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What Will the New Generation Generate? Gendering Accumulation in Fatou Diome's *Celles qui attendent*

Abstract

In this paper I focus on the penultimate installment of the *oeuvre* of the much-celebrated Franco-Senegalese writer Fatou Diome, whose largely autobiographical work has garnered a wide following and a lucrative contract with the Flammarion publishing house. I propose that Diome's 2010 novel *Celles qui attendent* strongly contributes to a discourse surrounding the roles of males and females in an African economy increasingly dominated by migration. Diome started as a writer who portrayed the empowered role of the female migrant, who is able to accumulate financial capital in Europe and send it back to Africa in order for males to slowly hoard goods and start businesses. Her more recent work, however, has been marked by a shift to reflect a portrait of Senegalese society and migration that is backed by sociological studies: men take on the role of migrants, tempted by "marchands d'illusions" 'merchants of illusions,' but are also determined to get away from social pressures in order to accumulate their own set of experiences in the world, at a distance from the expectations of a traditional African society. Women, on the other hand, are left in extreme proximity to the problems of everyday life on a cash-starved continent, as they have to go about the business of surviving and raising children, engaging in many forms of hoarding that have to do with accumulating finance, memories and myths.

Keywords

Fatou Diome, accumulation, migration, gender, Africa, Francophone

What will the New Generation Generate?
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The accumulation of wealth takes on a more pressing dimension in impoverished regions, as individuals and communities are obliged to find ever more opportunities to generate wealth. Migration has long been an option to which many turn—legally or illegally. In recent years, economic migration from countries in Africa has become increasingly prominent to international audiences. Examples such as the sinking of boats near the Italian island of Lampedusa raise attention to the plight of those who risk all to escape poverty and/or persecution; the shipwreck on October 3, 2103 caused more than 360 deaths and a second one on October 11 killed thirty-four. The attitude of the wave of young Africans who depart for Europe at any cost is different from that of economic or educational migrants from Africa. In a telling example, the Wolof expression “Barça walla barsax” ‘Barcelona or death’ has become commonplace in Senegal in the last decade, referring to the desperate attempts of would-be Senegalese migrants to Europe. Such journeys, and their often dramatic consequences, have recently been represented in an array of literary works from the African continent. Abasse Ndione’s 2008 *Mbëkë mi: A l’assaut des vagues de l’Atlantique* (‘The Headbutt: Assaulting the Waves of the Atlantic’),¹ for example, recounts how a group of Senegalese voyage to Europe in a *pirogue* (a small fishing boat popular in Senegal but inadequate for such a long journey) with the aim of washing up on the Canary Islands, in Spanish territory. In 2010, the same year in which Senegalese writer and journalist Omar Bâ published his provocative anti-migration tract *N’émigrez pas ! L’Europe est un mythe* (‘Don’t Emigrate! Europe is a Myth’), Senegalese writer Fatou Diome published a further addition to her already polemical series of works on migration. Diome shot to fame with *La Préférence nationale* (‘The National Preference,’ 2001), a collection of short stories about Africans in France, and her first novel, *Le Ventre de l’Atlantique* (*The Belly of the Atlantic*, 2003), garnered yet more success. In this text, an African female migrant in France dissuades her brother from migrating to Europe and instead sends him money from her menial jobs to develop a successful business. Diome’s innovative tale of a female migrant who encourages a male counterpart to stay at home is an important riposte to the typical migration narrative in the Francophone African novel, as has been noted by critics such as Dominic Thomas (2006), Pius Adesamni (2005), and myself (2008). By contrast, in this article, I examine Diome’s more recent work, *Celles qui attendent* (*Women Who Wait*, 2010), which tells the tale of a group of Senegalese men who migrate

to Europe, but focuses on the experiences of the women they leave behind. I read this novel in terms of the motifs of accumulation that it contains—in its form as well as in its content. This work denounces a poorly-reasoned “culture of flight” driven by or leading to selfish motivations. Moreover, it focuses clearly on the gendered aspects of migration.

