

GLOBAL WRECKAGE AND CONSUMER ILLUSIONS:  
RESPONSES TO THE HUMAN EFFECTS OF ECONOMIC GLOBALIZATION  
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN FRANCOPHONE NOVELS AND FILMS, 1973-2006

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in French in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the  
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## Abstract

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My study examines a group of nine novels and films set in Ivory Coast, Mali, Senegal, Cameroon and Gabon written and produced between 1973 and 2006 in which “the West” and its international finance network are depicted as the fundamental contemporary world power that wields a destructive dominance over African countries. These forms of control are in many ways similar, yet distinct, from the projects of European imperialism. I analyze consumerism as a major feature of globalization, and discuss the linkage of globalization and the consumer society by looking at various theoretical models, in particular that which Jean Baudrillard conceptualized as a stand-in for democracy. I also consider the connection between globalization and imposed cultural uniformity, which African novels and films denounce as promoting a system of cultural superiority and submission. Further, the most extreme effects of globalization reinforce notions of a sexualized, racialized or ethnicized *other*. In response authors and filmmakers bring out themes such as migration/immigration, the objectification of the body—particularly of women—and the eruption of communal violence. Visual imagery in the novel and silence and voice in film are exemplary of how the two media create a common response that resists contemporary

globalization. The dissertation thus examines what has emerged as *one* set of issues with which writers and filmmakers engage in their reflections on and responses to globalization.

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## Introduction

After several decades of exposing the impact of France's neo-colonial presence and the corruption of neo-colonial regimes with their slew of brutal dictators, African Francophone writers and filmmakers have been rallying to denounce the economic marginalization of the continent, its harsh local conditions, and the overall disastrous effects of globalization. These novelists and filmmakers—such as Yodi Karone, Mongo Beti, Djibril Diop Mambety and Abderrahmane Sissako—portray the dominance of “the West” and its international finance network as constantly posing a dire threat to Africans, their sovereignty and, most importantly, their value as humans. This shift in perspective stands out among sub-Saharan African Francophone artists who focus on local African communities' experiences of globalization. Scholars have increasingly discussed globalization as a source of instability for postcolonial communities. African artists and intellectuals share the concern that globalization as an economic and financial system also brings with it the imposition of cultural uniformity. For instance, at the Forum des écrivains et intellectuels francophones in Ouagadougou in 2004 the question was posed as to whether “les effets conjugués de la mondialisation doivent conduire irrémédiablement à un modèle uniforme des cultures qui mettrait fin à la diversité qui a caractérisé l'évolution de l'humanité depuis l'aube des temps, en faisant des cultures issues du monde industriel et de la société de consommation des modèles uniques” (Mbow 25). This concern highlights the influences of dominant Western popular culture as a universalizing force that consequently destabilizes and destroys other cultures instead of allowing for that process of *creolization*—where one shares aspects of others' cultures without losing one's own—advocated by Édouard Glissant. Moreover, it enforces conformity to a global standard of ways of being,

behaving, dressing, looking, etc. and thus indicates that humans relate to one another within a system of cultural superiority and submission. The perils of such an imperial form of domination are grave for those on the losing side; it literally incites rivalries between the haves and the have-nots within a given society, and symbolically, it is an assault on one's very being and value as a human.

Proponents of globalization laud it as a unifying phenomenon that integrates national economies, facilitating the movement of capital, goods and people across borders and connecting people at increasingly rapid speed through sophisticated communications networks and as mutually beneficial to people in all corners of the world. While they take some issue with this position, thinkers such as economist, Joseph Stiglitz, cultural theorist Arjun Appadurai, or sociologist Martin Albrow, claim that the system would benefit from changes in policy or the emergence of global governance and transnational networks, but they pay little attention to the predominantly oppressive nature of globalization that many scholars in the humanities increasingly observe. African writers and filmmakers point to globalization as responsible for denying basic rights to human beings and maintaining cultures in a permanent state of crisis. Their view is consonant with a critique of globalization, as performed by social scientists such as Saskia Sassen and Amartya Sen, who affirm that constant engagement with commodities and consumption has profoundly negative effects on individuals and communities whose political and economic status hinder or exclude their entitlement to the benefits of globalization. Their work considers those who remain in their local settings whose daily struggle for survival precludes their participation in the exchange of imported goods and denies them access to border crossings and innovative communication technologies. In this view, globalization manifests itself as a form of imperial control wielded by the strongest economic powers of the world –

particularly the United States and European nations such as France – over the national and local economies and cultures of the poorest regions of the world, notably, throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

In this dissertation, it is this noticeable shift in artists' and thinkers' perception of international power relations as transitioning to a global power structure which destabilizes and destroys local communities that I examine in a group of nine novels and films, written/produced from the years 1973 to 2006: the novels are Angèle Rawiri's *G'amèrakano: au carrefour* (1983); Pape Pathé Diop's *La Poubelle* (1984); Yodi Karone's *Les Beaux gosses* (1988); Mongo Beti's *Trop de soleil tue l'amour* (1999) and its sequel, *Branle-bas en noir et blanc* (2000); the films are Djibril Diop Mambety's *Touki-Bouki* (1973); *Hyènes* (1992); and Aberrahmane Sissako's *La Vie sur terre* (1998); and *Bamako* (2006). I argue that these novelists and filmmakers have chosen one aspect of globalization—consumerism—impelled and fueled by Western interests and the model of the Western *habitus*, at once as a theme illustrating what amounts to global wreckage and as a literary allegory of the constraints of dependency and the options for resistance. The choice of the products of consumerism as narrative tropes by these authors is far from frivolous, superficial and disengaged. On the contrary, it becomes a highly “visual” site of representation for broader political and social concerns. Notably, awareness of human rights discourse and its themes is most often implicit or acts as an undercurrent in these representations of consumerism. Jean Baudrillard's concept of the “consumer society” is particularly useful to understand these concerns. He famously argued in *La Société de consommation: ses mythes, ses structures* (1970) that the consumer society functions in relation to a set of ideals: the consumer engages in endless accumulation of consumer objects; s/he achieves social “standing” (status) by his or her choice of consumer objects, which have a relational value based not on their utility, but

on the value inscribed in them as status symbols. The *choice* to consume, as well as which objects to consume, according to Baudrillard, represents the consumer's democratic right. Thus, according to Baudrillard, the consumer society is a product of Western cultural mores and of the philosophical and political traditions on which Western democracies, such as the U.S.

(Baudrillard's case study), were founded. In this context, the major focus on consumerism in the novels and films I analyze points to the interconnection between globalization, consumerism and human rights. Globalization designates the workings of the world economic system.

Consumerism, integral to the workings of globalization, refers not only to the capitalist model of consumption of mass produced goods and services, but, moreover, to how people relate with one another within a given society vis à vis objects. The value of objects lies not in their utility, but, rather, is mirrored through the manipulation of them as signs of social success and of happiness (Baudrillard, *Système* 276; *Société* 60-1). Happiness "is the absolute reference of the consumer society" (Baudrillard, *Société* 59). It is based on the ideological myth that all individuals are equal before objects—in their choice to consume—just as they are equal politically and socially to exercise their democratic enjoyment of rights and reciprocal duties as citizens. Human rights refer to a set of social norms (recognized internationally) that regards each man, woman and child equal in their access to the necessities of life, justice, and freedom to dissent.

The major thread that connects this group of novels and films is, first, their questioning of consumer-driven globalization as an economic *phenomenon* that "integrates" national economies into one world economy and, as a result, supposedly has "positive" effects throughout the world. These works depict globalization, rather, as the contemporary *system* of domination, which, in addition to instituting and maintaining grinding poverty, produces far-reaching negative consequences for communities. Globalization is thus represented as, first, a political

system that denies sovereignty and thus raises significant questions concerning citizenship and encourages migration; second, it is shown to objectify and abjectify the body—particularly of women—and, finally, it incites the eruption of ethnic or communal violence fueled by rivalry over power and material spoils. These are three major themes that the corpus under examination presents. In representing these themes, these works extensively portray consumer and material goods that are coveted, exchanged or acquired, imbuing these concrete, material, elements with a powerful allegorical content.

Through their works, African novelists and filmmakers perform a pointed critique of Africa's peripheral positioning in the current world economy. The novels and films that I analyze are allegorical representations where the evils of consumerism are rendered through the juxtaposition of basic human needs, such as water, food, clothing or shelter, and of luxury items, which include anything from modern appliances to hair straightening pomades, skin lightening creams, haute couture, or luxurious living quarters; parallel to the theme of relentless accumulation of material goods, the novels and films represent local struggles along with the social implications of the imposed images that emerge out of the West's "consumer society" and its reliance on maintaining global inequalities. These writers and filmmakers place great emphasis on the body and its worth in relation to the value system that the global economy creates. Their focus is on the human experience(s) of globalization, where the body is a central metaphor for the value of human life. Violence against the racialized, ethnicized or sexualized body is often central to these stories, and most often precedes or accompanies the disappearance of actual bodies in the narratives. In these works, the body—violated, broken, or disposed of—is shown to be the site on which the most far-reaching effects of consumer-driven globalization are played out and contested.

In Rawiri's novel, the young woman Toula is representative of an entire generation whose local social status is determined by the possession of luxury items. She struggles between the consumerist image she aspires to and the reality in which she lives. In order for her to participate in globalization, she must lighten her black body and give herself over to prostitution; she and her age group must conform to the social, cultural and economic standards of global culture, symbolically represented by the local executives of an international bank. Additionally, this work as well as Pathé Diop's *La Poubelle* portrays globalization as a system that causes a displacement within the urban space in relation to the postcolonial notion of center (*métropole*) and periphery (colony). This is exemplary of one of the unique features of current globalization: While the African continent is relegated to the periphery of the world economy, at the same time, multiple peripheries emerge and exist within urban centers. In his novel, Pathé Diop evokes these issues in a tale where structural adjustment becomes allegorized through the presence of American tourists; the used commodities they bestow upon the locals ultimately cast out the inhabitants of the "tropical" South to the massive garbage dump of Dakar.

Djibril Diop Mambety and Abderrahmane Sissako sharply contrast local life in Senegal and Mali respectively, with the devastating effects of consumerism. There is less focus in film on the visibility of Western-driven commodities than is present in the novels in my corpus – with the important exceptions of *Hyènes* and *Touki-Bouki*. Rather, the films emphasize the absence of modern material goods, with a more pointed critique of global programs, such as international aid, as well as a denunciation of Africa's exclusion from the global economy. Mambety examined the theme of consumerism in so many of his films that one might go as far as to characterize his oeuvre as a meditation on consumerism's effects on African societies. His attempt to produce two trilogies that would present themes of "greed" and "marginality" as

“universal” evidences this (Ukadike, *Questioning* 122-3).<sup>1</sup> Sissako’s two films paint a portrait of both rural and urban Mali as being swallowed by the demands of the IMF and the World Bank and of communities attempting to connect with the global world, to tell their story and to deplore their exploitation. The former Malian Minister of Culture, Aminata Traoré, who is an intellectual, not just a politician, echoes the argument she made as a witness in Sissako’s simulated trial of the IMF in *Bamako*, in her denunciation of the rippling effects of this on the continent: “Le commerce [en Afrique] est devenu celui des produits importés, dont ceux subventionnés par les pays riches, ainsi que le lieu de recyclage de leurs déchets: vêtements, véhicules, ordinateurs... L’éducation, la santé, l’eau, l’assainissement et d’autres services publics ont été privatisés dans le même élan de désengagement de l’État” (Traoré 142). These are exemplary of how the works I examine portray globalization as an exclusionary system.

Another way in the novels and films I examine address the notion of globalization as a system that to a large extent excludes Africans from the global economy is through the theme of migration/immigration. This treatment of population movements contradicts the notion of a “flow” of people and is evidently in response to the realities of those on the continent who are not only excluded from the benefits of globalization, but suffer gravely as a result of it. It is indeed common knowledge that borders are far from fluid despite the alleged increase in the “flows” of people in this age of globalization. Mass media confirms this through multiple and frequent images and sound bites documenting life-threatening journeys of individuals who attempt to find a better life in the West: small boats capsize in the depths of the Atlantic either from the shores of North or West Africa heading toward Europe or from Cuba or Haiti en route

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<sup>1</sup> Ukadike writes about these trilogies in a special tribute to Mambety that precedes a two-part interview he conducted with the filmmaker, the first part at FESPACO in 1991 and the second at the African Literature Association Conference in 1997, a few months after which the filmmaker passed away.

to the USA. Across the African continent, in addition to thousands who attempt to make their way out of economic hardship, thousands more flee from political unrest or war. Such journeys toward Western Europe are often forcibly aborted as border patrols along the way reject the influx of immigrants; and such movement frequently ends in fatalities, whether due to overcrowded detention facilities lacking adequate water and food or the general perils that accompany the enterprise of human trafficking. Economic and political migration from one country to another within Africa proves equally futile. In the Horn of Africa, for instance, millions of Somalis fleeing drought and famine in 2011 struggled further to survive the threats of armed bandits who raided food and other supplies in camps outside of Mogadishu; others, at Somalia's southern border with Kenya, feared for their lives as Kenyan and French forces targeting terrorist groups in the region dropped bombs on or near their camps. In southern Africa in 2010, approximately one and a half million Zimbabweans who had taken refuge in South Africa over the previous few years from President Mugabe's oppressive regime and an extremely weak economy, were forcibly expelled from their new country to return to their homeland. Many viewed this as an outright death sentence given the reasons they had initially fled: either they had been marked as political enemies of Mugabe's ZANU-PF party for having spoken out against his rule; or they were among the three million dispossessed of their shanty town homes in and around Harare or in the southeastern diamond region of Marange. These groups faced hunger and homelessness following the razing of their communities by bulldozers or fires set by police and government forces in Operation Murambatsvina, meaning, literally, clear out the trash. The conundrum of eternal displacement plagues other regions of the African continent as well, particularly where wars have ravaged over the last decades. For instance, the current conflict in Sudan's western Darfur region led over two million refugees to flee. The hundreds of thousands

who crossed the border into neighboring Chad at least since 2007 face a constant threats to their lives—in this case due to a lack of basic infrastructure and services, such as health care, suitable living quarters, adequate food and water. There are numerous additional examples, each of which highlight that an increase in mobility of humans across borders is a misnomer. Moreover, images of migrants who actually arrive at destinations outside the continent, having successfully traversed drought-ridden areas, war-torn regions or conflict zones, additionally, show a reality other than the free movement of people across borders. Passing by the fenced-in, cage-like areas of Charles de Gaulle Airport’s immigration control evidences that there are physical barriers in place at border crossings where people are stopped, detained and, most often turned away. Étienne Balibar refers to these borders as “*detention zones and filtering systems* such as those located in the center or on the periphery of major international airports.” He adds “It is well known that these transit zones are zones of ‘nonright’ in which guarantees of individual freedom are suspended for a variable length of time and where foreigners [the great majority of whom in France are of North or West African origin] again become noncitizens and pariahs” (Balibar, “We the People” 111). Balibar’s description of borders as barriers—“zones of ‘nonright’”—thus directly contradicts the notion that globalization allows a free “flow” of people across borders and, instead, reveals it as exclusionary. African novelists and filmmakers evidently share this view and are able to expand upon this as a highly charged notion in complex narratives. With the theme of migration/immigration, their works not only portray the transitory space of immigration as a zone of nonright—for instance, the anguish Anta feels upon boarding the transatlantic ship bound for France or Sissako’s flashback scene in *Bamako*, where traversing the Sahara resulted in being turned away by two countries and the death of all but one young man—but they also depict spaces within African cities and rural areas as *zones of nonright*, where individuals and

groups are excluded from basic living standards. This is reflected by characters' often fatally precarious existence in the face of global forces.

The majority of the novels and films I analyze address the issue of immigration to France, Europe or even America; though in contrast to immigrant narratives set in France, these works, which are focalized on Africa, bring out such themes as dreams of an idealized West juxtaposed with aborted journeys. In her essay, "Images of France in Francophone African Films," Madeleine Cottenet-Hage points to this as an outward gaze toward an idealized West. Rather than being a reflection of experiencing life as an immigrant elsewhere, according to Cottenet-Hage, African cinema projects characters who dream of a way out of their predicament of economic or political instability and who imagine the West as "invested with hopes for material success" (Cottenet-Hage in Pfaff 118). Such narratives emphasize the perspective of those living on the African continent, exposing its economic marginalization. This is allegorized in fictional works through themes of marginalization and exclusion. For instance, in *Touki-Bouki*, Anta and Mory are doubly marginalized. On the one hand, they find themselves in a position of marginality—as Mambety has described these characters—with regard to their native Médina. They are marginalized because they are conscious of the economically disadvantaged position of the residents of the Médina. And, they are the only characters in the film to mirror their economic marginalization through Western consumer products and icons. For example, the camera focalizes Anta sitting at her desk, studying (which again distinguishes her from the general population in the Médina who do not go to university), with a bottle of imported Vittel water; in juxtaposition, the other women of the Médina are concerned with retrieving water from the community water spout. Other exemplary images include the airplane that flies overhead, which paired with Mory's reflective vertical gaze, indicates his perception of the horizontal

confinement in which the residents of the Médina live; in this instance, the airplane shows itself as a symbolic link to the outside world; and, finally, another crucial example is the iconic voice of Joséphine Baker, inseparable in this context from the words she pronounces repeatedly: “Paris, Paris, Paris” and their evocative image of “Paris le paradis.” Anta and Mory are uniquely conscious of the inequality that such consumer objects and icons represent; and their affiliations with the university and interest in consuming products, such as imported bottled water, sets them apart from the community residing in the Médina. Secondly, they are marginalized because they are not part of the national elite who maintain neocolonial relations with France. Unlike the university students who are the sons and daughters of the national political elite, Mory and Anta are not able to influence change in their society—neither for the residents of the Médina, nor on a national level. They lack political and economic power on the national level. Thus doubly marginalized, the two characters seek a way out of their economically disadvantaged position; and their goal throughout the film is to find a way out of their marginality. Their means to this end is to make it to the ship that will carry them to the globalized world and, ideally, allow them to participate in the global world whose signs have shown themselves at once in the Médina as well as at the university. However, their journey to the port reveals their exclusion from the global. Once aboard the ship, Anta sees her dreams of an ideal life in Paris quelled by the unfamiliarity of that which awaits her on the other side of the Atlantic. As for the other protagonist, Mory, he aborts his journey, turning abruptly away from Anta, the ship and the port and running back through Dakar’s streets as if he had resolved that there is a place for him as a herder in his homeland whereas life abroad is too uncertain.

Characters that succeed in making the journey across borders further represent Africa’s marginal position due to the exclusionary system of globalization, underlining the value it places

upon them as human beings. Linguère Ramatou's return to Colobane in *Hyènes* shows the outside world as a violent place. Having lost her child to death, her limbs to the dangers of modern travel, and prostituted herself in order to survive, she experiences a symbolic death and reincarnation and returns reconstructed. She achieves this by submitting herself to the system and, ultimately, becoming a member of the global elite in order to thwart her exclusion. In this new role, she embodies the ideals of a global institution (the allusion is to the World Bank) and subsequently exacts the same ill treatment on the members of the community as she had experienced. The far-reaching effects of her actions are mirrored in the post-credits scene which shows a bulldozer razing the entire town, allegorically depicting globalization's exclusion of entire communities as an extreme devaluation of entire groups of humans. The theme of migration/immigration—whether the desire to migrate, the aborted journey or return narratives—is a crucial component of the experiences of globalization on the ground in Africa and is one issue that reveals its most disastrous consequences.

One major motivation for characters in these works—women in particular—to migrate is the violence which poses a threat to them daily. As responses to globalization, the novels and films I examine direct an outward gaze to consumer-driven globalization as provoking the experiences of daily violence. This is noticeable particularly in the portrayal of female characters' experiences in *G'amèrakano*, *Les Beaux gosses*, *Trop de soleil*, *Branle-bas*, and in a film such as *Hyènes*. The four novels, for instance, depict the interconnectedness between local conflict and globalization. *Rawiri* evokes a constant daily violence, which at once denigrates the black female body and spurs sudden instances of inter-ethnic violence. Karone's mystery novel uses the trope of the powerful gangster in a narrative permeated with violence and depicts illicit networks of import control backed by France alongside the consumption of American culture. It

is a stark portrayal of severe ethnic tensions and foreshadows Ivory Coast's civil war (2002-07) and ongoing conflict through 2011. Mongo Beti portrays global consumerism through illicit cross-border smuggling and human trafficking, in a violent world dominated by the power and control of the French Secret Service and African and French middlemen, serving the interests of the global economy. The spaces of globalization are thus contradictory sites, and their portrayal as such contrasts sharply with positivist arguments about globalization.

The narratives additionally portray Africa's exclusion from the "globalized" world by incorporating alternative views on the rising ease and speed with which people communicate from one end of the world to another. For instance, whereas it is not unusual today for a village chief in rural central Mali to recharge his cell phone with the solar panel in his courtyard and connect with a colleague conducting international business at the port of the Niger River in Mopti, Abderrahmane Sissako chooses to represent a neighboring village of the same region at the dawn of the new millennium, highlighting the great dearth of working communication technology, including the single unreliable fixed telephone located at the central post office in his film, *La Vie sur terre* (1998). Clearly showing the filmmaker's rejection of a positivist view of globalization as propelling "greater and faster flows," his film contrasts wide pan, panoramic images of the remote village of Sokolo on the eve of the year 2000 with diegetic radio transmissions of Radio France International celebrating the advanced technologies and industries of Paris, New York and Tokyo. While the developed world thrives on the pleasures of goods and leisure, the inhabitants of Sokolo confront the looming threat that their food and water supply will not sustain their lives in the village through the dry season. These severe contrasts of great excess with next to nothing are contextualized in the historic anti-colonialist discourse of Western domination over Africa.

I have chosen to analyze novels and films set in Cameroon, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Mali and Senegal because these countries' historical and contemporary economic and political dimensions overlap, and not only as former Sub-Saharan colonies of France viewed as part of the "Francophone world." Senegal and Ivory Coast had been strategic geo-political and economic points of trade, particularly throughout the colonial period (from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through independence in 1960), but also the port towns of Dakar and Saint-Louis in Senegal were important points during the 18<sup>th</sup> century of transport of goods that circulated between France, Africa and the Americas. Furthermore, the elite of the two countries enjoyed some economic and political stability in the decades subsequent to independence in 1960 due to continued close ties with France. However, the majority of the citizens of both countries have suffered from inadequate infrastructure, unemployment, and general poverty, and today, Ivory Coast is barely out of a civil war (2002-2007). The war broke out between north and south along ethnic and religious lines as a result of the drastic decline of the national economy paired with extreme political tensions that the notion of "ivorité" (pure Ivorian citizenship) had incited since the previous decade. Following a series of ruptured peace accords, several months of political deadlock and over two years of cancelled elections, 2007 officially marked the end of the war with then President, Laurent Gbagbo's words, "la guerre est finie." Nonetheless, after his government stalled elections for three more years, then attempted to remain in power following the disputed election in 2010, Gbagbo was ousted (an action which the U.N. supported) and his long time political rival from the north, Alassane Ouattara, took the presidency in 2011. Since, fighting has once again resumed, escalating so fiercely that political analysts and human rights groups warn of an imminent renewed outbreak of civil war. Mali, although once among the most important cultural and educational centers of West Africa and the continent's leading exporter of

cotton, following Egypt, reeled into deep economic distress following the coup of Modibo Keita in 1969 and is today among the poorest countries in the world. Whereas Gabon's elite profited from being one of the strongest economies in the region in the 1970s, this country's economy also now relies heavily on foreign investment; and as new contracts are signed with Asian countries, such as China and Singapore, to obtain its natural resources—this time timber and manganese, now that its oil supply has diminished—its citizens remain deeply and largely disenfranchised. Structural adjustment programs have affected each of these countries negatively, in particular by essentially privatizing all national sectors, and thus they have sunken into debt far beyond their GDPs with minimal industrial infrastructure and have become mere pawns of the Western-dominated world market. These countries' economic positioning is evidently of central concern to novelists and filmmakers reacting to globalization's effects on the African continent.

In contrast to globalization's proponents' praise for the "information superhighway", technological innovations, opening borders to "free trade" and increased mobility, these fictional works show an *other* side to the story, ultimately revealing that for those who remain marginalized from the global economy, globalization is an assault on the subsistence of communities, and on the individual's body—and very existence. Further, novels and films depicting sub-Saharan Francophone African experiences of globalization show it to be a system of domination which, albeit distinct from imperialism, shares and sustains many of its power structures. There are indeed some parallels to the African experience of colonization, and some Africanist scholars, such as Manthia Diawara and Dayna Oscherwitz, have gone as far as to argue that globalization is equal to a "re-colonization" of Africa by an economic power consortium—"the West"—made up of a former colonizer, France, alongside other European

nations, and especially, by the hegemonic power of the United States of America and international finance agencies such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. However, whereas contemporary globalization indeed proceeds from the continent's historic colonial and neocolonial interactions with the West, I will argue here that its current form manifests itself distinctly.

By responding to globalization as a destabilizing, disruptive force in sub-Saharan Francophone African communities, the novelists and filmmakers I discuss make a noteworthy intervention in globalization studies as well as in human rights discourse. Through their narratives, the authors and filmmakers issue a warning to the architects of globalization – the World Bank, IMF, and African and Western leaders who have agreed to bilateral agreements about debt, for example—an urgent warning that basic human rights are under attack as a result of economic globalization. They state that the abuse of those rights is so far-reaching that it inevitably leads to crisis in the social and cultural lives of sub-Saharan Africans, and wreaks economic and political havoc across urban spaces throughout the region. By emphasizing the consumer side of globalization and exposing its disastrous consequences, these representations do not merely show themselves as contesting positivist views of globalization; they in effect evidence urgent concerns about the value of the human in this “age of globalization.”

The emergence of this group of novels and films marks the most recent phase of a long tradition of political engagement in African literature and filmmaking. African novelists have reflected the social, political, economic and cultural realities of the continent's interactions with their European colonizers since some of the earliest works created by Africans in French and, subsequently, during the decades immediately following independence, exposed in their works

the wrongdoings of national leaders. Anticolonialist literature of the 1930s-1950s characterizes the first phase.<sup>2</sup> The independence of Morocco and Tunisia in 1956 and of the remaining former French colonies in the 1960s and the political excitement on the continent during the years leading up to this moment spurred discourses, such as the Fanonian “New Man”, expressing a general feeling of optimism and hope in new leaders and youth culminating in the achievement of African self-determination following more than one hundred years of colonial rule. Self-determination promised sovereignty, and this is reflected in narratives of national consciousness. Filmmakers of the 1960s also took up these themes. Some were government sponsored features that overtly celebrated the nation, such as Paulin Vieyra’s *Une nation est née* (Senegal, 1961); others, such as Ousmane Sembène’s *Borom Sarret* (1963), were social realist narratives that examined the socio-economic cleavages in the nation and infrastructural areas that could be improved. In the 1970s, artists refocused their gaze and asserted a critique of greed and abuse of power by elites generally regarded as having continued a largely economic neocolonial relationship with France despite African political autonomy. For instance, in his novels, Congolese Sony Labou Tansi exposed and denounced torture, harsh treatment in prisons and summary executions carried out by new African leaders, a theme that continued through the 80s and stands out in the novel, *Toiles d’araignée* (1982),<sup>3</sup> by Malian Ibrahima Ly. Other writers across the continent, such as Senegalese Ousmane Sembène, and Kenyan Ngugi wa Thiong’o, created strong narratives that questioned dominant historical perspectives produced by the

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<sup>2</sup> Noteworthy anticolonialist works that span these decades include Lamine Senghor’s *La Violation d’un pays* (Senegal 1927), Ferdinand Oyono’s *Une vie de boy* (Cameroon 1956) and the early works of Mongo Beti (also Cameroonian). Richard Bjornson has written extensively on the latter. For discussions of L. Senghor’s early novel and Oyono’s work, see Ngate and Miller *Nationalists*.

<sup>3</sup> Malian filmmaker, Ibrahima Touré, adapted Ly’s novel into a film of the same title in 2009. Acknowledging that the film version is also a fiction (as the novel was), Touré made his political stance evident with his intention to “se coller à certains lieux de mémoire pour ne pas s’écarter de la réalité de cette époque douloureuse de notre histoire commune.” See Koné.

former colonial powers (French and British, respectively). In their works, a distinctive denunciatory stance emerges, for instance, against the ill treatment of African soldiers or the misrecognition of African participation in the empires' war efforts (Diawara, *In Search* 142).

Political themes continued to occupy the imagination of writers during the 1980s. During this decade, writing reflected African experiences of changes in global politics and economics that presented new social and economic realities for life on the continent, such as structural adjustments, a trend that continued in the 90s with the devaluation of the CFA franc. Scholars who have noted this shift include Francesca Canadé Sautman, who argues that even though scholarship on globalization only took off substantially from the 2000s onwards when literary works from Africa respond directly to globalization, the literature that deals with the moment of dictatorships and neocolonialism of the eighties is already a social response to the “global” realities of Africa (Sautman 109). Writers whose works exemplify this perspective rejected another significant trend of the decade: Afro-pessimism—a view that originated in the West in response to African governments' failure to develop stable political and economic states in spite of broad optimism and hope for the new countries at the dawn of independence. Rather, they focused their literary gaze at once outward, on negative influences affecting the continent, as well as inward, discrediting the discourse of African insolvability. Also noteworthy during the 1980s is the surge of women writers who, in addition to taking up some of the same themes as their male contemporaries, diversify the political scope to include issues particular to women's experiences.

In her article, “Writing the Child, Youth and Violence into the Francophone Novel from Sub-Saharan Africa” (2005), Odile Cazenave observes that in literary representations “[f]rom the early eighties on, violence was no longer limited to colonial or neocolonial governmental power”

and that a shift in power structures affecting the continent is noticeable in depictions of “new ethnic rivalries and tensions” (Cazenave, “Youth and Violence” 59). By the end of 1980s decade, as several scholars have observed, the literary landscape is consumed by violence, and this trend has continued to the present. This too is evidence of writers’ political engagement. For instance, Cazenave catalogues approximately one hundred novels written from the early 1980s to the early 2000s of which the central narrative focuses on civil war, genocide or ethnic conflict. Similar to her study, Jean-Marie Volet’s “Francophone Women Writing in 1998-99 and Beyond: A Literary Feast in a Violent World” (2001), highlights a shift in the focus of women’s writing from dealing solely with “[i]ssues traditionally associated with African women’s writing in years past, such as polygamy, forced marriage, and women’s limited opportunities” to responding to “new problematics born of rapidly changing sociocultural environments [including] the issue of violence and survival [...] in the face of extreme economic hardship [...], the collapse of social values, and war” (Volet 187).

Further, according to Cazenave, “[s]ince [the early 80s], violence has been much more graphic, much more ‘violent,’ taking the readers to the limits of the unbearable. [...] The textual violence in this literature is much more abject and sacrilegious, and women and children are its first victims. Women are raped, bodies are dislocated, guts gush out, pregnant women are torn apart, their babies killed or dismembered in front of their eyes. [...] Such extreme violence becomes a ‘synecdoche’ for the dislocation of postcolonial societies, of families, of community structures” (Cazenave, “Youth and Violence” 60). Cazenave describes the daily violence of the city, which is most common in the context of rural to urban migration in Africa. Although her focus on the distinction between the ways male and female authors write violence (which is not of concern in this dissertation), her work denotes two major categories of portraying violence:

first, there is the portrayal of political violence, which focuses on a specific “political context or situation of postcolonial societies: the civil wars and genocides, the children-soldiers” (61). Second, there is the representation of “multiple forms of daily aggressions” where “the city, the postcolonial urban landscape, is particularly prone to multiple variations of violence [... which] has been banalized and is ‘just’ part of life. In doing so, writers remind us not only of the presence of violence, but of the dangers, too, of not identifying it in its daily occurrence” (64-67). These two types always include references critical of exclusionary global politics but still are different from the works I analyze which point specifically to the issue of “outsider” groups or the outside influences of economic globalization as initiating and propelling daily violence in the lives of communities. This violence is always linked to consumerism and often ends with or includes as a major narrative event or element the disappearance of a body or bodies symbolic of annihilation of Africans—an erasure of culture and, moreover, of their very beings—as a result of their exclusion from the global economy. Additionally, several journals have dedicated entire issues to the topic of the noteworthy surge in representations of violence, including *Research in African Literatures* (2005) and *Notre Libraire* (2002). Leading scholars in the field of African literature, such as Kenneth Harrow, Richard Priebe and Patricia-Pia Célérier, who contributed articles to these journals, argue that writers’ attention to such an escalation in violence is a direct response to global inequalities and issues of human rights.

African filmmakers likewise expressed their common aim to make ideologically engaged art through their cinema. Indeed, the birth of African cinema corresponds at once with the emergence of newly independent African nations and the projection of images of Africans and the continent which were “generally unfamiliar and incomprehensible” to international

audiences” (Bakari, “Introduction” 4 in Givanni). Umrah Bakari thus cites Ousmane Sembène’s *Borom\_Sarret* (1963) as exemplary of this for “its approach to the representation of African life and society, one that was distinct from the hitherto established empire, colonial and ethnographic films popularised by Hollywood and the cinemas of Britain and France” (3). Given the great abundance of French “educational” colonial films in which France as empire is shown to be superior to Africans culturally in contrast to its African subjects who are portrayed as uneducated, savage, beings, African filmmakers faced a momentous task in setting out to counter images of Africans which were so vastly disseminated. Hollywood was also a major contributor to this image though popular films such as *Tarzan the Ape Man*, where the initial scorn for the white uncivilized “ape man” living in the jungle among his ape friends is redirected to the dangerous “tribe” of (Black) pygmies. Francophone African cinema had to forge its own tools and find its own voice. As Françoise Pfaff notes: “In order to challenge hegemonic Western iconography” that European and American cinemas projected on their continents as well as in Africa from the period of colonization to the present<sup>4</sup> and “assert their African identity, committed Black directors set out to emphasize Africa’s cultural wealth and diversity – historical, political, economic, social, ethnic, cultural, ideological, and geographical” (Pfaff 2).

From its beginning stages, then, African cinema was a form of cultural “liberation” from colonial oppression, and its filmmakers engaged in the collective project of re-imagining and re-imagining African identity and experiences of history from pre-colonial times through the decades following independence.<sup>5</sup> Further, as Bakari notes,

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<sup>4</sup> See also Gugler; Barlet; and Ukadike *Black African Cinema*.

<sup>5</sup> Teshome Gabriel’s term for the emergence of this cinema in Africa and other former colonies, notably throughout Latin America, is “Third Cinema.” See Gabriel.

[t]he production of the first films which [...] established [African] cinema coincided almost precisely with that epoch when African nation-states were born, and sought to establish themselves within the arena of global politics. The founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 marks this period. The organization's member states incorporated the entire continent, but the agenda was arguably set by the events in sub-Saharan Africa where, with the exception of Algeria in North Africa, the most volatile and sustained anti-colonial struggles were enacted (Bakari, "Introduction" 3 in Givanni).

This is reflected in documents produced by African filmmakers who came together at Congresses in order to discuss and define African cinema and address the problems the industry faced. Notably, the "Algiers Charter on African Cinema" (1975) and the "Niamey Manifesto" (1982) each attests to the fact that the political engagement of African filmmakers parallels that of their literary counterparts (Diawara, *African Cinema* 42-5). Particularly, literature established themes and tropes that the continent's cinema would take up and develop, albeit with its own aesthetic and stylistic approaches. According to Ukadike:

Black African cinema emerged with the independent movements to liberate African states [...]. In their protest literature African writers were already launching their own attacks on colonialism. With the emergence of African cinema, a quasi-conubial rapport was established between the cinema and the literature of protest. A mutual understanding of the cultural situation urged independent African cinema toward a protest designed to inspire political awareness in the African public, a protest directed not only toward the

condemnation of imperialism as the cause of Africa's predicament but also toward the contradictions of independent, postcolonial Africa (*BAC* 60).

Whereas African cinema thrived during the first two decades following independence, very few films were released in the 1980s. Lacking government funding or support for filmmaking in their respective countries, individual filmmakers had to turn to France as well as other European countries to co-produce their films; and this is still the case, with the exception of some coproductions with other African nations in the late 90s (Diawara, *African Cinema* 55, 81; Cham, "Globalizing"). As Lorenz and Pausch note, because of the lack of production resources for filmmakers, making a film on the African continent can take anywhere from three to ten years.<sup>6</sup> In this respect, one could argue that *Hyènes* (released in 1992) was in many ways a film of the 80s – though constantly updated and reflective of the early nineties – as indeed scholars' research has shown that Mambety developed his narrative while fighting to get funding to produce the film<sup>7</sup>. There is thus a suggestive parallel between such silencing of African filmmakers and the success of an American s blockbuster, *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, released in 1980. One of the most notable images it projects is that of a stupefied African bushman looking up at an airplane and being conked on the head by a Coke bottle that subsequently falls out of the sky, a scene intended as highly comical. This film not only highlights consumerism and modernity (the prominence of the coke bottle and the airplane in the narrative) as emergent cinematic tropes evoking the dominance of American cinema (Hollywood), but also points to the great rift between Western consumerism and its very different picture in Africa. An additional effect of severe economic hardship in the 80s was that cinematic production of the decade

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<sup>6</sup> See Humbolt in Lorenz and Pausch.

<sup>7</sup> I refer here to Annie Wynchank's study, which I discuss in Chapter II, section 2 of this dissertation.

neither paralleled the surge in novels, nor the increased focus on violence in novels written during the 1980s, 90s and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The focal African cinematic work of the 1980s was Malian director, Souleymane Cissé's *Yeelen (Brightness)* (1987), which Diawara classifies as a "return to the source" narrative, meaning that, instead of making a film with a clear political agenda, the director created a narrative that looks closely at traditional culture, but not without a critical gaze.

The political engagement that stands out in the African Francophone novel and film as social texts reflects a complex, albeit pointed, set of concerns about the continent's collective experiences of contemporary globalization. One of the major methodological positions of this dissertation is the crossed reading of these two media. While other forms of representation, such as performance or visual arts, have the potential to stimulate in-depth critical analysis of the workings of globalization, music or painting as text do not offer developed narratives as complicated as the narrative texture of the novel and film. The sub-Saharan African novel and film are indeed cultural products that have documented centuries of interaction between Africa and the West. They do so by means of witnessing and imagining, or imaging-in, African experiences which have been otherwise excluded from accounts of history. Simon Njami underlines this singular aspect of African literature: "In African culture of the twentieth century, literature [...] is not simple narration; it is a form of witnessing" (Njami in Jules-Rosette, *Black Paris* ix). The act of witnessing in the novelistic form allows a writer to intervene in the critical discourses of politics or economics that claim legitimacy for their purportedly "scientific" approaches and which, consequently, inform widely accepted theories about African history

which do not reflect the everyday experiences of life on the continent.<sup>8</sup> Françoise Lionnet asserts this position with the claim that “[...] using [...] novels to understand cultural configurations studied by social scientists is grounded in [the] belief that literature allows us to enter into the subjective processes of writers and their characters and thus to understand better the unique perspectives of subjects who are agents of transformation [...] in their own narratives—as opposed to being the objects of knowledge, as in the discourse of social science” (Lionnet 8).

Karone is one writer who believes that the role of art is to question dominant narratives: “Artists have the formidable hope of being able to show something. As soon as artists have shown something, they have, between parentheses, resolved a part of the problem, the question has already been posed. One has advanced the beginning of a response [... Incidentally, what] I am trying to express is precisely that a novel is a way of posing questions, not necessarily of answering them, but at least posing them.”<sup>9</sup> Karone’s words implicitly evoke the political stance of the novelist who, through his or her narrative, has the capacity to offer alternative perspectives to those which present Africa as riddled with problems. Achille Mbembe is one scholar who argues fervently that the overwhelming Western dominance on scholarship about Africa has created a discourse of African insolvability. Mbembe faults Western scholars for not understanding African economics and politics and, instead, he argues, they portray the African continent in their supposed scientific works as a place whose peoples engage in senseless wars and who are so deeply troubled by poverty and corruption that there is little hope of any change. The novel has emerged as one form of politically engaged resistance to this discourse of insolvability. Likewise, for the African filmmaker, “art is political”.<sup>10</sup> The political role that film

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<sup>8</sup> Achille Mbembe is one scholar who points directly to the dearth of scholarship on Africa in these two fields of study. See *On the Postcolony* 6.

<sup>9</sup> Excerpt from Jules-Rosette’s interview with Yodi Karone in 1991. See *Black Paris* 187.

<sup>10</sup> Senegalese filmmaker, Moussa Sene Absa, is quoted here.

plays in bringing Africans to voice in order to contest their exclusion from any positive experiences of globalization is equally observable in a statement that Sissako made in the context of making his film, *La Vie sur terre*: “More important than the message itself is the act of wanting to communicate” (Dembrow). Sissako’s words point to the importance of voice in contrast to the silencing of African groups and communities through globalization.

Stylistically, the African Francophone novel and film each have their own modes of representation. One major difference between the cinema and literature is that a film can reach many more viewers than the novel can reach readers, even in West Africa where cinema houses are few and films are expensive to make as well as to view. In addition, whereas both rely on an attentive reader/viewer, the former must image-in every visual detail and imagine the sounds in the novel, gleaning any such description that the writer provides. On the contrary, film provides its audience with visual and audio frames and tracks, although they are presented briefly. These distinctions are particularly noteworthy when dealing with themes such as violence—whether sexual or physical—and the portrayal of the body. Since African filmmakers have dedicated themselves to projecting images of Africans other than those of the violent, uneducated savages that European and Hollywood cinemas widely promote, it is rare to see a sequence of frames depicting violent acts or gruesome details of death and dying. Instead, Mambety, for instance, uses myth and symbolism to show the group of “hyenas” killing Dramane; Sissako uses the visual shots of the horizon and a metaphorical trail of ants in his flashback scene to the desert. Further, film relies as heavily on the visual text of symbolic iconography and horizontality / verticality as it does on its *soundscape* – not simply the sound effects and dialogue, but, as Robynn J. Stilwell has argued about cinema, the overlapping of speech, sound effects, music and

dialogue.<sup>11</sup> African filmmakers rely on the interplay of these cinematic elements to reflect emotion, pace or even irony. These examples are in striking contrast to the sharp detail of beatings, rapes and killings in Karone's novel or the ironic tone of the narrator in Mongo Beti's novels.

There are also differences within each genre: For instance, Sissako opts for a realist approach in his film *Bamako* with a cast of predominantly non-actors who simulate a largely unscripted simulation of an international court trial. Whereas his film relies heavily upon the discursive and visual modes enhanced by elements of the soundscape that seem to capture the trial in a slow-paced real time, Mambety's *Touki Bouki* is a fast-paced fictional narrative that employs the voice-over technique to convey interiority, and intersperses dreamlike and fantastical frames with "real" narrative events. Similarly, in addition to the commonalities that bind each of the works in my corpus, there is a rich diversity of writing styles and narrative structures in the novels.

