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DON'T ABANDON "OUR BOAT": SHIFTING PERCEPTIONS OF EMIGRATION
IN CONTEMPORARY SENEGALESE LITERATURE AND SONG

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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The dissertation argues that contemporary Senegalese novelists and hip-hop artists articulate local and global connections as a strategy to address the difficulties of emigration from Senegal. The project examines the way that novelists Aminata Sow Fall, Ken Bugul, and Fatou Diome as well as several hip-hop artists including WaGëblë, Awadi, 3GGA, and Simon Bisbi Clan approach emigration and return. The works of these authors and artists are set in contrast to earlier texts from Senegal that examine migration, wherein it is difficult and often impossible to maintain connections either in Senegal or abroad, resulting in tragic outcomes. Earlier works examined include those by Ousmane Socé, Cheikh Hamidou Kane, and Ousmane Sembene. Using literary and visual analysis of the written texts and hip-hop songs and videos, the dissertation demonstrates how the recent works strategically utilize local, national, and global affiliations to address emigration productively. Ultimately, the project demonstrates that these texts point to the need for a revised critical understanding of migration narratives from Senegal that takes

into account the full complexity of the affiliations and backgrounds that are often central to the texts.

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Introduction

Nation and Trans-nation

In his seminal essay published in 1991, “The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity,” cultural scholar Stuart Hall writes,

One of the things which happens when the nation-state begins to weaken, becoming less convincing and less powerful, is that the response seems to go in two ways simultaneously. It goes above the nation-state and it goes below it. It goes global and local in the same moment. (26)

While written nearly two decades ago, the processes that Hall identifies are still of significance, particularly as global mass media intersects with the work of local producers who can effectively use digital technology to disseminate their creative works both locally and globally. In a context of shifting global migration flows as well as the availability of increasingly diverse forms of media, the role of global and local affiliations continues to be important as artists and authors navigate migration, language, and media from home and abroad.

In his essay, Hall approaches globalization with an eye towards the local that enables room for a rooted sense of place in the contemporary interconnected world: “the moment of rediscovery of a place, a past, of one’s roots, of one’s context, seems to me a necessary moment of enunciation” (36). And recognizing the theoretical trends that work against conceptions of identity that address origins and roots, Hall points out, “What emerges from this is nothing like an uncomplicated, dehistoricised, undynamic, uncontradictory past” (38).¹ Recent novels and hip-hop songs from Senegal affirm Hall’s assertion of the way that local identities can become increasingly important alongside global exchange and movement. Authors including Aminata Sow Fall, Ken Bugul, and

¹ While not a direct response to it, one thinks here of Homi Bhabha’s work in *The Location of Culture* in contrast, which argues against narratives of identity and origin in a contemporary context (2-3).

Fatou Diome as well as several hip-hop artists have responded to the phenomenon of emigration from Senegal by articulating local as well as global connections. But where Hall argues that the nation has become increasingly less important, some of these works from Senegal also indicate a continued attention to national identity. This varied and overlapping set of associations is similar to what Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih describe in their version of transnationalism termed “minor” that “is not bound by the binary of the local and the global and can occur in national, local, or global spaces” (6). Lionnet and Shih suggest many productive possibilities with this type of transnational navigation, but it is also important to remember that such exchanges can also carry with them experiences of loss and pain that too must be addressed.

The work in the 2002 volume *New Approaches to Migration?: Transnational Communities and the Transformation of Home* edited by Nadjé Al-Ali and Khalid Koser also points to the importance of continuing to address the context of the nation in contemporary studies of migration. In their introduction, Al-Ali and Koser argue,

[W]hereas global processes are often decentered from specific national territories, transnational processes are anchored in but also transcend one of [sic] more nation-states. Implicit in this distinction is a rejection of the fairly common assertion that transnationalism is ringing the death-knell for nation-states. (2)

Lionnet and Shih similarly work against this understanding of transnationalism as entirely contrary to the concept of nation, wherein they recognize that “minor transnational subjects are inevitably invested in their respective geopolitical spaces” and often await citizenship or recognition (8). Both of these arguments affirm that concepts of the nation and national identity cannot easily be done away with in the contemporary global moment. The articles in Al-Ali and Koser’s book are based on social scientific research, but the assertion is equally true for literary and artistic representations of

migration that similarly continue to deal with the nation as such. Al-Ali and Koser insist, “the legal, social, political and economic context of nation-states cannot be ignored . . . it appears pivotal to pay attention to the specific contexts in both sending and receiving states” (5). Though individual nations are, as Saskia Sassen argues, increasingly unable to deal with international migration (5), it is important to acknowledge that national – not only local and global – contexts are still significant. Indeed, the novelists and hip-hop artists examined here often point to economic and political concerns at the national level even as they stress the value of locally-based affiliations. The nation, if presented as problematic, is nonetheless of concern in these texts, though they move well beyond the nation-building incentives of earlier works. The texts are instead able to reconfigure relationships between those in Senegal and those in France or elsewhere in Europe in way that moves beyond a reaction to colonialism or neo-colonialism evident in earlier works.

Contemporary research on the literature of migration in French often identifies a “new generation” of African writers in French who have a different approach to their places of origin, often according less importance to Africa or particular nations in Africa than did previous writers. In work by scholars and writers including Abdourahman Waberi, Jaques Chevrier, and Pius Adesanmi, members of this new generation are labeled as nomadic and identified primarily by a freedom accorded by their lack of affiliation to a precise nation in either Africa or Europe. Odile Cazenave’s *Afrique-sur-Seine* is also emblematic of this approach. Her book contains very precise analyses of texts by African writers living in Paris, but she insists of these new writers, “Theirs is a gaze no longer necessarily turned towards Africa, but rather towards themselves and their own experience, their writing taking a more personal turn” (1). Yet Fatou Diome, whose

two more recent novels admittedly antedate Cazenave's book, exhibits precisely the opposite of this trend because her work evidences a continued concern with situations in Senegal. In *Black France*, Dominic Thomas recognizes the danger of identifying this generation as such and disagrees with Cazenave's argument about "the reduced importance" of Africa (Thomas 21). In keeping with this expanded view, Thomas' study is not restricted to works that narrate life in France from the perspective of immigrant communities as he examines a diversity of texts that address emigration from Africa to France. Likewise, I assert the need to consider migration not only from the perspective of texts by so-called migrant writers (such as Diome) but also from that of authors and musicians who discuss emigration while located in Senegal. This is the case for the more recent works of Aminata Sow Fall and Ken Bugul, and their work highlights the way that networks of communication and exchange that often remain tied to local and national affiliations are central in dealing with migration. And in the context of these works, migration is often bound up by economic, political, and social processes both in Senegal and in Europe. Furthermore, migration is not necessarily indicative of freedom and is often associated with familial or social pressures or economic necessity, which is a situation addressed by Al-Ali and Koser (5).

The Problem of National Literatures

I do not assert the relevance of national affiliations alongside local and global connections in these works of contemporary novelists and hip-hop artists in Senegal in order to suggest something inherently positive about the concept of nation. What is unique about these works is the way they utilize a variety of connections and affiliations as strategies to address emigration from Senegal and return. The Senegalese nation-state

is often heavily criticized in these texts, particularly in the hip-hop songs. But at the same time, unity based on a shared national background is articulated progressively in several of the works. In this way, specific situations, references, and concerns in Senegal often become central.

Nonetheless, warnings against the enunciation of national literatures in Africa are important to consider. And the debate about national literatures in Africa, famously argued in the eighties between Guy Ossito Midiohouan and Adrien Huannou, has yet to lose relevance to contemporary critical work. In “Le phénomène des ‘littératures nationales’ en Afrique” Midiohouan, while at times lamenting pre-independence unity, argues against the characterization of national literatures in the study of African literature because the study of national literatures could result in a determinism that ignores authors’ individual creativity in favor of their national or ethnic origin (67-68).

Midiohouan also suggests that examining African literature on a national level could result in divisions where critics may posit one nation’s literature as being more prolific or superior than that of another nation (69). In a much more recent article, Thomas continues to follow many of Midiohouan’s warnings, similarly pointing out the danger of determinism and of divisions in African literary study (“Cultural Identities” 130).

Similarly, David Murphy argues against the tendency to read all of Senegalese literature as exemplifying hybridity that combines African and European characteristics (“Birth of Nation” 60). In examining literature and hip-hop from Senegal, I do not suggest that being Senegalese has determined the production of these works. However, the texts themselves critically engage the position of Senegal, and the artists and authors share a context in which the emigration of young people from Senegal has become increasingly

visible, often highlighted by the Senegalese and global media. As they respond to this context, it is fitting to consider works of Senegalese origin together to see how each artist and author chooses to address it.

Past studies of Senegalese literature have in fact fallen into the dilemmas against which scholars have warned. In Gisela Bonn's introduction to a collected volume on Senegalese literature, she aligns Senegalese literature in general with the personality of Léopold Sédar Senghor, pointing out that in the case of Senghor, "[l]'origine africaine et l'éducation française se sont amalgamées en lui. Il est Africain et Français à la fois, fier de l'un et de l'autre" [African origin and French education are mixed together in him. He is African and French at the same time, proud of the one and the other] (13). In the foreword to Bonn's volume, Senghor himself affirms this assertion and argues that Senegalese literature exists between "la négritude" [Negritude] and "la francité" [Frenchness] (9). This may be reflective of Senghor but is not appropriate when applied to all literature from Senegal.² Similarly, Dorothy Blair's study of Senegalese literature verges on an articulation of determinism, as her introduction describes elements of the Senegalese landscape, and she points out that Senegalese writers frequently depict this landscape (4-6). The landscape may in fact be (relatively) unique to Senegal and surrounding areas, but the authors Blair mentions have nonetheless made a creative choice to depict it. Additionally, portrayals of landscapes are found throughout other literatures from across the globe. Susan Stringer's work on Senegalese women's writing points out, as does Blair's, the unity of Senegalese culture and history in comparison to other African states (13-15). Notwithstanding the widespread use of Wolof in Senegal or

² In fact, Murphy argues that Senghor's model is largely ignored in Senegal and bears little weight on daily life and concerns ("Beyond Tradition" 225).

the importance of Cheikh Amadou Bamba in religious and cultural realms, Stringer indulges in a more problematic assertion of uniqueness as she seems to suggest that Senegalese writers have been more prolific than writers from other French-speaking African nations (15). Stringer and Blair both do important work examining writers and trends in written literature from Senegal, but their studies also demonstrate the problems that can arise in critical examinations of particular national African literatures.

But rather than dismiss the focus on a particular African nation altogether, I maintain that it is possible to study works from Senegal in conjunction with each other.³ Murphy argues, “[C]ritics must retain a flexible notion of national literature rather than positing a seamless continuum of texts all geared towards the same goals” (“Beyond Tradition” 63). The works from Sow Fall, Bugul, Diome, and the hip-hop artists all articulate strategies to deal with migration that often involve local, global, and even national connections. But each artist and author offers a somewhat different perspective. These authors and hip-hop artists have all been addressed from a set of critical contexts that overlook the way that varied affiliations are central to their works. Bringing these texts together demonstrates not simply that they are all inherently Senegalese but that they all offer fundamentally new (and diverse) ways to address migration from within a Senegalese context that cannot be accounted for by previous work on the literature of migration.

Multiplicity and Diversity

In this study, I examine works from as early as the 1920s and as recently as 2009. The more recent novels are written by women, while the early written texts are mostly by

³ There are of course other examples of studies that effectively deal with Senegalese literature without succumbing to these risks. Murphy’s article on early Senegalese literature is one example, as is Lisa McNee’s *Selfish Gifts: Senegalese Women’s Autobiographical Discourses*.

men. Several of the hip-hop songs are in Wolof, while the novels are exclusively in French. These examples are by no means meant to be exhaustive representations of Senegalese literature. However, these works do hint at some trends that are worth mentioning and that I examine in more detail later. The fact that the earlier texts are all written by men relates in part to the fact that the French colonial administration primarily enabled men to attend school, resulting in more male writers in French than female. While recent written expression from Senegal by women is in French, hip-hop – which has been initially the domain of men worldwide – offers much more opportunity for expression in Wolof. In a way, my study is thus limited by these patterns. But at the same time, there is a significant intersection of works that appear to come from very different backgrounds – novels written in French by middle-aged women and hip-hop songs primarily in Wolof by younger men. In both cases, the genres and languages used are instrumental to the artists' messages. And while the audiences of the respective texts may not be the same, both sets of texts work to create productive responses to migration.

In its examination of these novels and songs, this study focuses primarily on the texts themselves, their portrayals of the theme of migration, and how they have been addressed in previous scholarship. As such, this study does not examine at great length associated historical and political contexts, although historical and political considerations are nonetheless significant. Furthermore, the study does not include extensive research on the production or reception of either the novels or the songs, choosing instead to focus on the thematic representation of migration in the works themselves. Further discussion of these contexts and considerations would provide an additional dimension and insight into the texts, but it is beyond the scope of this study.

Each chapter here addresses a different set of works but always takes up the critical stances with which they have been explored. Tendencies to examine the tension between tradition and modernity or to celebrate transnational movement prove problematic when applied to the recent texts, and this is emphasized in part by their profound difference from earlier Senegalese creative productions. Chapter One focuses on literature and film from the 1920s-1960s, analyzing works that explore migration from Senegal to Europe as experienced by scholars, workers, and soldiers. Instead of marking a shift in literary portrayals of migration at the moment of independence, this chapter emphasizes consistency across the works. In nearly all of them, life abroad is difficult and return home is often tragic. Even in the context of independence, these authors do not imagine return home as offering a possibility for reconstruction or change: movement to Europe remains irrevocably destructive. It is only more recent texts that offer strategies to reconfigure this relationship to Europe and in some cases France more specifically.

The study of texts by Aminata Sow Fall in Chapter Two demonstrates that her 1998 novel *Douceurs du bercail* [*Comforts of the Fold*]⁴ is unique in her oeuvre for its departure from the trajectory of migration as described in Chapter One. Critics have described her texts, including *Douceurs du bercail*, as calls for a return to traditional cultures in the face of outside influence. But my consideration of *Douceurs du bercail* in the context of other migration narratives demonstrates that the novel reaches well beyond a struggle between tradition and modernity. Similarly, Ken Bugul's set of autobiographically-influenced novels – examined in Chapter Three – are often studied in the context of their relation to Bugul's own life. There is also a tendency to emphasize

⁴ Here, as elsewhere, I use Mildred Mortimer's title translation for Sow Fall's novel (*Hearth* 151). All other title translations are widely accepted in the field or are from published translations.

the degree to which nomadism is presented as a strategy in Bugul's texts. But like Sow Fall's recent novel, Bugul's 1999 novel *Riwan ou le chemin de sable* [*Riwan or the Sandy Track*] presents a fundamentally different approach to the experience of migration and return that posits as a solution renewed local connections coupled with the maintenance of international associations.

The younger novelist Fatou Diome is most easily associated by scholars with the younger generation of authors living in France. Chapter Four argues, however, that her association with this set of authors as well as the suggestion that her works espouse only the benefits of movement between nations is misplaced. Her works *Le ventre de l'Atlantique* [*The Belly of the Atlantic*] from 2003 and *Kétala* from 2006 remain in fact primarily concerned with life in Senegal even as she and some of her protagonists reside in France. In this way, her works do not behave as expected given the critical context in which migration narratives have been understood.

Global hip-hop scholarship has readily described the importance of local and national affiliations, even among artists living away from their place of origin. Hip-hop, since its inception in the United States, has always been concerned with neighborhoods and local communities. Chapter Five examines several hip-hop songs and videos from Senegalese artists who discuss migration from a variety of perspectives. In the case of these works, the concern with local situations is undeniable. What is also important is the way the artists engage local audiences in Senegal as well as potentially global audiences through the internet. In the videos associated with the songs, images of the Senegalese flag may be shown alongside calls for pan-African unity. Rather than articulations of contradictory messages, these productions are demonstrations of a strategic navigation of

different sets of connections and audiences that can be used to varied ends. With recourse to digital technologies that allow audio mixing and creative visual effects coupled with the use of Wolof, the hip-hop artists may stand out in their ability to simultaneously articulate local, national, and global connections. But their messages are similar to those of the novelists, pointing to a phenomenon that is not specific to digital productions. It is necessary to approach the works of both the authors and the hip-hop artists from a stance that recognizes the importance of overlapping sets of affiliations that do not always exclude identification with the nation nor do they exclude global influence from the position of the local.

Chapter One

Soldiers, Scholars, and Servants:

Migration To France in Early Senegalese Texts

Despite the political changes in Senegal between the 1920s and the 1960s, there is a near-constant in writers' portrayal of migration to France during this period. Among depictions of soldiers, intellectuals, and workers, the journey to France almost always results in failure either abroad or at home.¹ In this period of time, Senegal moved from the beginnings of black political organization in Dakar through independence for the nation.² Students left Senegal for short periods of study, soldiers were conscripted to fight in both World Wars, and increasing numbers of economic migrants arrived in search of wages.³ And while independence may have formally altered the relationship between Senegal and France, Senegalese literature into the 1980s and '90s also depicts challenges and failures for migrants in Europe similar to those faced by migrants from the 1960s or earlier. Texts from the 1920s to 1960s taken as a whole present a diverse set of migratory experiences, and the challenges these texts address are not all the same because the authors utilize the portrayal of difficulty abroad to illustrate different concerns related to the connection between Senegal and France. Nonetheless, writers from this period

¹ There are, of course, exceptions to this tragic portrayal of movement abroad from Senegal and elsewhere in West Africa. Ivorian Aké Loba's *Kocoumba, l'étudiant noir* (1960) is one example of a novel that portrays successful return from Europe. This study does not suggest that all texts during this period uniformly portray migration. However, the commonalities across a wide array of texts indicates a pattern that contrasts with more recent Senegalese works.

² See in particular G. Wesley Johnson's *Emergence of Black Politics in Senegal* for work on early black Senegalese political movements.

³ France became an especially frequent migration destination for work starting in the 1950s, when soldiers from across the Sahelian region who had fought during World War Two were allowed to remain in France and work. Their reports and wages led to further immigration to France so that by the 1970s, France was the primary migration destination for individuals from the Sahel, including Senegal (Findley, Traoré, et. al. 477).

continually portray the trip to France as one that usually ends tragically in isolation and often death.

Literary scholars have not ignored the prevalence of this pattern and its existence across texts from Africa in French. For example, in her 1990 book *Journeys Through the French African Novel*, Mildred Mortimer describes the outcome of novels in which “the ‘happy ending’ depicted as a return to the bosom of the community, is often impossible” (5). Mortimer establishes that migrants’ inability to reintegrate into their communities is apparent in texts from West Africa such as Cheikh Hamidou Kane’s *L’aventure ambiguë* [*Ambiguous Adventure*], as well as texts from North Africa (5). Extending Mortimer’s analysis, such a depiction of failed reintegration might also apply to Senegalese literature’s portrayal of the mad *tirailleur* in texts such as Ousmane Sembene’s *Véhicule sans nom* [*White-Genesis*] or Birago Diop’s “Sarzan,” for these individuals are similarly unable to communicate or function properly in the societies to which they return.

The failed journey abroad is also frequently discussed alongside the dislocating experience of the French colonial education system. Of this context, Dominic Thomas writes, “Protagonists who came to France and Europe during the colonial era in the spirit of discovery later evoked feelings of exile and nostalgia, and their displacement usually resulted in disillusionment, return, suicide, or death (physical and social)” in his book *Black France* (81). Thomas goes on to explore other types of migration beyond that of the student, though he utilizes narratives of intellectuals’ failed migration to Europe primarily to address colonial education systems in Africa. Ousmane Socé’s *Mirages de Paris* [*Mirages of Paris*] and Kane’s *L’aventure ambiguë* do dramatize the tension between different systems of knowledge and education, but the trajectories of these

novels' protagonists are just one of many possibilities for migrants during this period, whose fictionalized experiences vary though are equally tragic across depictions of different social positions and endeavors. For example, Sembene's texts that depict migration, such as his film *La noire de . . .* [*Black Girl*], focus on the lives of Senegalese workers in France and the economic structures that led them to leave home.

Written literary production during this period of Senegalese history, while vast, was primarily carried out by men. Studies such as Aïssata Sidikou's *Recreating Words, Reshaping Worlds: The Verbal Art of Women from Niger, Mali and Senegal* and Lisa McNee's *Selfish Gifts: Senegalese Women's Autobiographical Discourses* do important work of featuring contemporary women's oral productions and demonstrating how significant women's creative work has been, but oral productions from previous decades are beyond the scope of their work. The first long prose text in French published by a woman in Senegal is known to be Nafissatou Diallo's *De Tilène au Plateau* from 1975, and there is a rich tradition of women's writing in French that follows thereafter, much of which is evident in the later chapters of this study. As Ousseina Alidou explains, women in French West Africa, including Senegal, had limited access to French schooling and thus literacy in French because the French were primarily interested in creating a small number of male administrators (69-70). Alice Conklin's extensive historical study of France's *mission civilisatrice* similarly affirms the patriarchal structure of French colonialism that limited educational opportunities for women (88). However, some women did have access to schooling, particularly in Senegal's four *communes*. And there are some written works in French by women from the 1970s and much earlier that demonstrate a desire for change and a call to action, although they are not concerned with

immigration. These works have been collected and published in recent volumes such as Irène d'Almeida's *A Rain of Words* and the edited collection *Women Writing Africa: West Africa and the Sahel*.⁴ I would not want to suggest that women during this period did not care about immigration or did not migrate (in fact, the first woman to publish a complete book of poetry in French, Annette Mbaye D'Erneville, spent some time in France). The end of Diallo's narrative points – in retrospect – to her upcoming voyage to France with her husband (132-33), and a poem by Adja Khady Diop from 1975 imagines an extensive network of Senegalese abroad:

Today so many people travel by air,
The country itself is a great flying balloon. (281)

These lines read much like more recent discussions of global Senegalese communities.

One wonders if perhaps women's writings from this earlier period might offer a more positive outlook on the experience of migration that hints at later works' innovations. But even if this were the case, the depiction of failure either in Europe or upon return continues in Senegalese literature during the latter half of the twentieth century, including in works written by women, as demonstrated by Aminata Sow Fall's *L'appel des arènes* [*The Call of the Wrestling Arenas*] (1982) and Ken Bugul's *Le baobab fou* [*The Abandoned Baobab*] (1982). It is only recently that these authors have imagined strategies to cope with the dilemmas encountered in migration. These recent works thus stand in contrast to texts from the 1920s to 1960s, wherein authors also portray the difficulties of migration and the inequalities that exist between Senegal and France, but they do not indicate a productive way out for their protagonists. Despite

⁴ In *Women Writing Africa*, the letters and petitions of N'della Sey and Houley Diop are particularly striking in their straightforward demands for action from the French administration (Sutherland-Addy and Aminata Diaw 161; 165)

differing social positions and educational backgrounds, all of these protagonists suffer as a result of the impossibility of communication with home or of meaningful interaction with those they encounter while in France. Whether authors depict soldiers who return as madmen (the *fou* in Sembene's text as well as in Birago Diop's is a returned *tirailleur*), the intellectual milieu of *Mirages de Paris* or *L'aventure ambiguë*, or workers like Diouana in *La noire de . . .*, travel to France is always an endeavor fraught with uncertainty. The individuals who undertake these journeys are fundamentally alone as they encounter inequality and racism, despite the existence of black communities in France. Whether physically or mentally, the protagonists of these texts are unable to escape fully from their experiences in France; the works thereby indicate France's centrifugal pull on those from Senegal.

The *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* and Wartime Displacement

Depictions of soldiers who go to Europe to fight and return home are present throughout Senegalese literature, and this presence reflects the extensive service of West Africans conscripted to fight for France during both World Wars.⁵ Such texts are not usually considered alongside other critical analyses of migration in literature, even though the figure of the *tirailleur* is present throughout Senegalese literature well into the latter half of the twentieth century.⁶ Although the soldiers' wartime experience is unlike that of other migrants, the journey of the soldier in literature and film does nonetheless provide a representation of leaving home for Europe and returning. As Tyler Stovall explains, these

⁵ While termed the *tirailleurs sénégalais* by governor of Senegal Louis Faidherbe in 1857, these soldiers came from throughout France's African colonies both prior to and after Napoleon III's decree officiating the *tirailleur* forces (Echenberg 1; 7). However, the figure of the *tirailleur* appears to be particularly frequent in Senegalese literature.

⁶ See Papa Samba Diop's article "La figure du tirailleur sénégalais dans le roman sénégalais 1920-1985" for an extensive exploration of instances where the *tirailleur* appears in Senegalese literature.

soldiers interacted frequently with the French public and were not exclusively engaged in combat during their time abroad (299). The soldiers who return from war in these texts are frequently unable to reintegrate into the societies from which they came after having been changed by their experiences. Often appearing as mad *tirailleurs*, these veterans present another tragic outcome of migration to France and in some cases indicate a criticism of France's conscription of West African soldiers. These mad *tirailleurs* are seemingly more prevalent in literature than in life. The inability of mad *tirailleurs* to return productively to community life contrasts with the predominantly successful return to civilian life reported by Joe Lunn through interviews and research with Senegalese veterans of World War One (209-11).

The significance of the World Wars with regard to the movement of large numbers of Africans from France's colonies to Europe is clear as argued in several historical studies of African involvement in the Wars. Stovall indicates that World War One provided the first instance of sustained contact between Africans and Europeans on European soil, as more than half a million people from France's colonies were brought to Europe to work and fight (297). The French conscripted soldiers from throughout its African colonies during the nineteenth century but in 1912 instituted universal male conscription, which was often forced or coercive (Echenberg 2; 5). Senegal in particular paid a high toll of recruitment during the First World War compared to other countries in French West Africa (Echenberg 46). In his book *Memoirs of the Maelstrom*, Lunn reports that a total of 29,000 men from Senegal, or 2.4 percent of the population, were mobilized to fight for the French (224). Lunn further estimates that between 1914 and 1918, nearly half of Senegalese men ages 20 to 28 were outside of Senegal as a result of the war (224).

While precise figures on conscription are not available for World War Two, the African contribution of soldiers as a whole was proportionally greater than it was in World War One, with approximately 200,000 Africans in total recruited to serve France (Echenberg 88). Many men were conscripted to fight, but it is important to note that in contrast women did not share in this aspect of the wars. Echenberg explains that while the French allowed and in fact encouraged wives to accompany male soldiers during early excursions in Morocco and Algeria, families were not allowed to accompany soldiers to France, apparently due to the expense (78). And an analysis of Echenberg's data on conscription immediately demonstrates that while women were considered an important part of reproducing the empire, they were not considered potential soldiers. French tallies of potential soldiers prior to conscription count "the male population" and "males in their twentieth year" (48-49). The experience of departure and return in war was thus limited to men.

The engagement of these soldiers had a significant impact on later social and political organization both within Senegal and in relationship to France, particularly in the form of veterans' organizations. And many writers who have portrayed or addressed *tirailleurs* in their work, including Sembene and Léopold Sédar Senghor, themselves served in World War Two. Senghor's poems honoring the *tirailleurs* such as "Aux tirailleurs sénégalais morts pour la France" ["To the Senegalese Soldiers Who Died for France"] and "Prière des tirailleurs sénégalais" ["Prayer of the Senegalese Soldiers"] address the African soldiers' great sacrifice alongside that of the French (Senghor 109). On the other hand, Senghor's "Poème liminaire" ["Liminary Poem"] is more directly critical of French attitudes toward and images of *tirailleurs*. But Senghor's poem

“Tyaroye” written in honor of those killed at Thiaroye is not concerned with indicting the French for the massacre. In contrast, Sembene’s film *Camp de Thiaroye* (1988), made with Thierno Faty Sow decades after Senghor’s poem, is a directly critical depiction of *tirailleurs*’ experiences after World War Two. While the massacre at Thiaroye was particularly deadly, other rebellions following World War Two further indicate the soldiers’ (literal) struggle to renegotiate their positions with regard to France at the conclusion of the war (Echenberg 100).⁷ Thiaroye, both in historical fact and filmic representation, is a particularly dramatic example of tragedy upon return to Africa after the war, as soldiers organized themselves to demand what the French were unwilling to give and suffered as a result. But other literary examples also present uncertainty and loss at the end of the war that, while emphasizing the result of France’s use of African soldiers, are also in line with other tragic voyages from this period of time that do not involve war.

One of the earliest portrayals of an African soldier’s experience in France, and in fact the only written record of such from World War One, is Bakary Diallo’s *Force-Bonté* from 1926.⁸ Despite the text’s overwhelmingly pro-French tone, the difficulties that Diallo faces in France after the war prefigure the dilemmas of migrants in later texts. The narrative primarily depicts Diallo’s experiences during and after serving in World War One as a soldier in Morocco and France. Throughout the war and after, Diallo showers praise upon the French nation and its people, who are depicted as taking care of

⁷ Echenberg points out that despite Senghor’s poem, as Senegal’s president Senghor refused to authorize an official memorial at Thiaroye (170).

⁸ Although *Force-Bonté* is a seemingly straightforward autobiography, it is usually considered alongside other literary works, where it occupies a somewhat curious position as fictional due to allegations that Diallo had significant help, or perhaps more, from Lucie Costurier in preparing the narrative for publication, as scholarly studies of the novel have pointed out (Blair 16-17; Ogike 182).

the colonies in the same way that a tender woman feeds birds in the park (170-71). Images such as this offer strong support for David Murphy's assertion that "Diallo ponders the meaning of historical events but French colonial authority is never in question" ("Birth of a Nation" 60), while János Riesz's argument in "The *Tirailleur Sénégalais* Who Did Not Want to Be a 'Grand Enfant'" is much less compelling. Riesz suggests that Diallo is in fact quite critical of the French empire, particularly in his portrayal of France's involvement in Morocco. Despite Riesz's argument, there is no getting around Diallo's frequent mention of French superiority, which Diallo accepts eagerly along with the French people's "strength" and "kindness" referenced in the title. But even though Diallo is unquestionably eager and willing to serve "la patrie," he nonetheless describes an experience of dislocation once the war ends.⁹ It is for this reason that even Murphy, who in his article resists *Force-Bonté*'s comparison to later Senegalese texts, can acknowledge that Diallo's depiction of his uncertain post-war wanderings might serve as a precursor to the image of the mad *tirailleur* so frequent in later works ("Birth of a Nation" 66n14).

Diallo's descriptions of life after the war emphasize his difficulties adjusting to civilian life in France. Although Diallo maintains his regard for the French throughout his travails, his predicament points to a sense of displacement similar to that of later migrants. While Diallo is taken care of while serving as a soldier, there is a change in the way that the French administration regards him after he is decommissioned, and Diallo feels separated from the French nation that he proudly served (151). And it is after the war, not during battle, that Diallo acknowledges the presence of "différences entre les

⁹ As to Diallo's willingness to serve, unlike the majority of West African conscripts, he in fact describes choosing to sign up. Furthermore, in *Force-Bonté*, he reports signing up in 1911, prior to the universal conscription instituted in 1912 (27).

combattants français de France et les combattants français des colonies” [differences between the French soldiers from France and the French soldiers from the colonies] (155).¹⁰

Not only does Diallo no longer feel entirely welcome in France despite his continuing love for the country, he also cannot envision returning home to his family; he is, in some sense, stuck. Diallo speaks to himself about the impossibility of meeting his family now: “Si tu les revoyais maintenant, avec tes affaires aussi compliquées, avec ta tête bouleversée et tourmentée, quel bonheur pourrais-tu leur apporter?” [If you saw them again now, with your affairs as complicated as they are, with your disrupted and tormented mind, what happiness could you bring them?] (153). The use of “bouleversée” and “tourmentée” here is telling because it contrasts with the generally positive tone of Diallo’s narrative. While Diallo’s experiences are certainly different from characters who resort to suicide while abroad, he expresses a similar sentiment here concerning the seeming impossibility of return home coupled with the absence of a favorable position in France.

Diallo narrates his attempts to find suitable employment and lodgings in France after the war, and these circumstances highlight how difficult life abroad has become for him. At one point, Diallo barely has enough money for food and cannot find any housing, despite having numerous French friends (157). Curiously, Diallo’s desperate situation is heightened by an initial refusal to reveal to his French friends that he is indeed homeless (165), thereby initially distancing himself from those connections that he does have.

¹⁰ In historical fact there were numerous differences in pay, lodgings, and food between the *tirailleurs* and the French soldiers during the war (Johnson 190), upon which Diallo does not remark or of which he is unaware. Note that when translations into English are not followed by additional bracketed page numbers, they are my own. When a bracketed page number is present, the translation is from the published English version of a text.

Diallo's lonely Parisian wanderings are only a small part of the text, but these descriptions make Diallo's narration of life after the war that much more striking. Even though Diallo continually supports the French and their colonial endeavor, he feels very much out of place in France at the end of the war and describes experiences similar to those considerably more apparent in later works.

In contrast to Diallo's brief moment of uncertainty is the trajectory of the mad *tirailleur* who has been permanently altered by his time away at war. Though the mad *tirailleur* might return home, he is unable to function normally or communicate with others. One such example is Tanor from Sembene's novella *Véhi-Ciosane* (1966). In this story of incest, the community is itself far from healthy, but Tanor's madness is related to the war, as he is portrayed wandering the dunes in his military uniform (45). And the narrative continually marks him as being a veteran. He is always referred to as "l'ancien soldat" [the ex-soldier] and "l'ancien militaire" [the ex-soldier] (62 [39]; 63 [39]). Tanor's mother further indicates the way that Tanor returned home changed: "J'attendais un homme! . . . Ce fut moins qu'un homme que j'ai reçu: une loque" [I expected to see a man. It was less than a man that I welcomed home] (38 [20]). There are other examples of the mad *tirailleur* in Senegalese texts, which Riesz outlines in his article "La 'folie' des tirailleurs sénégalais." Riesz, among other critics, also lists *le fou* from *L'aventure ambiguë* as an example of a mad *tirailleur* in his article (149). This *fou* indeed represents an individual who has left the community and returned changed. However, it is unclear in the text whether this particular *fou* was in fact a *tirailleur*. The narrator explains,

Il *prétendait* qu'il revenait du pays des Blancs et qu'il s'y était battu contre des Blancs. Dans les débuts, on le crut sur parole, bien qu'aucun des autres fils du pays, qui avaient été à la guerre des Blancs, n'eût confirmé l'y avoir vu. Mais, assez vite, *on commença de mettre ses propos en doute*. (98, emphasis mine)

He *claimed* that he had come back from the white man's country, and that he had fought against the white men there. At first he was taken at his word, though none of the other sons of the countryside who had been in this white men's war said that they had ever seen him. But, fairly soon, *people began to doubt his recitals*. (79, emphasis mine)

Nonetheless, *le fou* in *L'aventure ambiguë* is a figure quite similar to that of the mad *tirailleur*, since he returned from abroad and is unable to exist in his society as anything other than *le fou*.

Birago Diop's story "Sarzan" from *Les Contes d'Amadou Koumba* [*The Tales of Amadou Koumba*] (1947) is another example of a soldier's tragic return home after living in Europe. In the tale, the Sergeant Thiémokho Kéita refuses to adjust to life in his village of Dougouba upon returning after a fifteen-year absence, and he attempts to destroy traditions and practices hoping to "civilize" the inhabitants. After he is unable to change life in the village, he eventually becomes "Sarzan-le-fou" [Sarzan-the-Mad] to everyone around him. Notably, the text points out that Thiémokho has traveled further afield than anyone else in Dougouba, and this difference hints at his later failure (29). Aside from Thiémokho who traveled much further, "tous savaient que la racine de leur vie était toujours à Dougouba" [all knew the root of their lives was still in Dougouba], including those who leave to work in major cities throughout Africa (168 [29]). But unlike those others, Thiémokho is influenced by his experiences in Europe to the extent that he cannot reintegrate into life in Dougouba.

Diop highlights Thiémokho's difficulties upon his return in the interaction between him and the other inhabitants of the village. Thiémokho isolates himself from the villagers with his insistence that they have "les manières des sauvages" [the ways of savages] (171 [31]; 178 [36]). But even before arriving in Dougouba, the narrator

indicates that Thiémokho's perceptions have been altered by his time abroad. On their journey home, Thiémokho tells the narrator about the European cities he visited and seems to see distant locations rather than his actual surroundings: "[I]l semblait ne plus voir la route . . . Il lui semblait, dans la brume calcinée et haletante, revoir les minarets de Fez, la foule grouillante de Marseille, les immenses et hautes demeures de France, la mer trop bleue" [He seemed no longer to see the road . . . Through the choking haze, Keita seemed to see once more the minarets of Fez, the teeming crowds of Marseilles, the great tall buildings of France, the blue sea] (169 [30]). Because the narrator and Thiémokho are in the middle of the desert on a hot and dusty roadway, the fact that Thiémokho appears to see the ocean is particularly indicative of how far away his mind is from the landscape around him. Thiémokho's return is thus marked by the way that he continues to live in his own world separate from that of his literal surroundings.