Discussing Diome’s first novel, Xavier Garnier claims:

rien de ce qu’écrit Fatou Diome n’est vraiment nouveau dans le contexte de la littérature africaine ... son roman dit à la fois les difficultés de l’émigration (dans une lignée qui va de Cheikh Hamidou Kane à Alain Mabanckou) et celles de la vie du pays (dans la tradition de critique sociale du roman africain). (30)

nothing of what Fatou Diome writes is really new in the context of African literature ... her novel describes both the difficulties of migration (in a line of writers going from Cheikh Hamidou Kane to Alain Mabanckou) and those of life in her country (in the African novelistic tradition of social critique).²

Celles qui attendent differs in that it represents the effects of migration on those who are left behind, who are forced to hoard up emotions and finances while undergoing an interminable wait for absent male migrants. This novel tells the tale of Arame, Bougna, Coumba, and Daba, mothers and wives left alone on an island off the coast of Senegal whilst their sons and partners illegally migrate to Europe via *pirogue*. The novel begins with all its characters living on an island in the sub-Sérère *niominka* country, a setting reminiscent of the Niodior island off the Siné Saloum delta where Diome grew up. Concerns over financial well-being and future familial and career prospects trouble all protagonists in this novel, particularly Bougna and Arame, the mothers of Issa and Lamine, respectively. The third-person narrator seems to share these concerns, as the reader is informed that the children of this generation are “sans aucune perspective d’avenir” (50) ‘without any prospect of a future.’ Having heard of several *pirogues* leaving for Europe full of Senegalese, and having heard rumors about parents receiving handsome financial remittances from these illegal migrants, Bougna convinces Arame that their sons should also leave for Europe (60-63). These mothers begin to sing the praises of the manly courage of daring undocumented migrant youths, although the narrator comments that these undertakings are mainly borne of desperation: “ce qu’on appelle courage n’étant souvent que la force extreme du désespoir” (73) ‘what we call courage often being only the extreme power of desperation.’ In this article, I analyze the recurrent metaphor of accumulation that Diome employs in her gendered critique of current migratory practices, namely

the accumulation of myths, family members through polygamy and procreation, experience, and wealth.

Accumulating Stories

The first accumulation that the reader encounters in this novel is that of the stories of migration propagated by these mothers who transform such stories into myths of success for people in the communities who surround them on the island. Female characters propagate rumors—stories of financial success woven by mothers and wives desperate to believe and have others believe that their absent sons and husbands are living a better life, supposedly increasing the family's honor at the same time. Bougna, for example, becomes suddenly determined to send her son to Europe after hearing one such exaggerated tale from another woman. Significantly, the woman of whom Bougna is jealous is her co-wife, her husband's first wife who is ever in competition with her. Upon the return to Senegal of a group of male migrants, among them "successful" sons of Bougna's co-wife, the narrator describes the character's feelings thus:

Durant le séjour des garçons, Bougna se sentit à l'étroit, supportant mal le déchainement de joie, les éclats de vanité de sa coépouse et guère mieux les félicitations dithyrambiques qui lui étaient adressées. ... Maintenant que leur réussite signait la suprématie de leur mère, elle les haïssait sincèrement. Pourtant, au fond d'elle-même, elle les remerciait ... grâce à eux, elle tenait enfin l'idée qui allait changeait le destin de son propre fils et lui offrir par la même occasion la revanche tant attendue. Sure de posséder les clefs de sa vengeance, Bougna sortit de l'expectative déterminée à construire l'échelle censée mener à ses ambitions; l'Europe! Son fils aussi irait en Europe comme tous les autres. (60)

During the boys' stay, Bougna felt sidelined, finding it hard to put up with the unbridled joy and outbursts of vanity of her co-wife, not to mention the raving compliments addressed to her. ... Now that their success put a seal on their mother's supremacy, she sincerely hated them. But deep down she thanked them ... thanks to them she finally had the idea that was going to change her sons' destiny as well as offer her the chance to exact the revenge she's been so long waiting for. Sure of possessing the keys to revenge, she left any doubt behind her, determined to build the stairway to her ambitions: Europe! Her son would go to Europe, like all the others.