This is an interdisciplinary dissertation at the intersection of Africanist studies, postcolonial theory, globalization studies, cultural theory, human rights theory, and film theory addressing issues of material accumulation, consumerism, commodities circulation and the general question of *habitus* and cultural identity. The fictional corpus is the principal corpus under examination; I find certain specific theoretical tools essential to understanding and examining their representations of globalization and consumerism.

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<sup>11</sup> In "Moving Lips: Cinema as Ventriloquism" (1980) Rick Altman argues that sound is as important as the visual in cinema. Robynn J. Stilwell asserts that the "soundscape," rather than "soundtrack" is a more comprehensive term to talk about sound in film.

In order to define globalization, I rely upon commonly accepted economic and political theories. I do not attempt to engage in a theoretical discussion of those theories; rather, I look to notions such as Immanuel Wallerstein's "world systems theory" to point to the unique features and workings of globalization as we know it today, particularly as a capitalist system. In line with Wallerstein's theory, globalization studies show that during the post-World War II era, theories and conceptions about the globe shifted from the purely political to an integration of the political and the economic. Subsequently, this led numerous scholars across the disciplines to observe that economic power is inscribed with cultural values (and thus promotes cultural values); Scholars such as David Leiwei Li argue that this is destabilizing and deeply destructive for cultures, as the dominance of the USA promotes a uniform culture. Crucial to my understanding of the workings of globalization in Africa – and the resistances and critiques it elicits – is Achille Mbembe's *On the Postcolony* (2001), where he posits the West as the active creator of the destructive global entanglement in which Africans are caught economically, politically, and socially.

Postcolonial theory points to an historic trajectory of the hegemonic economic, political and cultural power of the former colonizer, France, over its former African colonies. Exemplary of this is the novelists' and filmmakers' referential language – whether Mongo Beti's narrator's overt recollection of the fact that, "les Français [...] ont pourtant le bras long ici" or intertextual allusions (whether explicit or implicit) to literary and cinematic works formerly produced by Africans in response to colonization such as this author's reinscription of the colonial "sixa" into the global narrative in his last two novels, or Sissako's non-diegetic voice-over of Aimé Césaire's "Cahier du retour au pays natal" in *La Vie sur terre* (Beti, *Branle-bas* 7). Additionally, the very act of writing or filming primarily in the former colonizer's language is representative

of the literary and cinematic histories of Francophone Africa and the discourses and styles they have produced.

“Consumerism” in this dissertation refers to a phenomenon which originates, flourishes, and expands in the U.S. and Europe, which Jean Baudrillard theorizes in *La société de consommation: ses mythes, ses structures* (1970). His claim that societies are bound together by consumption is essential to my interpretation of the overwhelming prevalence of consumer objects in the fictional works I examine. Baudrillard develops his argument about consumer society to establish a linkage between the right to consume—equivalent in his view to the right to be happy (“le droit au Bonheur”)—and democracy. This is but one definition of democracy among many in political theory, which, as Baudrillard argues, the Western world exports alongside the values of free market and is most recently and overtly recognizable in the United States’ continuous occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan. In line with Baudrillard’s work on the “consumer society,” Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of “habitus” also informs my analysis. He defines *habitus* as a totality of behavior, reading consumerism as a process by which an individual internalizes social and bodily comportment through his or her interaction with consumer products. My work deciphers the latter as textual markers which function as cultural signs of Western dominance in the narratives. Additionally, in consonance with the concept of a Western consumerism, Roland Barthes claims in *Mythologies* (1957) that material objects produce cultural *connotations*, and his semiological approach to systems of meaning in *Système de la mode* (1967) also informs my analyses of consumer products which are just as integral to the social systems as they are to the economic system of globalization. The concepts of consumer society, *habitus* and objects inscribed with cultural connotations, together, are illustrative of Western consumerism that imposes itself on the African continent through globalization today

and which has roots in European imperialism and colonialism. Moreover, Baudrillard's pessimistic view concerning the far-reaching effects of mass production on society (as compared to Marx's optimism concerning social relations with and production and consumption) draws out the problems linked today to the workings of globalization: As a system, it maintains the inevitability of inequality through inclusion and exclusion, and the objectification and abjection of the body; in its most limiting forms, frequently aggravates social, particularly ethnic, interactions bringing them to extreme levels of violence.

Mahmood Mamdani and Amy Chua are two scholars who argue that a system of economic inequality—whether within the nation or on a global scale—has been shown in many cases throughout the world to lead to “ethnic” othering. This is due to the great divide between the economic success and privilege of minority groups, who are often outsiders who have either migrated to their current country or who have established themselves as a small elite community. Extreme examples of ethnic othering have proven to have such profound effects as the hate campaign led by the Hutu peasant majority in Rwanda which resulted in the genocide of nearly one million Tutsi in 1992, or the fundamentalist Islamist terrorist attacks against Americans in 2001. Chua maintains that in the global system, minority groups, such as the Lebanese in West Africa and Americans throughout the World, are favored by the global market and argues that there is a “relationship between free market democracy and ethnic violence” which has “escaped the view of both globalization's enthusiasts and its critics” (Chua 7). It is my contention that the majority of novelists and filmmakers whose works I examine are evidently responding to and reflecting on this mechanism of inequality.

I examine the shift in artists' gaze toward the effects of globalization in the following five chapters. Chapter one elaborates the interdisciplinary framework that guides my study. I begin with a discussion of opposing views on globalization by critics and proponents, showing that there is agreement on the economic and financial features of the term. Next, pointing to the interconnection of the economic, political, social and cultural aspects of the global system, I discuss the relevance of Baudrillard's concept of the "consumer society" at once in the context of its inception in the 1970s and in the current debates on globalization, and how such a concept relates to the daily experiences of life in African nations from the 1980s through the early 2000s. Globalization studies have also branched out to interface with the field of human rights because of the reconfiguration of the notion of citizenship and discourses of development. Additionally, inscribed in the concept of consumerism is the notion of individual rights; this leads me to consider the interconnection of consumerism, globalization and human rights. The emergence of this global power structure occurs in the wake of colonialism and, thus, has particular effects on developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Accordingly, postcolonial theory has contributed critical responses to globalization studies; and parallel to this process, African intellectuals argue for social and economic rights. Theory continues to be developed in the West; and, with the exception of the minority who are educated in the West, African voices tend to be quieted in these debates. It is urgent to read literature and film from this theoretical framework in order to recognize the pioneering role African writers and filmmakers are fulfilling.

The subsequent chapters in which I analyze the novels and films are organized chronologically. My aim is to highlight the effects of key historical moments of the current globalization – notably the transition from a neocolonial context to the era of globalization in which structural adjustment programs and their effects adversely affect the everyday lives of

communities. Such a perspective frames the organization of my argument and underlines how literary and cinematic representations shift their gaze to reflect an increasingly “globalized” world driven by “consumerism.” Additionally, I have chosen to separate my discussions of novels and films in different chapters with the aim to show that, whereas the two media depict the same themes and tropes in their denunciatory stance toward the ills of globalization, their modes of representation nonetheless differ.

In Chapters two and three, I contextualize Rawiri’s and Diop’s novels and Mambety’s two feature films as exemplary allegorical representations of the growing hegemonic power of the West alongside the diminishing—albeit continuous—economic, political and cultural force of the former colonizer, France, over its former African colonies. These works show consumerism to be the predominant feature of globalization, in other words, the principal driving force behind the uniformization (Americanization or Westernization) of social and cultural values. In Chapter two, consumerism poses a constant threat to Toula and the young women of her generation; in other words, Rawiri’s novel portrays the exclusion of characters and their communities from positions of stability and mobility, a metaphor for Africa’s exclusion from the global economy, moreover relegating their status to that of worthless beings. Set during the decade of the most rapid urbanization, life in the fictional city of Izoua and its popular quarter, Igewa, is characterized by a destabilization of gender and class positioning. Incorporating a tragic love story that ends with the mysterious death and disappearance of Toula’s boyfriend, the novel is an allegory for the violence of the system that is felt daily. Finally, this novel, alongside Pape Pathé Diop’s *La Poubelle* (1984), is exemplary of a trend in the depiction of “globalized” urban spaces as contradictory sites with multiple peripheries.

The third chapter focuses on Djibril Diop Mambety's meditation on the effects of consumerism in his cinematic oeuvre. In section one I analyze his first feature-length film, *Touki-Bouki* (1973). It is, exceptionally, the earliest cinematic representation of the shift from filmmakers' disdain for the new bourgeois elite or France's ongoing neocolonial presence in Senegal to a warning about the rise of America's global hegemony and its looming presence in newly independent African nations. Consumerism shows itself throughout the *soundscape* as a product of the West – led by the USA – to which only marginalized characters in the film are drawn. Section two examines his second feature, *Hyènes* (1992). Dayna Oscherwitz claims that “materialism is the driving force of both colonialism and globalization” (234). Considering this to be so in the case of globalization, I further examine that which is inscribed in consumerism (individualism, democratic notions, such as justice) and I question the notions of “global” and “universal” in the context of human rights. Is Mambety's meditation on justice inseparable then from his reflection on consumerism? Even in terms of characterization, one may consider that Draman is a shop owner, an allegorical representation of the African market, and Ramatou is richer than the World Bank. How does one situate her revenge narrative in this context? And, considering the impetus for her revenge – her original banishment from Colobane – what does Mambety accomplish in the film? Chapters two and three thus establish the recurring subthemes of prostitution (a metaphor for global consumerism) and abandonment, in addition to violence which eventually point to the farthest-reaching effects of such dominance, symbolized by the disappearance of bodies, a trope that runs throughout the entire corpus.

In Chapter four, Yodi Karone's novel, *Les Beaux gosses* and Mongo Beti's last two novels, *Trop de soleil tue l'amour* and its sequel, *Branle-bas en noir et blanc*, evidence a surge in direct violence to the body, evoking its extreme sexualization, racialization and ethnicization

integral to an already established globalized “present.” Each of these novels emphasizes the historical context of the countries in which they are set: Karone’s work recalls the recent glorious past of Ivory Coast while making strong allusions to the political and ethnic strife of the mid- to late 1980s, and foreshadowing that which persists presently under the shadows of economic globalization. Mongo Beti paints the portrait of slavery and colonization and their ugliness; and each author foregrounds the context in which their narrators and characters question the present “chaos” of globalization’s effects on Africans. Whereas in Chapters two and three consumerism emerges as a major feature of globalization, and Rawiri, Diop and Mambety’s works introduce the themes and tropes that authors use in response to globalization, in Chapter four Karone and Beti’s novels further develop and expand upon the same themes, at once showing how globalization escalates throughout the 80s and 90s and becomes a kind of all-out form of mayhem. Both authors present globalization as proceeding from colonial and neocolonial histories. Karone’s novel allegorizes Ivory Coast’s transition from a tight neocolonial relationship with France to a desperate grab for a piece of the global pie. Symbolically set in Abidjan, this narrative shows that the country’s economic crisis fuels a political standoff, which in turn incites a discourse of ethnic othering. Those who “belonged” to the nation before the global turn of events are now outsiders, abject objects for consumption or disposal. Mongo Beti allegorizes the rape and pillaging of Africa through the theme of prostitution; and the silencing of Africans and its resultant fatal vulnerability is evoked through strong images of the racialized body and, finally, the disappearance of a journalist, Zamakwé.

Chapter five examines Sissako’s two most recent feature-length films as manifestations of resistance to globalization and its ills. Sissako associates language and voice metonymically to the body. As acts of witnessing and telling, the narratives enact resistance to its systemic

oppression with the enunciation of a Césarian “cri” and striking images that present an “other” globalization.

Through my analyses in this dissertation, I aim to show that through their works these novelists and filmmakers formulate a language of resistance to the current predicaments that economic globalization poses for Africans. I argue that by bringing to voice African experiences of the far-reaching effects of globalization, this corpus contributes to that which Édouard Glissant conceptualizes as the “tout-monde.” In sharp contrast to globalization and its push for uniformity backed by capitalist “lois du profit,” Glissant’s concept of the “tout-monde” in of itself produces a resistant discourse to globalization. His project develops his own theory of Relation to arrive at a poetics of being *of the world*, or *worldness*: the imagining of a world in which all peoples (humanities) of the *terre-monde* put into language (speaking, writing) their experiences and their being, so as to be heard by other peoples. Rather than accepting the domination of global hierarchies, Glissant proposes imagining the *real*, through a process that he calls *creolization*: cultures are constantly changing with the influence of other cultures’ languages, ways of being, without losing themselves to any dominant uniform culture.

Finally, this study might expand into future projects to include fictional works from other postcolonial spaces albeit within limits of comparison between regions that have distinct past and present situations. Another direction that future study might take is to look at an emerging group of artistic works from Africa and beyond, suggesting that China’s more recent embrace of capitalistic ventures alongside its increasing noticeable presence on the African continent (as well as elsewhere) have already and will undoubtedly continue to influence further responses to globalization. The insipidness of capitalist consumerism and its devastating force as an effect of globalization is thus to be observed in the coming decades not only in the African context, but

also in other enclaves of the globe—whether in developing countries or in the most highly developed ones, such as the USA and China.

## Chapter One

### Interconnections: Globalization, Consumerism and Human Rights in Sub-Saharan Francophone Africa

“[...] la globalisation ne concerne pas que les seuls domaines économique et financier, elle entraîne aussi l’emprise culturelle des pôles dominants sur les esprits, la manière d’être, les goûts, les façons de vivre et d’être des populations du monde entier. Les modèles politique, économique, social et culturel de l’Amérique-Occident, deviennent insensiblement les normes dans lesquelles a tendance à se mouler tout le reste du monde” (Mbow 25).

“[...] la situation économique des pays [de l’Afrique occidentale] s’est détériorée [...] tout au long de la décennie 1980, marquée par la crise de la dette du tiers-monde et le lancement des programmes d’ajustement structurel [...] Le chômage des jeunes diplômés, la suppression de milliers d’emplois dans la fonction publique et la privatisation de la plupart des entreprises nationales ont progressivement créé une masse de population aux abois” (Traoré 68).

“La mondialisation déstabilise, déshumanise! La mondialisation est un monde ouvert aux Blancs, mais il n’est pas ouvert aux Noirs” (Aminata Traoré, witness, *Bamako*).

The shift toward a critical gaze on the negative effects of globalization in African Francophone literary and cinematic works parallels recent theoretical discussions among Africanist thinkers.

The three citations that open this chapter are exemplary of this confluence and reveal the features of globalization that are most relevant to the continent’s experiences of it. Firstly, at the International Book Fair in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in 2004, writers and intellectuals

convened a forum discussion—on the margins of the Summit of “la Francophonie”<sup>12</sup>—at which they collectively declared that globalization is not just financial and political but also, inevitably, cultural. There is this necessary link between the financial and political and the cultural, they maintain, because economic dominance is inseparable from cultural uniformization. The reasoning behind this is that global economic dominance is inextricably connected to political, cultural and social values which manifest themselves as “universal norms;” and the most powerful economic leaders in globalization are those who make up the West: the United States and European powers, such as France. Thus the global market drives and disseminates a uniformity of culture that proceeds from Western thought and traditions. In the political sphere, it prescribes democracy; the economic system is one of consumer-driven capitalism, and the workings of both together propel ways of thinking the world and ways of being that affect social life profoundly. Such uniformity also strips and denies people of their own cultural affinities with its assimilationist underpinnings. In this view, espoused by the 2004 Book Fair participants, globalization pervades all aspects of daily life in sub-Saharan Africa. Africanist scholarship strives to reveal how, in the political and economic contexts, globalization creates an exclusionary system by constantly sustaining inequality. The majority of Africans are excluded from participation, and this directly affects communities within the African nation-state. Globally, such exclusion raises questions of sovereignty, and locally, of citizenship. The latter can be attributed to globalization’s exacerbation of divisiveness and conflict between ethnic groups. At worst, such exclusion devalues and abjectifies human beings, and further impacts societies, notably, by sexualizing women through the process of their commodification. Finally,

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<sup>12</sup>This discussion was held “en marge du 10e Sommet de la Francophonie”. The implicit message is that Francophonie is an aspect of cultural globalization; however, this particular discussion is beyond the scope of this dissertation. See Bridel et. al. 6.

the exclusionary system of globalization creates serious barriers regarding race and the sustained disadvantage of Black Africa. For many African scholars and artists, alongside the economic and financial aspects that incontestably drive the workings of globalization, the global system is predicated on the interconnection of the cultural, political, economic and social spheres dominated by Western norms—particularly those of the USA. On that basis, I want to theorize that globalization’s farthest reaching effects manifest themselves as a result of the systemic tendency to racialize, ethnicize and sexualize entire groups of human beings.

In order to arrive at the formulation of my theory, I examine the historical development of the ways in which the social sciences generated the notion of the “globe” and, subsequently, of “globalization”. Immanuel Wallerstein’s “world systems” theory as well as Martin Albrow’s notion of “the global age” are most useful to observe the unique conceptualization of political, economic (Wallerstein) and social (Albrow) changes that set the current globalization apart from earlier periods. Their works identify the post-World War II period through the 1980s as the definitive moment when the world became “interconnected”. Each of these thinkers expresses, however, an unambiguous skepticism concerning such interconnectedness, and by emphasizing the reliance of such a system on economic (and political) inequality, they refuse the broad claim made by economists that globalization inevitably produces positive effects on societies. In order to further probe this critique, I turn to radical works that scrutinize the ways in which economic and political dominance in the global system takes on a life of its own as it produces cultural models, such as the “consumer society”. Specifically in his work, *La société de la consommation: ses mythes, ses structures* (1970), Baudrillard elaborates the ways in which mass consumerism led American society (and French society was quick to follow this lead) to develop certain images of itself based on the myth of equality, for instance as a model democracy, in the

1960s. Further, he asserts that the image that the consumer society relies upon is born of violence, as it is modeled after the dramatic acts of social revolt against the elite. In a more recent radical study, *World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability* (2004), Amy Chua maintains that the inequality of globalization serves as an impetus for violence. Her view that minority groups in power across the globe, and the constructed images of their superiority vis-à-vis majority groups' so-called inferiority, often inevitably incite hatred and violence. Further, she cites, as Mahmood Mamdani does in his critical response to the Rwanda genocide in *When Victims Become Killers* (2002), the legacy of European colonialism and the power structures it installed or manipulated as exemplary of the most devastating effects of economic inequality. I contrast the ideas of these radical thinkers and Africanist scholars' (Achille Mbembe, Aminata Dramane Traoré and Manthia Diawara) critiques of globalization as a dominant, homogenizing force with those who promote positivist views of globalization. The radical critiques of globalization most closely inform my analyses of the novels and films I examine. I end with Édouard Glissant's notion of the *tout-monde* as a model for resistance that, in my view, is observable in the fictional works I analyze.

### What Is Globalization?

“Globalization,” its workings and its effects have captured the scrutiny of scholars across the disciplines for more than half a century. Scholarship in the social sciences (economics, political science, political economy, sociology, anthropology) and the humanities has generated broad-reaching theories of globalization that reveal its complexity as a multifaceted “phenomenon” whose features and effects are vigorously debated. An initial problem is that of ascertaining the distinguishing characteristics of the present globalization in opposition to claims

that it has always existed in the form of trade and human communications around the world. Scholars see globalization as resulting from an amalgamate of various historical moments including the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and European expansion (Mbembe, Kemedjio, Albrow), the emergence of the “capitalist world economy” in Europe in the sixteenth century (Wallerstein), the Modern Project (including the spread of Enlightenment ideals and European colonial expansion in the nineteenth century) (Albrow), the formation of the nation-state, and the advances of transportation and communication technologies in the twentieth and twenty-first (Harvey, Appadurai, Bauman). Such a view has led to various theories of globalization, particularly since the 1990s, that its features include vastly diverse political and social phenomena to include anything from economic liberalism, innovative communication and transportation technologies, the facilitation of increasingly rapid “flows” of people, goods, and ideas (Appadurai, Harvey), the imminent demise of the nation-state (Appadurai, Albrow, Bauman), the production and wide dissemination of ‘world literature (Annesely, Casanova, Miller (1998), Moses), environmental issues<sup>13</sup>, or even terrorism (Priebe). As sociologist Martin Albrow observes: “The appeal to globalization as the explanation of almost any contemporary change in any sector of life pervades academic accounts and journalistic commentary” (Albrow 85). Globalization is thus a problematic term to describe the economic, social, political, cultural and environmental issues pertaining to the globe in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. I agree with those scholars who maintain that the current *age of globalization*<sup>14</sup> is unique. Since my dissertation examines responses to it in literature and cinema from postcolonial Africa where the most predominant effects are shown to be on economic, social and political life, my focus is

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<sup>13</sup> There is an ironic reference to the Western-led organizations, such as the IMF, prioritizing environmental issues as “truly global problems” in Sissako’s *Bamako*.

<sup>14</sup> Albrow’s term, the “age of globalization” is, in my view most appropriate

based on the work of those who maintain that globalization first and foremost proceeds from the restructuring of world politics and the shift to an economic model of center and periphery, such as Immanuel Wallerstein explicates in his seminal work: *The Politics of World-Economy: The States, the Movements and the Civilization* (1984). This also takes into account views, such as Albrow's, that the economic and political is interconnected with social and cultural phenomena. What, then, are the specific features of globalization and how do its workings manifest themselves in the African context?

To begin to answer this question and heed the concerns expressed by African artists and intellectuals that I alluded to previously, it is useful to consider that the term globalization "has arisen particularly in various arguments about postcolonial imperialism" (Scholte 45). Globalization theorist Jan Aart Scholte observes that by the mid- to late 1980s the term "globalization" had emerged as a redundancy to refer to "international relations," "liberalization," "universalization," or "westernization. [...] Often in these cases globalization is [...] associated with a process of homogenization, as all the world becomes western, modern and, more particularly, American" (45). Scholte is an outspoken critic of globalization as *a process of homogenization* toward Western and, particularly, American ways, and he points to the same inextricable interconnection between economic globalization, dominant practices of Western-driven consumerism and the imposition of a Western value system of morals and ideals that African artists and scholars find deplorable. In other words, his critique of globalization is that it has imperialist tendencies: it is a force that homogenizes everything in a Western mode, and the economic priorities of the West bring with them Western morals. As a leading scholar of globalization in the field of political science, Scholte's work on globalization reveals a consistent critique of globalization, indeed a critique that many across the disciplines share. I find his work

of particular interest because he is among very few scholars outside of the humanities who has not only examined globalization's political impacts, but also its capitalist and consumerist features as well as the social and cultural effects it produces specifically in the postcolonial context.<sup>15</sup> So how did this critique of globalization as a certain form of postcolonial imperialism come to be?

The origins of the term globalization are found in political and economic theories, and subsequently, in the field of political economy. Although the term globalization first appeared in its full form in the 1970s, references to “the globe” from the 1930s to the 1960s indicated changes in political formations that resulted from the shifts in hegemonic power alliances during the periods of the two World Wars.<sup>16</sup> Following World War II, the conception of the globe as an interdependent political unit was formalized through the formation of the League of Nations—the United Nations today. Social scientists also note “signs of the new globality” that fortified political alliances on a world-wide scale. For instance, according to Martin Albrow, the political conception of the interconnected globe is evidenced in events such as the dropping of the atomic bomb in 1945. Indeed, he recalls that this “instanc[e] of globalization” led Karl Jaspers to claim in 1955 that it “implicated the globe as a whole” (3). Albrow echoes economists, political scientists and historians with his claim that a transition to what he terms “the global age” occurred during the period between 1945 and 1989 (96). Albrow cites further “instances of globalization,” including the Cold War, the notions of First, Second and Third Worlds, [...] and the triumph of the United States in the face of Soviet collapse in 1991 as illustrative of the evolution of this concept of the globe as comprising of political as well as economic units (3).

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<sup>15</sup> Although Scholte's claims are useful to this discussion, his work diverges from the focus of this dissertation with its emphasis on space and territory, and he argues that “globalization” is better termed “deterritorialization”.

<sup>16</sup> Reiser and Davies coined the terms “globalize” and “globalism” in a treatise in 1944. See Scholte 43. For references to “the globe” leading up to and during WWI, see Pemberton 154.

Albrow's concept of the *transition* to a *global age* recalls political and economic theories that became widely accepted in the early 1980s. Notably, in his groundbreaking research on the "interstate system" and the "integration" of world economies, Immanuel Wallerstein argues that political as well as economic changes that occurred from the post-World War II era through the 1980s reflect an historic reconfiguration and new conception of "the globe".<sup>17</sup> This is the basis of his "world systems" theory, which has informed the basic structure and workings of globalization, a system in which the West—the United States and Europe (as well as Japan to some extent)—came to wield and maintain economic control over other sovereign powers without formally declaring their power as an official governing body through treaties or state-sponsored policies as Europe had done during its imperial rule. For instance, treaties proved France to be the official political and economic authority over its colonies in West Africa; in its capacity of direct ruler, the state of France legitimized its "civilizing mission;" and forced labor was a state sponsored policy.

The first and most dominant characteristic of the "world systems" theory is the force with which capitalism drives and sustains the system. According to Wallerstein, the capitalist economy is:

[...] an "historical system [that] came into existence [...] in Europe in the sixteenth century based on the drive to accumulate capital, the political conditioning of price levels (of capital, commodities and labor), and the steady polarization of classes and regions (core/periphery) over time. This system has developed and expanded to englobe the whole earth in the subsequent centuries

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<sup>17</sup> Other political scientists and economists argue along similar lines with regard to the "integration" of world economies during this time period. See, for instance, Pemberton 154; Gilpin 15; and Stiglitz *Discontents*.

[...] Its political superstructure is the interstate system composed of 'states,' some sovereign, some colonial. The zones under the jurisdiction of these states in this interstate system have never been economically autonomous, since they have always been integrated in a larger division of labor, that of the world-economy (29, 38, 80).

The capitalist system that Wallerstein describes forms the base structure of the current globalization. Secondly, the system, Wallerstein contends, contributes to "the creation of all the major institutions of the modern world," including class, ethnic and national groups, households, as well as the 'states' that make up the interstate system. "Furthermore, these various institutions, in fact, create each other. Classes, ethnic/national groups, and households are defined by the state, through the state, in relation to the state, and in turn create the state, shape the state, and transform the state" (29).

Finally, according to the *world systems theory*, global economic and political power is maintained through hegemony, which means that the few most powerful political and economic powers govern and manipulate the market while vying for power against the other few most powerful. In addition, "[h]egemonic powers during the period of their hegemony [tend] to be advocates of global 'liberalism'. They [come] forward as defenders of the principle of the free flow of the factors of production (goods, capital, and labor) throughout the world economy" (41). Whereas during the period of colonial rule—which in the case of France and Britain was at its height during the nineteenth century—hegemony was maintained through empire, and the French and British vied against each other for more power; following the collapse of empires and the

emergence of numerous new states (former colonies), the reshaping of the system meant that nation-states became the political units that comprised the interstate system. In this new configuration, the United States affirmed its obvious hegemonic power in 1945 (41, 81).

Whereas hegemony does not indicate absolute power (it indicates more power among the most powerful), the period of the United States' hegemonic position resulted in "a major restructuring of the interstate system" and "an enormous economic reshuffle" (74). For instance, the capitalist system allowed the USA (as hegemony) to control "the *partially* free flow of the factors of production [by means of] *selective* interference of the political machinery in the 'market'" (43). It did so because of its role as hegemonic power, which in Wallerstein's definition means the following:

[...] one power can largely impose its rules and its wishes (at the very least by effective veto power in the economic, political, military, diplomatic, and even cultural arenas). The material base of such [unbalanced] power lies in the ability of enterprises domiciled in that power to operate more efficiently in all three major economic arenas – agro-industrial production, commerce, and finance. The edge in efficiency of which we are speaking is one so great that these enterprises can not only outbid enterprises domiciled in other great powers in the world market in general, but quite specifically in very many instances within the home markets of the rival powers themselves (38-9).

For instance, in response to the sharp decline in global profits in the 1960s (due in part to the 1967 oil crisis), part of the economic restructuring occurred through the United States' creation of the international financial institution, Bretton Woods, and other international cooperation

models (76). Aimed to stimulate the flow of capital following decolonization in Africa and Asia, this allowed the US to stabilize the global economy, predominantly to its own advantage (but also to the advantage of other more powerful states), without direct political or economic interaction with the former European colonies. The programs administered through Bretton Woods and cooperation worked together—from their beginnings—with transnational corporations and Western governments to redesign the flow of capital, set currency values, and regulate labor for their economic profit. To maintain its capitalist dominance globally, the US adapted its domestic policies as well; for instance, it ensured its own corporations' success at the expense of minority workers (Wallerstein cites the examples of Blacks and Hispanics), whose labor was exchanged for the cheaper labor force found in poorer countries (76). These activities which aided the US to maintain its dominant economic force globally reinforced a framework of inclusion and exclusion between core and periphery countries.

The historical example of the United States' rise to power, first, as hegemony, and subsequently as a contender for the position, is significant with regard to its influential role in the current globalization. In spite of the “steady erosion of the hegemonic position of the United States in the world-economy” by 1980, it maintained the role of a dominant economic, political and military leader in subsequent decades alongside its allies, Western Europe and Japan who, according to Wallerstein, vied for hegemonic power following the US (58, 74).<sup>18</sup> With his account of how the US responded to the global economic crisis of the 1970s, Wallerstein provides an excellent example of how the capitalist system allows the US to continuously maintain a favorable position in the overall system and simultaneously produce negative effects

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<sup>18</sup> According to Wallerstein, the height of US hegemony took place in 1967. It was at this time, according to him, that strong alliances with Western Europe and Japan took hold. As US hegemony eroded, Western Europe and Japan vied for the more powerful hegemonic position. See Wallerstein 58, 42-3.

for its own society and far-reaching consequences for poor countries (peripheral states). It is easy enough, even for a person who is not a political economy expert, to observe that a similar trend to that described by Wallerstein concerning economic stagnation in the 70s is occurring as I write this dissertation. For instance, Wallerstein asserts that, in the face of economic crisis, US “[...] capitalists [...] try to cut costs heavily through reduction of labor costs – by relocating industries from higher-wage to lower-wage countries, by technological advances which will increase the capital-labor ration of various industries, and by direct attack on high wages within the United States through a combination of methods: union-busting, inflation with its wage-lag, reduction of welfare transfer payments, and internal industrial relocation [...]” (78). Indeed, there is a resemblance between this description and events taking place in 2011, for instance, in Wisconsin, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and other states within the US. Additionally, Wallerstein signals “an internal and unending class struggle” within weaker states “which is part and parcel of the single global struggle” (79). In this earlier period, this was exemplified by socialist states and the “Third World”; today, the social uprisings and demonstrations in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and other states in the Middle East are exemplary of such struggles.

Wallerstein’s “world systems” theory explains and breaks down the capitalist structure that drives the workings of the current globalization as well as the United States’ major role in creating and dominating the system. In addition to his noteworthy usage of terms such as *global liberalism* (a term that has become a catch phrase for describing the current world economy for proponents and critics alike) as early as 1984, his work stands out for bringing up issues that have become central in debates about globalization, especially since the 1990s (43, my emphasis). Whether they are among the most enthusiastic promoters or the harshest critics of globalization, scholars across the disciplines agree with Wallerstein’s view: the current capitalist-

driven economic system allows the most powerful states to determine the movement of “capital, commodities, and labor”—how and where they flow and whether they “flow” or not (29). Indeed, these are the major overarching themes that leading U.S. economists ascribe to the workings of globalization, with the triad, “trade, capital flows, and immigration” (Weinstein 1). Trade indicates the movement of commodities via importing and exporting; capital flows refer to the movement of money and setting currency standards according to privatization, trade liberalization, and deregulation policies (Calomiris in Weinstein 36-76); and labor is interchangeable with migration/immigration given that in order for entrepreneurs to produce goods at a price that favors market conditions, immigrants are often imported just as goods are.<sup>19</sup>

Globalization debates stem from these major themes, particularly with regard to the sweeping effects they produce, such as class struggle on a global scale, the ambivalent power of a state over its own nation and the question of the very survival of the nation-state, and—central to the concerns of this dissertation—the human consequences. Finally, the workings of the current globalization as described above point to one of its most important features: consumerism.

How can one understand the workings of the capitalist system in the context of how individuals, communities and nations interact within it and how lives are affected because of it? My aim in recalling Wallerstein’s example (as well as more contemporary situations) of social effects during periods of global economic instability is to show that the interconnections between

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<sup>19</sup> George J. Borjas cites two opposing views held by economists: the first mentioned above and the other, that immigrants are indeed not tradable or importable and thus policies and laws should reflect the difference between people and goods (see Borjas in Weinstein 77-8). Debates about humans, commodities and labor extend as well to the issue of human trafficking, which is a pressing global human rights issue, especially concerning women and children. Human trafficking—whether as part of the sex trade or a form of contemporary slavery, including the forced labor of children—as numerous UNESCO reports and scholarly works show, occurs as a result of global economic inequalities and is deeply integrated in the workings of economic globalization. For studies that at once address these issues generally and focus on their impact in various regions of Africa, see: Aronowitz; Shelley; and Toyin and Afolabi.

the economic and the social and cultural are not as abstract as they may at first appear; indeed, scholarly study across the disciplines—and especially in the humanities—shows that their interconnections are quite clear. Proponents of globalization cite many advantages to social and cultural life, arguing that positive effects are linked directly to the economic system. On the other hand, critics, such as Albrow contend that: “Contemporary capitalism is culture-led rather than government-directed, and to that extent the nation [people], rather than the government, has entered into a direct relation with the economy” (133). Jean Baudrillard made a similar statement with his radical conception of the “consumer society” in 1970.

### Consumerism and the *Consumer Society*

A major feature of globalization is its consumer-driven economy and the culture that at once leads it and is reproduced as a result of it. Baudrillard made the claim that consumerism is the basis for the ways humans relate in capitalist Western societies : “La circulation, l’achat, la vente, l’appropriation de biens et d’objets/signes différenciés constituent aujourd’hui notre langage, notre code, celui par où la société entière *communique* et se parle. Telle est la structure de la consommation, sa *langue* en regard de laquelle les besoins et les jouissances individuels ne sont que des *effets de parole*” (*Société* 112).

Baudrillard’s concept of the “société de consommation” derives from his earlier work, *Le système des objets* (1968). In this work, he developed the argument that humans function primarily vis-à-vis objects: “Il y a aujourd’hui tout autour de nous une espèce d’évidence fantastique de la consommation et de l’abondance, constituée par la multiplication des objets, des services, des biens matériels, et qui constitue une sorte de mutation fondamentale dans l’écologie de l’espèce humaine” (*Société* 17). These consumer objects, in the very excess in which they

exist, he likens to “l’image du *don*, de la prodigalité inépuisable et spectaculaire qui est celle de la *fête*” (19). Baudrillard cites examples of France’s Superprisunic, Great Britain’s sale of great delicacies of the world, and America’s “drugstore” as the evidentiary images of Western consumer society. Baudrillard’s model is the shopping mall, but, more specifically, he is referring to the high-end shopping and leisure center, “le Drugstore Publicis,” on the Boulevard Saint-Germain-des-Prés. The place became renown during the 1960s with its chic boutiques, brasserie, movie theatres and even an actual drug store that remained open until late-night and attracted a young, hip Parisian crowd. Having been the model after which additional “drugstores” were opened during that decade—for instance in West London’s Chelsea as well as at the head of the Champs Élysées in Paris—it is uncannily representative of the insatiability, profusion and panoply that characterize, according to Baudrillard, the “consumer society’s” aspirations of accumulation and its penchant for leisure. What such concepts lead to and the processes through which Baudrillard arrives to such conclusions are in fact crucial to the understanding of consumer-driven globalization.

Baudrillard begins to formulate this notion of an intricate relation between society and consumer objects in *Le système des objets* (1968); his argument stems from the idea that the industrialization of mass-produced objects (in the post-WWII era) “signale les changements de structures sociales liés à cette évolution technique” (*Système* 8-9). He clarifies that the mere existence and possession of objects is not of concern here, affirming, rather, that “l’objet-symbole traditionnel (les outils, les meubles, la maison elle-même)” is full of connotations – thus symbolic – and he stresses its non-arbitrariness. It is *not* a consumed object : “Pour devenir objet de consommation, il faut que l’objet devienne signe, c’est-à-dire extérieur de quelque façon à une relation qu’il ne fait plus que signifier – donc arbitraire et non cohérent à cette relation

concrète, mais prenant sa cohérence, et donc son sens, dans une relation abstraite et systématique à tous les autres objets-signes. C'est alors qu'il se 'personnalise', qu'il entre dans la série, etc. : il est consommé – non jamais dans sa matérialité, mais dans sa différence” (277). From this statement, he asks probing questions about the objects that one consumes and about relations, notably between object and person: He asks, “comment les objets sont vécus, à quels besoins autres que fonctionnels ils répondent, quelles structures mentales s'enchevêtrent avec les structures fonctionnelles et y contredisent, sur quel système intra- ou transculturel, est fondée leur quotidienneté vécue” (9). And he thus reaches the conclusion that instead of uniquely serving functionality or representing an exchange value based upon the theory of production and demand (as Marx argued), objects exist within a system that is relational: they are at once inscribed with meaning in relation to other objects and, moreover, to people and society. For Baudrillard, consumerism is “un mode actif de relation (non seulement aux objets, mais à la collectivité et au monde), un mode d'activité systématique et de réponse globale sur lequel se fonde tout notre système culturelle” (275). With this definition, he stresses that consumerism is not simply about satisfying one's needs, and the accumulation (or possession) of goods is not the object (l'objet) of consumerism. The quantity of goods one acquires, whether they be in excess or need-based “ne suffisent [pas] à définir le concept de consommation: ils n'en sont qu'une condition préalable” (276). This is how he distinguishes “consumerism” today (post WWII) from buying, possessing, enjoying or spending at any previous moment in history. Further, he specifies : “La consommation n'est ni une pratique matérielle, ni une phénoménologie de l'abondance”, elle ne se définit ni par l'aliment qu'on digère, ni par le vêtement dont on se vêt, ni par la voiture dont on se sert, ni par la substance orale et visuelle des images et des messages, mais par l'organisation de tout cela en substance signifiante ; elle est la totalité virtuelle de tous

les objets et messages constitués dès maintenant en un discours plus ou moins cohérent. La consommation, pour autant qu'elle ait un sens, est une activité de manipulation systématique de signes" (ibid.).

Focused on French and American post-World War II societies, his further conceptualization of the "consumer society" in 1968 and 70 provides an uncanny foresight into the emergence of a culture led by America and closely followed particularly by Western European countries, such as France, that thrives on excessive production, accumulation and consumption of industrialized consumer products. His examination of this society leads him to conclude that the consumer appetite is driven and constantly reinitiated cyclically through the cultural values of happiness and democracy which occur in tandem. He develops his notion of consumerism as democracy by tracing the roots of what he calls the "Révolution du Bien-Être" to the "Révolution Bourgeoise ou simplement de toute révolution qui érige en principe l'égalité des hommes, *sans pouvoir (ou sans vouloir) la réaliser au fond*" (*Société* 60). And thus, he points to participation in the consumer society as equal to enjoying democratic rights and principles. However, at the same time, he underlines that the relational aspect of the consumer society creates a myth based on the society's projected (not real) image of itself: "ce qui est consommé, ce ne sont jamais les objets, mais la relation elle-même [...] c'est *l'idée de la relation* qui se consomme dans la série d'objets qui la donne à voir" (*Système* 277). And : "La relation n'est plus vécue : elle s'abstrait et s'abolit dans un objet-signe où elle se consomme" (277). According to Baudrillard, the consumer society is therefore based on *the myth of equality*, and he believes this myth to be inscribed as part of the ideology of a democratic consumer society (and all its individualist values). Further, he reminds us that the political and sociological violence of the industrial Revolution and the revolutions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was carried out as a

means to achieve an ideal social equality in which every citizen would enjoy rights and have responsibilities, and such “democratic principle[s]” are inseparable from the right to “le Bonheur.” In Baudrillard’s view, the same democratic principles that guided violent revolutions are “transferred” to the myth that everyone can participate in the consumption of all goods and products; everyone is equal before objects and to choose which consumer products to consume. But, just as political equality is unobtainable, he maintains, neither is one equal to another in the consumer society. Equality is nothing but the myth/image that society has produced of itself (*Société* 50-9). He takes economic theories to task for their reliance upon numbers, which, he believes, merely perpetuates and reinforces the myth itself. Instead, Baudrillard advocates looking at these numbers that seem to spell abundance from the standpoint of another form of logic. Just as the opponents of globalization argue, Baudrillard critiques economists who link social equality and economic growth and argues: “Bien sûr l’hypothèse d’un progrès continu et régulier vers de plus en plus d’égalité est démentie par certains faits (l’Autre Amérique’: 20% de ‘pauvres’, etc.). Mais ceux-ci signalent une dysfonction provisoire et une maladie infantile. La croissance, en même temps que certains effets inégalitaires, implique une démocratisation d’ensemble et à long terme” (63).

In Baudrillard’s view, individual happiness and democracy (of a community/society) are interconnected. According to Baudrillard, progressively, in the capitalist system, all concrete values, communal values, foundations of the law, mores of society as well as supposed natural or inherent values, are transformed or turned into sources of economic profit and social privilege:

Le principe démocratique est transféré alors d’une égalité réelle, des capacités, des responsabilités, des chances sociales, du bonheur (au sens plein du terme) à une égalité devant l’Objet et autres signes *évidents* de la réussite sociale et du

bonheur. C'est la *démocratie du standing*, la démocratie de la T.V., de la voiture et de la chaîne stéréo, démocratie apparemment concrète, mais tout aussi formelle, qui répond par-delà les contradictions et inégalités sociales, à la démocratie formelle inscrite dans la Constitution. Toutes deux, l'une servant d'alibi à l'autre, se conjuguent en une idéologie démocratique globale, qui masque la démocratie *absente* et l'égalité introuvable (60-1).

