Diaspora and Visual Culture: Representing Africans and Jews is the first book to examine the connections between diaspora – the movement, whether forced or voluntary, of a nation or group of people from one homeland to another – and its representations in visual culture. Focusing on the visual culture of the African and Jewish diasporas, contributors address the rich complexity of diasporic cultures and art, and explore their potential to transform the way we look at ourselves and others.

Two foundational articles by Stuart Hall and the painter R.B. Kitaj provide points of departure for an exploration of the meanings of diaspora for cultural identity and artistic practice. In the second section, contributors examine the ways in which diaspora disrupted national and essentialist identity claims in nineteenth-century visual culture, focusing on the work of Caribbean-Jewish Impressionist painter Camille Pissarro; the African/Native American sculptor Mary Edmonia Lewis; and considering the notorious Dreyfus Affair.

The third section looks at the art of African-American women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Yoruba diaspora art and performance in Brazil and New York, and the formation of American, European and Israeli artistic identity, addressing issues of identity, gender and sexuality in relation to diaspora. In the final section contributors focus on visual culture in Poland and Brazil – two countries exemplifying the fictitiousness of nation and national identity – considering how artists there have made sense of their unique multicultural societies.
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INTRODUCTION
The multiple viewpoint: diasporic visual cultures

Nicholas Mirzoeff

The Jew and I: Since I was not satisfied to be racialized, by a lucky turn of fate, I was humanized. I joined the Jew, my brother in misery.

Frantz Fanon (Fanon 1967: 122)

Kishinev and St Louis – the same soil, the same people. It is a distance of four and half thousand miles between these two cities and yet they are so close and so similar to each other

The Forward, 1917 (quoted in Takaki 1995)

When Marshall MacLuhan first coined the phrase “global village” in the 1950s, it must have had a comforting ring. It implies that despite the astonishing proliferation of new technologies, life in the information age will have the same sense of belonging and rootedness that goes along with village life. From our fin-de-siecle perspective, the information age seems much less optimistic. In place of firm notions of identity has come an era of mass migrations, displacements, exile and transition. Capitalism has become postnational, operating in the blocs constituted by such agreements as the North American Free Trade Association, GATT and the European Union. From France to Rwanda and the Middle East, virulent right-wing nationalist movements have sprung up in response to these challenges to the nation state. On the other hand, artists, critics and writers have re-examined the cultures of diaspora as a means of understanding and even embracing the new modes of postnational citizenship. For, as Arjun Appadurai has observed, “in the postnational world we are seeing emerge, diaspora runs with, and not against, the grain of identity, movement and reproduction” (Appadurai 1993: 803). From academic journals like Transition and Diaspora to popular music anthems like Soul II Soul’s Keep On Movin’, artworks like Vera Frenkel’s . . . from the Transit Bar and films such as Mississippi Masala, the idea that culture must be based in one nation is increasingly being challenged. Now it is time to look at the way that culture crosses borders and oceans with ease in a constant state of evolution.
The new insistence on the diasporic in the work of such critics as Rey Chow (1993), James Clifford (1997), Paul Gilroy (1993), Stuart Hall (1990) and others results from a changed perception of the nature and meaning of diaspora itself. In the nineteenth century, diaspora peoples were seen as a disruption to the natural economy of the nation state. Diaspora peoples themselves envisaged an end to diaspora, whether in Theodore Herzl’s Zionism or Marcus Garvey’s return to Africa. For the self-conceived domestic population, diaspora peoples were an excess to national need to be disposed of by migration, colonial resettlement or ultimately by extermination. Diaspora was something that happened to “them” not “us.” That comforting division no longer holds good. Olabiyi Babalola Yai tells us that the Yoruba peoples of West Africa consider themselves to be a permanently diasporic people, a consequence no doubt of the experiences of slavery and colonization (Yai 1994). In the late twentieth century, that feeling has gone global. Whereas nineteenth-century diasporas revealed interconnected nations, our current experience is of an increasingly interdependent planet.

There is a growing sense that we now find ourselves at, to use Stuart Hall’s phrase, “the in-between of different cultures.” This book is dedicated to thinking through what that in-between looks like in the African and Jewish diasporas. It is motivated by the belief that diaspora is an inevitably plural noun, meaning that diasporas cannot be properly understood in isolation. As the citations at the head of this chapter indicate, Africans and Jews have long looked to each other for an explanation of what it means to be in diaspora, an understanding that is now in urgent need of renewal. For the inability of traditional politics to cope with the postnational world has been accompanied by a remarkable efflorescence of cultural work of all kinds dedicated to understanding the genealogy of the new global culture and its potential to transform the way we look at ourselves and at others.