This proliferation of myths is gradually exposed as detrimental, as Diome reveals the consequences of these exaggerated stories upon the women who first repeated

the stories they heard, then started to create their own and expounded them. The first meager money orders they receive from their sons are described ironically as “la preuve indubitable de leur réussite” (197) ‘the indubitable proof of their success’ and Arame uses such supposed success as social capital, as the narrator tells us: “L’hypothétique réussite de son fils était la fausse monnaie avec laquelle elle pouvait déjà se payer une tranche de respectabilité” (199-200) ‘The hypothetical success of her son was the false currency with which she bought a piece of respectability.’ However, Bougna and Arame are later to realize that this accumulation of myths has created a monster beyond control, as young men and their families joust with one another in their boasts about the prowess of their sons, in turn encouraging most of the young men of the island to leave (with the significant exception of Ansou, who accumulates more money than anybody through the traditional practice of fishing [199]).

Accumulating Family

Diome links this push to migration to another form of accumulation that is heavily criticized in this novel: that of polygamy, the accumulation of wives by men who then look on amusedly as women compete to impress them. The representation of polygamy as unhealthy and insensitive becomes especially pertinent later in the novel, as the young wives discover that their husbands gather more than financial capital in Europe. While women pass their time working at mundane jobs, men enjoy a range of experiences in “exotic” Europe, with consequences for their families at home. The description of the days they spend in wait for the return of their loved ones is compared to the lot of Penelope of Homer’s *Odyssey*, who spends decades accumulating thread she will not ultimately put to any use as she waits for her errant husband. The narrator remarks how Issa’s isolated wife Coumba’s experiences of lone motherhood and fidelity to a husband whose fate is unknown for several years are all too common: “Coumba était une de ces nombreuses femmes qui attendent Ulysse à quai en restant fidèles à leur chambres vides” (274) ‘Coumba was one of those many women who wait for Ulysses at the harbor while staying faithful to their empty bedrooms.’ Coumba’s threadbare existence, desperate attempts to acquire capital for her family’s survival, and excruciating wait for both news and financial remittances from Issa are described in great detail, with Diome’s stories of the dullness of their wait reflecting the monotonous days, then years, spent without their loved ones. Coumba’s days pass without her knowing if Issa is even alive, as she is largely starved of communication with him, all the while being forced to provide for her family: “Issa n’était plus là pour faire briller ses yeux, mais elle devait continuer à jouer son rôle dans cette grande famille” (162-63) ‘Issa was no longer there to make her eyes sparkle, but she had to carry on playing her role in this big

family.’ Readers are led to pity this woman, led into motherhood and then abandoned. Issa is reluctant to contact Coumba, and their infrequent conversations take place in crowded telephone centers. Issa’s mother’s demands for (expensive) conversations with her absent son further restrict Coumba’s contact with him. Desiring both communication with and affection from her husband, Coumba pens a series of unanswered letters to him (219). Tellingly, the narrator repeats throughout the text that “ceux qui nous font languir nous assassinent” (266) ‘those who make us languish kill us,’ but changes this in Coumba’s case to “ceux qui nous oublient nous assassinent” (266) ‘those who forget us kill us.’ After a considerable amount of time has elapsed, Diome’s narrator finally reveals that the reason for Issa’s prolonged absence is his marriage to a Spanish woman. Issa has thus engaged in the tradition of polygamy, which is often arranged by men without the knowledge of their wife or wives. Issa’s Spanish wife journeys to Senegal and is treated extremely well by his friends and family. She comments to Coumba: “Désormais, nous viendrons chaque été, et tu auras Issa pour toi toute seule, pendant tout un mois” (268) ‘from now on, we’ll come every summer, and you’ll have Issa all to yourself for a whole month.’ The narrator, sympathetic to Coumba’s unfair share, states wryly, “Laisser Issa dormir dans le lit de Coumba un mois sur douze, elle appelait ça partager” (269) ‘Letting Issa sleep in Coumba’s bed for one month out of twelve, she called that sharing.’ Issa’s mother disapproves of his new wife (272), but this accumulation is tolerated. Issa thus maintains wives and children on two continents (three with the Spanish wife Blanca and one with Coumba, who is expecting a second child by the end of the novel).