Baudrillard insists here on his point that society functions in relation to the image it has created of itself and that such an image is a complete myth. He asserts that unnecessary objects carry with them the falsity of democracy, that the satisfaction one feels, for instance about the possession of a new car every two years, a home in a nice neighborhood, a seasonal update to one's wardrobe, and an annual vacation trip has no real basis. One imagines s/he has achieved a position of social privilege, that s/he is exercising her/his rights freely, that s/he can carry out her/his duties. But, no, Baudrillard contends, it is nothing more than a cover up for an actual absence of rights, privileges, duties and responsibilities. One cannot be equal in a society where equality does not exist; and one does not enjoy rights that do not exist. He insists that the accumulation of non-needs in order to show (to oneself and to the rest of society) that one's needs are being met is absurd. And, in order to further impress this point, Baudrillard suggests that his reader imagine an idea that sounds rather silly at first: air as a commodity. His example leads me to consider air—and not a consumer product I am familiar with—in order to better understand his points: Imagine going to the grocery store, the local shopping mall or Wal-Mart to compare prices of a canister of air. Certainly, one can think of other natural elements that have indeed become covetable consumer products in one way or another (spring water for one), but to

bring his point home, he chooses this example. Natural elements, he reasons, exist and are literally free to everyone. One can be rich or poor; live in a mansion or on the street and breathe air without paying for it. But when air is made into a commodity—as it has in abstract ways—those who can buy it exercise social privilege; and it produces monetary profit for the seller. Here, it is essential to talk about abstraction. The consumer society doesn't consume an object (clean air), but rather turns objects (clean air) into signs (the air over Los Angeles) in abstract relation to other signs (the air over the Yukon)<sup>20</sup> ("BC Cities"). Then, a market opens up for the air in the Yukon; and people go to it, pay for it, enjoy it, and perhaps even buy a t-shirt that says: "I breathed the air of the Yukon." According to Baudrillard's notion of the "democracy of standing", consumer society idealizes the right to choose to breathe the clean air of the Yukon or to inhale for a week in the heart of Los Angeles (to stay with my example). This feeds directly into his view that class divisions occur quite logically, because, in order for the consumer society to exist (those making profit, those in positions of social privilege), there needs to be a majority of people who are not economically stable, who are economically exploitable and exploited and form the lower social classes. Whereas economists might criticize Baudrillard for his lack of training in economics, his aim is not to create an economic theory, but to draw out the social and cultural attributes of the consumer society—in other words, to focus on human interaction with the economic and financial spheres.

But I would like to return to the example of clean air alongside the notion that this consumer society is bound by the idea of democracy, to the very notion of democracy (choice, freedom to possess anything from clean air to appliances) as a system of thought based upon

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<sup>20</sup> The World Health Organization ranked the air over the Yukon to be of the best quality in 2011.

certain values. Indeed, the value system has been formalized and institutionalized by being transformed into rights (and laws in some cases). Baudrillard observes:

On parle beaucoup de droit à la santé, de droit à l'espace, de droit à la beauté, de droit aux vacances, de droit au savoir, de droit à la culture. Et au fur et à mesure que ces droits nouveaux émergent, naissent simultanément les ministères : de la Santé, des Loisirs, -- de la Beauté de l'Air Pur pourquoi pas ? Tout ceci, qui semble traduire un progrès individuel et collectif général, que viendrait sanctionner le droit à l'institution, a un sens ambigu, et on peut en quelque sorte y lire l'inverse : *il n'y a de droit à l'espace qu'à partir du moment où il n'y a plus d'espace pour tout le monde*, et où l'espace et le silence sont le privilège de certains aux dépens des autres. (*Société* 74-5).

Baudrillard is speaking here to the fact that things, commodities and services become rights precisely when they are no longer owned equally by everyone, such as his example of clean air. This is quite radical. In his view the values that social groups placed on health, knowledge, beauty and vacation, for instance, have been recognized as rights; and, subsequently, they are transformed into the rights of the privileged members of a collective body (society).

There is thus, following Baudrillard, equally, a sense of negative rights (not enough to go around) with respect to human rights. The values inscribed in human rights, as well, are in turn made into law—international human rights law. This is of interest in the context of many African novels and films in which characters and narrators point to the contradictions inherent to Western society. For instance, Eddie makes this same observation about the democratic society of

Helvetia in *Branle-bas*. He points to the irony that the very rights and values that rich, democratic countries promote, they deny to other peoples (generally of the South).

Another important insight in Baudrillard's work is that he describes the consumer society as violent. In his view, just as one consumes without reason or ideology, one engages in violence for the same (non) reasons. Radical thinkers such as Baudrillard and Bourdieu are echoed by radical thinkers on violence, such as Amy Chua, who speaks of "the relationship between free market democracy and ethnic violence" which she believes has "escaped the view of both globalization's enthusiasts and its critics" (7). Her book, *World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability*, (2004) addresses this "phenomenon," which, she affirms, is "pervasive outside the West yet [is] rarely acknowledged, indeed often viewed as taboo—that turns free market democracy into an engine of ethnic conflagration [...] These "market-dominated minorities" are "ethnic minorities who, for widely varying reasons, tend under market conditions to dominate economically, often to a startling extent the 'indigenous' majorities around them" (6). She maintains that Americans are the most widely dispersed group of market-dominated minorities: "[...] Americans today are everywhere perceived as the world's market-dominant minority, wielding outrageously disproportionate economic power relative to our size and numbers" (7). Further, she notes a connection between colonialism and globalization:

There are important links between colonialism and the phenomenon of market-dominated minorities. Not only were the colonialists themselves market-dominant minorities, but colonial divide-and-conquer policies favored certain groups over others, exacerbating ethnic wealth imbalances and fomenting group tensions. Indeed in some cases, these policies may have created 'ethnic identities' and

‘ethnic differences’ where they previously did not exist. Today, moreover, most starkly in southern Africa but also in Latin America and elsewhere [sub-Saharan Africa, for instance] many market-dominant minorities are the descendants of former colonizers. Thus, the pervasive existence of market-dominated minorities throughout the developing world is one of colonialism’s most overlooked and most destructive legacies (120-1).

In her section on, Africa and globalization, Chua contends that problems in Africa are part of “a much larger global pattern” [similar to what is] “destabilizing Southeast Asia, Latin America, and Russia [...] In Africa, as in virtually every other region of the non-Western world, market-dominant minorities control virtually all the most valuable and advanced sectors of the modern economy, monopolizing access to wealth and global markets, and producing seething, often unmobilized ethnic resentment and hatred among the indigenous African majorities around them” (121). Her essential point thus is that: “Africa is plagued with the problem of market-dominant minorities. As a result, economic liberalization, free markets, and globalization are aggravating Africa’s extreme ethnic concentrations of wealth, provoking the same dangerous combination of frustration, envy, insecurity, and suppressed anger that can also be seen among the impoverished indigenous majorities of Indonesia, Russia, Guatemala, or Sri Lanka” (121-2).

From Baudrillard to Chua, the system of consumer/capitalist-driven globalization is seen as deeply problematic, instituting mass poverty, a system of cultural dominance which is intricately intertwined with the workings of the world economy, and instigating and exacerbating deep-seated ethnic rivalries and eruptive violence. These are among the issues that critics of globalization’s effects in Africa cite as most relevant to the human experience of millions.

Baudrillard's sharp criticism of the effects of consumerism on society is in line with discourses of resistance to globalization, such as that evoked by Édouard Glissant's notion of the *tout-monde*. Even on the subject of violence, there are parallels between these two thinkers. For instance, Baudrillard contends that the system of inequality inscribed in consumer society instigates and perpetuates violence. Glissant states that there are two types of violence: *You have violence when you have too much. That's one kind. For example, 10% of the world has too much to eat. That makes violence. The good kind is the violence that can stop the whirring, grinding monotony of life. But when violence cannot stop, according to Glissant, it is not the good kind.*<sup>21</sup> With his reference to world hunger, Glissant refers to economic inequality as a direct cause of violence. It is a violence that, as Baudrillard also affirms, stems from the poor masses' reactions to their deeply subordinate positioning in relation to a dominant economic (and political) minority. There are striking similarities between this view and theories about "ethnic" othering that Chua describes.

Other themes that crossover with the issue of deep economic inequality and cultural dominance, which are more widely acknowledged and debated in discussions about globalization, include the notion of "integrat[ed] national economies" (Gilpin 15).<sup>22</sup> Whereas advocates maintain that globalization is an economic system that "integrat[es] national economies everywhere into a global economy of expanding trade and financial flows" and laud it as beneficial economically, politically, socially and culturally, critics take issue with this statement (Gilpin 15). Their argument, broadly, echoes Wallerstein's claim that the peripheral states (those who are not among the most powerful) are evidently in a disadvantageous position

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<sup>21</sup> Glissant made these comments at NYU in the spring of 2010. His words are paraphrased; my translation.

<sup>22</sup> See also Wallerstein and Stiglitz, each examples of the dominant view of globalization as "integrating economies".

with regard to their “integration” in the system based on its mechanisms of unequal exchange. The most solid economies in theory (and overall) do benefit from the positioning of all of the national economies since they maintain a relationship of dominance of stronger over weaker. The case of European economic imperialism is exemplary. In order for colonial empires to flourish, the world economy had to be structured in such a way that world production and money flowed into the coffers of France, England, Germany and Italy, for example, from its colonies. Wallerstein indeed describes these countries’ colonization of the African continent in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a “restructuring” of the world economy during that period. The processes by which this was achieved, according to him, included “weakening the pre-existing state-structures [...] or creating new [weak] ones” (Wallerstein 58). This allowed them to maintain their dominant position, not only in the world economy, but also politically and culturally. From this perspective—globalization as integrating economies—one also observes a similar restructuring that took place through Bretton Woods and its later cooperation models and STPs. Critics of globalization see nothing “integrative” in such a system; they remain opposed to the “everybody wins” argument and stress, rather, the reliance on inequality as a negative feature. For instance, Samir Amin argues that it has “polarizing” effects (Amin, *Empire* 7). His view is that “capitalist expansion has inverse effects upon the center and periphery of the system; in the first it *integrates* society, on which the nation is built, and in the second it *destroys* society, eventually destroying the nation itself, or annihilating its potentialities” (Amin, *Capitalism* 68, my emphasis).

Furthermore, some thinkers, such as Amin, have also observed that the center/periphery model has expanded to produce multiple centers and multiple peripheries. This evokes a more complex picture of globalization. For instance, consider states, such as the Congo and Ivory

Coast. In states such as these—“peripheral” to the world economy—multiple global interests vie for power (and maintaining it regionally to some extent) while at once playing off and exacerbating divisiveness among local, less powerful communities or political factions within and across borders. The emergence of these multiple peripheries and their ongoing struggles are servicing the workings of the global economy; and in that way, they are incorporated, which is perhaps a more appropriate term than “integrated”.

Arguably symptomatic of the center/periphery model, another issue that critics take with globalization is the notion of sovereignty. The global system, as an offshoot of the international system in that it is comprised of some one hundred ninety-three nations, poses a threat to nations within its structure. The current global system is also very actively managed by multinational corporations and international finance institutions, all of which have substantial influence over national economies—rich and poor alike. Advocates view this system as one where economic transactions are made more rapidly, with greater ease, wherein liberal, unregulated trade facilitates the exchange of money between banks and transnational corporations. This means that economic activity across borders, and those who execute it, have little to no boundaries set by international law. As a result, the state is at once in a powerful position and limited in its power in the face of market forces. Many critics of globalization from across the disciplines, (from Wallerstein to Gilpin, Albrow, Diawara, and Cooper, to name a few from very different fields) make varied, yet equally compelling arguments that such a system is leading to the “imminent demise of the nation-state.” Wallerstein asserts, for example: “One of the realities that all movements [in Africa] (resistance, revolution, etc.) discovered, once in power, is that state power is not merely an opportunity; it is also a constraint. A group in power seeks to remain in power in order to carry out its objectives, and remaining in power in a state within an interstate system

means being subject to the continuing pressure of the other states to observe certain very real *de facto* limitations on sovereignty” (Wallerstein 83-4). Advocates of globalization write this off as a bump in the road, generally because the supporters of this system are benefitting from it;<sup>23</sup> not only are they in the position to change it, they are the ones who influenced its implementation in the first place alongside multinationals and institutions, such as the IMF. Rarely has this aspect of globalization affected the most economically powerful nations, such as the USA, with the exception of the recent global economic “crisis” that caused investment bank after investment bank to fall to its end. The effects were (and still are) felt throughout this country across economic classes, races and ages. Many lost their homes because of the mortgage lending crisis; others their jobs as unemployment soared. Still others were denied access to schooling or health care. These are all effects that the United States government is able to manage through credit negotiations with existing big banks and finance institutions, other nations and its own civil society. These are also effects that peripheral states experience on a perpetual basis; their sovereignty is constantly at risk as a result, whereas America did not risk an abrupt outbreak of civil war, separatist movements or “ethnic” factioning. The critical positions that I have just outlined allow a very direct view into the effects of globalization on societies around the globe. Issues of ethnic othering, violence, peripheralization and state sovereignty, for instance, are but a few that occupy Africanist scholars’ and artists’ concerns with respect to globalization; in the following section, I delve into discussions and debates that address these issues from the perspective of those living on the continent.

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<sup>23</sup> Appadurai takes a slightly different approach when he writes optimistically about the global mechanisms that may lead to the nation-state’s demise. He conceives of a series of “scapes”—financescapes, ethnoscapes, technoscapes, mediascapes and ideascapes—which reflect fluid flows of people, ideas, money, goods, etc. that occur in his view of contemporary globalization. He relies upon the notion that the current period is a “postnational” era, meaning that as diasporas multiply, people will increasingly have other ways of connecting across the world and maintaining ethnic, cultural or even national identities without being bound to the state. He does not discuss how this would affect the interaction between states in the interstate system.

### Africa and Consumer-Driven Globalization

The quotes that open this chapter shed light on the discursive position from which the debate about globalization and its effects in Africa proceeds: “La réflexion était axée sur le continent africain car après une période de grands espoirs au moment de la décolonisation, l’Afrique a plongé dans le chaos, rongée par des maux (conflits ethniques, corruption, misère, pandémies) inhibiteurs du développement [...] elle a raté le train de la mondialisation” (Bridel et al. 6). In African spaces, globalization becomes a metaphor for conforming to the ideals of the Western *habitus*, which Pierre Bourdieu defines as a totality of behavior, a process by which an individual internalizes social and bodily comportment through his or her interaction with consumer products (Bourdieu, *Sociologie de l’Algérie*). Inscribed in the concept of *habitus* is the notion that consumer items produce and disseminate ideas and images of the West, and that these images and ideas continuously transform to take on altered meaning in different contexts.

Globalization’s harshest critics point to the inadequacies of the broad optimism of its proponents; in particular Achille Mbembe contends, foremost, that there is a lack of critical engagement with theories that have come to be widely accepted about Africa. In his seminal work, *On the Postcolony* (2001), Mbembe argues fervently that the disciplines of political science and economics have failed to understand African politics, history and culture. Instead, he maintains, generally scholars view the continent as a violent, savage place and relegate it to the realm of incomprehensibility and insolvability: In Africa, he writes, “[w]ar is seen as all-pervasive. The continent, a great, soft, fantastic body, is seen as powerless, engaged in rampant self-destruction. Human action there is seen as stupid and mad, always proceeding from anything

but rational calculation” (8). And “Every representation of an unstable world cannot automatically be subsumed under the heading ‘chaos’” (8). Other radical scholars share a similar view. For instance, law professor and globalization scholar Amy Chua, contends that: “[...] Africa is often seen as a vast continent of incomprehensible tribalism, endemic corruption, and almost intrinsic misery and violence. Cast in this way, Africa is irredeemable, its problems unique and uniquely insoluble” (Chua 121). Images of poverty, famine, disease, orphans, cruel leaders, massacres, genocide, civil war, child soldiers and refugees across the African continent feed these theses of incomprehensibility and insolvability to which Mbembe and Chua refer; and these images are just as deeply etched into the Western imaginary and consumed continuously through news media coverage, Hollywood films and the Western literary canon (British, French and more recently American). This is at once because of globalization and in spite of it; it is something that is happening at a confluence of collapse of Western power.

Globalization’s rootedness in Africa can be traced to the colonial and imperial—European and (later) American-led—projects of modernity. This modernity is inscribed in the system of globalization and, specifically in the interactions between the West and Africa. Mbembe contends that, “from the fifteenth century, there is no longer a ‘distinctive historicity’ of [African] societies, one not embedded in times and rhythms heavily conditioned by European domination. Therefore, dealing with African societies’ ‘historicity’ [having actually occurred in history] requires more than simply giving an account of what occurs on the continent itself at the interface between the working of internal forces and the working of international actors. It [also has to do with] “a critical delving into Western history and the theories that claim to interpret it” (Mbembe, *Postcolony* 9). Achille Mbembe’s words implore scholars of Africa to interrogate the relationship between the West and the African continent and to pay close attention to the

narrative of Western “History” and to question its accuracy (9). His view of globalization is that it is a continuation of the continent’s historical trajectory: the philosophical and political rationalizations for the *othering* of Africa during the trans-Atlantic slave trade and European imperialism and colonialism have foregrounded contemporary scholarship on post-independence Africa. Mbembe deplores that scholars across the disciplines fail to make “economic explanations of contemporary social and political phenomena” or to question “the market and capitalism as institutions both contingent and violent (6). Mbembe’s view echoes the argument that several Africanist scholars make that globalization is a “new form of colonization.”

However, one must be cautious when comparing globalization and imperialism of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. European imperial domination was distinctively planned and executed by *métropoles*, such as France and England, from the nineteenth century through the mid twentieth. For instance, historian Mamadou Diouf asserts that France’s colonial policy of assimilation was exemplary of nineteenth-century globalization projects (and these were distinct from the present globalization) (Diouf in Geschière and Meyer 71-96). Globalization is distinct from colonization because, although linked to the world economic system, the current globalization relies less on—or, rather, defies/takes advantage of—the limits of the world political structure. It is distinct from the imperialist dominance of France’s colonizing missions primarily in that it is not a state-sponsored “project”. Colonialism was based on a combination of economic and political power; the means was asserting the colonizer’s cultural power, which in the case of France, meant carrying out its “mission civilisatrice.” Thus, the French set out to educate those whom they regarded as savage beings, by teaching them the French language, Christianity and French ways of being. In contrast, globalization is economic power inscribed with cultural values (which promotes cultural values); however, there is no *official* political

governing body that takes control of other sovereign states. Nonetheless, today's system functions within strikingly similar power structures. According to Dominic Thomas, since the IMF and other such organizations are “not imperial,” “an important transition can be recorded here from Western colonial and neocolonial influence [...] Nevertheless, various cultural practitioners [filmmakers and novelists] have concentrated their work on denouncing these latest trends as mere rearticulations and reconfigurations of previous exploitative traditions” (Thomas, “Intersections” 239). He cites Mambety's *Hyènes* as an example, noting that such cultural productions “demonstrate how these organizations [IMF, World Bank] function in similar ways as states, remaining unaccountable in their behavior, often enlisting the help of private militias and insisting that their activities are beneficial to the membership of indigenous populations in modernity-based modes of existence” (240).

Aminata Dramane Traoré holds a similar view : “[Il faut] jeter un regard sur le passé, nommer et dénoncer [...] l'esclavage, la colonisation, la néocolonisation et la mondialisation néolibérale parce qu'ils procèdent de la même logique hégémonique et engendrent le même mépris, le même racisme” (147). Traoré—economist, sociologist, former Minister of Culture of Mali (1997-2000), essayist, unrelenting advocate for cancelling the debt of developing countries, and militant activist for an “other globalization”—articulates some of the effects of African nations' diminished economies paired with fiscal restructuring programs in the second citation that opens this chapter. She points to mass unemployment, even among the small populations of educated youth as exemplary of the misery that global financial firms have rooted throughout Africa. In this respect, the mechanisms of globalization leave Africa's citizens without choices and, thus, fatally vulnerable.

Further, Traoré's radical critique echoes through the adlib unscripted statement that she makes when playing the role of herself in Sissako's simulated trial of the IMF in his film, *Bamako*. The dehumanization and destabilization that she attributes to globalization is imbued with racialized undertones. Globalization, in her view, is as advantageous for the white dominant elites of the West as it is disastrous for disadvantaged, poor black Africans. Traoré's advocacy for an "other" globalization is one in which Africans have a voice in policy and decision-making for the continent rather than being silenced. Her position reveals an urgent message concerning the issue of race in the context of globalization.

Another radical view in line with Mbembe and Traoré's arguments that globalization protrudes from colonialist ideology is that of literary scholar Cilas Kemedjio, who contends that globalization leaves Africa caught in a web of "contemporary enslavement." This perspective also recalls attitudes about race that legitimized, first, slavery and later the "civilizing mission" of European colonization in Africa; and it is revealing of the racialization that persists in the current global system. Kemedjio has written specifically on globalization in the African context. He states in "The Politics of Humanitarianism: From Forced Labor to Doctors Without Borders" (2002) that the West's global ties with Africa, from the period of the Atlantic Slave Trade to France's colonization, are linked, today, to the failures and shortcomings of contemporary *humanitarian* missions. Further, he purports that the West acts as a philanthropic benefactor and posits that independent Africans' acquisition of material objects takes on the form of contemporary enslavement.

In the African context, the current globalization manifests itself most obviously in two ways: first, through economic policies, such as Structural Adjustment Programs (STPs) planned and executed by Western governments and international financing agencies, such as the World

Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF); and, second, through American consumer culture disseminated via expressions of popular culture, such as music and its iconic performers, Hollywood westerns and action movies, or boxing. Manthia Diawara signals the presence of both ways in two contexts—one negative; the other positive. There were those, he says, who viewed globalization as a “new form of colonialism” (Diawara, *In Search* 138). This side saw the corruption of African leaders and their friendly relations with Western leaders as complicit with transnational corporations; the view also held that this power network was infringing so heavily on African cultural life that it would soon no longer be their own. Then, there were those, according to Diawara, who saw it as an opportunity to bring their art onto the world scene. However, he notes that a shift in attitude after January 1994, when currency of the West African CFA franc (the currency of the Communauté Financière Africaine) was devalued. No longer was there such a noticeable divide in opinion; rather, West Africans were banding together to fight off a powerful force that had become all too invasive: “As restructuring programs began to take their toll on national institutions like education, health care, state-owned factories, and the department of labor, people who felt that these were symbols of national autonomy engaged in cultural and social forms of protest and resistance” (ibid.). In this context, Diawara recalls the moment when many African nations achieved independence, and in order to question the limits that globalization places on sovereignty, he places great emphasis on the programs of “mass education” that were “integral to the independence movements” (ibid.). Further, he reminds us that: “In the 1960s, mass education [had been] integral to the independence movements, which presented schools as the road to Africa’s development and self-determination. Independence, people thought, meant that everyone would have access to free schools – unlike colonialism, which denied access to education. Schooling therefore has become

a necessary symbol of national sovereignty, and students who fight to keep education from deviating from its original purpose are the new national heroes” (138-9).<sup>24</sup>

Diawara’s emphasis on the effects of restructuring programs as an infringement on the sovereignty of new nations is a sharp critique of globalization and its colonizing tendencies. Additionally, he points directly to their curtailment of basic rights to education, healthcare and employment opportunities which, he underlines, citizens of new nations had expected to enjoy based on promises of their new leaders. The restructuring of the global economy, however, superseded such hope and optimism; and the response of some African scholars, as Diawara asserts, was that a cycle had emerged: that of a “new form of colonialism.” A closer look at the foundation and workings of the WB and IMF highlights such a cyclical pattern, although I still maintain a distinction between the global restructuring and colonialism. Moreover, whereas the discourse of nationalism and Fanonian resistance indeed capture the sensibility of the historical moment that Diawara recalls, one must also acknowledge that the global economic system relies heavily on “performance and competition in the global market.” Diawara’s differentiation of how globalization was viewed on the continent—on the one hand as a form of renewed oppression; and on the other a way out for others—reveals, rather, in my view, the conundrum globalization poses for the African continent.

The WB and IMF, originally the Bretton Woods institutions (named after the city of their founding in the United States), pioneered the concept of international aid through loans as a way to relieve poor, underdeveloped nations’ debt to former European imperial powers and implemented the STP programs as “international” economic policy barely ten years following former colonies’ independence in 1960. Nearly a century of colonial rule left the African

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<sup>24</sup> The same text appears in Diawara’s article “Toward a Regional Imaginary” nearly exactly (111-12).

continent with neither infrastructure nor industry; thus, when imperial powers terminated their formal economic and political relationship with their colonies, African leaders who inherited new nation-states that were devoid of resources to provide services to their citizens initiated grandiose development projects. However, the result of such ambitious endeavors, paired with corruption among the African “elite and urban rich,” according to Ukadike, was that “projects [were] left unfinished or abandoned after millions of dollars [had] been squandered” (BAC 65). In an even more precarious economic position, African governments had no other recourse but to solicit assistance—“aid”—from the international financing structures that were in place. By the early 1980s, sub-Saharan African countries became increasingly dependent on foreign aid and, thus began the phases of “restructuring”. The STP programs continue today to control national economies through “international aid” and “debt relief” initiatives, which broadly mean devaluation of the French CFA currency and the reorganization of individual countries’ economies by means of replacing the national public sector—including health services, education, and natural resources for trade—with privatized corporations. In the particular case of Senegal, for instance, implementing these programs means “limiting credit, cutting government spending, cutting the public sector, promoting exports, and a special emphasis on privatization”. As early as the first decade of their initiation (the 1980s), the hopeful ideals of these programs elicited criticism because of *frequent limitation or cancellation of loans* by multilateral donors (decision and policy makers of the WB and IMF) “due to the [African] government’s slowness and hesitancy in implementation” (Miles-Doan)<sup>25</sup>. As Ukadike observes, Africa’s dependence and reliance on global economic powers for the livelihood of African nation-states has become a

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<sup>25</sup> For the same argument regarding African corruption, see Mbaku and Saxena “Introduction”.

vicious cycle that has left the majority of the continent vulnerable to the conditional policies of the WB and IMF and, as a result, in a state of life-threatening crisis:

[...] nearly three-quarters of black African countries have mortgaged themselves to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) [...] Because the decision making and implementation must conform with the dictates of industrial nations, and because the political and social uses of aid in tropical Africa make it an instrument of corruption, foreign aid and IMF loans have not provided any long-term bailout for black African economies. In fact, the countries that have mortgaged their economies to the IMF use more than two-thirds of their individual GNPs to service the loans obtained from the World Bank (65-6).

Ukadike's description of the overall effects of international aid is bleak, and even more so when one considers the absolute poverty that prevails across the continent in spite of loan and STP programs. Historian Frederick Cooper measures the devastation with appalling statistics, including: "[Africa's] share of world trade fell from over 3 percent in the 1950s to less than 2 percent in the 1990s [...] Africans have the use of one telephone line per 100 people [...], compared to 50 in the world as a whole" (Cooper, *Africa* 105). These are especially striking figures in comparison to proponents' views that globalization "integrates national economies everywhere into a global economy of expanding trade and financial flows" with "[t]he huge expansion of [...] communications technology [that] vastly increases the possibilities of extended [transnational] networks" (Gilpin 15; Albrow 161). Cooper's attention to the statistical data on international aid speaks loudly to the unrelenting relationship between the persistence of such poverty and the (in)effectiveness of foreign aid programs. According to Cooper's research,

“[f]oreign aid has declined to a minuscule .23 percent of donor country GDP, but in Africa this still represents over 13 percent of GDP, vastly higher than in any other ‘developing’ region [...]” (*Africa* 105). These numbers suggest at once that foreign aid programs hinder rather than help Africa’s position in the global economy and lead to probing questions regarding the far-reaching consequences of the West’s role in maintaining rather than relieving the continent in its stagnant economic situation.

While both Cooper and Ukadike critique the programs of the IMF in Africa, Ukadike addresses a second element that drives the vicious cycle impeding the livelihood of people on the continent: corruption of African leaders. Corruption among African elite is often cited in two contexts: first, it is a point of contention for Africans to hold their own leaders accountable for their duties and responsibilities to their people; second, it is used to bolster the argument that global institutions are only doing “good,” a position that U.S. economist, Joseph Stiglitz challenges in his own critique of globalization and its workings. Indeed, there is a case for holding corrupt leaders responsible; but the African state most often finds itself extremely limited and powerless with regard to, on the one hand, financial decisions that are made for them by the IMF and World Bank, as well as transnational corporations that work alongside these institutions; and, on the other hand, goods—anything from natural resources to arms—that move across borders without the consent of African leaders. Corruption can thus not be the only scapegoat for the continent’s ills in the context of globalization. In the second context, Stiglitz’s critical view of the way the World Bank and IMF plan and deliver policies is more compelling.

Stiglitz claims that his experience working in a leadership capacity at the World Bank showed him that often programs were designed and developed which would benefit special interests of the West as opposed to the communities for which they were designed. Whereas he

has echoed proponents' claims that foreign aid is one global program that has benefitted millions, particularly concerning their living standards<sup>26</sup>, Stiglitz contends that:

In Africa, the high aspirations following colonial independence have been largely unfulfilled. Instead, the continent plunges deeper into misery, as incomes fall and standards of living decline. The hard-won improvements in life expectancy gained in the past few decades have begun to reverse. While the scourge of AIDS is at the center of this decline, poverty is also a killer. Even countries that have abandoned African socialism, managed to install reasonably honest governments, balanced their budgets, and kept inflation down find that they simply cannot attract private investors. Without this investment, they cannot have sustainable growth (*Discontents* 6).

Private investment is evidently part and parcel of the privatization initiatives toward restructuring African economies; and, as Stiglitz makes clear, such programs result in stagnancy rather than growth in Africa. Further, his economist view of the decades following independence—of increased poverty despite high hopes and a lack of investment even in countries where “good governance” is practiced—shows that even if the processes of globalization have improved life slightly for some of the world population, the cycle that leaves African countries dependent on a system that works actively to their disadvantage continues. Other economists, such as William Easterly, have made similar observations; and their inquiries about how this happens reveal that

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<sup>26</sup> Stiglitz's general assessment of the effects on most of the developing world is positive. For instance, he claims that “[o]pening up to international trade has helped many countries grow far more quickly than they would otherwise have done. [...] Because of globalization many people in the world now live longer than before and their standard of living is far better [...] Globalization has reduced the sense of isolation felt in much of the developing world and has given many people in the developing countries access to knowledge well beyond the reach of even the wealthiest in any country a century ago.” See Stiglitz *Discontents* 4.

the dependence of weak African economies on Western aid and programs is integral to the systemic workings of the global economy. The West makes decisions that benefit its own interests, and its management of global issues relies upon maintaining inequality (Easterly 237-72). Easterly's critique of globalization alongside Stiglitz's insider perspective are dramatically compelling in light of a World Bank internal memo written by then World Bank Chief Economist (today US Deputy Treasury Secretary) that the international weekly, the *Economist*, published in 1992. In the memo, Summers writes from a purely Western interest base:

[S]houldn't the World Bank be encouraging more migration of the dirty industries to the [less developed countries]?... the measurement of the costs of health impairing pollution depends on the foregone earnings from increased morbidity and mortality. From this point of view, a given amount of health-impairing pollution should be done in the country with the lowest wages. I think the economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest-wage country is impeccable and we should face up to that... I've always thought that underpopulated countries in Africa are vastly under-polluted; their air quality is probably vastly inefficiently [high] compared to Los Angeles or Mexico City (Cited in McCorquodale and Fairbrother 5).

In spite of such a horrid information leak, most economists persist in the argument that global inequality is a mere inevitability and that the benefits of globalization far outweigh negative views, such as those presented by academics in the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, and the humanities. The latter take economists to task when discussing globalization and its effects because of their elision of disastrous human consequences; and they

are often sharply critical of how economists gloss over these as mere casualties of the trade. For instance, Albrow contends that globalization is by no means merely an economic phenomenon:

Some imagine that globalization is about the expansion of free trade. But even among economists it is well recognized that this is only one aspect of a transformation in the world economy in which changes in production and consumption are central. But accounts of globalization as simply economic betray a narrow economic outlook, when we are involved in a comprehensive social transformation. Those who imagine that globalization is about trade barriers are seriously unprepared to understand what is happening (4).

Albrow's view emphasizes that there are serious human consequences to the consumer side of globalization. His notion of a "comprehensive social transformation" points to the closed circuits of globalization rather than the flows proponents cite. Like Baudrillard, he contends that as it is a system based upon inequality, only a small minority across the globe has access to an excess of consumer goods, new technologies, and greater mobility; and their "right" to obtain them is producing an *ad hoc* global governance. Albrow refers to the emergent global elite as the "managerial class" who increasingly make decisions through transnational corporations and international finance structures.

Furthermore, returning to the critical views of Stiglitz and Easterly (and Mbembe as well is explicit on this), it is essential to note that globalization theory is produced in the West. Theory has developed and flowed out of the developed world with Harvard educated economists, such as Jeffrey Sachs, who has advised a great number of governments and the IMF on investment plans to restructure developing economies. Critiques of the current globalization often echo problems scholars have noted in their analyses of late European colonial projects. For instance, Cooper

notes that the central reason for the failure in the 1950s of colonial initiatives, such as development, to take root, was that the “concept itself [was detached] from what was happening in the countryside and cities of Africa” (*Africa* 44).

In their respective works on colonial and postcolonial market systems, Mamdani and Cooper show how such an economic system rooted itself historically in Africa. Mamdani reminds us that “[c]ommodity relations in Africa predated colonialism;” and he cautions against giving too much credit to colonialism for opening up Africa’s dependence on the world market. His point is to recall, rather, that Africa was predominantly rural, and the majority of the population formed a peasant society. The social, economic and political structures of the pre-colonial period were based on kinship relations rather than centralized administrative authorities that colonizers introduced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Colonialism instituted dependency on imported “producer goods,” such as agricultural tools, for survival. Thus, his emphasis is on the unequal exchange of goods between African production of raw materials and European production of industrial products necessary to their cultivation (*Citizen* 146). In addition, Mamdani asserts that the continent’s position in the current global system is founded on an authoritative “top-down” power structure that colonialism instituted [...] The productive activity of peasants was shaped not by the market economy [...] but by the force of the market and the compulsion of force. The overall impact of colonialism in economic relations was contradictory, both facilitating and constraining market expansion” (288, 147). In other words, colonialism institutionalized economic practices into law, such as forced labor (so a system of rights and duties emerged), but the unequal status to which the colonial regime held Africans limited their rights.

More than fifty years following independence, African rights and sovereignty with regard to their position in the global economy remain in question. Diawara shows that the Western

driven global market and African markets are antagonistic rather than complementary. African markets, he contends, are more linked to the people, to mass populations; in many ways, one might agree that they are the peoples' local markets (although of course they have always traded globally). According to Diawara, "The markets of West Africa, traditionally centers of international consumption and cross-cultural fertilization, pose a serious challenge to globalization and to the structural adjustments advocated by the World Bank and other multinational corporations that are vying to recolonize Africa" (*In Search* 142). He distinguishes current globalization from a positive "globalization" of trade with Arabs that provided access to plentiful goods in market towns, such as Timbuktu, Ganem and Niani, throughout West Africa from the 13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries; additionally, he contends that trading with Arabs during this period and with Europeans during the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism allowed for a breakdown of "tribal isolationism [and a] mixing of cultures, customs, and languages" since it brought African peoples from various lands across the Sahara together (143). His major argument concerning the modern market system of the current global age is that bodies, such as the World Bank, as well as "other global institutions [...] consider nation-states the only legitimate structures with which they can do business" (144-5); whereas "traditional" markets allow for the exchange of necessary monies between them, local banks and government when economic crises hit. In other words, they are codependent and at the same time competitive with one another. While Diawara does not deny that the traditional market system includes practices of bribery and corruption, it provides cities, countries and the region with a sense of autonomy. The global Western dominated market, on the other hand, is seen as promoting the businesses of the Lebanese and French, and taking it away from African markets; and the World Bank alongside African governments see the markets as a threat to development projects (145). Such antagonism

between the “traditional” and “modern” markets, as Diawara refers to them, produces political tension; and, the (modern) global market has responded with bullying to assert its dominance.

For instance, as Diawara recalls, in the 1990s:

the World Bank threatened to suspend a loan to Mali until the government was able to reduce significantly the flow of illegal merchandise in Bamako’s largest market. The market subsequently caught fire, which led people to speculate whether this had been the work of officially sanctioned arsonists. The Kermel market in Dakar burned under similarly suspicious circumstances in 1993, and it was rumored that the state fire department, which had been alerted at two in the morning, had not arrived at the site until six, by which time the place was completely engulfed in flame and smoke (145-6).

The trickle-down effects of a dominant global market are grave. The overview that Diawara’s examples provide of West Africa’s position in the global marketplace reveal that it is a politically charged system, with a tendency for violence. It also raises questions concerning sovereignty and human rights.

### Human Rights, Africa and Globalization

There are three periods most relevant to the “global age” that have seen significant changes in the ways one talks about rights and Africa: the transitional period between colonialism and independence, neocolonialism and the current “global age.” In the decades leading up to independence African thinkers and writers such as Mongo Beti produced writings that condemned French colonial policies and laws that legitimized practices such as forced labor.

Moreover, their focus was on the rights of Africans as French “citizens”. Once decolonization movements had gained momentum and during the period of independence in the 1960s), the attention to citizenship expanded to a discourse of the sovereignty of African nations and the rights of their people. The neo-colonial period was one exemplary moment when great debates took place. Neo-colonialism meant that African leaders symbolically exchanged places with former French leaders; they subsequently relied heavily upon France for economic stability, political backing, and assistance with social services, such as education, health care and infrastructural issues such as potable water in cities – often executed through its bilateral cooperation programs with individual African countries. New African states that were technically sovereign were plagued with civil and political issues that arose as a result of greed and corruption among some of the political elite. Leaders were condemned for unjust incarceration, and for summary killing and torture. Thus having shown itself to be firmly rooted by the 1970s, neocolonialism coincided with an emphasis on civil and political rights.

French rule in Africa, throughout several decades of the nineteenth century<sup>27</sup> and more than half of the twentieth produced drastic effects in the social life of millions of people. In the 1940s, African discourses on “universal humanism” emerged “as a reaction against European cultural assimilation, an assertion of cultural pride, and an effort to create a new cultural movement” (Jules-Rosette 5). Writings in the early issues of Alioune Diop’s journal, *Présence Africaine*, challenged the status quo of the colonizing mission by “address[ing] problems of human dignity and cultural inclusion [of Africans in France] in ways that were neither current nor popular in scholarly journals of the day” (4). Jules-Rosette reminds us that Diop “described

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<sup>27</sup> French colonization of West Africa began with treaties in the 1840s that established African states as French protectorates. The conquest of lands in the 1880s and 90s completed the process of building France’s colonial empire in Africa.

his philosophy of universal humanism as a reaction to Léopold Sédar Senghor. He articulated another humanist discourse. He was an essentialist, focusing his own discussion on universal humanism and human dignity in terms of cultural membership to; his ideas were ground in the ideals of Negritude, which celebrated African identity as singular. But these early articulations of African intellectual positions on human rights changed remarkably as early as the 1960s.

During the time of independence, sovereignty was the principal aim of African people and their leaders. Certain rights were synonymous with sovereignty. For instance, as Diawara reminded us (above), education had become a symbol of sovereignty. In addition, health care and employment followed as crucial demands of the citizens of new nations. These were essential rights that Africans were denied under colonial rule and law, and many fought for independence to achieve them. As Frederick Cooper notes, one outcome of the French empire's extension of citizenship and labor rights to its colonies was that "African social and political movements used the language of imperial legitimacy to claim all the social and political entitlements of metropolitan citizens" (*Africa* 39). Cooper's chapter takes us back to the time of Diop's writings with a focus on "African political and labor movements" in the late 1940s as a precursor to claims for citizenship. Cooper asserts that African colonies used France's post-war discourse of universal rights to its advantage. However, he also maintains that the opportunities African "political and labor movements saw [...] as a goal in 1945 was not where they ended up twenty years later" (38).] Cooper explains that whereas "France [...] did not think in 1945 that their [empire was] about to end, but [it] did realize that [it] would have to think in new ways about its domains" (38). This is reflective of a divide in the discourses of human rights as well as the role that power relations played in the shaping of those discourses.

Notably, as world political and economic structures changed so, too, did discourses of human rights. Major debates have taken place among human rights scholars and African and Western leaders concerning the notion of human rights in Africa as well as how to prioritize rights and how to promote, implement, and protect them. Two major debates stand out for having shaped the way scholars approach the topic in the context of sub-Saharan Africa. One issue is the argument concerning the (in)application of the Western born notion of human rights to the African context. Numerous Africanist critiques have rejected international human rights standards as ideals derived from the European philosophical traditions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, rooted in Western cultures. A similar argument states that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, declared by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948, derives from Western standards and is thus irrelevant to many non-Western cultures. This has framed scholars' debates on the universality of rights and cultural relativism. More recently, human rights scholars have accepted cross-cultural perspectives, meaning the recognition of "cultural assets and limitations on all sides" (Fox 9, Oloka-Onyango and Tamale, An-Na'im).

Throughout the 1970s and 80s, proponents of cultural relativism dominated the debate on human rights with regard to underdeveloped countries. A major problem with the cultural relativist debate concerns sovereignty. This group of scholars purports that cultures outside the Western world have developed their own specific concepts of human rights, distinct from those outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Cultural relativism takes to task, for example, the privileging of the individual with regard to the notion of the inalienable right to private property. Materialism and accumulation of material possessions is deemed representative of Western individualism. Other Africanist scholars took a somewhat different approach and traced the notions of human rights to African philosophy. In the 1980s, for

example, Africanist scholars, such as Dunstan Wai, claimed that traditional African societies had historically had a structured system of duties and obligations in place before the International instruments (such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) emerged as a discourse. This theory served the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in the drafting of “The African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights,” which was formerly adopted in 1986. The African Charter reflected another controversial discourse that had come up about human rights on the continent: the discourse of development. In article 1a of the document, development is articulated as a specific goal of the charter whose aims include: “to liberate the African peoples from socio-cultural conditions which impede their development in order to recreate and maintain the sense and will for progress, the sense and will for development” (“African Charter”). According to Malcolm Evans and Rachel Murray, the conceptualization of the Charter stemmed from specific goals of the OAU, including ridding African nations of threats to their sovereignty. Thus the discussion of human rights in the 1980s returns to the issue of sovereignty. And this becomes the pivotal point around which critiques of human rights as international norms revolve. Further, Wai added a significant critique to the international framework of human rights with his assertion that the authoritarian colonial regimes (for instance France in West Africa) had introduced the political exploitation of African masses. (Wai in Polis and Schwab 118). Wai’s argument echoes in many critiques throughout the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s that argue the same about globalization. Indeed today, fifty years after independence, writers, filmmakers and human rights scholars have brought the discussion back to sovereignty and other human rights issues related to citizenship.