Additionally, when Thiémokho goes on a destructive rampage through the village, the narrative is entwined with his persistent memories of Europe, further indicating how Thiémokho has been permanently affected by his time abroad. When Thiémokho destroys the village's ceremonial masks, the narrative relates his memory of seeing "les masques hilares ou terrifiants" [the funny and frightening masks] in the carnival in Nice (177 [36]). Thiémokho's destruction of statues in the Sacred Wood is similarly linked to his memories of statues in European churches, which he suggests are certainly more beautiful than the statues in Dougouba (177). Sana Camara points out that this ironically suggests a similarity between customs in the two locations (114-15), but it also indicates that in Thiémokho's madness, he is haunted by thoughts of Europe and cannot fully relate life in Europe to Dougouba

The complete failure of Thiémokho's return culminates in the way he becomes "Sarzan-le-fou" to everyone in the village. Given Thiémokho's refusal to accept village life, this is the only position he can now occupy. He no longer has the privilege of his family name, and the story ends with the insistence that "Thiémokho était parti pour ceux du village, il ne restait plus que Sarzan, Sarzan-le-fou" [Thiemokho Keita was gone for the villagers. Only Sarzan was left, Sarzan-the-Mad] (181 [39]). In "Sarzan," Birago Diop thus indicates that while Thiémokho returns in body from his time abroad, he is not ultimately able to return to life in Dougouba and is in fact destroyed by the experience of departure and return.

Thiémokho's attempt to change Dougouba fails completely, and while the image of the *tirailleur* impatient to change things upon his return may be prevalent, as Samba Diop's survey of stories about *tirailleurs* suggests ("Tirailleurs sénégalais" 45), the *tirailleur* is only successful in Sembene's *Ô pays, mon beau peuple!* [*Oh Country, My Beautiful People!*], which exists in stark contrast to other portrayals of returned *tirailleurs* who are marked by their experience abroad and unable to take a productive role in their societies. These mad *tirailleurs* indicate not only the traumatic experience of war but also demonstrate what has become of those forced to fight for France and thereafter dismissed.

Internalized Conflict in *Mirages de Paris* and *L'aventure ambiguë*

Socé's *Mirages de Paris* (1937) and Kane's *L'aventure ambiguë* (1962) both depict failed journeys abroad amidst Paris' vibrant international life. In *Mirages de Paris*, Fara arrives in Paris alongside the International Colonial and Overseas Exposition of 1931. His life becomes complicated upon his involvement with the white woman Jacqueline,

who eventually dies in childbirth, leading to Fara's suicide. Christopher Miller's careful study of the novel indicates that it is never clear precisely what Fara's role is in the exposition (71), but the text nonetheless reflects on the lives of both black intellectuals and workers in Paris. Many of Fara's struggles and failures thus center on the experience of being black in those milieus. Although Samba Diallo in *L'aventure ambiguë* faces similar difficulties abroad, he arrives in Paris much less idly than Fara. On the eve of independence, Samba arrives to study and embodies the hope of his community at home in Diallobé country but is ultimately tormented by the dual educational systems (Islamic and French) to which he has been exposed, and he dies at the end of the novel. Despite these differences, the two novels articulate the possibility that the protagonists might return to their communities with knowledge and insight gained abroad to help negotiate European influence at home, but in both cases this possibility cannot be realized. While Samba's and Fara's eventual deaths might appear to provide salvation or escape, their journeys abroad ultimately result in failure and any hoped-for production upon return or while abroad becomes impossible. With these tragedies, both novels demystify the journey to France, and they emphasize the psychological difficulties encountered as the protagonists become captured, in different ways, by their experiences away from home. However, in the later *L'aventure ambiguë*, the implications of Samba's failure are more widespread, and it is appropriate that he dies upon his return to Diallobé country, while Fara dies in Paris.

Socé's *Mirages de Paris* is set amidst Paris' black intellectual and cultural life during the interwar period. Starting with Lamine Senghor's *La voix des nègres* in 1927, groups of black students in Paris were articulating arguments against colonialism and

broader racist ideologies, including a reappropriation of the word *nègre*, which Brent Edwards has explored at length (28). This was followed by the organization of Antillean writers around *Légitime défense* in 1932 and in 1934 the publication of *L'étudiant noir*, the journal closely aligned with the Négritude movement and concerned more with cultural values of blackness than the more communist influenced *Légitime défense* (Kesteloot 92). Miller indicates that Socé is generally considered a minor participant in the *étudiant noir* group credited with developing the ideologies of Négritude (59). Despite his association with this group, Socé's novel does not conform to Senghor's expectations or his vision of Négritude. Because *Mirages de Paris* tells the story of a tragic relationship between a black man and a white woman, Guy Ossito Midiohouan argues that Socé's ideologies placed him in opposition to the general ideas of Négritude at the time due to his pessimist conclusions about cultural *métissage* (*L'ideologie* 73). Aside from Fara's relationship to Jacqueline, Socé's work more broadly presents the impossibility of Fara's success in Paris under any terms despite his need to stay.

Socé presents Fara's experience of dislocation in Paris throughout the novel, emphasizing the contradictions of black life there. Although Fara identifies jazz clubs and dance halls as offering a unique intercultural space, he is also aware of the transient nature of these locations. Each of Fara's observations of unity or freedom is undermined either by his anxiety about an intercontinental black community or by his realization that each evening masks the difficult and hierarchized reality in which many blacks live in Paris. As Edwin Hill argues, "pessimism dominates the overall perception" of the intercultural spaces that are presented (639). At one point, Fara gives Jacqueline a detailed description of the Cabane Cubaine's patrons emphasizing their diversity – in

addition to the white patrons, there are blacks from the United States, Senegal, Martinique, Haiti, and Britain's colonies (54-55). But there is a difference between this diverse yet unified group and the world outside, which intrudes into the narrative. Fara's description comes about as a response to Jacqueline's assertion that all black people look alike to her, and Fara strives to demonstrate their differences in skin color and demeanor (54). Similarly, when Fara and Jacqueline first meet for dinner, the narrator indicates Fara's uncomfortability with being seated next to his so-called "compatriotes," the Cuban musicians (44).

The spaces of the nightclubs themselves are also presented as problematic from Fara's perspective, indicating that he is not completely immersed in the Parisian lifestyle by which he is surrounded. Fara revels in dancing, but these dances and the unity they produce – both among blacks and between blacks and whites – are also referred to as a "paradis artificiel" [artificial paradise] and "un autre monde" [another world] (58; 166). When Fara leaves after an evening out, the harsh reality becomes immediately apparent. The text emphasizes a contrast between "les danseurs en smoking et en habit reconduisaient les cavalières en robe du soir vers les stations de taxis et vers les métros" [the dancers in coats and tails escorted their partners in evening gowns toward the taxi stands and metros] (61) and Pigalle, where Fara returns home to see "sur les marches de ciment, de pauvres hères, roulés dans des vêtements difformés d'usure, dormaient sur des lits faits de vieux journaux" [on the sidewalk, the poor wretches, rolled up in clothing deformed by wear and tear, were sleeping on beds made of old newspapers] (62). As Miller suggests about Socé's work, "The myth of Paris and France . . . as an ideal social space that erases hierarchies and imposes fraternity . . . thus seems to be partially

confirmed but also partially undermined” (85). Fara continues to be aware of the underlying reality that the dance hall masks, and in this way, he remains partially an outsider to the revelry. Fara’s outsider status and the difficult lives of blacks in France are thus affirmed in the narrative even before the story becomes undeniably tragic.

In Fara’s refusal to leave Paris after his wife’s death despite his increasing isolation, Socé indicates how Fara has become completely consumed by life in France, and Socé himself chooses not to realize the potential for successful return to which he points. Fara’s afrocentric friend Sidia argues that he should return to Senegal and work for a unified Senegal of the future (180). Although Sidia’s idea appeals to Fara, who at times dreams of return to Senegal himself, Sidia’s ideology appears too extreme throughout the text to be taken seriously. For example, he is horrified and angered that Fara has produced a child with a white woman, and his insistence on racial purity goes so far that he has Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* on his shelf (145). In this context, Socé does not portray Sidia’s idea as reasonable. Thomas points out that hope for productive return after education abroad is apparent in texts such as Camara Laye’s *L’enfant noir* as well as *L’aventure ambiguë* (*Black France* 62). But it is critical to note that in all of these texts, social or political change enacted upon return from France is a far-off dream. But even if Socé does not have the same position as the character Sidia, by inserting the possibility for productive return into the text, he brings up a potential outcome to migration, which is unfeasible for Fara in that it would require him to reject the Parisian experience, which he cannot give up.

Samba Diallo in Kane’s *L’aventure ambiguë* also experiences failure abroad like Fara, but his journey is different because he more directly holds the hope of his

community. Although much of this later novel involves Samba's personal dilemmas, the journey abroad becomes treacherous not only because Europe is a place where a black man might suffer based on race and social position but also because the entire community at home is struggling to maintain itself. Like Fara's journey, Samba's trip abroad presents an experience of isolation as well as the impossibility for integrating into life in Diallobé country. Kane emphasizes Samba's spiritual uncertainty as he comes to embody two systems of thought at the same time. In "In Praise of Alienation," Abiola Irele suggests that Samba is

the archetype of the divided consciousness, of the African who suffers in his mind the effects of cultural dispossession. His agony is that of his dual nature, marked by a cleavage rather than an integration of its two frames of reference. (203; qtd. in Thomas *Black France* 65)

The novel explores Samba's spiritual and psychological dilemmas as he attempts to find his place between the Islamic upbringing of his childhood and the French education he receives thereafter. Despite this conflict, Irele suggests that a "resolution" in the struggle is achieved because Samba escapes the concrete reality of his struggle in death at the hands of *le fou* (203). However, even if Samba himself finds a place beyond his conflict in death, he is not able to reintegrate into the community in life, as Mortimer effectively argues in *Journeys Through the French African Novel* (66). And most significantly, due to Samba's departure, he is unable to take up the role that the community had intended for him to have. Samba ultimately cannot navigate successfully between the two cultures and locations, and his trip abroad results in a loss not only of Samba's personal faith but also for members of his community, who lose an individual in which they might have placed their future.

There are two roles potentially available to Samba in Diallobé country, both of which become impossible to fulfill. Prior to Samba's movement to the French school, his time spent studying with the Master indicates the place that he would have had in the community if it were not for the decision to send him elsewhere. The Master sees an ideal disciple in Samba, though he knows that things are not as they once were. In the past, young men might leave their home for training and return "doctes et démocrates, aguerris et lucides" [learned and democratic, seasoned in body and clear of mind] (34 [22]). While the Master recognizes that this positive result of departure is long past, he nonetheless imagines that Samba might replace him. As Mortimer affirms, "When Samba is taken from the Master, the latter's dream is destroyed" (*Journeys* 57).

Similarly, the novel indicates that La Grande Royale and Samba's father also imagine Samba might take on a significant role in the community after returning home, but instead of returning from the Master's *foyer* they hope that Samba will return to Diallobé country with an understanding of and training from the Europeans that might help the community face increasing interaction with Europe. La Grande Royale is aware of the risk of such an endeavor: "Peut-être notre souvenir lui-même mourra-t-il en eux. Quand ils nous reviendront de l'école, il en est qui ne nous reconnaîtront pas" [Perhaps the very memory of us will die in them. When they return from this school, there may be those who will not recognize us] (57 [42]). Samba's father, while also recognizing the risk, imagines a productive return for his son, not unlike the one of which the Master spoke. But in this case Samba and others like him will return with Western education and contribute to the future "non plus en étranger venu des lointains, mais en artisan responsable des destinées de la cité" [not as a stranger come from distant regions, but as

an artisan responsible for the destinies of the citadel] (92 [73]). La Grande Royale's recognition that sending the Diallobé's children away will likely entail a sacrifice points to Samba's later return; he is unable to help construct the future as his father had hoped.

Kane's text is concerned primarily with Samba's spiritual and psychological experiences, and as such Samba's dilemmas in Paris are not directly related to day-to-day life but instead to an internal struggle as Samba finds it too difficult to be both Western and of Diallobé origin at the same time, which is precisely what he has become. Samba explains, "Je suis devenu le deux. Il n'y a pas une tête lucide entre deux termes d'un choix. Il y a une nature étrange, en détresse de n'être pas deux" [I have become the two. There is not a clear mind deciding between the two factors of a choice. There is a strange nature, in distress over not being two] (164 [140]). The extent to which Samba's voyage abroad did not turn out as it should have is indicated by the letter that Samba's father sends him. Samba's father calls for his return knowing Samba's spiritual situation, and he writes, "Peu importe que tu n'aies pas mené tes études au terme que tu aurais voulu" [The fact that you will not have brought your studies to the end you would have wished is of little importance] (175 [151]). This aspect of the letter is not incidental because it indicates that Samba's journey abroad is ultimately incomplete. Samba returns with his studies unfinished and uncertain of what he believes; Jacques Chevrier appropriately suggests that this return is "la fin et l'échec de sa formation" [the end and the failure of his education] (*Littérature nègre* 150).

Samba's death at the hands of *le fou* symbolically emphasizes the destruction of the Master's dream for Samba to follow in his footsteps. Despite Samba's protests, *le fou* insists that Samba is the Master: "Tu vois, tu es le maître . . . Tu es le maître des

Diallobé” [You see, you are the teacher . . . You are the teacher of the Diallobé] (179 [155]).¹¹ While Mortimer insists that *le fou* is primarily a “catalyst” that propels Samba more quickly to the next part of his existence (*Journeys* 65), it seems that *le fou* also points to Samba’s inability to take a position in the society upon return. While no one else insists that Samba is the Master, other members of the village did imagine that Samba might return and take the position of a leader. Instead, he returns lacking faith or understanding, as demonstrated by what Samba says as he is dying: “Je ne crois pas . . . je ne crois plus grand chose, de ce que tu m’avais appris. Je ne sais pas ce que je crois” [I do not believe – I do not believe very much anymore, of what you had taught me. I do not know what I believe] (185-86 [161]). While Samba’s death does provide release from his sense of malaise, his voyage abroad and return have nonetheless resulted in failure. While *le fou*’s insistence that Samba pray may be extreme, it demonstrates Samba’s inability to return to the daily routine at home or to fulfill potential roles in the society.¹² Even if Samba is eventually integrated into “nothingness” as Irele argues (203), he has been completely lost to the society that initially sent him off.

Both *Mirages de Paris* and *L’aventure ambiguë* present the space between cultures as particularly treacherous for these young people traveling between Senegal and France. While the protagonists of both novels are unable to successfully return home, *L’aventure ambiguë* directly articulates a loss not only for Samba but also for the community he represents. On the other hand, Fara’s background is not described in detail, and he initially goes to Paris only to partake in the Exposition. Nonetheless, Socé

¹¹ Katherine Woods translates “maître” as “teacher.” But the term “maître” in this context means not simply a teacher but also a spiritual leader.

¹² J.P. Little even indicates that, according to Cheikh Hamidou Kane’s comments in interviews, *le fou* might be a warning against Islamic fundamentalism (83). This connection seems excessive, but it nonetheless points to the intensity of *le fou*’s insistence that Fara pray no matter what.

presents a tragic outcome to Fara remaining in Paris, and he does not indicate what a more productive solution might be, for Fara's return to Senegal is not possible either. In both cases, the possibility that these protagonists might return and help their homelands is not feasible because they become captured, whether physically or spiritually, by their experiences in France. The outcomes of the two novels are similar, but the stakes are somewhat higher in *L'aventure ambiguë*. While Fara's home remains a distant dream, Samba's community has specifically lost him to the voyage abroad.

Migration, Work, and Slavery in Ousmane Sembene's Early Texts

Sembene's works set in France also demystify positive notions of the voyage abroad as do Socé's and Kane's novels, but some of Sembene's texts also begin to hint at more constructive ways that life in Senegal might progress in the midst of departure for Europe. While individuals in Sembene's works are completely lost to their communities after they travel to France, his film *La noire de . . .* and his novel *Ô pays, mon beau peuple!* (1957) both start to suggest how those communities might recover, paving the way for the productive work that occurs in later texts.

Sembene's written texts and films that address those who have gone to Europe both as soldiers and as workers present tragic situations like those of earlier decades, though they move beyond the intellectual milieu typically imagined in the Parisian migrant narrative (indeed, his works set in France are not set in Paris). While migrant workers from Africa (both North and Sub-Saharan) did not outnumber European migrants until the 1980s (Hargreaves and McKinney 8), they were not absent in France prior to that, even though French scholarship through much of the twentieth century ignored their presence and associated demographic trends (Hargreaves 5). In presenting

the life of workers, Sembene highlights twentieth century stratifications of class and power while pointing out a similarity between contemporary structures that bring Africans to France to work and the slave trade of previous centuries.

Sembene's works all indicate the ways that class and race intersect to result in particularly negative situations for those who migrate from Senegal to France.

Sembene's texts set in France portray experiences of extreme isolation, which is exacerbated by differences in social position and education. This isolation contrasts with Sembene's novel *Les bouts de bois de dieu* [*God's Bits of Wood*] (1960), which portrays collective action and organization and is narrated from a variety of perspectives. In Sembene's first novel *Le docker noir* [*The Black Docker*] (1956), Diaw Falla is in fact surrounded by a community of dockworkers and even helps organize them for better wages and conditions, however these individuals cannot help counter the allegations against him, and the novel ends with his imprisonment. Sembene presents an equally dire situation in *La noire de . . .* and the short story of the same title, where Diouana's de facto slavery is related in part to the fact that she is isolated in France and unable to communicate with home because she is illiterate; her only escape is suicide. In these works, Sembene depicts failure that occurs in France as individuals are caught in systems of law and labor that are undergirded by race- and class-based oppression, and he provides just the slightest bit of hope for those who remain in Senegal.

Le docker noir presents a group of dock workers and other Africans living in the port city of Marseille. While addressing numerous aspects of their lives, the novel ultimately narrates how the protagonist Diaw Falla becomes a prisoner. Diaw is accused of murdering the writer Ginette Tontisane, whose death he accidentally causes in anger

upon the realization that she has claimed his manuscript *Le dernier voyage du négrier* Sirius [The Last Voyage of the Slave Ship *Sirius*] as her own. Through this reference, the hard labor the dock workers perform is aligned with the work of slaves. In the narrative structure, Sembene further addresses notions of history and official records; in *Black France*, Thomas suggests that Sembene “introduces a multiplicity of voices and narratives competing for authority in a framework in which various modes of testimony emerge in order to discuss the fate of the central protagonist” (97). However, the voices and testimony of Diaw’s fellow dockworkers and friends cannot counteract the assumptions made by the French during the trial. Any possibility for Diaw to succeed in his ambition in going abroad and being a writer is destroyed by judgment based on French assumptions related to Diaw’s race.

During the trial, Diaw is described primarily through negative stereotypes about blacks that are underscored by the unsavory neighborhood in which he lives with other immigrants. The defense attorney depicts him as an animal: “les cheveux lui couvrent presque tout le front . . . ses bras sont anormalement pendants” [his forehead is almost entirely covered by his hair . . . His arms have an abnormal droop] (27 [10]). And he is accused of raping Ginette and of being sexually obsessed (54). Given these circumstances, Diaw’s guilt is predetermined. Just as the court refused Diaw the ability to tell the story of the slave ship or to tell the truth about his own life, Diaw’s imprisonment ultimately demonstrates the extent to which his life has been taken away from him. When Diaw finally speaks for himself at the end of the novel in a letter to his uncle, he indicates that the society surrounding him is at fault for his current situation. He writes, “Mon corps est captif de la société” [Society holds my body captive] (206 [113]). As a prisoner,

this is literally the case, but his letter also indicates the way the whole of his circumstance in France led to the accidental death of Ginette Tontisane and his imprisonment. Diaw worked long and hard hours to support his dream of being a writer, which was ultimately destroyed (213-14). Diaw's failure abroad does not come about due to confusion and self doubt but due to a society that refuses his attempts to alter his position and become a successful writer. Sembene points to a hope for change as Diaw dreams of freedom for his son (207). But in this novel, Sembene does not fully imagine a solution to the systems and attitudes that resulted in Diaw's imprisonment.

In "La noire de . . ." and the film of the same title, Diouana, like Diaw, works in slave-like conditions in France. Despite the tragic outcome of both film and story, however, Sembene suggests room for hope at the close of the film. In both texts, Diouana is effectively trapped in her employers' home and unable to return to Senegal. Her situation remains much the same in both versions even though the story, published in 1962, is set in 1958 and prior to Senegal's independence from France, while the film, from 1966, is set after independence. Sheila Petty points to the minor differences between the film and the short story, for Diouana's employer in the story works for a French airline, while in the film he is specifically a symbol of continued French involvement in Senegal because he works as a *coopérant* for a French-sponsored technical program to develop Senegalese infrastructure ("Changing Africa" 73). Françoise Pfaff likewise suggests, "The fact that the social comments made in the book can be maintained essentially unchanged in the film indicates that for Sembene, Senegal's present political and economic systems are identical to those of a colonized country" (144). While Pfaff's argument downplays the role of historical context as background in both texts – the

events of 1958 are highlighted at the beginning of the story and there are references to Senegal as an independent state throughout the film – it nonetheless points to Sembene's concern with Senegal's continued dependence on France after independence. But whether before or after 1960, Diouana's imprisonment abroad underscores race- and class-based differences in power that produce her situation, from which suicide is the only escape. In the film, narrative and visual techniques serve especially to heighten the depiction of Diouana's confinement, but they also leave room for the possibility Sembene demonstrates at the film's conclusion.

While the story does narrate Diouana's isolation, the film makes this aspect of her life abroad especially apparent. The story is told by a third person narrator and opens and closes with the determinations of Diouana's employer and the French police inspectors, although some of the story is also told from Diouana's perspective. The film, on the other hand, is narrated continuously by the voice of Diouana (until her death), and much of the time the camera follows her through the house and often cuts to her point of view. While Diouana's separation from normal communication is apparent in the story, her voice-over in the film serves to emphasize it even further. It has been argued that Sembene's choice to use an interior monologue for Diouana's thoughts comes as a solution to being funded by the French and therefore having to work in French (Murphy and Williams 89). Even though Diouana cannot speak French to her employers, the film provides access to her thoughts when she is around them. Film critics emphasize that the voice-over demonstrates Diouana's rich interior life as well as her self-awareness (Murphy and Williams 89; Langford 15). The short story does depict Diouana's confinement and awareness of the situation as well. But this is apparent only in moments where the

narrator provides specific access to Diouana's thoughts. For example, Diouana states, "Je suis cuisinière, bonne d'enfants, femme de chambre, je lave et repasse, et n'ai que 3 000 francs C.F.A par mois" [I'm cook, nursemaid and chambermaid, I do all the washing and iron it, and all for a pittance, three thousand francs a month] (181 [53]). Diouana makes similar statements in the film, but as voice-over they emphasize her desolate situation in form as well as in content. In this way, the film in particular uses narrative structure and point-of-view to highlight Diouana's isolation.

Diouana's complete lack of community in France contrasts with the life she had in Senegal, yet this too is more apparent in the film than in the short story. In "La noire de . . . ," Diouana's memories of communal life in the Casamance are already distant from her while living in Dakar. There is thus a layering of Diouana's migratory experience (first from Casamance to Dakar, and then from Dakar to France) that takes her even further away from home than in the film, where her neighborhood in Dakar is established more clearly. The warning from Tive Corr  a (a returned *tirailleur* turned alcoholic himself) points to a difference, not between Dakar and France but specifically between Casamance and France: "[L]es jeunes confondent vivre en France, et   tre domestique en France. Nos villages sont voisins en haute Casamance . . ." [they confuse living in France with being a servant in France. I come from the village next to Diouana's, in Casamance (172 [49]). And when Diouana is in France she thinks back not to Dakar but to her village: "Le souvenir de son village, de la vie en communaut  , la coupait encore davantage des autres" [The memory of her village, of the community life, cut her off from the others even more] (181 [53]). Because Diouana's home is so distant

in the short story, it exists only as a dream, and the story does not offer as extensive a contrast with life in France as does the film.

In *La noire de . . .*, on the other hand, numerous flashbacks firmly establish Diouana's life in Dakar and indicate precisely what she has left behind. Pfaff points out that at home, Diouana functions properly and fully in her society (117). Diouana further maintains her self-assertion in her desire to go to France, even though her nationalist boyfriend does not approve. Sheila Petty explains that *La noire de . . .* presents Senegal as externalized and open; Diouana moves freely through spaces, and the film gives "a powerful sense of Senegalese society as communal space," which "[contrasts] with the claustrophobic interior sequences shot in France" ("Mapping" 311). This argument is supported by the film's images because aside from Diouana's arrival, all of the scenes in France take place inside the apartment, and as Diouana's memories send the film back to Senegal, there is an immediate contrast with the more open spaces seen there. Nonetheless, life in Dakar is not idealized. There is a difference between the well-dressed Senegalese elite whom Diouana passes when looking for work and Diouana's obviously poor neighborhood, for example. In the film, Sembene thus presents Diouana's lively and open life in Dakar, while simultaneously pointing out the class differences that partially lead to Diouana leaving to work in France.

In both the film and the short story, though they present life in Senegal differently, Diouana is fundamentally isolated once she is in France. She does not go out and knows no one other than her employers. Her dreams of seeing France are in complete contrast to the reality of life in the apartment. This is rendered spatially in the film upon her initial arrival to the apartment. Madame points out the different towns and landscape

from Diouana's bedroom window. This is framed by the window and distant from Diouana. Then Madame turns and shows Diouana the kitchen, to which she does have access because they physically walk there and leave the view out the window behind. Petty suggests that Diouana stands out from her employers, as her black skin clashes with the bare whiteness of the apartment's walls ("Mapping" 310). While this is very apparent in the film's initial scenes, as when Diouana is first shown cleaning the white bathroom, in a later scene Diouana has instead become "(con)fused with the house," as Mireille Rosello cleverly suggests (128). Diouana wears a dress that alternates between white and dark stripes, and in this way she is nearly identical to the white and black tiled floor in the apartment's central room. This dress is the one she wears on an outing with her boyfriend in which she is carefree and happily dreaming of France. But here it has come to represent her imprisonment.

Unable to communicate with anyone outside of the apartment, Diouana in both the short story and the film is at the mercy of her employers' demands. And in both cases, she recognizes that her illiteracy contributes to her desperate position. Furthermore, there is much intersection with slavery. Not only does Diouana describe herself as a slave in "La noire de . . ." (182), but the context of *Voltaïque* further accentuates the connection. "La noire de . . ." is followed by a poem to Diouana with images of slavery. Thomas emphasizes that Diouana, though not forced to leave in the same way as those during the slave trade, has been caught by economic forces and by her dream of going to France and placed in a situation equally impossible to escape (*Black France* 128).

Diouana's isolation and its connection to her illiteracy can be contrasted with the young woman in "Lettres de France," another short story in *Voltaïque*. This young

woman, Nafi, communicates her loneliness and despair living in France after being married off to a much older Senegalese man through a series of letters to a woman back home. The narrative does not indicate how successful her return will be, but she is able to return. Ann Willey suggests that Nafi is better situated than Diouana because she has recourse to African oral tradition, as her letters recount folktales (127). But another significant difference is that Nafi is able to communicate with her friends and family back home through letters, while Diouana cannot. Both of these stories demonstrate young women's confinement and despair abroad – Nafi at one point even longs for death (85) – but Diouana's situation is especially dire because she is unable to leave the house and further unable to communicate with anyone in writing. In the film, Diouana comments that if she could write, she would say the truth about her situation, but instead she is “leur prisonnière” [their prisoner], and she reasons that since she has no relatives there, “voilà pourquoi je suis leur esclave” [that is why I am their slave].

Given the extreme nature of Diouana's imprisonment, suicide becomes her only way to escape and reclaim her body for herself. Just as Diouana's confinement in the apartment is acutely apparent in the film through voice-over, so is Diouana's resolution and strength in her decision to kill herself also clear. She repeats the phrase “plus jamais . . . jamais plus . . . jamais plus” [never again . . . never again . . . never again], deciding that Madame will never again order her around. In reference to the film, critics including Petty and Rachel Langford argue that Diouana's decision indicates that she is not a helpless victim but fully in control of her own actions (Petty “Mapping” 314; Langford 19). While this may be true, Diouana's situation is so extreme that suicide, even if an act of rebellion, is her only form of escape. But Petty goes on to argue that the return of

Diouana's mask in the film points to the potential of further action and rebellion in Senegal: "Diouana's death is . . . the impetus behind the struggle for true independence as the boy symbolically takes up her cause" ("Mapping" 314). With the mask and the boy who wears it, neither of which are present in the short story, Sembene indicates the necessity and possibility for change at home, although the message may not be as immediately hopeful as Petty suggests. Even in the film, Sembene primarily highlights Diouana's extreme isolation abroad, and he does not here articulate how a journey abroad can occur without tragedy. Sembene argues for the necessity for a different kind of relationship between France and Senegal, but the only possibility survives in the haunting image of the mask, which suggests that a new generation might renegotiate Senegal's position with regard to France, although it is too late for Diouana.

Sembene's novel *Ô pays, mon beau peuple!* goes further than *La noire de . . .* to articulate the potential for positive change; this occurs through the character Faye's partially successful return home. This text stands in stark contrast to most stories of departure to Europe and return from this period of time. As such, it emphasizes the extent to which most of Sembene's other works portray failure and only marginally suggest hope. Though Faye is a *tirailleur* returning home from war, his experience is much different from other *tirailleurs* in Senegalese texts. Where Sembene hints at change in the ending of *La noire de . . .*, return in life and actual change is more possible in *Ô pays, mon beau peuple!* Faye does experience his share of difficulty when he first gets back to his village. He decides to be a farmer, even though the rest of his family members are fishermen, much to his father's consternation. And his family and his village have

difficulty accepting the white woman with whom he has returned.¹³ While struggling to organize a farming cooperative, Faye is killed. Yet by the time of Faye's death, he has very much established himself in the community and begun to organize for everyone's benefit. In this way, Sembene points to the kind of production and change that might be possible upon return from abroad.

Each of Sembene's texts approaches the experience of migration and return somewhat differently, although they all indicate the possible destructive force of race- and class-based oppression and similarly present characters who are unable to escape from the systems in which they have been captured. Diaw in *Le docker noir* remains imprisoned in France, though he expresses hope that his son might have a better life. Diouana is caught in a desperate situation as well and signals her rebellion through her suicide; while this is all she can do in the story "La noire de . . .," her mask in the film suggests the possibility for a more positive future even more powerfully than Diaw's hope for his son in *Le docker noir*. Finally, Sembene imagines the most potential in *Ô pays, mon beau peuple!*, in which a successful cooperative is maintained even in the wake of the returnee Faye's murder.

Conclusions

While Senegal's relationship to France may have formally changed after independence, narratives of the difficulties experienced in migration to France or upon return from abroad both prior to and after independence demonstrate how authors have used this trajectory to illustrate a variety of concerns related to the relationship between Senegal and France. During both World Wars, France conscripted soldiers to fight for them, and

¹³ Bringing a wife back home who is an outsider often contributes to both the husband's and the wife's downfall as they have difficulty reintegrating into the community in Senegal. This is apparent, for example, in Mariama Bâ's *Un chante écarlate* (1981).

while these *tirailleurs* might have been perceived by the French as heroes during the war, they were not supported after it. Depictions of mad *tirailleurs* emphasize the traumatic experience of war as well as the loss that was experienced by communities in Africa, as young men were conscripted to fight but returned unable to contribute to life at home. Both Socé and Kane utilize journeys to France that end in failure to dramatize the internal struggles as young men get caught between their initial upbringing in Senegal and their experiences living in France. By portraying the poverty and hardship encountered by many blacks in France, Socé additionally works against more concrete outcomes of the mirages of Paris after which his novel is named. Sembene also utilizes journeys abroad that end in tragedy to emphasize race and class distinctions both in France and in Senegal.

While perhaps working towards different ends, these authors all portray tragedy that occurs when individuals choose or are forced to move from Senegal to France. The failed journeys might occur as a result of internal struggle or as a result of unjust circumstances, but either way failure is perpetuated by the individual protagonists' isolation from home or inability to reintegrate into their community upon return. In all of these cases, leaving for France inevitably results in loss for the individual and often for the community that they have left as well. While this pattern is prevalent in texts from the 1920s through the 1960s, it continues in contemporary works as well. Yet it is possible to imagine alternate outcomes to migration and still caution against assumptions about and dependence upon France, and Sembene's work points to these alternate possibilities. It is this potential for change and progress that has been taken up by contemporary artists as they reconfigure the well-established narrative of migration from Senegal to France.

Chapter Two

Rereading Migration in the Novels of Aminata Sow Fall

Aminata Sow Fall's 1998 novel *Douceurs du bercail* [*Comforts of the Fold*] might appear similar to the earlier and more widely known novel *L'appel des arènes* [*The Call of the Wrestling Arenas*] (1982); but *Douceurs du bercail* is unique in its departure from earlier Senegalese migration narratives. Unlike many previous texts, it offers a productive and inclusive strategy to recover from the difficulties of migration. Both texts suggest the value of traditional practices as an antidote to the traumatic experience of departure and return,¹ but in *Douceurs du bercail* Sow Fall additionally demonstrates how a valorization of local practices and communities can coexist with the maintenance of international ties, thus offering a successful and inclusive strategy to counteract challenges experienced abroad. Although *Douceurs du bercail* is similar to other novels of Sow Fall's such as *L'appel des arènes*, this more recent novel stands out among Sow Fall's *oeuvre* for the way that it combines a concern with both local practices as well as international relations, thereby pointing in a positive direction for Senegal.

Like Sow Fall's previous texts, *Douceurs du bercail* is concerned with Senegalese society and contains a message of potential hope through community endeavors and cooperation. Since her first novel *Le revenant* [*The Ghost*] (1976), Sow Fall's texts have portrayed social and political imbalances that affect human dignity and freedom in post-independence Senegal. Sow Fall's works from the 1970s and 1980s – among which *La grève des bàttu* [*The Beggars' Strike*] (1979) is the most widely known – are marked by social criticism and satire. In more recent works such as *Le jujubier du patriarce* [*The*

¹ A number of recent articles emphasize the similarities of the two texts but do not fully acknowledge their differences. See articles by Chantal Thompson ("Garden of Eden"), Catherine Mazauric, and Lucy Schwartz.

Patriarch's Jujubier] (1993) and *Festins de la détresse* [*Celebrations of Misery*] (2005), alternatives to greed and social disharmony appear when individuals are united through participation in oral folktales and songs. In its combinatory approach, *Douceurs du bercail* reaches beyond the scope of these other texts.

Sow Fall demonstrates a particular concern with relations between Senegal and foreign powers in her novel *L'ex-père de la nation* [*The Ex-Father of the Nation*] (1987), which dramatizes the relationship between France and one of its former African colonies.² As Irène d'Almeida has indicated in her study of *L'ex-père de la nation*, Sow Fall uses the manipulative Andru, the president's French adviser and head of security, to demonstrate the destructive role that France can play in its former colonies (d'Almeida 145). As the nation becomes increasingly saddled by foreign debt and reliant on aid from abroad, it also becomes controlled by the desires of those lenders and benefactors. By the time that one of the president's advisers suggests the country might "essayer de ne vivre que de nos moyens, de nos ressources, de nos productions" [try to live only by our own means, our resources, our productions] it is too late to turn back (163). Not until *Douceurs du bercail* does Sow Fall indicate how such self-sufficiency might be achieved while simultaneously maintaining connections with other nations.

Alternately, Sow Fall's novel *Le jujubier du patriarche* depicts the role that oral performance plays in family allegiances and support networks in contemporary Senegal. The text, though set in the present day, is entwined with a 700-year-old epic that tells how the patriarch Yelli's family has always been tied to the descendents of his ancestors'

² Peter Hawkins and Hal Wylie have both suggested that *L'ex-père de la nation* is not explicitly about Senegal because the country is unnamed and the story depicts political characteristics reminiscent of other African states (Hawkins 166-67; Wylie 363). However, characters frequently use Wolof phrases, and one of the president's political opponents publishes a Wolof-language magazine (19). The text is thus not completely removed from Senegal as a topic of consideration.

slaves. When all of the ancestors of the Almamy Sarebbibi unite in a return to the village of Babyselli, Naarou – a descendent of the slave caste – recites part of the myth, which appears within the narrative (125-43). The return to Babyselli and the recitation of the myth does not only signal the maintenance of ties between the novel's protagonists. There is also a connection to a much wider community because of the vast numbers of people who return to the village (93). Despite the contemporary setting, the novel contains few references to people from or migration to Europe. On the one hand, this presents a fascinating sidestep of colonial history and its aftereffects, which are essentially absent because the family's history is tied instead to events that occurred well before colonialism. In this novel, oral performance plays an important role in unifying groups of people, but its focus remains local. The use of performance and song in *Douceurs du bercail*, on the other hand, is different in that it is beneficial not only for the village and its inhabitants but also in terms of the way they are placed in an international context. In this way, *Douceurs du bercail* marks a profound difference from this and other previous works of Sow Fall's. In its singularity among Sow Fall's novels, *Douceurs du bercail* indicates how community organization as well as oral performance can be utilized to combat social and economic challenges in contemporary Senegal while maintaining concern with an international context.

