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# Sociétés d'accueil et de *teranga*

## Emigration and immigration in three texts by Fatou Diome

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Throughout his career the sociologist Abdelmalek Sayad argued that emigration and immigration are interdependent. He warns against media and political representations of migration which focus solely on the country of arrival and thus make it more difficult for us to understand the 'double' nature of migration. In this article we explore the epistemological and political dangers analysed by Sayad (an 'ethnocentric' notion of immigration) and by Anne McClintock (a 'eurocentric' idea of the postcolonial) through a reading of three texts by the Senegalese writer Fatou Diome. This approach allows a better understanding of certain aspects of migration rarely discussed in the press and in political discourse in Europe, while also showing that processes of myth-making about migration persist on all sides.

**Keywords:** Fatou Diome, Abdelmalek Sayad, migration, immigration, accueil, *teranga*

Le sociologue Abdelmalek Sayad a défendu tout au long de sa carrière l'idée que l'émigration et l'immigration sont « solidaires l'une de l'autre ». Il met en garde contre toute représentation médiatique ou politique de la migration qui se focaliserait uniquement sur la terre d'accueil, et compromettrait de ce fait la compréhension de la dualité du phénomène migratoire. Dans cet article nous nous proposons d'examiner les dangers épistémologiques et politiques analysés par Sayad (une conception « ethnocentrique » de l'immigration) et par Anne McClintock (une pensée « eurocentrique » du postcolonial) à travers la lecture de trois textes de l'écrivaine sénégalaise Fatou Diome. Cette lecture permettra de mieux comprendre certains aspects de la migration rarement abordés dans la presse et dans le discours politique en Europe, et montrera également que des processus de mythologisation de la migration sont courants, que ce soit dans les sociétés dites d'« émigration » comme sur la terre d'accueil.

**Mots clefs:** Fatou Diome, Abdelmalek Sayad, migration, immigration, *accueil*, *teranga*

In his preface to Abdelmalek Sayad's *L'Immigration, ou les paradoxes de l'altérité*, Pierre Bourdieu describes Sayad as an outstanding scholar of migration in all its human and economic complexity, in particular for having immediately identified

ce qui, avant lui, échappait à tous les observateurs: abordant l'immigration – le mot le dit – du point de vue de la société d'accueil qui ne se pose le problème des 'immigrés' que pour autant que les immigrés lui 'posent des problèmes', les analystes omettaient en effet de s'interroger sur les causes et les raisons qui avaient pu déterminer les départs et sur la diversité des conditions d'origine et des trajectoires.<sup>1</sup>

For all that they date back to the 1970s and 1980s, the essays collected in Sayad's book remain essential reading, as this lack of balance and complexity is very much present in much of the contemporary European political discourse on and press coverage of migration today. This is nowhere more clear than in the recurrent use of certain kinds of vocabulary by leading public figures, from a British prime minister's assertion in 1978 that British people feared being 'swamped' by 'alien cultures', to a mayor of Paris making a speech in 1991 in defence of the French worker suffering 'le bruit et l'odeur' of an immigrant family living next door, to multiple similar variants in the press today.<sup>2</sup> In the summer of 2015, when the scale of the current global refugee crisis finally began to register with European politicians as radically higher numbers of refugees began to arrive in Europe, much of the mainstream media and political discourse fell back on received ideas and well-worn imagery connected to 'immigration' rather than focusing on the realities behind the crisis or the ways in which international migration was perhaps undergoing a profound change.<sup>3</sup>

Selecting the term 'immigration' tends to focus analysis on the 'receiving country', or the so-called *terre d'accueil*, at the expense of attention to the complex questions of the 'conditions d'origine' or 'trajectoires' to which Bourdieu refers in connection to Sayad's work. It thus puts in place a certain familiar focus, dangerously open to becoming a certain bias, which Bourdieu calls an 'ethnocentrisme inconscient', and Sayad simply

1 Pierre Bourdieu, 'Préface: un analyseur de l'inconscient', in Abdelmalek Sayad, *L'Immigration, ou les paradoxes de l'altérité* (Brussels: De Boeck-Wesmael, 1991), pp. 5–9 (p. 9).