There is, however, a problem concerning the representation of diasporas. Diaspora cannot by its very nature be fully known, seen or quantified, even—or especially—by its own members. The notion of diaspora and visual culture embodies this paradox. A diaspora cannot be seen in any traditional sense and it certainly cannot be represented from the viewpoint of one-point perspective. The nation, by contrast, has long been central to Western visual culture. While we have become accustomed to thinking of the nation state as an “imagined community” (Anderson 1992), it can nonetheless call on a range of geographical sites, monuments and symbols to create a powerful visual rhetoric of nationality. The nineteenth-century creation of an extensive museum culture based on the idea of unfolding national histories gave institutional force to this vision of national culture (Sherman and Rogoff 1994; Clifford 1991). A distinction was made between historical objects that were displayed in national museums and the disinterested category of art, both of which excluded diaspora peoples. Museums served to emphasize the Western notion that history logically tended towards the dominance of the imperial
powers, while art collections served to reinforce the perceived “superiority” of Western culture. Diaspora peoples have been marginalized by this visualization of national cultures in museums, while consistently using visual means to represent their notions of loss, belonging, dispersal and identity. For example, the Border Art Workshop/Taller de Arte Fronterizo and the collaborative work of Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco have provided a powerful alternative way of conceiving the US/Mexican relationship to the xenophobic simplicities of Ross Perot and California's Governor Pete Wilson (Fusco 1995: 145-201). In the academy, art history’s notion of stylistic influence is another case in point. A successful attribution of stylistic influence relies on a clear visual homology between a source and its descendant together with evidence that the source was known to the artist. Martin J. Powers argues that

> [w]hat we call “style” is an important means whereby social groups project their constructed identities and stake their claims in the world. It may have been precisely for this reason that nineteenth- and much of twentieth-century art history stressed the “national” and personal element in style, since it was thought to be the visual counterpart of some internal essence.

(Powers 1995: 384)

That essence was, of course, race. Powers does not mean to suggest that all art history must be rejected as racist but that, when we are involved in cross-cultural work, the traditional tools of the discipline must be handled with the greatest of care. Writing the history of diaspora visual cultures will, then, pose important methodological questions for both diaspora studies and the visual disciplines.

**Diasporas and intervisuality**

In much diaspora scholarship, the Jewish diaspora has been taken as the “ideal type” of the experience (Clifford 1997: 247-8), leading other diasporic experience to be mapped against this model. However, diasporas are rarely considered in tandem. For Jews, the parallel has often been to compare “Jewish” (nomadic) culture with “Greek” (national) culture in a tradition stemming from Matthew Arnold’s *Culture and Anarchy* (1864) via James Joyce’s formulation of the neologism “jewgreek.” In the case of the African diaspora, the key question has been continuity with African traditions, rather than relations with other diaspora groups (Thompson 1983). Recent discussions of African-Jewish relations have thus concentrated almost exclusively on the case of North America since the Civil Rights era of the 1960s (Salzmann 1992). Even in this limited geographic space, Africans and Jews have been encountering one another since the seventeenth century, meaning that the hybridity generated by diaspora is not just an interaction with the “host” nation but
among diasporas themselves. For much of this time, Africans and Jews have seen their histories as mirroring one another. The nineteenth-century African diaspora theorist Edward Wilmot Blyden stated the parallel directly: “The Hebrews could not see or serve God in the land of the Egyptians; no more can the Negro under the Anglo-Saxon.” In the contemporary world in which the dominant tension between center and periphery has been replaced by a global pattern of flows and resistances (Appadurai 1996), both Africans and Jews can benefit from renewing their sense of diaspora culture with reference to the other as well as the self. It is no coincidence that Paul Gilroy, who has taken a strong position against essentialist notions of African identity, has also brought the African–Jewish comparison to the heart of his work (Gilroy 1993: 205–16), implying a challenge to the historians of the Jewish diaspora to follow suit. The complete history of such parallel diasporas is beyond the scope of this book and probably beyond any one individual writer. What can be achieved is the re-opening of a discussion and the beginnings of new patterns of thought. By bringing together the work of a variety of scholars working on the visual cultures of African and Jewish diasporas, this book offers the reader an opportunity to undertake the traditional art historical task to “compare and contrast.”

More importantly, it highlights new ways of thinking of diaspora as becoming, in the lineage of Stuart Hall’s now classic essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” reprinted in this volume. For Hall, “diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference.” This insight was in part inspired by Jacques Derrida’s notion of *differance*, a state between differing and deferring. For Derrida himself, this implies that Jewishness, as opposed to Judaism, is “open to a future radically to come, which is to say indeterminate, determined only by this opening of the future to come” (Derrida 1996: 70). Similarly, the Jewish-American artist R.B. Kitaj, whose *Diasporist Manifesto* is reprinted in this volume, notes: “I try to be, along with many artists, forward-looking” (Kitaj 1989: 65). Diaspora has long been understood as determined by the past, by the land which has been lost. More exactly, W.E.B. DuBois’ concept of “double consciousness” has dominated understandings of diaspora: “One ever feels his twoness – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (DuBois 1989 [1903]: 5). DuBois saw this double consciousness as the defining problem of the twentieth century, and so it has proved. This tension can in part be understood as a dialectic between past and present. It may be possible, by developing the notion of the future into the diaspora identity, to discover additional dimensions to diaspora consciousness. If it can now be rethought as an indeterminate future to come, that will imply a significant re-evaluation of diasporas past, present and future to which this volume can only contribute.