Partial Successes

Unlike *Douceurs du bercail*, the much earlier *L'appel des arènes* does not suggest an entirely successful outcome of emigration to Europe and return. As in other novels by Sow Fall, *L'appel des arènes* demonstrates the value of Senegalese cultural practices. But ultimately, these practices do not prove to be accessible or useful for the individuals

whose identities are most at stake. In the text, young Nalla counteracts his parents' adherence to European customs through his friendship with a group of Senegalese wrestlers. Ndiogou and Diattou, Nalla's parents, spent time in Europe so Ndiogou could complete his veterinary training. Upon their return, they mold their household to be what they consider European, and Diattou prefers the stylish boutiques and clubs of the city over her family's village. While Sow Fall depicts Nalla's navigation between French and Senegalese knowledge systems, his parents cannot completely adjust to life in Senegal after living in Europe. In this way, Sow Fall's novel does not differ from earlier literary depictions of migration. While Diattou completely deteriorates, Ndiogou's apparent success at reconnecting with Nalla at the end of the novel points to the kind of solutions that are more effective in *Douceurs du bercail*. But ultimately, Ndiogou's experience at the wrestling arena does not contribute to a changed understanding of the Senegalese community that surrounds him.

The critics Chantal Thompson and Lucy Schwartz both favor the cultural aspects of what the wrestling arenas represent in the novel. In her article "The Myth of the Garden of Eden and the Symbolism of the Baobab Tree in West African Literature," Thompson indicates that the arenas offer a return to a "lost paradise" (97), and Schwartz suggests the arenas provide an alternative to the "El Dorado" of life abroad (54). But a focus on the novel's idealization of local practices does not address the extent to which other concerns go unresolved, nor does it indicate the complexity of Sow Fall's vision, even in this early novel. Indeed, young Nalla benefits greatly from what he learns from the wrestlers he meets. However, the fact that Diattou is not integrated into this solution cannot be ignored and mars the hopeful possibilities apparent in the novel. On the other

hand, Odile Cazenave's article "Gender, Age, and Reeducation: A Changing Emphasis in Recent African Novels in French" considers the significant role that Nalla's parents and their experience in Europe play in the text, but even in her analysis of Ndiogou and Diattou's difficulties, Cazenave does not recognize the similarity between this novel and previous migration narratives. In fact, Cazenave argues that *L'appel des arènes* presents a reversal of the typical *roman de formation* of earlier decades as seen in novels such as Kane's *L'aventure ambiguë* and Laye's *L'enfant noir* because a crisis of identity is found not in the children but in the parents (Cazenave 54). Indeed, as Cazenave writes, in *L'appel des arènes* "the quest for identity is still the center of the novel, but it has become the parents' identity rather than the child's" (54). And yet, the overall trajectory of individuals going to Europe and returning to Senegal only to be unable or to refuse to reinscribe themselves in Senegalese society appears in *L'appel des arènes* and remains partially unchanged from earlier texts. In this case, a couple has gone abroad to study rather than a lone student or worker, but the outcome of the voyage remains the same as in earlier texts. Diattou in particular is destroyed by her complete resistance to the society that surrounds her. Her experience echoes the disastrous encounters of returnees such as Samba in *L'aventure ambiguë* or the title character in Birago Diop's "Sarzan." Taking into account the effect of Europe on the characters, Sow Fall's novel has a trajectory much like these earlier texts. Any hopeful possibilities suggested by the wrestling arena are thus limited, and in *L'appel des arènes* the characters are unable to negotiate the kind of relationship between Senegal and Europe that Sow Fall articulates as a success in *Douceurs du bercail*.

The way that Sow Fall portrays Ndiogou and Diattou's return from Europe indicates the significance of their experience there. Their return marks a profound change in the way they lead their lives and the gravity of Ndiogou and Diattou's situation is highlighted by the writings of Nalla's tutor, Monsieur Niang. Niang describes Nalla's parents as "alienated" and explains, "[I]ls renieront progressivement d'autres parties de leurs racines sans jamais réussir à les compenser par des racines appartenant à d'autres" [they progressively renounce the other parts of their roots without ever succeeding in replacing them with others' roots] (67). This dilemma is much like the result of protagonists' time in France in *Mirages de Paris* and *L'aventure ambiguë*. These individuals no longer fit into their society of origin but find they do not fully fit into French society either, which is precisely what Niang suggests is the case for Diattou and Ndiogou. He concludes that this alienation might lead to "Déséquilibre physique . . . Déséquilibre spirituel . . . Déséquilibre mental" [Physical imbalance . . . Spiritual imbalance . . . Mental imbalance] (67), the latter of which is what Diattou eventually experiences.

Similar to isolated individuals from previous texts that explore migration, Diattou, Ndiogou, and their home are marked by enclosure and separated from the surrounding community. Suzanne Crosta demonstrates this carefully in her article "Les structures spatiales dans *L'appel des arènes*" (58). The spatial contrasts developed in *L'appel des arènes* are not unlike those in Sembene's "La noire de . . .," where Diouana finds herself isolated and physically enclosed in a French villa. Sow Fall depicts much of the enclosure from Nalla's perspective, as he is increasingly prevented from gaining access to those around him, especially those with knowledge of Senegalese customs. But his parents'

decisions create the isolation. Upon his parents' return, they remove Nalla from the home of his grandmother Mame Fari, although they were content to leave him there when they initially left for Europe (58). Additionally, Nalla's parents discourage him from seeing the wrestlers André and Malaw, and they no longer allow Monsieur Niang in the house after he is caught using wrestling songs to teach Nalla grammar (85). Diattou even goes so far as to insult the griot Mapaté who is visiting to teach Nalla, and Mapaté vows never to return to their home (107). All of these incidents demonstrate that the household is cut off from the rest of life in the town of Louga. And the incidents also point to Diattou's escalating paranoia.

Though Diattou makes the decision to fire Niang and insults the griot, the novel also shows that Ndiogou has been changed by the trip abroad. First of all, his European degree lends him status, and he is known throughout the neighboring villages by his Land Rover and weekend getaway house (12). Additionally, Ndiogou's time abroad changes the way he interacts with his son. Nalla recalls happier times spent with his father: "l'époque où Ndiogou le prenait sur ses épaules en tournoyant pendant qu'il déchirait l'air de ses cris de joie" [the period when Ndiogou put him on his shoulders and spun him around while he split the air with his cries of joy], and he contrasts these memories with the current situation: "[E]n dehors des repas qu'ils prennent à trois dans la véranda en saison sèche et dans la salle à manger en hiveranage, Nalla n'a pratiquement pas la possibilité de converser avec son père" [Aside from the meals that all three of them eat together on the veranda in the dry season and in the dining room during the rainy season, Nalla almost never has the opportunity to talk to his father] (21). This difference could simply represent the changing relationship of a child and parent as the child grows older.

But the image from Nalla's young childhood suggests an experience of openness; by being placed on top of his father's shoulders, Nalla is given an expanded view of his surroundings. The image, suggestive of freedom and joy, contrasts with the current situation. Now Nalla sees his parents only within the confines of their house; even during the dry season, the family dines on the veranda and is thus not entirely in the open air. Sow Fall is not only indicating that Nalla has grown older or pointing out that his father is too busy with his work, although those are significant aspects of the text. Through Nalla's changed relationship to his parents, Sow Fall establishes that Ndiogou and Diattou have become particularly confined upon their return from Europe. They isolate Nalla by extension, and Nalla's struggle to access Senegalese tales and ceremonies against his parents' wishes further highlights the way the family has become separated from the surrounding society.

Sow Fall portrays Diattou as an extreme example of one who refuses to reintegrate into her society upon her return from abroad. Diattou will not let Nalla play with the neighborhood children, and the neighbors eventually accuse her of being responsible for children's deaths and drive the family from the neighborhood throwing rocks as well as insults (64).³ Thus not only does Diattou reject her community, but the community rejects her in return. Diattou has become caught in the idea of independence that she developed about Europe. By demonstrating Diattou's downfall, Sow Fall indicates the negative effects of idealizing Europe in this way. Diattou uses her

³ There is much to be said beyond the scope of this study concerning Diattou's relationship to motherhood, womanhood, and infanticide. For more exploration of these topics, see Mary F. Kay-Miller's chapter on *L'appel des arènes* in her book *(Re)Productions: Autobiography, Colonialism, and Infanticide*. Nicki Hitchcott's chapter "Aminata Sow Fall: A 'Masculine' Voice?" as well as Cazenave's article on *L'appel des arènes* also provide lengthy explorations of Diattou in terms of Senegalese society's expectations of women.

experience in Europe to reinvent herself, and she even gives herself a new name, signing letters home as Madame Toutou Bari (88). We are given no clues as to how successful Diattou was in Europe, but her call for independence becomes extreme with regard to everyone at home. With Diattou's name change, a break is signaled between her and her family. Her mother warns her, "[Q]uand certains noms sont difficiles à prononcer, les facteurs d'ici jettent le courrier" [When certain names are difficult to pronounce, the mail carriers here throw out the mail] (88). Her mother's warning hints not only at the fact that the mail carrier may be uncertain of what to do when he sees an unfamiliar name on a letter but also suggests that the community may not be willing to accept Diattou after she has discarded her own name and origins. Diattou also refuses to participate in any new communities she encounters; she ignores the women she works with, not noticing their judgments of the short skirts she wears to work, and she shuns her neighbors. All of these individuals eventually reject Diattou, which Sow Fall has alluded to in a number of interviews (Lebon 65; Aas-Rouxparis 208). In part, Diattou seeks freedom from the restrictions that have been placed on her in terms of how she should dress and act, but her desire for this freedom defines all of her actions so that she can no longer interact with anyone around her.

Having alienated members of her home village as well as her co-workers, Diattou becomes increasingly unstable as the novel progresses, and she moves from selfishness to complete isolation. In this way, Sow Fall continues to portray Diattou's disintegration, which occurs in part as a result of having lived abroad. As her madness increases, Diattou becomes less respondent to people around her, indicating the extent to which she does not participate in the surrounding society. During an argument with Nalla, Ndiogou realizes

that Diattou is no longer participating in the discussion. Rather than thinking about her son at that moment, Diattou is in fact tortured by the way she has been continually accused of being an infanticide (109). And this escalating madness and isolation reaches its most extreme at the end of the novel, where Diattou wanders out of the narrative and is even unable to communicate with her husband. Although the factors contributing to Diattou's madness are many, chief among them is her insistence on maintaining the isolation and independence that she has derived from her time abroad.

Although Diattou is not able to readjust to life in Senegal upon her return, in *L'appel des arènes*, Sow Fall does point to strategies that are useful for recovering from the difficulties of migration and which are articulated even more successfully in *Douceurs du bercail*. However, these strategies are available primarily to Nalla and not to his parents, who are the ones whose identities are actually at stake after their return from Europe. For Nalla, hope is available through the exchange of songs, stories, and poems; the openness and community found at the wrestling arena; and the possibility to utilize French education alongside songs and poems. Except for Ndiogou's brief encounter with the wrestling arenas, Nalla's parents cannot benefit from the solutions that Sow Fall presents.

The first indication of the possibility offered by songs and poems appears when the wrestling songs penetrate Nalla's parents' enclosed house. When Nalla hears the songs coming from the arena during his lesson with Monsieur Niang, he is not just distracted from his studies and is in fact mentally transported to the arena. The narrator, representing Nalla's emotions, explains, "La belle cadence du tam-tam s'étire jusqu'à Nalla, pénètre en Nalla, emplit Nalla d'une douce émotion . . . comme s'il était aux

arènes” [The tam-tam’s beautiful rhythm reached out to Nalla, penetrated Nalla, filled Nalla with a sweet emotion . . . as if he were at the arenas] (13). However excessive this description may seem on Sow Fall’s part, she nonetheless uses this scene to suggest that the songs and tales have the ability to create a significant connection that can reach across space.

Additionally, the personal connections that Nalla develops as he is told folktales by Malaw serve as a contrast to his lack of connection to his father. *L’appel des arènes* highlights the importance of Senegalese oral cultural forms through the presence of folktales, ceremonies, and the wrestling songs known as the *bàkk*. The importance of exchange through songs and tales is emphasized when Malaw demands that Nalla recount to him the *bàkk* that is sung during his fights. Malaw tells Nalla, “C’est moi qui raconte toujours! Ce n’est pas juste!” [It is always me who narrates! It’s not fair!] (70), and he later insists, “[R]appelle-toi le pacte: donnant donnant” [Remember the pact: fair is fair] (75). Nalla recites Malaw’s *bàkk* at his request, proving to Malaw that he knows it. But Malaw’s request is not simply for Nalla to prove that he knows the song, for he says “Donnant donnant!” again when requesting that Nalla recite (72). This exchange of songs and the subsequent relationship between Malaw and Nalla is precisely not what Nalla has with his father. Instead of an exchange or instruction, Ndiogou simply gave Nalla storybooks of European fairytales, without directly sharing them with him (75). In contrast, then, to the line of connection that Malaw traces between himself and his male elders, Nalla traces his back to a book rather than directly to his father.⁴

⁴ Additionally, this scene emphasizes that the line of instruction is always male. In such a context, it is unsurprising that there is ultimately no room for Diattou.

Another individual who provides Nalla with hope and leads him to the kind of progress that his parents do not have access to is his tutor Monsieur Niang. Niang is unique in the novel for his ability to combine both Senegalese and French forms of education. Niang is not simply a Western-educated tutor, although this is perhaps the assumption that enabled Nalla's parents to hire him. At first, Niang is portrayed forcing Nalla to learn grammar that he is uninterested in. In her article on the novel, Cazenave in fact considers the novel's opening scene in which Niang teaches Nalla with the sentence "le chasseur a abattu un lion" [the hunter shot a lion] (9) to be an example of the kind of education that does not fully take into account the African context ("Gender, Age" 55). However, the figure of Niang becomes more complex when he uses wrestling songs to teach Nalla grammar. No longer is this the kind of "out of context" education that Cazenave describes (55). However, Cazenave does not address this shift in the portrayal of Niang, preferring to maintain a contrast between Western and Senegalese education systems from which Sow Fall herself departs. In fact, Niang's teaching fruitfully combines different kinds of knowledge, and the problem Sow Fall portrays is not with Niang or even Western education but instead with Nalla's parents and their inability to accept the kind of navigation of which Niang is capable. As Médoune Guèye points out, Niang's teaching is particularly unique because he uses a tape player to play the wrestling songs, thus engaging contemporary technology in his methods (87). And a wrestling song played over the cassette player is precisely what causes Diattou to throw Niang out of the house. Diattou and her husband thus refuse to appreciate the combination of different forms of knowledge that Niang facilitates.

Nalla also benefits from the community associated with the wrestling arenas, which is likened to the kind of communities that exist in rural areas. The wrestling arena is formed by Malaw specifically as a way to counteract difficulties of life in an urban context after he is instructed by his father to bring the wrestling arena to the city to preserve their village Diaminar (128). Thompson indicates that the wrestling arena successfully recreates the village in the city (“Garden of Eden” 98), simultaneously allowing some people in Louga to benefit from the community formed in the wrestling arenas while also helping to preserve the values of Diaminar. But in Thompson’s celebration of so-called rural values in the novel, she fails to realize that Sow Fall’s depiction is not entirely effective.

Like the wrestling arenas, the compound where Malaw lives reproduces aspects of life that are absent in Nalla’s family’s house. André explains to Nalla about Malaw’s house: “*Sa maison est ma maison . . . sa maison est la maison de tous*” [His house is my house . . . his house is everyone’s house] (45). This openness contrasts with the way that Diattou will not allow outsiders in her house. But like the wrestling arena itself, Malaw’s compound is a primarily male space. Nearly everyone whom Nalla sees in Malaw’s household is male, and it is unlikely that a woman would find the same kind of warm welcome – complete with an impromptu wrestling match – that Nalla finds (44). The reason that the wrestling arena and Malaw’s house are not available to Diattou is not exclusively due to her own rejection of them, for they are also spaces where she would not fit. While the wrestling arena proves very helpful to Nalla and somewhat helpful to Ndiogou, Sow Fall has not imagined a fully inclusive solution to the difficulties that migration has caused Nalla and his parents.

In line with this gender distinction, Ndiogou rather than Diattou experiences the wrestling arenas and so becomes closer to his son. To a certain extent, this resolves Ndiogou's disconnection to life in the rest of Louga, however it does not fully change the way he sees the society around him. Notably, part of what convinces Ndiogou of the importance of the wrestling arena is the way that so many members from throughout the community, including those he deems to be Westernized, are able to enjoy watching a wrestling match. The description of whom Ndiogou sees emphasizes whom he considers important:

Il a rencontré le visage de Saer, médecin réputé dans la capitale, spécialiste des maladies mentales. Il est resté vingt-cinq ans en Occident et en est revenu avec une femme blanche . . . Il a aperçu Fara, le plus décrié des inspecteurs d'Etat . . . Ndiogou a encore fouillé dans la foule, et il a aperçu Anthiou, avocat général à la Cour. (142-43)

He came across the face of Saer, reputed doctor in the capital, specialist in mental disorders. He stayed in the West for twenty-five years and returned with a white wife . . . He caught sight of Fara, the most criticized of the state inspectors . . . Ndiogou searched the crowd again, and he caught sight of Anthiou, prosecutor in the court.

While Saer has come to the match with his wife, most of the people involved and watching are men. The fact that Saer returns from a long time abroad but can nonetheless enjoy the wrestling match indicates to Ndiogou that this endeavor is not as problematic as he had imagined. The arena provides a space, even for those who are seen by Ndiogou as Westernized (marked as they are by their elite educations), to engage with each other and with a practice particularly associated with Senegal. Ndiogou's view (and perhaps Sow Fall's) is incomplete, however, not only because women are primarily absent but also because Ndiogou is only concerned with those elite members of society whom he recognizes, and he does not take into account people at other socioeconomic levels. This

response is somewhat ironic because Ndiogou's opposition to Senegalese societal structures is based on his dislike of the caste system (101). While the wrestlers themselves have backgrounds different from Ndiogou and his acquaintances, the group depicted as Ndiogou scans the wrestling arena is nonetheless incomplete. And while it is hopeful that he is able to interact more positively with Nalla after his experience at the match, his own expectations have simply been reaffirmed by the individuals he sees there. Thus, even in an open space associated with the practice of wrestling, Ndiogou sees only the part of Senegalese society that he already knows.

And ultimately, Diattou's situation is not successfully resolved. Although the exchange of songs and folktales as well as the community formed around the wrestling arena and Niang's navigation of multiple knowledge systems are all helpful for Nalla and somewhat productive for Ndiogou, these possible sources of help are entirely unavailable to Diattou. In *L'appel des arènes*, going to Europe remains an experience that runs completely counter to interacting with one's home society upon return. Diattou is destroyed by going to Europe and returning, while Ndiogou maintains his elitist perspective even within the communal space of the wrestling arenas. Nalla may end the novel as a figure of successful hybridity as Lauren Locraft suggests (80), but his parents – whose identities are in jeopardy after living abroad – do not. Thus in considering the experiences of Ndiogou and Diattou, movement between Senegal and Europe remains as perilous in this novel as it is in texts from earlier decades. While *Sow Fall* points to the value of various aspects of Senegalese culture in *L'appel des arènes*, any possibilities from these cultural forms are not completely successful for those who have left Senegal and returned.

Positive Outcomes

Not until *Douceurs du bercail* does Sow Fall imagine more complex solutions to the difficulties of migration that involve both Senegal and France, and individuals who had rejected life in Senegal can eventually benefit from and adjust to life there. When Asta Diop and her friends are deported back to Senegal after a harrowing experience in an underground airport holding center referred to as “le dépôt” (39), they create a successful cooperative farm that at once sustains them while maintaining national and international ties. Sow Fall demonstrates the value of farming and community interaction that occurs in rural spaces like the co-op but more importantly indicates the transformative possibilities of sharing narratives and performances. While both of these themes are present in Sow Fall’s other texts, in *Douceurs du bercail*, Sow Fall indicates how both rural practices as well as shared narratives might be utilized to counteract the dislocating experience of migration and even to renegotiate Senegal’s relationship with France. Sow Fall thereby demonstrates how Senegal might newly and productively exist in an international context.

On one hand, the success of the cooperative points to the importance and productivity of a rural livelihood. And Schwartz and Thompson both read *Douceurs du bercail* as a call for a return to practices associated with a rural way of life in their argument for its similarities to *L’appel des arènes*. Schwartz argues that in *Douceurs du bercail*, Sow Fall “creates an ideal community, suggesting how modern people can go back from the city to the land and find happiness and prosperity” (60). Thompson does suggest that *Douceurs du bercail* contains a navigation between “traditional” and “modern” practices but ultimately argues for the value of the garden above all (“Garden

of Eden” 98). Neither *Douceurs du bercail* nor *L’appel des arènes* is a simple expression of a call for a return to a rural way of life, and in particular *Douceurs du bercail* extends well beyond that. What makes the co-op so successful is not simply that it is a rural space – the space of the wrestling arenas in *L’appel des arènes* does not provide an effective alternative for Diattou – but that it is forged through the shared narratives of the detainees. And that sharing starts not in the open and welcoming space of the cooperative but instead in the closed and traumatic space of the depot, which indicates just how constructive such performances and narratives might be.

Sow Fall’s initial depiction of Asta sets her apart from those migrants seeking a new life in France. Asta, aboard a plane from Senegal, is planning to stay in Paris for only a short period of time in order to attend – certainly not incidentally – a conference on global economics. Once the plane lands, Asta is described as walking much slower than the rest of her fellow passengers (8). Unlike Asta, “[i]ls courent tous comme s’ils allaient à la recherche d’une âme perdue” [they all run as if they were searching for a lost soul] (15). But Asta’s sense of place is nonetheless at stake. Despite the care she takes with her appearance before getting off the plane, her clothing is disheveled from the flight: “Sa jupe est froissée, son chemisier déborde sur un côté de sa veste en daim” [Her skirt is wrinkled, her blouse sticks out on one side from her suede jacket] (8). The description of Asta’s appearance hints at the slippage that later occurs at the customs gate when Asta is judged to be precisely one of those people she has been depicted as different from.

A dialogue that Asta has at one point with a young man on a plane further emphasizes her separation from the emigrants moving to France or others who see France

as a place of potential salvation. This dialogue also establishes Senegal as Asta's home and indicates her belief in the value of community projects. During this conversation, Asta is separated from the young people who choose to leave Senegal, and she is unable to understand their reasons for departure; this provides a contrast to the later communication that occurs between her and the detainees at the depot. The young man on the plane that Asta talks to at length tells her that his mother died after being turned away from a dispensary seeking medical care for a pregnancy. Indicative of her difference of opinion, Asta argues with the young man's assertion that there is "nothing" in Senegal, pointing out that there could not be "nothing" there because she and her family live and subsist in Senegal (9). The discussion with the young man, even as he relates his life in Senegal, is depicted primarily from Asta's perspective. The narrative follows her thoughts rather than the young man's, and nothing beyond what the young man directly tells Asta is revealed. To further emphasize Asta's distance from the other voyagers, the rest of her interlocutors mock her naiveté; her declarations of the possibility for productive work in Senegal are met with bursts of laughter (9-10). In the end, Asta does not come to understand the young man's point of view, and she remains frustrated by the fact that so many people choose to leave Senegal.

Based on Asta's predicament of being (literally) stuck between Senegal and France when held in detention, both Thompson and Catherine Mazauric draw connections between Asta and Diattou from *L'appel des arènes*. Thompson suggests that both women become lost during their encounter with Europe ("Garden of Eden" 96), and Mazauric similarly argues that both women suffer from cultural alienation (246). While Asta is in many ways different from Diattou, she does initially resemble Diattou in her

isolation from other people surrounding her in the airport and depot. Thompson rightly articulates the similarity between the two women but incorrectly assumes that Asta wants to “fit into” life in France (“Garden of Eden” 91), assuming the novel’s similarity to other migration narratives when it is in fact different from the very beginning. Unlike the typical protagonist of a migration narrative, Asta has no intentions of remaining in France and does not need to attempt to fit in, since she already has a room that she can call her own in the home of her French friend Anne, where she is always welcome (19). Asta’s assurance is in fact what makes it particularly unsettling for her to be equated with and treated the same way as the immigrants who are seeking to enter (and thus fit into) France illegally. At the moment she enters the depot, Asta does indeed resemble Diattou because she feels uncertain and isolated. Thompson explains, “The description of Asta in this enclosed space is reminiscent of Diattou’s” (“Garden of Eden” 96). Indeed, Asta’s increasingly disheveled appearance recalls Diattou’s appearance as she loses her sanity towards the end of *L’appel des arènes*. The fact that Asta’s own sanity is at stake is also indicated by her attempt to strangle the customs officer, and this further aligns her with Diattou, similarly accused of being murderous and violent. In Thompson’s argument, Asta is saved from the tragic outcome Diattou experiences by the co-op she creates (“Garden of Eden” 98); however, Asta’s transformation in fact begins in the depot itself. Asta is saved not only by a return to the earth, though this is very productive for her, but also (and especially) by the connections she eventually forms to those immigrants from whom she initially separated herself.

The migrants, being rejected by France but not yet returned to their countries of origin find themselves between worlds. The situation in the depot is particularly difficult

because the detainees are separated from all contact with the outside. The depot is also a hellish place due to the harsh overhead lights, lack of windows, and crowded spaces (83). Presented in this way, the depot is not initially a space of possibility. As Mortimer rightly indicates in her study of the novel in *Writing from the Hearth*, the depot demonstrates that borders are not porous for certain individuals, and movement between them is not always liberating (157). In characterizing the depot, Mortimer cautiously uses Marc Augé's idea of the *non-lieu*, or "non-place": a location such as a supermarket, shopping mall, or airport where individuals in the contemporary world pass and once inside do not have an identity based on anything beyond their position in that *non-lieu* (Mortimer *Hearth* 154). According to Augé, individuals entering a *non-lieu* cede any other aspects of their identities and only get those affiliations back upon departure in the way that a passenger in an airport is identified exclusively by a ticket and passport and only receives the rest of her or his identity after passing through the customs gate to exit (Augé 130). Mortimer indicates that Augé has overlooked instances in contemporary society where this agreed-upon code is violated, as when Asta and the others are held against their will and detained in the *non-lieu* of the depot (*Hearth* 155). The interrogation of Augé's description can be extended to indicate that it is in fact possible to reassert one's identity in a *non-lieu*. Perhaps in the case of the depot, this may in part be because the immigration officials intend to send the detainees back to their countries of origin. Nonetheless, while the detainees do indeed share the experience of being placed in the depot, the people with whom Asta interacts also share an identity based on Senegalese origin and further develop their own community through shared dialogues that are sustained even after they leave the depot.

This common identity emerges as Asta begins to interact with the other detainees. Initially, the narrative indicates the diversity in the depot: “[d]es noirs, des métis et des arabes pour la plupart” [blacks, people of mixed race, and Arabs for the most part] (39), and Asta does not identify any individuals as being a particular nationality or ethnicity. However, the group that Asta eventually finds herself with appears to be primarily Senegalese. The first detainee who the narrator and Asta know by name is Codé, who is referred to as a “*drianké*” (43).⁵ Asta identifies Codé as such due to her perfume (43); this identification suggests a shared set of references and that the two women are from the same place. When a detainee talks about his frustration at being imprisoned, he states, “Au Sénégal, nous n’avons jamais expulsé personne” [In Senegal, we have never deported anyone], and a conversation follows about “les Sénégalais” (45-46). At this point, not everyone involved in the conversation is from Senegal, but Senegal becomes very much of concern, while no other country is discussed by name. While numerous other people are in the depot, those with whom Asta becomes closely associated can be identified as Senegalese. One such person is Yakham, whose name means “tu es savant” [you are wise] in Wolof, and the origins and significance of his name are described at length (109). Detainees from elsewhere are not necessarily rejected or excluded and indeed can relate to the experiences that the primary characters describe. But the group that forms around Asta is nonetheless constructed around a shared national identity. This occurs even though the detainees are located in an intermediary space where they have no direct access to either Senegal or France. Survival in this space in fact necessitates the maintenance of national affiliations.

⁵ *Drianké*, also spelled *diriyanke*, is a Wolof word referring to a middle-aged Senegalese woman who is well dressed, as well as heavily perfumed, incensed, and jeweled. Francis Nyamnjoh explores this social phenomenon alongside the *diriyanke*’s younger counterpart, the *diskette* (300).

The group formed by Asta and the others pushes against the possibility that such national connections become less important in the context of global migration and exchange. Theoretical analyses have focused on migration as contributing to the reconsideration of national identities, both with regard to the host country as well as the concept of nation more generally. In his work, Homi Bhabha suggests that “wandering peoples” such as migrants and minorities “who will not be contained within the *Heim* of the national culture and its unisonant discourse . . . are themselves the marks of a shifting boundary that alienates the frontiers of the modern nation” (“DissemiNation” 315).⁶ For the migrants in the depot, their national identity (which is officially identified as not French) is indeed partly tied to permits and passports, as Bhabha suggests (315), but the response of the detainees to collaborate with each other points to a different configuration of national identity. In a situation where identity is temporarily removed – all of the migrants are forced into the same underground room – the migrants reclaim their identity before it is forced upon them in deportation.

While the individuals around Asta seem to share a set of Senegalese references, they go even further to create a community that enables them to survive life in the depot because they share in the creation of stories and performances. When Asta first enters the depot, she maintains her judgments of young people who leave their home countries for France, and Sow Fall describes her as different from the other detainees: “Rien dans l’attitude d’Asta ne permettait de penser qu’elle ferait comme les autres” [Nothing in

⁶ See also Saskia Sassen’s book *Globalization and its Discontents*, where she writes, “many of the disadvantaged workers in global cities are women, immigrants, and people of color, whose political sense of self and whose identities are not necessarily embedded in the ‘nation’ or the ‘national community’” (xxi). This comment indicates these workers’ lack of participation in the nation in which they live, but in the case of migrants, Sassen does not address the possibility that they might remain attached to or concerned by their nation of origin.

Asta's attitude gave the impression that she would behave like the others] (43). But as Asta comes to participate in the same world as the other detainees, she eventually changes her previously negative perceptions of Senegal's younger generation. This indicates the productive quality of the community that gets formed in the depot. For while Asta has always identified herself as Senegalese, she does initially stand apart from Senegalese emigrants. The interactions in the depot enable her to surpass this distinction.

One performance that unites all the detainees is Dianor's recitation of an impromptu poem referencing Beckett's *En attendant Godot* (50). The reference to *Godot* likens the detainees' endless wait for something they cannot control or predict to the absurd situation of Vladimir and Estragon.⁷ The community also develops during an extended narrative from Yakham's point of view, in which he shares the story of why he left Senegal. In her chapter on *Douceurs du bercail*, Mortimer emphasizes that Yakham's narration contributes to his healing (160), but it additionally indicates Asta's increased connection to everyone in the depot. When Yakham explains why he left to work in France, the narrative is related entirely from his perspective, and the narrator gives access to all of Yakham's thoughts and feelings. His story becomes as central to the text as Asta's own, and he shares it with her and the rest of the detainees. Rather than argue with Yakham as he relates his reasons for leaving and frustration at having been refused a well-deserved scholarship due to a corrupt system, Asta instead begins to understand his generation's plight and to connect Yakham to her son Paapi. She muses that perhaps these young people "venus au monde au moment où il ne fallait pas: quand il n'y avait plus à travailler, à manger à sa faim, plus à dormir et rêver, plus à espérer" [came into the

⁷ Jeanne-Sarah de Larquier in fact suggests that the Absurd plays a significant role throughout Sow Fall's text ("Clés" 88), however there is not much evidence of this beyond the brief reference to *En attendant Godot*.

world at the wrong time: when there was no more work, no longer enough to eat, nothing to sleep or dream about, nothing to hope for] (90). This understanding of the way that Senegal's youth feel is precisely the opposite of Asta's point of view when she argues with the young man on the airplane, insisting that there is more than "nothing" in Senegal.

The description of Paris' Quartier de la Gare and its destruction by the French authorities also demonstrates how the detainees share experiences. This section is narrated by no one in particular and seems to be collectively shared by all the detainees, although Dianor initiates the discussion. The Quartier de la Gare is described by the narrator and yet simultaneously told from the perspective of any – or perhaps all – of the detainees. The tone of nostalgia eventually associated with the Quartier de la Gare and the horror at its destruction suggests the narrative of someone who lived there, although no particular detainee tells this story. Just as the Quartier de la Gare was everyone's place in Paris, it is also everyone's story. The discussion about the Quartier de la Gare is one of the moments of unification in the text that extends well beyond Asta's group to detainees of other nationalities as well. Numerous traditions and cultures are referenced here: "On y dansait la rumba, le mbalax, et le tcha tcha tcha . . . On y dégustait son *ceebu jen* aussi bien que le *futu* à saveur forestière, le *mafé* à la mode mandingue . . . Le Quartier de la Gare!" [There, everyone danced the rumba, the mbalax, and the cha cha cha . . . there, everyone ate their *ceebu jen* as well as *futu* with forestière flavor, *mafé* in the Mandinka style . . . The Quartier de la Gare!] (126).

While a community is indeed formed among some of the detainees, their final experience is one of terror. An argument related to the Quartier de la Gare leads to

violence with unidentified perpetrators and results in Codé being raped. As in Mortimer's emphasis on Yakham's healing, she also argues that the depot is a generally transformative location for Asta and the others (*Hearth* 160), but the depot is never entirely transformed from a place of horror to one of hope. The final moment of violence is a reminder of that. Instead, what becomes permanent are the connections formed between people. The unique experience of the depot perhaps allows or necessitates the formation of these connections, but it is also significant that they are maintained upon the detainees' return to Senegal.

The relationships as well as roles that are formed in the depot prefigure what happens on Asta's cooperative farm. Rather than what might be expected and what often appears in narratives of migration – the shame of unsuccessful return home – Asta and the other detainees utilize the connections they forge to maintain a successful farm in Senegal's countryside. The detainees alter the experience of return to create a place where everyone is welcome, and most of the detainees do not suffer from the isolation that is typically present in narratives of migration from earlier decades. The only exception to this success is Codé, who never recovers from being raped and dies shortly after her return, not able to take advantage of life on the farm. Her death exists as a testament to the horrors of the depot, and though not directly a sacrifice, it nonetheless emphasizes the continuing influence of the detainees' time in the holding center. For the rest of the detainees, return is positive, for the cooperation and understanding that is narratively represented in the depot becomes physically realized at Asta's cooperative. Yakham works on the farm, Dianor continues his role of entertaining and educating in becoming the resident griot, and the frustrated intellectual Séga teaches courses at a

nearby school, having “overcome his anger” after being invited by Dianor to join them (200). While Séga did not always get along with Yakham and Dianor in the depot, they are able to reconcile their differences once they return to Senegal (183). Thus the connections that began in the depot are extended even further upon return. And even those who had given up on Senegal like Yakham end up working productively. They are joined by Asta’s friends and family, including her mother and her son Paapi, indicating a complete community integration that reaches across generational and gender differences.⁸ The space that Sow Fall imagines in this novel is thus more inclusive than the wrestling arena in *L’appel des arènes*.

The eventual success of the co-op appears to call for a return to the earth. One of the critical phrases indicative of Asta’s determination to succeed with her farm is “la terre ne ment pas” [the land doesn’t lie] (188), and this hope is borne out when the discovery of the herb *guewê* used by women to make incense and perfume leads to the farm’s economic sustainability (213). For the characters in the novel, this discovery points to the affirmation that the earth is indeed supporting them for taking care of it, and the phrase “la terre ne ment pas” is repeated upon the discovery of the *guewê* (214). Furthermore, the cooperative is named *Naatangué*, which a footnote emphasizes is evocative of “les notions de bonheur, abondance, paix” [notions of happiness, abundance, peace] (197n1). The name indicates the farm’s importance to Asta as a place that contrasts with the depot.

The novel also highlights the difference between rural and urban spaces with the reactions that those in the neighboring villages have to Asta and her friends’ arrival.

Naatangué’s neighbors refer to Asta and her friends as “waa reewu takh,” or “the people

⁸ In the context of female unification, Mortimer argues that the connections developed on the farm “do not extend to the younger generation” because Asta’s two daughters live in France (*Hearth* 166). But taking into account Asta’s son Paapi as well, the farm does in fact facilitate fully intergenerational cooperation.

from the concrete city” (203). As suggested by the nickname, these villagers are initially wary of Asta and her friends and assume that because they are from the city, they do not know what they are doing and will simply disturb life in the nearby villages (204). These assumptions indicate a distance between urban and rural spaces that is present throughout the narrative, and the villagers’ reactions further suggest that while *Naatangué* is in Senegal and within reasonable driving distance of Dakar, it is a very different place from the city.