In another telling example, when Arame’s son Lamine migrates to Europe, the young local woman Daba is forcibly married to him in his absence. Ironically, Daba’s celibacy and “fidelity” to the man to whom she has been promised end when she goes to Dakar to take a cleaning job in order to provide her family with the much-needed financial gain that is not forthcoming from her emigrant husband. Here, a tryst with her true lover Ansou leads to a pregnancy and eventual birth of a child. Diome appears to make a subtle point regarding the myth of Dakar for so many Senegalese; although migration from the island seems to be necessary for many, Diome depicts here a character who gathers both wealth and, ironically, family by traveling to her country’s capital. Mobility provides Daba with the means to follow her desires, although tradition forces her to pay certain consequences, as she is shunned by her community until Lamine returns and, in an optimistic portrayal of negotiation with tradition, agrees to act as a father to her child. This negotiation is not easy for the female protagonist, however, as Daba can really only gain a husband and father to her child if she renounces her relationship with Ansou (polygamy only being possible for men in Senegal, as Ousmane Sembene reminded us).³ Furthermore, the departure of

Lamine and Issa does not lead to much material or emotional benefit for their families, as their mothers feel the loss of their beloved sons acutely and fall into greater poverty as the financial remittances they receive over a period of nearly ten years are pitiful. Arame is described as “une mère de l’absence” (151) ‘mother to absence’ and Bougna frequently bemoans her folly at having pushed her son into migration.

In her critique of the way mothers force their sons into migration for both material and financial reasons, Diome makes a statement about the dubious consequences of having children (a form of accumulation *par excellence*) as forms of investment. Diome makes this critique in a very pointed manner in her previous novel *Kétala* (2006). In *Kétala*, the character Mémoria goes into prostitution in Europe in order to send money home to her family. Mémoria is eventually taken back to Senegal, having contracted a sexually transmitted disease. Her parents, who had previously never asked about the source of their income, reject her due to her moral turpitude. One of Diome’s characters viciously critiques the alleged tradition of African parents having children as investments to be sent off to Europe to accumulate capital:

Au lieu de faire des enfants, ceux qui rentabilisent leur progéniture feraient mieux de coter leurs ovules et leurs spermatozoïdes en Bourse. S’il faut allaiter son bébé et lui demander ensuite d’en payer le prix durant toute sa vie, les gynécologues, les banquiers, et les avocats devraient trouver une méthode pour proposer aux fœtus des contrats *in utero*. (168)

Instead of having children, those who make money off of their offspring would be better off floating their ovaries on the stock market. If we’re to give our babies milk and then ask them to pay for it the rest of their lives, then gynecologists, bankers and lawyers ought to find a way of drawing up contracts to offer fetuses *in utero*.

In this novel, Diome therefore introduces a critique of the notion of accumulating children as investments to be sent on to Europe at all costs. As we have seen, this notion is presented more explicitly in *Celles qui attendent*.