However, still, throughout the 1990s, numerous Africanist human rights scholars have been locked in a cyclical debate about cultural relativism on the one hand and the universality of

human rights on the other. One proposed solution to break this vicious cycle and a plea for the respect for the sovereignty of African nations was Abdullahi An'Na'im's promotion of "cross-cultural perspectives" on human rights (1-16). Other critics of cultural relativism, including scholars and advocates for women's rights, Diana Fox, Oloka-Onyango and Sylvia Tamale added enthusiastic support for "cross-cultural perspectives." According to these thinkers, this approach to human rights "require[s] recognition of cultural assets and limitations on all sides" (Fox 9). At the same time, a broader consensus developed concerning third and fourth generation rights (economic, social and cultural rights, women's and children's rights); political economists refer to the latter as "emergent rights." The shift of emphasis toward third and fourth generation rights among Africanist scholars paralleled similar developments in human rights theory coming out of the United States (and Europe).

Debates concerning human rights in Africa have proven problematic, their discourses circular. The introduction of the cross-cultural approach, paired with renewed discussions about human dignity, seem to be a productive emergent direction. In his introduction to the edited volume, *Human Rights in Africa: Cross-Cultural Perspectives* (1992), An-Na'im, concedes that the "ideals of human dignity" are no-doubt "abstract," but nonetheless, these ideals are relational with the "more precise legal principles of human rights" (3). In fact, the legal clauses in the International Charters are not so clear either, but that is the subject for another discussion. An-Na'im states: "Although it may be useful to distinguish between the abstract ideals of human dignity and the more precise legal principles of human rights, we must not overlook the close connection between these two sets of concepts and the way they reinforce each other" (ibid.). However, he does not see that the ideals of human dignity "dilute or distract from the content of human rights"; and thus, there should not be a distinction between the two, but rather one should

see them “as mutually reinforcing” (ibid.). But, he continues, “human rights are enforceable whereas the rights derived from principles of human dignity are not” (ibid.). This raises many questions. An-Na`im’s position is that in “traditional African society, for example, there is no clear-cut line between religious values, moral precepts, and laws” (ibid.). Rather, they are interrelated and the “rights and obligations derived from religious, moral, and cultural values associated with human dignity in traditional society are enforceable and, indeed, enforced against and for the benefit of both the community and the individual” (ibid.). This means that human dignity, according to An-Na`im, is interrelated with the legal rights and obligations associated with the ideals of human rights.

To gain a better understanding of what shapes human rights discourse in Africa, it is urgent to read the novels and films I analyze in this dissertation with a view to the debates and discussions that I have highlighted in this chapter. These novelists and filmmakers take a pioneering role in their responses to the human effects of globalization. The following chapters show that as engaged artists, novelists and filmmakers in francophone Africa are astutely aware of the workings of globalization as well as the critiques and defenses of it that I have highlighted in this chapter; such perspectives have evidently foregrounded their denunciatory literary and cinematic stance. The very writing and production of their fictional works marks novelists’ and filmmakers’ commitment to expose and denounce the ill effects of the phenomenon on the continent through the act of witnessing. Their works thus stand out as engaged art that enunciates the urgency to achieve, as Édouard Glissant theorizes the “tout-monde,” a “pensée du monde,” a thinking that is rhetorical (communicative) rather than a global, universalizing conformity. In this way, African artists forge a new discourse of inclusivity rather than exclusivity; their works function as a critical intervention in the discourses that dominate the field of globalization studies

as well as human rights; they call for a rethinking of what has emerged as a global normative discourse that continuously results in the racial, ethnic and sexual abjection of African populations.

## Chapter Two

### Literary Foreshadowing:

#### Global Consumerism and Black Bodies

in Angèle Rawiri's *G'amèrakano: au carrefour* (1983)

and Pape Pathé Diop's *La Poubelle* (1984)

In Angèle Rawiri's novel, *G'amèrakano: au carrefour* (1983) consumerism, constantly mirrored through values of the West and its consumer society, is representative of globalization's yoke and its control over economic, social and political life in Africa. The work is exemplary of the ways in which African Francophone novels tend to treat this problem. Most noteworthy is the representation of consumerism as an effect of globalization in a work published as early as 1983.<sup>28</sup> At a time when African women writers had barely emerged on the postcolonial francophone literary scene, Rawiri was not only the first woman writer from Gabon, but she produced a pioneering work that foresees globalization on its way to superseding the power structure that France left on the continent through colonialism and neo-colonialism.

In 1983, having studied English translation in Paris, modeled and played small roles in James Bond films in London, and then returned to her native Gabon to work as a translator for the country's national oil company, Petrogab<sup>29</sup> (privatized in 1992), Rawiri published *G'amèrakano: au carrefour*, her second of three novels. In *G'amèrakano* Rawiri tells the story of young Toula, who lives in a shack which doubles as a beer stall with her mother, grandmother

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<sup>28</sup> Rawiri originally published *G'amèrakano* in 1983; her novel was re-released in 1988.

<sup>29</sup> This biographical information is included in Rawiri's obituaries (born 1954; deceased Nov. 2010). See Bonnenfant.

and three brothers in the slum of Igewa. In contrast to the tranquility of a romantic swim at dawn with her boyfriend, Toula's desperation begins as she rushes off for her arduous morning commute to her job as a secretary in the fictional city of Izoua. In the city, she realizes that a whole other "world" exists; it is a space of globalization to which access is granted through the accumulation of luxury material possessions and the social behavior that accompanies them. Toula is highly aware of this global world and she mirrors her poverty and faded tattered clothes, contrasting her own self-image with images of her sophisticated peers who arrive at the office in haute couture ensembles, dripping in jewels gifted to them by high-class executives who spin around in flashy, expensive cars. Toula begins to loathe herself: her internal voice laments that she is too poor, too fat and too black. With the help of her friend, Ekata, who is already a part of this global world, her own pair of eyes and a handful of Western fashion magazines, Toula undergoes a total physical and social transformation, and searches for a way out of her abjection and into high society by becoming the mistress of a rich international bank manager, Eléwagnè. Yet her life of glitz and glam is at once impermanent and violent; Toula's acquired villa, designer wardrobe and her cash allowance are taken away when her benefactor finds out that she has secretly continued a romantic relationship with her boyfriend, Angwé. The dénouement also reveals the latter's apparent suicide, of which Toula learns on the radio.

The emergence of Rawiri's novel in 1983 is striking because she exposed her readers to a different set of issues from that which other African Francophone writers were concerned during the 1970s and early 1980s. Her contemporaries had been producing a sizeable corpus of fiction that portrayed the colonial period and its aftermath; and up to the late-1980s, male and female

authors' works differed significantly. Interestingly, Rawiri's work forebodes the shift of power from neo-colonial to global, while her male contemporaries wrote exhaustively throughout the 1970s and early 1980s on the earlier political transition from colonial rule to African despotism. Notably, their engagement with the development of power structures eventually led them to the theme of consumerism and to trace its models to the West. It is possible to see how this developed in representations of the transfer of power from colonizer to the neo-colonial elite of newly independent African nations. As early as 1968, Yambo Ouologuem and Ahmadou Kourouma had overtly condemned the negative features of French colonization through their respective novels published simultaneously, *Le Devoir de violence* and *Les Soleils des indépendances*. These works are exemplary of those which exposed forced labor and corporal punishment and other violent tactics as a means for asserting and maintaining colonial domination. Increasingly, subsequent fictional works portrayed African rulers as resorting to and adapting similar tactics. Authors such as Alioum Fantouré (1938-), Sony Labou Tansi (1947-95) and Ibrahima Ly (1936-99), indicted African dictators for the misuse and abuse of their power<sup>30</sup>. These new leaders engaged in two basic methods in order to affirm their power: on the one hand, torture, summary execution, and rape; and on the other, a display of excessive opulence. Such representations of new African leaders established the literary themes of violence to the body alongside an increasing drive for the accumulation of material possessions—both themes connected to a certain image of the West as former colonizer.

Novelists not only condemned such leaders' greed for affluence and abundance; they also denounced such ostentation as an extension of colonial power, thus pointing to an historical

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<sup>30</sup> Novels include *Le Cercle des tropiques* (1972) by Guinean Alioum Fantouré; *La Vie et demie* (1979) and *L'Anti-peuple* (1983), by Congolese Sony Labou Tansi, *Les Chauves-souris* (1980) by Cameroonian Bernard Nanga, and *Toiles d'araignées* (1982) by Malian Ibrahima Ly.

trajectory in which Western consumerism played a significant role in both the colonial and neo-colonial periods. Dominic Thomas has observed this in his work on “la *sape*,”<sup>31</sup> where he analyzes the ways in which fashion and appearance are markers of acceptance or authority among West African immigrant populations in contemporary France.<sup>32</sup> Thomas’ work points to the history of Africans’ interaction with Europeans and, consequently, with consumer products that Africans utilized during the colonial period to carry off the image of the “*évolué*”. African imitation of the outward appearance of the European/French symbolically meant ascension to power; and, consequently, accumulation to the point of excess set the standard for the African ruling elite. Thomas observes this in artistic works of the 1970s:

Postcolonial African fiction has provided a multiplicity of examples of such practices, from leaders obsessed with the ‘VVVF’ (villas, voitures, vins, femmes) in Sony Labou Tansi’s novel *La vie et demie*, the concerns of Nkem Nwankwo’s novel, *My Mercedes is Bigger Than Yours*, and Ousmane Sembène’s film and novel *Xala*, in which the transfer of power from colonial to autonomous rule takes place in a striking scene [where] traditional African clothes are abandoned in favor of the Western style ‘costard’ as a symbolic marker of power (“Fashion” 958).

These works, all published in 1979, 1975 and 1973 respectively, probe the role of consumerism as a mode to display power. Whether compared to men’s or women’s works, Rawiri’s novel, *G’amèrakano*, stands out because it is among the earliest literary examples to translate this notion of power—once associated with the French Empire, then with the African elite or

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<sup>31</sup> “Sape” is an acronym for Société des Ambianceurs et des Personnes élégantes. See Thomas 2003.

<sup>32</sup> See Thomas 2003.

dictator—to the global, with particular emphasis on the economic power of Europe as a whole and the United States.

Having emerged on the Francophone literary scene only in the mid-1970s (Miller, *Theories* 246),<sup>33</sup> women writers took up their pens with the aim to “call into question the [African] male [writers’] view of themselves [...] primarily as mothers and also as symbols of Africa” (D’Almeida 8). Women writers were the first to tell women’s stories of education, polygamy, motherhood and other traditional roles in the context of Africa’s transition to independence and the continent’s urbanization from *women’s* perspectives.<sup>34</sup> They asserted female protagonists in their works who were formerly omitted or overshadowed by their male counterparts and probed social roles and values within their communities. In their works, women writers showed concern regarding the power structures within the family—daughters with their fathers or wives in plural marriages—with their rights to education, as well as women’s roles within Islam, Christianity or Animist indigenous traditions. Exemplary works include Nafissatou Diallo’s memoir *De Tilène au Plateau: une enfance dakaroise* (1975), Aminata Sow Fall’s autobiographical work, *Le Revenant* (1976) and Mariama Bâ’s epistolary novel, *Une si longue lettre* (1979). Certainly women writers were no anomaly; their genres were in no way limited to the *roman de mœurs*, and as publishing became less difficult for them, their works multiplied in production as well as with respect to themes. Nonetheless, few in the early 80s engaged with political themes, such as dictatorship, torture and corruption as their male counterparts did. However, by the second half of the decade, women were delving into many of the same themes as male authors—particularly into political themes, such as corruption and authoritarian regimes,

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<sup>33</sup> Jean-Marie Volet (1992, 765) cites the emergence of women’s fiction at an even earlier date with the 1969 publication of the lesser known novel, *Rencontres essentielles* by Cameroonian Thérèse Kuoh Moukoury.

<sup>34</sup> Ousmane Sembène has also received critical praise for his attention to the roles of women in his short stories, novels and films. See Petty.

as well as violence, as much of the African continent experienced political instability and reeled from war to war, driven largely by ethnic rivalries.

Among her female contemporaries, Rawiri's writing stands out for breaking taboos and presenting more dynamic narratives. Whereas her contemporaries, Bâ in her epistolary novel, *Une si longue lettre*, Diallo in her memoir, and even Ousmane Sembène in his short story "Taaw," present narratives about women dealing with polygamy, Rawiri takes a completely different approach. For instance, in *Fureurs et cris de femmes* (1989), rather than centralizing her narrative on polygamy from the start, she depicts her main protagonist, Emilienne, who would not even accept the idea that her husband would take a second wife as her "traditional" mother-in-law proposes. D'Almeida recalls that the main protagonist, Emilienne, is an "educated, well-to-do, and professionally successful" woman who earns a larger salary than her husband (90); whereas main protagonist, Toula, in *G'amèrakano* "belongs to the common people, the poor" (98). This narrative is a woman's story; it is the story of Émilienne who is a modern woman with her own ideas, who—unprecedented in African fiction until this moment—takes a lesbian lover (who, in an even more scandalous turn of events, turns out to be her husband's mistress).

Writing about Rawiri's three novels, Jean-Marie Volet observes: "Pris séparément, ces romans reflètent les difficultés auxquelles se heurtent un certain nombre de femmes qui revendiquent le droit de décider librement de leur sort, pour le meilleur ou pour le pire ; considérés dans leur ensemble, ces trois livres permettent aussi de prendre la mesure du succès de femmes appartenant à des milieux fort différents" (*Parole* 126). In each of her novels, Rawiri vigorously tries and tests women's position in society; however, as Volet points out, her female characters are not satisfied with superficial rights, even in the case of the professionally successful Emilienne: "Ce pouvoir explicitement contraignant n'est cependant pas du tout celui

auquel Emilienne aspirait. Elle rêvait de dignité, d'égalité et de libertés individuelles dans son travail et dans sa vie familiale. Elle se retrouve au contraire aux commandes d'un appareil d'Etat indigne, corrompu et oppressif où, même au sommet de la pyramide, les possibilités sont limitées [...]” (133). So, as Volet observes, the freshness and innovation in *Fureurs* accompanies a discourse of the nation. The state and its institutions are central in this novel; whereas in *G'amèrakano* a global world emerges.

Jean-Marie Volet and Odile Cazenave have documented a considerable surge not only in the number of representations of violence in the African Francophone novel, but also in works written by and including main protagonists of both genders from the late-1980s henceforth. In this literary landscape, Rawiri occupies a distinctive position—not only for *G'amèrakano*, which is the focus of part one of this chapter, but also for her subsequent novel, *Fureurs et cris de femmes*. As in *G'amèrakano*, as D'Almeida notes, the female body is central in *Fureurs*. However, there are very distinct concerns in her earlier novel. It is a reflection on a society that is not confined to a national narrative; rather, there is a constant outward gaze fixed upon outsider elements that are directly affecting the local community. Nonetheless, one major parallel in both these novels has to do with what D'Almeida observes about the ending of *Fureurs*: that the female protagonist *will exist on her own terms*. This is true of Toula as well at the end of *G'amèrakano* where she chooses to leave the banker and consequently, lose the villa she and her entire family enjoyed, because she has since experienced the shame and subordinate positioning that were her lot and that of her true love while she was with the banker. Thus, the trend in Rawiri's œuvre is an emphasis on the body—particularly the female body—as something that does not merely highlight existence, but also the will to exist and assert it on one's own terms as a form of resistance. And this is one message that, in my view, each of the novelists and

filmmakers in this corpus voice loudly: to redefine the workings of globalization on African terms, with African voices listened to.

In this context, *G'amèrakano* reflects the author's sense of urgency about Toula's generation (young women in particular in the early 80s) in a way that reveals the profound social and economic ills of the new global power structure of consumerism—with America and Europe as the globalizers—and its encroachment on the African postcolonial space. Rawiri's novel is thus an allegorical presage of what is to occur. She incorporates themes that her contemporaries have already established, albeit probing them further with a deceptively straightforward writing style. For instance, a romantic swim opens her narrative and the suicide/death of Toula's lover at the end incorporates all the elements of a conventional tragic love story. The purity and beauty of these moments for Toula do not exist at all in the world she discovers. Despite the love story, the fact that Toula is outright owned unequivocally signals the author's condemnation of this model. Rather, Toula's role as mistress is shown as perverse. Instead of penning homage to tradition or critically engaging with it, Rawiri creates a female protagonist who becomes the property of Eléwagnè. In a further deviation from the tragic love story, the death of Toula's true love, Angwé, remains a mystery for several pages in the narrative. A close reading reveals that his death is an outright killing. The narrative events around Angwé's supposed suicide are illustrative of the insidious but fatal violence of globalization.

Toula engages in a love relationship with the young professional, Angwé, against the will of her benefactor and Angwé's boss, the international banker. Despite Eléwagnè's forbiddance to continue their relationship, they carry on their romantic meetings in secret until the banker learns of their defiance. Before Eléwagnè informs Toula that he no longer desires her services or will provide her with the high lifestyle or accompanying sizeable allowance, she learns of her true

love's suicide as she listens to the radio at home. While Toula reacts in a fit of emotions—crying, moaning and yearning for the news to be untrue—she struggles to accept the news, and the narrative conveys considerable doubt concerning Angwé's death. On one side Toula imagines that it must not have been a suicide because she was with Angwé the day before when Eléwagnè surprised them and beat the young man. Toula had fled the violent scene and now she wondered whether the banker simply left Angwé for dead. On the flip side, Toula fears being responsible for causing Angwé to take his own life; and she oscillates between the two beliefs as she mourns for her true love. A subsequent narrative event confirms Toula's suspicion of Eléwagnè. When he comes to talk with her and her grandmother, he bears his confession fairly explicitly. First, he asks Toula why she had to continue her relationship with Angwé when he had expressly forbidden her to do so. Then, he reveals that Ozoumet had alerted him about the regularity of the lovers' meetings and he tells Toula that he had gone to see for himself that she was indeed in Angwé's arms. Finally, before leaving the two women, as Eléwagnè discusses the changes in Toula's material comforts now that he would be severing his relationship with her, he offers his confession in confidence. He directs his speech at Okassa: "Vous comprenez que je ne peux plus voir votre petite-fille. J'occupe un poste qui fait qu'on a les yeux fixés sur moi. Je ne veux pas que mon nom soit mêlé à ce déplorable accident. [...] Je compte sur votre discrétion..." (195). Eléwagnè's words nearly confirm that he is responsible for Angwé's death. This points to Rawiri's observance of a transition from neocolonial power relations to global ones. To cause someone to simply disappear one day is a terror model reminiscent of the extent of "le bras long" of the archetypal dictator, which many male authors portrayed. Here, however, the omnipotent national leader is absent; Angwé's allegorical death indicates the extent of power of the global economic leaders. No longer of use or needed by the consumer society, he simply is killed off,

disposed of. Toula, in a state of shock, can barely imagine that Angwé died this way, and she instead laments his suicide as the local radio had reported it. Finally, however, the narrative ambiguity is resolved. After days have passed, Toula learns from her friends “que l’implication d’Eléwagnè dans la mort d’Angwé avait été rapportée par les journaux étrangers et qu’il avait perdu son poste” (196). More than confirming Eléwagnè’s confession, the significance of the international press revealing this information shows the global power structure at work—and in particular this narrative element is an allegory of how the big banking and corporate structures impact individual lives so deeply. Symbolically, globalization is so powerful, so far-reaching that it executes those who challenge its power structure—even to the slight extent that Angwé does—and covers up its unspeakable ills with a stark misinformation, as is the case in Rawiri’s novel where the local radio reports Angwé’s suicide. It is likely that being so powerful, Eléwagnè was able to ensure that the report on the radio—which is the fastest way to get news out to the most members of the community at one time—by paying someone a little money at the radio station. It is his way of protecting himself from any form of local or international punishment. However, once the international newspapers grasped hold of the story of murder, Eléwagnè’s support within the global structure collapses on him. He is, like Angwé was to him, disposable to those who are more powerful economically than him. His body is of no value to the global elite.

Rawiri compels her reader to see consumerism as holding and maintaining power over contemporary African society. Frenetic global consumerism comes from everywhere! The West is the model for the endless accumulation of consumer objects, and the city is the locus of global transactions. Rawiri’s narrator points to this with various visual examples around the city. For instance, concerning the night-club called “PUB,” the narrator comments: “On se demande même si le propriétaire de ce bar, sans doute trépassé, n’avait pas déniché cette appellation

bizarre pour un tel lieu dans quelque revue touristique anglaise ramassée au fond d'une poubelle, et qu'un Britannique venu à la découverte de l'Afrique y avait laissée" (59). Western objects which make their way to the slum where Toula and her family live, such as the "electrophone" that Ozavino, Toula's brother, "a rapporté de la ville," are contraposed in the narrative with a lack of basic needs for survival (19). The electrophone is thus exemplary. Although Ozavino was able to glean the unnecessary object, evidently discarded by a passing Westerner, the same passage of the narrative reveals his failure to bring any substantial amount of food home for the family of six's main meal because "le marché était presque vide à midi" (20).

One way in which the author is able to illustrate the pervasiveness of consumerism, not only for Toula's generation, but also its rippling effect throughout her community and African society on the whole, is by telling young Toula's story in the context of three generations of women: Toula, her mother, Moussiliki, and grandmother, Yaya Okassa. Central to this position is the denunciation of how the global system maintains women in a position of submission. Additionally, it reveals class struggle on a global scale. In both cases, the dominant positioning of the West and its control over the local economy takes on the role of oppressor. This is evidenced in the narrative with particular references to France, the U.S. and Britain. In addition to piles of French language fashion magazines that successfully dictate the methods for Toula's physical and social transformation (from dieting regimes to skin and hair lightening techniques to modes of social interaction and conversation), this medium pairs with French billboards across the city and the displays of excess of luxury products in the European haute couture shops in the city's shopping center to project the images of beauty and happiness to which Toula aspires. Focusing on cultivating a social behavior that meets the standards for mingling with the global elite in the city, Ekata takes Toula to the "café 'Détente' [dont la] clientèle particulière [...] a

connu les bars anglais et ceux du quartier Latin à Paris” (46). In one of the more happening and hip parts of the city, Ekata and Toula pass by the small bar and restaurant called ‘PUB’ on their way to a nightclub (mentioned on page 94). This is yet another “sign” at once in the literal sense and metaphorically of the presence of models of Western consumer culture. The U.S. asserts its presence with its big and shiny “belles voitures” (11); Angwé is crushed when he learns that Toula has accepted to provide her social and sexual services to Eléwagnè, and the only sense he can make of it is by recalling an American popular saying: “[...] l’argent n’est pas tout mais [...] c’est la seule chose qui compte” (165). Furthermore, the prominent role that Eléwagnè plays in the narrative is revealing of the dominating presence of the European and American economies in Izoua. It is in his capacity of managing director at an international bank that interests Toula. If one considers the relationship between banking and the national economy, the influence of the West becomes more apparent. Local and regional banks are part of a six-country “community”—the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC)—and they oversee the circulation of a common currency, the CFA franc, for the region; and the CFA franc is “pegged to the euro” (*World Bank*, “Gabon” 1). Most of the financial investment in the country through the 1980s was in its oil and its financing “is largely undertaken outside the country” (2). Banking transactions and activities that that directly impact the circulation of money inside the country are overseen by “foreign parent banks,” who also determine whether to make loans to the national and regional banks (*ibid.*). Thus, by accepting Eléwagnè’s money, cars, clothes, jewelry, villa and other imported luxury products, Toula is at the mercy of the administrators of the global economy. Further, by socializing in such high society circles and carrying off their image, she achieves an elevated social status and is supposed to be happy and free of the abject poverty that formerly oppressed her. Each of these places contribute to the creation of “ce monde de miroirs

qui crée des désirs” and show themselves as influencing class positioning in the fictional city of Izoua and its slum, Igewa (Rawiri 27). Toula observes: “[...] je sais que le monde est divisé en deux: les pauvres, dont on ne parle que pour s’apitoyer sur leur sort, et les riches qui possèdent tout et font l’événement” (62). Rawiri condemns the volatility of this global system for the contradictions it produces with regard to human worth. With Toula’s story, her novel ruptures the postcolonial narrative and forges a consumerist narrative of globalization.

Toula’s story comprises the main plot that holds together the subsidiary storylines that are all interconnected with globalized consumerism in *G’amèrakano*. Toula’s body is at once negatively racialized and sexualized; ethnically-inspired violence leads to killing of bodies; and the violence of the city establishes parallels between the two. Other women writers portray a deep-seated vulnerability of young women as they face the city when they migrate from the village, such as Isabelle Boni-Claverie’s *La grande dévoreuse* (1989) and later Ken Bugul, in *La Folie et la mort* (2000). Their bodies are also objectified and abjectified, but the difference is by what. Most such narratives present the rural-urban migration issue in cities that undergo rapid expansion and thus suffer problems of overpopulation, with the cohabitation of ethnic groups and their struggles to intermingle, and the lack of adequate infrastructure due to the rapid growth. These narratives, as does Rawiri’s *G’amèrakano*, portray the city as a hectic, daunting space—particularly for women. But Rawiri adds to this narrative the presence of an economic bully from the outside as early as the first pages of her novel, with an oversized American car that causes an accident, leaving poor African bodies mangled while the driver of the automobile suffers a few mere scratches. The spectacle that this scene creates in the center of the city introduces a series of narrative events that depict a frenetic, life-altering, consumerism in Izoua. Just as the

oversized American car does, high-end European goods and the insatiable consumption of material objects cause conflict throughout the narrative.

In *G'amèrakano*, the standard is that accumulation of money and of consumer goods determines a favorable positioning within the system; but this aspect of the characters' life is always entangled with the violence of Western-driven consumerism which is systemic to globalization. The social world in which Toula, Ekata, and the office secretaries interact is a closed circuit, a network that is impenetrable by the inhabitants of Igewa. Many of Toula's (interrupted) interactions evidence this—and the interruptions stylistically show how the circuit is so closed that it silences those not on the inside. For instance, the neighbor who is in love with Toula remains on the “periphery” within the urban space; he is uninteresting to her because he represents those who do not have the means to engage with the consumer society to which Toula aspires. Toula's conversations with her grandmother also evidence the closed circuit. Yet another example of the closed circuit of globalism is Angwé, a main character in *G'amèrakano*, who reflects upon his chances to create his own livelihood in the context of “[u]n dicton américain [qui] dit que l'argent n'est pas tout mais que c'est la seule chose qui compte” (165). Rawiri's choice to include this *dicton américain* draws attention to the USA in the narrative and its exclusive position not only as economic dominator, but also a model for cultural uniformity. This is further evidenced by other relationships in the novel, where being shut out of the closed circuit is synonymous with the provocation of violence. For instance, as Cazenave observes, Mebalé and Ipeké have “no hope of social ascension. It is in a symbolic manner that the first dies beneath the blows of the second. [...] “From this point on, Toula is described according to the changes in her body and mind, and her rise is related to her success with men” (*Rebellious* 47).

*G'amèrakano* interrogates the far-reaching impacts of this global economic power structure and its closed circuits in an urban Africa that is literally at a crossroads—at the threshold of globalization, or Westernization. In a startling scene at an intersection in the city in which Toula and others make the long treacherous commute into the urban center, “the American” makes its début with a violent thrust to assert its potency. As witnesses to the scene, the bus passengers double as the reader’s eyes and observe the enormous, imported luxury car out of place, literally pushing its weight around and causing tumult for the local inhabitants. This allegorical imagery exposes the reader to the violent shock that globalization incites for Africans:

Une voiture impressionnante braque brusquement à gauche entre deux files. Elle est percutée de tous côtés. La circulation est bloquée. Piétons et automobilistes s’arrêtent. La foule accourt comme une horde sauvage et s’agglutine sur le lieu de l’accident. Quatre des voitures accidentées sont en piteux état. Leurs passagers gisent sur la route. Le conducteur de l’immense voiture américaine se dégage péniblement de la ferraille tordue. Il n’a que quelques égratignures au visage. Des hommes et des femmes en furie se jettent sur lui et le rouent de coups. Il s’écroule. La foule exulte. Enfin du spectacle! (11).

This scene depicts “the American” economic force as an unstoppable beast that, singlehandedly, is capable of overpowering other people. It is one example of the way in which Rawiri ruptures the postcolonial narrative to enunciate her denunciation of consumerism. The act of the crowd witnessing the accident en masse and, subsequently, exhilarated in the “spectacle” of the attack on the economic bully, is a bold intervention which intertextually recalls fragments of anti-colonialist discourse, such as Aimé Césaire’s resonating lines, “la vie n’est pas un spectacle [...]”

un homme qui crie n'est pas un ours qui danse..." (Césaire, "Cahier" in *La Poésie* 21). In this scene, however, Rawiri blurs the lines between the subjective and objective gaze: while the reader (most typically a member of the global elite – an outsider who does not inhabit the slum and is not illiterate) witnesses the scene, the poor from the slum in turn observe the crowd at the scene of the accident. At the same time, the misplaced American automobile, being the object of attention from Toula's perspective, is "othered" not only by the on-looking commuters, but also by the reader. At this literal juncture, the text also shows itself as allegorical. The automobile is a symbol of consumerism and becomes the object of the onlookers' gaze, whereas the postcolonial narrative confronts the subjective gaze of the colonizer onto the African as "object." This mirroring that Rawiri inserts into her narrative can also be interpreted as a metanarrative that subverts colonialist imagery of Africans: For centuries, the West has catalogued images of Africa as "une horde sauvage" and its conditions as "en piteux états;" when "[des] hommes et des femmes en furie [qui] se jettent [...] et rouent [quelqu'un] de coups," countless stereotypical literary, cinematic and other media images of Africa are evoked.<sup>35</sup> This highly visual scene confronts such imagery and interpolates "the American" automobile, rather, as the savage object of the gaze. The oversized, beastly car signifies the omnipotence of consumerism; it is, additionally, an agent as well as an impetus for violence.

The slum is also symbolic of this "carrefour," being an interstitial space between the modern city and the traditional village. The rapidly formed African city doubles as a pastiche of the Western one. It is mixed and matched with people and objects following the great rural exodus and explosion of the urban population. Okassa, Moussiliki and Toula embody this allegorically alongside the striking absence of husbands or fathers in their lives. The author's

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<sup>35</sup> See, for instance, Barlet and Ukadike *BAC*.

inclusion of three generations of female characters indeed also evidences that Rawiri aims to bring women to voice in her story. She skews, however, classic narratives, such as the inter-generational trajectory, which would typically emphasize a clash between romanticizing tradition (the idea of the peaceful, rural life of African elders) and a capitalistic, industrially developed “modernity”.<sup>36</sup>

Okassa represents a world that is passé—at once outmoded and of the past. She embodies the traditional roles of African elders. She romanticizes her rural past and that of her ancestors, recalling that the only worry *back then* was nothing other than “des récoltes lorsque les saisons étaient capricieuses” (Rawiri 27). Okassa imagines an idyllic past and a strongly unified community—one which relies upon subsistence farming, which can fight off intruders and outsiders, and which values rites of passage and celebrates them with customary rituals of dance and song. She recounts: “La vie était comme un fleuve coulant sur un lit plat [...] En ce temps-là, on ne désirait rien. [...] On se contentait de la vie que l’on menait [...] Tout événement qui échappait au train-train habituel était prétexte à des danses et des chants. On dansait et on chantait pour célébrer une victoire guerrière. À l’occasion des deuils, des noces, des naissances [aussi]” (27). Okassa’s recollection of the past is typical of the “return to the source narratives” where one glorifies the past in order to strengthen a critique of the present (Diawara, *African Cinema* 159-64). She goes as far as to try to replicate that life in the urban slum, whether by taking charge of daily activities, or by leading ceremonious occasions, such as Toula’s older brother, Ozavino’s wedding. Okassa was once the pillar of the family, but she is ageing; and her perceivable weakening state is reflective of the fragility of African societies in face of unstoppable consumerist values that inundate Toula’s “world”. Nonetheless, Rawiri does not

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<sup>36</sup> For a discussion of this clash, see Mamdani 9.

leave her reader with the impression that whatever remains of African traditional societies is merely dying off in the face of an overly powerful Western influence. On the contrary, Okassa shows steadfastness throughout the novel as a solid guide and strong woman who maintains her dignity.

At the same time, the other women around Toula who participate in the consumer society perish or even die. These are the women who support her taking on a subordinate role and accepting Eléwagnè's money, clothes, jewelry, car and villa in exchange for sex (her mother, Moussiliki) and who teach her how to socialize in the supposed high society and dress, look thinner and to lighten her skin (Ekata, her cousin and her friends). Toula observes these women closely and thus so does the reader; and as the novel comes to a close, the focus is on the disillusionment of these characters. Moussiliki literally dies of causes unknown. One could infer that alcoholism simply finally finished her off; or, one could delve into the symbolism of her actions as a character who lived and (literally) died for the purposes of appearances. Her death occurs at the time when Eléwagnè dispossesses Toula of her endowments. If we consider her trajectory, then, we remember that, first, she had her bar/shack in the slum which barely even partially sustained her family's needs for food and clothing; next, she encourages her daughter to make any necessary changes to her physical appearance and social behavior in order to gain access to the riches of a benefactor; then, her bar is demolished and Moussiliki moves into the villa; and, finally, once the relationship between Toula and Eléwagnè has ended and Toula and her family have nothing again, Moussiliki suddenly dies in the narrative. She is symbolically a casualty of the workings of consumer driven globalization. Her support of the system has made her weaker.

Toula, on the other hand, as Gabonese scholar Magalie Mbazoo-Kassa asserts, transitions from a passive to an active subject (128-31). Instead of passively accepting the suicide of her boyfriend and she and her family's reinsertion into miserable poverty, she is an active agent of her destiny. She continues a love relationship with Angwé and simultaneously diminishes sexual relations with Eléwagnè; and these are the first indications that she does not accept her new role (her transformation). Further, Okassa is consistently there for her, and Toula listens so often to Okassa's views, reactions to the present and reflections on the past that by the end of the novel Toula hears her grandmother in her own thoughts. Toula realizes that the difference between the two women's experiences lies not so much a distinction between past and present as it is about Toula's refusal to remain subjected to the global economy that shows itself in her little slum of Igewa. As does Emilienne in Rawiri's subsequent novel, Toula assesses the society around her astutely and fights for her agency on her own terms.

Nonetheless, Toula's present as the focus of the narrative, is entirely different from Okassa's longing for an idyllic past and from that of the majority of the inhabitants of Igewa, with whom she has difficulty identifying once she goes to work in the city. As she reveals to her grandmother, the dictates of consumerism predominate: "[...] tu oublies souvent que j'évolue dans un univers nouveau. Je côtoie un monde qui n'a d'yeux que pour l'instruction, l'argent et même l'apparence" (Rawiri 18). With these words, Toula identifies a shift away from the more insular community life her elders knew to one which is inundated with haute couture products, American luxury cars, villas, and complemented by 'educated' conversations over a drink in a chic café. She describes it as a whole other "world" or "universe" in her conversations with Okassa. The impetus for her journey from slum life to mingling with high society—comprised of international bankers and global consumers—is her exposure to that society in the city, which

she calls the “univers nouveau.” Toula must transform her body completely as well as her social habits—ways of speaking and behaving—and submit it to the pleasures of the rich, international banker, Eléwagnè, in order to get herself out of the wretched poverty of Igewa and into the “univers nouveau,” made up of the circles of the global elite. In order to change her socio-economic positioning, she must undergo a complete self-transformation: she must re-image herself according to Western-dominated standards. For instance, she must lose weight, lighten her skin, and smooth her hair with pomade. Her friend Ekata’s advice and insight lead Toula to recognize that that she must mirror the dominant standard of beauty and comportment as dictated, for instance, in Western fashion magazines. Ekata advises her:

Je te remettrai un magazine qui consacre une vingtaine de pages à la culture physique [...] Je trouve aussi que tu es trop noire. La couleur claire passe mieux aujourd’hui. Si tu regardes bien autour de toi, tu constateras que de nombreuses filles célibataires préfèrent avoir des enfants avec des Blancs ou des métis. Ces femmes n’ont pas tort. Elles savent que les métisses sont recherchées à tous les niveaux de la société (63).

Ekata’s words point to the direct relationship between mass consumer culture and contemporary social standards of racialized beauty and of defining the self through the body in Africa. The banker as benefactor serves as a middleman who controls local participation in the global economy. The relationship between Toula and Eléwagnè is one of unequal power, symbolic of the dominance of Western-driven consumerism over local Africans.

On the other hand, Moussiliki, Toula’s mother, embodies poverty and drunkenness, and an inability to take care of herself and her family. Her character serves as a metaphor for Afro-

pessimism, the idea that the past merely “[lays] the foundations of a present crisis” without hope, which became a strong discourse during the 1980s (Mamdani, *Citizen* 287). Since neither her grandmother nor her mother provide a model, in order for Toula to live her life fully, participation in global consumerism appears to be the only possibility.

Rawiri’s narrative shows a reciprocal relationship between one’s social positioning and the image one maintains through consumption. A uniform outward appearance that confirms accumulation of material possessions is emphasized as the principal determinant of a favorable economic, social, and political positioning. The greater excess one can display the more power one has. Allegorically, this points to the power of the West in the global economy over Africa’s weak economies. Toula embodies the extreme submissive status of women of her generation as an effect of globalization. Her exposure to globalization and her subsequent participation in the system transform her into a consumer object herself. Her conversation with her benefactor is exemplary of this when she asks him, “pourquoi il lui remettait de l’argent chaque fois qu’il venait lui rendre visite,” probing the question, “[...] qu’un homme aide une femme dans le besoin [...] n’explique pas qu’il veuille faire d’elle sa propriété, sa chose” (Rawiri 171). Eléwagnè’s reply is indicative in the vulnerable position of African women in the system of globalization. He responds:

On dit que les hommes aisés sont dominateurs et possessifs tout simplement parce qu’ils donnent plus que les autres. Ces rapports sociaux de dominant-dominé entre l’homme et la femme dureront aussi longtemps que les sociétés du monde entier ne se seront pas réorganisées. Tant qu’il y aura des pauvres et des riches [...] Les femmes vivent dans un monde qui a la folie de la consommation [...] Comment trouver tout cet argent quand le salaire ne suffit pas? (171).

Eléwagnè views his role as benefactor in terms of his global positioning: he is not merely a successful local businessman; rather, he sees himself as a member of the dominant elite of global society. He attributes his favorable social and economic status to the world system where the rich control and thus determine the livelihood of the poor. Eléwagnè does not deny that such a system objectifies women, or makes them into a commodity themselves; he accepts the rationalization and privileges the workings of the global market and consumerism over any discussion of gender or class equality.

Rawiri's novel is thus exemplary of how the "consumer society" subjugates women. At the same time, however, the author focuses on the negative effects that the illusion of admittance to global economy has on men. The dénouement in *G'amèrakano* is illustrative of consumerism's yoke over entire societies. Angwé is literally denied life as a result of the inequalities of global consumerism; and his body disappears. Whereas earlier in the novel, the community gathers around Mebalé's body to say good-bye and console his family, Angwé's dead body never appears in the narrative. The disappearance of his body evokes Rawiri's pointed critique that globalization devalues human beings. Secondly, whereas Eléwagnè's perceived self-image is one of global elite, he too is a mere pawn in the economic scheme. This is evidenced by his removal from his executive position at the international bank branch in Izoua following Angwé's death. In the narrative his body, too, disappears, the only trace of it remains the report by the international media of his transfer to another bank elsewhere.

As early as the first scenes of the novel, when Toula makes her journey through the city to work, violence is present, and it looms throughout the work. On her morning commute in the bus a child is knocked down, yet the crowd keeps moving and pushing. Next there is the startling

accident; and, once the driver of the oversized American car exits his vehicle unscathed, “[d]es homes et des femmes en furie se jettent sur lui et le rouent de coups” (11). Upon finally arriving at the office where she works, the tension in the air is already thick between Toula and the other typists; and it merely takes a few remarks between Toula and her colleague, Ekata, before they break out into scratching and hitting and pulling each other’s hair (12). Okassa feels compromised by the material desires her granddaughter encounters and for which she has developed a taste, and she senses danger. Her perception of consumer society is that it incites deep hatred of the other:

Aujourd’hui, tout n’est que tristesse. Plus les gens se côtoient et se déplacent, plus ils peinent. On va chez l’autre pour apprendre et voir et, au lieu de se réjouir des connaissances qu’il a acquises et des découvertes qu’il a faites, on le déteste. On garde jalousement ce que l’on possède et l’on envie ce que l’on n’a pas. On préserve jalousement les biens que l’on a acquis et, en même temps, on nargue les autres avec ces mêmes biens [...] (27).

Toula must accommodate consumerism through the imitation of an other. Her identity is negated, deemed of no value in the context of globalization, because, like her contemporaries, she is compelled to conform to the *habitus* that comes from elsewhere. “Je vis, puisque vivre consiste à imiter les autres et à s’identifier à eux [...] Il faut que j’essaie d’être ce que je ne suis pas [...]” (66). While she is attracted by this lifestyle as her only way out of poverty-stricken desperation, Toula, too, perceives the dangers involved in subordinating herself to a consumer system that will transform her very being into a consumer product.

Rawiri's novel shows the body as a site of contestation. She does so, on the one hand, by using prostitution as a metaphor for the global economy's stranglehold on Africa and Africans' ambiguous complicity in its system. Rawiri's denunciation of this aspect of globalization is represented through Toula's ambivalent trajectories and her constant questioning of prostitution (which she names in the fight with her secretary colleagues) as a contemporary social norm through her conversations and actions. At the same time, as Toula herself takes on the role for some time, characters in other works also engage in prostitution, deliberately, as a means for attaining power. In the next chapter, I show that Mambety's character, Linguère Ramatou also expresses the view of prostitution as a means of resistance to the economic oppression of globalization. Nonetheless, whether a character is a participant in prostitution, or ambivalent towards it, the presence of the character of the prostitute is one subtheme in the works I examine that points to the implied violence of the system of globalization.

Pape Pathé Diop's *La Poubelle* (1984) stands out for the narrator's representation of North/South inequalities, as do some other works such as Pierre-Claver Ilboudo's *Adama ou la force des choses* (Burkina Faso 1987), that deal with the false hope for happiness that comes with the possession of consumer goods. Each of these novels are allegorical portrayals of the devastating effects of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) on individuals and communities, though neither of them is as forward-looking or comes across as such an urgent warning as Rawiri's novel. Nonetheless, it is worth looking briefly at Diop's allegorical tale set in Dakar, Senegal, as exemplary of such narratives in order to underline that a set of common concerns regarding globalization occupies the imaginary of writers as early as the 80s.

As the title indicates, *La Poubelle* is centered on garbage; more specifically, in a literal sense, it is about the circulation of disposable consumer objects. In this novel, Médina, a neighborhood in Dakar, obtains its reusable garbage from a seemingly better-off person inside, who gets it from Europeans and Americans who have imported it. This chain of consumerism involves material goods which seem destined to pass through the hands of local Africans before ending up in a garbage pile, the immense garbage dump of Dakar.