2 Margaret Thatcher's words are cited and contextualized in Sarah Spencer, *Migrants, Refugees and the Boundaries of Citizenship* (London: Institute for Public Policy Research and Swansea: University of Wales, 1995), p. 12, and Jacques Chirac's infamous speech (with English translation) in Mireille Rosello, 'Gender, hospitality and cross-cultural transactions in *Les Passagers du Roissy Express* and *Mémoires d'immigrés*', in *Women, Immigration and Identities in France*, ed. by Jane Freedman and Carrie Tarr (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2000), pp. 135–51 (pp. 148–49). A recent special issue of the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 41.6 (2015), offers a range of detailed analyses of more recent instances of this type of discourse.

3 The statistics published by the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) place the number of Mediterranean sea and land arrivals in the low hundreds of thousands for each year. In 2015, however, there were just over a million arrivals. See <<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>>.

an ‘ethnocentrisme’.<sup>4</sup> The important element in the debate becomes the experience of the *terre d’accueil* and the people living there. Discussion of ‘immigration’ dominates; all thought of ‘emigration’ is occluded and our understanding of ‘migration’ becomes dangerously lopsided.<sup>5</sup> This imbalance can be seen in large part as responsible for the creation of an arena of debate where public figures may talk in the extreme terms quoted above, and where journalistic coverage can follow suit and recycle received ideas about ‘immigration’ whether the context be the legal migration of workers and students, the long-standing and horrific patterns of people trafficking, or a vast war-driven refugee crisis.

This emphasis on *terre d’accueil* in discussions of migration in a way recalls some of the early criticisms of the term ‘postcolonial’ for its potential to impose a distorting lens permanently calibrated on the ‘colonial’. For example, Anne McClintock argues:

The term confers on colonialism the prestige of history proper; colonialism is the determining marker of history. Other cultures share only a chronological, prepositional relationship to a Euro-centred epoch that is over (post-), or not yet begun (pre-). In other words, the world’s multitudinous cultures are marked, not positively by what distinguishes them, but by a subordinate, retrospective relation to linear, European time.<sup>6</sup>

It is important to point out that McClintock repeatedly makes clear that her reservations relate only to the term ‘postcolonial’ itself rather than to the theoretical work that was already underway in connection to it. In her view, the term could all too easily have led discussion of colonialism, decolonization, and their multiple aftermaths to take a ‘prematurely celebratory and obfuscatory’ tone.<sup>7</sup> This has not been borne out in the field of postcolonial studies: it is vanishingly rare to find any analysis that comes anywhere near being ‘celebratory’. However, McClintock’s point on obfuscation is worth exploring, as there is a parallel between her concern that ‘the singular category “post-colonial” may license too readily a panoptic tendency to view the globe within generic abstractions voided of political nuance’ and the way that ‘the world’s multitudinous cultures’ have been subsumed into

4 Bourdieu, p. 9; Sayad, p. 15.

5 For an extensive review of recent scholarly work on European media coverage of migration, see Alexander Caviedes, ‘An emerging “European” news portrayal of immigration?’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 41.6 (2015), 897–917.

6 Anne McClintock, ‘The angel of progress: Pitfalls of the term “post-colonialism”’, in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994), pp. 291–304 (p. 293).

7 *Ibid.*, p. 298.

a certain limited discourse on migration in European press and political discourse.<sup>8</sup> Where for McClintock a singular European colonialism risks dominating *time*, in contemporary discussion of migration something of the same imbalance has emerged with regard to *space*. The focus on ‘immigration’ privileges a certain space, giving the *terre d’accueil* the status of ‘determining marker’ in the debate.

The effort to undo this determined and determining focus on the *terre d’accueil* is precisely what Bourdieu points to in Sayad’s work. Sayad maintains that emigration and immigration are ‘solidaires l’un de l’autre’,<sup>9</sup> and criticizes a system of knowledge within which it is permitted – even commonplace – to limit the scope of curiosity and enquiry to ‘immigration’ alone: ‘on ne connaît que ce qu’on a intérêt à connaître, on ne comprend que ce qu’on a besoin de comprendre, le besoin de savoir crée le savoir’.<sup>10</sup> In Sayad’s view, this applies to both academic research and society in general, though he is perhaps rather optimistic about the extent to which social attitudes are informed by academic research. His aim is to demonstrate the importance of paying more careful attention to migration as a process that has profound effects for individuals and entire communities in both the *société d’immigration* and the *société d’émigration*. If this closer attention can be achieved, he argues, ‘le traitement social et traitement scientifique [...] réservés à l’immigré et, plus largement, à tout le phénomène de l’immigration, gagnent en extension et en compréhension’.<sup>11</sup>