Accumulating Experience

Though Diome is capable of cutting, brutal humor, as in the citation above, her narrator’s sympathy towards her female characters is mostly expressed in a mournful, poetic prose. She concentrates on the ways in which the migration to Europe is presented as a male rite of passage that is a necessary part of accumulating experience and adventure—regardless of the experiences of the

women left behind. Issa, for example, is embarrassed by his actions overseas, but is still considered to be acting like a typical family man, able to garner some (if not a lot of) capital to send to his African family through his European marriage. The narrator describes how what could be seen as betrayal is instead accepted since it both provides capital and propagates myths of Europe: “Au lieu de lui reprocher son immense trahison, on le regardait, le scrutait, l’admirait, comme on se laisse ébahir par ceux qui ont marché sur la Lune. Un parfum d’Europe, ça vous hypnotise les sédentaires de la savane” (268) ‘rather than reproaching him for his enormous treachery, people looked at him, scrutinizing him, like you gape at someone who has walked on the moon. The scent of Europe hypnotizes the sedentary savannah peoples.’ The gathering of experience, of the symbolic capital of living in Europe, is here depicted as having far more value than the old act of abiding by tradition. This valorization of the exotic rather than the familiar is problematized throughout Diome’s work.

The fictional example of Issa’s previously unacceptable behavior in Europe (since Senegalese men are only supposed to accumulate African wives even in Europe) resonates with comments made by real-life Senegalese men interviewed in a recently published collection by psychologist Mamadou Mbodji. One interviewee stated that “les valeurs sociales empêchent les individus de réussir ... elles sont une véritable camisole de force ... un véritable obstacle à la réussite. ... Il faut s’éloigner pour échapper aux pressions et respire tout en aidant nos *waajur* (parents)” (qtd in Diop 310) ‘social values prevent success for the individual ... they are a real straitjacket ... a real obstacle to success. ... We need to distance ourselves in order to escape pressure, all the while helping our family members.’ Migration to Europe, in other words, is a means of accumulating money, but also a way of accumulating experience and escaping from the expectations forced on young men by traditional society. By contrast, the female characters in *Celles qui attendent* have few such avenues for escape.

Accumulating Money

In addition to the layered accumulation of myths, wives, children, and experience, Diome also represents the struggle to accumulate money from a female perspective. Throughout the text, a special status is conferred on male migrants to Europe by the inhabitants of the island due to the (relatively small) remittances they send back (197). In reality, however, the female protagonists of this novel receive very little, as male migrants do not live up to the ideal of living parsimoniously (in harsh situations with only *le froid et le piment* [the cold and the chili pepper] as their companions, as one sociological study argued).⁴ It could be that Diome’s maturity has altered her idealism towards the culture of financial remittances she seemed to celebrate in *Le Ventre de l’Atlantique*. In *Celles qui*

attendent, accumulated wealth is meagerly distributed, and the culture of remittances is depicted as having eroded to a culture of accumulation largely for the sake of the self. Whereas Salie toiled in Europe in order to amass enough wealth for her brother to be able to open his own store in Diome's first novel, her migrant character Issa in *Celles qui attendent*, provides only a little money to his family in Africa and becomes more selfish and cut off from his Senegalese community, all the while spending more time and money on his newly-acquired European family. If the female character Salie toiled selflessly, Issa is a more selfish migrant accumulator.

Diome also turns her attention to strategies of obtaining wealth on a local level through the new practice of microcredit. The advent of microcredit is offered up as a possible way out of poverty by Western agents, but it serves in this novel as a model for how poorly the West understands the meager financial means available to African populations. Whereas Arame and Bougna were previously struggling to survive by selling *beignets* and peanuts and wrangling informal credit from the local storekeeper, microcredit allows them to expand their business. However, it comes at the price of an interest rate of 2%. Diome rails at what she sees as a form of extortion, as credit leads African women away from a path from which they can rarely afford to diverge:

Dans l'esprit des défenseurs du microcrédit, 2% n'était rien, mais pour elles, c'était beaucoup ... un bénéfice de 2% multiplié par un nombre incalculable de pauvres restait pour la banque une manière d'engranger du profit, aussi efficacement que ceux qui prêtent aux riches, moins nombreux, à des taux plus élevés. Le capitalisme humanitaire n'existe pas. ... Le microcrédit ne servait qu'à rajouter des complications dans leur vie. Même prélever 1% de la sueur de ces femmes qui manquaient de tout était indécent, un prêt à taux zéro semblant plus indiqué pour qui désirait sincèrement leur venir en aide. (209-10)