The novel reads like a parable, its moral wrapped neatly in a prologue and a nearly identical epilogue: “L’important étant que l’on ne sache jamais comment vous avez acquis votre château, votre immense propriété, votre luxe de femme, de voiture ou... de poubelle” (Diop 7).

Diop’s novel challenges the hegemony of global consumerism with striking imagery that portrays abject circumstances for those of the subordinate classes. It is an allegory where structural adjustment is mirrored through the marked presence of American, British and other European tourists and nationals and the used commodities they bestow upon the locals. It is about the utter dependence of the “South” on World Bank and IMF programs and the dire consequences on local families when that aid is retracted.

The main protagonist, Mour, lives with his extended family in the popular quartier, Médina. He is a meagerly literate construction worker caught in the predicament of whether to uphold his social and cultural obligations as it is his turn to purchase the family sacrificial sheep (for the Tabaski fête) or to produce payment for his dream home – *one* room in low-income housing. In a naïve attempt to understand his envy of his neighbor, Camara, for acquiring all these material possessions, Mour sets out to investigate how and why he lives this way. Mour becomes so obsessed with Camara’s appearance and by the incomprehensibility of it all that he follows his neighbor, leading him, ultimately, to witness the demise of Camara, as this latter

sucks on an old bottle of whiskey amid the debris of the massive garbage dump at the periphery of the capital. Diop dedicates three and a half pages toward the end of his novel to itemize with great detail the accumulation of consumer products found in that immense garbage dump, including:

des mégots de cigarettes de tous les coins du monde [...], tabacs bruns, blonds, mélanges, en vrac, feuilles de tabac roulées, capsules, bouchons, tire-bouchons [...]. Des carcasses de voitures, des emballages, des landaus cases, des trottinettes sans roues, des produits pharmaceutiques qui se laissent enduire de leurs propres poisons [...] des journaux passés, des revues aux photos décolorées, des revues de mode, de prêt-à-porter, des morceaux de livres, des livres sans feuilles, d'épais magazines aux pages sales qui parlent du monde, des guerres, des hommes célèbres, de mode, aux pages sales [...], des radios crasseuses, silencieuses, des pneus gigantesques, usés [...] (194-7).

And the list of course goes on. The narrator complements this list with the sharp irony that, “seule une ville moderne peut avoir une pareille poubelle” (197). Clearly, this elaborate list is made up entirely of used, discarded items, which reflects the author’s awareness of the mainstream discourse in the U.S. and France of Africa as “Europe’s dumping ground” and “Afrique Poubelle,” respectively. Its contents are also broken, dismembered. Further, these modern items consist of every type of industrially mass-produced product or print media that are circulated throughout the world and represent, mainly, the dominance of world economic powers and the discourses they disseminate. Acquiring and possessing the consumer products and then displaying or even discarding of them allows the Médinois to believe they have reached a certain

social standing. Camara and his wife, Marième, exemplify this par excellence. Old magazines and newspapers symbolize print capitalism and the force with which popular media influences consumer appetite and the formation of ideas and ideals about anything from fashion to politics. Moreover, the narrator's emphasis that the waste in the "poubelle" predominantly comes from elsewhere shows that international media is exerting dominance with its one sided communication. Finally, everything is tossed in the garbage after a short period of circulation and consumption. Symbolically, the ultimate focal point of this portrait of global consumerism is the image of Camara atop the colossal heap, barely discernable from the excess of waste that surrounds him. While throughout the novel this character appears to benefit from globalization, his economic dependence on European and American "aid" (through consumer products) leads him, finally, to his economic and social demise. Camara's existence is an embodiment of globalization. His being is compromised when the foreign nationals deny him further access to consumer products.

*La Poubelle* is thus an allegorical tale concerned with the devastating effects an unbalanced world economy has on urban spaces. The omniscient narrator begins with the ironical assertion that possession of material goods is what makes a man. This then seems to be a story about a man, his castle and his garbage. This man, Camara, lives in a modern villa (14). He is a young civil servant, and he is with the times. He has a comfortable life and a leisurely and confident demeanor. He also possesses a beautiful, modern wife, Marième, whose harmonious gait leaves passers-by with the scent of her chic and subtle perfume.<sup>37</sup> Camara and Marième have the latest modern items – whether the most fashionable haircut from a sophisticated downtown salon, the newest green tea on the market or an electric coffee grinder to replace their old manual

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<sup>37</sup> My own translation paraphrased. The original text is: "sa démarche harmonieuse, laissant flotter autour des buveurs de thé son parfum chic et subtil" (21). All translations from Diop's novel are my own.

one.<sup>38</sup> When their new items become out-of-date, or simply when they acquire the newest version of a material item, their excess fills the large bin—*la poubelle*—in the courtyard of their villa. Across from Camara’s *poubelle*, are the corroded walls and stinking sewers of Dakar’s Médina. This is where Mour and the rest of the regular afternoon group usually drink their tea, chat and tease one another until it is time for all to proceed home for the evening prayer. Camara and Marième are part of the tea group; but to the others, their material success is a secret to be revealed. Most perplexed by the constant replenishing of useful items in Camara’s *poubelle* is Mour. He lives in his uncle’s house with his aunts and cousins, and prefers to try to make payments toward a studio apartment in a new low-income residence for him and his future wife rather than to consider obtaining a bicycle or motorbike for everyday transportation. Mour is, seemingly, the antithesis of Camara; and his daily struggle to make financial ends meet leads him to obsessively investigate and reflect upon the secret behind Camara’s “poubelle”. However, like those of the other members of the afternoon tea group, Camara and Mour’s individual stories are not singular in themselves. Each of the characters, as well as the setting—Médina of Dakar—is representative of human groups, their environment, and their interactions with the garbage of the world. In this way, the author relates the broad implications of possessing material wealth to the particular situations of members of society trying to integrate or coexist with the ever-increasingly competitive and complex nature of globalization, or the high level of exchange of goods and people throughout the world.

*La Poubelle* produces a strong critique of the negative effects globalization poses—particularly for poor communities—worldwide. The story provides a moral lesson for the reader: every human being will try to get ahead in the superficial game of material gain, but is likely to

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<sup>38</sup> The items are mentioned in the descriptions of the contents of Camara’s waste bin (23 and 25 respectively).

find out one day that one is not solely in control of one's own material success. One may, like Camara, appear to have reached a certain level of material comfort; but when the origins of his material possessions are finally exposed in the story, one learns that he is also gleaning from the garbage of an even richer man and his wife, an American couple living in Dakar's center. What is striking about reading Diop's novel today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, is his use of the garbage receptacle as a metaphor for the excessive waste created as a result of a competitive, though largely unequal, global economy. He masterfully seizes all of this, furnishing prolific details of a culturally specific community and the hybrid spaces that overlap with it, to illustrate the large-scale complexities of a city, which could be in many places.

The striking emphasis on the items from the garbage symbolizes an extreme class distinction between those who accumulate and dispose of their excess material items and the Médinois, who desire but cannot afford such luxury. They are the gleaners of waste; they fix it and use it—though not without the awareness and shame of doing so. Mour is representative of the typical Médinois who works hard, but is always faced with the inability to get ahead and, thus, can only access the waste from Camara's *poubelle*. Camara appears to have achieved a certain economic status that allows him to acquire new material and luxury items and, subsequently, to disencumber the burden of the waste once he acquires newer, more modern possession. But in fact, Camara can only replenish his garbage after he has retrieved the new items from the American couple's *poubelle*.

Throughout Diop's novel, the Médina is the primary setting in which the allegory of waste takes place. However, the Médina is neither isolated within the city limits of Dakar, nor is it unique with respect to other cities throughout the world. The narrative focus on the spaces inside and around the Médina allows for an interpretive understanding of the complex inter-

workings of globalization at the local level. It also brings perspective to the economic relations and commonalities between cities throughout the world. *La Poubelle* thus poses a general question concerning the relationship between humans and global waste, in addition to telling the tale with the particular setting in Dakar.

The allegorical structure of the novel allows for Mour and Camara's individual stories to be interpreted in a broader context. Both, by the end of the narrative, share the central problem that is representative of the predicament that globalization poses as a set of contradictions for Africans: the inability at once to assert one's local culture and to maintain basic living standards, such as paying for one's home (basic human rights). Despite the initial disparity between Mour and Camara's economic situations, then, Camara is ruined because the source of his *poubelle* has been unveiled. Additionally, the American couple, who would also provide Camara with his lamb, cuts off the supply to him when they face economic problems of their own. In the final scenes of the novel, Mour finds Camara in the midst of the rats, stray dogs and immense piles of garbage of the largest *poubelle* of all of Dakar. As Mour is exploring the massive dump, completely awestruck, he stumbles upon him, unsure at first of what is moving: "Nuée de mouches? Rats? Un chien encore?" he wonders (198). Then, as he approaches, Mour understands it is a man; and he believes he is a bum. Mour sees him drinking from his bottle of whiskey and eating the piece of bread and cheese that he had retrieved from the immense pile of waste; he is literally consuming waste. Mesmerized almost with delight by the scene of the dump (an ironic spin in the narration), Mour finds it "bien normal" that a bum would come to sit in the heart of such a luxurious heap of throwaways (198). He opens the conversation with an enthusiastic: "Que de choses, dans la poubelle de la capitale!" (199). When Camara finally looks up and shows his face, however, Mour is floored. Camara is utterly crazed that he has been exposed,

and, he speaks with sharp irony: “Elle est belle, hein, la poubelle de la capital!... Mais ouvre donc les yeux, Babacar [Mour’s Muslim name]!... Car, qui te dit que c’est sa poubelle, à la capital?... Qui te le dit?...” (199). Finally, he declares wildly that the whole dump belongs to him and invites Mour to dig through it. Why has Camara ended up in the dump? What happened was he was putting on airs. His appearance, his villa, and all of his possessions that ended up in his own waste receptacle which was so appealing to so many in the Médina came from a relationship he had been cultivating with an American couple, the Mullighans (127). He simply went three or four times a month to their residence across the city to clear out the junk that piled up from the husband’s trading business, including, as Mr. Mullighan describes them: “des articles plus ou moins détériorés que je n’ai le plus souvent ni le temps de réparer, ni le temps de brader ou, même, de jeter à la poubelle” (118). Each time he went, Camara gleaned what he pleased from their garbage—an appliance that had quickly become outmoded because a new one came out on the market, for instance—and brought it back to his “poubelle” in the Médina. But when the *fête de tabaski* came he, like Mour, did not have the money to buy the sheep. The couple had usually purchased it for him when he needed it, but this time they announced they were unable to. Thus, like Mour, he suffered deep anxiety that he would be dishonored if he could not produce the sheep the year that it was his turn. His ultimate fear was realized when the Mullighans came looking for him in the Médina and publicly described the work he had been doing for them and announced that they would not be able to supply his sheep this time. Camara was ruined because he had become fully exposed. He had “toute la honte de la terre” because not only could he no longer maintain appearances, but, moreover, he was unable to fulfill the duty that his family, his community, his culture expected of him and which should have taken priority over showing off his meaningless consumer goods (143). Camara’s “poubelle” represents the extent to which

Senegal's capital city's economy is linked to and dependent upon numerous economies throughout the rest of the world. It also, in my interpretation, asserts that the harshest effects of the complex economic forces of the global economy fall on the shoulders of individuals, such as Mour and Camara, in a small enclave of a city—even if the city overall is supposedly benefiting from globalization.

Another way in which Diop's work relates the distinctiveness of life in the Médina with other areas of Dakar as well as with other cities of the world is in the at once contrasting and relational religious and educational characteristics of individual Médinois who represent entire groups. The author's employment of a prolifically detailed, slow-paced narrative style exposes the ways in which the specifics of the Médinois' way of life are in constant negotiation with ideas and material objects that originate in other parts of the city or from various locations around the globe.

The narrator defines and explains the daily activities and events minute-by-minute or hour-by-hour, with particular emphasis on the Médinois' practice of Islam. Throughout the novel, the narrator presents and explains to the reader the meanings of various Muslim traditions as well as the unequivocal importance each Médinois ascribes to daily habits and activities, such as the tea-drinking ceremony in the late afternoon, the evening prayer and the year-long preparations for the annual *fête de tabaski*, a Muslim holiday during which the sacrifice of a sheep honors the tradition of giving. Such meticulous attention to the cultural specifics of the Médina forces the reader to recognize that religious tradition is, on the one hand, idealized and that the Médina is an insular space. Conversely, the looming presence of the *poubelle* represents points of conflict and tension that arise between family members or friends in the Médina and is proof of the ease with which material objects and diverse ideas flow into the enclave. Indeed,

Mour's undying attention is focused on Camara's *poubelle* when he attempts to understand why his own economic situation compromises his ability to fulfill his obligation to buy the sheep. He also has to contend with his nephews, who have a fight over an electric iron they found in Camara's garbage bin. The contrast between the supposedly insular religious community and the tension the material items incite in the Médinois proves that Médina is not, in reality, a closed space with a singular tradition. Rather, as the *poubelle*'s important role as well as the interactions between the different members of the regular tea group illustrate, the Médina is a space in which change is taking place. While there remain customs or economic factors that are specific to the Médina, the space is loosely distinguished by "imprecise and unofficial" borders in and around which is the constant flow of Médinois (36).

Two examples expose the diversification of the Médina's human population and its interaction with other parts of Dakar. The first concerns education and economic status. Individual members of the regular tea group offer excellent examples of groups who flow in and out of the Médina and negotiate outside influences when they return. Given the year of publication of Diop's work, it is clear that when the narrative contrasts the "old guard" with the university-educated youth, the point of reference is the replacement of Koranic schools in the villages with the establishment of a French-based university system in the cities (18). Vieux Sidi's character then represents a sizeable group of Senegalese who were predominantly exposed to a Koranic education. Mour missed out on university education, for it is clear that, for his age-group (and perhaps also social situation), work was more important in making a life in the city. The younger generations, represented in the tea group by Khady and Taye, Issa and Thioune, for example, have the opportunity to complete a university education. It is thus significant that this generation—who clearly has spent most or all of their life in post-independent Senegal—offers

insightful and diverse opinions on class positions in the country in a conversation over tea with Mour and Camara. The members of the younger generation believe that their education has allowed them to move up socially and to become members of the Bourgeois. They believe that the Bourgeois are “[des] alliés objectifs” in maintaining the established order of economic power (18-20). They see themselves as transitioning to the educated elite and, as a younger generation they believe they have the power to achieve what they see as positive change in society. The narrative dialogue shows that the image the youth have of themselves is far from Mour’s reality. Thioune tells him: “Mais Mour, toi aussi. Que tu sois ouvrier qualifié ou specialize, tu es dans le coup: tu es aussi bourgeois que grand Camus!” (18). But Mour disagrees, insisting that his social positioning is unchangeable. “Ah, quoi! Moi, bourgeois? T’as déjà vu des bourgeois porter des poutres de fer lourdes comme ça du matin au soir! Entre 9 heures et 18 heures tous les jours, avec une demi-heure pour manger du riz au poisson !” (ibid.). The conversation persists with some friendly banter between Khady and Issa in which they demonstrate their intelligence to one another, showing off really. Camara is mostly silent, except for the side comment he makes to Mour that exposes that they both had fewer educational opportunities. Next, Mour makes a joke that shows he is lost in Khady and Issa’s conversation about sines and cosines albeit without belittling his own intelligence. Then, one of the students follows his joke with kind words towards Mour. However, the student, Thioune alters the mood with a sly remark that angers Mour so much that the other tea drinkers have to hold him back as he lunges at Thioune with fists waving. Thioune remarks that Mour is “un allié objectif du pouvoir. Au lieu de se perfectionner [dans la lecture et l’écriture] pour pouvoir défendre ses droits, il dit qu’il n’a pas le temps!” (20). Despite the momentary shift in mood, the group quickly goes back to joking with one another and drinking their tea; and Mour says with a light air this time: “Quand vous

viendrez à l'usine, je vous ferai porter un peu nos poutres et nos lamelles de fer, nos bonnes briques, et vous me direz si je suis un bourgeois ou un ouvrier!" (21). This conversation between the younger generation of hopefuls and Camara and Mour who are already settled in their socioeconomic positions is a direct allusion in the narrative to the contrast between these last two: Camara appears throughout most of the story to be a part of the powerful middle class, who is connected—not to the powerful educated elite of Senegal—but rather to the global circulation of luxury goods. Mour, at the other end of the spectrum and in spite of the same level of education as Camara (as the conversation inferred), is a lower-class, manual laborer whose long working hours keep him from demanding the same economic opportunity as Camara enjoys. Nevertheless, despite the probable amelioration education will have on the future economic situation of the university-educated youth, another group's portrait points to the inability to completely erase the boundaries between the Médina and other areas of a capital city whose *poubelle* is controlled by the economic powers of globalization.

When Mour follows Camara through the various neighborhoods and areas of Dakar, his observations indicate the difficulties in removing the blurred boundaries that separate the more affluent—mainly European—downtown enclaves and the Médina. The portrait of young women, who typically find work as secretaries in the city center, is illustrative of the temporary accessibility to the material goods Médinois may enjoy. Although, as the narrator explains, they will maintain—for a short period—an exterior appearance of economic success, their origins as Médinoises will come back to them at the time of marriage. Despite the short-term enjoyment of the clothing and accessories imported from rich countries and found in the catalogues and boutiques in their very own city, this group of women will be forced back to a life where one waits for a good item to show up in a *poubelle* somewhere. The narrator presents this in the

context of under-development, alluding to the fate of women from the poor enclaves of an overall economically unstable country. This group of women both benefits and suffers from the forces of globalization. In spite of temporarily breaking down the unofficial borders around the Médina, their example shows that the novel's message remains that even in the case of a city that is supposedly integrated in the global economy, the Méдиноis continue to be denied economic stability.

Going beyond the one example of Dakar's Médina in the allegory of globalization, Pathé Diop exemplifies this Senegalese city as a symbolic euphemism for enclaves in capital cities of the so called developing world that are currently marginal and poor. The setting of this story as well as its characters could be the same story of the garbage of any city in any country of the "Global South." As the narrator explains—moreover, by means of directly addressing the reader with phrases, such as "Vous remarquerez que..."—this Médina represents the type of space one finds in many urban settings throughout the world (35). Whereas "médina" is the word for this type of enclave in Dakar, the same type of space is referred to as "villa miseria" in Argentina, "favela," in Brazil, "slum," in India, or "shanty town" in Zimbabwe. In each of these places, as in many others elsewhere, every individual retrieves their *poubelle* from somewhere; but s/he does not have control over whether or not s/he will be supplying or gleaning her or his next material possessions. Diop's story, then, is about Dakar and Africa as much as it is, as I propose in this analysis, a critique of the negative effects the global economy has on the marginalized populations of the world.

Whether in Mour's courtyard or Toula's "world," these stories include depictions that constitute parallel narratives evoking the unavailability of potable water, food, affordable

housing, access to basic health care and education, a lack of employment opportunities and reduced wages for civil servants. This, alongside the violence to bodies and the sexualization of the body in Rawiri's novel as well as the motif of disappearance or disposal of bodies in the two novels respectively, condemns globalization for deeming entire classes of humans disposable. As literary representations, these early African depictions of globalization establish certain elements that show power relationships that carry over from the colonial to the neocolonial to the global context. And, this is something that is shared with films from the same region.

## Chapter Three

### Consumerism on the Screen I:

#### Chasing Dreams of a “Mythical” West in Djibril Diop Mambety’s *Touki-Bouki* (1973)

As did the novel, African Francophone cinema also shifted its focus from denunciation of the ills of colonization to a critical examination of the issues that ail contemporary postcolonial African societies. During the 1970s and 1980s, many filmmakers were critical of political leaders and the elite of newly independent African nations for taking on a role similar to that of the former colonizer. According to Nwachukwu Frank Ukadike, the examination of their societies marked the “introspective phase” (BAC 166) which, as Françoise Pfaff and other scholars agree, was characterized by “a sarcastic glance at the incongruity of France’s neocolonial presence in independent African nations and a denunciatory stance toward the socioeconomic oppression continuously exerted on disenfranchised masses by the new African elites” (99). In the films of the *introspective phase*, on the other hand, consumerism emerges as a major theme. Ukadike observes this in Gnoan Roger M’bala’s short film, *Amanié* (*What News*, Ivory Coast, 1972), Étienne N’dabian Vodio’s *Le cri du muezzin* (Ivory Coast, 1972), Mustapha Allasane’s *F.V.V.A – Femme, villa, voiture, argent* (Niger, 1972) and Henri Duparc’s *Abusuan* (*The Family*, Ivory Coast, 1972). Ousmane Sembène’s *Xala* (*The Curse of Impotence*, Senegal, 1975) is also exemplary of this tendency. These portrayals evidence the filmmakers’ preoccupation with “the delusive aspects of neocolonialism [and] the lure of material success” (BAC 171). Further, consumerism shows itself as the impetus for the surfacing of an additional set of issues that

afflict societies of newly independent nations to include, “deceit, prostitution, and thievery,” along with religious and ethnic conflict over material spoils (ibid.).

In such films consumerism shows itself to be an inheritance from the former colonizer. The neocolonial ties between France and its former colonies’ new leaders are exemplified by the way they emulate her. For instance, Madeleine Cottenet-Hage observes the following trend: “Officials and bureaucrats of all types generally speak French, wear European clothes, and treat their subordinates with the same haughtiness and disrespect that we are used to seeing in older films. This is part of the more general pattern of ‘cultural mimicry’ that characterizes the African bourgeoisie in Africa-based, usually satirical cinema. Discarding African dress and languages are markers of class mobility and assimilation” (Cottenet-Hage in Pfaff 117). Dominic Thomas observes the same “transfer of power from colonial to autonomous rule [...] in a striking scene [in Sembène’s *Xala* in which] traditional African clothes are abandoned in favor of the Western style ‘costard’ [...]” (“Fashion” 958). Whereas the trend among the filmmakers of the introspective phase was to critique African leaders closely allied with the neocolonial power, I observe a shift in current African francophone filmmakers’ attention to changes in the global power structure and their direct, albeit rippling impacts on the continent.

Djibril Diop Mambety’s first feature length film, *Touki-Bouki* (1973) stands out as the earliest example emblematic of this shift. In addition to depictions of Western-driven consumerism through the filmmaker’s insertion of visual references to French-style clothing and dress or symbols of American consumer culture, this film’s visual references point to the (dis)connection between West Africa and the West. Exemplary of this is the symbolic departure of the Trans-Atlantic ship from Senegal’s port of Dakar on its horizontal trajectory to France on which Anta travels. Mambety’s work also stands out for its aesthetic innovation—not only

concerning the visual aspects of his film, but the soundscape as well. His film is marked by sophisticated camera work, “effective visual metaphors, and intelligible juxtaposition of images of reality and fiction,” according to Ukadike, which in my view additionally draws attention to the themes related to the dominance of consumer-driven globalization (Ukadike, *BAC* 173).

African films are filled with iconic examples of imagery and stylistic devices which filmmakers have used to provoke critical reflection on social, cultural, political and economic issues on the continent among viewers. Certain symbols, such as the fetish or the Kore (a long wooden staff), in Souleymane Cissé’s *Yeelen* (1987) evoke an idyllic mythical past. Manthia Diawara has noted Cheikh Oumar Sissoko’s filming of the Sudanic architecture of Djenné in *Guimba, un tyran une époque* (1995) as a manifestation of a glorified African past in contrast to the oppressive dictatorship Mali endured following independence in 1960 (Diawara, “Iconography” 88 in Givanni). Additionally, according to Pfaff, “[as] part of their didactic anticolonial discourse, Francophone African filmmakers have often punctuated their urban narratives with buildings and monuments that are concrete icons of former European colonial rule” (Pfaff 91). Whether it is treating historical narratives, portraying regional cultural traditions, following a didactic approach, or taking denunciatory stances against colonialism and its aftermath, African cinema privileges a richly diverse aesthetic iconography.<sup>39</sup>

In Mambety’s film, images of the United States of America stand out as symbolic of the country’s rising economic power and its overshadowing of the former colonizer, France. At the same time, dialogue, music and sound effects are equally integral to such a representation. In her groundbreaking essay, “Sound and Empathy: Subjectivity and the Cinematic Soundscape”

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<sup>39</sup> Ukadike contends that an “authentic” African filmmaking aesthetic exists whereas Manthia Diawara maintains that “there are variations, and even contradictions among film languages and ideologies, which are attributable to the prevailing political cultures in each region, the differences in the modes of production and distribution, and the particularities of regional cultures.” See Ukadike *BAC* and Diawara, “Iconography” 81.

(2001), musicologist Robynn J. Stilwell refers to these three elements as the “soundscape,” and argue for its equal consideration in relation to other components, such as “lighting, design, camera angles and editing” (“Sound” 167-8). According to her, a filmmaker’s manipulation of the “soundscape” is equally integral to the production of meaning in cinematic works. Her aim, thus, is to break down the hierarchy that exists between the different elements of sound among viewers as well as scholars. When viewing a film, she asserts: “Typically, we prioritize the dialogue, as a bearer of the narrative, but the occasional sound effect may catch our attention with new information. Music tends to remain a subliminal signal for most audience members” (169). Likewise, she signals that specific academic disciplines are designated for the study of individual components. The study of film music, for instance, is left to musicologists whereas departments of technology and sound reproduction deal with sound effects. In disagreement with such boundaries, Stilwell highlights the *soundscape* as a “perceptual” rather than a purely “technological” aspect of cinema so that the “viewer/auditor” includes each of its elements in his or her analysis.

Stilwell’s term, *soundscape*, is of noteworthy relevance to an ongoing debate among African filmmakers and scholars – particularly with regard to *Touki-Bouki*. On one side, the film has been widely praised for its artistic and stylistic qualities. However, such attention to aesthetic innovation opened the debate concerning the value of its narrative content and, consequently, fueled arguments – even among directors – against the collective agreement to produce politically engaged films.<sup>40</sup> For instance, exemplary of critics who contend that the film’s great significance is based solely on its cinematic structure, Roy Armes sees the story content as

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<sup>40</sup> Filmmakers held such debates at the FEPACI (Fédération PanAfricaine des Cinéastes) congresses of 1975 in Algiers and 1982 in Niamey. The former proceeded from the understanding that filmmakers across the continent were united in “embrac[ing] the tenets and philosophy of the ideologically engaged form and content of third cinema.” See Martin 193. There was already discord among filmmakers on the subject at the second meeting.

ancillary: “[...] in a very real sense [the story] is little more than a thread on which to hang, bead-like, a series of always vivid but often very differently shaped stories” (*African Filmmaking* 113).<sup>41</sup> In contrast, Ukadike has forged a sort of compromise in his book-length study of African film aesthetics with a thorough elaboration on Mambety’s filming and editing techniques that is exemplary of the attention scholars have paid to *Touki-Bouki*’s cinematic qualities:

The film’s stylistic sophistication surpasses previous experimentations within African cinema and is replete with well-integrated symbolism of typical African sociocultural codes, effective visual metaphors, and intelligible juxtaposition of images of reality and fiction which force frequent action and reaction between opposite poles. The film lacks the slow pacing and linear structuring that so characterizes and stigmatizes most African cinema. The editing strategy subverts spatial, temporal, and graphic continuity: disjunctive editing, jump cuts, and calculated disparities between sound and image violate dominant patterns of representation within both Western and African cinema, thus contributing to the fascination of the film (Ukadike, *BAC* 173-4).

Alongside his praise for Mambety’s filmmaking, Ukadike cautions “critics [who] have read the film as an avant-gardist manipulation of reality” and exhorts Africanist scholars to “attempt a reconfigurative reading that synthesizes the narrative components and reads the images as representing an indictment of contemporary African life-styles and sociopolitical situations in disarray” (173). Ukadike urges us to see that the issues African filmmakers portray are so pressing that one cannot ignore content. My aim in this chapter is thus to examine the ways in

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<sup>41</sup> Armes’ position echoes Férid Boughédir’s classification system of African cinema in which he places *Touki-Bouki* as stylistically rather than politically revolutionary. See Boughédir.

which image and sound work together in *Touki-Bouki* as iconic examples of the encroachment of Western-style consumerism.

Further, a focus at once on Mambety's innovative film style and the overt critique of French (or Western) society in his first film places him among other minority radical practitioners of film art who were producing artistic commentary on the deep problems of European and American society in the late at the same time. For instance, the French-Swiss screen writer, director, and film critic, Jean-Luc Godard (1930-), and the Italian modernist, Michelangelo Antonioni (1912-2007) were producing works, such as *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* (1967) *Blow Up* (1966) or *Zabriskie Point* (1970), respectively. Such works exposed with disdain the acute polarities of Western society within itself with its political injustices and civil strife. Moreover, both Godard and Antonioni also evoke a deep mistrust of the consumer frenzy that flourished and increasingly captivated the young, hip "in" crowds of Britain, France and the United States. Antonioni's *Zabriskie Point* actually projects the destruction of the consumer world. In many ways, Mambety's work must be considered within this tradition, as he also critiques the West within the West (with the Western medium of the cinema). At the same time, it is essential to note that Godard or Antonioni could easily produce films that denounce and destroy consumerism since consumer goods and consumer society are readily available and are the norm. Mambety, however, could not use such strategies in Africa where basic consumer goods necessary to everyday life (domestic utensils, tools, access to water-without which washing machines have no meaning) are restricted or absent. His denunciation of consumerism therefore had to be much more political. Differences in representational strategies aside, Mambety's stunning art film thus stands out as an artifact of a transnational trend that artists like

Antonioni and Godard were most known for. It is also noteworthy that the Senegalese filmmaker's training in Moscow further allowed for a nuanced cultural critique of the West.

*Touki Bouki* tells the story of Mory and Anta, a young couple who spend their days pining for an elegant life in Paris, France. The two characters are marginalized in their native Dakar Médina: Mory is a rebellious young man who – in contrast to his probable past as a cattle herder – has turned to petty thievery in his own community. He disrupts the pedestrian tranquility of the medina with the loud roar and kicking dust of his motorcycle and associates exclusively with his girlfriend, Anta, and, occasionally, Charlie, a flamboyant character who recreates an idyllic Euro-luxury life at his Oceanside villa. Anta is Mory's clever companion. She evades her mother and aunt, drawing attention to her marginality in relation to the traditional community of the Médina, constantly slipping away to her “modern” university life or to meet with Mory, and chooses Western casual dress over the boubous that other women in the Médina wear.

With Mory taking the more aggressive lead, the couple embarks – as the Wolof title conveys – on a “Hyena's Journey.” Cunning and greedy, they aim to amass enough cash to buy a ticket for the ocean liner departing for France by engaging in three major exploits. First, Mory attempts to outsmart the dealer of a local card game. When this fails, the couple heads to the wrestling arena and steal what they believe to be the grand prize – millions of CFA francs. However, upon opening the chest at their getaway location, they are desperate to find that it only contains the fetishes of one of the contestants. Finally, their ultimate success is attained when Mory succeeds in pilfering Charlie's entire wardrobe and Anta steals cash from one of his poolside guests. The two take off in Charlie's American classic roadster, sure that they are on their way to “Paris le paradis.” Their journey from the villa to the port of Dakar is presented as a

dream sequence in which Mory and Anta literally parade gallantly through the entire city. As if they were royalty, the guards at the presidential palace salute them; an elder in the Médina sings their praises; and the crowd downtown cheers wildly. Upon arrival at the port, a major twist in plot leaves Anta alone aboard ship while Mory turns back and performs a staggering sprint through the streets of the city. Looking around at her new, unfamiliar surroundings on the luxury liner, Anta finds herself at a literal crossing between neocolonialism and global consumerism.

Mambety portrays this historic shift most obviously with a camera that cuts from Anta's searching gaze on board the ship to the collage sequence of close-ups that accompany the disjointed conversation of *Coopérants* about their past seven years teaching in Dakar. Their remarks are paired with their own commentary about the fate of the world economy. The first two speakers' words leave little to the imagination concerning the filmmaker's overt critique of France's neocolonial role. A male teacher recounts advice he had given to one of his students: "Your job is to kick out the neocolonialists whom I represent." This opening remark is striking in that, not only does the teacher refer to himself as a neocolonialist, but also, in that the group's remarks are framed by a subsequent widening pan that shows the group of *neocolonialists* literally on their way out. While the luxury cruise ship is not bringing them back to France for good, the emphasis on the past in the *Coopérants*' reflections on an uncertain future signals the diminishing power of France over Senegal alongside the emergence of additional foreign involvement.

The next teacher to speak, a *Coopérante*, elucidates the filmmaker's disdainful opinion of neocolonial presence as at once crippling and demeaning to Africans. She states: "Our salary is three times the Senegalese teachers [and] we bank half our salary [...] but [of course] they don't eat the same as us; they don't have the same refinement." Her words indicate that even with

France's support through bilateral programs following independence, former colonies remain at a great economic disadvantage. Additionally, her articulation confirms that the European colonial mentality of cultural superiority towards Africans persists despite changes in power relations. Economic disadvantages as well as discourses of cultural inferiority—as vestiges of colonialism—continue to characterize the African experience of consumer-driven globalization.

Overall, these frames portray France's diminishing—albeit continuous—power over its former colonies and contextualize Africa's positioning in the current triumph of globalization. Together with images of consumerism, the symbolic return of the *Coopérants* to France leaves the viewer with an open-ended question: why are the French ceding some of their neocolonial influence and to whom? What is the political and economic historical context to which this act alludes? What is happening on a global scale in the early 1970s that will impact the African continent and France's relationship to her former colonies? These visual frames, accompanied with a disorienting musical theme and the rapid cuts between the *Coopérants*' dialogues evoke an important shift in world politics; and Anta's discomfited gaze at the unfamiliarity that surrounds her evokes Senegal's uncertain future. Additional speakers in the same sequence of close-up headshots provide illuminating answers to these questions with their remarks about changes in the global economy. Their praise for U.S. economic strength contextualizes France and Senegal in a changing world economy. France's heyday (as a colonial power) is ceding to other growing economic powers. As a number of consumer objects symbolize throughout the film, the United States of America emerges as the dominating power.

Mambety's choice to present the economic strength of the U.S. in this conversation directs his viewers'/auditors' attention to the changes in the organization of the economic and political world-system that occurred from the end of World War II through the late 1980s. As

political scientists Michael Hunt and Steven Levine remind us, during the post-World War II era “a historic shift was underway” with regard to international relations. Particularly, during the 1960s and 1970s (when the majority of African Francophone countries experienced their first two decades of independence from colonial rule), “the accelerating decline of the Western imperium in Asia and Africa was opening the way for some new, yet still undefined, international system” (Hunt and Levine in Leffler and Painter 251-64). In other words, when France and England lost their colonial reign over the two great continental expanses, an opportunity for a new dominant world power arose without any prescriptive structuring or blueprint for its outcome. The Cold War was underway. The United States was already extremely well positioned politically, and ideologically grounded in its discourses of democracy and free liberal trade; its prime competition was the USSR and the communist ideology it promoted. Communist China, despite a short alliance with the Soviets, ceased rapidly to be a contender for world power due to its own internal affairs during the Maoist Revolution. The Cold War pressed on requiring every nation to choose a side. This had particularly resonating effects in newly independent African nations that were less stable politically and economically. Indeed, it is widely acknowledged that the African continent “was used by the superpowers [USA and U.S.S.R.] to play out their competition” (Ukadike, *BAC* 67).<sup>42</sup> The U.S. and the Soviet Union both made promises of political and economic protection and provided goods to African leaders; in return, they required African allegiance to their respective causes. In the case of Senegal, the country’s president at the time, Léopold Sédar Senghor, did not maintain socialist nationalist ideals as did, for instance, his contemporary, Sékou Touré, in neighboring (Francophone)

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<sup>42</sup> Diawara articulates the same. The notion of Africa as well as much of Latin America, for instance, as a pawn of the superpowers during the Cold War is also noted by Guneratne in the context of “Third Cinema.”

Guinea. Thus, the USA maintained a favorable position of power in the country, and the remarks by Mambety's characters reference this.

Mambety's inclusion of China and the United States—without mention of the USSR—in his historical framing of the film is also noteworthy in light of the important role China—and this time not Russia—has pursued through increasingly capitalist modes on the continent since 1980. Of particular note, as reflected in recent media reports alongside an increased volume of publications on its activities in Africa, is the country's embrace of capitalism. For instance, in one of a series of articles in the *New York Times* that investigates China's growing involvement in African countries, Harry Hurt III refers to one of the most recent books published on the topic, *China Safari: On the Trail of Beijing's Expansion in Africa* (2009), and signals a revision of its former insular economic strategy to one that engages actively in competition in the global economy.<sup>43</sup> His reference is to a 1995 speech that authors Michel, Beuret and Woods cite in their book, in which Chinese president, Jiang Zemin, encourages business leaders to: 'Go abroad! Become world players!' (Hurt 2009). And, indeed the country has done so. According to Michel, Beuret and Woods: "Bilateral trade between [China and Africa] multiplied fiftyfold from 1980 to 2005, quintupling between 2000 and 2006 [...]. It is estimated that in 2006 there were nine hundred Chinese companies operating on African soil [...]" (Michel, Beuret and Woods 3). China is currently deeply invested and thus largely present predominantly in sub-Saharan African countries, including Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Kenya, Mali, Namibia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Somalia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Its primary interests in these places is mining; although it is clearly broadening its power base through economic and cultural projects such as the distribution of loans to governments, the construction of roads,

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<sup>43</sup> The series of articles in the *New York Times* began in 2007 and is ongoing as of November 2009. A selection of the articles is included in the bibliography.

bridges and other infrastructure as well as educational training programs and exchanges. “China has [thus] taken France’s place as Africa’s second largest business partner and is hot on the heels of number one, the United States” (Michel, Beuret and Woods 3). Such a presence across the African continent reminds us of the “new yet still undefined international system” Hunt and Levine observed during the 1960s and 70s and which has characterized the consumer side of the current globalization. It is within this context of a “global” economy that one must situate *Touki-Bouki*, as is evident from Mambety’s preoccupation with the effects of the rise of consumer capitalism in the wake of colonialism.

Mambety’s insertion of iconic imagery and sounds of Western consumerism in *Touki-Bouki* signals America’s rise to global economic domination during the period in which the film was made and, symbolically, Senegal’s acquiescence to free-market capitalism. In the film, Mambety accomplishes a critique of American-led Western consumerism as an extension of his critique of France as a former colonial power. Three visual examples of the force of American-driven consumerism in the space of Dakar stand out in the film: a pair of Mobil oil tanks, a giant Pepsi-Cola cap, and a classic American automobile with a continental tire painted with red and white stripes and blue and white stars. Mambety weaves these icons of American consumerism into his plot with sophisticated camera work and an elaborate overlapping of music, voice-over and sound, resulting in a complex narrative that portrays the force with which consumerism descends upon Senegal’s capital.

First are two scenes which, together, form a larger narrative sequence as the camera swiftly cuts from one to the other: The viewer sees the backside of an O.P.T. employee (Office of Postal Services and Telecommunications) as he struggles to climb the sandy embankment to reach the main avenue. Meanwhile, as the civil servant persists in his efforts for several minutes,

the camera cuts to a group of young men piled up in a four-wheel drive vehicle as they pull up to the university gates to bully Anta. They have it in for Mory (whom they later capture, tie to their truck and parade through the city). While the youth continue to search for Mory, the camera cuts back to the O.P.T. employee, indicating the lengthy duration of his struggle. A still medium shot shows his feet as they take two steps up, before sliding down one. After several tries, his feet finally manage to pull him up to the crest of the hill. His success is confirmed with a rapid cut to another still frame in which he figures at the left edge facing the camera, which, this time, is positioned across the road. A horse cart and an old car cross each other – one left to right, the other right to left, almost creating the effect of two curtains opening. Central to the frame and interrupting an otherwise distant horizon are two Mobil oil tanks (*Touki-Bouki* 13:17). They are more prominent than the human subject in the frame (he remains at the left edge), suggesting that his daily struggles to fill his duties as a civil service employee who does not own an automobile will persist while the American oil giant grows and expands its international market. Mobil, in these frames, is representative of the strength of privatized companies in the global economy in contrast to poor countries, such as Senegal, which, like the civil servant, struggle from the inability to rise out of poverty in the face of the global economy. The shot also foreshadows privatization plans that have become compulsory under the restructuring programs of the World Bank and IMF which meant that the country would replace much of its national companies (that the civil servant represents) with private international corporations. As the camera cuts back and forth from the civil servant to the young bullies, and then from the imposing Mobil tanks back to the group of young men who now have Mory tied to the rack on their truck—parading on public display for all of Dakarois society—this striking scene points to the bullies as the educated neocolonial elite that implements the privatization of national industries, and thus as a metaphor

for the domineering presence of foreign companies like Mobil. An agent of the oppressive global economy, Mobil, poses a looming threat to the development of Senegal's national economy.

In another instance, an oversized Pepsi-Cola bottle cap appears on the exterior wall of a downtown building during the dream sequence where Mory and Anta parade through the city (*Touki-Bouki* 57:14). Its presence is surprising at first in that it seems oddly out of place following images of Anta's Aunt Oumi and other slum dwellers singing Mory's praises for his newly acquired wealth or in contrast to other prominent national icons, such as the presidential palace. However, the giant Pepsi-Cola bottle cap is clearly a deliberately calculated addition to this sequence of shots. The visual composition in which the advertisement appears gives the impression that the consumer product maintains its ominous stature as a fixture on a downtown wall. The object appears at the upper right corner of the frame toward the end of the parade sequence. From the viewpoint of Mory and Anta, it frames the shots, remaining steadily at the top of the frame, as the camera pans from left to right across the crowd of onlookers. Suspended above the heads of thousands in the crowd, it alludes to the rising status of consumerism from the perspective of the young couple. Notably, this scene follows the sequence where Mory and Anta parade past the national icons, former colonial administrative buildings where the French ruled its colonial capital of French West Africa. Mambety's insertion of consumer images in this scene—the Pepsi cap, the American car they ride in and even references to French consumerism (Renaut billboard)—marks the looming presence—and perhaps promise—of a rising global consumerism that will one day pose a threat to African nationalism.

Furthermore, the frames in which Oumi, an elder, and her neighbors sing and dance in praise of Mory contrast sharply with previous frames in which the former curses Mory for having stolen her rice as if she had turned into a *sorceress* (MacRae 27). Whereas Mambety's

focus on Mory and Anta is on their marginal roles, the change in Aunt Oumi and other inhabitants of the slum indicates that the welcoming attitude toward consumerism, or its praise, is seeping deeper into the rest of the society. The culmination of the parade sequence produces an aesthetic marriage of the visual with the auditory elements of the soundscape which brings together the elite, the marginalized middle class and the poor in unison to praise consumerism – as if they were all converted to the Western consumer mentality.