This article seeks to draw together the epistemological and sociopolitical dangers evoked by McClintock (a Eurocentric postcolonial) and Sayad (an ethnocentric immigration) through a reading of three texts by Senegalese author Fatou Diome where migration is a central theme, and which, read together, re-establish more of a sense of balance between ideas of ‘immigration’ and ‘emigration’.<sup>12</sup> In her 2001 collection of short stories, *La Préférence nationale*, it will be argued, Diome gives a critique of the one-sided perception of migration that seems to dominate in the *société d’immigration*, and of the social and political context Sayad describes where the immigrant ‘n’existe [...] que par les problèmes qu’il pose à la société’.<sup>13</sup> The first two of the short stories are set in Senegal, and the later ones in

8 Ibid., p. 293.

9 Sayad, p. 18.

10 Ibid., pp. 15–16.

11 Ibid., p. 14.

12 Fatou Diome, *La Préférence nationale* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 2001); *Le Ventre de l’Atlantique* (Paris: Anne Carrière, 2003); and *Celles qui attendent* (Paris: Flammarion, 2010). Further references to these texts are given in parentheses after quotations.

13 Sayad, p. 14.

France: thinking in terms of ‘immigration’ does make sense here, both in the teleology suggested by the succession of stories, and in the themes that emerge throughout. In Diome’s novels *Le Ventre de l’Atlantique* (2003) and *Celles qui attendent* (2010), however, focusing solely on ‘immigration’ could lead to a very limited reading, for in these two texts the themes and impacts of emigration are much more prominent. In these texts, a narrative space is created within which ethnocentrism (including Eurocentrism) are undone. Diome’s work restores complexity to the discussion of migration, showing that ‘immigration’ cannot be understood in isolation from ‘emigration’, and exposing the lethal myth-making about migration that persists on all sides.

It becomes clear, for instance, that in thinking about migration it is essential to follow Sarah Ahmed’s contention that we should also pay attention to ‘the implications of the way in which people, images and objects move across national borders, as well as the way in which others *fail to move*’.<sup>14</sup> In Diome’s work, the perspectives of specific characters who ‘fail to move’ come into focus in *Le Ventre de l’Atlantique*, where they are placed alongside the perspectives of characters who have settled abroad, who have spent some time abroad and then returned, or who have no desire whatsoever to move. Diome’s portrayal of this last group in particular, in this novel and in *Celles qui attendent*, shows how other equally complex spaces are neglected and excluded from debate about migration, demonstrating the ways in which a much greater diversity in perspectives on migration is politically crucial.

### ***La Préférence nationale***

Madior Diouf’s preface to the collection of short stories in *La Préférence nationale* presents the texts as an ‘itinéraire de femme’,<sup>15</sup> highlighting the sense of continuity in the experiences of the (always anonymous) central character from one story to the next. The first two stories are set in Africa, with the central character in the first text a schoolgirl and in the second a bride struggling with misgivings as she marries a European; and the remaining four follow a young African student in Alsace. The characters in the first two stories are so lightly drawn as to have an allegorical quality: the schoolgirl and the old woman selling peanuts outside her school in one

14 Sara Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Postcoloniality* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 14; emphasis original.

15 Madior Diouf, ‘Préface’, in Fatou Diome, *La Préférence nationale* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 2001), pp. 9–11 (p. 9).

story, the unhappy bride and the lost true love in the next. This sense of allegory is carried through into the stories set in France, but here the device serves to underline the brutal social and economic forces at work which efface all individual identity in the ‘immigrant’. Diome’s decisions on how her narrators’ identities are formed on the page may be read in many ways, but one interpretation is to connect these migrating narrators to Sayad’s argument on how the immigrant is constructed in order to ‘mutiler cet objet d’une partie de lui-même, la partie relative à l’émigration’.<sup>16</sup>

