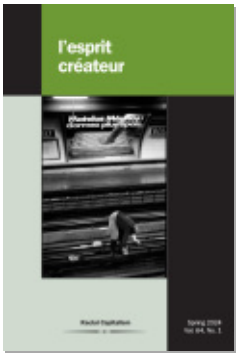
The Black Must Become Dangerous: Stanislas Adotevi's Critique of Negritude and the Philosophy of Pan-African Revolution



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L'Esprit Créateur, Volume 64, Number 1, Spring 2024, pp. 11-24 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press
DOI: *https://doi.org/10.1353/esp.2024.a929201*

The Black Must Become Dangerous: Stanislas Adotevi's Critique of Negritude and the Philosophy of Pan-African Revolution

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Abstract: Born in 1934, the Beninese philosopher and politician Stanislas Spero Adotevi passed away on February 7, 2024. He remains famous for his radical critique of Léopold Senghor's thought and political practice, but his ideas are often caricatured. This article offers the first academic assessment of Adotevi's analysis of Negritude. Far from another philosophical deconstruction of ethnophilosophy, he elaborates a genuine critique of state power, neo-colonialism, and imperialism in the African postcolony. Although inspired by Marxism, Adotevi's critical theory must be understood as a pan-Africanist reinvention of Black Power activism and philosophy.

THIS ARTICLE CONTEXTUALIZES and presents the thought of Benin's philosopher and former Commissioner General for Culture and Youth, Stanislas Spero Adotevi, focusing on his major book titled *Négritude et négrologues*.[1] Originally published in 1972 in Paris by the mass-market publisher 10/18, Adotevi's work offers a radical critique of neo-colonialism, under the guise of a full-fledged deconstruction of Léopold Sédar Senghor's leadership as president of Senegal.

In November 1969, Adotevi's article "The Strategy of Culture" appeared in the first-ever issue of the African American journal *The Black Scholar*, which represents a staple for Black Studies as a discipline. However, his work has fallen victim to a double erasure. First, it has been wiped out from the history of French theory. While Adotevi studied with Louis Althusser and Jacques Derrida as a student at the École Normale Supérieure—where he was a fellow student of Alain Badiou—and while *Négritude et négrologues* was published the same year as Derrida's *Marges de la philosophie* and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *L'Anti-Œdipe*, he and his work are hardly considered to be part of the same conjuncture, if even of the same spacetime.

Second, accounts of African philosophy also tend to ignore Adotevi's contribution to the pressing debates of the mid-twentieth century over culturalism and progressivism, despite his explicit dialogue with influential Francophone African philosophical figures such as Marcien Towa and Paulin Hountondji. Perhaps because he is the one who embraced most radical and revolutionary political options, developing an unapologetic Pan-African approach inspired by North America's Black Power movement, the transmission of Adotevi's

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thought has been interrupted, and his original contribution remains strangely absent from contemporary academic discussions.

This article contributes to a materialist history of African philosophy. It shows how historical events such as attempted revolutions and counter-revolutionary reactions, as well as theoretical influences and dialogues, shaped Adotevi's social and political thought. Adotevi's work is exemplary of an under-researched area within both Black studies and French studies: the Francophone Black Radical Tradition. The aim of this article is to present this frequently caricatured but more often than not forgotten philosophy for discussion, with particular emphasis on his trenchant critique of the articulation between Senghor's thought and neo-colonial political practice in the late 1960s.

Senghor, or neo-colonialism with Senegalese characteristics

Numerous studies of Negritude make note of Adotevi's critique of Senghor's metaphysical and political thought.[2] However, scholars never report adequately the depth and aim of his arguments. Contemporary scholarship on Senghor often alludes to Adotevi's ideas, but always summarizes it as a commonplace attack on Senghor's culturalism. Such an approach erases the social and political dimension of Adotevi's discourse. He does not criticize Negritude for its own sake, but as it relates symbiotically to the specific mode of government that prevails in Francophone post-colonial Africa. The dispute is not primarily an intellectual disagreement regarding the nature of the African personality or identity, but rather the effect of a conflict regarding neo-colonialism in Africa.