Most striking is the “all-American classic” automobile that Mory and Anta steal from Charlie. Mambety dedicates a great deal of the film to shots that feature this automobile, particularly of its hood and rear which are painted in red, white and blue stars and stripes. It is a luxurious car by any standard (even during the 1970s), but most notably, it confirms Mory and Anta’s future journey into a world of opulence (they believe). As they ride away from Charlie’s villa, each of them transforms their physical appearance with the wardrobe Mory had stolen while Charlie was in the bath. During the dream sequence in which the couple parade through the streets of Dakar’s medina to its downtown, the camera executes a series of horizontal pans as they pass national administrative buildings, such as the presidential palace. During this particular moment, prior to the cheering of the crowd of onlookers, the president’s guards salute Mory and Anta. The “all-American classic” is in this way praised alongside its passengers.

Mambety’s carefully edited *soundscape* overlays audio tracks with such images of consumerism; and notwithstanding the prominence of symbols of American consumerism in the film, the U.S.A is by no means a singular driving force. With the insertion of historical landmarks, France also shows itself as a continuous presence and influence through iconic imagery of French consumerism. The country’s continuous “strong ties” are exemplified throughout the film. Cottenet-Hage and Pfaff observe this unceasing neocolonial persistence in

their respective essays, “Images of France in Francophone African Films (1978-1998)” and “African Cities as Cinematic Texts.” Frames where historical buildings figure prominently, such as the presidential palace, which was formerly the colonial administration building (erected in 1906) of French West Africa’s capital, are notable examples. Additionally, the announcer’s speech at the start of the wrestling match alongside the visual text (frames of old decorated generals who fought in World War II for France and are presently national leaders) refers to “important people”. Also, visual frames, for instance, during the sequence in which Mory and Anta head toward the port in the American car, include strong background shots of a billboard-sized advertisement for Renault automobiles. It covers the entire side of a building in the wealthier Plateau district (toward Place de la Liberté) of Dakar.

American and French consumer products—together—thus represent Western consumerism in the film. For instance, accompanying the long sequence of Mory and Anta parading through the streets of Dakar in the “All-American Classic,” Josephine Baker’s voice fills an audio track with the tune of “Paris, Paris, Paris...” (*Touki-Bouki* 1:06:09). Mambety devotes a cumulative four minutes and forty-four seconds to the chorus throughout his film, which is an enormous amount of cinema time! The initializing frames of the first sequence consist of an overlay of other isolated audio tracks that fade in when Baker’s voice fades out and vice versa. The tracks include drumming, the cawing of vultures, interspersed with a similar sound from a man in a tree, as well as the idling motor of Mory’s motorcycle. Each time Mory and Anta feel they have amassed money and are on their way to board the ship for Paris, Baker’s refrain fades in at full volume. In this way, Mambety gives importance to Baker as an icon of Western consumerism. She embodies consumerism through the image France has made of her: although her African roots were never known, she was presented as an African “native” at the

Universal Colonial Exposition of 1931 in Paris.<sup>44</sup> By doing so, France made her a *global* product; the exposition commoditized and consumed her. As Njami notes, this coincided with her rise to fame as a performer (“Forward” in Jules-Rosette). She was an American whose fame was attained through successful performances in France. Dominic Thomas has remarked that “American blackness has for decades been recuperated and imported into France—from Josephine Baker and Richard Wright to [more] recent television commercials that have capitalized on the sociocultural currency this offers by featuring young black Americans rather than the local resources offered by African minorities residing in France’s postcolonial diasporic communities” (Thomas, “Intersections” 240). Thus, Baker’s voice represents not only the words that she sings in praise of Paris – “Paris, le paradis” – but also the commodification of her being as an icon of French—and by extension—Western consumerism.

Why does Mambety choose to include Josephine Baker’s song as opposed to one by another artist? Of the myriad of choices available to him, why is Josephine Baker the best choice for Mambety’s film? According to Cottenet-Hage, declarations referencing “Paris le paradis” or ‘Paris is beautiful’ are commonplace “in Francophone African cinema [whether] in the form of songs, slogans, [or] catchphrases [and they] belong to a mythical construct about France and Europe that Africans have absorbed through schooling, radio programs, films, television, and, especially, the stories that immigrant ‘returnees’ tell because failure is so difficult to admit” (Cottenet-Hage in Pfaff 119). In this view, the song fits thematically. Indeed, Baker’s nondiegetic refrain accompanies Mory and Anta’s desire to enjoy the glamorous life that they believe awaits them on the other side of the Atlantic. Mambety was known for his deep disdain

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<sup>44</sup> Jules-Rosette and Njami note that casting Baker as a “native” or direct descendent of Africans fed “the quest for exoticism undertaken by the exposition’s organizers and French anthropologists.” See Jules-Rosette *Josephine Baker* 62.

for African youth who glorified and pined for Europe, and Mory and Anta represent this group in the film (Cottenet-Hage in Pfaff 118). How, then, does his insertion of Baker's repetitive trill contribute in breaking down such mythical illusions? Claudia Springer has taken up some of these issues and describes Mambety's choice as functioning on two levels: First, she sees the role of the lyrics as indeed revealing Mory's desire to pursue the dream of completing the round-trip voyage to France and returning to great public praise for his accomplishment. At the same time, however, Springer notes that: "The use of Baker's voice contains a level of irony; her fame in Paris was not based solely on her considerable dancing and singing talents, but was inextricably caught up with her presentation as a 'savage' black woman who had to dress in 'jungle' attire onstage despite having grown up in St. Louis, Missouri. Baker's praise for Paris as the gateway to paradise in the song may be fueling Mory's fantasy of French glory, but it should also function to warn him about the reality of French racism" (Springer 140). This is a subject that, as Springer notes, Mambety does not develop in the film; however, it is evident that it preoccupied him.

Indeed, France's commodification of Baker was dependent upon her construction as a racialized gendered subject. Kathryn Kalinak reminds us that just as French colonialism in Africa was based on the science of racial inferiority, the work of Modernist artists that showed a fascination with Baker herself, such as Picasso, Cocteau and Le Corbusier, evidenced that such Othering was also a form of exoticism. As Kalinak notes, in "the twentieth century, that fascination [with the *other*] was circulated as a cultural commodity, most notably through the work of the Modernists" (322). In addition, from the Harlem Renaissance writers of New York and Paris in the 1920s and 30s to those writers who continued their meditations on race, society and the law at both edges of the Atlantic throughout the 1950s, evidence of the racialized subject prevailed while on the other end of the spectrum whiteness became a commodity. A most

striking example is the notion of “passing,” which meant ridding oneself of all of one’s “savage” features of Blackness and replacing them with white skin, and smooth, lighter hair. Such a transformation from *other* to White “enabled [one’s] mobility, [particularly a woman’s] entrance into the marriage market, and her marriage to a wealthy white man” (Larsen xix). Mambety’s inclusion of Baker as an icon of exoticism forces the consideration of such a broad range of discourses on race that were highly relevant to social realities of the period he portrays.

Mambety’s *Touki-Bouki* draws further parallels between race and consumerism with the insertion of his character broadly referred to by scholars as the “savage in a tree.”<sup>45</sup> Merely given a small part, the character appears twice in the film: first, he appears to Anta in the dream sequence where she and Mory meet at their hideout to exult in the riches they believe to have taken from the wrestling match. She is riding Mory’s motorcycle; however, disturbed by this man in a tree, she rides off the road and leaves the vehicle wheels spinning. Her fear is the result of this light colored human being who is perched in a tree sporting only an afro and a loincloth. His screeching finds assonance with the vultures’ cawing around him. This sequence suggests a sly play on racial stereotyping by Mambety, who portrays the trope of the “caveman” as a white individual who lives with only the shelter of trees in the African bush. He does not appear again until the final scenes of the film, when Mory is making his staggering way back through the streets of Dakar. At a moment, he passes by an accident: lying in the road is, on one side, the motorcycle; and on the other, the man who had clearly taken the bike when Anta left it in despair. Presently dressed in a stylish European shirt and slacks, the “savage” evidences his complete transformation into a “civilized” being with the utterance: “C’est une jolie bête, non?”

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<sup>45</sup> Roy Armes and Lizbeth Malkmus refer to the character as a “savage in a tree,” whereas other scholars have identified the same individual as a “European hippy” or simply a “‘wild man’ [...] with a stone age axe.” See Armes and Malkmus 192; and Diawara (2000) 86-7.

Directed to Mory, who is now fleeing back to his roots of cattle herding (and away from “Paris, le Paradis”), the white man’s expression infers that the modern motorcycle has brought him to language and thus to all that Mory and Anta desired. Rather than glorifying an ideal Paris as Baker’s words suggest, Mambety inserts her iconic status alongside examples such as the “savage” and the motorcycle in order to broaden his critique of consumerism as inscribed with discourses of race and *othering*.

While Mory and Anta represent the penchant of marginalized (middle class) youth for the accumulation of consumer goods to the point of obsession, Mambety’s frames depict consumerism, *rather*, as an imposing “Other” in the space of Dakar –objects that are presented as extrinsic to Senegalese society. This is evidenced in the establishing sequence before the opening credits and recurs throughout the film. First, Mory disrupts pedestrians on the avenue with the loud roar of his motorcycle. Next, there is a sound of an airplane landing which gets closer as the camera zooms in on Anta who is studying at a desk outside of her home. She drinks from her bottle of imported Vittel water before the camera cuts to a group of women and young kids assembled around the public water pump; and two ladies get into a fight over their place in line. The audio and visual dissonance of this sequence projects consumerism as an imposition on the community in the medina.

Additionally, the film portrays complex issues that arise in Africa as a result of the U.S., Europe and other allies’ success in producing and sustaining the consumer-driven world economy. These include power struggles, dreams of migrating to Europe, rural exodus and mass migration into urban centers which have neither employment opportunities nor industry to sustain such change (due to industrial underdevelopment). *Touki-Bouki* establishes that foreign aid will be given and taken away; gender roles will change, particularly women’s roles. For

instance, women will make it to France. Whereas earlier it was just men who would leave to receive education, Anta begins her journey without a plan. She is all alone. So does this hint that she will somehow join the university upon arrival or will she have another experience? Mambety leaves these questions unanswered with his open-ending, although it is unlikely that she will engage in university life given the gender-specific roles in place in France at the time. More plausibly, Anta will find work as a domestic servant or as a prostitute. Additionally, the film depicts the rapid urban expansion Africa experienced due to the largest rural exodus in centuries. The scene where two women of the Médina begin fighting over their turn to collect water from the collective well signals the hardship they experience to provide for their families in urban spaces of a newly independent nation that is ill-equipped to service its masses. Finally, the film infers that overall violence will afflict societies as a result of consumer-driven globalization.

Mambety's first feature film shows where consumerism comes from and how the West emerges as a new dominating force in young West African nations, such as Senegal. Mambety's extensive exploration of consumerism through his films is foundational in African cinema, establishing the theme of consumerism and its ill effects which he and other filmmakers take up and expand upon throughout the 1990s and 2000s. In his entire oeuvre, Mambety further explores consumerism, and its negative effects as part of the emergent current globalization; and his films stand out as forms of resistance to it.

The penultimate frames of *Touki-Bouki* mark the film's open ending and leave the viewer with several questions. At the end of the film, whereas Anta boards the ship in hopes of "a better life"—as an immigrant in "the paradise" of Paris—when she glances back toward Mory, he pauses in a moment of reflection and decides not to embark. Whereas the film provides no information about the fate of either character, one merely deduces that Mory feels compelled to

return to his work as a cattle herder; and he leaves his partner to an unknown fate. The last frames show Anta in a widening pan as the ship prepares to float out to sea, and Mory running with rapid, shaky camera movements, back to the center of Dakar. In Mambety's next feature, *Hyènes*, produced nineteen years later, one is forced to return to the ending of *Touki-Bouki* and consider Anta's journey to France. Mambety himself has stated this in an interview: "I began to make *Hyènes* when I realized I absolutely had to find one of the characters in *Touki-Bouki*, which I had made twenty years before. This is Anta, the girl who had to leave Africa and cross the Atlantic alone" (Ukadike, *Questioning* 124). So, the return of Anta (not Mory)—albeit in the form of a completely reconstructed character—becomes central to the story of consumer-driven globalization in *Hyènes*. How, then, was her experience in Paris? Did she experience the fashionable, luxurious life of great wealth that she expected? How does Mambety frame these questions? And what changes over the course of very nearly two decades led him to focus on the return of a female character whose male counterpart had abandoned her? What new issues are at stake in this context?

## Chapter Three

### Consumerism on the Screen II:

#### Broken Bodies, Vanishing Bodies:

#### The Effects of Economic Restructuring in Mambety's *Hyènes* (1992)

*“Colobane pour un meurtre, la prospérité pour un cadavre”* – Linguère Ramatou in *Hyènes*

Most scholars agree that *Hyènes* is an allegory of the economic predicament that globalization poses for Africa. For instance, Annie Wynchank asserts that the character Linguère Ramatou is “une métaphore qui représente la Banque Mondiale et le Fond Monétaire International, les organes des puissances néo-coloniales, qui veulent contrôler l’Afrique post-coloniale au moyen de leur aide financière [...] L’argent assujettit les Colobanais et les corrompt tout comme les fonds de la Banque Mondiale ont corrompu et asservi une certaine bourgeoisie africaine sans scrupules” (75). This view is commonly held among scholars. However, few have probed further into the continuity of Mambety’s reflections on consumerism and its meaning in the context of globalization. It is striking that there is little in-depth analysis of the filmmaker’s detailed denunciation of globalization through its material trappings, given the importance he attributes to the orgy of consumer products that Linguère Ramatou brings with her from her travels the world over to the small, increasingly remote town of Colobane in order to carry out a death sentence on Dramane Drameh and, later, of the entire community. In fact, writing off the film as an obvious indictment of globalization has led some scholars, such as Joseph Gugler, to exclude it completely from thematic or stylistic overviews of African

cinema.<sup>46</sup> One reason for such a dismissal of the film concerns the question of adaptation. The parallels between Mambety's film and Swiss playwright Freidrich Dürrenmatt's 1956 play, "Der Besuch der Alten Dame" (literally *The Visit of the Old Lady*), has stimulated a commonly held view that the film is not wholly representative of African cinema. In more positive criticism, it is often viewed, as Pfaff notes, as "continu[ing] a trend that links African and European creativity in new ways [...thus showing] that Western writers such as Dürrenmatt could be successfully 'Senegalized' and adapted to the screen" (Pfaff 6). From Gugler's perspective, however, as a critically acclaimed adaptation of the Swiss play, Mambety's film achieves the aim shared by some filmmakers "to escape the confines of producing films that present 'African stories' in an 'African mode'" (179). For this reason, Gugler believes that *Hyènes* must still be considered as part of the Western canon; and, indeed, a great many scholars agree that Mambety's creation of a "universal" story makes the film less authentically African.

The debates concerning Mambety's film as "adaptation" of Dürrenmatt's original play address the limits of adaptation. However, film theorists, such as Dudley Andrew, maintain that "no filmmaker and no film (at least in the representational mode) responds immediately to reality itself, or to its own inner vision. Every representational film *adapts* a prior conception" (97). This view allows us to see that the Swiss play can provide an interpretive opening to Mambety's film. The process this filmmaker carries out in the development of his cinematic narrative transforms his work into a set of signs that mirror his vision of the world. *Hyènes* is a representation of the ways the artist sees the interactions between his character, Linguère Ramatou (as a metaphor for the World Bank in *one* incarnation) and Senegalese society of the 1980s.

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<sup>46</sup> See Gugler. Also, see Murphy and Williams 1. These scholars agree that this is the same reason Melissa Thackway excludes the film from detailed analysis in her work.

My aim in this section is neither to question the (African) authenticity of the film nor to carry out a close comparison of the two works as other scholars have already done<sup>47</sup>; my interest is, rather, to examine Mambety's meditation on the concept of consumerism as he presents it in the context of globalization with its direct effects on Africans—and more broadly, on the human. Mambety achieves this through the creation of the multidimensional character, Linguère Ramatou, and by juxtaposing her version of justice with the “traditional” justice that called for her earlier banishment—her abandonment by her community—in the first place – evidently called into question in the new circumstances upon her return. Parallel to the drama of Linguère Ramatou's desire for revenge, is the detailed attention to her means of obtaining justice: by giving “aid” through consumer products and money. Seeking revenge for her banishment (and seemingly for her broken body), she brings this outside world in, and its immediate effect is the punishment of Dramane.

In her book *Djibril Diop Mambety: ou le voyage du voyant* (2007), Annie Wynchank examines the ways in which the filmmaker developed what she sees as a “dual” character in Linguère Ramatou, as at once a sort of reincarnation of Anta and, in a second role, a “metaphor” for globalization. In Wynchank's view, however, Ramatou stands out as uniquely representative of the neo-colonial elite. Making direct reference to the reality that she claims Mambety is portraying, she cites the scholarly work of René Dumont, dedicated to the study of the region of the Sahel during the neocolonial period. Wynchank concurs with Dumont that the neocolonial system grew structures, such as the World Bank and the IMF, which provided luxury and wealth to the new elite of former colonies, such as Senegal, and which, in turn, allowed for the introduction of the importation of new manufactured products into African countries at the

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<sup>47</sup> For a close comparison of the play with the film, see Rayfield.

expense of their dependence. She thus argues that upon returning to Colobane, Linguère Ramatou represents the corrupt African elite who reap the benefits of aid programs and do not inaugurate lasting programs for their people. It is in that position, Wynchank believes, that Mambety's stance in the film *Hyènes* is rooted. In my view, however, Wynchank's presentation of the filmmaker's molding of Linguère Ramatou leaves out additional aspects that contribute to the multidimensionality of the character. I see her, rather, as revealing some nuanced differences between the neo-colonial and the global elite as well as the cultural contradictions the filmmaker identifies in traditional society. This is evident if one analyzes more closely the sources from which Mambety creates her alongside the changes to her character, as well as the consistent characteristics he chooses to keep from one Ramatou to the next. Ultimately, one observes the figure at once as a victim, an enabler and, finally, an embodiment of globalization and the consumerism that drives it.

### Linguère Ramatou

Linguère Ramatou is indeed a multidimensional and complex character. As Wynchank observes, the figure of Linguère Ramatou not only comes from traditional Wolof folklore and Egyptian legend, but also from Mambety's broad imagination paired with his stylistic leaning for the fantastical. These are each elements that make up the "global" Ramatou (with "modern" characteristics, too) who embodies at once the violence of globalization and the deep contradictions its consumer side produces, particularly in poor regions (or enclaves), such as sub-Saharan Africa.

Referring to the tale Mambety told and printed on a brochure at the release of his film in Cannes in 1992, Wynchank recalls how this figure originated and evolved. It is worth citing Mambety's words at some length:

Une curieuse histoire qui remonte aujourd'hui à il y a quinze ans. À Dakar au Sénégal, je vivais dans les quartiers du port, entouré de prostituées. L'une d'elles me fascinait par sa grandeur. Tout le monde l'appelait Linguère Ramatou. Linguère Ramatou signifie Reine Unique, dans notre langue. Ramatou est un oiseau rouge de la légende de l'Égypte noire pharaonique. Un oiseau sacré que l'on ne tue pas impunément. Il est l'âme des morts. Cette prostituée était nommée Linguère Ramatou parce qu'elle ne travaillait pas dans les bas-fonds du port mais dans les hautes sphères de la finance. Tous les vendredis, elle descendait vers le port pour faire profiter les miséreux de son argent et partager sa richesse avec tous. [...] Un vendredi où elle n'est pas descendue, je lui ai imaginé une histoire [...] (Mambety cited in Wynchank 71-2).

The story Mambety invents is not about a prostitute; instead, it is about a young girl who lives with her mother and grandparents, having been abandoned by her father. In his story the villagers suspect that young Linguère and her family members are sorcerers and blame all of their troubles on spells they have allegedly cast. One night, in an attempt to free themselves of the sorcerers' curses, the villagers set fire to their home. Next morning, when the villagers return to inspect the charred remains of their victims, they find every body except that of Linguère. They are terrified by this; and at the end of the tale, haunted by the song of a striking woman much like the one who fascinated Mambety in the port. Mambety closes his narrative by recalling the mysterious

departure of the (real) prostitute: “Une grande dame dans la plaine chante le mystère de Linguère Ramatou. Le peuple ainsi vécut dans la hantise d’un retour de la petite Linguère. [...] Linguère Ramatou ne revint plus dans les bas-fonds du port. Nul ne sait où elle avait émigré” (72).

Linguère Ramatou is thus first based on a real person: the prostitute Mambety observed at the port. Her work with clients from the *high finance* sector is consistent with the filmmaker’s final version of the character who sells her body on the global market. Next, she transforms into a figment of his imagination where she takes on the fantastical characteristics of the sacred bird, Ramatou, from Egyptian legend. In Wynchank’s view, the *reappearance* of this character makes Ramatou immortal: “la Ramatou de Mambety est impérissable, immortelle, puisqu’elle renaît d’un film à l’autre” (80). This grounds her character in a traditional role which, in this instance, Mambety celebrates. Her timelessness evidences a history of African tradition and culture that extends to a time well before Western colonization. Additionally, the legendary figure’s immortality—as “l’âme des morts”—allows the filmmaker to cast her in different roles at different times, maintaining some characteristics in each transformation while adding others. It is in this way that Mambety confers multidimensionality on her, separating, in a sense, the young woman who seeks revenge for her abandonment from the “outsider” that Linguère Ramatou has become. Her immunity from punishment makes her the timeless figure who maintains her dignity, whether in the role of the generous prostitute Mambety observes during the late 1970s who gives alms to the poor despite her service to the neo-colonial elite, the little girl whose family is shunned and unjustly killed in his folkloric tale, or the Anta/Ramatou who returns as stronger and empowered in spite of her previous abandonment. The moralizing tale he circulates at the release of his film in France suggests a critique of colonialism and its values through its laws and its *mission civilisatrice* that disrupted and nearly destroyed traditional animist societies

completely. In this portrait of Ramatou (who ultimately transforms into the kind prostitute from the port), he praises tradition in the face of a changing society that showed intolerance toward animist beliefs, believing little Linguère and her family to be sorcerers. With the return of the “grande dame” who haunts the community for abandoning the little girl, Mambety adds a motive for revenge against those who wronged her (and her family).

A markedly different Linguère Ramatou is the one who, rather than returning to protect Colobane from the outside forces of negative change, embodies the dangerous fate that descends upon Dramane and, ultimately, the entire community. She has completely transformed. She is no longer a glorified traditional figure; instead, she abhors the tradition that cast her out years ago. Instead of being a mysterious and captivating prostitute from the port, she laments that the world has made her a whore. Her revenge narrative has overcome her generosity; and the “gifts” she bears carry a heavy price. According to Wynchank, the link that remains between Mambety’s tale (discussed above) and the film is that “on ne dispose pas [de Ramatou], pas impunément” (73). This is significant. Her final transformation in fact makes her an *outsider*, and whereas Mambety celebrates the impunity of the innocent traditional Ramatou, he critiques that of the outsider. This is evidenced by her address to the townspeople: “Habitants de Colobane! J’ai offert cent milliards en échange du cadavre d’un des vôtres. J’ignore si cela est un crime” (Hyènes). Her words evidence her outright refusal to heed the laws of the land. She is so rich and powerful that she will stop at nothing. She remains immortal; but even her immortality has undergone a complete change. She is literally and symbolically reconstructed. Her broken body is fabricated in gold; and in her outsider status, she has become the “hyena.” In an interview at the Southern Africa Film Festival in 1993, Mambety revealed the significance of this metaphor:

[...] the Hyena is a terrible animal. He is able to follow a lion, a sick lion, during all seasons. And during the lion's last days it comes down and jumps on him and eats him, eats the lion peacefully. That is the life of the World Bank. They know we are sick and poor and we have some dignity. But they can wait, wait for the last days when you say OK, I know my dignity is meat. I want to survive. Please take my dignity and kill me with your money (*Africa Film and TV Magazine* 1993).

Mambety thus transformed Linguère Ramatou drastically, molding her to represent the issue that evidently struck him as most urgent throughout the 1980s and early 1990s: the devastating effects of the banishment of the African continent from the world economy.

It is this final version of Linguère Ramatou that scholars have noted for its uncanny similarity between her and Swiss playwright, Dürrenmatt's character, Claire Zachanassian. Indeed, Mambety's screenplay is strikingly comparable to "The Visit"; and, it is evident that the film is adapted from it. However, according to Wynchank, it was only subsequent to an interaction between the filmmaker and a German friend who brought his attention to the similarities between Mambety's original screenplay and the Swiss play, that Mambety met and spoke with the playwright about adapting the work for the screen; and, ultimately, it was his failed pitch to producer André Gardies that influenced his choice to revise the plot considerably into the story that is nearly identical to the original: "une vieille femme qui regagne sa ville natale trente ans après l'avoir quittée, abandonnée par l'homme qu'elle aimait et conspuée par les habitants" (Wynchank 73). As I mentioned above, scholars have paid a great deal of attention to the similarities of these works. Yet, I would like to point to several differences that reflect the

seriousness with which Mambety approaches the theme of Africa's exclusion from the global economy. First, despite a nearly identical cast of characters, Wynchank observes differences in their dispositions. For instance, she points out, Mambety's characters are "plus nuancés et plus humains. [...] Claire Zachanassian était un personnage de farce, avec la série de maris extraordinaires qu'elle avait épousés, ses manières assez vulgaires, ses vêtements voyants, ses cheveux roux, la robe de mariée qu'elle arbore pour son huitième mariage. Mambety a exclu tout cela dans son film [où il crée un personnage qui est plutôt] digne [...] une héroïne de tragédie" (80). So, stylistically, Mambety chooses to approach the themes of abandonment and revenge with more seriousness—framing a "human drama" rather than the farce with which Dürrenmatt masks his tragic love story (and politics). Further, Mambety highlights the townspeople's enthusiastic reception of Ramatou. As Burlin Barr observes: "[...] as the town prepares for her arrival, the citizens actively recreate stories about Ramatou as selfless and generous and that sentimentally position her as a long-lost daughter who finally is returning to the place she belongs" (Barr 67). Ramatou's welcome home by the people of Colobane produces a narrative of belonging to the community, in which her status suddenly changes to citizen. So the character of Ramatou is politicized, as opposed to Dürrenmatt's Claire. In this way, Mambety is more overt about his political stance even if he blurs it a little by emphasizing the love story and abandonment/revenge motif. Another marked difference is the death Mambety chooses for Dramane. Whereas his counterpart, Ill, in "The Visit" dies of a supposed "heart attack,"—a familiar trope in late modern European tragic love stories—Dramane's body disappears. This is a noteworthy change; and it is essential to ask why Mambety chooses such a dramatic death for his character. Further, what is the significance of the bulldozer scene in relation to Dramane's disappearance?

Besides Wynchank's substantial examination of Ramatou's development as a character, Sada Niang's conclusions in his study, *Djibril Diop Mambety: un cinéaste à contre-courant* (2002), are helpful to begin to answer the above questions. Underlining that the story portrays an historical moment where African countries, such as Senegal, find themselves at a crossroads during the neo-colonial moment, Niang distinguishes Linguère Ramatou's role from that of her former lover, clarifying each one's allegorical function: "Dramane a été une hyène. Linguère est devenue l'hyène par excellence en voulant profiter de la déprivation des mœurs à Colobane pour détruire l'avenir de cette ville" (137). In this view, Dramane symbolizes the neo-colonial elite who pillaged African nations by hoarding the power and wealth that the former colonizers dispensed following independence, whereas the (reconstructed) Ramatou espouses, in my view, the power of global institutions that exact the changes from the customary legal and economic structures that will eventually destroy former stability. Besides addressing the issue of the misallocation of monies by corrupt African leaders—by pointing out the existence of a mayor but no municipal building, a police and military presence but no health services and a teacher with no school building—Niang's analysis infers an interpellation of globalization (Ramatou) for dangling loans like carrots on a stick and maintaining African municipalities (such as Colobane) in a state of economic dependence decades after independence from France (Niang 139-42).

Moreover, Niang's remarks concerning the body remind us that Mambety's central narrative – of abandonment and revenge – is essentially about human value. Just as Ramatou's return (as representation of the World Bank) will nullify her banishment, the townspeople will live if they kill Dramane, whereas if they don't they will starve and die. In this context, it is essential to note the emphasis Mambety places on the body as proof of existence; and, as Niang reminds us, the body is at once the site of victimization (Ramatou's broken body) and

punishment (the disappearance of Dramane's body). Since the final frames during the closing credits are an obvious allusion to the demolition of the entire town of Colobane, it is evident that Mambety is posing a more urgent concern around the disappearance of not just of one body (Dramane's) but of many (the entire community of Colobane). With this, the filmmaker juxtaposes the value of the human (Ramatou, Dramane, the community) with the value of consumer happiness. He achieves this by returning to and developing his first female character, Anta. He takes as his point of departure the image of Anta boarding the ship toward the unknown and then observing and contemplating how the contradictions of a shifting global power structure transforms her into Linguère Ramatou. And he develops Ramatou as an impressively complex, multidimensional character over nearly twenty years as his struggle to finance the film mirrored yet again economic relationships of dominance and dependency (this time concerning the cinema).

In an interview, Mambety made clear his intention of bringing *Touki Bouki's* Anta back in his second feature film, *Hyènes*—albeit this time as a completely reconstructed character, Linguère Ramatou—in order to tell the story of a young African woman and her experiences in Europe and in the outside world. His choice to emphasize the experience of a *woman* who manages to make the journey to Europe and beyond, *and* to return is noteworthy, and in many ways unexpected. In comparison to the majority of sub-Saharan African films which—when they do present a journey—predominantly portray a *man* who has returned from France, the métropole, Mambety's Linguère Ramatou is the focal character in *Hyènes* who completes the journey in both directions. Many films present the male journey/return with two additional elements that are so standardized that they create a trope: first, he returns bearing innumerable gifts and money for all as symbols of his “success” in spite of and as a matter of concealing how

much he struggled to survive wretched conditions while away; and, secondly, his return incites some sort of community conflict since his absence has instilled in him ideas about life that markedly differ from those of his original community.<sup>48</sup> Mambety's second film is exceptional in that it broadens and alters this three-pronged trope with several twists that reflect noticeable changes occurring outside the continent, notably, the shift to the current global age. The most significant of these changes was the reorganization of the world economy, which, in an effort to offset the problems that former colonies in Africa posed to the balance of the global marketplace, led the USA and the more powerful European nations and multinational corporations to create the institutions of the IMF and World Bank, and later, their "debt relief," and structural adjustment programs—significantly, two years after the release of the film, the CFA franc was devaluated.

Mambety mirrors these changes through the character of Linguère Ramatou in a narrative that relies on a simple dramatic structure and a pairing of themes: abandonment and revenge. Telling the story of Ramatou's banishment from her community evokes a critique of traditional society, and thus a shift toward introspection. Filmmaker Jean Ouedraogo developed this theme more fully in 1989 with *Yaaba*<sup>49</sup> (Burkina Faso), a feature Mambety helped to film as he struggled to obtain funding to continue making *Hyènes*. Whereas Ouedraogo portrays two young

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<sup>48</sup> The first of this three-pronged trope is observable as early as 1966 in Ousmane Sembène's *La Noire de...* in which Diouana's boyfriend, as well as the old war veteran, typify the experience of going abroad and returning as a male journey. The old man had fought as a soldier on the side of the French during WWII; Diouana's boyfriend went to study. Both men returned to Senegal with revolutionary ideas which informed nationalist discourses that were anti-colonial, the latter resonating through student engagements at the university. The exceptional journey that the young woman undertakes is unlike any made by her male contemporaries, particularly in that she does not physically return home. Notable characters who contribute to the trope include El Hadji Beye in Sembène's *Xala* (1975) whose purely symbolic journey is followed by his (supposed) increased wealth with which he takes a third wife, effectively causing conflict among his own family members, metaphorically a microcosmic representation of the nation. Each aspect of this three-pronged trope is evident in Ousmane Sembène's last film, *Moolaadé* (2004). Éliane DeLatour still relies on this trope in her most recent feature, *Après l'océan* (2006), albeit with the added element of shame that eats away at a character who ends up revealing the "real," experiences he and other African immigrants share not only in Paris, but also London and New York.

<sup>49</sup> *Yaaba* means grandmother in Mooré.

village children whose youthful purity leads them to empathize with and befriend the old woman their community had abandoned, Mambety elicits critical reflection on the past from the people of Colobane in their present. With this, the theme of abandonment privileges the narrative focus on the human community. The people of Colobane can imagine Ramatou's sense of abandonment because they are now—in the film's present—equally isolated, abandoned by the local and national government and by the global power structure. *Her* lengthy journey outside of Colobane not only in Europe, but also through various regions in Africa and Asia is also emblematic of another ongoing shift: not only is the journey outward not limited to men seeking education, but Linguère Ramatou cannot and does not attempt to conceal the abuse she endured while away; rather, her broken body displays the proof of this with permanent markings. Having transformed drastically since her abandonment, she returns as an embodiment of globalization and the changes it brings about with a bullying threat to the people of Colobane: Perish as a group or kill one of your own. This immediately leads the community to disintegration and a conflict that turns deadly.

In *Hyènes*, the setting of Colobane is selectively chosen. Senegal is just one new country (independent from French rule in 1960) which by the early 1980s suffered greatly economically not only from the restructuring of the world economy, but also as a result of greedy, corrupt politicians and the exponential expansion of its capital, Dakar, as a result of rural to urban migration. As the national and local governments focused their attention and coffers on problems inside the capital, nearby communes, such as the island of Gorée and the town of Colobane, in spite of having their own local governments, depended deeply on nearly nonexistent state monies and, as a result, suffered significant financial difficulty. The people of Colobane became exemplary of communities of the newly conceptualized “global south” who were marginalized,

not only, by the state—in this case Senegal—but also by the global powers that swept up a great deal of the state’s power. In the filmmakers’ own words, the devastation that resulted from these global changes was murderous. According to him, during the late 1980s and early 1990s, the debt relief programs conceived and administered through the World Bank and IMF placed a market value on human beings, deeming poor communities more or less expendable: The two agencies, he contends, “ont fait la même chose avec les pauvres du sud. Ils ont dit aux Africains: nous savons que vous êtes pauvres, mais vous êtes trop nombreux à travailler et vous n’avez pas suffisamment d’argent pour payer tout le monde. Il faut donc en tuer quelques uns. Et alors nous pourrions vous donner de l’argent. Il faut mettre votre économie en ordre. Tuez assez de monde et alors nous vous donnerons de l’argent. [...] C’est mathématique” (Mambety in Wynchank 76-7). *Hyènes* is an allegorical response to this global economic logic.

In its opening scenes, *Hyènes* portrays the fictional Colobane’s reality as hopeless; the first images of the town in the film reveal that its inhabitants are stuck; they have no access to the outside because they have been abandoned by their national government. The first frames of the film announce this crisis with scenes of the municipal building being emptied of its furnishings and its entranceway being carried away. The body and structure of these edifices are literally dismantled, gutted, and then thrown away. Later in the film, the viewer learns that the primary school has no building, desks or chairs. These narrative components clearly allude to the impotence of the local government and abandonment by the national government. And the effects of this infrastructural decay turned nonexistence are shown to be taking a heavy toll on the entire community. The inhabitants of Colobane are poor and they are hungry. This is evidenced most obviously in the first scenes that show everyday life in the town. The center of activity and exchange between the citizens of Colobane occurs in Dramane Drameh’s general

store and bar. Its shelves are nearly bare; however, the townspeople assemble there, joke, play music, dance and offer their greetings to one another, asking after family members as their purchase of staple foodstuffs, such as rice and milk, runs them further into debt to Dramane Drameh.

It is in the context of this looming threat of hunger and hopelessness that Linguère Ramatou—a daughter of the community who has become “richer than the World Bank”—makes her entrance. The news of her return inspires profound hope, particularly among the leaders of the community; and this is where the national drama portrayed in the initializing scenes shifts to the human drama of globalization. The town’s elders, including the mayor, the teacher, and shop owner, Dramane Drameh, organize an elaborate welcome in her honor and prepare a speech filled with praise for her *well known* (actually little known because her banishment wiped clean any remembrance of her in the collective memory) qualities of generosity, fine memory and love of justice in hopes that she will agree to help them all out of their economic misery. But her arrival quickly quells the festivities and poses a predicament for the townspeople when she reveals that the sole motivation for her return is to take vengeance on Dramane Drameh who, years ago, had played the primary role in her banishment from the community. The story of her past that she recounts through her *griot* to the assembled townspeople and during a private conversation with Dramane Drameh reveals the giddy love affair they had shared until she became pregnant and, according to custom, either had to be married at once or cast out from the community. Dramane had betrayed her. Having denied their affair and even gone as far as to pay two male witnesses whose testimony would result in bringing great shame on Ramatou in a public trial, her lover chose instead to marry Khoudia Lô, who at that time was richer and more prosperous because her family owned the town market/general store. Dramane Drameh inherited

the business by marrying her. Abandoned and shamed, Linguère Ramatou set out pregnant and alone. Her daughter survived for only a few days after her birth and Ramatou earned her livelihood as a prostitute.

Yet in spite of her troubled journey, she proves to be indestructible time and time again. She travels all over the world and becomes richer, stronger and more powerful and even survives a plane crash. As sole survivor, the airline provides her with a settlement that allows her to replace her broken limbs with gold prosthetics. She has become immensely rich and has learned that, as she had experienced, people can be bought and sold. Upon her return to Colobane, in an attempt to gain the townspeople's favor to exact her revenge, she offers them "one hundred million" in addition to uncountable consumer products in exchange for the life of Dramane: She fills the shelves of his store until they are overflowing with imported luxury goods, such as high-end tobacco and Calvados; she brings in two tractor trailer-loads of fans, washing machines and freezers, which she "gifts" to the women. The townspeople also now sport the latest fashions from the region, for instance new yellow boots from Burkina Faso; Ramatou even goes as far as to bring in a carnival, complete with a Ferris wheel!

The townspeople, while initially adverse to the idea of killing a member of their own community, slowly, yet with increasing ease, succumb to the temptation of possessing and amassing material goods which were until now unfathomable in their small town in which even the railroad no longer passes. Dramane Drameh is humbled by his youthful behavior and accepts the guilty plea even though he thinks Ramatou's punishment to be extreme. Observing the rapidly changing behavior of his customers and compatriots, who now buy expensive imports on credit from Ramatou, Dramane sees that the whole town has turned against him – even his own

son.<sup>50</sup> The closing frames portray the townspeople disguised in burlap sacks as a pack of hyenas who surround and close in on Dramane from all sides. As they get closer, they hover over and descend on him. When the group disperses, only Dramane's clothing remains on the ground. His body has disappeared. He has been consumed by the "hyenas". Finally, as the final credits roll, a bulldozer razes Colobane to the ground.

The emphasis on the body—on Ramatou's broken body and the disappearance of Dramane's—is striking and leads me to question whether the story of abandonment, revenge and of the ambiguous relationship (vengeance/tragic love) between Linguère Ramatou and Dramane Drameh is a mere distraction from a more nuanced critique of consumer-driven globalization. Ramatou's multidimensionality—particularly exemplified by Mambety's development of her character—is layered and complex. As the daughter of Colobane who has been cast out, Ramatou, in her earliest incarnation, symbolizes the young African nation whose economic structure has literally been cut up, slashed, reorganized and pieced back together in various ways and at multiple stages. Abandoned by the global economy, the broken Ramatou / severed nation's only economic recourse is to be taken under the wing of the World Bank by subjecting herself to prostitution and buy offs—and the precariousness of such dependency. Ramatou imposes this cycle on Colobane, most notably, by buying off the community.

Ramatou and her actions are mirrored as well in other characters. One noteworthy instance of this is when she buys off Dramane's wife, Khoudia Lô, with a slew of washing machines. With this act, Ramatou and Khoudia—who once rivaled over the attention and love of Dramane—act in complicity and symbolically continue the process of transferring/translating neocolonial relationships into the global system. Khoudia Lô, throughout most of the film

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<sup>50</sup> Annie Wynchank claims that this is Mambety's way of bringing Mory back. The brief entrance of Dramane's son on scene is a cameo by Mory (81).

observes silently yet attentively—often in an elevated position, such as at the top of the stairs in the shop or in the center of the camera’s frame, all indicating a certain importance Mambety ascribes to her role in the story. It is striking then, when she breaks her silence while Ramatou is distributing washing machines at the “global” marketplace she has created. Khoudia Lô bursts out with: *I’ll take them all!* The handing over of so many washing machines to one person and to Khoudia Lô in particular, is a symbolic act in the film. In the scenario where Ramatou stands in as the World Bank to crush Dramane as the African “traditional” market, Khoudia fits in, in an interesting position. As Manthia Diawara asserts, the African market poses a threat to the workings of the global market. As a popular market, its sellers maintain trade networks regionally and internationally; and the local clients rely on those networks. The African market vendors also deal in hard currencies—the local CFA as well as global currencies, such as the U.S. dollar and the Euro. When market sellers need a loan, it comes most often in the form of exchange for goods and services with local and national government officials. Yes, as Diawara acknowledges, this often indicates corruption; and the African market is not nearly as economically advantaged as the global market is. However, beyond those particular issues, his point is that the relationship between the African market and local and state governments creates a system that is at odds with the economic imperatives of globalization. While the African market maintains a relationship with local and national governments, so, too, does the global market on its own terms. In this view, Khoudia Lô plays a neocolonial role—probably the same one she played before her husband, Dramane, took over her market and changed it to interact as a “traditional” African market. With her husband’s death imminent (the symbolic death of the traditional market), Khoudia will likely run her store by the rules of the global one. She clues the

viewer in on this even when Dramane is still in charge, asking his friends if they paid for their drinks and making clear that she does not accept doling out informal credit to everyone.

Once the global is manifest and Ramatou's aim (killing Dramane) as an incarnation of the World Bank is achieved, a major turn in the narrative takes place: In the final scenes of the film, Ramatou waits for Dramane on a pier by the ocean. It is arguable that *this*—rather than her reincarnation as the World Bank—marks her *actual* final transformation; and that this brings out the most nuanced element to Mambety's critique of globalization. In my opinion, the punishment that Linguère Ramatou carries out on Dramane actually reflects the antagonistic relationship between the African "traditional" market and the global one. In this view, Dramane indeed poses a threat to Ramatou/the World Bank; and his death will supposedly rid them of that threat. We might recall, for instance, how, as Diawara reminds us, the Kermel market in Dakar was set on fire when it posed a threat to Senegal's participation in global trade.<sup>51</sup> That is how, I believe, one can interpret the "revenge" narrative. Mambety is aware of the profound consequences of such market antagonisms; and he is critical of globalization in this regard. At the same time, he shows that Africans sometimes return to the continent as "insiders"—with regard to institutions, such as the IMF or World Bank—that they can rely upon, and act in complicity with globalization because they are gaining economically from it. Ramatou plays this role. She knows who is at the center of any threat to globalization (Dramane) and how to strike him down (by destroying his market); and, she asserts her advantageous position of economic dominance in order to incite contempt for the threat among the "citizens" of Colobane. In this way Mambety shows the extremes to which humans will go to gain economic prosperity within the new terms of

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<sup>51</sup> I discuss this in greater depth in Chapter 1.

globalization; and the bulldozer scene suggests that, in the end, they lose it as quickly as they gain it.