Despite the differences between country and city evident in the text, Asta and her friends are eventually accepted by and form connections to those in the surrounding villages, and the novel ultimately demonstrates the value of these local relationships. The relationship between the two groups of people shows that Asta and the other detainees are able to reintegrate into life at home (some of the detainees have been in France for longer periods of time than others), and *Naatangué* facilitates this. While at first Asta cannot gain the villagers’ support despite visiting twelve nearby chiefs (204), the villagers come to respect the work being done on Asta’s farm when they realize that Asta and her friends are devoted to caring for the earth in a sustainable manner (205). As Asta and the other detainees successfully become part of a rural community and create a bountiful farm, they counteract the trajectories of other individuals unable to readjust to life in Senegal such as Samba from *L’aventure ambiguë* or Diattou from *L’appel des arènes*. Even Faye from *Ô pays, mon beau peuple!* is killed for the ideologies that he instills upon his return, despite the fact that he successfully starts a cooperative as well.

In addition to offering a sanctuary for those individuals who suffered in the depot, Sow Fall uses *Naatangué* to point to a significant message for self-sustainability in

Senegal. Mortimer points out that the farm demonstrates the possibility for projects to exist in Senegal that do not depend on foreign support (*Hearth* 165). In this way, Sow Fall indicates how Senegal might develop without dependence on foreign aid, in the same way that is suggested in Sow Fall's earlier novel *L'ex-père de la nation* but cannot be realized in that text. Alongside this independence, the farm enables Asta and her friends to develop and maintain both local and global connections. First of all, *Naatangué* has the potential to be a significant institution that contributes to the surrounding neighborhoods through a school and theater (209). And while Asta and her friends may seem isolated in their rural surroundings, they trade frequently with those near and far. Furthermore, the cooperative has an additional aspect of communication integral to its trade. Asta and her friends have named their products "Douceurs du bercail," and they put that stamp on everything they sell. In this way, their message of hope and hard work, which is also Sow Fall's, spreads throughout Senegal. The narrative states the possibility for this dissemination because the goods with "Douceurs du bercail" are not just marked with a name but "covoiaient partout dans le pays et ailleurs l'idée d'une terre généreuse" [conveyed everywhere in the country and abroad the idea of a generous land] (217).

While the descriptions of life at *Naatangué* emphasize local connections to the neighboring farmers and others in the villages, among the group of people working together on the farm, and with those who purchase the goods labeled "Douceurs du bercail," Sow Fall also indicates the value and importance of international connections. Rather than suggest a complete rejection of all influence from France, Sow Fall indicates how the two nations might interact more reciprocally, despite the economic imbalance between them. Since Asta and her friends have a successful project, they can imagine

interaction with France differently from the way that those migrants desperate to leave Senegal to work abroad do. The possibility for a changed interaction with France is seen in Asta's suggestion that her son Paapi might one day study there. Prior to *Naatangué*, Asta lamented the fact that her son wanted to leave Senegal, but now Asta imagines that one day Paapi might further his education in France and give back even more to the farm (202).

Asta and Anne's relationship also indicates the value of connections between Senegal and France in the way that the two women consistently offer each other support. While much of the novel focuses on Asta's ordeal in the depot and her later success with *Naatangué*, a portion of the text is in fact from Anne's perspective as she searches for Asta in the depot and then reminisces about the early days of their friendship. In her article on *Douceurs du bercail*, "Les clés du projet humaniste: une question de dignité," Jeanne-Sarah de Larquier indicates that as the novel alternates between the observations of Asta and Anne, the two narratives become increasingly entwined (94). The two women's lives are interconnected from the day they meet in a maternity ward both awaiting the births of their first children. Khaiudi Claver Mabana also suggests that the women's relationship is continually characterized by mutual care and support as each woman has faced difficulties and supported the other – Anne lost her newborn child, while Asta divorced her abusive first husband (72).

De Larquier argues that the connection between the two women is an example of a friendship that extends across cultural and national barriers (95). But at the same time that they reach across nations, the two women remain marked by their cultural backgrounds, which ultimately enrich their relationship. The reason that Anne is familiar

with Senegal is because her parents traveled throughout Africa as researchers, and her mother became fascinated by Senegalese culture and language. Anne explains, “Je crois que le mot *téranga* avait charmé ma mère. Pour elle, c’était à cause de la magie des sonorités de ce mot” [I think that the word *téranga* charmed my mother. For her, it was because of the magic in the sounds of this word] (153-54). This comment points to Anne’s mother’s possibly exoticized view of life in Senegal, and Anne’s own curiosity extends from her mother’s interests. Anne’s mother has in fact been read as a symbol of colonialism by Mame Selbée Diouf Ndiaye (107), and Anne’s mother’s as well as Anne’s knowledge and interest in Senegal and Africa more broadly stems in part from idealized notions of life there. In contrast to this, Asta talks more specifically of villages where everyone works hard and contributes fruitfully to production; this makes the ideas of solidarity and unification that Anne imagines in Africa more tangible and precise (154-55). The initial discussion that Asta and Anne have about Africa engages a number of generalizations. Their conversation here is one of the only places in the text where the subject of discussion is “l’afrique” rather than “le Sénégal,” thus emphasizing the assumptions that Anne has made about Africa and Asta’s negotiation of them. The conversation also enables Asta to articulate her belief in cooperation and community self-sufficiency. While Anne and Asta’s friendship might point to the value of a universal humanism, as de Larquier suggests (“Clés” 95-96), it is also tied to the histories that the two women have. The coming together of these particularities furthers the connections between the two women and the two countries.

The connection between both women’s histories is epitomized by Anne’s support for *Naatangué*. First of all, Anne visits Asta in Senegal and is one of the first people to

see the land that will become the farm. But more significantly, Anne later contributes seeds to be grown on the farm, which she sends from France. The narrator's explanation of the seeds demonstrates the connection between the two women and their respective backgrounds:

Ils avaient aussi planté les espèces qu'Anne avait envoyées en grande quantité, pas au hasard, mais selon des renseignements puisés dans des encyclopédies – objets chéris de sa défunte mère – revisités avec le double plaisir de ranimer des souvenirs lointains et de transplanter en zone sahélienne, dans les terres d'Asta, des arbres bien de chez elle. (216)

They also planted the species that Anne had sent in large quantity, not randomly, but according to instructions drawn from encyclopedias – objects cherished by her late mother – revisited with the double pleasure of rekindling distant memories and transplanting them in the Sahel, in Asta's lands, trees typical of her home.

Anne researches the seeds in her mother's books, which connects the seeds as well to her mother's naive but genuine interest in Senegal. Furthermore, Anne learns about what seeds to send in written texts, in contrast to discovery of the *guewê* that happens communally on the farm. While the research methods are different, both types of plants are important to the farm and will grow there. Finally Anne's plants, in being transplanted, reverse the direction that migration might usually occur in the contemporary context of Senegal and France. Rather than having people migrate from Senegal to France, Anne's seeds make the reverse journey when they move from their home "chez [Anne]" to the "zone sahélienne." This reverse migration is further emphasized by Asta's comment that Anne "survivra dans ces arbres que sa générosité a fait voyager à travers l'océan" [will live on in these trees that due to her generosity traveled across the ocean] (222). The seeds were not simply mailed but were made to journey across the ocean, recalling the journey of a migrant in a boat. In *Douceurs du bercail*, there is a double contribution to the farm that comes from both local and international sources. Integral to

this is the lasting connection between Asta and Anne that has been maintained through frequent phone calls and visits (36). Their relationship is a model not only for universal cooperation but more significantly for a renegotiated interaction between Senegal and France.

Though Anne dies before returning to see the farm in full form, the lasting connection between the two women is represented by Dianor's recitation of "la belle histoire du fleuve et de la femme" [the beautiful story of the river and the woman] (223). The story is told in honor of Anne after her death, and while readers are not given access to the story, Sow Fall indicates that it is shared among everyone present, as well as Anne despite her physical absence. This moment at the novel's end recalls the similar oral performance that unites everyone at the end of Sow Fall's *Le jujubier du patriarce*. But where that novel connects everyone of a particular ancestry, *Douceurs du bercail* solidifies connections between those in Senegal and those from France.

This utopian vision supported by local and global friendships may appear to be "not enough" of a concrete solution to the very real economic difficulties faced by Senegal and other African countries.⁹ Yet Sow Fall's perspective remains as practical in *Douceurs du bercail* as it is in her earlier and more critical texts such as *L'ex-père de la nation* and *La grève des bātū*. Through the testimonies of Yakham, Dianor, and other migrants in the depot, Sow Fall presents difficulties encountered in both Senegal and France. Additionally, Sow Fall's depiction of the depot mirrors very closely the unfortunate situations where immigration detainees might find themselves.¹⁰ Finally,

⁹ This was suggested by Wandia Njoya in the presentation of her paper "Migration, Intellectual Decadence and African Migration to France" at the 2009 ALA conference.

¹⁰ In an interview with Ada Uzoamaka Azodo, Sow Fall explains that she has been told how closely her depiction of the depot is to descriptions of real immigrant detention centers ("African Soul" 294).

through her choice of the novel to articulate these concerns,¹¹ Sow Fall not only suggests the value of community projects but also narratively constructs local and global connections between people and communities that foster an alternative to the migration trajectories in other texts.

While both *L'appel des arènes* and *Douceurs du bercail* indicate the importance of oral performances and rural community formations, the results of migration are very different in these two novels. In *L'appel des arènes*, Sow Fall ultimately portrays migration and return as a doomed endeavor; Diattou cannot benefit from the wrestling arenas the way that her son can, and she is irremediably lost. But in *Douceurs du bercail*, Sow Fall imagines a more productive outcome to return from abroad, even amidst Asta's particularly difficult experience in the airport depot. In part, Sow Fall articulates this unique solution through a combination of elements that are present in her earlier novels, such as an attention to Senegal's global position in *L'ex-père de la nation* and the importance of oral performance, which is particularly clear in *Le jujubier du patriarce*. But just as *Douceurs du bercail* is different from *L'appel des arènes*, it stands out from all of Sow Fall's other works in its precise articulation of a way to combat not only the difficulties of migration but also the imbalance between Senegal and France. Sow Fall demonstrates how this is possible both through local endeavors as well as the maintenance of international connections. In this way, Sow Fall's project in *Douceurs du bercail* is similar to that of other contemporary Senegalese creative producers also able to articulate and utilize a variety of communities and affiliations through narrative, song, and video.

¹¹ Sow Fall discusses her choice of the novel genre to address social concerns in a number of interviews (Hammond 192; Lebon 68).

Chapter Three

Ken Bugul's First Three Novels and Beyond:

A Progressive Exploration of Migration

Ken Bugul's first three novels are often described as an autobiographical trilogy, and articles published after Bugul's more recent *De l'autre côté du regard* [*As Seen from the Other Side*] (2003) include this text in the list as well.¹ Indeed, *Le baobab fou* (1982), *Cendres et braises* [*Ashes and Embers*] (1994), *Riwan ou le chemin de sable* (1999), and finally *De l'autre côté du regard* all address similar themes and experiences, which Bugul has discussed as parallel to her own in interviews. In discussing her personal life, Bugul has mentioned the separation from her parents and living in Belgium (Magnier, "Ken Bugul" 152; 155), the abusive relationship she had in France (Bourget and d'Almeida 354; Garane 104), as well as returning to Senegal to eventually marry a prominent Serigne (Bourget and d'Almeida 356; Garane 103-04).² It is easy to characterize these texts as autobiographical or semi-autobiographical.³ However, in his encyclopedia-style entry on Ken Bugul, Patrick Corcoran argues against the quick assumption that Bugul's first three books demonstrate "a need to 'write through' certain personal problems before finding the freedom to write without inhibitions," and he points out that Bugul "invites just such an interpretation" in her interviews (103). Corcoran's warning is well-taken, especially because Bugul's first three novels are much more than a "writing through" of Bugul's personal problems. While acknowledging that Bugul's

¹ Most articles and interviews that seek to provide any sort of expansive mention of Bugul's work mention this "autobiographical trilogy" and sometimes include her more recent text as an addition. See for example Corcoran 103; Bourget and d'Almeida 352; Garane 101; and Azodo, "Introduction" 14.

² This list of cited interviews does not attempt to be exhaustive. Bugul has given numerous other interviews and frequently answers questions about the relationship between her life and her work.

³ Jeanne Garane notes, however, that only *Le baobab fou* is officially presented as autobiography in its publication as part of the Vies d'Afrique collection (111n1).

novels are indeed autobiographically inflected, it is possible to understand her first three texts as a trilogy, but one that is not only about Bugul's life and is in fact an extended exploration of departure, immigration, and return.

Over the course of Bugul's first three novels there is a shift in the portrayal of Europe, Senegal, and migration between the two. While the moment of return home appears in all three texts, the community that the protagonist encounters upon return becomes increasingly important with each successive work. In the third book, *Riwan ou le chemin de sable*, the community has become so significant that the narrative is no longer exclusively first person in the way that the earlier texts *Le baobab fou* and *Cendres et braises* are. Additionally, *Riwan ou le chemin de sable* points to a reconciliation with and recovery from the protagonist's (mis)adventures abroad; Bugul does not explore this possibility as extensively in the earlier *Cendres et braises*, where the narrator's abusive relationship in France remains prominent, and Bugul only suggests it in *Le baobab fou*, when the narrator returns from Belgium at the novel's end. Over the course of these three texts, Bugul may indicate how she has worked through her personal difficulties. But more importantly, Bugul's writing points to a changing understanding of migration and homecoming wherein the possibilities for successful return, community relationships, and the maintenance of international ties become increasingly apparent with each novel.

The critical response to *Le baobab fou* has been so extensive and continues decades after its publication that until Bugul's recent flurry of new novels, her other work (and *Cendres et braises* in particular) was largely ignored. Jeanne-Sarah de Larquier points this out in her article "From Fanon's Alienating Masks to Sartre's Retour en

Afrique: From *Le Baobab fou* to *De l'autre côté du regard*,” wherein she explores *Le baobab fou* and *De l'autre côté du regard* as autobiography and argues the two texts ought to be read together (123-24). Although she is focused on the works’ autobiographical elements, de Larquier nonetheless indicates that the two novels, when considered together, point to “an optimistic evolution from an alienated stranger in *Le baobab fou* to a space where ex-colonizers no longer shape the emotional and social landscape in *De l'autre côté du regard*” (135). This more recent novel is in fact so focused on the narrator’s familial relationships that Sow Fall mentions experiences of exile and migration only in passing. In this way, *De l'autre côté du regard* fits alongside Bugul’s first three novels but also points in a different direction, one that Bugul continues to follow in her most recent publications, such as *Rue Félix-Faure* (2005) and *La pièce d’or* [*The Gold Coin*] (2006), which focus on criticisms of and possibilities within Senegalese society.

***Le baobab fou*: The Alienated Self in Belgium**

Bugul’s first novel *Le baobab fou*, though renowned for its risk-taking (and risqué) narrative, in fact has a trajectory similar to that of earlier migration novels.⁴ In this first text of Bugul’s, the narrator Ken leaves home for Brussels in an attempt to escape from the memories of her past. As these memories and traumas come back to haunt her, life in Belgium becomes increasingly difficult because the visual facts of Ken’s race and gender conflict with her imagined connection to whites in Europe. Although some of Ken’s experiences and the structure of the narrative differ from earlier stories of (primarily

⁴ Critical explorations of Bugul’s work habitually mention the connection between *Le baobab fou*’s somewhat controversial content and Mariëtou Mbaye Biléoma taking the pen name Ken Bugul. An early discussion of this appears in an interview with Magnier (“Ken Bugul” 153-54). See also Azodo, “Introduction” 1.

male) migration, Ken's overall journey is in line with that of previous texts. After facing trials abroad that result in extreme isolation and alienation, Ken has no choice but to return to Senegal. As in the ending of Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *L'aventure ambiguë*, Ken in *Le baobab fou* appears to have resolved her personal uncertainties, but the narrative does not indicate what this might mean for the broader community in Senegal or for Ken's relationship to those around her. In *Le baobab fou*, the journey to Europe remains alienating and traumatic, and Bugul does not directly articulate how Ken's return might lead to recovery.

The vast critical response to *Le baobab fou* contains a set of possible, and potentially overlapping, responses to the result of Ken's journey. Some articles insist that Ken's voyage and exile lead to learning and ultimately to healing and recovery. Critics Michelle Mielly and Keith Walker have both read Ken's journey abroad as one of emancipation, leading Ken to new libratory possibilities of self-understanding (Mielly 49; Walker 182, 209). Another possible reading recognizes the difficulties of Ken's time abroad as well as her childhood and insists that it is not through the voyage but through writing about the voyage that both the character Ken and the author Bugul can resolve their problems. Studies favoring this autobiographical approach were common throughout the 1990s and shortly thereafter and include works by Mildred Mortimer (*Journeys* 176), Irène d'Almeida (54-55), and Odile Cazenave (*Rebellious Women* 218).⁵ These critics all provide insightful readings of the novel, but their arguments become problematic in retrospect. Any argument about the healing that Bugul experienced in writing *Le baobab fou* conflicts with the writing of Bugul's subsequent novels, which

⁵ An article by Ayo Abiétou Coli presents an exception to this type of argument. Coli in fact uses the autobiographical approach to question the possibility that Bugul heals through writing (67).

suggests that recovery was not yet complete at the conclusion of *Le baobab fou*. Finally, another way to understand the novel's resolution as positive is through a purely symbolic approach that focuses on the image of the baobab tree that confronts Ken upon her return. Chantal Thompson's interpretation is an example of this perspective. She understands the dead baobab as symbolic of Ken's life up to the end of the novel, and because the tree is dead Ken will move on to a new and better life at home ("Garden of Eden" 97).

However, examining *Le baobab fou* in the context of previous Senegalese migration narratives and Bugul's other works indicates that Ken's return does not necessarily resolve the challenges she faces both at home and abroad. Any hopeful possibilities suggested by Ken's return are not fully explored in the novel and certainly do not come about because of any emancipatory or revelatory experiences that Ken has had while abroad. Thus Ken's journey in *Le baobab fou* remains difficult, alienating, and traumatic, much like the migration narratives from earlier decades.

Although Ken's voyage primarily follows the same trajectory of earlier texts about migration from Senegal to Europe, her destination is different. Unlike the protagonists of works by Kane, Ousmane Socé, and Ousmane Sembene who travel to Paris or elsewhere in France, Ken travels to Belgium. And while this does not make her experience profoundly different, it nonetheless marks her as being particularly marginal. Ken indicates that she feels slighted because she cannot experience Paris and narrates passing through without being able to stop. Ken explains,

Je devais prendre un bus pour aller à un autre aéroport, mais ce fut un bien triste trajet. Ce n'était pas ainsi que je voyais Paris, ce n'était pas ainsi que je pensais Paris. Ce fut seulement plus tard que je fus informée que le bus avait pris les routes périphériques. (39)

I had to take a bus to another airport, but it was a very sad trip. This was not at all how I'd expected Paris would be. It was only later that I was told the bus had taken outlying roads. (29)

While Ken ends up in a French-speaking European country, she has not exactly reached the location evoked by French colonial education's phrase "nos ancêtres les Gaulois" [our ancestors the Gauls].⁶ Ken imagines that upon arriving in Belgium she is at last in the "pays de mes 'ancêtres'" [the land of my "ancestors"] (40 [29]), but her stopover in Paris indicates that she is not quite in the right place, even if the fact that she is Senegalese rather than Congolese facilitates her interaction with whites in Belgium (89).

Because of *Le baobab fou*'s similarity to earlier texts, critics frequently mention it alongside Kane's *L'aventure ambiguë* and other Senegalese novels that portray migration.⁷ In particular, Mortimer, citing Kane as well, suggests that Bugul's narrative "follows a tradition that began with [one of] the earliest Senegalese francophone novel[s], Diallo's *Force-bonté*," and Mortimer highlights the "circular" journeys made by the protagonists of Diallo's, Kane's, and Bugul's texts (*Journeys* 166). Among other similarities to these works, in *Le baobab fou*, Ken reports that she felt isolated from those around her as a child and teenager. The narrative frequently returns to Ken's early memory of being left behind when her mother went to care for an infant grandchild (80). The mother's departure not only creates a rupture between Ken and her mother but between Ken and the rest of her family as well, who "soudain m'étaient devenus étrangers" [had suddenly become strangers to me] (82 [67]).⁸ This isolation and

⁶ The narrative references this phrase (39 [28]). For discussion of French colonial schools' use of this term, see Manning 166, and for broader information on earlier French colonial education and the *mission civilisatrice*, see Alice Conklin's *A Mission to Civilize*.

⁷ Among others, articles by Anne Adams and Thompson ("L'aventure ambiguë") both feature the connection between the novels of Kane and Bugul as central to their respective arguments.

⁸ A number of semi-autobiographical and autobiographical texts written by other West African women articulate a separation from the mother. For example, the narrator is distant from her family and mother in

separation also appear in other texts that portray migration. Even the generally optimistic Bakary Diallo, author of *Force-Bonté*, recalls an uncertain childhood, wherein the young Diallo does not fit in with his family and is not cut out for the family trade of shepherd (8). This difficulty in fact leads Diallo to leave his village for St. Louis, where he eventually joins the ranks of the *tirailleurs* and goes to France. For very different (and more positive) reasons, Samba in *L'aventure ambiguë* stands out from his cohorts and is the only one in his village picked to attend French school.⁹ These protagonists, like Ken, have always been different from those around them. Unsurprisingly, Ken reports a childhood of isolation, and as Mortimer notes, this is in part what leads her to seek out her supposed ancestors the Gauls (*Journeys* 173).

Although Ken hopes to find a place where she will be at home in Belgium, the difficulties she experiences there trigger memories of childhood traumas, thus indicating that Ken is far from at ease. For example, she remembers the death of her brother and other experiences from her youth during a harrowing abortion consultation (60). And Ken's first experience working as a prostitute leads to one of the longest periods of the novel set in the past. Ken is disgusted by the client's sexual desire for her and wants to vomit (127). The experience causes her to look over her life "depuis le départ de la mère jusqu'à ce jour" [from the day of the mother's departure until this one] (128 [109]). But most of the memories she reports after this are unpleasant, and they do not result in healing or self-understanding. Elisabeth Mudimbe-Boyi insists that the novel's

particular in Aoua Kéita's *Femme d'Afrique, la vie d'Aoua Kéita racontée par elle-même* (1975), and the narrator's mother is absent due to death in Nafissatou Diallo's *De Tilène au Plateau, une enfance dakaroise* (1975). Renée Larrier and Sidonie Smith both explore this aspect of the lives of African women writers and autobiographers, while this theme has also been explored with regard to Western women writers by Marianne Hirsch.

⁹ Adams notes the contrast between Ken, singled out negatively for wanting to attend school, and Samba, chosen to attend French school because of his already privileged status (551).

wanderings through memory demonstrate “a wrestling for stabilization and territorilization” (203), but no stabilization is achieved, for an even more horrifying and embarrassing encounter with the same man follows Ken’s long foray into the past. Ken’s experiences abroad thus heighten the negative memories of her previous difficulties rather than assuaging them or enabling her to come fully to terms with them; after all, Ken’s time in Belgium ends with near-suicide. Walker insists that the madness that Ken experiences in these moments eventually leads to understanding and rebirth through the contemplation of suicide (205). But Ken has no constructive way to deal with the identity crisis that life in Belgium brings upon her, and her voyage is primarily destructive to her identity.

In addition to considerations of her past, Ken constantly encounters difficulties in her present life in Belgium. And though she is involved in activities different from those of protagonists in earlier novels, her experience of alienation is much the same. First of all, Ken has an initial and terrifying recognition of the significance of her skin color. After attempting to buy a wig and being told that there are no wigs appropriate for her, Ken sees her reflection in a store window:

Je n’en crus pas mes yeux. Je me dis rapidement que ce visage ne m’appartenait pas: j’avais les yeux hors de moi, la peau brillante et noire, le visage terrifiant. J’étouffais à nouveau parce que ce regard là, c’était mon regard. (50)¹⁰

I couldn’t believe my eyes. That face couldn’t belong to me, I quickly told myself: my eyes were bulging, my skin was shiny and black, the face terrifying. I almost choked; that look there was my look. (37)

The experience at once demonstrates Ken’s realization of how she appears to whites in Belgium and indicates a distance between this image and the person Ken feels she really

¹⁰ This passage is often cited by critics, as it particularly typifies Ken’s difficulties in Belgium. See, for example both Watson 154 and Cazenave, *Rebellious Women* 44.

is. Ken does not recognize the image in the window, and the experience shocks and disturbs her, as indicated by her “terrifying” face and the mention that she is choking.

Having thought of Europeans as her ancestors, these recognitions particularly upset Ken, and they do not result in the progress that some critics suggest. Walker indicates that Ken makes significant realizations while abroad (207), and indeed Ken recognizes something about her identity as it is perceived by white Europeans. However, she has difficulty acknowledging the reality of her difference. For example, Ken states, “Je me touchais le menton, la joue pour mieux me rendre compte que cette couleur était à moi” [I touched my chin, my cheek, to better help me realize that this was my color] (50 [38]). And even after Ken has lived in Belgium for a long time, the recognition of her skin color continues to haunt her. After her first acid trip, Ken desperately scratches off her skin until it bleeds because, as she says, “[J]e ne voulais plus avoir la peau noire” [I didn’t want to have black skin any longer] (113 [96]). As d’Almeida indicates, Ken’s skin only takes on this significance in the European context (59). Thus Ken’s problems cannot only be seen as her struggle to recover from childhood trauma, because life in Europe itself presents its own set of problems.

The novel also indicates that Ken places herself in a particularly difficult situation because of her desire for appreciation from the white people around her; she takes advantage of the perceptions they have about her due to her skin color. Cazenave recognizes that this is central to Ken’s increasing sense of alienation, which

develops through the idea of the importance of skin color and the phenomenon of fashion and exoticism that encourages Western men to seek out the company of African women and vice versa. (*Rebellious Women* 44)

To this as well, I would add the general exoticism current among Ken's friends; women as well as men find Ken desirable for a number of reasons. Among Ken's friends "[n]ous avons une amie noire, une Africaine," était la phrase la plus 'in'" ["We have a Black friend, an African woman" was the most fashionable sentence] (101 [85]). And in another instance, the Denoëls, a married couple, become friends with Ken as a way to assuage their colonial guilt (103), though the male half of the couple eventually hopes for more in the relationship. Ken is thus seen as a desirable object among both men and women, and she continues to play into this role despite the psychological difficulties it causes her.

Ken also generally avoids interaction with other blacks, further contributing to her isolation. But significantly, the only black person with whom Ken feels any connection is the young Senegalese man Souleymane, whom she used to know in Senegal and meets unexpectedly in Brussels. She specifies in fact, "Je n'arrivais pas à me lier avec les Africains des autres nationalités" [I didn't manage to become close to Africans of other nationalities] (107 [90]). The significance of the connection between the two young people is indicated by the moment Ken meets Souleymane when he hears her use the Wolof word "dof" [crazy] (89).¹¹ The word and language they share link them and also link Ken to her home: "Souleymane me donnait envie de retourner dans mon pays" [Souleymane made me want to go home to my country] (91 [77]). Ken's interaction with Souleymane points to the significance that Ken's home continues to have for her, even though the memories of her village and her connection to Souleymane cannot provide Ken any solace given her difficult time in Belgium. Despite her numerous social adventures and affiliations with people of various nationalities, Ken remains emotionally

¹¹ In her article, Adams provides a lengthy discussion of the significance of the word "dof" in Senegal and in the novel more specifically (563).

isolated. Ken's alienation from those around her marks her entire time in Belgium and culminates in her consideration of suicide.

Even though Ken has negative memories of childhood, she also increasingly expresses an idealized opinion of life in Africa broadly and her home more specifically. Life in Belgium becomes more difficult, and Ken realizes that the Gauls are not her ancestors, but the perspective that she develops of her home is not entirely accurate as a result. As Mudimbe-Boyi suggests, the narrator's process of self-discovery, while productive in some ways, ultimately leads to this problematic view:

Bugul proceeds to uncover the layers of cultural amnesia that had led her to embrace a false ancestry, and she discovers Africa, which becomes her reference point. But Bugul's Africa is one reconstructed from her childhood memories, during her agonizing days of exile in the West. (205)

Ken insists that men never deceive their wives "[a]u village" [in the village] because if a man is interested in another woman, he openly marries her (71 [57]). And Ken also says, unconsciously contradicting her own memories of childhood isolation, "Là-bas tout le monde est intégré, concerné, entouré; tout vit ensemble" [Down there, everyone was integrated, concerned, surrounded; everything lived together] (97 [81]; qtd in Mudimbe-Boyi 105). In a moment of desperation, Ken even wishes to return to her village (87), and she does return briefly for her father's funeral. However, the village provides her with no solace whatsoever, and she realizes "ce n'était pas non plus là que je trouverais le rêve éternel" [it wasn't here either that I would find the eternal dream] (95 [79]). This brief return and its result do not bode well for Ken's situation at the end of the novel, where she returns home for good in the hope of recovery. Given Ken's idealized visions of life in the village and her uncomfortable return home for the funeral, meeting the baobab tree at the novel's end may not suffice for her recovery.

Due to Ken's realizations while abroad, Mielly suggests that only through "self-imposed" exile can Ken, or Bugul herself, come to terms with the difficulties of her past (50-51). Mielly also argues that Bugul moves forward because "losing or letting go of one's 'native' or 'original' self is necessary in order to find and depict a distinct textual self" (56). Mielly's argument, driven by an adherence to Homi Bhabha's notion of Third Space,¹² overlooks significant aspects of the novel, particularly the fact that Ken never completely abandons her home location. As evidenced by her nostalgia for her home village and by her friendship with Souleymane, Ken remains connected to her home, even if it cannot yet provide the solace that she seeks.¹³

Walker goes even further than Mielly to suggest not only that Ken progresses due to her voyage abroad but that the madness and near-suicide she experiences in Belgium lead to her freedom. Walker explains, "Migrancy entails status inconsistency, role conflict, and shifts in consciousness that, together, constitute a radical learning experience" (207). Indeed, Ken does learn while living in Belgium, and this learning is profoundly painful for her. Walker does not deny the intensity of Ken's experience, but he insists, "The madness that was initially self-destructive eventually becomes emancipatory for Ken" (209). But Ken does not recover after going through her near-suicidal moment, for she boards the plane home "folle de rage et de désespoir" [full of rage and despair] (181 [158]). Ken's "radical learning experience" does not result in more coherent self-understanding. And in fact, her newly idealized image of Africa could prove to be even more difficult to overcome.

¹² See, for example, Bhabha's chapter "The Commitment to Theory" in *The Location of Culture* for his discussion of Third Space and the challenge to originary narratives (54-55).

¹³ In her article "African Muslim Communities in Diaspora," Shirin Edwin makes a convincing argument against Mielly and uses in part the suggestion that Ken "misses her home" (84).

Using a symbolic approach, many articles highlight the traumatic aspects of Ken's time in Belgium but nonetheless use the novel's concluding pages to argue for Ken's ultimate recovery. Thompson concludes, "As [Ken] pronounces her eulogy to the baobab, she is saying farewell to her life of alienation and welcoming a new and better life back in the village" ("Garden of Eden" 97). And even Mudimbe-Boyi suggests that the baobab's death "inaugurates 'the first morning of a sunrise without sundown,' a new era" (211). The baobab, though declared dead by a villager Ken talks to, continues to stand tall, in contrast to the other baobab trees that are hiding behind all of their leaves (181). This image further suggests the possibility for progress upon the novel's conclusion.

While this ending might point to hopeful possibilities, the narrative does not indicate just how Ken will be able to recover. As the novel ends, Ken still stands alone beside the dead baobab tree. She may be putting to rest her past, but her future remains uncertain, and Bugul does not articulate what role Ken may have in the community from which she always felt estranged. As Julia Watson suggests, "The ending of *The Abandoned Baobab* is open, unarticulated, in profound ambivalence between death and rebirth, loss and recovery . . . solitude and community, return and going forward" (161). For example, the ending lacks any suggestion of how the idyllic image of the village that Ken has developed while abroad might interact with the realities of her return. *Le baobab fou* primarily explores Ken's difficulties in Belgium as her life there intersects with memories from her past. Ultimately Ken's voyage abroad appears destructive and recovery upon return remains uncertain, much like travel to Europe and return home in earlier Senegalese texts. Bugul examines the potential for recovery much more directly in her two subsequent novels, *Cendres et braises* and *Riwan ou le chemin de sable*.

Cendres et braises: Oscillations on a Theme

Cendres et braises, the novel that follows *Le baobab fou*, in many ways occupies a narrative and thematic space between *Le baobab fou* and *Riwan ou le chemin de sable*. Considering it in this way highlights the three texts' shifting portrayals of migration and return. Like *Le baobab fou*, *Cendres et braises* narrates the story of a young Senegalese woman who goes to Europe in an effort to become part of European society; in both novels, the protagonist is instead met with difficulties that ultimately lead to the disintegration of her sense of identity. The narrator Marie has a particularly difficult time because her life in Paris revolves around her attachment to her abusive lover Y., who refuses to leave his wife for her. Marie faces loneliness abroad as does Ken, but *Le baobab fou* does not specify what life is like for the female narrator once she returns home. In contrast, *Cendres et braises* follows Marie's reintegration into her family's village in Senegal, where she becomes close to and eventually marries a local Marabout.¹⁴ In its portrayal of life in Senegal, the novel is thus very similar to Bugul's following novel *Riwan ou le chemin de sable*, and *Cendres et braises* also begins to articulate the type of community involvement and interconnection that is present in *Riwan ou le chemin de sable*. But where Bugul articulates in *Riwan ou le chemin de sable* a movement between different ways of life and locations, in *Cendres et braises*, Marie's recovery is contingent upon her escape from European surroundings and full immersion in Senegalese village life. In *Cendres et braises*, the two spaces cannot be reconciled and remain completely separate from each other.

¹⁴ The word *marabout* is a French-developed term generally understood as equivalent to the Wolof term *sériñ* (written in French spelling as *serigne*). Both *marabout* and *sériñ* can, at their most broad, refer to a Muslim religious leader, teacher, spiritual figure, or other dignitary. For discussion of these words, see Cruise O'Brien 23 and Searing 21. In *Cendres et braises*, Bugul uses "Marabout," while in *Riwan ou le chemin de sable*, she uses "Serigne" (in the French spelling) to refer to a similar figure.

The structure of the narrative is such that the novel's more recent past takes place upon Marie's return to her mother's village in Senegal, and everything that happens in Paris is set prior to that. The novel's narrative voice points to the kind of community relationships that are developed further in *Riwan ou le chemin de sable*, for Marie narrates much of her story about Paris in conversation with her friend Anta Sèye. In her review of *Cendres et braises*, Patricia-Pia Célérier comments that whereas Ken speaks to herself in *Le baobab fou*, Marie "se dégage de son narcissisme mélancolique" [breaks free from her melancholic narcissism] through her dialogue with Anta Sèye (1057). However, Anta Sèye is not very present once Marie begins her story, and Marie even comments, "Je ne savais plus si je la racontais à Anta Sèye qui était peut-être partie ou à moi-même ou à un auditeur invisible ou à l'environnement ou aux objets" [I didn't know anymore if I was telling it to Anta Sèye who had perhaps left or to myself or an invisible listener or the surroundings or objects] (41). Sometimes Marie continues speaking once Anta Sèye has left the room, or she insists that Anta Sèye remain and listen to her despite Anta Sèye's need to complete household tasks. The narrative effect is ultimately not that different from *Le baobab fou*, where Ken relates her difficult misadventures abroad in a consistent first person narrative, and just as Marie continues talking about her time in Paris whether or not Anta Sèye is in the room, the Parisian portion of the novel takes precedence over the rest.

Without suggesting that the narrator is precisely the same in each of Bugul's early novels (as could be assumed if one simply assumes all three women are Bugul),¹⁵ all three texts do indeed intersect. In *Cendres et braises*' oscillation between Marie's

¹⁵ In the article "Returning for the Surrogate Mother," Kerith Edwards makes this error and refers to the narrator as "Ken" when discussing all three novels.

girlhood and time in Paris on the one hand and her return to her mother's village on the other, the novel moves between the milieus present in both novels. The character Marie resembles Ken of *Le baobab fou* in many ways.¹⁶ Like Ken, Marie reports a feeling of being an outsider as a child and teenager. As Christian Mbarga notes, Marie is haunted by the feeling of abandonment left by the departures of both her mother and brother (142-43). And like Ken home on holiday, Marie, having returned from abroad, only uses “la langue de l'ailleurs” [the language of elsewhere] to talk with her friends (44). But while the uncertain young Marie resembles Ken, the later Marie who befriends and marries a nearby Marabout provides continuity with the protagonist of *Riwan ou le chemin de sable*. Like the narrator of *Riwan ou le chemin de sable*, Marie also follows a sandy path to the Marabout's household (5). And an early conversation Marie has with the Marabout, where she apologizes for not being able to visit sooner and he asks her about her travels is very similar to the protagonist's first meeting with the Serigne in *Riwan ou le chemin de sable* (*Cendres* 53-54; *Riwan* 16).