Like other French philosophical texts of the 1970s, such as Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* or Jacques Rancière's *Althusser's Lesson*, Adotevi's *Négritude et négrologues* reads as a consequence and theoretical response to the unprecedented political uprisings of May 1968. However, its context of interest is not so much the Paris Quartier Latin and suburban car factories as the lesser-known revolutionary events that occurred at the same time in Senegal. I argue that this anti-colonial eruption constitutes the key to understanding the motivation behind the critique of Senghor that Adotevi articulates in the book. It follows almost a decade of neo-colonialism in Senegal following its 'independence,' against which May '68 was a massive protest. If the country is sometimes regarded as a rather exemplary democracy compared with other regimes in the West African region at the same period, it was nevertheless an integral part of the system of unequal trade, bribery, and dependency known as "Françafrique."[3] It exhibited very common authoritarian and anti-

democratic tendencies that put it at the service of France-based multinational firms and French diplomacy.

A short overview of the beginnings of Senghor's presidency—missing from all rebuttals of Adotevi's take on Negritude—offers an adequate portrayal of the very nature of his political and social project. An important starting point is the law of December 22, 1961, that established the High Court of Justice of Senegal. Senghor's ambition in creating this institution had less to do with criminal justice than with political issues. The main purpose of this court was to resist hypothetical attacks on the state's internal security. The president tailored it as a tool to repress dissident voices. "This court diminishes the rights of the defense and judges in a hurry. It is entirely political as it is made up of eleven members of the parliament from the ruling party: six are judges, four are members of the investigating committee and one is the public prosecutor."[4] This political tribunal, composed of Senghor's vassals, was one of his weapons to ensure the prevalence of French interests in Senegal.

Senghor's disregard of economic matters is almost as well-known as his passion for cultural affairs. At the independence, power was meant to be split between the President of the Republic (competent in particular in diplomatic matters) and the Président du Conseil, or Prime Minister, his old friend Mamadou Dia (competent in economic and internal affairs). However, the arrangement was short-lived. Dia was taking seriously those who called for a 'socialist' project for Senegal. A partisan of farmers' co-operatives and labor self-management, he envisioned a planned exit from the peanut monoculture inherited from colonial times, which ensured the country's dependency on France. The socialist program worried both French elites and rural religious leaders who benefited from the agrarian status quo.[5] While careful not to attack France and its government explicitly so shortly after independence, Dia disapproved of the way Western countries conducted their cooperation with the new African nations. In his view, the former colonial *métropole* treated official public assistance as part of a global strategy of influence reminiscent of the 1884 Berlin conference and the scramble for Africa.[6] The assistance was fashioned after Western countries' conjunctural needs rather than with an eye for the structural necessities of underdeveloped nations. When this assistance is used to dispose of the excess production of a commodity, the consequence is that the African country receiving the aid will not have to buy it from one of its neighbors. A negative externality of this case is to disrupt local trade relations between countries with fragile economies. In the medium term, the disastrous strategy weakens African economies and creates a vicious circle of dependency upon Europe. As Adotevi points out, aid is designed to

benefit the country that sends it more than the country that receives it (*Négritude* 151).

Such an analysis of so-called French cooperation combined with Senghor's economic program centered on the region's development and autonomy had everything to displease the former colonial authorities, who successfully incentivized Senghor to take action against his right-hand man. First, Senghor tried to pass an illegal vote of no confidence to push Dia out of power, but Dia resorted to the police to occupy the national assembly building, preventing the vote from taking place. No matter, the vote was to be held elsewhere, at the personal residence of the President of the Assembly, Lamine Guèye. Simultaneously, a reform transferred all the powers previously vested in the Prime Minister to the President of the Republic. In the aftermath, Senghor undertook to 'unify' his party, the Union Progressiste Sénégalaise (UPS), by transitioning to a one-party system by absorbing opposing political organizations. Senghor was then the sole master of the country. This change led to the arrest of Dia, as well as that of four ministers accused of being his accomplices. "In May 1963, the Senegalese High Court of Justice sentenced Mamadou Dia to life imprisonment for attempted coup d'état, and the four ministers to twenty years' imprisonment. They served their sentences in the special detention center of Kédougou until Senghor finally agreed to pardon them in 1974" (Tchuisseu 292). The conditions of imprisonment were so harsh that, due to lack of medical care, Dia became blind during his detention (Bertho 110).