This is evident in each of the texts, particularly where the central postgraduate student character is looking for work. In the story ‘Le visage de l’emploi’, she has become accustomed to being rejected for jobs, and to passing the opportunities on to her white university friends, but finally gets a job babysitting for a middle-class white French couple. This turns out to involve all sorts of menial housework tasks while the lady of the house addresses her in a kind of hyper-simplified French, and as the narrator puts it, decides to attempt to ‘civilize’ her (p. 74). She also discovers that the only reason she got the job is, in the words of Mme Dupont, that ‘ces gens-là sont travailleurs et plus obéissants, ça n’a rien à voir avec les chipies de chez nous [...] Ma copine Anita en a une comme ça, et elle obéit au doigt et à l’œil’ (pp. 69–70). M. Dupont requires some more persuasion, asking, ‘Mais qu’est-ce que tu veux qu’on fasse avec ça?’ (p. 67). His repeated references to the narrator as *ça* eventually push her to reflect that, ‘J’étais donc *ça* et même pas *l’autre*’ (p. 67; emphasis original). Any human identity, even the generic identity of Europe’s postcolonial ‘other’ that McClintock warned against, is denied here.

In the titular story, an Alsatian baker advertising a counter job asks, ‘Mais pourquoi fous n’allez donc pas travailler chez fous?’ (p. 87), his accented *vous* representing not the polite form he should have been using, but a plural *vous* that Diome’s narrator easily recognizes. She neatly dissects his racist reaction, right down to his accent and syntax, and concludes magisterially:

Vous m’avez appris à chanter *Nos ancêtres les Gaulois*, et j’ai appris que c’était faux. Je veux apprendre à vos gosses à chanter *Nos ancêtres les tirailleurs sénégalais*, car la France est un grenier sur pilotis, et certains de ses poutres viennent d’Afrique. (p. 89)

This is characteristic of Diome’s narrators throughout her work: deeply cultured and historically literate characters who, when the moment arises,

<sup>16</sup> Sayad, p. 15.

can fight back against the cultural, gender, and racial stereotyping they encounter, and comprehensively demolish the superiority complex of their aggressors. In the example above, the narrator draws a vast history into just a few lines. First, in the phrase ‘Nos ancêtres les Gaulois’ she references the much-satirized export of French schoolbooks to colonies with such little effort at adaptation that black African children were taught of the glorious achievements of these ‘ancêtres’ as their own. Readers familiar with French culture will quickly place the ‘Nos ancêtres les Gaulois’ line, while readers familiar with francophone African literature will know the satires. Second, in just the two words *tirailleurs sénégalais*, she references both the enormous sacrifices made by the French colonies in the twentieth-century world wars and the utter failure to recognize or even identify these sacrifices properly, as *sénégalais* and vague ideas of racial and ‘African’ identity were conflated in the phrase. This from a Senegalese character is particularly sharp, given the massacre of African soldiers in the French army by the French army at Thiaroye in Senegal in 1944. Diome’s narrator in *Le Ventre de l’Atlantique* has a similar ability to draw upon a vast range of cultural and historical references, also using a wartime metaphor to describe the fate of the contemporary ‘Génération africaine de la Mondialisation’ as ‘les Malgré-nous du voyage’ (p. 250).

Diome’s ‘immigrant’ narrators in a sense thus own the ‘panoptic tendency’ that McClintock saw in the term ‘postcolonial’, though instead of ‘telescoping crucial geo-political distinctions into invisibility’,<sup>17</sup> they put their experience to much more positive effect. The ease with which they bring historical references into play raises an important point connected to what Sayad identified as the ‘déséquilibre d’allure scientifique’<sup>18</sup> and the tendency to be interested only in that which serves the interests of the *société d’immigration*. On the one hand, Diome’s ‘immigrant’ narrators have a confident grasp of key markers of both national (‘Gaulois’) and regional (‘Malgré-nous’) French history and culture that none of their French interlocutors could plausibly match in reference to the narrators’ home country, even on the rare occasions where they make the effort to find out which country that is. On the other hand, none of the French characters in *La Préférence nationale* seem to have any concept of the Senegalese tradition of *teranga*, hospitality or welcoming generosity, which would be the first idea to turn to in connection to the arrival of a stranger in one’s country.<sup>19</sup>

17 McClintock, p. 293.

18 Sayad, p. 16.

19 For two good discussions of the concept of *teranga*, see Mactar Faye, ‘La “teranga” sénégalaise facteur de développement du tourisme urbain’, *Noroi*, 45.178 (1998), 337–41; Fedora

The idea of France as a *terre d'accueil* then seems a bad joke: the best that can be said for the baker and the Duponts in the *terre d'accueil* of *La Préférence nationale* is that they seriously misjudge the individual *ça* and *fous* they perceive before them, and go on to make a series of assumptions that evidently draw upon the collective myths about migration enabled by contemporary public discourse in Europe. The loss of multiplicity and obfuscation of individuality that McClintock feared would come of some crude 'postcolonial' mode of thinking is writ large in the attitudes of these characters.