In the minds of the defenders of microcredit, 2% was nothing, but for them it was a lot ... a benefit of 2% multiplied by an incalculable amount of poor people remained, for the bank, a way of hoarding up a profit, as efficiently as lending to the rich, who were less numerous, at higher rates. Humanitarian capitalism doesn't exist. ... Microcredit just made their lives more complicated. Even making 1% off the sweat of these women who lacked everything was indecent. A rate of zero per cent was more appropriate if anyone really wanted to come to their aid.

Therefore, financial incentives available to women within Senegal are unworkable, and remittances from their absent husbands are sparse. Instead, as is

the case in Coumba's pathetic letters, the women of this novel are thus forced into another type of hoarding: that of memories.⁵ Isolated and impoverished, the women are forced to resort to other strategies to render their lives bearable: in order to "rendre les absents présents. ... Il fallait garder les souvenirs frais" 'render the absent present. ... they had to keep their memories fresh' and to console "cette solitude qui s'apparentait à un interminable veuvage" (207) 'this solitude that was like interminable widowing.' Where financial accumulation is scant ("les mandats des clandestins étaient aussi rares que la pluie sur le Sahel" [207-208] 'the money orders from the illegal immigrants were as rare as the rain on the Sahel desert') and the accumulation of children a burden, memories are hoarded, substituting for the myths these characters once accumulated of Europe. For Coumba, for example "l'attente se fait reminiscence. ... Dans sa cage virtuelle, Coumba se souvenait" (215) 'waiting turns into reminiscence. ... in her virtual cage, Coumba remembered.' Hope for the future is thus shifted to remembrance of the past, with little or no focus on the present.

Though depressing forms of accumulation for women abound in this novel, it must be noted that *Celles qui attendent* is not an interminable lament. The female characters eventually get by: Lamine returns home (although Issa does not), repents his decision to migrate, and accepts Daba's child. Daba is therefore able to have her lover's child and the stable marriage her family desires for her: a felicitous accumulation indeed! These all come from a recognition of the need to forego traditional rivalries in order to respect the wishes of elders (who have, Diome's narrator reveals, also broken with and suffered from traditional expectations). Diome seems to depict flight abroad as ultimately fruitless, whereas a return home and the gradual acceptance of breaks with tradition represents a negotiation, even if it is, as in Daba's case, fraught with unfair compromise. Diome brings her work to a surprisingly happy ending, as characters work with traditions and sacrifice to "naviguer les courants de la vie" (323) 'navigate the currents of life' in a way that ultimately appears more beneficial for the women involved. Arame breaks with tradition and marries her lover, refusing to continue to hoard up her emotions for the sake of respectability. Bougna has no such happy ending, but the stories she is forced to listen to regarding the success of her co-wife's sons, who have returned to Africa from Europe with degrees and found jobs in Dakar, prove that not all migrants are depicted as doomed to failure in this novel either (242).

Unlike previous texts, Diome locates the plot entirely in Senegal in order to underscore the harsh lifestyles led by African women as opposed to those of their male (migrating) counterparts. Prominent Senegalese writer Ken Bugul may have shown how migration can involve a hedonistic yet sterile accumulation of experience in her 1982 novel *Le Baobab fou* (*The Abandoned Baobab*) but in *Celles qui attendent*, Diome is determined to show that this same hedonistic