With the liquidation of its prime minister, Senegal locked itself into an economic model dictated by French interests in defiance of the country's development strategy. However, its first major crisis occurred in May 1968, beginning with the discontent of the University of Dakar students who were facing a drastic diminution of their scholarships. This starting point is not surprising because the UPS had become the only party in the country, which made the university into the last major forum of expression for political dissent. Two major student unions took action against the government's plan. The Union des Étudiants Sénégalais (UDES) represented Senegalese nationals, while the Union des Étudiants de Dakar (UED) represented other African students from neighboring countries attracted by Francophone West Africa's flagship university. If both organizations existed de facto, they lacked any de jure existence, as the state had never legally recognized them.[7] On the evening of May 24, a general assembly convened on the initiative of the UDES declared the unlimited general strike and the boycott of exams. The president of the UDES, M'Baye Diack, was also a former member of the Parti Africain de l'Indépendance, a Pan-Africanist Marxist political organization outlawed

in Senegal in 1960. To him and numerous other radical leaders, the current discontent with scholarships served as a catalyst for all major social and political grievances in the student population and beyond. Past the one-issue movement that had mobilized a considerable number of protesters, the unions actually aimed at a regime change.

In Dakar, the young protesters benefited from the support of most of the population. One witnessed a convergence between the intellectuals and the urban sub-proletariat, and for good reason: a vast urban renewal plan initiated by the President threatened many residents with eviction. In addition, the Union Nationale des Travailleurs Sénégalais (UNTS)—which, unlike the students' organizations, was recognized by the state—supported and joined the movement based on its own requests. It demanded replacing the numerous European executives inherited from colonization and cooperation with African executives. The discontent spread beyond the capital city, gaining other regions. This massive convergence of dissatisfactions and political demands shook the state to its foundations. Protesters were storming the homes of the Minister of Education, the Mayor of Dakar, the Director of Security, and the country's main radio host (Blum 162).

Faced with the revolutionary conjunction of the intellectuals, the proletariat, and the urban sub-proletariat, Senghor called upon other forces to defend his power. First, the Senegalese military, led by General Jean-Alfred Diallo, remained unshakably legitimist. Second, the same marabouts and other rural religious elites that had campaigned against Mamadou Dia seven years earlier were ready to use their militias against the protesters at Senghor's demand.[8] In sum, the country's most reactionary groups all stood united in support of Senghor. At first, it was only by resorting to the police and the army that he managed to stifle the movement. On May 29, 1968, the police stormed the university campus. Official sources reported one person dead and sixty-nine injured—but there were certainly many more—as well as thousands of arrests. More than 1,300 foreign African students were deported from the country by plane (Gueye 163). On the 31st, there were two dead and 900 arrests.

However, Senghor acted as a clever strategist. Once the army and the police restored civil order, he reorganized his government and agreed to some of the demonstrators' demands, for example concerning scholarships. Under diplomatic pressure from neighboring countries, he eventually reinstated many expelled foreign students. He took the opportunity to offer special scholarships to opponents of the socialist Pan-African president of Guinea-Conakry Ahmed Sékou Touré, a notorious adversary of France's African pol-

itics and a repeated target of destabilization attempts since the late 1950s. In essence, everything had to change for everything to remain the same.

A reminder of the authoritarian and pro-French nature of Senghor's political regime is essential if we are to understand the motivations behind Adotevi's criticism. As we shall now see, he seeks to show the links between this governance and the theory of Negritude.

Negritude as neo-colonial method of government: from Towa to Adotevi

The political context makes clear that radical arguments against Senghor's Negritude relate to how the President's discourse legitimized authoritarianism and counter-revolution in the idiom of his own philosophy. In *Négritude et négrologues*, Adotevi writes, "Today's Negritude is the current discourse of neo-colonialism. Negritude is the *black* way of being *white*."[9] The accusation does not simply concern theories and ideas but relates to social and political matters as well. In other words, we should not interpret the notion of neo-colonialism used here in metaphorical or mere cultural terms, but rather in a very material fashion. On June 1, 1968, the daily newspaper *Dakar-Matin* reproduced a statement by Senghor in which he dismissed the students' motivations and political relevance, vindicating his own anti-colonial legitimacy as an originator of the Negritude movement:

> It is odd how [the students of Dakar] waited for the revolt of the Paris students to do "same thing toubabs," to ape French students without the slightest change. That is because our students wanted to demonstrate in the streets, to attack people and property. This is how they intended to prove their "intellectual independence" towards France. When we initiated the theory of Negritude while attending the Lycée Louis-le-Grand and the Sorbonne, we did not ask French imperialism for permission.[10]

The articulation between Negritude and counter-revolutionary politics evidenced by Senghor's handling of the 1968 crisis is the key to understanding the rejection of the movement among Black radical francophone intellectuals of the late 1960s and beyond.