### ***Le Ventre de l'Atlantique***

Diome's first full-length novel has attracted much greater critical attention so far than either of the other texts discussed here. Véronique Porra has interrogated how Diome's texts fit into the ever-contested fields of 'franco-phone' and 'postcolonial' literature, while Catherine Mazauric reads Diome in relation to questions of identity, and Dominic Thomas has provided a very useful reading on the contemporary realpolitik of globalization.<sup>20</sup> Several critics incorporate elements of Diome's personal biography and identity into their readings: for example, Rosia Beer places her work 'within a broader corpus of Senegalese migrant writing and within a substantial and growing field of writing by West African women migrant authors in France',<sup>21</sup> while Jacques Chevrier has proposed the younger category of 'migritude' (combining *migration* and *négritude*) to link her to a series of other contemporary writers. In these readings of *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique*, ideas of 'immigration' are not entirely absent, but do give way to the strikingly rich range and complexity of issues associated with 'migration'.

Where the short stories in *La Préférence nationale* discussed above present one aspect of contemporary migration from Africa to France, with the multiple ruptures in communication and comprehension (to say nothing

Gasparetti, 'Relying on *teranga*: Senegalese migrants to Italy and their children left behind', *Autrepart*, 57–58 (2011), 215–32.

20 Véronique Porra, 'De la marginalité instituée à la marginalité déviante, ou Que faire des littératures africaines d'expression française contemporaines?', *Revue de littérature comparée*, 314 (2005), 207–26; Catherine Mazauric, 'Fictions de soi dans la maison de l'autre (Aminata Sow Fall, Ken Bugul, Fatou Diome)', *Dalhousie French Studies*, 74–75 (2006), 237–52; Dominic Thomas, 'African youth in the global economy: Fatou Diome's *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique*', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 26.2 (2006), 243–59.

21 Rosia Beer, 'Gesturing to an empty theatre? Author, text and audience in the fiction of Fatou Diome and Aïssatou Diamanka-Besland', *Relief*, 5.1 (2011), 44–61 (p. 45).

of the outright racism) that confront characters such as Diome's narrators, *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* stages a much more subtle set of relationships. Current questions about perceptions and misperceptions of migrants and migration are still central, but the focus shifts away from the set of perspectives that tend to foreground 'immigration' as a theme, to a discussion that encompasses much more of the complexity of migration. In *La Préférence nationale*, Diome draws much of the drama of her stories from the differing perspectives of an 'immigrant' and a member of a 'host culture' living securely in a *terre d'accueil*. In *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* she stages the contrasts in perceptions between a person moving and a person 'left behind' or, in Ahmed's terms, who 'fails to move'.

The narrator is Salie, a young woman studying in France; the person left behind (and he very much feels it) is her younger brother Madické, who remains at home in Senegal on the island of Niodior. Salie never mentions friends or lovers, and while she seems utterly alone in France, her close relationship with Madické is maintained via phone calls and a shared intense interest in football. He calls regularly, and there is some humour in the very ordinary sibling frustrations they both feel as Salie begs for family news and Madické demands the latest updates on Italy's progress in the Euro 2000 championship. Salie gives in to this, recognizing that at least there is some connection to her brother as they watch the live televised coverage at the same time, though in different spaces:

j'imagine un jeune homme rivé devant une télévision de fortune, pour suivre le même match que moi. Je le sens près de moi. Nos yeux se croisent sur les mêmes images. Battements de cœur, souffle, gestes de joie ou de désarroi, tous nos signes émotionnels sont synchronisés la durée d'un match, car nous courons derrière le même homme: Paolo Maldini. (p. 15)

The championship seems to stand for the ideal version of the globalized world here: in this ideal world, everyone can follow the teams and players of their choice, see the matches on television in real time, and experience the same intense emotions in one universal shared moment. However, an emotional rift in the siblings' close relationship has developed over Salie's move to France:

Pour Madické, vivre dans un pays développé représentait en soi un avantage démesuré que j'avais par rapport à lui, lui qui profitait de sa famille et du soleil sous les tropiques. Comment aurais-je pu lui faire comprendre la solitude de l'exil, mon combat pour la survie et l'état d'alerte permanent où me gardaient mes études? (p. 51)

Salie tries to tell Madické about the realities of her life in France, from her loneliness to the humiliations of the cleaning jobs she has to take to make ends meet (a clear link to the narrators in *La Préférence nationale*). He, on the other hand, persists in seeing her as the rich sister who has ‘made it’, and who must have the luxurious Western lifestyle he sees on television and hears about in the tales told by ‘returned expatriates’ in Niodior who appear to have succeeded in making their fortune ‘over there’. Salie has acerbic nicknames for this kind of person, including ‘Monsieur Sonacotra’ and ‘l’homme de Barbès’, which Thomas has accurately described as functioning as ‘simultaneously “exotic” (in the African imaginary) and “pejorative” ([in representing] French stereotypes)’.<sup>22</sup> Both ‘Sonacotra’ and ‘Barbès’ are also specifically French cultural codes, both terms so fraught with connotations of ‘immigration’ that they are selected for detailed explanation in Alec G. Hargreaves’s 1987 anthology of texts on immigration in France, and emblematic of a kind of im/migration and a kind of life that does not correspond to what Madické envisages for his own future.<sup>23</sup> Any kind of modest housing such as that offered in the SONACOTRA system, or a lifestyle connected to that of an ‘immigrant’ is not part of his plans. Madické is equally uninterested in the kind of opportunities entailed in the list that Sayad draws up of the familiar set of economic needs for manpower of certain types at certain points in Europe’s economic cycles,<sup>24</sup> or of the type of ‘immigrant’ testimony that Sayad collected where France was a ‘piège’ and ‘ensorcelease’.<sup>25</sup>

This is where Diome’s work in developing a deeper understanding of migration becomes invaluable. In the character of Madické – even if his voice is mediated via Salie’s narration – the rare voice of a would-be migrant is heard. Madické is drawn as a highly sympathetic character, a young man who simply has hopes for his own future and a career path he would dearly like to follow. He dreams of an international career in football, and he knows that his slim chances depend on getting a trial with a club that can place him in a training programme. He refuses to accept that Salie cannot afford to buy him a plane ticket, and terrifies her with his hints

22 Thomas, p. 249.

23 Alec G. Hargreaves, *Immigration in Post-War France: A Documentary Anthology* (London, Methuen, 1987). On SONACOTRA and related mid-twentieth-century hostel and housing projects ‘designed for immigrant workers’, see pp. 90–106. On ‘Barbès’, Hargreaves includes a *Figaro* newspaper article from 1985 which picks out the Parisian district as an example to be held up at the national level as among ‘les quartiers où existent de fortes communautés étrangères structurées’ (p. 55).

24 See Sayad, p. 17.

25 Sayad, p. 126.

that he may go to the people traffickers if she does not help him. Diome's skill in drawing the two characters means that the reader sees both sides in the difference of views between brother and sister: the key point here is that while Madické sees a shot at a successful international career, Salie sees a future as an 'immigrant', and before that can even be hoped for, the crossing. What Salie fears, given that she cannot finance Madické's voyage to Europe, or provide the range of financial and professional guarantees required to get him a visa, is that she will be powerless to prevent him from opting for what Boubacar Boris Diop has called 'les fragiles embarcations de ceux qu'on peut appeler les damnés de la mer'.<sup>26</sup>

### ***Celles qui attendent***

Diop's brutally striking phrase leads us to the final text under discussion here. Xavier Garnier was perhaps right in 2004 when he wrote that 'Rien de ce qu'écrit Fatou Diome n'est vraiment nouveau dans le contexte de la littérature africaine',<sup>27</sup> but Diome's 2010 novel *Celles qui attendent* is perhaps new, or at least unusual, in providing a narrative that focuses almost entirely on 'those left behind' as others move, and specifically on those who remain at home while loved ones take their chances with the people traffickers operating the 'fragiles embarcations' to which Diop refers above. This third novel makes it impossible to disconnect real lived experience from abstract ideas about the 'migrant', and acts as a vital corrective to the myths about migration that persist in the current European debate on migration.