However, debate over the African and Jewish diasporas has been dominated
instead by the highly effective and notorious preaching of Minister Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam (Berman 1994). Farrakhan straightforwardly asserts that "[s]ome of the biggest slave merchants were Jews. The owners of the slave ships were Jews ... It's been a master-slave relationship" (Gardell 1996: 260). Although historians have shown the absolute inaccuracy of such statements (Faber 1998), their work has had little effect on the impact of Farrakhan's comments, not least because of persistent racism in some sections of the Jewish community. His goal is not to change the academic consensus on slavery but for the Nation of Islam to take over the metaphorical place of the Jews in modern American popular culture:

I declare to the world that the people of God are not those who call themselves Jews, but the people of God who are chosen in this critical time in history are you, the black people of America, the lost, the despised, the rejected

(Gardell 1996: 258).

Farrakhan's argument is, in effect, that the present relative wealth of American Jews by comparison with African-Americans invalidates any claim that they might have to be the people of God. This message has found a significant audience in the world of rap and hip-hop, where many performers have turned to the Nation of Islam. One of the most notorious Farrakhan aides, Khalid Abdul Mohammad, has performed with the rap group Public Enemy and the L.A. gangsta rapper Ice Cube. Rap now sells extensively to white teenagers in the suburbs but individual artists continue to base their claim to authenticity or "realness" on their roots in the black ghetto. While not every American Jew has achieved great wealth, few can claim "realness" on this level. However, this is not a sociological debate, as demonstrated by the success of the suburban Jew turned rapper, Adam Horowitz of the Beastie Boys. What is at stake is the claim to a metaphorical and rhetorical position as the absolute Diaspora, perceived as a singular and exclusive condition. Both Farrakhan's supporters and some of those who use him as demon figure use the Other diaspora as a means of disciplining their own. That is to say, in a world marked by hybridity and diversity, the absolute evil of the Other is perhaps the only means by which the integrity of the same can be sustained. As long as "realness" is perceived solely in performative terms of the "origin" of diaspora, this debate will continue to be as unproductive as it has been to date. In some senses, it could be argued that the tensions between Africans and Jews in the United States stem from this insistence that diaspora is only about origins and the past. Both groups claim to have suffered most in diaspora and at the same time assert a crucial place in modern "Americanness." To adopt Gilroy's distinction, both groups need to reassert their "routes" over their "roots," while also paying attention both to those places where African and Jewish routes have overlapped in the past and to ways in which they might again merge in the future.
The notion of a “route” may be too singular. In his *Diasporist Manifesto* Kitaj defines the diasporist as appearing in “every polyglot matrix,” an appropriately fractal metaphor for these complicated times. He later glossed the “polyglot” to mean “Jew, Black, Arab, Homosexual, Gypsy, Asian, emigre from despotism, bad luck etc.,” divorcing the idea of diaspora from any essentialist notion of “race” or ethnicity (Kitaj 1989: 75). By extending the categories of the diasporist beyond the dispersed nation state, Kitaj challenges us to rethink the notion of authen­ticity, as applied to both national and diaspora cultures. It further opens diaspora to categories beyond the national, especially sexual minorities. Indeed, it almost suggests that diaspora is becoming a majority condition in global capitalism. This polymorphous notion of diaspora transforms the visual image itself as “the Diasporist painting I have always done also often represents more than one view” (Kitaj 1989: 73). Kitaj’s sense of the multiplicity of diaspora is not limited to his own art but, as the essays in this collection show, is also part of the revision of modernism commonly known as postmodernism. Diaspora generates what I shall call a “multiple viewpoint” in any diasporic visual image. This viewpoint incorporates Derrida’s *differance*, Kitaj’s many views and what Ella Shohat and Robert Stam have called a “polycentric vision” in which the visual is located “between individuals and communities and cultures in the process of dialogic interaction” (Shohat and Stam 1998: 46). The multiple viewpoint moves beyond the one-point perspective of Cartesian rationalism in the search for a forward­looking, transcultural and transitive place from which to look and be seen. In the contemporary moment, when imagination itself “is neither purely emanci­patory nor entirely disciplined but is a space of contestation in which individu­als and groups seek to annex the global into their own practices of the modern” (Appadurai 1996: 4), changing the way in which people see themselves is in all senses a critical activity.