Although the parts of *Cendres et braises* where Marie is home in her mother's village are similar to *Riwan ou le chemin de sable*, her narration of her time in Paris takes up the bulk of the novel and provides its primary drama and plot. Marie's time in Paris is marked by isolation and is in many ways significantly more nightmarish than Ken's life in Brussels ever is. Whereas some argument might be made that Ken learns and progresses during her time in Belgium, no such argument could possibly be made for Marie's time in Paris. Marie does not explore different modes of life, nor does she contemplate her past memories. Her life is consumed by waiting for Y. to leave his wife's

¹⁶ Guy Ossito Midiohouan notes that while Ken, the narrator's name in *Le baobab fou*, is Mariètou Mbaye's pseudonym, Marie is a European version of the author's real name Mariètou (“Ken Bugul” 26).

house and come to the apartment he has provided for her. During the course of her years in Paris, Marie is frequently abused physically and psychologically by Y., but she always returns to him; she attempts suicide by turning on the gas in the stove (whereas Ken only contemplates suicide); and she is arrested on the request of Y. and subsequently hospitalized in an asylum. In no way can her trip be utilized to make an argument about the benefits or freedom gained through an exilic or transnational perspective; it is thus unsurprising that critics writing about *Le baobab fou* in this regard make no mention of *Cendres et braises*.¹⁷

Rather than moving across or between borders, Marie is perpetually stuck alongside Y. She says, for example, “Je passais toutes mes journées à attendre. Attendre un coup de téléphone, attendre un coup à la porte. Quand Y. apparaissait, c’était la délivrance” [I spent all of my days waiting. Waiting for a telephone ring, waiting for a knock at the door. When Y. appeared, it was deliverance] (62). The excursions that Marie does undertake simply make her situation worse, thus the narration indicates that Marie’s life is controlled by Y. even when she goes out. For example, Y. beats Marie after one excursion and demands to know where she had been (66). This exacerbates the state of her loneliness because she has no one to talk to about her situation (67).

Marie’s inability to extricate herself from her relationship to Y. is especially demonstrated by the trip she takes back to Senegal with him. During this trip, she alerts none of her family that she has returned and stays only with Y. At this point, even physical movement across borders cannot free Marie from her situation because she is so

¹⁷ Walker’s chapter on *Le baobab fou* appeared in 1999 and makes no reference to *Cendres et braises* from 1994, nor does Mielly’s 2000 article. This is not necessarily an oversight on their parts, but it is an indication that *Cendres et braises* does not fit into the model that both scholars attempt to establish for *Le baobab fou*.

attached to Y. She explains, “Je me souciais moins d’être dans mon pays que d’être avec Y.” [I cared less about being in my country than about being with Y.] (68). Bugul also articulates Marie’s alienation in Marie’s observations about the other Senegalese people she sees on her trip. Referring to waitresses in the restaurants she and Y. frequent, Marie explains, “[J]’avais envie d’être avec elles, de parler le même langage, de rentrer à la maison, de vivre les réalités profondes de mon pays, de vivre le même sort qu’elles” [I wanted to be with them, to speak the same language, to return home, to live the innermost realities of my country, to experience the same fate as them] (69). She thus remains separated from other Senegalese people when she returns and like Ken develops a somewhat idealized longing for home and family. The extent of Marie’s separation is also evident in her response to a neighbor’s query about whether there is anyone “de [son] pays” [from her country] to stay with after suffering particularly harmful abuse from Y. Marie questions, “Des gens de mon pays? Qui étaient les gens de mon pays et de quel pays?” [People from my country? Who were the people from my country and what country?] (145). Such a loss of place is not liberating for Marie but profoundly problematic.

In the novel, Paris emerges as central to Marie’s continued connection to Y. As Mbarga indicates, Marie’s insistence on returning to Y. is mirrored by her insistence on remaining in Paris (154). In this way, Marie is stuck and isolated much like protagonists of earlier migration narratives. Fara in *Mirages de Paris*, for example, refuses to leave Paris even though it is the source of all of his troubles. As Marie’s relationship with Y. becomes increasingly violent and difficult, she finds Paris more appealing: “[C]’était pendant toute cette époque où Paris était fraîche come le creux des seins des femmes

repues. Paris, ressemblant à une symphonie, m'emportait dans son murmure" [It was during this period that Paris was fresh like the bosom of satiated women. Paris, resembling a symphony, carried me away in its murmur] (117). This description suggests that Paris itself, like Y., has seduced her but in a somewhat spurious manner. She imagines, while walking on streets in a different neighborhood (where the inhabitants do not know her story), that she is living a different life. To those who do not know her, she appears to be happy (118). And just as she creates a dream while walking her dog through the streets of Paris, she indicates, "Je ne vivais que le rêve avec Y." [I was only living a dream with Y.] (118). Both Paris and Y. contribute to the extension of a fantasy that is ultimately very destructive for Marie. After returning to Y. even after she has her own job and apartment, Marie explains, "J'avais essayé désespérément de recommencer une nouvelle vie, mais le destin semblait me lier à Y. irrémédiablement" [I had desperately tried to start a new life, but destiny seemed to irremediably link me to Y.] (186). Even in expressing her wish to escape Y., the use of "destin" [destiny] here indicates Marie's sense that as long as she remains in Paris, she will always return to Y.

While Marie tells others in the village about her experiences in Paris, the village itself remains separate from the city in Senegal and from Europe. Indicative of this separation is the way that Marie hopes to recover from everything in the village: "J'étais revenue chez moi, j'étais revenue me réadapter, j'étais revenue me désaliéner. J'étais revenue me purifier" [I had returned home, I had returned to readapt, I had returned to de-alienate myself. I had returned to purify myself] (109). Furthermore, Marie's relationship with the Marabout, which is restorative and progressive, is set in contrast to her relationship to Y., which is destructive. While Marie remained primarily an object for Y.,

the Marabout listens to what she has to say and is curious about her experiences (54). The opposition between the two relationships is emphasized by the narrative structure, for as Marie's life with Y. becomes increasingly intolerable in Paris, she spends more and more time with the Marabout in Senegal and benefits from their conversations. *Cendres et braises* thus points to the direction that *Riwan ou le chemin de sable* subsequently goes. The narrative in *Cendres et braises* is, however, still primarily occupied with depicting Marie's traumatic experiences in Europe and thus does not deal with life in Senegal upon return as much as *Riwan ou le chemin de sable* does. In this way, *Cendres et braises* straddles *Le baobab fou* and *Riwan ou le chemin de sable* in terms of the extent of its concern with Europe and return to Senegal.

***Riwan ou le chemin de sable*: Return and Community**

The third novel in Bugul's trilogy is narratively very different from both *Le baobab fou* and *Cendres et braises*, even though the novel's subject matter overlaps especially with that of *Cendres et braises*. While *Le baobab fou* and *Cendres et braises* primarily depict an individual woman's journey to Europe and the difficulties encountered there, *Riwan ou le chemin de sable* is instead anchored in the Senegalese village to which the narrator returns after traveling for many years. In his survey of Bugul's first four novels, Guy Ossito Midiohouan emphasizes how *Riwan* is different from Bugul's previous work because it addresses the lives of not just one, but several women ("Ken Bugul" 28). And the novel explores not only the lives of women, for the Serigne himself as well as Riwan of the title are also important figures and contribute to the depiction of the community. But the story of the young woman Rama stands out in particular: she is given to the Serigne by her father, and she is ultimately unhappy about being forced to join the

Serigne's household, eventually cheating on the Serigne and fleeing his concession.

Through these overlapping stories and a unique narrative style, Bugul articulates both a community structure as well as movement that occurs outside of that structure, both of which ultimately enable the narrator to heal from her difficult past of errance abroad.

While *Riwan ou le chemin de sable* has received less critical attention than *Le baobab fou*, a few close studies of the novel do address the narrator's experiences abroad and her past in Europe in particular.¹⁸ In one article, Rangira Béa Gallimore argues that the novel suggests a complete rejection of all aspects of Western life (195; 201). On the other hand, Antje Ziethen indicates that rather than rejecting Western influences, the narrator remains nomadic, as symbolized by her traversal of the sandy path between her mother's house and the Serigne's compound (86; 87). Ziethen's argument is much more convincing, as the text contains numerous indications that the narrator has chosen not to dismiss everything she has experienced abroad. However, suggesting the narrator is "nomadic" is not quite appropriate because she finally settles down upon her return home. Though the narrator traverses the sandy path, she remains in the rural Senegalese space where she lived as a child. The narrator is neither immersed in the village to the exclusion of the rest of the world nor is she entirely nomadic; instead she remains rooted in her village surroundings while at the same time marking her own way, which occasionally takes her outside those surroundings, as when she goes to visit her friend in "la grande ville" [the big city] (213).

Despite the narrator's movement and her migratory past, the novel as a whole is more fully centered in Senegal than are Bugul's two previous texts. For example, the

¹⁸ Nathalie Etoké has a recently published article that also addresses *Riwan ou le chemin de sable* but her concern is instead the portrayal of female homoeroticism (173). Jacqueline Couti's fairly recent article also addresses the novel with regard to sexuality.

stories of several characters other than the narrator are significant to the text.¹⁹ The importance of the group is particularly apparent in the novel's opening, which is centered in the village: "Un lundi./ Jour de marché./ À Dianké" [A Monday./ Market day./ In Dianké] (9). By referring to Monday as market day, the opening lines immediately place the narrative in a particular local context where Monday is identified in this way. It is not clear who is talking or what is being discussed, which conveys a sense of being suddenly surrounded by (or dropped into) this conversation and situation.

When individuals' thoughts are depicted, particularly Rama's, they appear in series of broken lines. The thoughts, frequently phrased in the form of questions, suggest a dialogue with other individuals. And the text does not indicate whether only Rama is talking or others are as well. When Rama initially learns that she is to depart to marry the Serigne, the line of questioning reads,

Son père allait l'emmener chez le Serigne./ Comment?/ Pourquoi ne venait-on la chercher, se demanda-t-elle, à défaut de l'avoir voulue, cherchée, désirée?/ Une de ses soeurs allait peut-être l'accompagner?/ Non, une de ses tantes paternelles./ Laquelle?/ Sa Badiène./ Un rôle pour elle, enfin! (50).

Her father was going to bring her to the Serigne./ Pardon?/ Why didn't he come to find her, she asked herself, in the absence of being wanted, sought out, desired?/ Maybe one of her sisters was going to accompany her?/ No, one of her paternal aunts./ Which one?/ Her *Badiène*./ A role for her, at last!

In part, these phrases suggest Rama's internal concerns, particularly with the question about why her father is not coming to take her, which is directly attributed to Rama. But at the same time, many of these questions and responses could be Rama in dialogue with others in the village or perhaps others in the village in dialogue with each other.

¹⁹ Although the novel is narrated from a variety of perspectives, there is one narrator who is nonetheless more apparent and whose experiences relate to the narrators of Bugul's two earlier novels. In *Riwan ou le chemin de sable*, this narrator is not given a name, and I thus refer to her as "the narrator," even though the text is not always related from her perspective.

Particularly with the comment “[u]n rôle pour elle, enfin!” the passage takes the tone of village gossip, indicating that at last Rama is getting married, and her paternal aunt will have a job to do.²⁰ Although the situation of Rama being sent off to the Serigne is unpleasant and fills her with uncertainty and apprehension, this near-dialogue indicates how the surrounding community is part of everything that happens.

Throughout the novel, other questions and answers phrased in a way similar to those about Rama frequently appear. Exclamations and questions intrude upon the rest of the narrative, as a continuous reminder of all the inhabitants of the community and how they participate in and comment on events. These interjections sometimes reflect the sentiments of the narrator, as when she critiques the kinds of “emancipated” lives that she suggests Westernized women imagine they have (165; 179). But elsewhere, the interjections present a general opinion or the conversations of groups of people. One example of this appears in a discussion about how many wives the Serigne has:

“Combien d’épouses avait le Serigne?/ Certains disaient vingt-cinq ou trente. Et on ajoutait: - Mais ce Serigne ne peut être comparé à celui qui vient de décéder à Yari Goye et qui en avait une centaine./ Cent épouses ou cent femmes!/ Cent épouses!” [How many wives did the Serigne have?/ Some said twenty-five or thirty. And they added: - But this Serigne can’t be compared to the one who just passed away in Yari Goye and who had a hundred./ One hundred wives or one hundred women!/ One hundred wives!] (66).²¹ The use of “on” here especially indicates that this discussion involves a group of people and

²⁰ See Ousmane Sembene’s *Xala* for another literary portrayal of the paternal aunt’s involvement in a young woman’s marriage (55).

²¹ In addition to its appearance in the novel, Bugul herself discusses the difference between “femme” and “épouse” in her interview with Garane (103).

what “they” say.²² Through this gossip, questioning, and discussion, Bugul reveals the community’s involvement in everything that happens, for better or worse. In the case of the narrator, joining the Serigne enables her to at last become part of such a community, which is profoundly beneficial to her. This sense of community contrasts with the narratives of Ken in *Le baobab fou* and Marie in *Cendres et braises* who report everything only from their own points of view.

The presence of Senegalese Mouridism is another indication that the novel is located in a precise community. This contrasts particularly with Bugul’s earlier novel *Le baobab fou*. In her article, Edwin makes a careful but somewhat stretched argument for the importance of Ken’s Senegalese Muslim background in *Le baobab fou*. While Edwin must dissect small textual clues in *Le baobab fou* to make this argument, a similar position can be maintained more easily in the case of *Riwan ou le chemin de sable*. This is not simply because the narrator joins a significant Serigne but also because of the frequent references to the founder of Senegalese Mouridism, Cheikh Amadou Bamba, as well as other references, such as a discussion of the Magal (pilgrimage) to Touba, the sacred Mouride city (53). Elsewhere, the narrator questions, “Quand allions-nous avoir un Ibra Fall pour nous débayer le chemin!” [When were we going to have an Ibra Fall to show us the way!] (177) in the context of current political leaders.²³ Additionally, there is a list of prominent Mouride villages, each linked to a Serigne: “Darou Marnane,/ Darou Salam,/ Darou Mousty,/ Darou Rahmane,/ Darou Xudos,/ Darou Miname./ . . . Mouride!”

²² Gallimore discusses the use of “on” to demonstrate the presence of many people’s perceptions, but she mentions it with reference to the novel’s opening lines (187).

²³ This reference to Cheikh Ibra Fall, one of Amadou Bamba’s principle disciples, utilizes the way he is referred to and associated with the phrase *Lamp Fall*, which means “the way” of Ibra Fall (Searing 239). Only readers who know the phrase *Lamp Fall* and its meaning would recognize this reference.

(101).²⁴ Aside from a Wolof lesson for terms of familial relationship to explain the difference between “femme” and “épouse,” most of these references and exclamations do not appear as exotic flavor included for a Western reader because of the way they are incorporated into the conversations and context of the rest of the text. While some Wolof terms are glossed, others are not, just as some references to global figures (aligned with everything from human rights to music) are glossed while others are not.

Alongside the narrative style that is rooted in a collectivity as well as the presence of a precise cultural context, the novel depicts the narrator’s reintegration into her mother’s village and the nearby Serigne’s concession upon her return from travels in Europe and the United States. The narrator’s ability to recover from the difficulties she had abroad indicates that this novel is profoundly different from other texts about migration where protagonists find it difficult or impossible to adjust to life in Senegal after travel or extended time away. The narrator’s recovery occurs in part due to the Serigne himself and his perspectives. Not only does the Serigne help the narrator by expanding her spiritual perspective and providing her with a place to anchor herself, he also maintains interest in the narrator’s skills gained from her education and the experiences she had in her travels. For example, the Serigne asks the narrator about what she has seen of the world, wondering about America, China, India, and the Tigris and Euphrates rivers (16). And he is also curious about the English book on feminism that the narrator is carrying when she first visits him. Rather than dismissing the book, the Serigne wants to be told what is in it since he cannot read the Latin alphabet (17). The conversation that follows about problems faced by women demonstrates the Serigne’s

²⁴ For background on the development of many of these villages and the Serignes who founded them, see Cruise O’Brien’s *The Mourides of Senegal*.

curiosity, and even though he replies that women should not have problems, he is interested in the perspective that the book presents (17). The narrator later feels awkward about bringing this book from a completely different context into the Serigne's concession (22), but the Serigne still welcomes her, the stories of her travels, and the foreign book on feminism she carries. This indicates his acceptance of the narrator in her entirety, and in this way Bugul points to the possibility for a returned emigrant to reintegrate into her home society without rejecting the knowledge and experiences she gained in the past.

Just as the Serigne accepts the narrator and makes her feel increasingly comfortable with herself, the women who are part of the Serigne's household welcome her, further solidifying the narrator's reinsertion into the community. Although the narrator always remains slightly separated from the women who live with the Serigne full-time and never go out, she also takes part in their lives, and like her relationship with the Serigne, this enables her to begin to heal and to become more even comfortable in the society in turn. Contrary to a possible assumption that the women suffer on account of the fact that they cannot go out, when the narrator first visits the compound, the door to the women's area is described as keeping her out rather than keeping the other women inside. The narrator explains that there are two doors, one that leads to the outside, and "[l]'autre porte donnait sur un monde qui m'était inconnu. À travers un rideau en voile, il était aisé de deviner une cour avec des arbres" [the other door lead to a world that was unknown to me. Through a veiled curtain, it was easy to make out a courtyard with trees] (20). The narrator's attempt to make out what is on the other side suggests that she desperately would like to know what is there, but at this point the courtyard remains cut off to her.

When she finally has access to the women's world, she encounters a society that accepts her for who she is, further enabling her to "exorciser une aliénation" [exorcise an alienation] (32).

This community, while beneficial for the narrator, is not entirely perfect or idealized. Gallimore argues that because the narrator can come and go as she pleases and does not participate entirely in the women's community, she does not have a completely accurate vision of their lives, resulting in the positive depiction of life inside the Serigne's walls (203). However, with the story of Rama's unwillingness to marry the Serigne and her eventual decision to run away, Bugul points to a recognition of the potential difficulties of life in a Marabout's concession. Bugul has indicated in an interview with Renée Mendy-Ongoundou published online in *Amina* that she adapted Rama's story from a similar tale that she was told as a girl. Gallimore uses this fact to suggest that Bugul includes Rama's story as a warning and moralizing tale (191), much as its purpose would have been when told to Bugul as a child. But more than anything, Rama's situation indicates Bugul's careful consideration of all the possible ways that life in a Serigne's household might be carried out and the recognition that not everyone is willing to subject themselves to the associated rules and expectations. As Bugul explains in the same interview, all of the women except for Rama are willing to submit to the spiritual mandate of life with the Serigne and "[c]'est pour cela que Rama finit par tromper le serigne et à fuir" [it is because of this that Rama ends up cheating on the serigne and running away]. Although Gallimore ascribes the depiction of Rama's desire for freedom to an imported Western notion of independence (200), Rama in fact dreams of marrying a young man in her home village and having a typical wedding (41-42). Thus

the accusation of Western influence becomes problematic, for Rama is at the same time influenced by the surroundings of her own village and what she has seen other girls and women experience. Rama's story indicates that the society in which the narrator has become immersed is far from perfect, however it is the best place for the narrator to regain a notion of herself after her travels.

For the narrator, movement is integral to her recovery, even as she remains rooted in the Senegalese community she joins. The narrator explains that she realizes the fault of her earlier assumption that she could be happy "loin de mon village natal, loin des miens, loin de mes camarades d'enfance, loin de ce chemin de sable que pendant des années et des années les pieds de mes frères et de mes soeurs avaient foulé" [far from my home village, far from my family, far from my childhood friends, far from this sandy path upon which the feet of my brothers and sisters had tread for years and years] (113). This list indicates that movement along the sandy path is just as necessary to the narrator's reintegration into her home village as is reconnecting with her family and friends, for the sandy path is integral to these people's lives as well. In this way, Ziethen's reading of the sandy path as indicative of the narrator's nomadism is slightly off. Ziethen is correct in her argument that the narrator navigates "un lieu intermédiaire qui réunit l'Afrique mouride et l'Afrique influencée par l'Europe" [an intermediary space that unites Mouride Africa and European-influenced Africa] (86), however the narrator becomes successful and established both in her mother's village (which is not particularly influenced by Europe in any case) and in the Serigne's household, marking her less as a nomad and more as a returnee who succeeds upon return.

At the same time that the narrator remains rooted in her community, she is open to some influence from abroad. Her list of musical preferences demonstrates this balance:

“[J]’aime écouter Verdi, Tchaïkovsky, Bach, surtout le dimanche matin./ Youssou N’Dour, Papa Wemba, Fela?/ J’adore les écouter et surtout en voiture climatisée./ Musique d’ambiance à la maison?/ De la kora ou du fado” [I like listening to Verdi, Tchaikovsky, Bach, especially Sunday morning./ Youssou N’Dour, Papa Wemba, Fela?/ I love to listen to them and especially in an air conditioned car./ Background music at home?/ The kora or fado] (179-80). The narrator is not conflicted about her preferences but instead celebratory of them, in contrast to the confusion of Ken in *Le baobab fou* and Marie in *Cendres et braises*, both of whom attempt to embrace European culture to the complete exclusion of anything related to Africa. Likewise, it is not necessary to dismiss all European influence, just as the Serigne does not demand that the narrator ignore her past experiences and is curious about them.

This hopeful balance is also apparent in Bugul’s concern with economic situations in the context of a village in Senegal, all of Africa, and the world at large. Global concerns appear via frequent reference to figures associated with human rights struggles such as Ken Saro Wiwa, Christina Anyanwu, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Aung San Suu Kyi (64; 73, 209; 148; 116). The novel makes a clear argument for self-production and sustainability when the narrator questions the need to look elsewhere for what can be found “à Touba et ici, dans cette cour, dans cette concession, auprès du Serigne” [in Touba and here, in this courtyard, in this concession, next to the Serigne] (61). But at the same time, she demands the help of those who have returned from abroad: “Et nos Revenants, pourquoi ne nous aidaient-ils pas?” [And our returnees, why didn’t they help

us?]) (64). This comment suggests that those who have returned from abroad would indeed have something to offer, but that they have not done their part. The narrator also evokes the Mouride trade diaspora and suggests that the benefits gained from Mourides abroad be fully taken into account: “Comptez et recomptez l’argent et les biens qu’ils envoient chez eux./ Vous n’en reviendrez pas./ Évaluez leurs investissements dans le pays./ Vous serez encore plus surpris” [Count and recount the money and goods that they sent home./ You will never get over it./ Evaluate their investments in the country./ You will be even more surprised] (81).²⁵ By discussing Mouride traders, the situation becomes more specific and is not simply about Africans in general who have gone abroad but precisely people from communities like the one in the novel. And in contrast to the “Revenants,” the Mourides do contribute greatly to their families and communities (81). While criticizing those at home who may not fully take into account the work that these individuals have undertaken to support their homes, families, and leaders, the narrator also acknowledges the importance of their remittances to development in the current social and economic context.

The experiences of the unnamed narrator in *Riwan ou le chemin de sable* can be connected to Ken in *Le baobab fou* and Marie in *Cendres et braises* due to each woman’s movement from Senegal to Europe and back. The second novel *Cendres et braises* articulates how life with the Marabout helps her recover from her experiences abroad. But *Riwan ou le chemin de sable* presents a broader societal perspective, indicating not only how the narrator connects to the Serigne but also to the other women in the Serigne’s concession. Narratively, this interconnection is indicated through a

²⁵ For an insightful discussion of Mouride traders and diaspora in both historical and contemporary contexts, see Mamadou Diouf’s article “The Senegalese Murid Trade Diaspora and the Making of a Vernacular Cosmopolitanism.”

structure that is not guided exclusively by first-person narration in the way that Bugul's previous two novels are. Instead, stories of others, such as Rama, become equally important and are depicted through a variety of perspectives. Although the novel is firmly anchored in a Senegalese Muslim context, there is room for global connections and movement beyond the central rural location. The sandy path is one indication of these connections. However, movement along the path is indicative not necessarily of a nomadic existence on the part of the narrator but instead of a renegotiated position to the rest of the world that becomes possible after fully understanding one's place at home. The narrator moves between the Serigne's concession and her mother's house; she additionally makes visits to her friend in the city. At the same time that the narrator comes to value her origins, she articulates a connection to global, as well as local, contexts. In the novel, Bugul advocates not a rejection of migration but instead a renegotiated position with regard to emigrants that fully addresses their important contributions as well as their possibility to return.

Coda: Bugul's Twenty-First Century Novels

Riwan ou le chemin de sable was published in 1999, and Bugul has published six additional novels since then. Aside from *De l'autre côté du regard*, which is also commonly understood as autobiographical, most of these texts are often set in contrast to Bugul's first three because the recent ones are less obviously marked by her personal experiences; with attention to this, in Ada Uzoamaka Azodo's introduction to her collected volume on Bugul, she writes, "an introduction of this sort calls for a comparison of Ken Bugul's earlier autobiographical works with her later fictional works" (13). But given the progression indicated by Bugul's first three works, her concern with Senegal as

well as the role of collective responses to difficulties remain important in her more recent work as well (Azodo, in contrast, indicates that Bugul's personal experiences can be found in her later novels [15]). Rather than being set off from her first three novels, many of Bugul's recent texts extend the work that is clearly apparent in *Riwan ou le chemin de sable* and progressively hinted at in *Cendres et braises* and *Le baobab fou* before that. In her focus on Senegal, Bugul continues to emphasize the importance of both collective as well as individual concerns and to articulate an extended perspective that includes global human rights matters.

De Larquier's article that reads *Le baobab fou* and *De l'autre côté du regard* alongside each other points to the continuation of some of these concerns and the way that Bugul has worked them out more successfully in her more recent book. In particular, de Larquier indicates that in *De l'autre côté du regard*, Bugul has found a more effective way to address the collective. Understanding Bugul as one and the same as her narrators (124), de Larquier writes, "Her rejection from [the] collective society [of her family] is the primary cause of her alienation. The interest in the genealogy of her family thus reconciles the opposition" (134). Coming to terms with a collectivity is evident in *De l'autre côté du regard* where the narrator is constantly in dialogue with members of her family, both living and dead; memories of her childhood intersect with more contemporary experiences of family relations. And the experience of exile is related not through the narrator's interactions with the society of her host country but instead through the way she remains in contact with her family; she recalls, for example, the joy of receiving letters from her brother while away from home (24). While the place of family is especially central to *De l'autre côté du regard*, this centrality is in some ways a

continuation of what Bugul articulates in *Riwan ou le chemin de sable*. There as well, the collectivity is important though it appears differently; narration occurs not only through the eyes of one woman but through a host of other people. The two novels are also firmly located in Senegalese villages (those addressing Bugul's biography would identify both as Bugul's mother's village), though *De l'autre côté du regard* somewhat more so. In this way, *De l'autre côté du regard* extends upon the importance of collective opinions and experiences that appears in *Riwan ou le chemin de sable*.

Another of Bugul's recent novels, *La pièce d'or*, is also a continuation of many themes that are apparent in *Riwan ou le chemin de sable*, and the novel indicates Bugul's attention to societal and economic conditions in Senegal and beyond. There is a link between *Riwan ou le chemin de sable* and *La pièce d'or* because some of the human rights figures mentioned in interjections throughout *Riwan ou le chemin de sable* reappear as chapter titles in *La pièce d'or*: the Kuti Ransome family (*Riwan* 194; *Pièce* 7) and Aung San Suu Kyi (*Riwan* 116; *Pièce* 293) are mentioned in both novels. In *Riwan ou le chemin de sable*, Sow Fall focuses on the Senegalese village where the novel is set and mentions global human rights figures, thus indicating the narrator's broader perspective. *La pièce d'or* also focuses in part on the village of Birlane, which becomes increasingly desolate as its inhabitants leave for the city, and the novel indicates a broader dialogue with figures representative of freedom struggles within Africa (Nelson Mandela, Thomas Sankara) and beyond. But the novel exhibits an additional concern with the nation, broadening the collectivity that appears in *Riwan ou le chemin de sable* to one that is associated not only with Mouridism but with Senegal as a whole. The city in *La pièce d'or* is named Yakar, which Alison Rice points out is recognizable as Dakar

in name (304). The city also resembles Dakar in its geographical location in the country's west (*Pièce* 53). And while the chapter titles do not directly relate to the content of their respective chapters, the proliferation of those related directly to Senegal is striking. In addition to Cheikh Amadou Bamba and the name Modou-Modou,²⁶ which are both prominent references in *Riwan ou le chemin de sable*, there is also Aline Sitoe Diatta, who, as Rice points out, is one of Senegal's significant figures of resistance to colonialism (313), as well as Blondin Diop²⁷ and Valdiodio Ndiaye.²⁸

In *La pièce d'or* Bugul interrogates the nation's current and past leaders for their greed in the face of the people's despair and poverty in a manner that is reminiscent of early post-independence novels such as Sembene's *Xala* or Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones are Not Yet Born*. In the center of Bugul's Yakar there is a huge mountain of debris, and smaller piles of garbage mark the declining towns on the road to the city (23-24). People in the city are so consumed by their own difficulties that they do not notice the young man Zak carrying the dead body of his friend Mawdo through the streets (302). But the value of individuals coming together nonetheless presents hope for the nation at the end of the novel, just as the narrator in *Riwan ou le chemin de sable* is able to move towards individual recovery by joining the group of women surrounding the Serigne. At the end of *La pièce d'or*, though in the context of science fiction elements not present in Bugul's other novels, the hero Moïse shares the remaining half of the valuable gold coin in the novel's title with an entire group of people, symbolically indicating the

²⁶ The name for Mourides who travel abroad for trade (Roberts and Roberts 240).

²⁷ Likely a reference to the Blondin Diop brothers, leftist student activists in the 1970s, and of those two, specifically Oumar Blondin Diop, who died in his cell on Gorée Island in 1973 in what was officially termed suicide but was not accepted as such, as reported by Amadou Fall for *Le soleil*.

²⁸ Minister of the Interior under Senghor, Ndiaye fell from favor alongside Mamadou Dia (Crowder 113-14) and remains a significant figure of human rights and independence in Senegal, as articulated by Ndiaye's daughter in an online interview with Olivier Barlet.

importance and hope of the collective. He imagines a future “[q]uand les peuples retrouveront leur dignité, quand les enfants pourront jouer et vivre en paix” [when the people will regain their dignity, when children will be able to play and live in peace] (313). While calling to task those who have left Senegal and do not contribute to its growth (115), the novel nonetheless indicates the possibility for change and progress.

In these novels subsequent to *Riwan ou le chemin de sable*, Bugul continues to be concerned with individuals as well as groups (families, Mourides, the Senegalese people) in Senegal. Bugul’s first three novels indicate a progression from a focus on the individual’s (mostly tragic) experience abroad in *Le baobab fou* to an intermediate position between life abroad and reintegration at home in *Cendres et braises* and finally to a more inclusive and successful experience upon return in *Riwan ou le chemin de sable*. Bugul’s recent novels *De l’autre côté du regard* and *La pièce d’or* demonstrate how Bugul has continued to advance her concerns in the twenty-first century. This continuity indicates an intersection of Bugul’s novels that is based not on the degree to which they reflect her own life but instead on the extent to which they cultivate responses (of varying success) to migration, exile, and Senegal’s global position.

Chapter Four

Fatou Diome's Reconfiguration of the Migration Narrative

Living in France and much younger than both Aminata Sow Fall and Ken Bugul, Fatou Diome appears at first glance to conform to the model of the migrant African writer that has been established by Francophone literary critics over the past two decades. Scholars who examine Diome's work often categorize her as part of the new generation of African writers living in France; however this approach does not illuminate the extent to which Senegal itself is still very much at stake in her fiction. Among the authors alongside whom Diome has been listed are Calixthe Beyala, Bessora, Daniel Biyaoula, and Simon Njami (Adesanmi 967; Cazenave 67). Such a list itself elides these writers' individual backgrounds and concerns, pointing perhaps to a dilemma with this categorization as well as Diome's inclusion in it – Beyala and Njami are both Cameroonian but have very different perspectives on the relationships between men and women, Biyaoula is from the Congo, while Bessora's background, born in Belgium to a Swiss mother and Gabonese father, appears to particularly reflect the spirit of migrancy. Despite these authors' differences, several of their works do highlight life in France and do not directly depict communities in Africa. In contrast, Diome's Senegalese origin remains particularly central to her work. Diome has published three books to date: *La préférence nationale* (2001), a set of short stories, and two novels *Le ventre de l'Atlantique* [*The Belly of the Atlantic*] (2003) and *Kétala* (2006), all three of which depict, at least in part, Senegalese people who live in France. But closer examination, particularly of Diome's later two novels, demonstrates that, even when depicting life in France, Diome is in fact more concerned with Senegal.

A host of scholars and writers have worked to categorize this new generation of African writers in France. While this scholarship does significant work to identify authors who have very different priorities than the students who arrived in France for short periods of study from the 1930s-1960s, not every writer currently living and writing in France today necessarily has the same concerns. This group was identified as early as 1990 in Bernard Magnier's article "Beurs noirs à Black Babel." Using the term *beur* the journalist and critic Magnier plays on the shift in immigration flows as well as in literature to reflect that more immigrants had begun arriving from sub-Saharan Africa as opposed to North Africa.¹ Djiboutian novelist Abdourahman Waberi continued Magnier's work nearly a decade later by categorizing the group with which Diome is so often associated as being able to navigate between multiple national affiliations and geographic locations without the same ideological weight that colonization supposedly placed on their literary predecessors (11). In an article in 2004, French scholar Jaques Chevrier first referred to them as "migrITUDE" writers, emphasizing their difference from earlier authors and Négritude in particular (97). The amount to which Diome is clearly indebted to Senghor and her other Senegalese literary forbears immediately sets her apart from this categorization. And Pius Adesanmi, currently in the American academe, continues Chevrier's work and explains that for these writers "Paris is . . . the context in which s/he seeks to articulate a resistant black identity that refuses to construct Africa as a site of salutary return" (967).

Over two decades and coming from a variety of academic and literary backgrounds, these critics and essayists all agree on a pattern in the works of African

¹ His article title also points to the way the term "beur" has become racialized to represent anyone from Africa and thus not white.

writers who have moved from West and Central Africa to France; they all indicate that these writers have reached beyond the boundaries of national identity and are concerned instead with a transnational experience that in this case is freed from any restrictions based on origin or affiliation. Whether or not these categorizations are appropriate for the host of writers with which they have been associated, they become especially imprecise in Diome's case. While Diome chooses to live in France (though not Paris), and some of her characters do describe themselves as migrants, Diome's writing, and her two novels in particular, demonstrate that such categorizations do not always apply and the mere facts of Diome's birth and domicile do not entirely facilitate an understanding of her work.

Even Senegalese scholar Papa Samba Diop maintains Diome's position as characteristic of migrant writers and describes *Le ventre de l'Atlantique* as "un hymne entonné à la gloire de l'errance" [a hymn sung to the glory of errance] ("Le pays d'origine" 57). Yet this novel and her more recent *Kétala* do much more than narrate the migrant trajectories of their female protagonists, who originate in Senegal and spend time in France. Diome is additionally concerned with addressing specific problems in Senegalese society and pointing towards solutions to these problems on the level of communities and individuals. Writers with whom Diome is sometimes associated such as Beyala and Njami clearly have very different concerns. Whether or not Senegal is the place Diome considers home, it is still central to her two novels. Diome's protagonists may appear to celebrate migrancy, but the texts themselves are not, in fact, just glorifications of a boundless transnationalism. Diome's work actually points to a reconfiguration of the migration experience through the connections and affiliations that

individuals have with each other locally – within communities in Senegal. In this way, Diome is marked as drastically different from the other members of the new generation of African writers living in France.

La préférence nationale: The Individual in Senegal and France

Of all Diome's works, *La préférence nationale* conforms most closely to the expectations of the typical scholar of francophone migrant literature.² Four of the six short stories in the book are set in France and focus exclusively on the narrators' lives there. In this way, Diome's first published text appears to fit well with many of the descriptions associated with works by the new generation of African writers. Magnier describes the protagonists of these books as solitary individuals who "n'assument en aucune façon le destin d'un groupe ou d'une nation, encore bien moins d'un peuple ou d'une race" [do not in any way take on the destiny of a group or a nation, even less so that of a people or a race] (102). The extent to which these authors depict personal rather than collective experiences is central to Odile Cazenave's argument in her book *Afrique sur Seine* (3). One of Cazenave's primary, and particularly appropriate, examples of this is from Simon Njami's *African Gigolo*, wherein the main character Moïse continually rejects association with his origins in Cameroon as well as the Africans he encounters in Paris. The narrators of *La préférence nationale* do not expressly reject their origins as does Moïse, but neither

² Diome's title immediately evokes the difficulties of immigrant life in France through her reference to the legislative and public campaign of *préférence nationale* [national preference], articulated by the Front National, France's extreme right-wing political party. In practice, *préférence nationale* would favor French citizens over immigrants or those of immigrant descent in housing allocation, employment, family benefits, and education (Davies 190). The Front National and its founder Jean-Marie Le Pen had been anti-immigration since the party's inception in 1972, but in the 1980s, the party's rhetoric shifted to articulate its concerns in less directly racist terms; this is exemplified by the concept of *préférence nationale* (Williams 96-97). However the exclusionary impetus behind the *préférence nationale* becomes clear in the way it has played out on the local level. This could mean giving a job to a French person instead of a foreigner, and in one case, *préférence nationale* meant a school district's refusal to offer non-pork meals for Muslim and Jewish students in school cafeterias (Davies 189-90).