As we have seen, Diome's work shows how both 'Africa' and 'Europe' can be entirely imaginary constructs (whether pictured as a 'chez fous' by a racist Alsatian baker, or in the media-fed ideals of a young man hoping simply to follow his dreams), and how the migrant cannot resolve all of the demands made on her relatively privileged position. *Celles qui attendent* brings into focus the lives and views of 'those at home', who are all too often absent from the debate over migration. The novel centres on four women, the wives and mothers of two young men who have left their Senegalese

26 Aminata Dramane Traoré and Boubacar Boris Diop, *La Gloire des imposteurs. Lettres sur le Mali et l'Afrique* (Paris: Philippe Rey, 2014), p. 7.

27 Xavier Garnier, 'L'exil lettré de Fatou Diome', *Notre Librairie*, 155–56 (2004), 26–30 (p. 26). The quoted text is the provocative opening line to Garnier's review of *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique*: in the opening paragraph he goes on to compare Diome to both Ousmane Sembène and Cheikh Hamidou Kane.

village with the people traffickers. Worse, for several months they do not know if the two men have made it safely to Europe, and Diome describes in detail the utter terror the women experience when a group of fishermen discover the body of a young man out at sea (p. 162), and then when radio reports come in of a *pirogue* filled with corpses discovered off the coast of Brazil (pp. 176–77).

The novel opens with a description of the emotional impact on the four women of the absence of their menfolk: ‘mères et épouses de clandestins, [elles] portaient jusqu’au fond des pupilles des rêves gelés, des fleurs d’espoir flétries et l’angoisse permanente d’un deuil hypothétique’ (p. 9). As in Diome’s earlier texts, there is a thoroughgoing social critique in *Celles qui attendent*, including a biting deconstruction of the opportunistic corruption of traditional ideas of community and solidarity. The mothers initially gain standing in the community as they may potentially become rich and influential if their sons succeed in Europe:

depuis qu’on situait son fils du côté de l’Europe, un effet d’optique la parait, elle et les siens, de nouveaux atours. L’hypothétique réussite de son fils était la fausse monnaie avec laquelle elle pouvait déjà se payer une tranche de respectabilité. (p. 200)

This fades as their sons’ success and the arrival of funds from them seem less and less certain. For Diome, positive ideas of mutual support have been twisted into self-serving hypocrisy and a keen sense of favours owed, or a ‘dépendance perpétuelle si habilement maquillée en solidarité’ (p. 55). This echoes a comment by the narrator of *Le Ventre de l’Atlantique* on the bitter irony that Senegal, a country that prides itself on its unique *teranga*, the warm welcome extended to all visitors, can nonetheless fail to provide any real warmth or support to its own. As Anna-Leena Toivanen puts it, ‘la nation postcoloniale a en effet cédé sa place à la diaspora en tant qu’espace d’espoir’.<sup>28</sup> There is nothing ‘celebratory’ about the postcolonial here, unless it is just to be counted in profits made by traffickers or in successful escapes to the diaspora. This is one economic and social context that is entirely absent from debate about migration when the postcolonial ‘re-centering of global history around the single rubric of European time’<sup>29</sup> is amplified by a further recentring of global history of migration on European space. What Caroline Melly calls ‘a larger social landscape, one in which vanished

28 Anna-Leena Toivanen, ‘Retour au local: *Celles qui attendent* et l’engagement diasporique de Fatou Diome’, *Relief*, 5.1 (2011), 62–77 (pp. 69–70).

29 McClintock, p. 293.

*pirogues* and missing men became public fixations<sup>30</sup> is simply erased from Europe's sight.

The economic reasons for the men's departure is clear from the start: there is no way of making a living at home, and their families depend on them to become breadwinners. The extreme poverty of their community is drawn in striking detail, as the women's lives follow a never-ending cycle of 'jour de carence, jour de désarroi, jour de crédit, jour de honte' (p. 17), and basic material needs can only be met through a day-to-day struggle. The men's decision to migrate simply follows the logic of capitalism and the younger fantasy of the positive effects of globalization, both of which allow for and encourage movement and migration with the purpose of economic activity. Diome draws out how neither grand ideology, capitalism or globalization, works in a positive way for this community, by showing how the only local business that appears to be booming is people trafficking itself. As the local fishing industry collapses due to overfishing by international fleets, people traffickers buy up the boats and establish a very successful business model where the news of any successful crossing is systematically transformed into a kind of advertising blurb 'pour appâter d'autres candidats' (p. 185). As Melly has shown, the emigrants become 'risk-taking entrepreneurs'<sup>31</sup> to be celebrated in terms of sound investment and excellent capitalist enterprise. This becomes an open secret locally, and eventually the local women themselves – the very 'mères et épouses de clandestins' who know the suffering caused by the departure of the men – get involved in the trafficking, as 'véritables affairistes de la précarité' and proceed to run rings round the established traffickers or 'passeurs patentés' (p. 115).