In a 1965 review of Senghor's first major collection of essays entitled *Liberté I*, the Cameroonian philosopher Marcien Towa presents arguments that will profoundly influence Adotevi's views. As Adotevi put it, Marcien Towa was the first to suspect that "the timeless character of Senghor's Black is not a mere metaphysical approach but a method of government."[11] At the core of Senghor's worldview stands an anthropology of Black people that conflates the biological and the cultural. According to Towa, Senghor theorizes the "Black soul" as an existential reality whose sole inscription in history is by

way of its biological character, which predetermines one's social function, aptitude, and taste. Both European and African bloods are marked with such naturalistic determinism. A rational demeanor defines the former, while the latter is more prone to emotion, imagination, and intuition. For Adotevi, the outcome is a philosophy of history that is not strictly speaking a fixist one, since it takes into account many scientific and geopolitical upheavals. However, history develops only through its white side, which represents the pole of change. Time is not motionless according to Senghor, but Black subjects virtually are. More accurately, they transform at the same speed as their genetics alters itself. European blood determines whites as innovators, while African blood induces cyclical repetition, hence the disorientation of Blacks facing the white-induced modernization of their world. Towa writes:

> Forced to adapt to the techno-scientific universe that Europe is creating around him, the Black would not find in his biological heritage any resource enabling him to take up the challenge, either immediately or in the long term. Senghor sees no way out except in the acceptance of white tutelage, while waiting for the biological specificity of the Black to be diluted and vanish through interbreeding in a humanity without races. The Civilization of the Universal of which he dreams "can only be mixed-race," a synthesis of "reconciled beauties of all races"[12]

The only possible conclusion to such an analysis is the necessity for Africans to accept French tutelage, always presented as an egalitarian and consensual cooperation, a genuine break with colonialism.

Negritude, once turned into an idiom of state power, allows for subjugation and subordination to be praised as marks of Black and African growth. However, the events of May 1968 revealed the underside of this discourse, that is, its repressive dimension. Accusing the protestors of "faire même chose toubabs," of aping the French militants fighting the police in the streets of Paris, Senghor naturalizes revolt and discontent as a foreign character, an infection tarnishing the docile African soul. Under the guise of Negritude, Senghor's voice on the radio and his words in the newspapers dictate what the Black must be to remain authentic. Blacks' duties are meant to be compatible with a new international division of labor with Africans at the bottom and whites at the top. Adotevi interprets this role of Negritude in psychoanalytical terms: "Negritude actually was a neurosis; it was the language of the Other, of the great Third; in Lacanian terms, the discourse of order: that of the unconscious."[13] Negritude functions as a voice that speaks inside and through the Black subject, working not as a practice of rebellion but rather as a sense of authority. Adotevi alludes to what Lacan calls "the third listener, always pre-

supposed" and which constitutes "the locus of the Other."[14] The concept of the Other terms a godlike figure of radical alterity experienced as an absolute, with whom any form of identification is impossible; it stands as the guardian of the symbolic order. It is outside of language and constitutes the condition of possibility for language itself. Unbeknownst to us, it dominates and determines us, defining the contours of what is sayable.

Senghor's Negritude functions as a form of subjection in the Lacanian sense of the term, which is to say that it produces subjects.[15] Negritude imposes its system of drives upon Senegalese society, offering Africans a way to enjoy their dependence as if it were the full accomplishment of their nature and personality. Confounding one's race with a set of values and social predispositions, it coalesces into a collective destiny that Senghor claims to decipher out of his people's culture and genetics. Its emphasis, placed on the necessity to be and to remain "Nègre," disarms attempts at transforming people's lives, as it equates what is desirable with what always-already exists. Senghor posits Negritude as the sole and perpetual object of the Africans' longing, which they could satisfy by simply contemplating their Blackness. He believes the free cultural expression he gained with independence suffices to satisfy his people's desire for equality and social transformation. For Adotevi, Senghor's discourse gives Blacks an immaterial satisfaction that does not threaten the imperialist status quo; "the West does not have to be overtly racist anymore, as the trick of independence allows civilized men to transfer what Jaulin named ethnocidal responsibilities to the ones they 'civilized.'"[16]

The French leftist ethnologist Robert Jaulin, who served as Adotevi's doctoral advisor, terms "ethnocide" the European colonial process of negating alterity through both violence and assimilation.[17] With Senghor, Negritude—defined as social patience and political docility—becomes a new standard that must prevail over the foreign menacing otherness represented by revolutionary ideas and actions. It aims at securing collaboration between the newly independent state with Europe's capitalism, which renews the colonial bond instead of severing it.[18]