accumulation has profound consequences on the lives of those left in Africa, all too often women. The didactic nature of Diome's writing recalls cultural works from Senegal in the 1990s and 2000s that rail against migration and propose solutions to Senegalese problems in order to convince young people to stay at home (or, as one critic put it, "don't abandon our boat").⁶ Diome's privileged didacticism as an established writer in Europe representing underprivileged migrants has drawn criticism (Beer n.p.), yet this writer seems to recognize her position in her depiction of Lamine; he returns home and spends great time and effort trying to dissuade young men from embarking upon heedless migration and is described by the narrator as "pas Ghandhi, ni Senghor, ni Obama, l'impuissance faisait partie de son fardeau existentiel" (317) 'not Ghandhi, nor Senghor, nor Obama, powerlessness was part of his existential burden.' Diome's nod to the great poet of *Négritude* and fellow Sérère Léopold Sédar Senghor is significant as she recognizes that no celebration of Africa (as the *Négritude* movement was) seems able to lessen young African men's desire to leave Africa and accumulate life experience elsewhere. She leaves us with the question of the effects of such male mobility on female lives and of how much financial and emotional suffering they can tolerate.

As well as developing metaphors of accumulation throughout this text, Fatou Diome practices proliferation in her very narrative style. Whereas Diome rose to prominence as a writer of short stories (notably in the collection *La Préférence nationale*) and with a novel short enough to be regarded as a novella (*Le Ventre de l'Atlantique*), her later novels have been considerably longer, with her latest, *Impossible de grandir* ('Impossible to Grow Up,' 2013) amounting to over four hundred pages. Diome is not the first Senegalese writer to move from writing short stories to long novels (one thinks, for example, of Sembene, who started by writing collections of stories but wrote long volumes like *Le Dernier de l'empire* ['The Last of the Empire,' 1981] later in his career). Nevertheless, Diome's slow-moving plots are particularly striking. In a 2001 interview between prominent African writers Alain Mabanckou and Boubacar Boris Diop, the two point out that African authors have generally composed short novels, which they attribute to a "manque de souffle" (72) 'lack of breath.' Diome seems to thrive on the accumulation of stories within her stories, although her latest novels, perhaps as a result of this development, have been significantly less popular than her earlier works. One could argue, nevertheless, that Diome's slow-paced style reflects the excruciating nature of the long, painful process of waiting these women undergo. Perhaps Diome deliberately chooses in this text to forego recounting the potentially more exciting tales of male migrant accumulation of adventure and experience in Europe in order to focus readers' attention on another form of accumulation—that of days spent in monotonous labor and wait. This condition is best conveyed by the French verb *languir*, employed by the narrator

throughout the text to describe the emotional state of the female characters, and translated into English somewhere between yearning, languishing, pining, and gradually shriveling away.

Diome's work therefore provides important commentary on differing forms of accumulation based on gender in an African society. Moneymaking, adventure, and the begetting of numerous wives and children are forms of accumulation enjoyed by male protagonists, whereas myth making, childrearing, labor, and homemaking remain forms of accumulation depressingly allocated to female figures.

Notes

1. Ndione gives the following translation of the Wolof language title in the text: "Littéralement: le coup de tête. Nom donné à la traversée en pirogue à destination des îles Canaries" (17) 'Literally, the Headbutt. Name Given to the Crossing via Pirogue Towards the Destination of the Canary Islands.'
2. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.
3. In Sembene's 1975 film version of his renowned critique of polygamy, *Xala*, the secretary of the polygamous protagonist El Hadj Abdou Kader Bèye asks a flirtatious male client why only men are permitted to marry several partners.
4. See Mame Seck Mbacké's *Le Froid et le piment*, a sociological study of the lives and living conditions of Africans in France in the 1990s.
5. See Hubbell "Collecting Souvenirs or Hoarding Memory: the Literary Reconstruction of Algeria" for a thorough explanation of this concept.
6. The title of Mahriana Rofheardt's 2010 dissertation is a play on a Wolof term. *Sunu Gall* means "our boat" and is sometimes seen as the source of the name of Senegal. DJ Awadi's popular Wolof language song *Sunu Gall* discusses the issue of people attempting to enter Europe illegally via boats. Awadi's attempt at dissuading people from undergoing such journeys follows in the tradition of Senegalese singer Youssou N'Dour, whose song *Dem* ('Going') treats this theme and contains the English words "Don't go away."

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