Andrew Apter (Los Angeles)

**FESTAC 77 and the critique of racial capital**

Nigeria’s Second World Black and African Festival of African Arts and Culture, otherwise known as FESTAC 77, signaled a decisive break from Senghor’s ideology of Négritude, which had been enshrined and promoted eleven years earlier in Senegal’s Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres (FESMAN). Although initially modeled on its Dakar precedent, FESTAC 77 fashioned an inclusive horizon of blackness that crossed Négritude’s ethnocultural threshold between “Arabo-berbérs et Négro-africaines,” precipitating Senghor’s widely-publicized threat of a boycott and his subsequent dismissal as FESTAC co-patron. Building on my earlier attention to Nigeria’s petro-capitalism and spectacle of culture, I argue that FESTAC’s remapping of global blackness – and the falling-out between Senghor and Nigeria’s president Obasanjo – cannot be reduced to ideology or geopolitics, but represents historic transformations of *racial capital* through dirigiste mechanisms of cultural production. By focusing on genealogies of racial capital, I trace the origins of postcolonial African festivals not to colonial grammars of difference and domination, but to fetishized forms of Atlantic slavery. To understand the critique of Négritude that took place during FESTAC, I relate the commodification of blackness underwritten by oil to the earlier history of enslaved Africans as Atlantic commodities.

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