Today's intellectual status quo is predominantly oblivious of these polemics, as both Africana and Francophone studies are currently witnessing a revival of academic interest in Senghor's thought. Scholars routinely herald him as a prominent Black anti-colonial author and politician, praise him as a talented poet, and picture him as a philosopher of Black dignity.[19] To label his thought as neo-colonial ideology is considered reductive and exaggerated, as scholars claim a reasonable middle ground position, which neglects or caricatures the criticisms made by radical Black thinkers. For example, the influen-

tial Senegalese philosopher Souleymane Bachir Diagne endeavored to defend Senghor against Adotevi's criticism by simply pointing to the Beninese's overlooking the complexity of his reading of Levy-Bruhl. According to Adotevi, Senghor takes up the idea of a Black "prelogical mentality" elaborated by Levy-Bruhl but rejected in the later part of his life (Adotevi, *Négritude* 44–45). Diagne denounces Adotevi's "glaring approximations," noting that Senghor is in fact conscious of this reorientation (Diagne, *Bergson* 28). In so doing, Diagne certainly demonstrates Senghor's awareness of Levy-Bruhl's later writings, but he does not justify Levy-Bruhl's conception of Negritude as being saturated with racist tropes inherited from early twentieth-century ethnology. In addition, these fastidious philological arguments should not suffice to convince us that criticism of Senghor's politics is unfounded. Fixation over a mere textual detail here leads to overlooking the main argument about Senghor's repressive government and to portraying Adotevi's book condescendingly as a failed "pamphlet" (Diagne, *Bergson* 29).

Although not included in the carefully edited five volumes of his collected essays, Senghor's May 1968 discourse should be regarded as an integral part of his complete works as it stands as a testimony to his action and thought. Nevertheless, according to the French critic Elara Bertho, "we should reread Senghor from the point of view of ecology, of a sensitive relation to the world, of promoting the living world and anti-capitalist politics. In that way, his work is intensely present and alive: it is to be rediscovered" (Bertho, *Léopold Sédar Senghor* 147). If Bertho acknowledges certain flaws in Senghor's governance, she does not go as far as to connect these abuses to his political thought and philosophical worldview. Instead of trying to imagine progressive applications of Senghor's texts, we should acknowledge the counter-revolutionary application that he himself proclaimed and enforced. Contrary to what Senghor would have his people believe, his youthful intellectual anti-colonialism was compatible with his full support of neo-colonialism as head of state. Adotevi shows that there is not, on the one hand, Senghor's rich and brilliant thought, and on the other hand his pro-French political action, but rather the dynamic unity of theory and practice where Negritude serves to legitimize Black docility towards imperialism.

Radicalizing Blackness

Unlike other influential critics of Negritude such as Jean-Paul Sartre – whom he praises for his assessment of the unachieved character of Negritude as a political philosophy—Adotevi resists the temptation to embrace blindly the project of Marxist internationalism: "Comrades, let us quit worrying about

Europe's progressives, or those of any imperialist or imperialist heir country."[20] Rather, Adotevi invites African activists to "overcome the experience of European proletarians dumbed down by Western provincialism" (Adotevi, *Négritude* 165). Adotevi maintains a strong sense of the political relevance of Blackness as a political category. Such focus on the specificity of the African experience combined with the desire to radicalize the socialist project anticipated political theorist Cedric Robinson's criticism of the Western workers' movement. According to Robinson, Western socialism turned Marxism into a European identity, relying on German philosophy, French socialism, and British political economy.[21] Under such assumptive logic, a socialist project that is not predicated upon this Eurocentric philosophy of history was labeled as primitive or utopian. "Marxism, the dominant form that the critique of capitalism has assumed in Western thought, incorporated theoretical and ideological weakness that stemmed from the same social forces that provided the bases of capitalist formation," Robinson remarks.[22] In other words, according to both Adotevi and Robinson, Western socialism and imperialism both express European provincialism.