For those contemporary artists, critics and historians concerned with dias­pora, the key question thus becomes determining what such multiple view­points look like now, in the past and in the future. Indeed, the multiple viewpoint has much to offer all those seeking new ways to formulate key questions of the gaze and spectatorship. Just as theories of hybridity and mestizaje developed in the Caribbean, India and Latin America now seem the most contemporary tools with which to examine the “West,” so may visual theory developed in rethinking diaspora contribute to the ongoing rethinking of the visual that has come to be termed visual culture. Such questions, by their nature, are unlikely to produce an answer in the form of traditional “evidence.” Homi Bhabha has situated his influential endorsement of hybridity under the sign of a double negative, “neither the one, nor the other.” He nonetheless hopes that a new art may emerge from the working through of these contra­dictions, provided that it

demands an encounter with “newness” that is not part of the contin­uum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent
THE MULTIPLE VIEWPOINT

act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent "in-between" space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The "past-present" becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living.

(Bhabha 1994: 7)

From the fragments of the past-present – that is to say, double consciousness – Bhabha sees the creation of multiple diaspora futures, futures forged from memory and experience but not dependent on them. This kind of work cannot be done by standard histories and realist representations. It is what Jean-François Lyotard meant when he called the sublime the modern mode of presenting the unpresentable. This, then, is the postmodern diasporic dilemma: how can something be visualized that is adequate to guide us round what is so widely felt to be new, when all that is available is the discredited apparatus of the modern? One method of constructing answers to that question lies in writing diasporist genealogies of the present that refigure the past in order to facilitate the theoretical and phenomenological understanding of the multiple viewpoint of diaspora. Such work entails a certain risk, described by Iain Chambers as "embracing a mode of thought that is destined to be incomplete" (Chambers 1994: 70). Any writing that addresses the future must, by its very nature, fail to fully succeed.

The diasporic visual image is necessarily intertextual, in that the spectator needs to bring extratextual information to bear on what is seen within the frame in order to make full sense of it. However, in the visual image, intertextuality is not simply a matter of interlocking texts but of interacting and interdependent modes of visuality that I shall call intervisuality. From a particular starting point, a diasporic image can create multiple visual and intellectual associations both within and beyond the intent of the producer of that image.

Robert Farris Thompson's example of the yodel shows how even a certain sound becomes the gateway to a multiple viewpoint on the African diaspora. The yodel is "a chest/head, high low snap across an octave [that] is one of the hallmarks of the singing of rainforest pygmies in Central Africa." Thompson hears the echo of that yodel in Kongo music and from there in the Mississippi Delta blues, a sound that resonated with the wail of a steam engine:

By the 1940s, if your ear were culturally prepared, you could hear a lonesome train whistle in the night and immediately think of black people, on the move. From Memphis to Mobile. Goin' to Chicago, sorry that I can't take you.

(Thompson 1989: 98)

The American railway was the means by which the Great Migration of African-Americans from South to North took place, as depicted by Jacob
Lawrence in his series painting *The Migration of the Negro* (1940). This modern diaspora inevitably evoked the forced transatlantic diaspora of slavery that had brought Africans to America, creating different music like the blues, jazz and soul in which the train was both inspiration and subject-matter. In short, the train whistle had become what Mikhail Iampolski has called a “hyperquote,” an artifact generating multiple intertextual references (Iampolski 1998: 35). Learning to hear under Thompson’s tuition, one could even go further. The American railroads were built by Africans, Chicanos, Chinese, Irish, Japanese and other immigrants, each with their own song expressing the pain of the work. Frederick Douglass heard echoes of African song in Irish ballads (Takaki 1995: 21–2). Others have made a similar connection to the Yiddish music of Eastern Europe. As has been widely noted, the train itself is a privileged site in the creation of Western visual culture, for the view from the train window was the first perception of the moving image that later became institutionalized as cinema. The train, to use Stephen Heath’s distinction, was where the seen first became the scene. By the 1940s, the railway had been transformed from a symbol of European progress to the facilitator of the Holocaust, with special meaning for Jews, gypsies, gays, the disabled and the other victims of slaughter. This resonance informs work as various as R.B. Kitaj’s painting *The Jewish Rider*, Vera Frenkel’s installation piece and web site . . . *from the Transit Bar* and Claude Lanzmann’s epic documentary *Shoah*. Diasporas do not occur one by one but inevitably overlap, creating polyvalent symbols that are sometimes shared, sometimes contested. Diaspora moves like that, adjacently and in free-style.