At the same time, however, given Ramatou's multidimensional character, Mambety does not only leave his viewer with the simple message that Africans are often implied in carrying out the ills of globalization. On the contrary, Ramatou's absolutely *final* transformation brings her back to the spirit world where she waits to meet the Dramane she loves. In spite of her role as the incarnation of the World Bank, Ramatou shows another side of herself when she is alone with Dramane. She laments her suffering and holds him accountable for her banishment; however, both acknowledge that their love for each other was pure and unmotivated by any greed. Mambety celebrates her immortality—which has allowed her to survive all of her trials on earth—and turns the tragic love story back around to one of human love, albeit a love that can only be achieved in the mystical world. In this way, Mambety confronts and condemns human greed and its interconnection with the drama of globalization.

In another respect, Ramatou's banishment also means, according to Sada Niang, the erasure of her existence from Colobane's annals of history (Niang 135). On one hand this can be interpreted as another example of Mambety's critique of tradition; it was, after all, the traditional society that sent her away, and when she returns the community leaders are at pains to remember her prior to her status as outcast. However, Mambety does not stop here; the sweeping power she wields upon her return as embodiment of the World Bank over the lives of Dramane and the inhabitants of Colobane reveals the great threat that globalization poses. The past that she has endured through bodily experience is Dramane's present in the film. His symbolic death in the final frames of the film and the subsequent bulldozer scene link his present fate to the future of Colobane. Since the formerly strong neo-colonialist national government has been weakened by

its exclusion from the global economy, it, in turn, has abandoned its own people. The final dramatic events of the disappearance of Dramane's body and, symbolically, of the entire community at the end of the film points more broadly to the erasure—in fact to the annihilation—of entire groups of humans, something Mambety stressed in an interview as a threat to Africans in particular (*Africa Film and TV Magazine* 1993).

Linguère Ramatou's broken body is inscribed with different meaning in its reconstructed state. Having transformed allegorically into a reincarnation of the World Bank, she now embodies the values of the *consumer society* and the global finance institutions that propel its workings. Now that she has learned the extent to which her acquired wealth equals power, according to Niang, she realizes her authority to have, "le droit de parole en public." (Niang 135). She thus understands that her advantageous position in the global consumer society gives her dominant power as well as an influential voice. Further, her wealth allows her to place a constraining conditionality on those to whom she gives consumer products and money, her demand that the townspeople execute her "justice," which then loads them with new meaning. Thus, they come to represent a Western value system (justice, for instance) that imposes itself without discussion with the community or its leaders. Rather, it is Ramatou—"an outsider"—as Melissa Thackway underscores—who dictate these values to the community; for if they accept the gifts, she asks in return that the community surrender the life of Dramane (77). Thus, ultimately, Mambety shows the imposing World Bank as creditor/loan distributor actively inciting a violent act that immediately leads to the complete disintegration of the community.

Further, Ramatou basically converts the inhabitants of Colobane to the belief system inscribed in the *consumer society*. The consumer objects she brings to them not only make the people happy (seemingly relieving them of their economic misery), but they also generate a

mirror image of themselves as having the right to possess these items and to choose the specific ones they desire. Their greed then becomes immeasurable. Believing they have a right to consume, and to choose their consumer products, and that those rights are associated with the right to be happy, the townspeople exalt in the thrill of the consumer carnival and perform their happiness by participating in public laughter and entertainment. They thus gain a false sense of democracy and a false sense that they are participating actively in the global economy and are stepping out of their isolation. Mambety's choice to privilege the revenge narrative with Ramatou's bestowal of *conditional* gifts evidences the filmmaker's preoccupation with the meaning the consumer products carry, in other words, with that which is inscribed in consumerism. Explicitly, the items she brings are in great excess of their needs yet make the people happy. The "objective" of the people of Colobane, according to Mambety, "is to amass as many riches as possible" (Ukadike, *Questioning* 127). This is marked, for instance, in their delight in not only being able to buy liquor, cigars and other unnecessary items, but in being able to order "the good stuff," that has been recently imported thanks to Ramatou. Their access to choice luxury items provides them with the image of themselves as rich (partaking in the ultimate spoils of the global economy) and able to choose their possessions (participating democratically). Other consumer products—for the possession of which the townspeople are equally enthusiastic—include items that are certainly useable, albeit not to them! The parade Ramatou displays of electric fans, washing machines, refrigerators and other large household appliances elicits the question of what use are these objects for a community that has limited electricity or none at all. The consumption of these objects is thus in excess of any utility due to the lack of infrastructure. Certainly, the choice to insert these specific consumer products in

Colobane points to the filmmaker's critique of aid programs and how they are administered in ways that show little to no understanding of the needs of the communities they purport to serve.

Indeed, the products that Ramatou brings into Colobane indeed completely transform the lives of the inhabitants. They alter their behavior and, ultimately, their values. More specifically, they transform into a "consumer society" à la Baudrillard. Dramane and his wife's store, which used to have extremely limited items and variety, has turned into what the French call the "drugstore" with endless choices in inexhaustible quantities. These items are used as Ramatou's means for punishing Dramane; but then, one may ask how giving lavish and plentiful gifts is tantamount to punishment? This is the filmmaker's clear allusion to the way in which the IMF and World Bank frame their loans and debt relief programs—wonderful gifts that poor countries cannot pass up. Yet, they are by no means gifts, and as Mambety portrays through the allegory of Ramatou bearing luxurious, unnecessary gifts to the townspeople, they have done more harm—devastating harm—than good. Therefore, more implicitly, these items—as consumable desirables—carry more meaning in this context in which Mambety situates them: Foremost is the inscription of values of the global market in these consumer products—not only monetary value, but also social and moral values. As Baudrillard has observed of the Western consumer society, the consumer has shifted away from acquiring consumer goods that serve a utilitarian purpose. Rather, he or she opts for products that symbolize a certain social standing, and belonging to a class. Mambety portrays the predicament that current globalization poses for African communities as a system that imposes a universal that is in fact dictated by the needs of the global market.

According to Murphy and Williams, this portrayal is rooted in a clear critique of the West imposing its "modernity" on Africa. Indeed, these authors see both of Mambety's first two

features “in part as an exploration of the impact of Western culture on Africa” (94). Citing Anthony Appiah, Murphy and Williams underline this interpretation: “‘Modernity’ has turned every element of the world into a sign, and the sign reads ‘for sale’” (Appiah cited in Murphy and Williams 104). According to Murphy and Williams,

It is this aspect of modernity that both repulses and fascinates Mambety. Far from bringing the light of reason and democracy to Africa, colonialism is seen to have introduced a pervasive and confusing urban, capitalist culture. [...] Europe (in *Touki-Bouki*) is best represented, as Appiah argues, by money, not reason. [...] by the early 1990s, when [*Hyènes*] was [released], Mambety suggests that Africa has been largely bypassed by the capitalist system and left to exist on the margins of a global capitalist system in which the grand narratives of modernist emancipation have slowly been eroded, which simply leaves in its wake the values of the market, personified in the character of Ramatou who is able to buy the ‘soul’ of Colobane with the promise of consumer happiness (104).

As Murphy and Williams maintain, the filmmaker situates the continent’s current predicament within the larger context of Africa’s interactions with the West, which they refer to as “modernity.” For instance, in their presentation of Mambety’s life and works in *Postcolonial African Cinema: Ten Directors* (2007), they reflect upon the “barbarity” of globalization that is shown in Mambety’s final shots: “[...] is it the (ironic) juxtaposition of the (supposed) barbarity of a collectively administered and individually accepted cleansing of the community, versus the (actual) barbarity of the mechanized obliteration of the community’s homes, way of life, values?” (107). Framing their rhetorical question in a discussion of “modernity,” the authors

situate the film's portrayal of globalization within the larger context of African experiences with the West. It is above all else a violent interaction.

In my view, Mambety takes this critique even further by inserting consumer objects that show this violent interaction to be continuous. In the film, certain images of modern machines point directly to the lack of infrastructure, particularly structures that would link Colobane to the outside as opposed to maintaining its isolation. These images are loaded with meaning as well. For instance, prior to Ramatou's arrival, the inhabitants cannot imagine her coming on a train that only passes through once in a while, albeit without stopping. But her arrival on the train (and one that does stop) produces an image of global power bringing not only goods, but, moreover, with these objects, the values of the *consumer society*. The moment Ramatou steps off the train, she already decides on a great change that will affect the entire society: she establishes a foundation for women. Later, she announces the major impetus for her journey to Colobane—the death of Dramane—which she also decides unilaterally. Another example—and one that is particularly interesting because it is one not translated into a visual image—is the action Ramatou takes with regard to the town's infrastructure (its body). She announces that she has bought up all of Colobane's worth, all its infrastructure, including its factories. Yet, the factory is completely absent visually, as is most any image of industrialization.

Furthermore, Ramatou was once in an airplane crash and subsequently received a settlement that allowed her to become extremely wealthy, as symbolized by her gold prosthetics. Yet Mambety's narrative is not solely about planes, trains, and other modern machines. Rather than focusing on the objects associated with “modernity,” the film includes the significant detail that Ramatou was bought off. This draws attention to the airline company which—as one infers from her status as presently richer than the world bank—is among those multinational

corporations, like Wal-Mart, McDonalds, Nike, that gross more in a year than the GDP of many poor countries. Thus she has been bought off by the very architects of globalization, and her body is, first, mangled by the modern apparatus—the airplane—and, subsequently, reconstructed in gold, which is how she has earned the status of a member of the global elite.

### Consumer Society, the Body and the Bulldozer

Dramane's death is the punishment Linguère Ramatou sees as just, and, her means for carrying it out is to buy Colobane and its people. Her abandonment taught her that the body is the principal site for abuse, and, thus, she makes it also her site for revenge. According to Niang, "Elle fut la victime sexuelle d'un homme, s'est enrichie à son corps défendant et tente de détruire l'esprit, le corps et l'héritage de ses anciens bourreaux" (134). Indeed, after being abandoned by her lover (and community), she prostituted herself in order to survive. Upon her return in a reconstructed form, she can finally take her vengeance on the body of others. She understands that money and consumer products give her agency, not only because they confer on her "le droit de parole," but also because they give importance to her very being. According to Niang, this makes her (present) similar to Dramane (past):

Pour elle [...] le corps demeure une source de plaisirs, de souffrances et l'outil par lequel elle exerce sa domination sur les autres. [...] Linguère et Dramane se sont tous deux enrichis sur les corps des autres. Ils sont sortis exceptionnellement indemnes du fléau qui a fait des milliers des victimes. Aujourd'hui, ils doivent leur statut au pouvoir qu'ils exercent sur d'autres corps, du moins en apparence, en échange d'un minimum de confort (138-9).

By choosing Khoudia Lô over Ramatou, Dramane became one of the richest members of Colobane. He achieved his wealth in exchange for Ramatou's body. The feminine body is a common metaphor in African fiction for the failure of nations following independence.

According to Grace Musila,

[...] nationalist discourses constituted the African nation as the feminine victim of an aggressive [male] colonial master [...] After the decade of independence, when the ideals of the liberation struggles failed to materialize, writers [and filmmakers] still fell back on the body in their critique of the post-colony and its failures.

Thus, the prostitute's body became a convenient index for the degraded postcolonial nation, yet again a helpless victim of capitalist neo-colonialism and the black petit bourgeois (51).

In this view, Ramatou the victim represents the nation, and Dramane's past power over her was due to his symbolic role as a member of the neo-colonial elite. Now, however, times have changed, and, their roles have shifted. The global economy has weakened African economies with its restructuring programs (SAPs). Ramatou, now a symbol of the global elite, is stronger than the nation. Thus, whereas the prostituted feminine body remains a sign of the weak nation, the body in Mambety's film is commodified as a metaphor for a new assessment of human value in the global context. Knowing she has the power to turn the townspeople into a "consumer society," Ramatou showers them with consumer goods, confident that they will assess the value of commodities above that of human life, and comply in carrying out the death of Dramane.

Further, since Linguère Ramatou returns to Colobane as an "outsider" who has also become excessively richer, she represents these powerful institutions (multinational corporations

in addition to their co-collaborators, the World Bank, IMF, and rich countries) that set the rules of globalization, which in the case of sub-Saharan Africa means giving aid to countries based upon their respective governments heeding to the conditionalities of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). Such conditionalities typically include the privatization of national institutions, such as schools and health care facilities, as well as businesses and industry, such as mining or logging. In addition to the World Bank or IMF's demands to restructure countries' economies in this way (by making privatization compulsory), the same institutions enabled private businesses to establish rules and laws of trade that in many cases were not even in accordance with international law. Often, alongside such demands, these same institutions, backed by Western governments such as the USA, demanded that in exchange for aid African leaders cede some of their sovereign power and promote "democratic" principles in their nations (Zezeza 476).

By globalizing (universalizing) the world not only with products but with the images of a certain society that thrives on them and the meanings those products carry with them, consumerism provides a means for controlling at once the fate of an individual and of a group. Thus, when Linguère Ramatou asserts her own view of justice by introducing her own punishment for Dramane, Mambety achieves a sharp criticism of the contradictions of globalization and its negative consumer side. Moreover, he shows the consequences to be severe.

Despite the false universal consumer happiness that globalization allegedly fosters, *Hyènes* shows globalization—as a market-driven system—to be fatally exclusionary. Notably, the film portrays Colobane as the typical site that globalization strikes down, using and pillaging it to its advantage. It is in effect excluded from the global market, something that has very real consequences for people, in their daily life and in their very bodies. The overall lack that nearly

paralyzes the community of Colobane is presented alongside remnants of a prosperous past and indicates that something was lost, even taken away from it. That something is identifiable as the town's linkage to the outside—to other markets—and its ability to make its own decisions and participate in a democratic political life possible before the townspeople became so severely economically constrained by dependence. Formerly a stop on the railway, in the film's present, Colobane merely witnesses the train as it whizzes by once a week – if that – which recalls the diminishing of rail service in Africa at the time. Its tracks are used but the villagers cannot trade anything via the train and are thus completely isolated there. It makes sense, then, that when Ramatou comes to shower the inhabitants of Colobane with tons of consumer objects, “they are hungry,” as Mambety said in an interview, and accept all of the goods. Oscherwitz views their acceptance of the goods as giving in “willingly” to a “new form of colonization” (59). Wynchank approaches the consequence of the community accepting these consumer goods differently. They are, she points out, imported, inessential items – superfluous – and thus have an especially strong appeal for individuals who have next to nothing. Their acceptance, although ambivalent in that it goes against their wishes to *not* kill a member of their community, is proof that they have been bought. They are swept into the spiraling logic of the consumer society. The consumer objects thus symbolize the power that is taken from the community. And, as a result, reasons Wynchank, the people of Colobane “[ils] ne sont plus maîtres chez eux” (76). Indeed, with their acceptance of the conditional gifts they are stripped of any agency.

Mambety shows the consequences of this to be utterly devastating, something that the filmmaker pointed out directly in an interview during *Hyènes*' premiere in Harare, Zimbabwe in 1992: “Ce film (...) est situé dans une ville pauvre du continent, au milieu des gens pauvres. Et ce que je dis est: ‘Si vous voulez de l’argent, l’un de vous doit être tué’” (Mambety cited in

Wynchank 76) Thus the price for the supposed happiness the consumer products bring has to be the death of one of the community's members, suggesting that a lethal assault on the human being is inscribed in consumerism. Ramatou herself – she who bestows upon the villagers the consumer products – is proof that the accumulation of material objects is a perilous affair when it depends on the suffering of another individual or other individuals. Furthermore, the film's dénouement underscores the fatal character of this latent violence, as the razing of the town of Colobane signals that Mambety's story of Dramane's symbolic death is not about the individual, but rather about the fate of entire groups of people. Just as Linguère Ramatou would have been erased from the records of Colobane, Dramane's body disappears at the end of the film; and, finally, Colobane is wiped off the face of the earth. However, Mambety avoids displaying violence on the screen by representing Dramane's death as a symbolic process instead. Disguised as a pack of hyenas descending on their victim (Dramane), the townspeople literally consume him just as they consumed the goods Linguère Ramatou distributed. In an interview with Ukadike, Mambety explained his choice of representing Dramane Drameh's killers as a pack of animals rather than individuals: "They are all disguised because no one wants to carry the individual responsibility for murder [...] for each individual to have clean hands, everyone has to be dirty, to share in the same communal guilt" (*Questioning* 127). This is exemplary of how the current globalization manifests itself. In contrast to colonial or neocolonial power structures, no single country, group or individual can be held fully responsible or accountable even for as serious a crime as the execution of a member of society, simply because all are complicit; and all participate in continuing the economic system.

### Questioning Globalization as Universal Value

In direct relation to the major themes that Mambety probes and questions in the film – abandonment, revenge and justice – stands the notion of the “universal.” Mambety does not call for an African universalism as did African thinkers such as Léopold Sédar Senghor.<sup>52</sup> Rather, as did first generation African filmmaker, Ousmane Sembène, in a different context, Mambety formulates his own critique of the contemporary predicament inherent to the African experience. As he put it in an interview, money brings out the worst in people – and *that* is the (universal) human drama: “The film depicts a human drama. My task was to identify the enemy of humankind: money, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank [...] (Ukadike, *Questioning* 125). Mambety’s declaration suggests that he rejects a definition of the “universal” as standards and values that the West promotes and impels through globalization. In my view, Mambety’s creation of a “human drama” informs his critique that globalization forges universal values, such as “justice.” Whereas he does not omit an introspective critique of traditional African society, he emphasizes the devastating consequences of the “universal” values that globalization promotes with consumerism as its sign. He does so by questioning the value globalization places on humans through its restructuring programs which are administered by the World Bank and IMF.

Within the allegory of international aid and its constraints on African countries, Mambety inserts the problem of instilling universal values by asking whose rights are more important, in fact whose very life is more important? Ramatou’s? Dramane’s? Or the community’s? The film merely goes as far as to suggest that “justice” is provided in the form of consumer products – as a quick fix – to the people, but one cannot escape the fact that for the community to prosper,

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<sup>52</sup> See Senghor’s “Negritude: A Humanism for the Twentieth Century.”

Dramane's life is devalued and taken away, just as Ramatou's life was sacrificed earlier because of traditional values. Thus, while Mambety critiques the universalizing aspect of globalization and its distinctive feature of a dominant, relentless consumerism," he also includes a critique of traditional values, and ultimately refuses to glorify the past.

When Ramatou literally tells the people to continue to starve or kill Dramane, this plot element is in fact a far-reaching allegory that serves as a vector for Mambety's critique of the universals that globalization promotes and forces on communities through consumerism. Further, it is a one-sided justice when the economic power points to itself as a savior in a life or death scenario but asks the townspeople of Colobane (or Africans in general) to take up foreign (Western) ways whether they have previously relied on them or not, or perhaps may even have outlawed them in their own land. When Linguère Ramatou says, "Colobane pour un meurtre, la prospérité pour un cadavre" (*Hyènes*), she seems to promise to save Colobane at the price of one life, but in the end, the bulldozers raze Colobane entirely, the sacrifice of Dramane was in vain; and all are killed off by the same version of "justice."

Mambety's films *Touki-Bouki* and *Hyènes* portray consumerism as a dominating and destructive force. During the two decade hiatus between the releases of each film significant economic change occurred worldwide. The earlier film relies upon the neocolonial model where the excess comes from the elite; and, Mory and Anta, who want to attain socio-economic mobility, learn that the real riches come from outside of their new nation. The film ends with Anta (abandoned) boarding the ship to a consumer "paradise" alone, unaware of the dangers that await her. In *Hyènes* Linguère Ramatou acts as a stand-in for the World Bank, and exemplifies allegorically the murderous consequences of "aid" that pours in on the continent from the outside. The orgy of consumer products that Mambety brings to the screen in 1992 is portrayed

as a sort of invasion of the dominant world market that is inscribed with “universal” values and fatal violence; to which Mambety directly opposes the specificity of Dakar and its environs, but also of the African continent as a part of the global South.

As I have attempted to highlight in this section, Mambety cultivated an overt critique of globalization over a period of nearly two-decades as he witnessed the implementation and lasting effects of the World Bank and IMF programs in Dakar. In *Hyènes*, he used the trope of consumer products and the struggle over their acquisition to show how this drive is linked to an assault on human existence, exemplified by violence to the body that is made to disappear. The disappearance of a body (or bodies) that is central to Mambety’s narrative is also a trope in most of the other representations I examine in this dissertation. This is the case, as I discussed in Chapter two, of Angwé’s disappearance in *G’amèrakano: au carrefour*; while the main intrigue of *Trop de soleil* and *Branle-bas* concerns the disappearances of Zamakwé and Elisabeth, and the former’s body is never found. In *Les Beaux gosses*, the (dis)appearance of the body of an ethnic *other* frames the novel which includes a complex series of killings and disposal of bodies, at the tragic end of which Kairuane desecrates the body of his own father, Venance Taffu, and is himself hacked to pieces. Acts of unspeakable violence that lead to the disappearance and destruction of bodies are indeed increasingly prevalent in the African Francophone novel by the late 1980s. As I discuss in the next chapter, this violence is primarily carried out against women and ethnic minorities, and it is also symptomatic of racial tension. It is this violence that comes to characterize globalization as a destructive force, whose power is maintained by bullying and killing; and, conversely, those who are marginalized feel so slighted that they resort to violence too.

## Chapter Four

### Responses to Globalization in the Novel

#### I Globalization and Ethnic, Racial and Sexual Violence

##### in Yodi Karone's *Les Beaux gosses* (1988)

Despite their apparent differences, Yodi Karone and Mongo Beti (discussed in the next section) – the former of the “new generation” of writers who began writing after independence, the latter a long-time militant writer against the crimes of colonization – share the commitment of producing an engaged writing that exposes the political, social and economic ills of the periods during which they write (Jules-Rosette, *Black Paris* 8). Additionally, stylistically, both were influenced by the style of the Black American writer of the Harlem Renaissance, Chester Himes, who seizes the harshness of the black experience of unjust laws and prejudice in years leading up to and just after the Civil Rights struggle in the United States.<sup>53</sup> Like Himes, in their most recent novels, Karone and Beti produce fast-paced narratives that are infused with local dialects, a sardonic tone, and the wrenching details of ethnic, racial and sexual violence that for these two authors are associated with global trade. The two share the exceptional legacy of having “dared pick up their pens to depict, each in his own fashion, the harsh realities of ‘national reconstruction,’” as Ambroise Kom notes, at a time when their contemporaries in Cameroon avoided any criticism in their writings toward the country’s first time president, Ahmadou Ahidjo (1958-1982) (“Monocracy” 85). Writing in exile, Karone and Beti both demonstrate their firm commitment to project a critical gaze on the political ills of their newly

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<sup>53</sup> Cazenave notes Himes’ influence on Karone in *Afrique sur Seine* 154; Higginson cites an interview in which Beti expresses his admiration for Himes and his resultant penchant for crime fiction (384).

independent country by denouncing the regime for its authoritarianism.<sup>54</sup> Each, in his own way, reflective of their different generations, makes the same sharp criticism of France for its colonial and neocolonial roles in their fiction and, in their most recent works, of the West and the violent aspects of its economic dominance, which is the subject of this chapter. I address these aspects of Beti's writing in the next section; the present section focuses on Karone.

Karone has written four novels and three plays.<sup>55</sup> He is considered one of the "leading novelists" of the "new generation" residing in Paris (Jules-Rosette, *Black Paris* 158). While his short novel, *Nègre de paille* (1982), earned him critical acclaim with the Grand Prix Littéraire d'Afrique Noire, most scholarly attention has been paid to *À la Recherche du cannibale amour* (1988), a novel that for Benetta Jules-Rosette characterizes the author's writing as representative of the triangular trans-Atlantic relations—West Africa, Paris, New York—and addresses politics and identity issues of Africans living in Paris. In this work, a young male protagonist, having lost the manuscript to his novel in a Paris metro station, takes a journey in search of inspiration from the French capital to Cameroon, Harlem and back to Paris. Jules-Rosette focuses her attention on this novel as representative of "Parisianism," one of two genres she attributes to the new generation of postcolonial African writers. According to her: "Parisianism refers to a literary interest in Paris as the social context for the authors' works, the subject matter of their writings, and the source of their focal audience" (*Black Paris* 7). Her inclusion of Karone among the writers of this genre is based specifically upon the themes he develops in *À la Recherche du cannibale amour* which she discusses as relevant to "the lives of Africans transplanted in France [such as] problems of immigration and cultural assimilation" (8). However, this is just one aspect

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<sup>54</sup> Kom cites the specific examples of Karone's *Le Bal des caïmans* (1980) and Beti's *Main basse sur le Cameroun* (1972). See Kom "Monocracy" 85.

<sup>55</sup> He wrote and self published two plays under his real name, Alain Dye, in 1978: "Umm ou le sacré dernier" and "Palabres de nuit;" and, he wrote at least one under the pseudonym for which he is known, Yodi Karone. See Karone Interview 1980.

of Karone's work. Published in the same year and having received much less critical attention despite being praised alongside his first novel, *Le Bal des caïmans* (1980) as confirming his talent as a writer,<sup>56</sup> *Les Beaux gosses* does share some features with *À la Recherche* in that its characters make constant reference to a connectedness between the three continents. However, *Les Beaux gosses* is particular in that it is set entirely in Ivory Coast's capital, Abidjan, and not Paris (nor his native Cameroon).

Unlike many of his contemporaries living and writing in France whose narratives delve into the themes of Parisianism and include very limited representations of life in Africa, if any at all,<sup>57</sup> life on the continent evidently preoccupies Karone's s imaginary. Three out of four of his novels and each of his plays are set almost entirely in West Africa and bring to the fore socio-political and economic issues that are contemporary to each work. Thus, if one must limit his œuvre to a genre (at least concerning the three novels I mention below), I would argue that Karone's work is better understood as having some characteristics of "postcolonial universalism," the second genre that Jules-Rosette ascribes to contemporary African literature (that is usually written in the métropole—and Karone does reside in Paris). She writes: "the new universalism invokes the re-envisioning of African social and political issues in a global context." Universalism, she adds "emphasizes human dignity, rights, and privileges" (Jules-Rosette, *Black Paris* 7). Indeed, *Le Bal des caïmans*, *Nègre de paille* and *Les Beaux gosses* reflect Karone's concerns about the social, political and economic problems that West African

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<sup>56</sup> See Biography of Karone in *Africultures*.

<sup>57</sup> Odile Cazenave includes Calixthe Beyala, Simon Njami, Philippe Camara, Alain Mbanckou and J.R. Essomba as representative of "the New Black Generation" of writers whose novels "reject all ties with Africa, as the characters distance themselves from anything that has to do with Africans or Africa" ("New Identities" 154). Dominic Thomas classifies the same group as "Afro-Parisian" writers, again distinguishing them from those who portray life on the African continent. See Thomas "Daniel Biyaoula" 166. Perhaps Karone is classified as such in part because of the critique that devalues Karone's portrayal of life on the continent for having not ever lived there. For this view, see Lorenz and Pausch 49.

countries experienced in the 1970s and 80s as “universal” or global issues. For instance, *Le Bal des Caïmans* (1980) takes the reader on a breathless man hunt, into the darkness of Cameroonian prisons and to witness a trial that parodies its own proceedings; in this novel no one is safe from the false accusations, torture and execution carried out by the autocratic leadership. Thus, from the start of his literary œuvre, Karone is clearly concerned with the representation of oppressive regimes as a “universal” problem and particularly those in Africa. As he states in an interview, he feels compelled to portray “une réalité qui se retrouve dans plusieurs pays du fait de leur régime, du fait de leur histoire, du fait de l’exploitation et de l’oppression qu’ils subissent [...] [Ceci existe dans] divers continents. Mais je veux aussi souligner qu’il existe en Afrique une sorte de panafricaine de la répression” (Karone, *Interview* 1980). He adds that he views writing as a weapon (*une arme*) with which to expose injustice that is overlooked or ignored even by human rights groups, thus evidencing his preoccupation with human rights issues in Africa and foreshadowing the engaged political stance he takes in his later novels (*ibid.*). In *Le Bal des Caïmans*, as well as in *Nègre de paille*, Karone’s focus is on political rights of citizens whose life, incarceration, death or torture depends upon the decisions and acts of an omnipresent autocratic ruler of the country. Such a political stance places his work among his contemporaries throughout Africa as well as in Latin America who contributed to the genre known as the dictator novel during the 1970s and early 80s.

It is his last novel, *Les Beaux gosses*, that captures a specific moment of the African experience of the current economic globalization—symbolically portraying the transition from Ivory Coast’s neocolonial relationship with France to its rapid descent into a grossly disadvantaged position in the global economy. From independence in 1960 to his death in 1993, the new country’s leader, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, maintained close relations with France and

supported, as Bruno Charbonneau states, “the postcolonial model of development/dependency” (155). This meant, for instance, that foreign (mostly French and later American) firms controlled the country’s largest economic sector, the exportation of cocoa, along with coffee, and cotton while the national government “relied almost entirely on the agencies of the state bequeathed [...] by the French [colonizers]” (Jackson and Rosberg 146). As a result of a strong global economy, Ivory Coast enjoyed flourishing economic success in comparison to other countries in the region to the extent that its capital, Abidjan, was broadly referred to as the African Paris and, consequently, attracted and welcomed millions of migrants. The largest groups included Lebanese nationals who fled their own civil war to settle into the capital and set up businesses and regional migrants who flocked to the country for work. The latter came in vast groups from neighboring Burkina Faso and Mali<sup>58</sup> to settle in the northern (largely Muslim) regions of Ivory Coast, and Ghanaians settled in the central and eastern regions. Houphouët-Boigny welcomed each of these groups with open arms, integrating them into the social and political fabric of the country enough to maintain prosperity, until the country reeled into severe economic crisis in the mid-1980s. At this juncture the attitude of the long time one-party ruler toward immigrants shifted, particularly away from support for the Lebanese for having made significant contributions to the economic success of the country. Houphouët-Boigny went as far as to denounce this group for participating in fraudulent import/export schemes and attempting to build monopolies that would funnel money out of the country and into their original homeland. The national media also incited animosity toward them with allegations that they were evading taxes. Additionally, the regional African migrants—hundreds of thousands of whom by this time

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<sup>58</sup> In their study of migration, Toro-Morn and Alicea cite a surge in migrants from these two countries to Ivory Coast: “From 1975 to 1988, the number of foreigners in the Ivory Coast doubled from 1.5 million to 3 million, most of them citizens of Burkina Faso and Mali” (xxv).

had been in Ivory Coast for generations—became targets of oppressive measures; whereas the president had “held [these] diverse ethnic groups together [...] through a constructed system of patronage,” the economic downturn caused a rise in nationalist sentiments of belonging; and, in contrast to “indigenous” groups, the predominantly Muslim migrants and their descendants were increasingly viewed as “strangers” who were stealing employment opportunities and no longer welcome in the country (Nhema and Zeleza 99). Both the Lebanese and the African Muslim migrant communities had been assets to Houphouët-Boigny’s “market-friendly policies,” and their contributions to the country’s economic growth were paralleled, according to historian Tiyambe Zeleza, with “considerable quantities of foreign direct investment [...] from the West and especially France” (ibid.). When the price of the country’s principal export, cocoa, plummeted on the world market, foreign investment diminished, the currency was devalued by 50%, and debt hit hard. The country mortgaged itself to debt relief and restructuring programs administered by the IMF; and Houphouët-Boigny enlisted the financial advisement of economist and former Director of the African Department of the IMF (1984-88), Alassane Ouattara, to whom he gave the title Prime Minister (1990-93). Amidst such economic disaster, political rivalries heightened; and, those who had been critical of Houphouët-Boigny’s rule leapt to gain popular support that would win them political power. Among them, Henri Konan Bédié—who succeeded “le Vieux” (as Houphouët-Boigny was called) upon his death in 1993—led a campaign of national belonging, known as “*ivoirité*.”

*Ivoirité*, which Bédié made law once in office, defined citizenship for indigenous Ivorians in contrast to the foreign status of migrants or immigrants. The major motivation for sustaining such a distinction, according to pro-*ivoirité* discourse was “[t]he imperative to increase the participation of native Ivorians in the economy” by diminishing that of “foreigners” (Nhema and

Zezeza 100). The concept of *ivoirité* additionally extended to the political arena from the early 90s as a result of Bédié's law forbidding presidential candidacy to "foreigners," which stated that both parents of a candidate must have been born in Ivory Coast, that he must never have given up the Ivorian passport, and that he must have resided in the country for five consecutive years leading up to the elections.<sup>59</sup> It is widely accepted that Bédié, having succeeded Houphouët-Boigny following his death, enacted the law with the particular aim of keeping his then political rival, Alassane Ouattara, from presenting himself as presidential candidate in 1995—the first official elections after le Vieux's death—and then again in 2000. Bédié won the 1995 presidency by a landslide 96% of the vote (African Elections Database).<sup>60</sup> It was reported that Ouattara's party boycotted the election having been excluded from participation.

Meanwhile, politics continued to deepen the divide among Ivory Coast's northern and southern populations with the events of the military coup that forced Bédié into exile in 1999 and a new Article (35) to the Constitution. General Robert Guéï (a southerner) secured the presidency and took the debate about *ivoirité* to a new (and different) level with a referendum in 2000 that "approved new clauses on citizenship in the Constitution" (Nhema and Zezeza 101). It effectively denied large ethnic groups in the north, such as the Dioula, their rights as citizens. Whereas it was widely "known" by his supporters that this latter's victorious coup over Bédié "had been organized by northern elements in the military," Guéï attempted to please constituents of various ethnic identities by siding with one group over another (Akan against Baoule, for

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<sup>59</sup> The law also implicitly excluded women from presenting their candidacy. In 2010, Jacqueline Lohouès Oble made history as the first female presidential candidate in Ivory Coast's history. For more information on her place in the running, see Zamblé. In the same year, it was reported throughout Ivorian and international press that presidential candidates promised to change laws so that women would be permitted to occupy one third of national decision making posts (such as Ministerial appointments); seventy percent of the country's women are illiterate; and especially in rural areas women have been coerced with violence by men in their communities into voting for his preferred candidate.

<sup>60</sup> The only other candidate, Francis Wodié, won almost 4% of the vote. Two parties boycotted the elections: the Ivorian Popular Front (FPI-Gbagbo's party) and the Rally of the Republicans (RDR-Ouattara's party). See "Elections".

instance); but he was inconsistent, and playing one ethnic group against another, he sparked deep distrust among them and incited further animosity among them (ibid.; Ben Yahmed). During this time Ouattara (of the Dioula ethnic group) gained popular support from the northerners. And, in spite of his earlier support for Guéi's coup, Ouattara dropped him as an ally and positioned himself politically as the opposition. Laurent Gbagbo (of the Bété ethnic group) gained popularity in the south.

Amidst brewing implosion of identity politics, elections were held (2000). This time again the RDR party boycotted in protest of Ouattara's exclusion as an eligible candidate; and Laurent Gbagbo won the presidency with 59% of the vote against four other candidates (African Elections Database). "[L]ike his predecessor, [Gbagbo] had been content to maintain a hardline posture on the exclusionist citizenship policy" (Nhema and Zeleza 102). He increased his popular support by citing Ivory Coast's constitution which he swore to uphold as law and the voice of the people. Ouattara demanded a reelection in 2000 on the basis that he should not have been excluded. This was the political climate in the years leading up to the outbreak of civil war in 2002. The situation was rapidly deteriorating amidst escalating violence and killings between Gbagbo's supporters in the south and Ouattara's in the north. One strategy Gbagbo used to ensure his own popular support was to capitalize on the opportunity to discredit Ouattara and declare his illegitimacy as a candidate. He utilized radio and television transmissions to demonize Ouattara: he was described as a "foreign" Muslim from the north, having been born of one Ivorian parent, the other from Burkina Faso. His political opponents also stressed that he had performed his service to the IMF as a representative of Burkina Faso. His opponents also stressed his "foreignness" because of his ties to the West: he had studied for seven years in the United States; and, referring to his post as Prime Minister, they referred to him as a "stooge of

France” for having heeded the advice and interests of the French state when making decisions concerning the Ivorian national economy (“Ivory Coast’s Alassane Ouattara”). These are but a few of the details of how Gbagbo and Ouattara each strengthened his popular support base and built up his armies and militias for nearly a decade now. The relentless civil war has been interspersed with stalled elections, short-lived ceasefires and broken peace agreements between the two political rivals and their supporters and continuous fighting ensues today. Ivory Coast’s top court declared Ouattara the legitimate winner of the presidential elections in October 2010 and Gbagbo was ousted and subsequently brought to the ICC in The Hague on the charges of having committed war crimes. Both of these actions were supported by the United Nations, which also officially recognized Ouattara’s win. Ouattara took office in May 2011, and, today, in November 2011, civil war threatens to erupt again.

Karone was evidently highly attuned to the political and economic changes that were taking place in the mid- to late 1980s. By evoking in his novel the dramatic fall in the country’s economic success, following, as his narrator describes it, “le temps des splendeurs,” Karone goes beyond a critique that solely holds national leadership responsible for the country’s economic and political ills. His novel depicts social problems in Abidjan as emblematic of the country’s woes, which the narrative reflects by portraying a system that functions in relation to something more complex than the interaction between national government, its people and its relations with the former colonial power, France. This is evident in the way the author frames the narrative historically, making allegorical allusions to Houphouët-Boigny’s presidency during the mid- to late 1980s— in which an *other*, global, force is at play. Additionally, as allegory, the author’s narrative is a strikingly accurate allegory that foreshadows the political tumult of subsequent decades.

Karone opens his novel with *Psalm 103: 15-16*<sup>61</sup> from the King James Bible, which begins with a cry of lament for “L’homme!” Rather than introducing religion as a predominant theme, this scriptural passage is an exergue that at once signals one of the elements of ethnic division in Ivorian society—the Christian south in political opposition to the Muslim north—that is represented throughout the work along with the themes of the afflicted man and the fragility of the human body, and brings to voice an appeal of hope to overcome the suffering of human existence. Next, a prologue opens the narrative with two accounts of dead bodies, and the causes of their demise, the novel subsequently reveals, are one in the same. The first describes a sunset burial at the Christian cemetery of the slum, Treichtown. The narrator ambiguously describes an older woman, “une mère, une épouse ou une amante—peut-être les trois à la fois” as the closest relation among few who are in attendance. Intra-textuality leads the reader to identify the deceased here as either Julie Madola’s son, Kairuane, her beloved, Venance Taffu (le Danseur), or her husband, Ange Balla (Archange)—or all three symbolically—with a similar scene in the last chapter, albeit at dawn, with the muezzin’s call to prayer when this mother, wife and lover “ne sait toujours pas celui qu’elle doit pleurer. L’Archange, le Danseur, son fils ou encore elle-même?” (Karone 175). With specific details of her son—the third of this trio to die—brutally hacked to pieces in the penultimate chapter, and Julie’s utterance, ‘dodo, l’enfant do,’ in the last, the narrator signals that the ceremony at the end of the novel is dedicated to Kairuane; and the deaths of the three men serve as a framing device for the author’s allegorical narrative. The central plot concerns the social and economic descent (at once literal and metaphorical) of Julie and Kairuane from their luxurious life residing in the villa, “Les Beaux gosses” that overlooks the city of Abidjan. The death of the villa’s owner, Archange, is the direct cause for their

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<sup>61</sup> In the text, the Psalm is labeled 102; this may be the author’s way of including also the “Prayer of an Afflicted Man,” which is the subject of Psalm 102.

banishment to the underbelly of society, and their new residence in an apartment in the city's putrid slum, Treichtown. As his nickname suggests, Archange holds the most influential position among the Christians in Abidjan; and, he is closest to "God," symbolically the eternal father of the nation. Further, as principal interlocutor between "god" and humans, this character's allegorical name suits his role as intermediary between the Muslim mayor, the group of Lebanese (Christians and Muslims)—who control the economic workings with their banks, import/export businesses, jewelry stores, restaurants, clubs, beauty salons, and the largest insurance company in the country—and the various ethnic Bamilekè, Sénoufo, Ghanaian, Malian and other "foreign" migrant groups from the Sahel region who would otherwise all be at one another's throats in an unending power struggle.

The second account of death in the prologue foreshadows the realization of such violent conflict with the discovery of the body of an unnamed Bamilekè, his throat slit "comme un bœuf de l'Aïd," his body dumped atop the heaps of garbage that heavy rains have washed down from the markets (7). As Désiré Nyela asserts, this event "donne manifestement le ton de l'ampleur du phénomène [de la violence] dans le texte" (60). Further, the narrator's account of this murder as coinciding with the end of the rainy season, alongside a page-long overview of the economic inequality between the major groups who make up "citizens" and "foreigners"—those who reside throughout Abidjan, their neighborhoods practically on top of one another—at once banalizes such an act and underlines the outrageousness of such normalcy. The first group, referred to as "les Abidjanais," and represented (almost ironically in this context) by a Lebanese married to the daughter of a minister for the Ivorian government, asserts an ideology of belonging: "Ces crimes [contre les Libanais et non pas contre le Bamilekè ci-dessus mentionné] sont le fait des étrangers car nous sommes victimes de notre miracle économique. Je suis pour la

solution bulldozer'; the second group, or those who reside in the "bidonville," who "tue pour une poignée de CFA," are—like the Lebanese—also at once victims and enablers of the violence that permeates this text. (8). It is in this context that the prologue introduces the notion of "l'assainissement de la cité," cleansing the city of its "gangrène," and a narrative in which multiple eruptions of such extreme violent acts and killings show themselves as a complex set of effects of a new looming economic order (8, 63). The allegory that proceeds—with references, for instance from the movement of the capital city toward the beginning of the novel to the inauguration of the new Saint-Paul cathedral at the end (a foreshadowing of the actual building and ceremonial opening of the Basilica of Saint Peter in the early 1990s)—constantly blurs the line between fiction and reality, underlining a tone of urgency with which Karone writes as witness to real events (73, 177). At the same time, however, the author ends the prologue with a strategy of distancing—at once distancing himself as author as well as his stories from the realm of reality—with his narrator's disclaimer that such stories "sont exemplaires parce qu'elles sont amoraux comme celles que l'on raconte aux enfants en mal de sommeil, un soir d'orage" (8).