Adotevi's opposition to Senghor's thought and political practice does not fully extend to the interpretation of Negritude formulated by Aimé Césaire, whom he describes as "the tireless warrior of Black people and the greatest lyric poet of the century (read Breton and Éluard): a civilization-building poet."[23] Césaire's thought and poetry are haunted both with the historical experience of Black dehumanization and suffering, as well as the urgent necessity to invent a cultural, political, and social remedy to the enduring wrongs of colonialism. If Senghor's Negritude rests on a diagnosis of cultural and spiritual plenitude, in which Blacks suffer only from a lack of recognition and the imposition of Western stereotypes, Césaire envisions Blackness as a site of radical dispossession and deprivation. It calls for a revolutionary upheaval of our world order by taking a different route from the Stalinist and chauvinist trajectory of the French Communist Party.[24]

Adotevi draws from Césaire's darker interpretation of the Black condition. "What is at stake is neither Negritude as such, nor its latent or manifest, original or hijacked content. We are denouncing its actual (and future) political use and the perverse will to maintain it in its original theoretical incompleteness."[25] Under the guise of a theoretical attack on Senghor, Adotevi plans to complete Negritude: to push the analysis of Blackness to its final consequences: "It is now time to be Black. Truly."[26] If present-day Negritude undeniably appears to him as a tool of neo-colonial control, it once was a theoretical and literary step towards African renaissance: "I am not speaking of

deviated or perverted Negritude. I am speaking of our debt, and above all, our pride, in belonging to the tradition of African civilization, and in possessing values which distinguish the black world from that of the white men."[27] In sum, Adotevi's critique of Negritude does not entail the turning away from any politicization of Blackness but rather coincides with a new embrace of what defines the Black shared condition.

One of Adotevi's major issues with Senghor was his poetic overwriting of the African experience, which silences people's suffering and social interests, displacing the conversation to the metaphysical or aesthetic plane. On the contrary, central to Adotevi's view is Black dispossession and dehumanization. "For Africans, the main question is not the recognition of a theoretical particularity, as it is lived existentially in everyday practice as a constant external negation of everything that would allow them to be themselves."[28] Since the transatlantic slave trade and the scramble for Africa, Blacks are the always-negated condition of possibility for other groups' fortune and privilege. History is always in need of a subject, but Black people have been reduced to objects. Therefore, their only futurity lies in destroying the system that keeps denying them. "Blacks already have every subjective reason to rebel. All they need is revolutionary parties, connecting them to Africa, drawing on the Black horizon the curve and direction of independent Africa, through rehabilitation of its forever denied sons" (Adotevi, *Négritude* 171).[29]

The two main inspirations for this political orientation that derive from Adotevi's writings are, on the one hand, Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah's Pan-African agenda and, on the other, the North American Black Power movement. Like Senghor, Nkrumah was both an intellectual and a statesman—a published author and a political leader of the independence. As such, he provides Adotevi with a counter-model for post-colonial African governance. Adotevi's point is not to oppose an abstract political ideal to reality, but rather to show the optional character of Senegal's direction: its avoidable grounding in a deliberate project of neo-colonial collaboration. While imperfect, Nkrumah's political action represents a credible project of African independence grounded on socialism (Adotevi 97). In a poignant obituary published in 1973, Adotevi describes the first president of Ghana as follows:

> Nkrumah's waking dream, pursued with open eyes for sixty-three years, is the dream of an Africa liberated from the fantasies of the past and present; still nothing, but rich with all possibilities; which can and must happen. Nkrumah wanted to go very far. He wanted to assert the power of the African man, the Black man, through his intelligence and suffering, to master the blind game of colonial domination.[30]

Along with other leaders such as Congo's Patrice Lumumba and later Burkina Faso's Thomas Sankara, Nkrumah embodies the idea of African self-reliance.

The importance of this notion of African self-determination and autonomy for Adotevi leads us to the theme of Black Power, which echoes Richard Wright's narration of his encounter with Nkrumah,[31] and which also alludes to the African American radical political movement of the mid-twentieth century initiated by Kwame Ture and Charles Hamilton.[32] The core idea of the doctrine is that Blacks in America and abroad are oppressed on a colonial basis and that their liberation requires an offensive politics of autonomy and self-determination. Adotevi admits to admiring the movement: "Only Blacks in America today are able to desire the end of American wealth. Destroying imperialism in its most perfect form: human task!"[33] From the topicality of African American radicalism and revolutionary thought, Adotevi draws the realization that Black Africans worldwide need a clear understanding of their shared racial interests: "It is not a new racialism but an identification. It is an affirmation of the plain fact that to be a Negro today is still to live through the violent depredations of the slave trade" ("The Strategy" 32). Adotevi notes that Black people are routinely subjected to mistreatment that no other group faces on such a massive scale. Given that situation, Black liberation requires both the consciousness of current-day African global wretchedness and dehumanization and the resolute desire to destroy the world of racism and exploitation: "The carnal ardor of black hatred should have been opposed to the cosmic insults to which none other than the black race have been subjected" ("The Strategy" 31). In sum, given its focus on revolutionary activism, race interests, and Pan-Africanism, Adotevi's philosophy is arguably the closest we have come to adapting Black Power to the French-speaking context.