**Diaspora politics**

There is, however, a danger that diaspora can be taken as truly “authentic,” a new universalism in contrast to the formal structures of national culture. It certainly seems to come packaged in an attractive “alternative” wrapping, promising interdisciplinary and cross-cultural ideas that hope to resist the normalizing tendencies of the critical process. However, the attractions of the nomad lifestyle are as clear to elites as to popular and critical groups. Almost all Americans now seek a connection to alterity, as shown by every recent President discovering their “Irish” roots on the campaign trail. Suddenly, diaspora as a subject position has become fashionable, leaving the historical diaspora communities with some quandries. In an age when the most marked diaspora is that of capital, we are all the “wretched of the earth.” Cyberprophet Jacques Attali heralds the emergence of a new class he calls “liberated nomads bound by nothing but desire and imagination, greed and ambition” (Owen 1996: 31). This new superclass will use their “nomadic objects” like laptops with fax modems, cellular phones and DAT recorders to regulate a workforce compelled to be nomadic in pursuit of ever-diminishing employment. As diaspora becomes a way of life, it is emerging as a fragmented class-riven norm,
rather than the romanticized refuge of the persecuted. In Latin America, hybridity under the name *mestizaje* is already a central element of government strategy, as Sean Cubitt explains:

> When presidents in Bolivia or Brazil want to lay claim to legitimacy in a continent whose cultures and economies are overlays of indigenous, colonial and slave populations, they claim *mestizaje*: no longer the property of resistance, this hybridity is the authority of rule — like Clinton’s saxophone, it marks a place between, a fictive and utopian space, a territory of meeting, empathy, commonality.

(Cubitt 1995: 71)

Thus the claim to hybridity that may seem to be the mark of resistance in former colonial powers can be the sign of political authority in some former colonies. The Latin American experience can stand as a useful corrective to some of the more present-centered approaches all too common in today’s cultural studies. Even if that work often refers only to Great Britain, it ignores Britain’s ethnic diversity in the eighteenth century, whose visibility was diminished in the nineteenth century through intermarriage but far from eradicated, as historians have recently argued (Wilson 1995). Further, as Robert Young has shown, hybridity was a central goal of nineteenth-century imperial administrators (Young 1995). Caution is therefore required in making exclusively positive use of such terms as hybridity and diaspora.

Indeed, the African critic V.Y. Mudimbe has recently critiqued the new focus on diasporic culture as being governed by an unthinking continuity with the nineteenth-century nation state:

> [O]ur contemporary thought seems to be a thought of exile, a thought hiding behind a nostalgia for the recent past, a thought speaking from spaces and cultures that no longer exist and were dead long before the death of the long nineteenth century

(Mudimbe 1995: 983)

Mudimbe might perhaps have had in mind James Clifford’s earlier celebration of the traveler or Paul Gilroy’s focus on the sailor as a hero of diaspora narratives. At the same time, this re-emergence of nineteenth-century discursive practice as a motive force of late twentieth-century culture was by no means self-evident until the end of the Cold War. Mudimbe’s critique thus highlights the ways in which the postmodern permits a re-reading of the modern in the light of the failure of modernist grand narratives. It suggests that the nation state depended on its diasporic others as a means of negative differentiation. That is to say, diaspora peoples like Africans, Armenians, Gypsies and Jews were the definition of what a nation was not and, as a consequence, were the target of sustained nationally organized terror throughout the modern period.
Simply inverting the terms to privilege the diasporic over the national will not, in Mudimbe’s view, change the fundamental structure of the discourse. The contained dialogue of the past with the present needs to be broken by the indeterminate figure of the future.

One way to think through this problem was supplied by Jean-François Lyotard in his response to the Heidegger affair. In 1987, Victor Farias published a book called *Heidegger and Nazism*, demonstrating that the German philosopher Martin Heidegger had far more extensive connections with the Nazi party than had previously been thought (Steiner 1995: 177–88). Although Heidegger’s Nazi past was no secret – Jean-Paul Sartre had refused to meet him for this very reason – the charges took on greater importance due to the centrality of Heidegger’s thought in French poststructuralism. Could it in some way be said that poststructuralism’s questioning of Western philosophy was tainted by association with Nazism? For those opposed to poststructural thought, the answer was simply “yes,” forcing many into equivocal defences of Heidegger. By contrast, Lyotard realized that the crisis in modern thought was precisely that Heidegger was at one and the same time a great thinker and someone who had a “deliberate, profound [and] persistent” involvement with National Socialism. Consistent with his earlier assertion that we have paid too high a price for the sustenance of modernism’s grand narratives, Lyotard argued that this contradiction in Heidegger was most strikingly apparent in his inability to understand those who are not authentic to his twin principles of Being (*Dasein*) and people (*Volk*). Lyotard names these people “the jews”:

> They are what cannot be domesticated in the obsession to dominate, in the compulsion to control domain, in the passion for empire . . . “The jews,” never at home wherever they are, cannot be integrated, converted or expelled. They are also always away from home when they are at home, in their so-called own tradition.

*(Lyotard 1990: 22)*

For both Kitaj and Lyotard, then, the diasporists or “the jews” are the sign that modern aspirations to a fully authentic national culture can never be realized. The past cannot be synthesized into the present without creating a remainder.