*Celles qui attendent* thus allows the reader to understand more about the complexity of just one kind of *emigration*, to set alongside the ideas of *immigration* in the previous two texts. The extremely uneven nature of contemporary globalization and the unequal effects of global capitalism are clear throughout each of the texts. Diome reserves her most excoriating critique of these for a section towards the end of the novel, invoking the hostile media imagery of 'Ces hordes d'affamés qui arrivent en rafiôt' (p. 239) that has run through much of the negative Western discourse on migration for decades. Europe is no longer a utopia: the characters in *Celles qui attendent*, unlike Madické and his young friends in *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique*, are keenly aware of what Africa means to Europe when it comes

30 Caroline M. Melly, 'Titanic tales of missing men', *American Ethnologist*, 38.2 (2011), 361–76 (p. 362).

31 *Ibid.*, p. 363.

to questions of migration. They see that Europe seeks to manage migration in different ways at different times, attracting or deterring migrants according to economic needs; and in doing so reduces individuals to ‘manpower’ or worse, to ‘cheptel’ (p. 238), and the continent of Africa to ‘sa bétailière de réserve’ (p. 241). In just a few pages, Diome links the idea of *immigration choisie* available to the *société d’immigration* to global economic systems and national interests that require another kind of immigration *from* the *société d’émigration*, ‘une Afrique vassalisée’ (p. 240), a false and cynical discourse of ‘aid’, and a vast system of lies that no individual can escape. As in *Le Ventre de l’Atlantique*, there is no idealization of ‘Africa’, either of civil society or of the African elites and governments that might be expected to do more to remedy the disastrous situation that Diome depicts. Instead, she concludes this section with a characteristic call for a clear-eyed view of the world:

Entre un passé mal soldé et un présent abandonné aux illusionnistes, l’Afrique et l’Europe sont comme deux enfants devant un miroir déformant. Au lieu de se regarder et de se reconnaître pleinement, elles persistent dans leur jeu de dupes et comptent sur des reflets mensongers pour dessiner leur avenir commun. (p. 241)

## Conclusion

This image of a ‘jeu de dupes’ with ‘reflets mensongers’ of a future that will nonetheless be shared returns us to Sayad’s argument that ‘ce qu’on appelle *immigration*, et dont on traite comme telle en un lieu et en une société, s’appelle ailleurs, en une autre société ou pour une autre société, *émigration*’.<sup>32</sup> Diome’s work moves away from the narrow ethnocentrism of immigration that she highlights in *La Préférence nationale* to explore in *Le Ventre de l’Atlantique* and *Celles qui attendent* the emigration that is always the precursor of and partner to immigration. Diome thus shows some of the possibilities for remedying the neglect of ideas of ‘emigration’, ensuring that where ‘immigration’ is presented as a theme, the reader cannot fail to think also of emigration, and perhaps come to a better understanding of some aspects of contemporary migration. The ‘voile d’illusions’ that Bourdieu refers to in the context of immigration remains in place,<sup>33</sup> but Diome restores some balance to the debate about migration precisely by

<sup>32</sup> Sayad, p. 14.

<sup>33</sup> Bourdieu, p. 9.

showing in what ways those illusions operate on both sides: for the *société d'immigration* and the *société d'émigration*. 'Migrants' emerge as complex figures subject to all kinds of pressures and expectations, both from their home community and from the society they migrate to, but in Diome's work, it becomes impossible to ignore the fact that even those who have no intention of moving may nonetheless find their lives profoundly shaped by migration. It is this inclusion of the non-migrating subject that brings a new layer to Sayad's analysis. Ahmed highlighted this subject as one who 'fails to move', but the perspectives of those who have no *desire* to move are just as important. This latter group would, after all, include many of *celles qui attendent* and many who buy into the dominant discourse on immigration.