Senegal nor other Senegalese living in France are mentioned. And unlike her novels, Diome does not suggest hope here for approaching the difficulties that she depicts in Senegal. Instead, as Chevrier asserts, Diome describes Senegal with just as much sordid realism as she does France (“Migritude” 98). In her novels, this aspect is not absent, as she is continually realistic about the difficulties of life in Senegal, but her later novels also offer hope for change within Senegal.

Part of Diome’s pessimistic description of Senegal in *La préférence nationale* comes in her demonstration of the government’s failures and inadequacies. In this way, her two stories set in Senegal “La mendiante et l’écolière” [The Beggar and the Schoolgirl] and “Mariage volé” [Stolen Marriage] have echoes of Ousmane Sembene’s and Aminata Sow Fall’s work, though Diome’s text is located in a more recent era.³ While Diome’s treatment of emigration sets her apart from earlier Senegalese writers, she also inscribes herself in a Senegalese literary tradition through allusions to her eminent forbears. The narrator of “La mendiante et l’écolière” comments that she “regrettai[t] l’époque où Senghor avait institué l’uniforme à l’école” [missed the era where Senghor had instituted school uniforms] (20). By referring to Senghor as statesman in this context, the narrator expresses a sense of nostalgia for a past Senegal, full of hope and promise where all students would have appeared equally (though Sembene, of course, shows us that things were not ideal then either). Indicative of this loss, the narrator must attend school in jean shorts and a t-shirt, thereby marking her as different and separating her

³ Diome, born in 1968 and thus after Senegalese independence, is certainly of a generation different from that of Sembene and Sow Fall, even if she cannot be readily classified in the new generation of African writers in France. Her works demonstrate a criticism of the state that echoes that of earlier Senegalese writers, but her concerns are different because they do not articulate any expectations from the state and instead indicate how people can be productive on their own. This attitude is particularly indicative of several Senegalese youth movements, discussed further in Chapter Five.

from other, better-off, students (20).⁴ Economic separations are further emphasized in a vivid description of poverty, particularly in the figure the woman Coudou who relies on begging after losing a hand to leprosy (15). In an explicit reference to Sow Fall's *La grève des battus*, Diome's narrator describes Coudou as one of the "déchets de la société" [the dregs of society] (Diome 18)⁵ who, like Sow Fall's beggars, sustains herself because people depend on being able to give alms to her (Diome 17-18). Similarly, the Dakar City Hall in "Mariage volé" is surrounded by people attempting to make money by selling whatever they can, unable to escape "la misère qu'ils pensaient quitter en venant à Dakar" [the misery they thought they were leaving in coming to Dakar] (39). One thinks here of the beggars who are often seen surrounding the public offices and buildings in Sembene's films *Xala* and *Mandabi*. As Diome evokes and interrogates the poverty of urban Senegal, she also aligns herself with a specifically Senegalese literary establishment. Thus even in this early text, while Diome's narrators reject and deride their Senegalese origins, Diome's Senegalese literary background is clear.

Diome's criticism of the Senegalese state is particularly apparent in "Mariage volé." The story is set in Dakar's city hall and interspersed with the narrator's memories of a more pleasant girlhood. The marriage of the title is "stolen" because the narrator is being forced to marry a husband she has not chosen and is being separated from the man she loves. The mayor performing the marriage wears a Senegalese flag at his belt, about which the narrator comments to herself, "Voulait-il ainsi signifier la virilité du pays? . . . j'aurais préféré qu'il port nos trois couleurs en bandoulière, sur son coeur et non sur ses

⁴ Even though the narrator's outfit marks her in this context as poor, the fact that she wears jean shorts can also point to the pervasiveness of American fashion and the way that second-hand clothing in markets might be full of replicas of American clothing styles.

⁵ Translation of this phrase taken from the published English translation of Sow Fall's novel.

reins” [Did he thus want to signify the virility of the country? . . . I would have preferred for him to wear our three colors over the shoulder, over his heart and not over his loins] (41). Interestingly, this quote does not entirely do away with the Senegalese flag and thus identification with the nationality. Though acerbic, Diome uses the narrator to suggest that the flag is misplaced or perhaps in need of more sincerity behind it. In this scene, Diome further highlights the absurdity of the mayor and the civil marriage process because the mayor wears glasses that he actually does not need, as if to appear more intelligent and official (42). The scene mocks governmental processes while simultaneously criticizing the institution of an arranged marriage in which the bride has no say. In the background of the city hall office is a picture depicting chained men destined to be slaves in the Americas (42). This is at once a metaphor for the life awaiting the woman getting married as well as the suggestion that slavery – in various forms and directly under the nose of the government – may not be entirely of the past.

Diome’s analyses also extend to explorations of gender, power, and economy in Senegal. This particularly occurs in “La mendiante et l’écolière” in the depiction of Coudou’s situation as well as the narrator’s struggle to maintain herself while attending school. Alongside her lack of money is the narrator’s position as a young woman far from home. The father of the family with which she stays takes advantage of this by confiscating her savings and demanding that the narrator perform oral sex on him for her money (29). Uniquely in this story, the narrator makes reference to her Serer identity in describing the way that she escapes the situation. Her host forgets that she is a Serer from Niominka, and she affirms her identity in pointing out that “[l]es *Sérères Niominka* ne mettent jamais toute leur récolte dans le même grenier; celui de la maison est toujours

moins rempli que celui cache dans la brousse” [the Serers of Niominka never put all of their harvest in the same granary; the one in the house is never as full as the one hidden in the bush] (30).⁶ In line with the idiom she cites, the narrator has established another stash of money with Coudou, enabling her to avoid performing oral sex on her host. Both women benefit from the economic arrangement they share, Coudou has enough capital to re-start her food stall while the narrator’s money is kept safe by Coudou, who also gives her a daily meal in exchange (34-35).

Despite the positive note that ends “La mendiante et l’écolière,” the young woman marrying against her will in “Mariage volé” is, unsurprisingly, not as hopeful. Diome’s overall picture of Senegal in these two stories is largely unfavorable, and in this way she works to expose negative realities of life there. It therefore follows that the protagonists living in France in the subsequent stories of *La préférence nationale* do not look back on Senegal at all. In Diome’s later novels, she envisions the construction of new spaces in Senegal that work against these negative experiences. In the last lines of “Mariage volé,” the narrator references Aimé Césaire’s “Partir” from *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal*, which she appropriately used for her BAC examination in French literature. “Partir” appears as the narrator joins her unwanted new husband and as the text embarks on the stories set in France. By ending the two stories set in Senegal this way, Diome does not offer much solution to the problems of poverty and women’s lack of power that she has depicted in Senegal, instead she turns to departure. And given what

⁶ The Serer ethnicity is particularly associated with the Casamance region of Senegal (south of the Gambia), which stands out in the “Senegalese exception” of political stability in that it has never been successfully incorporated into the state. Diome herself, though Serer, is not from Casamance. And when she chooses to depict a particular location, as in *Le ventre de l’Atlantique*, she depicts the island of Niodior (her birthplace). And the Niominka group to which the narrator refers in “La mendiante et l’écolière” is associated with Niodior and other nearby islands. Although Diome addresses the ways that the state does not fully care for or incorporate parts of Senegal in her works, she does not seem to address the problem in Casamance directly.

the narrators experience in France, that departure does not offer much hope either. Diome connects her narrators' departures to Césaire's voyage in the *Cahier*. While Césaire's narrator experiences a disappointing return, Diome's narrators arrive in France never to look back within the space of the text – an aspect of the work that could be seen as characteristic of works by new generation writers.

After Diome's two stories set in Senegal, the rest of her text is thus appropriately focused on life in France and any reference to Senegal or ethnic origins is erased. In part, this demonstrates the way that the narrators are continually viewed by the French as black, African, or simply foreign; in France, Diome's narrators never have the room to demonstrate a national or ethnic origin. Diome is primarily concerned here with depicting the interaction between the narrators and the French citizens they encounter. And these French people continually prevent the young women from being anything other than black or African. Diome situates herself counter to this elision in her later two novels, in which her characters maintain access to their Senegalese or Serer identities even while in France; Diome's critique of the French public's negation of ethnic and national identities in *La préférence nationale* thus prefigures her more direct turn towards a portrayal of these identities in *Le ventre de l'Atlantique* and *Kétala*. Madame Dupont, the narrator's employer in "Le visage de l'emploi" [An Employable Face] labels her as "africaine" after hearing her accent on the phone (64). Similarly, when talking to the pastry chef for whom she wants to work, the narrator of "La préférence nationale" is called "vous," the French form of address which can signify respect but in this case, we are told that "vous" serves as "un sac poubelle où il mettait tous les étrangers qu'il aurait aimé jeter dans le Rhin" [a garbage bag where he put all the foreigners whom he would have liked to throw into the

Rhine] (87). In the pristine white bakery, there is no space for the narrator's identity, which Diome cleverly expresses with a list of typically French and West African names: "Il n'y avait que Pierre, Paul, Joseph et Martin pour les hommes, la gent féminine était représentée par Gertrude, Josiane et Jacqueline. Aucune trace donc d'Aïcha ou de Mamadou" [There was only Pierre, Paul, Joseph and Martin for the men, the fair sex was represented by Gertrude, Josiane and Jacqueline. No trace therefore of Aïcha or Mamadou] (86).

Like the narrator of Beyala's *Petit prince de Belleville* or Moïse for most of Njami's *African Gigolo*, Diome's narrators living in France focus primarily on their lives there and do not consider return to Africa; they also rarely refer to their pasts. In the one story where her childhood is discussed at length, the narrator of "Cunégonde à la bibliothèque" [Cunégonde at the Library] simply states, "J'ai la meilleure des grands-mères" [I have the best grandmother] and "Le meilleur des grands-pères est le mien" [The best grandfather is mine] (107). There are few identifiers of location here, and the only way that the memory is located outside of France is the mention of "les champs de mil fécondés par les pluies sahéliennes" [the millet fields fertilized by the Sahelian rains] (107). This memory is placed not in Senegal, but in the larger Sahelian region. The other times that Diome's narrators mention origin, there is a suggested affiliation instead with a history shared by all of Africa colonized by France: "les enfants de monsieur Banania" [the children of Mister Banania] (76) and "*Nos ancêtres les tirailleurs sénégalais*" [*Our ancestors the tirailleurs sénégalais*] (89). Both of these references to African soldiers' involvement in the world wars point to Senghor's poems written about the *tirailleurs sénégalais* and in particular "Poème liminaire" from *Hosties noires*, in which Senghor

criticizes French perceptions of African soldiers. The latter phrase additionally parodies “nos ancêtres les gaulois,” the line famously taught across the French colonial empire that erases actual ancestry in favor of Frenchness. With these allusions to Senghor and French colonial history, Diome aligns herself (and extends beyond) Senghor’s critique of the images and assumptions made by the French about African soldiers and the identities into which they were forced. The soldiers, termed *tirailleurs sénégalais* were not, in fact, all Senegalese. And conversely, a specifically Senegalese or Serer identity is not available for the narrators of the stories set in France because the French read these young women as African before anything else. The narrators too do not emphasize their origins beyond an association with all Africans.⁷ In Diome’s two novels that follow *La préférence nationale*, she offers a method to counter this denial of origins in the way that Senegalese identity remains central even to those characters located in France.

Diome’s concern with life in France and the way that the young narrators are treated by their French employers is demonstrated by the experiences of the narrator in “Le visage de l’emploi,” who can be compared to Diouana in Sembene’s film *La noire de . . .* and his story of the same title. The reference at once pays homage to Sembene as well as demonstrates a similarity in the imbalance of power that the two women experience. The narrator in Diome’s story works as “une bonne-à-tout-faire” [a maid-of-all-work] which instantly recalls Diouana’s situation; both women are initially employed to look after a family’s children but ultimately are taken advantage of and required to do all of the family’s housework. In a seemingly direct reference to Sembene, the narrator of “Le

⁷ The narrators are not all the same woman and do not share precisely the same experiences, but their stories are loosely similar and their characters have a continuity. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that all of the women are Serer and Senegalese, even if not all of them describe themselves as such. Diome has said in an interview that she sees *La préférence nationale* as breaking the boundaries between short story and novel (qtd. in Mazauric 245).

visage de l'emploi" describes with frustration all the tasks she is asked to complete in the house: "Tout ça pour un salaire de garde d'enfants" [All of this for a nursemaid's salary] (Diome 73). This is precisely the same problem with which Diouana is faced in "La noire de . . .," and she similarly reflects on the large amount of work she must do throughout the house for a small amount of money (Sembene 181). While the narrator of "Le visage de l'emploi" may be a capable young woman able to read, write, and potentially find other employment, the difficulty of finding another job necessitates that she remain a maid for the Dupont family even though they take advantage of her – she is, in effect, just as trapped as Diouana is. But the story, concerned too with making an insulting wink towards the French, ends not with suicide but with the narrator sleeping with Monsieur Dupont (78). The reference to Sembene here aligns Diome to a specifically Senegalese artistic tradition. Just as the characters in *La préférence nationale* continually have their national and ethnic origins denied them by the French, Diome's own origins are elided by critics' characterization of her as an African migrant writer.

Even though Diome is engaged with the serious business of depicting the difficulties of life in France that emerge for someone marked by race and gender, she is also continually engaged with insulting the French at every turn. The narrators do this within the stories, as they correct references to Descartes (it's "*Cogito ergo sum*," haven't you read *Discours de la méthode*?) (75) and yell things like, "Si vous aviez ce que j'ai dans la tête, vous ne seriez pas caissière au supermarché" [If you had what I have in my head, you would not be a supermarket cashier] (91). To make the insult to this cashier even more pointed, the woman is described as the embodiment of the French flag: "Madame m'avait dit qu'elle aurait un *pull blanc à bandes bleues*. Je l'identifiai très vite:

avec son rouge à lèvres couleur de sang, le drapeau français flottait avec elle” [Madame told me that she would have a *white sweater with blue stripes*. I identified her very quickly: with her red lipstick the color of blood, the French flag floated around her] (90). The white shirt with blue stripes is, of course, the stereotypical French national garb, which becomes excessively, even threateningly, French in Diome’s description. The woman asserts her French identity in contrast to the narrator’s Africanness, as emphasized by her proclamation, “rentre dans ta forêt” [go back to your forest] (91). Diome consciously makes fun of the French in scenes of this sort, where her narrators appear witty and educated, while the French employers seem stupid and callous. Her concern here wavers between depicting the trials of immigrant life and taking shots at the French. Though Cazenave categorizes *La préférence nationale* as among those texts that “[gaze] onto the African community in France” (*Afrique-sur-Seine* 11-12; 67), the gaze is equally directed towards the French themselves, demonstrating how little the French public’s idealized notion of themselves has to do with their reality.

Part of Diome’s criticism of the French comes in her direct discussion of *la préférence nationale* from her title. Although meant to legislate in favor of those born in France, Diome has explained in an interview with Renée Mendy-Ongoundou that she understands *la préférence nationale* more as an exclusion of those whom the French do not want rather than a preference for those whom they do.⁸ This exclusion is presented by the narrator of the title story when she imagines the response to her request for aid: “oui mais vous n’avez pas droit à telle aide, vous n’êtes pas de nationalité française” [Yes, but you do not have the right to such assistance, you are not a French citizen] (84). In her

⁸ Renée Larrier also emphasizes this statement of Diome’s in her examination of migration and French policy (178).

narrator's sarcastic comments, Diome also criticizes the way that the legislation dictates that if a foreign woman stays married to a French man and has a child with him, that same help, once refused, becomes available (83; 88). Through the entire book, Diome demonstrates that the French will only allow immigrants to fulfill certain roles. When the narrators of the stories step out of their roles as uneducated domestic workers and demonstrate their intelligence, their relationships with their employers are inevitably changed. For example, when one boss catches the narrator of "Cunégonde à la bibliothèque" in the library, she is fired the following week (111). And other employers continually ignore the narrators' academic credentials, turning them down for tutoring jobs and favoring them for domestic work. It is also possible for the narrators to enter sexual relationships with French men, but only on certain terms. Diome here explores the relationships available between men and women both in Senegal and in France. She indicates that difficult situations in which women may find themselves exist in both countries. In this way, Diome is different from those authors who indicate that France may offer freedom to women in particular, which Cazenave does recognize in her analysis of the text (*Afrique-sur-Seine* 81n55).⁹ Commenting on a man who approaches her, the narrator of "La préférence nationale" states that he "aimait bien la noire dans son lit, mais avait honte de me tenir la main dans la rue" [liked black in his bed well enough, but he was ashamed to take my hand in the street] (93). Diome thus indicates that there are limited ways that these young women can exist alongside the rest of French society.

In *La préférence nationale*, Diome depicts problems in Senegal of poverty and abuse without offering much hope for change. She then focuses primarily on life in France, emphasizing the difficulties that the narrators have with their French employers,

⁹ See also Dominic Thomas' chapter "Afro-Parisianism and African Feminisms" in *Black France*.

who consistently become punch lines for the narrators' jokes and criticisms. In these stories, the narrators do not interact with other Senegalese people and do not align themselves with any larger ethnic or national community, whether in France or Africa. The bleakness of life in France is brightened only by school and study, the importance of which appears primarily in "Cunégonde à la bibliothèque" and frequent literary references (Voltaire among others). At once dismantling the image of economic success in France while simultaneously describing harsh conditions in Senegal, *La préférence nationale*, though full of derisive humor, does not point to any possibilities for change or progress, whether in Senegal or in France. *Le ventre de l'Atlantique* and *Kétala*, though equally tough on Senegalese and French societies are unique because they reconfigure relationships between people living in the two nations and suggest ways that conditions in Senegal might change.

More than Migration: Diome's Exploration of Senegalese Realities in *Le ventre de l'Atlantique* and *Kétala*

Le ventre de l'Atlantique is ostensibly about the relationship between a Senegalese woman in Strasbourg and her younger brother on the island of Niodior, Senegal. At first, Fatou Diome's novel appears to be about Salie's continued contact with her brother Madické and her navigation between Senegal and France. Madické calls Salie for updates on European soccer matches, while Salie tries desperately to get Madické to talk about her family at home in Senegal. Yet critics who understand *Le ventre de l'Atlantique* as focused on Salie's individual experiences of errance and migration do so at the cost of ignoring the extensive sections of the novel set in Niodior that address the rest of the island's citizens. Catherine Mazauric, for example, focuses entirely on Salie's

understanding of her identity and glosses over the particularities of what it means to be Senegalese or even a Senegalese woman in France in *Le ventre de l'Atlantique*, saying just that Diome's protagonists navigate between "une identité de femme et une identité africaine" [a female identity and an African identity] (246). Julie Nack Ngue has a well-argued piece that explores Salie's bodily experience in *Le ventre de l'Atlantique*, but she is able to present this argument with reference to only a few key scenes. Though an incisive article, Salie's body is not the only one that matters in Diome's novel.

Diome indicates that her primary concern is not with the narrator Salie but all the citizens of Niodior when Salie explains that her brother's obsession with soccer is ultimately related to his desire to move to Europe. The novel then becomes a complex illustration of life in the village of Niodior; Diome uses Salie's position as a relative outsider to address Senegalese perceptions of France, Senegalese attitudes towards reproductive and gender roles, and Niodior's geographic and political isolation. Diome does not primarily address Salie's struggles to navigate French society, nor does she tell a tale of failed integration and eventual return home. Although Salie's perceptions and experiences are relevant, *Le ventre de l'Atlantique* is more the story of an entire village told in the guise of an immigration novel.

It is true that Salie, an outsider since birth due to her illegitimate status, is out of place in Senegal as well as in France. Salie says, in an almost clichéd manner, "je vais chez moi comme on va à l'étranger, car je suis devenue l'*autre* pour ceux que je continue à appeler les miens" [I go home as a tourist in my own country, for I have become the *other* for the people I continue to call my family] (166 [116]). Salie further indicates that even before her departure, the women of the village have long considered her entirely

useless for housework and regarded her as especially strange because she reads constantly (171). In an article on Diome's novel, Xavier Garnier explains that it is in fact Salie's literacy that marks her as particularly different and that gives her a unique perception outside of national boundaries (34). Tempting to those critics who want to celebrate Diome's work as emblematic of migrant fiction, *Le ventre de l'Atlantique* has long passages where Salie affirms her position as an eternal migrant and exile from Niodior. By living elsewhere Salie is free from the assumptions based on her birth made by those in Niodior, and she even states, "l'ailleurs . . . est pour moi gage de liberté, d'autodétermination" [Foreign lands . . . are the gauge of my freedom, of self-determination] (226 [161-62]). Despite these lyric proclamations of migrancy, Diome's novel is still entrenched in the realities of Niodior – its folktales, tragedies, and hopes. If the narrator Salie asserts her separation from Niodior, she is still profoundly concerned with its inhabitants, and in the structure and theme of the novel, Diome likewise demonstrates her concern with realities in Senegal.

Part of Diome's concern with Senegal comes in her demystification of life in Europe; this can be identified in scores of novels – from Ousmane Socé's *Mirages de Paris* to Daniel Biyouala's *L'impasse*, and this demystification is certainly characteristic of Diome's *Préférence nationale* as well. But *Le ventre de l'Atlantique* is unique because it only minimally addresses the difficulties and realities of living in France from the perspective of the narrator, who almost exclusively describes life in her apartment, listening to music, taking baths, and talking to Madické on the phone. Instead, Salie narrates the stories of other individuals to demonstrate what life in France is like, and

these descriptions always necessitate involved stories about the rest of Niodior. A number of Niodior's inhabitants went to France, were not successful, and thereafter returned.

Salie must work against the stories others tell about life abroad, particularly l'homme de Barbès, known as the richest man in the village. Appropriately named for having been to France, Barbès frequently talks about the wonders he saw there, insisting that every family in France has their own car, television, and refrigerator full of food (85). His situation emphasizes among the rest of the inhabitants that going to France automatically results in wealth, and he insists that "il faut vraiment être un imbécile pour rentrer pauvre de là-bas" [You'd have to be a real idiot to come back from there poor] (87 [58]). It is not explicitly clear how Salie knows what l'homme de Barbès' life was actually like in France, but she explains that he was desperately poor and had to engage in tiring and degrading jobs. Whether or not Salie has precise proof of l'homme de Barbès' life in France, Diome uses this alternate version of his story to depict what it is like for many immigrants there.

Diome's text also presents the story of Moussa, the young man who left to play on a French soccer team just as Madické and his friends dream of doing. Although Salie is the narrator of the entire novel, the story of Moussa is told primarily by Ndétare, the schoolteacher. Ndétare tells Moussa's story in an attempt to convince the young soccer players not to join a European team. While l'homme de Barbès recounts tales of wealth and paradise in France to the village's youth, Ndétare insists, "[R]eviens sur Terre, tout le monde ne ramène pas une fortune de France" [You're living in a dreamworld, not everyone bring back a fortune from France] (93 [62]). Moussa is not successful in France

and is unable to develop his soccer career; upon his return to Senegal, he is so ashamed of his failure and of his family's disappointment in him that he drowns himself in the ocean.

Yet the stories of l'homme de Barbès and Moussa, perhaps the clearest illustrations of what France is "really like," also provide Diome the opportunity to comment on life in Niodior. In conversation with her brother, Salie just as frequently reveals something unknown about Niodior as about France. For Salie, mention of l'homme de Barbès evokes more than just his stories of Paris. Diome, here as in *La préférence nationale*, is frequently concerned with critically addressing the expectations that limit young women in Senegal. As many of the people in the small community are connected to each other, the story of l'homme de Barbès is linked to that of Sankèle, the young woman who was supposed to marry him against her wishes. In anticipation of the marriage, Sankèle's father violently drowns her child born out of wedlock to another man (134). This tragic story is partially dependent on Barbès' status as the man from France, for that is precisely what makes him such an appealing spouse as far as Sankèle's father is concerned, but it illustrates too Sankèle's own tragedy and provides Diome a point from which to highlight unequal gender roles and generational conflict in Senegal.

Moussa's story is even more aligned with a description of life in Niodior. Diome does depict Moussa's stay in France – being abused by French teammates, working on a boat as an indentured servant, and eventually being deported. But Moussa's tragedy also enables Diome to delve into Niodior's folklore, while Salie at the same time places blame on those in Niodior for the expectations and demands that they placed on Moussa. Before drowning himself in the ocean, Moussa references a familiar tale about the sea that he heard as a child. Diome underlines the significance of this tale on the island with the

statement, “Petit, Moussa, comme tous les natifs de l’île, avait entendu cette légende”

[Moussa, like all those native to the island, had heard this legend as a boy] (111 [75]).

The legend is about a man named Sédar who drowns himself in response to being publically called impotent by his mother-in-law. In the tale, Sédar enters the sea in response to this public humiliation and becomes a dolphin; his grieving wife follows him into the sea as a dolphin as well. Moussa echoes Sédar’s model by drowning himself in response to his feeling of shame and to the community’s somewhat unfair dismissal of him. But unlike Sédar, who turns into a dolphin, Moussa’s body is rejected by the sea and returned to land. Salie, through Ndétare, explains, “Même l’Atlantique ne peut digérer tout ce que la terre vomit” [Even the Atlantic can’t digest all that the earth throws up] (114 [77]). The word “digérer” here particularly suggests that the sea might be capable of eating and does indeed have a belly, as suggested by Diome’s title.

The sea is frequently a place of simultaneous escape and death in Senegalese tales (for example “Les mamelles” and “Petit-mari” as told by Birago Diop), and throughout Senegalese folklore the sea has a connection to spirits and is described as having a tantalizing call that draws people to it.¹⁰ With the story of Moussa and his attraction to the sea, as throughout the novel, Diome plays off the Atlantic’s multiple significances. Mention of the Atlantic suggests a connection to slavery, as well as the departure that Moussa and so many others make when they leave Niodior for France. Samba Diop indicates yet another significance of the sea in the novel, for it can also be associated with Salie’s nurturing grandmother (“Astres et désastres” 253), and the sea is continually used

¹⁰ I do not know whether Diome refers directly to a tale present on the island of Niodior or if she has invented the story of Sédar the dolphin, but Cheikh Aliou Ndao affirmed to me the frequent presence of the sea as a tantalizing force throughout Senegalese folklore in response to a paper I gave on this topic at Literature and the Arts in Senegal I: Birago Diop and Léopold Sédar Senghor, Then and Now (Bloomington, Indiana; 31 Mar. 2007).

by Diome to narrate daily life in the village. The belly of the Atlantic of the title can be both a devouring monster as well as something necessary to sustain life – there is the womanly connotation of the term “ventre,” as well as the fact that so many of the islanders rely on fishing for food and livelihood. For while the sea rejects Moussa’s body, the dolphin couple from the folktale accept Sankèle’s tragically murdered infant as their own. The stories of Moussa, Sankèle, and l’homme de Barbès thus demonstrate how Diome, while discussing life in France, also depicts Niodior, its geography, stories, and challenges.

In choosing to focus specifically on Niodior, Diome is able to address concerns that, though perhaps apparent in different guises throughout Senegal, are specific to that location. Niodior is unique in part because it is an island, which creates a particular sense of isolation and confinement. Moussa escapes only by drowning himself, and Sankèle escapes her father by boat disguised as a man. Niodior’s isolation is emphasized by the fact that the government has seen fit to exile Ndétare there for past incendiary activity. Although Ndétare is not literally trapped (he could certainly get on a boat and leave) his exile on Niodior suggests that the state considers the island as separate and unimportant; Ndétare apparently cannot cause much trouble from his post there. Furthermore, the inhabitants of Niodior are entirely removed from the Senegal they see on national programming. Though about Senegal, the news report on television is in French and most of the islanders cannot understand it. The report discusses foreign drought relief that has been accepted by the Prime Minister; the drought does not affect the inhabitants of Niodior, and they need none of the relief. Niodior’s separation from the rest of Senegal is particularly emphasized by Salie’s comment: “Ils auraient pu, s’ils l’avaient voulu, ériger

leur mini-république au sein de la République sénégalaise, et le gouvernement ne se serait rendu compte de rien avant de nombreuses années, au moment des élections” [If they’d wanted, they could have set up a mini-republic within the Senegalese Republic and the government wouldn’t have cottoned on for years, until the elections came around] (51 [31]). These comments are similar to the type of criticisms that Diome makes about the Senegalese government in *La préférence nationale*. But in the context of Niodior, the emphasis is on the islander’s responses to governmental inaction; people on Niodior seem to make do with what they have but also dream of foreign shores.

The novel’s descriptions of Niodior emphasize that while no one there pays attention to the rest of Senegal, everyone is focused on life in France in one way or another. The children dream of the ice cream cones they see on television advertisements, and the teenage boys all hope to join a big European soccer team. Although the adults are not as swayed by the images on television and prefer traditional wrestling to soccer (51) they certainly take notice of who has been to France and what they have brought back, as demonstrated by the village’s reaction to both l’homme de Barbès’ success and Moussa’s failure. Key to this concern with France and Europe more broadly is the village *télécentre*. While the village is unmoved by news programs from Dakar, the *télécentre* provides an appreciated lifeline outwards. The *télécentre* itself is run by one of the few literate individuals in the village, emphasizing the uniqueness of the location (34). The *télécentre* connects the community to a more privileged world; the inhabitants of Niodior bring their documents and letters to the proprietress to read, but more importantly the *télécentre* provides them with a connection to their relatives throughout the world, likely to be earning more than they are (35). The television and the phone both become points

of connection between the two locations, and the messages they bring emphasize the assumptions that people in Niodior have about life in France. Garnier appropriately suggests that Diome's work depicts the multiplicity of *télécentres*, televisions, and money transfer stations as a representation of this "pression de l'ailleurs sur la société sénégalaise" [pressure from abroad on Senegalese society] (32). Dominic Thomas similarly examines the way that the presence of this technology further enables the villagers' access to images of France and to their relatives in France (*Black France* 187). In fact, these technologies enable people in Niodior the kind of access to information that they simply would not have had before, being a relatively isolated island community. While Niodior happens to be Diome's birthplace, it also provides an especially apt locale for Diome to demonstrate the ineptness of the Senegalese state as well as the inhabitants' concern with the rest of the world. Getting absolutely nothing from Senegal aside from an exiled schoolteacher, the villagers turn to dreams of France provided to them through the phone and the television. While portraying the negative aspects of this situation, Diome also indicates how these inevitable links to France can be used to benefit Niodior.

Le ventre de l'Atlantique, while perhaps being a hymn to Salie's freedom from being tied to one place, is also grounded in the specificities of life in Niodior. What further marks this novel as unique from other tales of immigration is the ultimately hopeful message at the end. In response to Madické asking for money to leave Senegal, Salie insists that she will give Madické money only if he will develop an entrepreneurial project in Niodior such as a boutique (223). The boutique ultimately becomes quite successful. And the optimism extends to a scene with a surprisingly pro-nationalist tone where a group of people watch the Senegalese national soccer team in Madické's home.

Diome points to change in Niodior especially through the fact that the spectators are watching a television that Madické has rented rather than watching with l'homme de Barbès, formerly provider of the only television in Niodior. Perhaps they have moved away from the l'homme de Barbès and everything that he represents concerning life in France. And rather than dreaming of leaving for Europe, Madické now hopes to see the Senegalese national team play in the Dakar stadium (251). Diome does not suggest a complete rejection of France and immigration there, for Madické's boutique would not have been successful without Salie's help. But Diome indicates the possibility to prosper within Senegal despite the economic imbalance between Senegal and France.

In *Le ventre de l'Atlantique*, Diome does criticize Senegalese society both for exercising control over women's reproductive decisions and for perpetuating a skewed perception of life in France. Nonetheless, the novel ends positively. Diome does not present the "dysfunctional Africa" that Pius Adesanmi argues is present in many novels about Africans living in France (Adesanmi 972). Although Salie herself cannot envision a permanent return to Niodior, making her a candidate for espousal of the glories of nomadism, Diome nonetheless emphasizes the possibilities that do exist in Senegal for those who stay. The potential changes wrought by departure are emphasized not only by Salie's own life but also by Moussa, who was never able to recover from his failure in France. Although immigration to France is a viable option for some, *Le ventre de l'Atlantique* emphasizes the importance of carefully considering a decision to leave and insists that individuals not become misguided by visions of economic success, an argument to which Diome herself ascribes in an interview with Labass Diallo.

Similar to the use of Salie's story in *Le ventre de l'Atlantique*, in *Kétala* Diome utilizes the trajectory of Mémoria, who also leaves Senegal for France and then returns, to discuss situations specific to Senegalese society. In identifying these concerns, Diome ultimately points to possibility for change. In *Le ventre de l'Atlantique*, Diome uses Salie's discussions with her brother and reflections on life on Niodior to primarily address Senegal, even while Salie is in France. Conversely, in *Kétala*, Diome uses a set of narrators located in Dakar to describe the protagonist Mémoria's life in Senegal as well as in France. The novel, uniquely told from the perspective of Mémoria's furniture and other belongings, features domestic space on both continents. As Mémoria is recently deceased, her belongings recount her life to each other, in anticipation of their separation in the *kétala* of the title. This creative perspective enables the novel to be particularly grounded in Senegalese life, while addressing life in France as well.

Part of Mémoria's story in France echoes that of Ken's from Ken Bugul's *Baobab fou*. While Ken is in Amsterdam, Mémoria is primarily in Strasbourg. After separating from the husband her parents chose for her, Mémoria enters a life quite similar to Ken's. Lacking money, Mémoria begins dancing at a nightclub at the suggestion of a friend. Mémoria is at first horrified by the suggestion and insists that she will never exhibit herself in public (Diome 209). But as a nightclub dancer she profits from her billing as "une bombe africaine qui avait la musique dans le sang" [an African bombshell who had music in her blood] (Diome 215). Ken too refuses at first but is successful because, as her friend explains, she is black and can make a fortune (123). This intertext with *Le baobab fou* is one of the only times in *Kétala* where Diome depicts the way that others in Europe perceive Mémoria. As in *Le ventre de l'Atlantique*, the majority of what happens to the

protagonist in France occurs in her apartment. It is only in recalling *Le baobab fou* here that Diome exposes Mémoria to judgment on the part of the French. Mémoria's descent into prostitution and drugs further aligns this portion of the story with *Le baobab fou*. And like Ken, Mémoria returns to Senegal in a state of crisis. Yet unlike the primarily psychological crisis that Ken faces, Mémoria's situation is intensified by the fact that she has contracted HIV and is sick with AIDS; this difference suggests that Diome has moved Ken's story into the present day. It also enables Diome to explore the way that those with HIV/AIDS are perceived in Senegal, even though Mémoria contracts the virus in Europe.

Aside for this one foray into French nightlife, the majority of what occurs in France is described from inside Mémoria's apartment. Prior to splitting up with her husband Makhou, France exists as a place that offers hope for her and Makhou to develop their own life, far away from family in Senegal. In this way, France offers a potential for freedom to Mémoria as well as Makhou. While Mémoria hopes to start afresh with Makhou, for Makhou life in France eventually enables him to live openly as a gay man. Either way, Diome clearly wants to differentiate Mémoria and Makhou from those immigrants who go to France because of economic conditions in Senegal. If Mémoria's hopes of living "une vraie vie matrimoniale" [a real matrimonial life] in France were not clear enough, her Masque states it very plainly: "C'était donc pour cette raison et non à cause de la situation économique qu'ils débarquèrent en France" [It was thus for this reason and not because of the economic situation that they landed in France] (127).

Because Mémoria wants to live with Makhou as husband and wife, their domestic space in Strasbourg is of primary importance and often takes precedence over

descriptions of life in the city more generally. Appropriately, the household objects are able to narrate extensively about Mémoria and Makhou's apartment: what they eat, how their relationship develops and thereafter collapses, and Mémoria's battles with depression and illness. There is some view of the outside world, particularly in their difficulty finding work as well as some description of Strasbourg (155; 195). But the majority of the novel's scenes while Mémoria lives in France take place in the bedroom, living room, or dining room of her apartment, not unlike what is portrayed of France from Salie's perspective in *Le ventre de l'Atlantique*. The items that are worn when Mémoria goes out (clothing, watch, necklace) can tell of the outside world, but most of what happens of importance occurs inside. In this way, daily life on the streets of Strasbourg is not of primary importance to the text.