One incident may serve to indicate how much work there is to be done. In 1995 Ethiopian Israelis vehemently protested when it was revealed that Israeli authorities had been disposing of Ethiopian blood donations motivated by an unfounded fear of AIDS. There is no more charged symbol in African and Jewish history than blood. Since the early Christian era, Jews have been slandered with the infamous blood libel, that is to say, the belief that Jews murder Christians in order to make various religious uses of their blood. Far from being restricted to medieval persecutions, the blood libel was revived periodically throughout modern history, with a rash of cases in the late nineteenth
century. Both the Spanish Inquisition and the Nazis sought to keep the blood of their Gentile population “pure” of contamination by Jewish blood. So intense was this passion that the Inquisition “investigated” the Virgin Mary herself in order to prove her racial purity. This same doctrine lay behind much of the racist practice of the American South, where individuals were defined as “black” by the “one drop of blood” rule. In other words, anyone who had any African ancestry whatsoever was perceived as black. By this logic, of course, the entire world population is black, but logic has had little role to play in such debates. One would therefore imagine that it ought to have been impossible for Israeli “white” Jews to believe that “black” Jews had contaminated blood. It seems that the myths of hundreds of years of diaspora have not been ended by forty years of statehood nor are diaspors themselves immune to such mistaken but powerful myths. Blood is a powerful symbol that is remarkably intervisual in ways that cannot always be contained.

Diaspora and visual culture: the essays

This volume begins with the essays by Stuart Hall and R.B. Kitaj, described above, that provide the key point of departure for diaspora visual studies. In these insightful pieces, we are challenged to rethink our assumptions about what constitutes diaspora and how it might be represented. Neither claims to be writing universally. Hall departs from his own experience in the African diaspora, having grown up in Jamaica and then lived and worked as an adult in Great Britain. Kitaj observes laconically that he lives in “post-Holocaust diasporism,” a specific and difficult freedom, to use Levinas’s term. For both writers, as Hall puts it, “we can’t literally go home again” but nonetheless our cultural work must allow us “to see and recognise the different parts and histories of ourselves, to construct those points of identification, those positionalities we call in retrospect our ‘cultural identities’.”

In the second section, three essays examine the ways in which diaspora disrupted national and essentialist identity claims in nineteenth-century visual culture. Juanita Marie Holland examines the complex interaction of gender and “race” in the work of the nineteenth-century sculptor Mary Edmonia Lewis. It was unusual enough for a woman to sculpt in this period, but Lewis had an African-American father and a Native American mother of the Ojibwa/Chippewa people. Holland shows how Lewis created “multiple identities” to negotiate her need for artistic training, subject matter and patrons. She concludes that “Lewis created or greatly embellished her Indian past to enhance the public’s interest in her life and work,” while playing down her more problematic African-American ancestry. In my essay, I show how the Impressionist artist Camille Pissarro was also strongly influenced by the dynamic of his background as a Caribbean Jew. Arguing that “Jewishness” in visual culture should not be restricted to traditional Jewish iconography, I argue that for Pissarro, the question was precisely how to be Jewish and
modern at once, provided that Jewishness was understood neither as race nor religion. Ethnicity and "race" were not simply denoted in avant-garde art but rather connoted as an aspect of pictorial technique. Pissarro's focus on sensation as the key aspect of his work thus engaged with the locus of ethnic difference in modern France. He termed this work "passage," a term that resonates with intervisual connections to diaspora, "race" and sexuality.

Curator of the influential exhibitions *The Dreyfus Affair* and *Too Jewish*, Norman L. Kleeblatt concludes the section with a reconsideration of the most notorious of all Jewish bodies, that of Captain Alfred Dreyfus. Kleeblatt here highlights the little-regarded coincidence that in the very wastepaper basket where the French intelligence discovered the *bordereau* – the document used to convict Dreyfus – they also discovered unmistakable passionate homosexual love letters between the Italian and German military attachés in Paris. Public exposure of this scandal might have led to serious political and even military confrontation. Kleeblatt argues that "Dreyfus's victimization offered a transference of the threatened manhood and power of the French military." He shows that these anxieties were played out not only in the Dreyfus case but in the later development of Zionism and its notion of the "muscle Jew." This paper presents the fin-de-siècle as an interplay of representation, sexuality, stereotype, medical discourse and political action with intriguing homologies with our own time.

**Engendering diaspora**

Diaspora has seemed very much a (heterosexual) man's world in some studies as James Clifford has pointed out (Clifford 1997: 272–3). It is in this field that visual culture has perhaps the most to contribute to diaspora studies. Since the 1970s, art history, film and media studies have all developed significant theoretical and historical analyses of the gendering of looking, the representation of gender and sexuality, and the role of women, gay and lesbian artists. The first corrective move was simply to include women, lesbians and gay men in the history of diaspora and its visual culture. Increasingly, critics are seeking to understand the ways in which diaspora itself is gendered and the role sexuality plays in shaping diaspora identity. Almost all of the chapters in this volume show that gender and sexuality combined to add a third layer to the "double consciousness" of diasporic modernity. The chapters in the third section directly address these issues from a variety of perspectives that seem to suggest collectively new directions for both historical and theoretical work.