Conclusion

Adotevi's thought reads as a plea to rethink our political interpretation of Blackness. He criticizes Senghor's definition of Negritude as an official state ideology and as a counter-revolutionary discourse used to delegitimize protests and social unrest, as evidenced by the May 1968 crisis in Dakar. However, he believes in the opportunity to maintain a strong sense of global solidarity between all Blacks who are continuously victims of racial slavery pursued by new means. At the core of Adotevi's political diagnosis in the conjuncture of the late 1960s and early 1970s lies the idea, shared by both Kwame Nkrumah's Pan-Africanism and Kwame Ture's Black Power Movement, that even if Black Americans happen to achieve civil rights, their freedom is doomed to remain an illusion as long as Africa does not gain its autonomy"

("The Strategy" 32–33). For any African aware of these issues, the only way out is a revolutionary one. "The Black, Baldwin writes, has become a beautiful color, not because we love it, but because we fear it. The Black is not a color, it is a value. The Black who betrays is not a Black. The Black who has no faith in the rehabilitation of his race is not a man. BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL. The Black must become dangerous!" (Adotevi, *Négritude* 163).[34]

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Notes

1. Stanislas Spero Adotevi, *Négritude et négrologues* (Paris: Éditions Delga, 2017). All quotes are given in translation and are my own.
2. Kahiudi Claver Mabana, "Léopold Sédar Senghor et la civilisation de l'universel," *Diogène*, 235-36 (2011/3-4): 3–13; Cheikh Thiam, "Negritude, Eurocentrism, and African Agency: For an Africentered Renaissance of Léopold Sédar Senghor's Philosophy," *The French Review*, 88:1 (October 2014): 149–63; Souleymane Bachir Diagne, *Bergson Postcolonial: L'élan vital dans la pensée de Léopold Sédar Senghor et de Mohamed Iqbal* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2011).
3. François-Xavier Verschave. *La Françafrique: Le plus long scandale de la République* (Paris: Stock, 1998), 61–62.
4. Ghislain Youdji Tchuisseu, "Nos 'amis' les dictateurs," in Amzat Boukari-Yabara, et al., eds., *L'Empire qui ne veut pas mourir: Une histoire de la Françafrique* (Paris: Seuil, 2021), 291.
5. Elara Bertho, *Léopold Sédar Senghor* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2023): 107–8.
6. Mamadou Dia, *Nations africaines et solidarité mondiale* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), 151.
7. Françoise Blum, "Sénégal 1968: Révolte étudiante et grève générale," *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, 59 (2012): 148.
8. Omar Gueye, "Mai 1968 au Sénégal: Dakar dans le mouvement social mondial," *Socio*, 10 (2018): 132.
9. "La négritude d'aujourd'hui, c'est le discours actuel du néo-colonialisme. La négritude, c'est la manière *noire* d'être *Blanc*" (Adotevi, *Négritude* 137).
10. "Il est curieux [que les étudiants de Dakar] aient attendu la révolte des étudiants de Paris pour faire 'même chose toubabs' pour singer les étudiants français sans modifier une virgule. Car ce qu'ils voulaient, nos étudiants, c'était manifester dans la rue, s'en prendre aux personnes et aux biens. Voilà comment ils entendaient manifester leur 'indépendance intellectuelle' vis-à-vis de la France. Lorsque, des bancs du lycée Louis-le-Grand et de la Sorbonne, nous lancions la théorie de la négritude, nous n'avions pas consulté l'impérialisme français." Quoted in Blum, 166.
11. "Aussi l'approche éternitaire du Nègre senghorien n'est-elle pas une simple démarche métaphysique mais une méthode de gouvernement" (Adotevi, *Négritude* 49).
12. "Acculé à s'adapter à l'univers techno-scientifique que l'Europe a fait surgir autour de lui, le Nègre ne trouverait dans son patrimoine biologique aucune ressource lui permettant de relever le défi, ni immédiatement, ni à terme. Senghor ne voit d'issue que dans l'acceptation de la tutelle blanche, en attendant que la spécificité biologique du Nègre se dilue et s'évanouisse par métissage dans une humanité sans races. La Civilisation de l'Universel dont il rêve 'ne saurait être que métisse,' synthèse des 'beautés réconciliées de toutes les races.'" Marcien Towa, "*Liberté I* de Léopold Sédar Senghor," *Genève-Afrique*, 4:2 (1965): 230.
13. "La négritude était bien une névrose, c'était le langage de l'Autre, du grand Tiers; en termes lacaniens, le discours de l'ordre: celui de l'inconscient" (Adotevi, *Négritude* 76).

14. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection* (London: Routledge, 2001), 45.
15. Jean-Louis Sous, *Lacan et la politique: De la valeur* (Toulouse: Érès, 2017), 26.
16. "il n'est plus aujourd'hui nécessaire que l'Occident soit ouvertement et franchement raciste, puisque par le jeu des indépendances l'homme civilisé a transmis à ceux qu'il a 'civilisé' ce que Jaulin appelle ses responsabilités ethnocidaires" (Adotevi, *Négritude* 116).
17. Robert Jaulin, *La paix blanche: Introduction à l'ethnocide* (Paris: Seuil, 1970), 408–9.
18. Yves Bénot, *Idéologies des indépendances africaines* (Paris: Maspero, 1969), 177.
19. Souleymane Bachir Diagne, *Léopold Sédar Senghor: L'art africain comme philosophie* (Paris: Riveneuve Éditions, 2007), 149–50.
20. "Camarades, ne nous occupons plus des progressistes d'Europe: ni d'aucun pays impérialiste ou simplement héritier de l'impérialisme (Adotevi, *Négritude* 164).
21. Cedric Robinson, *An Anthropology of Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 2019), 12–13.
22. Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2000), 10.
23. "le guerrier infatigable du peuple noir et le plus grand poète lyrique du siècle (lire Breton et Éluard): un poète créateur de civilisation" (Adotevi, *Négritude* 202).
24. Aimé Césaire, "Lettre à Maurice Thorez," *Écrits Politiques 1935–1956* (Paris: Jean-Michel Place, 2016), 392–93.
25. "Ce qui est en cause, ce n'est pas la négritude en tant que telle, encore moins son contenu latent ou manifeste, originaire ou dévié. Ce que nous dénonçons, c'est l'utilisation politique qu'on en fait (et fera) et cette volonté malsaine de maintenir le concept dans son inachèvement théorique originel" (Adotevi, *Négritude* 79).
26. "Il est temps, maintenant, d'être Nègre. Vraiment" (Adotevi, *Négritude* 161).
27. Stanislas Spero Adotevi, "The Strategy of Culture," *The Black Scholar*, 1:1 (1969), 31.
28. "Pour ces Africains, la question n'est pas la reconnaissance d'une particularité théorique, puisque cette particularité est vécue de manière existentielle dans la pratique quotidienne comme une négation constante par l'extérieur de tout ce qui leur permettrait d'être eux-mêmes" (Adotevi, *Négritude* 159).
29. "Les Nègres ont déjà toutes les raisons subjectives de se révolter. Ils n'ont besoin que de partis révolutionnaires qui les mettent en face de l'Afrique, et dessinent sur l'horizon noir la courbe et la direction de l'Afrique rendue à elle-même par la réhabilitation de ses fils immémorialement niés" (Adotevi, *Négritude* 171).
30. Stanislas Adotevi, "Nkrumah ou le rêve éveillé," *Présence africaine*, 85 (1973): 17. "Le rêve éveillé de Nkrumah, poursuivi les yeux ouverts depuis 63 ans, n'est que le rêve d'une Afrique libérée des fantasmes du passé et du présent; forte, à la mesure d'elle-même, se donnant à elle-même sa propre loi; encore rien, mais riche de tous les possibles; qui peut et qui doit se faire. Nkrumah veut aller très loin. Il veut affirmer le pouvoir de l'homme africain, l'homme noir, par son intelligence et sa souffrance, de maitriser le jeu aveugle des forces de domination coloniale."
31. Richard Wright, *Black Power* (London: Dennis Dobson, 1954), 52.
32. Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 37.
33. "Seuls les Noirs aujourd'hui en Amérique sont capables de désirer la fin de la richesse Américaine. Détruire l'impérialisme dans sa force la plus parfaite: tâche humaine!" (Adotevi, *Négritude* 163).
34. "Le Noir, écrit Baldwin, est devenu une belle couleur, non parce qu'on l'aime, mais parce qu'on le craint. Le Nègre n'est pas une couleur, c'est une valeur. Le Nègre qui trahit n'est pas un Nègre. Le Nègre qui n'a pas foi dans la réhabilitation de sa race n'est pas un homme. BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL. Le Nègre doit devenir dangereux!" (Adotevi, *Négritude* 163).