While the furniture provides a view of domestic life in France, it also enables Diome to address many facets of Senegalese society. Diome has explained that the term *kétala* can also refer to a confrontation in addition to the sharing of memories and belongings; and the furniture that are, in effect, conducting their own *kétala* frequently have their share of arguments and confrontations ("Writing Out Loud"). These arguments provide humorous asides more often than not, but Diome also uses them to address life in Senegal and in France from a variety of perspectives. Just as each individual on Niodior relates to a set of stories and concerns that Diome addresses, each object has its own origin and set of stories. Mémoria's belongings indicate a tapestry of influences. They come together to tell the full story of Mémoria's life, and in doing so they also tell much about contemporary Senegal. By maintaining a humorous tone, Diome discusses the combination of traditional, Islamic, and Western influences in Senegal without having a

sense of nostalgia about the prevalence of any one of these. There is, for example, Masque, who first proposes that each object tell what they know of Mémoria because he comes from “une civilisation où les hommes se transmettent leur histoire familiale, leurs traditions, leur culture . . . de génération en génération” [a civilization where people transmit their family history, their traditions, their culture . . . from generation to generation] (23). Appropriately, his proposal is supported by the statue of the African hunter (“la statue du chasseur africain”) (24). There are also the marks of Islam, in Mémoria’s life and in Senegal more generally, as represented by the large white boubou (bought for Tabaski) and the shawl, which covered Mémoria’s head in prayer (25). And finally, there are all of the kitchen appliances, furniture, and electronics brought back from Strasbourg. Each item struggles to insist that it has particular insight into Mémoria’s life, when in truth each one of them is necessary to reconstruct her entire story.

Diome does not use the furniture’s differing origins to espouse an unproblematic view of cultural mixing, although she does address the fact that multiple traditions do intersect in contemporary Senegal. And more incisively, the furniture’s arguments and perspectives enable Diome to criticize the different types of discussions that often go on about Senegal, France, tradition, and modernity. This demonstrates her willingness to play with these kinds of debates, and they prefigure the aspects of the novel that present a practical consideration of life in Senegal. The objects argue, for example, about whether French baggage handlers are nicer than Senegalese baggage handlers, or if it is just because of the differing technologies that make the French workers’ jobs easier (133). Though humorous, Diome nonetheless demonstrates the very practical differences between France and Senegal here. All the objects get into yet another argument when

discussing Makhou's decision to give Mémoria flowers. Coumba Djiguène, the Gambian fertility figure, is horrified by this gift of flowers saying it is "une façon de singer les manières des Blancs" [a way to ape White ways], and a useful gift of rice, sweet potatoes, fabric, or money would be much more appropriate (179-80). But the final consensus, determined by Masque, is that Makhou's gift of flowers is not problematic and makes perfect sense; he has simply learned of this gesture in France and it can still be seen as a pleasant gift (181). Masque, though frequently the voice of reason in these debates, also laments the loss of tradition from time to time:

[E]n moi dorment les ancêtres. Signifiant toutes les règles de la vie social, je préludais aux gais comme aux tristes événements . . . les Hommes ne me prient plus, ils m'exposent dans leurs salons ou dans leurs musées. (175)

The ancestors rest in me. Signifying all the regulations of social life, I was a prelude to both happy and sad events . . . Men don't pray to me anymore, they display me in their living rooms or their museums.

Although it is true that Mémoria's ancestors were neither Muslim nor Christian but animist (174), Masque's nostalgia for the past is not portrayed entirely seriously, nor are his insistences on mutual collaboration and search for common ground (167). Any dialogue of identity politics is undermined by the fact that all of these arguments are being carried out by furniture. But some aspects of Mémoria's situation are not discussed by the furniture in argument, and this difference points to the issues with which Diome is primarily concerned. For example, there are no arguments about whether or not it is acceptable that Makhou is gay (none of the furniture judges Makhou negatively), and there are no arguments about whether Mémoria's parents are right for rejecting her when she returns with AIDS (the parents are judged as wrong by everyone).

Diome portrays Mémoria's parents so negatively as a way to approach the unequal economic conditions of people in Senegal as compared to Senegalese people in France and also to discuss how people in Senegal think about those in France. Mémoria's parents, part of Dakar's upper middle class, are overly concerned with other people's perceptions and what "le Tout-Dakar" will think even before Mémoria leaves (70). It is unsurprising that Mémoria's mother uses the fact that she is in France to brag to her friends: "Ma fille est en Frâânçe avec son mari, Makhou est *Lozisticien* dans une grande *entarprisse* à *Erasbourre*!" [My daughter is in *Frâânçe* with her husband, Makhou is a *Lozisticien* in a big *entarprisse* in *Erasbourre*!] (164). Later affected by difficult economic times, Mémoria's parents demand her support (202). The hypocrisy of Mémoria's parents is shown in that they are happy to accept the money she gives them but refuse to accept the consequences or to care for her. She can pay for her siblings' educations and send her parents to Mecca, making her "la meilleure des filles" [the best daughter] (224). Mémoria's parents do not know that her money is coming from dancing and prostitution, and they refuse to help her when she returns with AIDS. Diome depicts Mémoria's father as having an exceedingly prejudicial view of HIV and AIDS when he says, "[C]ette maladie n'infecte que les dégénérés qui mènent une vie dissolue" [This illness only infects degenerates who lead an immoral life] (259). Diome further emphasizes the greed of Mémoria's relatives when they are eager to receive some of her belongings in the *kétala*, even though they did not care for her at all when she was dying. Mémoria's family illustrates the kind of expectations that people in Senegal might have from those in France. Though the criticism is a bit extreme, Diome nonetheless discusses

the very real economic imbalance between France and Senegal, as well as the assumptions that people make about those with HIV/AIDS.¹¹

As in Diome's other two texts, she is frequently concerned in *Kétala* with the roles that women have in Senegalese society, and in particular the situation that affects both men and women, where parents choose their children's spouses. This is seen in both *La préférence nationale* and *Le ventre de l'Atlantique* as well. Additionally, Diome claims that she decided to write *Kétala* after seeing a gay man harassed on the street in Dakar ("Writing Out Loud"). Even if that may not be the reality of her inspiration (authors' statement are best taken with a grain of salt), she nonetheless chooses to present *Kétala* as if it were primarily concerned with the treatment of gay people in Senegalese society. And a good part of the text does indeed address Makhou's experiences, as well as those of Tamsir-Tamara.¹² While the novel is primarily about Mémoria and Makhou, there is an extended diversion into Tamsir-Tamara's life, who dresses as a woman in order to more easily live as he wishes. Born as Tamsir in the Gambia, Tamara lives as a celebrated dance instructor in Dakar. Like the background stories in *Le ventre de l'Atlantique*, Diome uses Tamsir-Tamara's life to further discuss Senegal even as Mémoria and Makhou spend much of their time in France.

The narrative ultimately lays blame for Mémoria's death on her parents and Makhou's, emphasizing generational conflict. Makhou's parents, aware that he is gay,

¹¹ Mémoria contracts HIV in Europe rather than Senegal, where HIV/AIDS rates are considerably lower than elsewhere in Africa. In 2001, the HIV positive rate for adults was 0.5 in Senegal (Bourgault 20; 30-31). Nonetheless, or perhaps as a result, there has been extensive social stigma against individuals with HIV/AIDS in Senegal (see Renaud), and this is part of Diome's concern in portraying Mémoria's parents' reaction to her disease.

¹² It seems that Diome uses Tamsir-Tamara to approach the figure of the *goor-jigeeen* in Senegal, however she never uses this term and does not fully present Tamsir-Tamara's role as potentially acceptable in certain circumstances. Perhaps at the expense of fully exploring the intricacies of gender roles in Senegal, Diome focuses on the judgment and prejudice that gay men in Senegal might face. Some cursory exploration of these intricacies can be found in Stephen O. Murray's *Boy-Wives and Female Husbands*.

decide that he will marry Mémoria, which perpetuates the tragedy of the rest of the novel, wherein Mémoria longs for the kind of love that Makhou is unable to give her. Makhou's parents want to find him a wife to quell suspicions about his sexual preferences, and Mémoria's parents are eager to marry her to an economically suitable match from a prosperous family. To emphasize this situation, Makhou comments that Mémoria is "la malheureuse victime d'une situation qui nous dépasse tous les deux" [the unfortunate victim of a situation that overtook the both of us] (90). This "tous les deux" particularly sets Mémoria and Makhou apart from their parents. Though Mémoria and Makhou's forced marriage reads like melodrama (particularly when Mémoria finds Makhou with Tamara, having had no idea that Tamara was actually a man), Diome uses their story to depict both generational conflict as well as the difficulties that a gay man might face in Senegal.

The problems that Diome identifies – the greed and unfairness of Mémoria's family, the fact that Mémoria and Makhou have been forced to marry, and Makhou's navigation of Senegalese society – are not simply displayed as a way to point out negative aspects of life in Senegal. At times, especially in the way that Mémoria's parents are portrayed, the text does sound overly critical of Senegalese society. However, as in *Le ventre de l'Atlantique*, Diome identifies some hope to go beyond the difficulties she presents.

Also, where characters in *La préférence nationale* and Salie in *Le ventre de l'Atlantique* do not perceive Senegal as home, it is in fact home for both Mémoria and Makhou. Mémoria returns to Senegal to die, but her trajectory is unlike that of those whose travels abroad end in death or desolation upon return. Samba Diallo dies full of

conflict in *L'aventure ambiguë*, for example. And Ken in *Le baobab fou* returns hoping for a psychological recovery but at the end of the book is left with nothing but the “crazy baobab” of the title. In contrast, Mémoria returns with the certainty that she is going home and that it is the right place for her to be, even though she is dying. Mémoria’s confusion and malaise in France is primarily tied to her desire for a matrimonial relationship with Makhoul (177). Although similar to Ken at times, Mémoria does not question the status of her identity relative to Senegal and France because she is so consumed by the status of her identity relative to Makhoul. Senegal remains home for Mémoria, and as she gets sicker in France, she begs Makhoul to bring her back. Her dialogue with him demonstrates how much she sees Senegal as home: “Ramène-moi *chez nous* . . . Je t’en prie, Makhoul, ne me laisse pas mourir ici, rends mon corps à mes parents, à *la terre qui m’a vue naître*” [Bring me to *our home* . . . I beg you, Makhoul, don’t let me die here, return my body to my parents, *to the land that saw my birth*] (250, italics mine). These dreams of home are interrupted by reality upon Mémoria’s return when her parents refuse to address her. But Diome indicates that Senegal is still Mémoria’s home even though her parents reject her; Makhoul and his mother care for Mémoria in her own apartment until she dies. And while Mémoria’s parents refuse to change, it seems that Makhoul’s mother recognizes the mistake of Makhoul and Mémoria’s marriage. In this way, Makhoul’s return home is particularly hopeful, and this is further indicated by the fact that Makhoul’s mother even becomes accepting of the fact that her son is gay (276).

Despite Mémoria’s death, the greatest indication of change and progress comes in the fact that her furniture does not get separated at the end of the novel. The *kétala* never

happens, and the furniture remains in Mémoria's apartment in Dakar as a testament to her life and the mistakes that resulted in her death. Makhou's refusal to allow the *kétala* to be carried out represents a shifting of power between generations as well as a statement against the greed and hypocrisy of Mémoria's family. He directly counters Mémoria's family when he tells everyone waiting for the *kétala* that his wife's things belong in their apartment and not "chez ses soeurs qui l'ont abandonnée à son triste sort" [with her sisters, who abandoned her to her sad end] (275). Diome sets the furniture's permanence against the backdrop of Dakar, further emphasizing Mémoria's final return to Senegal where "[l]e muezzin criait toujours le nom de Dieu . . . Harmattan/mousson, moussoun/harmattan, les saisons alternaient" [the muezzin always called the name of God . . . Harmattan/monsoon, monsoon/harmattan, the seasons alternated] (276). And because the furniture, in all of its diversity – Masque, shawl, and computer alike – remain in the apartment the novel points to hope in Senegal in the context of multiple influences and heritages. Diome's argument is intensified because her optimism is coupled with realistic depictions of problems in Senegal – her vision is not of a utopia.

The experiences of Salie in *Le ventre de l'Atlantique* and Mémoria and Makhou in *Kétala* may appear to be celebrations of the possibilities of migration unfettered by national affiliations, but the two novels are in fact focused on Senegal in addition to depicting travel to France. Diome's texts recognize contemporary Senegalese culture as having diverse sets of influences and as being inevitably entwined with France. Diome does not revel in this but does indicate how individuals and communities in Senegal can prosper nonetheless. Diome takes to task those in Senegal who expect too much from their relatives abroad and assume that it is easy to earn a living in France. But she also

indicates, especially in Salie's relationship with her brother, how necessary income from abroad can be to those in Senegal. Though *Kétala* provides particularly harsh criticisms of arranged marriage, attitudes towards gay men, and the stigma of HIV/AIDS, it also provides an especially prosperous ending, where Mémoria's furniture remains a testament to her life and to these challenges. The narrators of *La préférence nationale* do not look back on Senegal once they are dealing with their own difficulties in France, but Diome does choose to consider Senegalese society closely in *Kétala* and *Le ventre de l'Atlantique*. Whether Diome considers Senegal as home or instead sees herself as navigating between multiple locales, her two novels depict characters who indeed see Senegal as home, and through them Diome points to some hope both for those who stay and for those who have returned. In Diome's ongoing concern with Senegalese realities and her references to Senegalese texts, it is thus impossible to characterize her along with the other writers of the so-called *migrITUDE* generation. Furthermore, Diome's works point to the very real concerns currently at issue in Senegal, which texts that focus exclusively on the individual's life abroad might potentially ignore. The young people of whom Diome writes are reflective of those in Senegal who are very much aware of their position and the fact that they are not citizens of the United States or a country in Europe. The social and economic distinctions that Diome highlights in her attention to Senegal are significant and similar to those brought out in contemporary Senegalese hip-hop music.

Chapter Five

Making Connections in Senegalese Hip-Hop

In his introduction to *Global Noise: Rap and Hip-Hop Outside the USA*, Tony Mitchell argues for the importance of local specificities and histories in global hip-hop. He explains that rap music and hip-hop culture across the world are “used in different local contexts to espouse the causes of ethnic minorities . . . and to make political statements about local racial, sexual, employment and class issues” (10). While Mitchell tends to idealize non-American hip-hop music at the expense of hip-hop in the United States,¹ his affirmation points to the way that hip-hop music across the world takes on local meanings despite the genre’s origin in the United States. Global hip-hop scholarship consistently affirms the importance of local politics, histories, and cultures in hip-hop, and this work often moves beyond what Mitchell calls “academic attempts to explain rap inadequately in terms of pastiche, fragmentation, the loss of history, and the blurring of boundaries between ‘high art’ and popular culture” (10).² Following on Adam Krims’ warning against an overemphasis on hybridity (174), all of these theoretical tendencies could threaten an understanding of hip-hop music, in which real histories as well as local and even national identities are often of primary importance. Such narratives of and identifications with origin are absolutely central to hip-hop music in Senegal, as in hip-hop elsewhere.

Although it is incisive, Mitchell’s argument overlooks the way that hip-hop music can also be used to navigate international connections from the vantage point of those

¹ For further criticism of Mitchell on this point see Dipannita Basu and Sidney J. Lemelle 5.

² For more explorations of the importance of local communities and identities in hip hop, see *The Vinyl Ain’t Final: Hip Hop and the Globalization of Black Popular Culture* (2006) edited by Basu and Lemelle, Adam Krims’ *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity* (2000), and Halifu Osumare’s *The Africanist Aesthetic in Global Hip-hop* (2007).

local contexts, and this becomes even more apparent with the ability to place music and videos on the internet for worldwide dispersal.³ In the case of Senegalese hip-hop, scholars including Katrin Lock, Esther Baker, and Abdoulaye Niang have effectively demonstrated that many hip-hop artists in Senegal are concerned with Senegalese political and social matters. But several recent songs from Senegalese hip-hop artists about migration articulate local and national affiliations while simultaneously addressing a broader context and the presence of global audiences. As these songs deal with the phenomenon of frequent emigration from Senegal, they articulate connections within Senegal and communication between those in Senegal and those abroad.

Artists and groups including Simon Bisbi Clan, WaGëblë, Awadi, and 3GGA have all addressed migration in recent songs and accompanying videos.⁴ While these artists have varied approaches to migration, an examination of their songs and videos indicates a continuous concern with local realities in Senegal alongside an effort to navigate connections that reach across nations. Ultimately, unification within several overlapping communities is central to these songs' responses to emigration and to life abroad. In this way, the productions of these hip-hop artists are in line with the recent novels by Sow Fall, Bugul, and Diome, which also posit the importance of Senegalese communities alongside global relationships as a response to migration. But while the novelists express themselves only in writing and in French, the hip-hop artists extend

³ While Mitchell's introduction does not acknowledge the importance of international connections, it must be noted that several essays in his volume do. See for example Urla 178, 182.

⁴ It would be difficult, if not impossible to survey all of the numerous groups in Senegal; groups in Dakar only were numbered at over 2,500 in 2001-02 (Havard 65n7; Benga 81). Therefore, these artists should not be considered the only ones that take on the theme of migration. Furthermore, while the number of female soloists and groups in Senegal has been growing, it is still limited, as it historically has been in hip-hop in the United States and throughout the world. Female artists such as Sister Fa and Alif do address Senegalese communities, but they are more likely to address the role of women in Senegalese society rather than the phenomenon of emigration. There is not, to my knowledge, any extensive scholarly work on female Senegalese hip-hop artists and their music, and the topic merits further study.

their messages and connections across a variety of media as they interact with audiences near and far and use a mix of languages including Wolof, French, English, and occasionally other European or African languages. The songs and videos indicate that expressions of connection to Senegal do not preclude the formation of other affiliations, and local, national, and global connections are all critical in confronting the experience of migration and its broader context.

Previous Examinations of Migration

Just as there is an earlier history of novels and films about migration, so too is there a previous history of music that addresses migration within and emigration from Senegal. One could consider oral epics that involve travel within Africa, but in contemporary music, migration also appears as a theme in popular *mbalax* music, which emerged in Senegal in the 1970s. While these *mbalax* songs present the emotional strain of migration, most of them do not actively suggest a way to address the circumstances surrounding it. Also, earlier social and politically concerned hip-hop songs in Senegal since the late 1980s address migration and articulate unity and community engagement. But hip-hop artists did not initially have recourse to the diversity of media and methods of dispersion that are currently available.

Although *mbalax* is dismissed in some contexts as apolitical music meant only for dancing, musicians of the *mbalax* style have not ignored themes of import to Senegalese society, the experience of living abroad included.⁵ Baker's interviews with Senegalese hip-hop artist Keyti (known as KT in Baker's text) indicate his and other rappers' dislike

⁵ *Mbalax* music foregrounds rhythm using traditional Senegalese percussion instruments such as the *tabbor* and *sabar*. While *mbalax* emerges in part from praise singing traditions, it also utilizes contemporary Western instruments such as keyboard and electric guitar. For more about the *mbalax* style and its history see Tang 154-60 and Benga 79-80.

of *mbalax* because it does not make people think or question; furthermore, *mbalax*'s association with the world music scene serves to perpetuate a romanticized and unrealistic vision of Africa for listeners abroad (90; 92). Jean-François Havard further affirms the difference between *mbalax* and hip-hop, where hip-hop takes on serious themes and *mbalax* does not (69-70). *Mbalax* does foreground rhythm and, as Patricia Tang explains, "is first and foremost music to be danced to" (155), but it is not entirely separate from social action. It is simply representative of a different era of youth engagement in Senegal, as Mamadou Diouf has outlined ("Cultures urbaines" 278; 285). There is, for example, the tie between the song "Set" by *mbalax* star Youssou N'Dour and *Set/Setal*, the social movement in which young people were mobilized to take charge of the cleanliness and order of their communities in the face of government inaction.⁶ And as Richard Shain's careful analysis of twentieth century Senegalese music establishes, at the moment of *mbalax*'s emergence in the 1970s, the decision to sing in Wolof worked as an emerging statement of Senegalese identity (96; 98).

Despite *mbalax*'s attention to topics of import to Senegalese society, the *mbalax* songs about migration do not articulate clear responses to the difficult experience of living abroad that is depicted. As Bruno Riccio indicates in his study of Senegalese attitudes towards migration, the *mbalax* songs primarily praise migrants for their work earning money abroad (106). And as Christine Ludl points out, citing works by Youssou N'Dour and Ismael Lô, among others, these songs articulate immigrants' "hard lives in

⁶ For more about *Set/Setal* and its relation to Youssou N'Dour's songs, see two of Diouf's articles "Le *Set/Setal* à Dakar" (42) and "Des cultures urbaines entre traditions et mondialisation" (276). For a similar discussion in English, see Diouf's "Urban Youth and Senegalese Politics: Dakar 1988-1994."

Western countries” (108). For example, Thione Seck’s song “France”⁷ is in part the narrative of someone who has left Senegal for France. He sings over and over again to “Senegal” and talks about the elements of life there that he misses such as

waxtaan ak attaya
l’Islam.

talking and tea
Islam.

As Seck sings these lyrics, he sounds profoundly mournful and laments the experience of the immigrant. Youssou N’Dour’s song “Immigrés” similarly talks about the difficult life of immigrants in France, but the song maintains the typically upbeat *mbalax* sound. Many of these songs point to the personal challenges of migration but do not approach migration with an appeal to a diverse set of connections in the way that hip-hop songs do.

Although this study addresses Senegalese hip-hop from the latter half of the 00s, hip-hop in Senegal has been politically motivated since its emergence in the late 1980s, and earlier songs and albums have addressed Senegal’s global position as well as the phenomenon of migration. An album from the group Positive Black Soul (PBS) that came out in 1997 was entitled *New York-Paris-Dakar*. As Diouf notes in an interview with Peter Bloom, the album suggests a reformulated geography where “Paris and New York are suburbs of Dakar” (59). The album’s title also points to transcontinental collaborations, as many songs feature the work of artists from outside of Senegal such as American KRS-One and French rapper Manu Key, originally from Guadeloupe. These types of collaborations are still apparent in the recent work of Didier Awadi, one of the

⁷ Ludl mentions, but does not analyze, “France,” by Thione Seck in addition to songs by Youssou N’Dour and Ismael Lô (108n14).

founding members of PBS. On his 2008 album, the song “Eastwest Konnection” features Kenyan rapper Maji Maji.

The first hip-hop music in Senegal initially copied American groups such as Public Enemy, but the music gradually developed its own sound and become increasingly reflective of local situations. This is reported in Baker’s analysis of hip-hop artists in Senegal (10; 36) as well as by the hip-hop artists themselves in the documentary *Democracy in Dakar*.⁸ As hip-hop artists continue to progress in developing their own sound and the number of groups continues to rise, hip-hop in Senegal becomes increasingly diverse and complex. Some artists migrate between Europe, the United States, and Senegal, while others remain based in Senegal but regularly tour in Europe. Many use the internet to publicize their albums and to diffuse political messages, while their songs and videos may also appear on Senegalese TV and radio.⁹ It is important to note that despite artists’ often conscious attempts to convey messages to the Senegalese public, comprehension of songs has been limited in the past due to the use of obscure references and phrases (Baker 57; Niang 176). Niang explains that more recently, hip-hop artists have made conscious efforts to make their songs intelligible to a broader public (180), and the artists explored here use many strategies to make their songs understandable, particularly in music videos where gestures, images, and words on screen can be used to highlight the lyrics’ meaning.

⁸ This pattern of first imitation and then local specification in hip-hop is noted in hip-hop movements worldwide. See Mitchell 11 and Pennay 121.

⁹ In *Democracy in Dakar*, Awadi suggests that overt political criticism in hip-hop songs will result in less radio airtime. He suggests that songs of this kind are more readily diffused over the internet. Ndiouga Adrien Benga also indicates that hard-core hip-hop songs do not get aired as much as those with softer sounds (83). Furthermore, at her talk at the 2010 ALA conference, Moradewun Adejunmobi pointed out that the less popular a hip-hop artist is, the more he or she must depend on the internet for diffusion of her or his work.

Of the songs examined, most are from late 2006 or early 2007 and all are from the latter half of the 00s. In 2006, the Senegalese press paid considerable attention to the phenomenon of young people leaving in pirogues for Spain's Canary Islands. An article in *Le Soleil* by Abdoulaye Thiam from early 2007 indicates the way emigration was discussed during this period:

L'année 2006 a été surtout marquée par l'émigration clandestine de jeunes Sénégalais en destination de l'Espagne pour un nouvel eldorado. Devenu un véritable phénomène social, Barça ou « barzakh » (Barcelone ou la mort) était le slogan des partants à travers les plages.¹⁰

The year 2006 was above all marked by the illegal emigration of young Senegalese people headed to Spain for a new El Dorado. Having become a veritable social phenomenon, Barça ou “barzakh” (Barcelona or death) was the emigrants' slogan across the beaches.

Thus at around the same time that the emigration of young people by boat became a general topic of concern in Senegal, several hip-hop artists addressed the issue, offering their own perspectives. While migration is not a new theme in Senegalese hip-hop or in Senegalese music more broadly, this particular moment during the late 00s provides a particularly ripe setting for the exploration of migration in hip-hop music due to the relevance of the topic to the time period and to the creative and connective possibilities currently available to many artists.

In writing about hip-hop from Senegal, I must note the choice to use the term “hip-hop music” rather than “rap music.” Tricia Rose, one of the foremost scholars of hip-hop, uses the term “rap music” and explains that the music is just one part of hip-hop

¹⁰ In her analysis of the 2006 coverage of emigration, Schmitz suggests that the common French translation of the Wolof phrase “Barça walla barzakh” does not fully take into account the Arabic meaning of the second term, which suggests an opening up to many more possibilities than does the word “mort” [death] (6).

culture, which also includes graffiti and break dancing (25-27).¹¹ Rose insists on the interrelationship between the emergence of rap music and “hip hop style” and “[t]he hip hop context” (26). Acknowledging this argument, the phrase “hip-hop music” in fact lends itself even more than does “rap music” to emphasizing the connection between the music and hip-hop culture more broadly. Krims points this out in an explanation of his choice to use “rap music” as a way to indicate his focus on musical form to the exclusion of cultural context (11). He favors the “restrictive” term “rap” for the majority of his book and uses “hip-hop” to “[leave] open a wider possible field” (11-12). Hip-hop artist KRS-One is famously quoted as saying, “[R]ap is something you do, Hip-Hop is something you live,” and he goes on to distinguish between “hip-hop music,” which is part of hip-hop culture and “rap music,” which he sees as part of the entertainment industry (Copeland 58). Despite the potential here for an idealization of hip-hop culture, KRS-One’s quotation points to a distinction between “rapping” as an act and “hip-hop” as a broader musical and cultural experience. I thus choose to use the term “hip-hop” to refer to the musical genre itself in part to emphasize the relationship to a broader cultural field that also encompasses videos, images, clothing, and dance. I use “rap” primarily as a verb to refer to the discrete act of performing lyrics within a hip-hop song. Because the Senegalese artists whom I examine do much more than rap a set of lyrics as they interact with communities near and far, I choose to refer to them as “hip-hop artists” and to their productions as “hip-hop songs” and “hip-hop videos.”

¹¹ Rose defines the genre itself as “a form of rhymed storytelling accompanied by highly rhythmic, electronically based music” (2). Hip-hop music generally involves the use of looped samples from other musical sources (such as rock, funk, soul, and previous hip-hop), as well as the use of a drum machine.

Messages From Home/Messages To Home

While communication with those at home is portrayed as limited for individuals in mid-twentieth century films and novels about emigration from Senegal to Europe, in Senegalese hip-hop songs set in Europe, communication with home remains open. This appears in two songs with very different responses to the experience of living abroad: “Jeul seen kagn” [Take Their Money] by Simon Bisbi Clan and “Faudra leur dire que” [You Must Tell Them That . . .] by Eyewitness. Both songs present similar aspects of what is challenging about life in Europe, but while Eyewitness calls for cross-border dialogue, Simon calls for violence in the name of Senegalese hip-hop and shared references based in Senegal. While their messages are different, both artists use the context of hip-hop to call for a collective response to life in Europe that relies on maintaining connections to Senegal.

In the song and video of “Jeul seen kagn,” the response to immigrant life has a violent and reactive tone. Over a simple and rhythmic looped sample, the lyrics implore the listener to “stand up” and respond to the way that immigrant workers are treated in Europe. The song is almost entirely in Wolof, aside from a sprinkling of French and English words in otherwise Wolof sentences, a feature common to Senegalese hip-hop’s use of urban Wolof (Auzanneau, “Lieu d’expression” 713-14). While the scene is set in France (the video labels the location as Bordeaux), the context is still that of Senegalese rap. The opening stanza is also the song’s refrain, and it points to one of the messages central to the song:

Jël sen kañ, bardelo sen dom, jabar aki rak
Ñibisi dëk bi tabax.

Take their money, seduce their daughters, wives and sisters

Return home and build a house.¹²

Although return home is significant in the song, the goal of successful return is not presented as easily achieved. The rest of the song indicates that money and success in Europe can only be found through extreme action. The rest of the verses shift between further calls for action within a rhetoric of war and descriptions of life in Europe that require those actions.

This call for action in response to oppression is in some ways characteristic of what in the United States has been called message rap. As described by Ernest Allen Jr., message rap “tends to carry with it considerable antisocial baggage characteristic of, but hardly limited to, the rap phenomenon in general: misogyny, homophobia, vainglorious trippings, [and] interethnic malevolence” (160).¹³ While Allen is speaking of hip-hop in the United States in the early 1990s, political and potentially revolutionary discourses in hip-hop anywhere can be accompanied by these kinds of characteristics. While much Senegalese hip-hop reacts against the government and some criticizes the society’s control by Muslim elders, thus “bear[ing] witness to resistance against overt external oppression” (Allen 169), even hard-core Senegalese hip-hop is otherwise relatively restrained by international standards, though songs may discuss topics not often

¹² All transcriptions of Wolof lyrics by Mamadou Dramé at the University Gaston Berger in Saint Louis, Senegal, to whom I owe many thanks. Translations from Wolof into English are my own, with occasional reference to Dramé’s translations from Wolof to French. Orthography can vary in Wolof, but I choose to retain the artists’ original orthographies for song titles, although these orthographies sometimes differ from Dramé’s. Thus “jeul seen kagn” and “jël sen kañ” are the same phrase, but I use Dramé’s orthography in the song lyrics for the sake of consistency from line to line. Transcriptions of originally French and English lyrics are my own unless otherwise stated.

¹³ While the rise of message rap, as outlined by Allen and by William Eric Perkins in the same volume (20-24), is tied closely to the political, artistic, and religious histories of African-Americans in the United States, discussions of message rap are nonetheless relevant to Senegalese hip-hop because American artists like Chuck D of Public Enemy and Melle Mel, both associated with message rap, served as inspiration for the first Senegalese hip-hop groups (see *Democracy in Dakar* for discussion of this influence).

confronted directly in Senegalese society.¹⁴ “Jeul seen kagn,” on the other hand, insists on violent action in a revenge-like context (particularly in the song’s video). Also, the act of seducing European women is placed alongside taking European money, thereby equating the two. These aspects of the song serve as a reminder to take into account the full complexity of revolutionary messages in socially conscious hip-hop, for not all songs call for a simple or clean sense of unity and progress (and given the tense situation for immigrant groups in France, Simon’s response is in keeping with reality). Thus in the vein of other examples of message rap, “Jeul seen kagn” pairs a somewhat shocking reaction to European life with reference to respected elders of Senegalese culture and religion.

The song articulates unity through enunciations of shared experiences on European soil as well as a shared Senegalese background. In addition to the mention of dirty and unpleasant jobs, Simon tells a brief story of a man who is taken advantage of by his employers and blamed for stealing because he is black (the song uses the word “black” in English, which stands out in the lyrics, just as the man stood out at his job). Rather than lamenting the situation, this story works as an explanation for the attitude that the song takes, as the story concludes, “Kon dawal sentiment *Babylone* daganul” [So don’t have any sentiments toward *Babylone*].¹⁵ The man had a positive and honest attitude toward Europeans, and his employers falsified his documents and had him deported, thus Simon indicates that it is dangerous to be tolerant towards those in *Babylone*. Simon’s descriptions of negative experiences in Europe dismantle any idea of the ease of life abroad and indicate why a response of some kind is necessary.

¹⁴ There is an increasing trend in Senegalese hip-hop to describe women in lyrics and depict women in videos as sexual objects, but this appears primarily in songs that do not have overt political messages.

¹⁵ The term “Babylone” is frequently used in Senegalese hip-hop to refer to the West.

Additionally, the song suggests the need to seek justice for the centuries of European involvement in Africa and in Senegal specifically. In this way, the action that the song calls for is connected to Senegalese history. Speaking within the context of slavery, Simon raps,

*Seex Anta represent
Fok ñu fight again
quatre-cent ans la ñu la amel*

*Cheikh Anta represent
We must fight again
They owe us four hundred years.*¹⁶

This suggests the need for vengeance in the sense that something is “owed,” but it also calls on a shared Senegalese history, particularly with the mention of Cheikh Anta Diop, who is both a significant figure of Senegalese nationalism and certainly of afrocentrism more generally.¹⁷ In this context, the resistance to which Simon alludes is not part of a brand-new fight in France; it is actually the continuation of a fight that began on Senegalese soil. Similarly, Cheikh Amadou Bamba and other foundational figures of Mouridism such as Limamou Laye are referenced – the song states that these figures knew that one day there would be people who would make the Europeans pay, further indicating that this is a collective struggle not only of immigrants in France but backed by figures from Senegal’s past.¹⁸

¹⁶ Words and phrases that are italicized highlight the use of French or English terms in the original text.

¹⁷ For an overview of Cheikh Anta Diop’s contributions to afrocentric thought, see Stephen Howe’s chapter on him. For more precise exploration of Diop’s influence in Senegal see, for example, Ferran Iniesta’s “À propos de l’École de Dakar: Modernité et tradition dans l’œuvre de Cheikh Anta Diop.”

¹⁸ Discussing the difference between *mbalax* musicians and younger hip-hop artists, Diouf suggests that the hip-hop artists do not refer to “early twentieth century Muslims and political leaders” in the way that popular *mbalax* musicians do, and he suggests that Cheikh Anta Diop is the oldest reference to which they look (59). “Jeul seen kagn” and other songs such as 3GGA’s “Jotna” indicate that this is not always the case, pointing to the diversity of Senegalese hip-hop that makes any sort of generalization difficult to maintain.

Alongside the references to these prominent Senegalese individuals, a group identity is further developed in the song's lyrics. There is reference to collective action throughout the song, particularly apparent in the refrain's call, "*Never ever*, dara munu ñu ko xañ" [*Never ever*, nothing can stop us]. Additionally, the song points to the fact that this hip-hop is Senegalese even though it is about life in Europe. The end of the song, prior to the final refrain, proclaims, "tewal hip hop u senegal à distance" [present Senegalese hip-hop from afar]. Even though the song speaks of life abroad, it still does so in the context of Senegal, and this is also emphasized by the song's repeated command to return to Senegal and build a house.

Most of the calls for action, which demand the listener "fight," "stand up,"¹⁹ or "make them pay," are not necessarily violent, but they are reactive, and the song does not suggest how to move forward after the "war"²⁰ has been won. But if the song lyrics themselves may not literally call for violence, the video of "Jeul seen kagn" has an explicitly violent message of revenge against French society. In one set of images, Simon and his group of young men are approached and patted down by French police officers (see fig. 1). In an interspersed set of alternate images, Simon's group kidnaps people on the streets of Bordeaux; the captives are shown tied up underground, and eventually the group is shown sharing the spoils of their escapade - money and papers taken from the captives. Both sets of images are replete with a sense of uncertainty and discomfort, emphasized by shadowed faces (of both the police officers and Simon's group) and unsteady camera work; this further links the two sets of images and suggests that the kidnapping works to reverse the roles displayed in the police pat-down.

¹⁹ "taxawna"

²⁰ "xare"



Fig. 1. Police pat-down and discomfoting light and shadow in Simon Bisbi Clan's "Jeul seen kagn."

The police surveillance and the act of revenge are both experienced by an entire group in the video. Although Simon raps most of the song's lyrics alone, he is always shown surrounded by a large group of young men who experience the same things that he does: they walk together on the street, are all stopped by the police, and together kidnap unsuspecting Bordeaux citizens. Additionally, Senegal is visually referenced in the video, serving as a reminder that this group of young men on the streets of Bordeaux is in fact Senegalese. A t-shirt that says "Sénégal hustler" is displayed prominently at the beginning and end of the video. And Simon is periodically shown rapping in a bright and empty room with a Senegalese flag in the background. This contrasts with the crowded and dark images that persist of Bordeaux for most of the video, perhaps suggesting the amount of encouragement that is brought by that connection to Senegal as opposed to the oppressive atmosphere of Bordeaux.