In seeking to provide answers to some of these questions, it is noticeable that the authors in this volume have limited themselves to a series of specific circumstances, attending to the complexities of the local as a means of approaching the global, rather than vice versa. Picking up on Stuart Hall's notion of diaspora as an identity in itself, Alan Sinfield argues that queer
identity could more profitably be thought of as diasporic, in distinction to the national rhetoric of groups like Queer Nation or the ethnic model in which gay rights are claimed in the manner of the United States' Civil Rights Movement. He proposes that lesbians and gay men envisage themselves as a subculture constituted around the “queer diasporic experience.” Taken in concert with other work in queer theory that has problematized the (heterosexual) gendering of the gaze as providing only a masculine/feminine binary viewpoint (Mayne 1993), Sinfield’s perspective offers fruitful new ways of conceptualizing diaspora. Margaret Thompson Drewal provides us with a fascinating insight into the performance of diasporic gender and sexual identities in what has become termed “Yoruba reversionism,” the recreation of Yoruba religious practices in diaspora. Stressing the importance of actual performance over the theoretical construct of performativity advanced by Judith Butler and others, Drewal describes how the deities invoked at the bembe, descend and “mount” participants, often crossing genders and sexualities in their manifestations. The performance of the bembe shows how diaspora traditions are in no sense fixed but are “continuously reinterpreted, re-invented and recreated anew.” Taking as his starting point the televising of the Egungun masquerade in contemporary Nigeria, artist and art historian Moyo Okediji next examines the figuration of what he terms “metamodern masks” in the work of three African-American women artists, Howardena Pindell, Adrian Piper and Renée Stout. Okediji highlights the “diasporic transmutations” undertaken in different ways by these artists transforming the body as they transform national and diasporic identities. For both Drewal and Okediji, the body is a key site of diaspora experience but one that is neither stable nor fixed. The last two essays reflect on what it means to undertake art history writing as what Donna Haraway has called a “situated knowledge” when the writer’s situation is in fact diaspora. At the same time, they suggest that the sensibility of Jewish diaspora has recently increased, rather than diminished, despite – or even because of – the existence of the state of Israel. Irit Rogoff reflects on the ways in which her identity in the newly-formed state of Israel was formed from a “conjunction of Judaism, femininity and modernity,” in itself constantly referenced to European origins to create “the diaspora’s diaspora.” Eunice Lipton has previously explored how she came to embrace and then reject a professional art history career in her remarkable book Alias Olympia, creating a voice that moved fluently between autobiography, fictional recreation and scholarly analysis. In similar vein, she uses her essay as the occasion to reflect on how her interest in art was formed in her Jewish childhood in New York City by a rather unlikely nineteenth-century academic painting. Further she considers why, as a professional art historian, she came to write at length from a Marxist and feminist perspective on the artist Edgar Degas without considering his anti-Semitism. Lipton’s frank self-examination reminds us that every insight is enabled by another oversight.
Poland–Brazil

The last section of essays looks at the specificities of diaspora in the different circumstances of Brazil and Poland. Bringing these two nations together creates an unfamiliar axis with which to examine what Joseph Roach has called the “circum-Atlantic world” away from the familiar binary of colonizer and colonized (Poland does not border the Atlantic, of course, but the way “out” of Poland for her Jews was across the ocean). Both countries are examples of the fictitiousness of nation and national identity, constituted as much by various forms of diasporic memory as by any internal nationalism. Poland has struggled for existence caught between larger imperial powers to the East and West. Nonetheless, Poland’s Jewish community, the most populous and most hated in Europe before the Second World War, found no sympathy from their Gentile counterparts. Poland is a particularly resonant site for many Ashkenazi Jews as Polish Jewish culture all but disappeared in the Shoah. Carol Zemel considers contrasting photographic representations of shtetl (Yiddish for small town or village) life in 1920s and 1930s Poland. She shows how both documentary and modernist photographic styles created a narrative of diaspora life which “literally reframed diaspora consciousness, linking both content and readers to modernity.” Although nostalgia was certainly evoked for the early twentieth-century viewer, Zemel provocatively concludes that these images take on a different hue in the present moment as we debate both Jewish identity and the “conflicts of multiculturalisms.” Paula J. Birnbaum also pursues this theme of Polish-Jewish diaspora by examining the work of two exiled painters, Alice Halicka and Louis Marcoussis. Her reading of their work shows that they went to great lengths to conceal their Jewishness and to evoke symbols of metropolitan belonging. While Marcoussis continued to use a Cubist style to claim French nationality, Halicka created “a more complicated and shifting response . . . to the problems of displacement and marginalization faced by diaspora peoples.” From 1920 onwards, Jewish iconography, physical “types” and subjects appear frequently in Halicka’s work. The Jewish mother became a central figure in her work, as ever represented in highly ambivalent style. These chapters combine to show that “Jewishness” did not simply exist awaiting figuration by artists but was an unstable identity, fissured by gender and modernism, and in constant need of renewal.

Two intriguing essays next consider strikingly different aspects of Afro-Brazil. Brazil is an entity carved out of the South American continent by the colonial enterprise of the Portuguese. Extensive indigenous cultures were destroyed by force and by the devastating effect of European diseases on a population without immunity. In their place came the (in)famous coffee and sugar plantations of Brazil, built on the labor of enslaved Africans. Not only was Brazil the destination for at least four million Africans, Brazilian slavery remained in force until 1888. Modern Brazil’s mix of indigenous peoples, Europeans, Africans and all varieties of combination make it in some ways par-
adigmatic of the twenty-first century nation. Economist Goran Therborn has argued that the economies of Western Europe and North America are currently undergoing a Brazilianization, entailing the construction of a permanent and significant subaltern underclass and a small but powerful elite. For Europeans and North Americans, understanding Brazil is more than a gesture to multiculturalism, it is a look into the near future.

Simone Osthoff investigates the work of her fellow Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica, in particular his widely-known body of work, the Parangolés. A fusion of words, materials and performance, the Parangolés were Oiticica’s attempt to create a hybrid from European high modernism and Brazilian vernacular culture, especially that of Afro-Brazil. Osthoff argues that they should be seen “under the light of diaspora and of the nomadic experiences of seeing the world from an inside/outside perspective, a viewpoint between cultures.” “Parangolé” is a slang term meaning “sudden confusion between people” and Osthoff pursues the ways in which Oiticica’s exploration of form necessarily involved broader ethical, social and political questions. He denied the possibility of purity, and adopted the practice of carnival as emblematic of the new Brazilian hybrid he was trying to create. Henry J. Drewal is similarly concerned to explicate “how Afro-Brazilians forged and continue to forge distinctive artistic worlds despite Euro-Brazilian attempts at cultural hegemony.”

Drawing on a remarkable range of sources, from contemporary Brazilian art practice to the ethnography of French neo-classical artist Jean-Baptiste Debret and the martial art of capoeira, Drewal argues that the diaspora caused by slavery created what he terms “multiple consciousness.” Africans in Brazil developed this strategy as a means for survival in the harsh conditions of the colonial plantation by continuing to use African theories of agency, adapted to their new surroundings. Drewal shows how Brazilian ecclesiastical architecture, language and festivals contained hidden histories that enabled Afro-Brazilians to sustain a distinct cultural identity. Based on her response to these four papers at the College Art Association meeting in Boston (1996), Aline Brandauer suggests here that the Latin American theme of “interpenetration” may help us develop cross-diaspora understandings. She notes that interpenetration is “that most feared and gendered enemy of formulations of modernism and the nation state.” Drawing on the criticism of Trinh T. Minh-ha, Brandauer seeks to move beyond the critique of the phallocentrism of modernism to question both the positive aspects of the formation of modernism and the nature of the evidence we as critics bring to that task.

Time for a change?

In sum, all the writers in this volume describe an ambivalent intervisual multiple viewpoint on diaspora that is not only our best means of understanding diasporas past but of producing diasporic work in the present and future. From Henry J. Drewal’s “multiple consciousness” to Rogoff’s “diaspora of diaspora”
via Pissarro's "passage" and the "metamodern masks" of Pindell, Piper and Stout, multiplicity is the key to identity, interpretation and visual pleasure. The intervisual encounter continues to produce new transcultural meanings for diasporic cultures. In Mathieu Kassovitz's striking 1995 film *La Haine (Hate)*, depicting life in the Parisian projects, there is a moment in which the polyphony of diaspora is actively visualized. After a riot in which one young Arab man is left in a coma, Sayid and his friends Vinz and Hubert are killing time in their project when a DJ opens his windows and begins to play. He scratches up a break beat and overlays it with the chorus from Edith Piaf's *Je Ne Regrette Rien*. The trio — composed of one Arab, one Jew and one black African — are mesmerized by the sound. The transcultural mix incorporates African-American hip-hop beats with classic French cabaret singing to create a new mix that, just for a moment, transforms the empty space of the housing project into a place where people from different backgrounds can belong. This brief moment of optimism is offset by a violent and ultimately fatal series of confrontations between the young men and the police. It is in the interstices of such moments, at once contradictory, polyphonic and utopian, that the investigation of the visual cultures of diaspora will go on.

**Notes**

1 Interestingly, Kitaj hints that he was also influenced by deconstruction: "Thirty years later, I've learnt of the Diasporists of the Ecole de Yale [de Man and his students] and their crazed and fascinating Cult of the Fragment (based on their French Diasporist mentor)" (Kitaj 1989: 59).

2 While this is not the place to pursue the argument, Derrida has shown that sound is incorporated into any "pictogram" in alphabetic societies: "the sound may also be an atomic element itself entering into the composition" (Derrida 1976: 90). In other words, it is entirely consistent with the logic of phonocentric culture to begin with a sound in pursuing the visual image.
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