Alongside its presentation of the difficult and unfair treatment that is experienced by Senegalese abroad, the song and video of “Jeul seen kagn” suggest a collective and violent way to deal with immigrant life, articulated in the context of Senegalese history and Senegalese hip hop. Even if Simon may not literally advocate violent action (although his video is very violent), the song nonetheless suggests that it is not necessary to simply accept the difficulties and if nothing else, “return home and build a house” as stated in the refrain. In this way, a connection to Senegal and the goal of eventual return is an important part of the response to life abroad. Even though the song suggests that there are problems with living in Europe, it does not suggest that people should not migrate and instead indicates that migration presents a possibility to take what is, in the words of the song, essentially owed to the Senegalese people.

The song “Faudra leur dire que” by Eyewitness, a member of the hip-hop group WaGëblë, also depicts life in Europe and uses the structure of hip-hop to connect back to Senegal. The song’s message, quite different from that of Simon’s song, calls for telling the truth to friends and relatives back home about what it is like abroad. At the same time that the song insists “You must tell them,” it performs some of that telling. Primarily in French with some Wolof, the song has a much softer sound than that of “Jeul seen kagn” because some of the musical samples are more melodic. This could help the song appeal to a wider audience, as it was written to be part of the documentary film *Au-delà des rêves*, directed by an international group of young filmmakers. As indicated in newspaper coverage of the film, this documentary, with interviews of primarily Senegalese immigrants in Switzerland, France, and Italy, aims to work against the taboo of telling family and friends in Senegal what life is really like in Europe and to open a dialogue

between those in Senegal and those living abroad (Gueye). And as the filmmakers' indicate on their website, *Au-delà des rêves* was shown throughout Senegal in 2008 and 2009. Thus the song "Faudra leur que" itself, and as part of the film, fulfills the very purpose it argues for: Eyewitness (whose name predates the song but is nonetheless appropriate) tells people in Senegal what life is like in Europe and insists that others do the same.

As the song emphasizes the need for conversation between those in Europe and those in Senegal, it is appropriately framed as a dialogue. The song opens as a conversation between two men, and the sounds of static and echoing are used to emphasize that the conversation is occurring over the phone. One voice implores the other, "Qu'est ce que je vais leur dire?" [What am I going to tell them?], and both men decide that "la réalité" is best. The song thus commences after the first man says, "Ecoute bien" [Listen up]. The concept of communicating messages back home, while apparent already in the title, is emphasized further by the dialogue established at the song's opening. An emphasis on dialogue between those in Senegal and those abroad is similarly seen in Chronik 2H's song "Toi ici, moi là-bas," the video of which presents the entire song as a rapped cell phone conversation between the two members of Chronik 2H, one in Senegal and one ostensibly abroad. "Toi ici, moi là-bas" remains a conversation between two friends, while in "Faudra leur dire que," the message is more consciously expanded beyond the phone conversation to tell all Senegalese immigrants abroad to communicate back home the reality of life in Europe.

In part, "Faudra leur dire que" describes problems encountered in Europe, thus performing the very purpose that it calls for. The song talks about being perceived as a

stranger and working hard for a small amount of money. It also emphasizes the loneliness of being far from home. In this way, the song is similar to Thione Seck's "France" in which Seck lists off elements of life in Senegal that he misses. But here, the descriptions serve not only to lament the struggles that those abroad encounter but also to convey to those in Senegal that emigration is something they should think carefully about because it is not a pleasant experience. The sense of disappointment and loneliness that might confront an immigrant abroad becomes especially apparent in the Wolof refrain. More than the French lyrics, the Wolof lyrics convey the emotional toll of emigration:

Ne len
 Samay gent dèmb réerna ma
 Sama *life* orna ma
 Sama dëkk sori na ma
 Ne len.

Tell them
 My dreams have been lost
 My *life* betrayed me
 My country is far from me
 Tell them.

These lines, consistently directed back to Senegal and recalling the conversation from the beginning of the song, aim to depict the reality of what living abroad is like.

At the same time that the song is descriptive of daily life and emotional struggles in Europe, it is also prescriptive in its discussion of the importance of observing and reporting on reality. The narrator raps,

Faudra leur dire que
 Je leur parle d'ici
 C'est mon rôle de dire . . . alors
 Je crie, je rime ce pays
 Je le décris tel quel, je l'exprime tel quel.

You must tell them that . . .
 I talk to them of here

It's my role to say . . . so
 I cry, I rhyme this country
 I describe it as it is, I express it as it is.

These lyrics address the importance of telling “them” in Senegal what it is like in Europe using the medium of hip-hop, thus demonstrating how hip-hop as a genre becomes entwined with the need to maintain a connection to Senegal. This insistence on “telling it like it is” and depicting reality is common in hip-hop. It is especially apparent in songs that describe the ghetto or the ‘hood in the United States.²¹ Speaking of Grandmaster Flash and Melle Mel’s “The Message,” one of the most notable hip-hop descriptions of life in New York, Forman explains, “It asserts an authority of voice that is spatially grounded and assumes that the speaking subject can accurately convey the underlying ‘truth’ of the site of articulation” (*Hood* 93). In the case of Senegalese hip-hop, this site is often Dakar, but in “Faudra leur dire que,” this goal of hip-hop is used to describe life in Europe.

In the song’s purpose to depict life in Europe and to insist that others articulate similar descriptions, the song works to reverse assumptions about life abroad. In general, this reversal occurs in the song’s presentation of loneliness and difficulty. But a direct reversal of the discourse surrounding departure occurs with the Wolof refrain’s line “Fi dara amul fi” [Here, there is nothing here]. The logic that “there is nothing” in Senegal is precisely what often drives young people to migrate. One thinks, for example, of the young people with whom Asta talks in Sow Fall’s novel *Douceurs du bercail* who insist that there is nothing for them in Senegal. But “Faudra leur dire que” insists instead that “there is nothing” in Europe.

²¹ For the shifting uses and significance of these two terms for urban neighborhoods, see Forman (*Hood* 63-67).

In this kind of reversal, Senegal itself risks becoming an idealized land of dreams. This problem appears, for example, in Bugul's novel *Le baobab fou*, where Ken dreams of returning home, but the vision she develops of that home is unrealistic. In the song "Faudra leur dire que," life in Senegal is similarly distant and longed-for:

La terre, les saveurs
L'attaya jusqu'a
Très tard le soir . . .
Il me manque tellement
Il me manque énormément.

The land, the flavors
Attaya until
Late at night . . .
I miss it so much
I miss it enormously.

An idealization of life in Senegal is especially prominent in the song "Paris-Dakar" by Daara J, which narrates from the perspective of someone with a one way ticket from Paris home to Dakar. Here Paris becomes the place of hardship and Dakar the land of luxury:

C'est une presqu'île sur le bout de l'Atlantique
Au gout de melting-pot de couleurs
Avec un peuple authentique
Sous les palmiers et les cocotiers
Le sens de l'hospitalité.²²

It's a near-island on the edge of the Atlantic
A drop in the melting pot of colors
With an authentic people
Under the palm and coconut trees
The sense of hospitality.

In this song return home exists as a solution to the "soucis" [worries] of life abroad.

Although "Faudra leur dire que" also speaks longingly of Senegal, Eyewitness

²² Due to Daara J's prominence, transcriptions of these lyrics are widely available on several French lyrics websites, which I consulted for this transcription.

acknowledges the pressure from family members at home who need the remittances that are sent back. Instead of return, Eyewitness offers as a solution communication and the indication that those in Senegal carefully consider a decision to leave.

Like the song lyrics themselves, the video of “Faudra leur dire que” dually emphasizes the story of someone living abroad as well as the importance of observing and conveying that story to those at home. As in “Jeul seen kagn,” there are two intertwined sets of images that reflect on each other. One set depicts a day in the life of a young man who is selling CDs on the street (see fig. 2). The man’s loneliness is emphasized by sped-up images of people walking past; this visual effect serves to distance the man from those around him, as the rest of the people rush by without stopping to talk to him or to look at the CDs he is selling. At the end of his lonely day, the young man heads to the Western Union office to send home what little money he has made, and this scene corresponds to the song’s lyrics that discuss how there is not enough money to send home and no way to make employers pay better wages. The other character in the video is that of a hip-hop artist, played by Eyewitness himself. Shown jogging throughout the city, his purpose is to observe and report. He is twice depicted jogging past different sets of homeless white people (see fig. 3), which is precisely the type of information it would be important to convey to those in Senegal who imagine Europe as a land of ease and comfort.



Fig. 2. The young man attempts to sell CDs in Eyewitness' "Faudra leur dire que."



Fig. 3. The jogger stops to give money to a white beggar in "Faudra leur dire que."

While Simon Bisbi Clan's "Jeul seen kagn" and Eyewitness' "Faudra leur dire que" address life in Europe with different strategies, both songs and their accompanying videos articulate the maintenance of connections with Senegal while abroad. In "Jeul seen kagn," this appears in a call for unity emphasized in part through Senegalese identity and history. "Faudra leur dire que," on the other hand, advocates direct communication with people in Senegal about what life is like abroad. National and cultural identities remain present in these songs, and this is profoundly different from the loss of identity that is often apparent in earlier works that address immigrant life in Europe.

Awadi's Multimedia Messages

Rather than discussing migration from European soil, the hip-hop artist Awadi articulates messages about departure as told from Senegal in his songs "Sunugaal" [Our Pirogue] and "Djow sa gaal" [Paddle your pirogue].²³ Similar to both "Jeul seen kagn" and "Faudra leur dire que," Awadi's songs articulate an explicit and collective response to the phenomenon of migration that relies on unification based on Senegalese identity while utilizing wider connections as well. For further global communication, Awadi has purposefully used the internet to disseminate his messages about migration. Prior to the release of "Sunugaal," Awadi placed the song on his studio's website accompanied by evocative images of young men in boats desperate to reach Spain. And the song "Djow sa gaal" has a full music video to accompany it that incorporates lyrics and music from "Sunugaal," thereby reflecting back on that song as well. Writing of "Sunugaal," Ludl suggests, "Awadi . . . paints a rather dark picture and conceives of actuality and of the outcome of migration as rather closed, mutually exclusive, though causally linked entities

²³ The word "gaal" in Wolof can be translated as either "boat" or "pirogue," but the French translation of "Sunugaal" on Awadi's website translates "gaal" as "pirogue," and I have chosen to keep his translation here (aside from this word, the translation on Awadi's website was not otherwise consulted).

that do not leave much space for imagination” (114). And indeed, the song “Sunugaal” and its accompanying images seem to equate migration with death and do not point to possibilities or hope either in leaving or staying. However, the message of “Djow sa gaal” leaves more room for change and possibility, even directly responding to the hopeless tone of “Sunugaal” in its video. Despite the differences between the two videos, in both cases, Awadi uses the internet to make the songs accessible to those in and outside of Senegal. Specific situations in Senegal and cooperation within the country are central to both of Awadi’s songs. But the accompanying videos point to additional messages, some of which are directed at non-Wolof audiences, despite the songs’ Wolof lyrics.

In “Sunugaal,” Awadi and fellow hip-hop artist Kirikou narrate from the perspective of a young man who has decided to leave Senegal for Spain. While many young hip-hop artists do leave Senegal searching for opportunities, it is important to note that this narrative is not Awadi’s own but that of a persona adopted for the song; Awadi himself remains firmly based in Dakar.²⁴ The song alternates between lyrics rapped over a basic drum sample and more melodic lyrics accompanied by a guitar- or kora-like sound. The addition of the stringed instrument sound lends a softer and more mournful tone to lyrics about the loss of the narrator’s hopes and dreams. This feeling is also emphasized by the extension of vowels in several words, as if the singer is emitting a cry. And the entire song has a fairly slow tempo, further contributing to the generally downbeat feel.

²⁴ In addition to living in Senegal, Awadi has his own studio in Dakar where hip-hop artists and other musicians can record (see Studio Sankara’s website by Kaïre Maram).

The song's lyrics work along with the music's somber tone. The narrator explains to his father and to Senegal's leaders that none of their promises have materialized and that is why he is leaving in lyrics such as

Da ngéen ma digóon ni nina am job
 Da ngéen ma digóon ni dina am cob
 Da ngéen ma digóon ni dina am xëy
 Dëg dëg, ma de guisu ma fi fox.

You told me I would have a job
 You told me I would have something to eat
 You told me I would have work to go to each morning
 Really, I don't see anything here.

The narrator in fact finds life in Senegal so hopeless that he thinks that death would be better than staying.²⁵ This also points to a recognition that the narrator is willing to risk death in the dangerous departure for Spain, for even dying in a boat would be better than living in his current situation.

In Ludl's reading, Awadi's song leaves no room for the imagination of a future, and she is right regarding the narrator's story of hopelessness and departure. But Awadi intersperses this narrative with political criticism, and while these critiques contribute to an understanding of why the narrator might choose to leave, they also point to a determination to create a better future. Appropriately, these critical lyrics – about everything from the Senegalese president to SENELEC, the national electric company – are rapped in a straight speaking voice and are not accompanied by the mournful melodic sounds of the rest of the song. Rather than emotion, these lines emphasize a straightforward approach to reality. Ludl reads the political criticisms in the song as

²⁵ "Dée moo gën."

indicative of a focus on the present moment rather than a way to address the future, citing a translation of the line

Université du futur nga bëga teg
Ana bu tey? (108).

You want to build *the university of the future*
Where are those of today?

But integral to this reporting on the present moment, as is often a part of hip-hop songs concerned with narrating harsh realities, is the suggestion that things should be different. As Awadi indicates in an online interview with Louise Simondet about “Sunugaal” and its dispersion on the internet, “C’est notre devoir de critiquer le système actuel pour que les choses s’améliorent” [It is our duty to criticize the system that is in place so that things can improve]. And even the cries of the emigrant narrator emphasize regret that things are not different:

Du lii la ñu yakaar on
Bu rewmi nexon, du ñu dem duggi gaal.

This wasn’t what we hoped for
If the country wasn’t so bad, we wouldn’t go get in pirogues.

This use of “if” [bu] seems to implore the country’s leaders to change things, suggesting that the leaders should take action if they do not want more young people to leave. While Awadi’s criticisms do not prescribe precise solutions, the lyrics nonetheless point to a desire for change as they report on the situation.

The slideshow that was placed online prior to the 2006 release of “Sunugaal” further emphasizes the dire situation of young people who choose to emigrate from Senegal. It also works as a call to awareness about the phenomenon of emigration for those in Senegal and beyond. The images heighten the song’s melancholic tone and tend

towards a victimization of the men in the boats, presenting them not as conscious actors choosing to leave but instead as unlucky pawns of larger processes. While the song itself speaks about problems across Senegal and is involved in detailed political critique, the images exclusively depict young men who have left Africa for Europe or America in pirogues.²⁶ The slideshow displays many photos of these men after they have been found on the water or at their destination. They are shown dehydrated, injured, dejected, and being cared for by (white-skinned and rubber-gloved) medical personnel. The images fade in and out slowly, and about three seconds are spent on each one. This simple setup enables the focus to remain on the figures in the pictures, and enough time is devoted to each image that it is possible to be emotionally affected by the dismal scenes.²⁷ The emotional appeal of the images makes them fully intelligible to any viewer, even though the accompanying song is in Wolof. Jean Schmitz suggests that such portrayals of emigrants are problematic, in that they capitalize on the portrayal of human misery rather than recognize the real and precise goals of the people who make conscious decisions to leave in the hope of success abroad (8). Awadi's slideshow of images that accompanies "Sunugaal" does seem to fall into this "misérabiliste" trap, even more so than the song itself.

Despite the problematic aspects of the slideshow, it is significant in Awadi's attempt to use a hip-hop song and the internet with the express purpose to communicate globally. Awadi explains in the interview with Simondet, "Internet permet de partager

²⁶ There is no indication in the slideshow about where exactly the images are from or who is in them. Many of the images likely portray Senegalese men hoping to reach Spain's Canary Islands, but I do not want to assume that is the case for all of the images.

²⁷ See Zettl for an explanation of why it is preferable to favor a simple change between images on-screen rather than to use flashy digital graphics to transition between images, as the noticeable effects risk detracting from the images' emotional impact (285).

des idées partout dans le monde” [The internet permits ideas to be shared throughout the world]. He goes on to explain that when the video was placed on his website, he included a link with the encouragement to pass the video along, to moderate success.²⁸ These comments indicate the way that this song, though entirely in Wolof, is nonetheless placed online with the idea that it may be dispersed globally and have significance to people in different parts of the world. The song and slideshow combined communicate clearly to those in Senegal who know Wolof but would nonetheless be effective on any audience. For those unaware of the situation of emigration, it presents a “shock,” as Awadi suggests when talking with Simondet. The placement of the video online with the hope that it will be disseminated demonstrates the goal not only to “tell it like it is” (though one could argue about the representation of reality that Awadi chooses to convey), but also the hope that raising awareness will eventually lead to change.

Awadi’s song “Djow sa gaal” responds in part to the negative trajectory described in “Sunugaal,” and the second song demonstrates how unification in Senegal (rather than fear of death) can counter frequent emigration. “Djow sa gaal” is critical of the urge to migrate, but it presents an alternate outcome to the story of a young man who wants to leave Senegal from “Sunugaal.” While “Sunugaal” is slow and mournful, “Djow sa gaal” has a much faster tempo and an upbeat sound. And where “Sunugaal” has many precise lyrics implicating politicians and government organizations, “Djow sa gaal” primarily involves the repetition of a set of phrases, all of which enthusiastically call for collective work in Senegal. The song repeats “Ayca len ñu andando jow suñu gaal” [Come on

²⁸ Awadi reports to both Simondet and Joseph Winter, in another interview, that there were 10,000 hits for the video within three days of it being online in 2006. While this is not a particularly large number in the context of 2010, where popular YouTube videos get hundreds of millions of views, the number is fairly impressive given that placing videos online was much less common in 2006 than it is today.

everyone, let's paddle our pirogue] and "Jow sa gaal" [Paddle your pirogue] continually. The beat behind the music emphasizes the impact of the refrain, as drum beats often fall on the consonants that begin words, making the message sound more explosive and energetic. The play on the word "gaal" in the country's name is aligned not only with the boats in which young people leave for the Canary Islands, but is also firmly reassociated with the unity suggested by "our boat" or "our pirogue."

The song narrates the story of a young man who decides to leave Senegal for Spain and has much the same perspective as the narrator of "Sunugaal." However, this story is narrated from the third person rather than the first, reporting and commenting on the young man's sentiments. The situation is almost mocked by Kirikou's exaggerated cries of "Barsa!" in between each line, referencing the phrase "Barça ou barzakh." Awadi also raps, "Amul job, amul cob" [No job, no food] in reporting what the young man said as he left, which is a shortened version of precisely the same complaint made in "Sunugaal."

Like "Sunugaal," this song contains an argument against emigration, but rather than the implication that emigration is related to hopelessness, "Djow sa gaal" presents the alternate side of the situation, in which staying home is related to hope and progress and dependent on unification. While the narrative warns "Moytul ma géej" [Be careful of the sea], the warning is primarily concerned with what will happen to the country if all of the young people fail to return. The song also warns, "Bul fale ñi di politik, jowal sa gaal" [Don't worry about politics, paddle your pirogue]. This reference to the *bul fale* movement can also be seen as a response to "Sunugaal." Where the narrator of that song talks a lot about politics and is disappointed with what he sees, "Djow sa gaal" suggests

not to worry so much about what the leaders are doing (or not doing) and to instead take care of yourself and the country on your own. This is related to the sentiment at the center of the *bul fale* movement, in which young people in late twentieth century Senegal, no longer able to count on having a government job or office position after college and unable to rely on the state for any other sort of aid, developed the attitude that they must do things on their own. The *bul fale* movement has been described in this way by Jean-François Havard (63-64) and by recognized scholar of Senegalese culture and history, Mamadou Diouf (“Cultures urbaines” 278). Havard reports a decline in the significance of *bul fale* as an identifying slogan after Senegal’s Parti socialiste attempted to capitalize on the popularity of the wrestler known as Tyson during the 2000 elections (68), but Awadi, credited with the beginning of the *bul fale* movement as part of the group Positive Black Soul, continues to refer to the slogan in “Djow sa gaal.” However, where the *bul fale* movement emphasized individual success and competition, the overall message of “Djow sa gaal” entails cooperation. It is important to note that this cooperation, as indicated by the message “Don’t worry about politics,” does not suggest a nationalism that entails support of the government. Instead, it points to a call to be productive as a group in Senegal independent of the government’s actions.

The extent to which “Djow sa gaal” works as a response to “Sunugaal” is even more evident in the video of “Djow sa gaal” because lines from “Sunugaal” are incorporated therein. The video of “Djow sa gaal” begins with the spoken and mournful explanation of departure that opens “Sunugaal.” And a young man is shown heading to the beach to leave in a boat. This young man is much the same character as the narrator of “Sunugaal.” More narrative from “Sunugaal” is also sampled as the boat of young men

leaving for Spain approaches another a stalled fishing boat. In the characters of two older fishermen, Awadi and Kirikou question the young men for leaving (see fig. 4 for an image from this scene). Because lyrics from “Sunugaal” appear just prior to Awadi’s diatribe, the two rappers directly interrogate lyrics from “Sunugaal” about leaving and the loss of all hope. The fact that the video’s protagonist ultimately chooses to stay with the fishermen, helping them with their boat, further emphasizes the way that “Djow sa gaal” works as a response to “Sunugaal.” Here the outcome of choosing to leave is different, concluding with return and cooperation rather than departure and an uncertain future.



Fig. 4. The young men (right) pull up alongside the fishing boat (left) in Awadi’s “Djow sa gaal.”

While the song “Djow sa gaal” is entirely in Wolof, the video makes the song and story accessible to a non-Wolof-speaking public. The repetition of “Ayca len ñu andando jow suñu gaal” is accompanied with gestures: a beckoning gesture to accompany “Ayca len” [Come on everyone] and a paddling gesture to accompany “andando jow suñu gaal”

[let's paddle our pirogue]. And signs that appear prominently in the video make it clear that the young man is getting on a boat to go to Spain. Exaggerated gestures of conversation also make the exchange between the young man and the older fishermen very obvious.

In “Sunugaal” and “Djow sa gaal,” Awadi responds to the phenomenon of migration in two different ways. He warns young people of the dangers of migration and alerts the world to the fact that so many young people in Senegal feel desperate to leave in “Sunugaal.” While the story told is certainly sad, Awadi’s message is not without hope in its insistence on raising awareness of the situation and critiquing Senegalese politics, even as his slideshow tends towards a victimization of those who choose to emigrate. In “Djow sa gaal,” Awadi more explicitly calls for people in Senegal to unify and work to develop the country, playing off of the image of a pirogue used for migration and turning it into a pirogue that symbolizes unity. As the lyrics of “Sunugaal” get combined with “Djow sa gaal” in the latter’s video, Awadi ultimately responds to the hopeless tone of the young man whose voice he adopts in “Sunugaal,” warning not of death in migration but insisting on the importance of remaining in Senegal and working together as a group. In this way, the various incarnations of the songs and their appearance on the internet are integral to the shifting messages that Awadi hopes to convey to audiences in Senegal and across the world.

In his more recent work, Awadi continues to demonstrate a commitment to using the internet to convey his messages. The “Sunugaal” slideshow appeared in 2006 and the music video of “Djow sa gaal” was first placed online in 2007. But Awadi has more recently released a series of video collaborations with different hip-hop artists speaking

against the Accords de Partenariat Economique (APE), trade agreements between the European Union and countries in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific. He also made a documentary discussing these agreements that is available online, along with a document on his website that argues against the accords. The collaborative songs, each called “On signe pas” [We won’t sign], feature different hip-hop artists and encourage Senegal and other nations in Africa not to sign the APE. The songs utilize a cycling of languages and written on-screen messages to make Awadi’s argument broadly accessible. This work demonstrates Awadi’s continued use of hip-hop and the internet to convey messages both within Senegal and beyond and to call for collective action.

Solidarities and Affiliations

As evident in the songs from Simon Bisbi Clan, Eyewitness, and Awadi, national as well as local and global communication is central to the artists’ responses to the phenomenon of migration. In these songs, a connection to Senegal remains significant when on European soil. And when in Senegal, unity and collective action counters the assumptions that might lead young people to emigrate. Such affiliations, particularly those articulated on the national level, might appear somewhat disconcerting. In *The 'Hood Comes First*, Forman warns that oppositional assertions based on affiliations of place, though frequent in hip-hop, may “urgently attempt to introduce either a rejuvenated nationalism or, conversely, a hyper-localism framed within powerful notions of nostalgic pride, tradition, and racial or ethnic purity that might reaffirm or reify unified and unambiguous identities” (33). Indeed, the articulation of unity in “Jeul seen kagn” is in some ways threatening in its calls to attack European society. But when nation-based unity appears in

several of these hip-hop songs, it is also accompanied by either explicit or implicit global connections and often local affiliations, indicating a more complex set of concerns.

Michelle Auzanneau, writing of hip-hop music in Libreville, argues that “rap engages two types of solidarity: a solidarity uniting them [sic] with the international hip-hop community, and a solidarity that unites them with the society in which they live” (“Libreville” 110). And in the case of Senegalese hip-hop, I would extend this argument to include not only the international hip-hop community but also other societies that may share similar experiences to Senegal. This type of opening up to global connections alongside national or local concerns is evident in Jacqueline Urla’s study of hip-hop in the Basque region of Spain. The fiercely nationalist group Negu Gorriak does not exclude dialogue with others but expresses solidarity with worldwide struggles for liberation and frequently collaborates with singers and musicians of other cultural and ethnic backgrounds (180-82). As part of Negu Gorriak’s cultural and nationalist message, the group raps only in the Basque language, but the members also suggest that this should not prevent them from being listened to or understood throughout the world (176). This sort of articulation is not the type of nationalism against which Forman warns; instead, it points to an approach to cultural, ethnic, or national unity that remains open and is not resistant to plurality.

Even when hip-hop songs represent Senegalese cities and neighborhoods, they continue to articulate broader affiliations. This is apparent in two songs that directly address Senegal, “Sénégal” by WaGëblë and “Jotna” by 3GGA. Both “Sénégal” and “Jotna” call for change across Senegalese (and in the case of “Jotna,” African) society and in so doing address, in part, emigration. The songs also address other concerns, often

specifically interrogating the actions of political leaders, but both ask a version of the question “Why leave here?” In their argument for staying is a call for collective pride and action related closely to Senegal, yet these calls for unity do not exclude diversity or international connections.

The importance of plurality within the nation is apparent in WaGëblë’s “Sénégal.” The group’s call for change and mutual support relies on the diversity of people in Senegal, as indicated by the song’s lines “Suñu rew lañu . . . katolik, julit, tijan, murid, tamba, joloff” [It is our country . . . Catholic, Muslim, Tijani, Mouride, Tamba, Joloff]. This is accompanied by a declaration of pride in and affiliation with Dakar and Senegal, in which one of the group members raps,

Senegaal, Dakar . . .
Sama rew fii la
Sama niit ñii la
Sama yar fii la
Sama yax fii la
Sama yapp fii la
Sama xam fii la.

Senegal, Dakar . . .
My country is here
My people are here
My education is here
My bones are here
My flesh is here
My knowledge is here.

And in the continued articulation of the whole nation, the song chooses to represent not just one city but many: “Kasamans ba ndar/ Yeksina, Dakar” [From Casamance to Ndar/ Yeksina, Dakar]. Finally, such proclamations of national connection do not preclude criticism of the government, as indicated by the statement

Ñoy fal foli
Ñoy wote sopi

Ñoy teg tegi.

We put a leader in place
We voted for change
We can remove who is placed in office.

These lines could reference the involvement of young people and hip-hop groups in the 2000 election of Abdoulaye Wade, and the song suggests the possibility of changing things again, with a view toward removing Wade from office (which did not happen in the 2007 election).²⁹ WaGëblë thus couples a call for cooperation across the nation with a critique of that nation's leaders.

While rapping about cities and ethnicities specific to Senegal, WaGëblë also articulates their message in the context of hip-hop culture more broadly. This is indicated in the song's English refrain of "Senegal please stand up. Hey, ho" recalling Naughty By Nature's song "Hip Hop Hooray" from 1993. The video of "Sénégal" also makes heavy use of imagery related to graffiti, thus utilizing an aspect of hip-hop culture other than music to further address local spaces in Senegal. Members of WaGëblë are shown rapping in front of a graffiti-covered wall. And a digital graffiti effect is used in the video as graffiti-style writing appears on the video screen (see fig. 5), with words such as "Dakar," "Stand Up," and "Thiaroye" (the neighborhood of origin for some of the group members). In order to represent Senegal and call for pride and support, WaGëblë uses in part identifying aspects of hip-hop culture. Rather than a simple imitation of hip-hop tropes, the song and video seem to engage in an effort to use hip-hop culture to represent and speak to Senegal and its neighborhoods and cities.

²⁹ Ludl discusses the disillusion with politics among Senegalese youth after Wade did not fulfill his promises, as well as his subsequent reelection despite widespread dissatisfaction with his presidency (115-16), and this is also something discussed by hip-hop artists including WaGëblë in the *Democracy in Dakar* documentary.



Fig. 5. Graffiti-style writing on-screen in WaGëblë's "Sénégal."

3GGA's song "Jotna" similarly uses hip-hop to depict his neighborhood and Senegal, but he also makes connections across Africa. While some songs with messages for global audiences, such as Awadi's "Sunugaal," are entirely in Wolof, 3GGA chooses to use equal amounts of Wolof, French, and English. Other hip-hop songs may have a refrain in a different language than the majority of the song (WaGëblë's refrain is in English, whereas Eyewitness' solo song has a refrain in Wolof). But in 3GGA's song, there is a full verse in each language as well as a similar refrain translated in all three, suggesting the desire to convey the song's message to audiences of varied linguistic backgrounds. 3GGA's song calls for unity across all of Africa, as the refrain's English version, similar to the Wolof and French versions, asks

Why don't we work Africa ourself
 Why don't we fight or elect ourself?
 Why aren't we Africans for ourself?
 Why leave Africa if Africa is ourself?"³⁰

³⁰ 3GGA spent much of his childhood in the United States, and it is unlikely that the choice to say "ourself" rather than "ourselves" reflects an uncertain grasp of English. It seems possible that this choice relates to

The last question underlines the issue of emigration throughout the song and across languages.

There are further expressions of unity across all of Africa beyond 3GGA's communication with a wide audience in several languages. The English verse even suggests,

Why Africa don't unite all them states?
Same money, same rights, same license plates.

But at the same time that the song suggests unification, it also emphasizes the presence of individual and diverse nations across Africa. At the end of the song, 3GGA calls out the names of eighteen African countries that are both French- and English-speaking and from all areas of Africa (the initial appearance of the Senegalese flag is shown in fig. 6). In the video, the name of each country is accompanied by the image of its respective flag, which takes up the entirety of the screen as that country's name is spoken. This emphasizes the diversity and vast number of African countries, as the viewer is confronted by a quickly changing screen of many colors and shapes.

the structure of the lyrics, in which "ourself" fits more adequately in the verse and ends more concretely than "ourselves." The corresponding words in the Wolof and French lines are "suñu bopp" and "nous même," respectively.



Fig. 6. The Senegalese flag in the process of expanding on-screen in 3GGA's "Jotna."

The fast-moving set of flags is similar to the visual pace of the rest of the video, in which pictures of people and places flash across the screen, continually aligning the song with a multitude of situations and references. These still photographs are interspersed with shots of 3GGA rapping under a tree with several other men in a neighborhood (perhaps Parcelles Assainies, to which he proclaims affiliation at the end of the song). The diversity of images – some of which suffer from the same tendency towards victimizing their subjects similar to the images in Awadi's slideshow – along with the shifting use of language points to references and connections that reach beyond Senegal to other African countries that may experience difficulties such as “everyday drama, war, and AIDS.” At the same time, the video's return to the image of 3GGA rapping surrounded by friends and neighbors serves to ground the video in a Senegalese location.

3GGA's articulation of affiliation across Africa, in its acknowledgement of diverse nations, does not therefore prevent additional focus on Senegal. The list of African countries starts and ends with “Senegal,” the only nation repeated twice. And the

Wolof verse also directly addresses the Senegalese people: “Jotna, waxtu senegaal jug dem jobi” [It is time, people of Senegal, to get up and go to work]. Furthermore, 3GGA talks in this section about what “the president” should do. He is not referring here to the presidents of all African countries but only to one president: “Dafa jot presiden yaakal xalaat ci benn bopp” [It is time for the president to think about things for himself]. Even though these Wolof lyrics also speak of “Africa” more broadly, 3GGA seems to be directly addressing Senegal in this section. In this way, 3GGA connects to problems experienced across Africa while still articulating a more specific message to Senegal. Both “Jotna” and “Sénégal” demonstrate the way that hip-hop songs, even when they call for unity and represent national affiliations, need not remain closed off to other forms of identification. “Sénégal” articulates a diversity of Senegalese religions, ethnicities and cities while also making explicit connections to hip-hop culture. And “Jotna” calls for unity across Africa without ignoring a more specifically Senegalese context.

3GGA’s “Jotna” presents the clearest attempt of any of the hip-hop songs discussed to communicate to an international as well as Senegalese audience in its calls for collective action. But all of the songs examined here point to some navigation of the importance of Senegal alongside the articulation of broader connections. These formulations, such as Awadi’s slideshow placed online or the messages directed back to Senegal from Europe in Eyewitness’ “Faudra leur dire que,” are much more than indications of globalization’s effect on Senegal or evidence of the appropriation of an American musical genre.³¹ All of these songs focus on specifics in Senegal and frequently offer messages of unity based on a shared experiences and histories. The local

³¹ Niang makes a similar argument in his analysis of Senegalese hip-hop (181).

and national are absolutely critical to these songs' responses to migration, and global connections, articulated in a number of different ways, are also integral to the songs' messages.

Conclusion

This study of recent creative productions by authors and hip-hop artists has demonstrated that revised critical paradigms are needed to address contemporary migration narratives from Senegal. Contrary to the expectations of other studies of migration narratives in French, locations and specificities in Senegal – from the perspective of neighborhoods, cities, and sometimes the nation as a whole – are of utmost importance in the context of migration. But at the same time, these authors and hip-hop artists do not posit the local or national as a way to reject the global, for in fact global relationships, dialogues, and connections are also articulated in their works. Whether articulating local, national, or global relationships, the novels and hip-hop songs work to produce these connections on a formal level. It is through these navigations that the authors and hip-hop artists are able to envision productive responses to migration that enable a reconfiguration of the relationship between those in Senegal and those abroad. While earlier texts by Ousmane Socé, Cheikh Hamidou Kane, and Ousmane Sembene, among others, depict protagonists unable to escape fully from the centrifugal pull of France, these more recent works articulate their own global networks in which France or other European nations may play a part but are ultimately only one aspect of the migration experience. From the hip-hop songs of 2006 and 2007 to the novels of the past decade by Aminata Sow Fall, Ken Bugul, and Fatou Diome, it is clear that Senegalese cultural producers have chosen to approach migration in a way that is different from, though at times inflected by, earlier migration stories.

Certainly not all of the responses are precisely the same – Awadi and 3GGA make use of images that appeal to human rights-influenced conceptions of suffering in Africa,

while Bugul narrates a happy and fulfilling life married to a Marabout with a large harem. The hip-hop songs are able to cleverly make use of Wolof, English, and French in songs and videos that can reach anyone with access to the internet. On the other hand, the novels are written in French and are often published in France. Despite these differences of creation and potential audience, exploring the novels and hip-hop songs alongside each other leads to the recognition of a continuum of reflections on life in Senegal: Wolof phrases, references to Cheikh Amadou Bamba, criticisms of the government's failures, and depictions of the desperate desire of young people to leave. These characteristics as they appear in the texts are not predetermined but have been consciously taken up by the authors and artists to varying degrees. The way that the authors and artists look at migration from a rooted sense of place emerges all the more when the texts are considered alongside each other. Additionally, Sow Fall, Bugul, and Diome's more recent novels are all different from earlier texts they have written. Similarly, hip-hop's approach to migration is different from that of *mbalax*. These shifts, when considered together, point to the possibility for an overall change in the way that migration is understood and discussed by Senegalese creative producers.

Hip-hop music and the novel are both genres ready for wide public consumption, and this study does not address other types of Senegalese creative productions, including oral performances that may be more spontaneous or personal. Particularly, I have not been able to consider women's oral productions. Given the similar work that the novels and hip-hop songs do, it would be interesting to see whether other genres also strive to articulate the same types of local and global connections, even in the presence of audiences that are much smaller or more limited. While not exhaustive of oral and written

genres, this study nonetheless points to the way that textual work can be done across a variety of media. In this project, hip-hop scholarship's comfortability with origins and rooted identities has helped develop my understanding of novels that do work similar to that of the hip-hop songs. However, many other genres and art forms could be considered with regard to migration or other contemporary concerns. Particularly as Senegal and other African nations gain increased access to the internet and associated technologies, creative engagements with global digital media will provide fruitful subjects for study. As such research is carried out, it will be important to consider the way that the Senegalese creative producers I have examined form global connections while demonstrating the equal importance of the local.

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Publications

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