Karone's narrator makes clear references to a global network already in place during neocolonialism and distinguishes the present of the novel from drastic changes that occur, including a major turnover in political power at the national and local levels. The death of Archange alludes to the end of an era where an omnipotent head of state loses a drastic amount of his power, opening the struggle for economic and political gain to "outsider" groups, such as the Lebanese businessmen who control a large part of the national economy and maintain constant communication with the local and national governments, France, and the new player on the scene—the IMF. Overall, the Lebanese see themselves as more Ivorian than African migrant groups. At the same time, again, the Lebanese as well as other "foreigners" are at once the

scapegoat as well as the victim (Nyela 60). This is one example of how the novel, as Sautman observes, “complicates ethnic and national scripts” (Sautman 114). Sautman describes the Lebanese as emblematic of the “context where non-Africans operate freely as communities or as tentacular economic powers” (111). At the same time, the Lebanese are not the main object of attention; rather, they represent an integral part of the system of globalization that drives inequality and violence as a result. The story of the main protagonists in the novel, Archange, Julie Madola, her son Kairuane, and the Danseur, Venance Taffu, shows how this affects daily life. Additionally, in spite of the Lebanese’s presence as a group of successful “citizens/outsideers,” or victims/scapegoats, they are an eclectic bunch, whose interests are diverse. For instance, Toufik the imam, whose aim is to keep the peace between religious groups, and Naïm, a jeweler who was born in Grand Bassam and never knew Lebanon, represent quite distinct “community” ties from Zoltar and Béchir’s mission to clean up the city, ridding it of its “gangrène qui ronge la société” (Karone 63).

In the novel—as in the country’s history—the notion of belonging to the nation is central. The trajectories of the cast of main characters—Archange, Kairuane, Julie Madola, the Danseur and the “clan”<sup>62</sup> of Lebanese—exemplify the experiences of those who are or are not citizens; in other words, those who are valued as full-fledged humans or are plainly expendable. Further, those who are deemed “foreigners” revolt with violent acts and thievery. But it is not an unmotivated violence waged through mob mentality; rather, local economic and political conditions, which are determined by the global economy, provoke the relentless attacks on the bodies of ethnic, cultural, and racialized others, and on women. And, likewise, those whose power these groups threaten retaliate.

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<sup>62</sup> Karone uses the word “clan” to refer to the group of Lebanese in the novel.

Globalization scholar, Amy Chua, attributes such construction of “ethnic” identities, such as the “Lebanese” in West Africa or Americans on the world market, to free market capitalism. It is a system, in her view, that privileges a small elite—often either descendants of former colonizers or groups who served colonial interests directly—economically and, as a result, politically as well. Such minorities are left open to hatred and violence among the impoverished masses.

In Karone’s novel, the impetus for violence stems from the underbelly of Abidjan society, showing that consumerism and violence proceed from global norms. This work starkly juxtaposes the slum and the excessive wealth that is tied to the global economy. For instance, the narrator evokes open critiques of modern (consumer) society by likening Treichtown to a “Miami de banlieue, version tropicale” and with intertextual reference to Pamélo Mounk’a’s song, “L’argent appelle l’argent,”<sup>63</sup> (Karone 74, 78). Further, the focus on ruthless measures to acquire and amass consumer products imported from the West is revealing of its exportation of a uniform culture that exacerbates the problem of belonging to the extreme. Karone writes his novel with a deceptive style, which is evident even in the title of his novel. “Les beaux gosses,” as Sautman observes, “is not, as one might surmise, a nickname for delinquent youth, but a sumptuous villa, surrounded by lavish gardens, and situated high up on a hill, yet still close to Treichtown, the slum. The villa, even abandoned [in the present of the novel], and the urban topography [...] are the locus of fantasies and hopes, and underdevelopment is the hidden face of a blatant overdevelopment characterized by brash consumerism” (Sautman 114). The opening chapter of the novel begins with a flashback to the day of young Kairuane’s baptism, his “father” and proprietor of the villa, Archange, looking out from atop the splendor as the motorcade of

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<sup>63</sup> Pamélo Mounk’a is a Congolese singer known for his critique of Western society.

limousines, Mercedes, and Julie's BMW arrive. It is the greatest event in all of Abidjan, not only with regard to the elite "global" entourage in attendance—the city's mayor, the Lebanese businessmen, French *coopérants*, artists who have made it to the world literature and music circuits, and the African middle-weight boxing champion who would take on America's most ruthless contender for the world championship in his next fight. Moreover, the significance of this day is marked by the events that transpire in the dead of the night long after the host of the celebration, Ange Balla, demonstrates his omnipotence with a sensational performance retrieving his golden child's diamond encrusted bracelet from the horns of a charging buffalo in his own arena. Only about halfway through the novel, a series of flashbacks interwoven throughout to designate the past when Julie Madola and Kairuane lived as a family with Archange in this ostentatious villa, the reader learns that the major event that day was the murder—execution style—of Archange.

His death informs the central two-pronged plot: On the one hand, this is a story of a tragic love triangle and oedipal intrigue. Julie Madola, before meeting Archange, was an up-and-coming jazz saxophonist, on the verge of a European tour. She was in love with Venance Taffu, "le Danseur," a marginalized dancer, with whom she performed, until Archange wooed her with his wealth. This storyline reveals that the once brotherly love between Archange and le Danseur turned into hatred and vengefulness, the former having assumed the parental role over Kairuane—this detail unbeknownst to the boy—and maimed Taffu in a fight to assert his possession of Julie. Believing his whole life that Archange is his adoring father, Kairuane idolizes him so much that at the end of the novel he avenges his death by killing le Danseur. After the fact, Julie—she herself feeling destroyed by Archange—tells him listlessly that he has killed his real father.

A parallel narrative reveals that this is also the story of the demise of “les beaux gosses” and the neocolonial network that aided it to thrive. The result is a scramble for economic and political power, a struggle that affects the whole of Abidjan and Ivorian society. The present of the novel takes up this theme from the perspective of what has become of Julie, le Danseur and Kairuane. The three live in putrid conditions in the slum in severe contrast to their former life of luxury, where Archange showered Julie with wads of CFA notes, haute couture, a BMW, further seducing her with his “monocle cerclé d’or, sa canne d’ivoire, ses mocassins en croco”—all of which he acquired by robbing the poor in complicity with his neo-colonial backers, symbolized by their gift of a Louis XVI table to adorn his abode (60, 10). Presently, Julie, le Danseur, and Kairuane’s abject existence is symbolized by their most noteworthy possession: an armchair “grincheux, défoncé, déchiré. Fauteuil-symbole de la déchéance, recouvert d’une vieille couverture râpée, sans couleur” (34, 47, 66). Kairuane engages in a life of delinquency and thievery and ends up in prison for a year for having robbed, once again, the Lebanese.

Kairuane’s illicit ventures have a much larger significance than the petty crimes he commits. His revolt against those who he believes are responsible for his poverty and despair is shown to be the connecting thread to this other aspect of the plot. While doing his time, Kairuane meets Mobio, a notorious hit man in the service of the Lebanese with their ties with local government; this paid killer is also infatuated with America and its assertion of global power through violence and cultural products. He explains to Kairuane that killing is an art—and the “Ricains” (Americans), according to him, have perfected this art through their history of the genocide of native Americans, the secession war, the mafia, Vietnam, and, of course, its effective weaponry, including napalm, chain saws and electric shock treatment (41).<sup>64</sup> He dreams of going

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<sup>64</sup> My translation paraphrased.

to the “States” to consume its violence and, in return, sell the country new methods with which to take life: “les hot dogs de la mort [...] une banane cadavérée [dont le] gars qui en bouffe explose [...] on s’attaquera [aussi] aux hamburgers, aux pop-corn et même au Coca-Cola” (39). Mobio’s obsession with a violent consumerist America is so extreme that he has painted a mural in his cell that depicts “Harlem la négresse au-dessus de laquelle jaillit le poing tranché de la statue de la liberté; [...] un boxeur aux bras ballants à la manière d’un gibbon [qui] regarde sa Marilyn Monroe chuter dans sa robe blanche du haut de l’Empire State Building” (32). Kairuane is his cell mate; and the two are finally released from prison with the help of Zoltar, a godfather-like leader figure of the Lebanese clan whose revenge for the thefts includes an assassination plot on the likely winner from the opposition in the next political election; Mobio is to ready Kairuane for the execution of the crime. The connections between Mobio, the Lebanese, the Mayor, and the pivotal role that Kairuane is supposed to play in their network suggests that the whole tragic love story is more of a distraction in the narrative, an attention grabber, providing context for the larger issues that are present in the narrative, namely that violence and sexual violence show themselves as effects of economic dominance on the society. This occurs in tandem with a silencing mechanism of cultural dominance and rising ethnic and racial tensions, which, together, have fatal consequences.

A dominant culture manifests itself in the novel as a force that rejects and suppresses any form of cultural difference or fusion. Symbolically, the insistence by powerful, bullying characters—notably, Archange and the global forces that replace him—upon cultural uniformity creates deep schisms in Ivorian society along ethnic and racial lines. Karone chooses cultural products of mass consumption to represent this relationship. Most noticeable is the major role that music plays in the novel. Music is performed throughout this novel by marginalized

characters in a way that—ideally—allows them to voice their identity and feel alive. In fact, one might go as far as to argue that Karone has inserted a soundtrack to his novel, made up of musical themes that contribute significantly to character development and, in so doing, articulate ethnic and racial identities and the acute divisiveness between those who wield power and others who are constantly struck down, silenced as objects of contempt, dis-membered (broken, their oral expression literally severed from the body either as a result of brute force exercised on the body or a precursor to it), and killed off for their crime of merely existing as *other*. To be a marginalized *other* in the novel is to have indigenous ethnic affinities, to identify with transnational Black culture or, quite simply, to be Black. Such classification of the *other* is puzzling since this is the Ivory Coast, an African nation whose indigenous and immigrant population from neighboring countries is black. Each of these modes of existence poses a threat to the dominant monoculture that is emergent in the present of the novel.

Le Danseur, Julie and the group of black Africans in Yopcity prison (when Kairuane is there) are emblematic of such a threat to monoculture. Le Danseur exudes his Sénoufo roots literally through a grand dance performance at the end of the novel. Until this point in the narrative, his ethnic identity remains absolutely silenced, to the point of erasure. Symbolically, he had asserted his roots freely as a dancer until the powerful Archange literally overpowered his body by maiming him in their brawl over Julie. With the death of Archange Taffu believes he can start anew, “renaître,” as he says, trying to convince Julie to go back to their “selves” and go through with the performance. However, he and especially his accompanying saxophonist are rejected once again, to the point that instead of a “rebirth,” they experience symbolic death on stage.

Whereas le Danseur's marginality is primarily a result of his status as ethnic other, as opposed to being a valued human member of Ivorian society, Julie's worthlessness is shown to be attributed to her status as a woman as well as because of a solidarity she seeks in transnational Blackness—particularly in her impassioned attempt to assert a unique identity and a voice of her own—with the help of the historical success of jazz and fusion innovation. Julie's symbolic death and “real” (in the story) demeaning violence and sexual mistreatment are attacks on her as a racialized body, which is of particular note considering she is lighter-skinned—caramel in color, a mere variant of the skin of her son, her lover and her benefactor. Her light complexion characterizes the beauty that the latter, Archange, sees in her; and her features—particularly her mouth—makes her strikingly attractive to him. For her, though, her mouth serves the function of self-expression on the saxophone. As Sautman observes, in her final performance (toward the end of the novel) Julie “plays discordant, disdainful notes on her sax, which becomes her true voice and mouth, freed and regenerated from its previous confinement to sexual subjection and humiliation under the gangster's rule. Only her fellow musicians, including an American from the Bronx, understand the despair and rebellion she is sounding to the very end of her music. The fiasco is a reflection on the tyranny of global culture” (115-16).

Playing jazz and improvising allows Julie to produce her own language, asserting an identity of cultural fusion, where neither American jazz artists nor the African influences that inspire her take over. One reads her self-identification as a Creole, as Édouard Glissant defines the notion—where cultural identities influence one another through relation, with none overpowering any other. With her saxophone, Julie attempts to break out of the uniform culture that Archange imposes on her, most notably through his disdain for her jazz, and more so for any sort of improvisation. This literally silences her and symbolically kills her. It is not a mere matter

of having the club owner, Gandur (a “négrier”—and thus worthless—in Archange’s opinion) killed so that, at the would-be height of her career, she is forced to forego the European tour; Archange controls her “corps et âme” (Karone 36). A powerful instance of his dominance occurs when Julie allows the inner passion of her voice to resound through the instrument, playing “Summertime.” Archange silences her with an abrupt: ‘Pas de jazz!’ (71). He accepts only a linear melody; with him there is no space for innovation. This is emblematic of the monoculture that he not only promotes, but which arouses him—sexually. While playing to his request, Julie’s eyes well up with tears and she has trouble mustering the air necessary to play the notes; meanwhile, Archange has grown a formidable erection; the saxophone at her lips makes Julie an object of sexual desire. “[Il] lui commandât de venir près de lui afin de le finir. Elle déposait son instrument au pied du lit avant de s’agenouiller entre les cuisses du maître, hésitant à l’entreprendre” (72). With this, the author draws a connection between the silencing mechanism of monoculture and a direct relation to sex. Moreover, with this sequence of actions, Archange takes away Julie’s personal expression—of her identity, her passion, her language. This silencing on multiple levels is carried out as a result of Archange’s economic force and related ability to exert culturally uniform dominance. Karone’s novel shows this to be a metaphor for the negative racialization and sexualization that are exacerbated to the extreme by global economic and cultural dominance, and which affects individual lives and daily experience.

The way the narrator recounts this scene in which Archange’s silence resonates in a broader context with its racializing and sexualizing undertones—inserted in the narrative as a flashback to Kairuane’s nostalgic past—evidences additional interconnection between economic and sexual dominance and race. After Kairuane is attacked, beaten and raped in the Yopcity prison showers by those whom he refers to as the “négraille,” feeling deep loathing toward their

singing voices (language), he alleviates his anguish with an auditory image of his mother playing the soothing notes of “Summertime” in the lush gardens of “les beaux gosses” (69). At the same time, however, this nostalgia is mirrored, shockingly, through another significant instance of violence in the novel: Kairuane’s rape of Mélodie. Kairuane has returned from prison and is welcomed and taken in by his girlfriend. When he bathes, he daydreams of becoming the “enfant-roi” again. Metaphorically, he cleanses himself—just as the new global elite tried to rid the streets of his kind—and imagining the power he would like to have again, like his “father,” Archange had, he becomes aroused sexually; he then goes to Mélodie and forces her to perform violent sex. What is the significance of this scene? When Kairuane mirrors himself in the image of Archange, and in the presence of a woman as well, he envisions the relationship between a benefactor and *his woman*. In Mélodie, “[il] revoit sa propre mère jouer à la putain” (99). She has a benefactor; and he knows that she “connaît trop bien les hommes” (98). She has achieved the status of a high class prostitute—just as Julie had with Archange—as her only way out of poverty. The female body is negatively sexualized—and abused through the violent act of rape—as a metaphor for the physical violence that globalization carries out through inequality and exclusion. The unique value of the woman (in this character type) is to service the desires of the global male powerhouse, just as the African market value lies solely in goods and human labor that takes from the continent but does not give back. Further, just as Kairuane images himself in the role of Archange, his mirror refracts his mother and then Mélodie. Symbolically, this is a powerful series of images, where the effects of globalization refract to portray the disintegration of communities—in a pattern of splitting into various fragments.

Moreover, violence to the body in general has come to characterize economic globalization as a destructive force. Sautman notes that the image of extreme violence to the

body—in her example one that is literally dis-membered—is inextricably connected with voice: “When Kairuane is gruesomely hacked to pieces by his former acolytes, the membra disjecta of his unformed identity and speech lie in a garbage can near the road” (118). The literal disposal of Kairuane’s body is symbolic of the exclusionary effects wrought by the global economy; the gruesome act of dismemberment reveals the author’s insistence upon the system of globalization as a violent process for Africans.

## Chapter Four

### II Denunciations of Globalization in Mongo Beti's

#### *Trop de soleil tue l'amour* (1999) and *Branle-bas en noir et blanc* (2000)

Mongo Beti (1932-2001) dedicated his life to the advocacy of critical engagement about African societies. His fictional and critical works, written over a period of more than fifty years, expose the crimes of colonization and the resultant aftermath with the unequal power relationship between the West and the African continent. His last two novels, *Trop de soleil tue l'amour* (1999) and its sequel, *Branle-bas en noir et blanc* (2000), complete Mongo Beti's vast œuvre, culminating in a complex critique of the system of globalization and its effects on the African continent. These two novels present and contest the notion of a "globalized world" by addressing the gamut of problems that such a paradigm poses directly for sub-Saharan Africa: issues of ethnic tensions, immigration, the status and exploitation of women and children, media flows (and limitations), transnational business (including the extraction and sale of natural resources), the disposal of nuclear and toxic waste, the activities of non-state aligned militias and gangs, and the very concept of human rights and their absence. Beti accomplishes this, in part, by further developing historical themes that he established during the first two "phases" of his writing. The "first phase," according to Richard Bjornson, refers to his writing up to 1958 (two years prior to his native Cameroon's independence) through which the author maintained "widespread rejection of the entire colonialist enterprise" (viii). French colonization in sub-Saharan Africa was carried out with the "*civilizing* imperative's objective of compensating for the perceived cultural, linguistic, political, religious, and social inadequacies of [the colonized]" (Thomas,

“Intersections” 239). Beti’s early fiction is an act of witnessing and denunciation of these aspects of colonial history. His first novel, *Ville cruelle* (1954), for instance, is revealing of France’s political and economic endeavors at delegitimizing African identity. In *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba* (1956), Beti’s narrative exposes the brutal practices carried out by Christian missionaries and their active role in sustaining forced labor and sexual exploitation of young women as integral to the “civilizing mission” France would carry out for more than a century.

His second phase after fourteen years of silence (1972-94) is marked by a more politicized revolutionary stance against the powerful neocolonial structures in place during the post-independence period. The distinctive trait of this phase is that the author’s fiction addressed fully contemporary issues. His writing condemned abuses being carried out by “dictators and their foreign supporters” (Bjornson vii). Bjornson observes a “consistency” at this point with themes expressed in novels such as *Remember Ruben* (1974) and *Perpétue et l’habitude du malheur* (1978) that would run throughout his entire fictional œuvre. First, according to Bjornson, Beti’s writings would continue to reflect his virulent indignation towards a power structure which continuously subjugates Africans under “the assumption that [they] are incapable of making decisions by and for themselves” (xiii-ix); and, secondly, his creation of “an imaginary universe that links all its novels together [would lend] a sense of unity to his entire work” (vii). The consistency and continuity that Bjornson observes reveal the author’s commitment to carrying out a rewriting of history through his fictional works.

Beti’s last two novels mark his “third phase,” (1999-2000) the particularity of which, according to Kom, is that, while being consistent with earlier works, the characters in these two novels are constantly aware of the world outside of the continent. In addition, in my view, the authoritative narrator, as well as the main protagonist in both novels, is equally aware of the

West's images of Africa as a haven of lawlessness, rife with poverty, lascivious women and brutality and whose leaders had failed its nations shamelessly. In these works, the narrator himself makes intertextual references, not only between *Branle-bas* and its prequel, *Trop de soleil*, which exemplify the "unity" of his fictional works, but also – less overtly – between these last two novels and earlier works, such as *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba* (1956). The narrator's recollection of events, characters, and historical context first serves the obvious function of allowing the sequel to be recognized as a continuation of the story in *Trop de soleil*. There are also, however, other, more subtle instances of intertextuality which are only evident if one has read Beti's previous works. A noteworthy example is the "sixa," or "Camp K8" in *Branle-bas*, which Beti introduces and describes in detail in *Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba*. The significance of this women's camp in Beti's last two novels is not only an excellent example of the continuity and unity of his literary works; it is, moreover, revealing of how the author constructs his portrayal of globalization as proceeding from the power structures which took root during the colonial period. In his 1956 novel, the omniscient narrator's description of the "sixa" is illustrative of the insular fictional universe Beti creates in order to represent and denounce crimes of colonialism:

In every mission in the southern Cameroun there is a building which houses, in principle, all the young girls engaged to be married. This is the sixa. All our girls who want to be married in the strict Catholic way must stay in the sixa for two to four months, except in special cases, which are always numerous. The defenders of this institution praise its usefulness, if not its necessity. Doesn't it prepare these girls to be mothers of Christian families? But this justification is disputed by

others. What is certain is that the inmates of the sixa are compelled to do manual labour for more than ten hours every day. (Beti, *Pauvre Christ* 5).

The “sixa” is portrayed as a systematic element of the colonial project masked as a method of “civilizing” young women by instilling in them Christian values. This information is complemented with the author’s footnote that claims the information to be factual. This is a stylistic element in *Trop de soleil* and *Branle-bas* as well, which is one of the ways the author blurs fiction with reality throughout his œuvre. The narrator as informant reveals the “sixa” to be a site of contention, with the announcement of a “dispute” over its “usefulness” and “necessity.” He likens it, rather, to a place of subjugation, a prison where women are kept as “inmates” and required to perform work without pay. Moreover, the novel’s dénouement exposes the entire system as an outright perversion of its very ideology with the discovery that the priests in charge also forced the young women to engage in sexual activity and, as a result, spread syphilis throughout the entire community. By exposing the crimes of this one aspect of the colonial system—the “sixa”—Beti achieves a forceful condemnation of its murderous consequences. In *Trop de soleil* and *Branle-bas*, he does the same thing, albeit by broadening the context to the workings of globalization. In these novels (especially the last) the “sixa” serves as a secret hub for an international prostitution ring and as means for smuggling goods. Indeed, the discovery of this international prostitution ring is central to the narrative development in *Branle-bas*. Beti’s main protagonist, Eddie, describes prostitution as “quasiment une industrie” (*Branle-bas* 249). Instead of French Christian missionaries, a network of local and global actors controls the “sixa” camp. It is a site exemplary of a frenetic “global” consumerism of uncontrollable transactions, exploitation and violence that permeate Beti’s last works. He develops a complex narrative

structure through which a wide array of themes stand out. The major themes of his “third phase” – characterized by a shift from his denunciation of colonial and neocolonial subjugation to one of globalization – are violence (from daily struggle to ethnic conflict and genocide), the position of women in a system that constantly challenges and subjugates the female body, and, interwoven with these themes but nevertheless central, the disruptive emergence of a consumer society.

Beti accomplishes this denunciation through the genre of the crime fiction novel as a form of witnessing reality. According to Pim Higginson, “Beti turns to [this] popular genre [for the effect] of representing – in realistic fashion – the complexities of the postcolonial quotidian” (381). The crime fiction genre provides Beti with “an effective postcolonial aesthetic model” to portray globalization as ultimate mayhem, where the reality of real events, such as the 1994 Rwanda genocide, intermingles with the fictional goings-on of the characters’ daily lives. Mysterious disappearances, rampant death squads, and trafficking in counterfeit goods, women and children, make up the major events of the plot of both novels.

The aim of the first novel, according to an interview with Beti, is to show that “la vie n’est pas aussi belle que ça” in the tropics (Interview with Mongo-Mboussa 1999). The title, *Trop de soleil tue l’amour* finds its source in the jazz song “On the Sunny Side of the Street.” *Trop de soleil* tells the story of Zamakwé (Zam) and his tumultuous love affair with Élisabeth (Bébète), who works as his personal secretary at an independent newspaper, *Aujourd’hui la démocratie*. Zam is an investigative journalist, whose interests lie in revealing heinous crimes. He fears, for instance, the wrath of the dictator with ties to foreign firms that destroy forests in remote villages and facilitate the dumping of toxic – and perhaps nuclear – waste by Europeans in African waters and soils. Zam’s professional activity is the direct cause of a constant threat to his life. This is the prototype of a common story – particularly in Cameroun where President

Paul Biya (1982-present) is known for his strict censorship of media.<sup>65</sup> The main event of this novel is the nearly simultaneous disappearance of, first, Élisabeth (Bébète), and subsequently of Zam. This is a national story; however, the global addendum to this is that the destruction of the rural arable lands benefits not only the neo-colonial elite, but equally, the “firmes étrangères d’exploitation forestière que le gouvernement protégeait moyennant rétribution” (Beti, *Trop* 25). The twist in *Trop* is that Zam is captured and tortured – not by a member of an oppressive regime – but by a man who says he’s his son as a result of an affair Zam had back in 1963. His mother was young at the time of these events, but is now dead, and the son wants revenge. That is the mystery in *Branle-bas*. Only the reader who has read *Trop* knows where Zam is throughout the entire sequel. Élisabeth’s location is also divulged at the end of *Trop de soleil*. Main protagonist Eddie’s professional partner (in their self appointed positions of detectives), Georges, sees her at a Camp K8, unsure of what the camp is all about and whether or not she is there of her own will. The epilogue provides ironic commentary about the events of the story, with the claim that all of the violence, torture, promiscuity and so forth is typical in a “république bananière” (249). It also serves to foreshadow the sequel, which begins with the independent newspaper owner’s organization of a party to pay homage to Laurent Désiré Kabila at the moment when he is taking over the presidency (from Mobutu Sese Seko) in nearby Democratic Republic of Congo. This dates the story to May 1997, though it is not historically accurate, according to the author’s misleading footnote.

Based on what happens in *Trop de soleil*, its sequel might take many directions. It could result in a national narrative with its principal focus on censorship and internal politics, since the main plot is indeed based on the disappearance of Zam and his controversial position as a

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<sup>65</sup> Ahmadou Ahidjo was the first president following independence for twenty-two years (1960-82). He was also known for harsh censorship.

journalist for an independent newspaper. It also could address migration and immigration issues, including “ethnic” *othering* of foreign workers, as the epilogue of its prequel suggests. Or, it could be entirely about jazz and the popular subculture of the transnational music genre. Rather, *Branle-bas* opts to include each of these stories in a larger context: the story of globalization and its effects on the African continent.

*Branle-bas en noir et blanc* is the last novel Beti produced prior to his death in 2001. Surprisingly, this novel as well as its prequel has received significantly less critical examination than any of his earlier works. The story follows two main characters, Eddie and Georges, in their self-assigned investigation of the disappearance of Eddie’s friend, Zamakwé, and of George’s lover, Élisabeth (also the mother of his illegitimate child). Zam can be seen as a main protagonist in both detective novels despite his absence in the second because Eddie and Georges are looking for him throughout the narrative. With the inclusion of his disappearance as a major element of the plot, Beti highlights the shift from a neo-colonial issue to a global one. His choice of the term “branle-bas” for his title announces that a major mobilization is occurring in response to some sort of political emergency; indeed as early as the first pages of the novel paramilitary groups are swarming around—armed and ready for attack. The narrator declares that some of the commotion is due to the landmark political transition that was taking place in neighboring DRC; though he guides the reader to look for other events that are central to the plot of the chaos of globalization. The addition of the qualitative phrase “en noir et blanc” evokes print media, which allows Beti to blur the lines between fiction and the reality to which he is responding. He thus presents both of his novels as a fictive collection of “fait divers”—everyday occurrences—in a

newspaper. Indeed the original story was published in serial form in a newspaper in Cameroon.<sup>66</sup> Throughout their hopeful search for Élisabeth and Zam, ironically, Eddie and Georges's apparent incapacity to break their case runs parallel to their constant involvement with enabling the system of globalization itself.

The characters in *Trop de soleil* and *Branle-bas* are indeed highly aware of the world outside; they are entwined in its system and they experience its devastating effects daily. Beti's insertion of the "sixa"/ "Camp K8" is one example of how his last two novels address Africa's current experience of globalization by having the continent's contemporary predicaments mirror historical abuses of European colonization. The narrative also evokes the continent's complex history of previous and ongoing national or group struggles, Cold War politics during the neocolonial period, and immigration issues. These historical moments are alive in the narrator's and main characters' memories as instances of struggle against oppression and denigration. Thus, Beti's narrator and main protagonist, Eddie, constantly engages and contests the dominant Western discourse on Africa's struggles throughout these periods. In the mode of irony, the authoritative narrator teases out the images that are projected upon the continent and constantly misleads the reader into recognizing and even buying into images of Africa as violent, savage, and backward. However, the narrator then deconstructs the argument and beckons a different (his)story, one which manifests itself as a fabricated history—a myth—produced and consumed by the West. Likewise, the two novels evoke an idyllic West, only to set up this paradigm and promptly break it down with sharp irony, direct apostrophe by the author and a constant blurring of fiction with reality. As in his earlier fiction, according to Bjornson, Beti's "primary motivation

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<sup>66</sup> See Higginson. It is important to mention here that despite Beti's representation of Zam's precarious position, the author did not risk his own safety with the publication of his last works. As he describes in an interview (2002), the seriousness of threats by the government of Cameroon does not apply to well-known, established writers such as him.

behind the creation of [his] imaginary universe has been a persistent desire to reveal the falsity of myths and stereotypes that deny the full humanity of black Africans while sanctioning relations of dominance that allow them to be exploited for the benefit of others” (vii). This authorial strategy of rewriting history reveals and interpellates the global system as inciting and promoting a flagrantly mendacious imagery of endless violence on the continent.

In both *Trop de soleil* and *Branle-bas* the characters’ fictional world is rampant with violence; but the depiction of this violence shows it to be emblematic of Africa’s experience of globalization and as a continuum resulting from a longstanding unequal power relationship between the continent and the West. This relationship was fraught with violence and oppressive policies since the beginnings of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, it became outright domination and exploitation as a result of Europe’s carving of Africa into colonies, and pressed on as a result of market dominance over natural resources following independence. In order to maintain imperial control in different guises over much of the continent for well over a century, the West produced scientific “evidence” and social and spiritual discourses that cast the inhabitants of the entire continent as “backward.” These discourses – which took root in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and were further honed throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth – resulted in and preserved the image of Africa as the “dark continent.” Beti’s omniscient narrator is particularly aware of the resonating effects of such discourses and images: He consistently refers to the continent with the words “chez nous,” while in a matter-of-fact albeit ironic tone, challenging the reader, for instance regarding the West’s eager likening of African wars between ethnic groups to its own medieval conflicts, as if Africans were a conveniently available archive of a barbaric past.

Notre vraie colère, s'il en advient une, n'est pas dirigée contre l'opresseur étranger, la multinationale qui ronge notre peuple, le dictateur, homme sans classe ni envergure, qui brade notre patrimoine naturel, la caste vénale et corrompue de nos dirigeants qui ont fait un loisir banal du détournement de fonds publics et de l'évasion des capitaux, mais toujours contre l'ethnie rivale, comme au Moyen Âge des autres continents. C'est sur nous qu'on se penche pour se faire une image des époques barbares de l'histoire de l'humanité (Beti, *Trop* 105.)

This passage is exemplary of how both novels situate the historical complexity in which Africa's experience of globalization is inscribed: oppression by the former colonizer, the presence of multinational corporations as consumers of the continent's natural and human resources rather than producers for its people in the present, dictators who sell off the continent's natural resources, corrupt leaders who have exhausted countries' financial independence for individual profit, and, finally, the convenient historical accusation of savagery. The narrator reveals how the African continent is subjected to an *othering*, first, by diminishing the culpability and responsibility of colonial, neocolonial, and global powers. Secondly, that *othering* is shored up through the fabricated image of a continent whose "vraie" source of violence lies in ethnic conflict. However, in apostrophes such as the one quoted above, the narrator finally subverts this discourse; for the narrator, the real threat posed by ethnic rivalries is fueled from elsewhere. He references very real events to make his argument: the previous passage cites the "guerres de libération du Viêt-nam [et] de l'Algérie;" in the passage to follow, he wonders about the future of Cameroon: "théâtre probable des génocides de demain, prochain Rwanda sans doute?" (104, 105). The narrator engages stereotypical Western discourse only to reject it as a fabricated

image of Africans, bitterly commenting: “C’est sur nous qu’on se penche pour se faire une image des époques barbares de l’histoire de l’humanité.” This passage evokes the manipulation of a vast temporal span that underlines the unequal power dynamic between Africa and the West, in which the latter freely ignores all of African history and annexes its painful contemporary issues to its own troubled past, during the Middle Ages, for instance, without any regard for real African temporalities, and using its Middle Ages as the “nail in the coffin” in the construction of Africa as a totally backward and barbaric *other*. The sensibility of a power relationship in which the West likens present-day Africa to the Middle Ages is reinscribed at various moments in both *Trop de soleil* and *Branle-bas* in a way that constantly contests the image as both fabricated and deeply embedded in the mindset of the West, as one that served to legitimize the Atlantic Slave Trade and then fortify the colonial discourses of the nineteenth century. The narrator, or at other times, the main protagonist, Eddie, identify this imagery of Africans as an effective ideological tool in the continuance of this power relationship within the paradigm of a globalization that is all to the West’s advantage.

The “myth” of primordial violence is also notable in examples of quotidian violence that occurs in the narrative. In *Trop de soleil*, for instance, one day a mob gathers and runs through the streets after a migrant from a neighboring country, crying out: “Il faut tuer ce voleur. Tous les Tchadiens sont des voleurs. Racaille de Tchadiens ! Tous des voleurs. Tuez-le” (152-3). In his retelling of the sequence of events, the narrator plays on the notion of inter-ethnic rivalries as supposedly inherent – normal – in the African context. In this passage the narrator does not recount a reason why in Cameroon *all* Chadians have a reputation for thievery; instead, the narrative reproduces “l’image parfaite de ce que devait être le *runaway nigger* des romans américains du dix-neuvième siècle au temps de l’esclavage, *La Case de l’oncle Tom*, par

exemple” (152). The Chadian, as object of pursuit, receives nearly an entire page of description despite the *fait divers* quality of the telling : “[...] un jeune homme dégingandé, nu comme au jardin d’Éden, courait à une vitesse de bête fauve, se tortillant en un déhanchement que seule l’énergie du désespoir pouvait justifier, car le fuyard était poursuivi par une meute d’autres jeunes qui s’excitaient en criant à tue-tête, et brandissaient des gourdins, de gros cailloux, des barres de fer, tous instruments avec lesquels ils s’apprêtaient à opérer à leur accoutumée” (ibid.).

This unruly scene mirrors the images in Western news, novels and films which produce the perception of Africa as a horrific place. Evidence of this is Beti’s insertion of the awestruck reaction of one onlooker, Georges, who is a “toubab” (White person or European): “Georges contempla un moment avec horreur le corps parcouru de spasmes du jeune Tchadien” (154). He is the only one, however, to stop and consider the sight. By singling him out, the narrator highlights an ambivalence in George’s character. According to the narrator, whereas Georges takes on various roles that make him part of the community—Eddie’s partner and a friend and lover of many—he still cannot rid himself of some of the stereotypes Westerners have of Africans. For instance, Georges has a side to him that objectifies *others* as in need. It is his romanticized version of international aid. Eddie and he constantly antagonize each other playfully throughout the novel as being worlds apart (Eddie saying he is African and Georges always trying to prove he is not the typical French man), as well as in *Branle-bas*; and toward the end of the second, Georges infers that he will finally fulfill his dream of going to Oceania to carry out aid work. Thus the narrator’s attention uniquely on his reaction of horror to the scene evokes a critique of “toubab” Westerners who want to help *others* who they view as incapable of helping themselves, particularly those whom they view as having a supposed propensity toward ethnic rivalries and hatred.

Imaging-in the West also occurs throughout the novel; and, in the same way that Beti's narrative responds to the "falsity" of stereotypes about Africans, so too does the narrative reveal the criminal involvement of an otherwise idyllic West. For instance, in *Trop de soleil*: African countries are initially framed as the exact opposite of places like Switzerland (Helvetic Republic), Lichtenstein or Iceland. The narrator idealizes these countries as places "où le peuple choisit librement ses dirigeants tandis que les forces de l'ordre protègent le citoyen [avec] la police nationale, la maréchaussée mêlées aux organisations de défense des droits de l'homme et du consommateur" (9). The irony, however, shows itself in the active participation of countries and agencies that supposedly represent these democratic ideals and values of freedom in the denial of these very tenets in Africa. One noteworthy example is enunciated by Ébénezer, the "Notable" of the city, at a political meeting. In his attempt to explain the importance of the United States of America and how that country has usurped France's former position, he reveals the former's manipulation of African elections since the Cold War: "Les perspectives ne sont plus certaines depuis la fin de la guerre froide. Les Américains, libérés de leurs soucis là-bas, se répandent maintenant partout. Ils veulent tout et ils trouvent ici des relais. C'est ça le drame. Alors on parle de démocratie, de corruption, de droits de l'homme, mais tout ça c'est la propagande américaine pour évincer nos vieux amis français, ceux qui ont été avec nous dans les bons comme dans les mauvais jours. Voilà le problème" (193). This character worked for the party in power which has in the past been supported by the French (and thus managed to stay in power). However, the political situation shifts, according to Ébénezer, as a result of American economic interests in Africa. Explaining the report on the country's elections, Ébénezer divulges to Georges the extreme measures the superpowers would take to secure their chosen candidate: "Nous savions que les Américains manigançaient quelque chose dans le nord et l'ouest du pays"

(195). On a political level, one may read this as the West's insistence on democracy and African countries' own attempt at the Western model of democracy (American, French, or British) (Fandio, "*Trop*" 8). Closer attention to the author's construction of globalization as a market-driven system, however, evidences a very different mechanism of power. Ébénezer's disclosure of a plot carried out in the north and west of the country alludes to the depot of the illicit trafficking network in the north (to which the women of Kamp K8 carry goods) as well as a web of nongovernmental groups who appear there at the time of Élisabeth's voyage.

Further, the consumer interests of France (and other rich countries) are of primary importance in maintaining control over the continent. The French represent a wound that continuously re-opens. Eddie quotes Zam's boss, PTC, in order to explain to Zam and Élisabeth how deeply French economic interests are still embedded in West Africa:

[...] quand tu touches au bois ici, forcément, tu énerves les Français; c'est la thèse de PTC [...] À l'en croire, les Français sont en train de stocker les bois tropicaux pris chez nous en prévision d'une pénurie de bois de menuiserie et de décoration qui va concerner les années 2020 et 2030. Et à ce moment-là, ils vont faire des bénéfices faramineux, étant pratiquement en situation de monopole, comme Elf Aquitaine avec le pétrole en Afrique centrale. C'est ça qui explique la frénésie avec laquelle ils dévastent nos forêts. Selon lui [PTC], avec le pétrole et le bois, c'est un complot des Français pour clochardiser à jamais les Africains et les tenir éternellement en laisse (Beti, *Trop* 58).

Zam's boss at the newspaper also perceives the domination of Africa in the world market as ruthless and violent: "Nous n'aimons pas beaucoup les Français ici [...] ces gens-là n'ont

jamais oublié qu'ils ont été nos maîtres. Regardez ce qui s'est passé au Rwanda. Ils sont prêts à tout pour maintenir leur emprise ici. Écoutez-moi là : pourquoi je dois passer par un concessionnaire français d'ici, et non pas un compatriote, si je veux acheter une voiture japonaise ? [...] Pourquoi nous sommes indépendants alors si nous ne pouvons même pas avoir un des nôtres concessionnaires de marques japonaises ?" (27-28). PTC's words indicate two major discourses here and their interconnection. First, consumer interests trump all.

Consumerism – whether represented here through automobiles or France's exploitation of forests in another instance – is a means for maintaining economic (and political) control and foregoing African countries' sovereignty. Further, inscribed in this consumerism is the historical context of European subjugation of Africa. Zam's boss, PTC, evokes the history of colonialism by using the word, "*maîtres*". By evoking the example of Rwanda, PTC makes a striking reference to that country's genocide in 1994 and the alleged role France had played (as a neocolonial power that stepped in after Rwanda became independent from Belgium) in aiding and escalating the killings. Rwanda has accused France of supplying arms and training Hutu militias. His discourse on master and genocide finally returns to consumerism. The French and Japanese automobiles are symptomatic of the continuous economic stranglehold other countries maintain on Cameroonians. The control of global consumerism by rich Western countries is a form of dominance. Their penetration of the local economy also reveals the lack of industry in the country – a similar situation to most of underdeveloped sub-Saharan Africa. Zam remarks on this aspect to Eddie: "[...] les marques de voitures? Il y en a tellement ici qu'un spécialiste y perdrait son latin, [...] Entre les japonaises, les françaises, les allemandes, les américaines, les italiennes – il y a même des sud-coréennes maintenant, et même des russes [...]" (82). But there is no mention of African made automobiles. All are imported.

Beti's concern for the status of women is evidenced throughout the two novels. In a familiar tactic ascribed to his narrator, first, he misleads the reader by seeming to subscribe to the stereotypical image of the lascivious African woman: "c'est vrai que nos femmes se donnent facilement à un Blanc, sans tenir compte de son apparence physique, tout simplement parce qu'un Blanc, quel qu'il soit, est toujours supposé avoir de l'argent" (Beti, *Trop* 182-3). However, his remark is really part of a pointed attack on the pervasiveness of prostitution of women, their transport in luxury cars, their idyllic hopes to flee to Europe and their final abuse. Toward the end of the novel, Eddie accidentally finds Élisabeth at the pseudo-religious camp K8 that is, up to this point in the narrative, known for its lack of food despite close proximity to over-flowing fresh markets. Eddie and Georges discover that she had apparently gone there of her own free will, albeit unaware of the type of business she would enter. This is emblematic of the subjected position of women at the same time as that of Africans in globalization; the women's participation in the expedition to the north is indeed active; yet, they do not know at the offset what they are getting into because it is all out of their control.

Élisabeth's kidnapping is central to the story; and, notably, she is present despite her disappearance much more than Zam. Beti tells her story within the context of the fate of other young women. Indeed, each of the female characters is objectified and commodified by the system. In addition to forced prostitution and general violence toward women, Beti's chapter titled, "Pourquoi toutes nos bamboulines s'en vont" makes it clear that he also finds it urgent to talk about female immigration to France (or Europe), as a major part of globalization and consumerism. It is notable that his male characters have returned from studying there – in France, for instance – but that his emphasis is on the women. He dedicates this chapter to these issues, though immigration and prostitution are themes that run throughout both novels, a major

thread which connects the stories of so many of the female characters: Élisabeth, Nathalie, Antoinette, and the sorcière, for instance. Élisabeth's trajectory is based on her longing to leave for elsewhere. That is how she ends up on a trip to the north unknowingly smuggling goods. The horror of her experience becomes clear on the trip during which she is systematically raped by the Swiss abbot, Roger, and perhaps previously tortured. Thus, the prostitution of women reveals other issues other than albeit related to smuggling and prostitution as a practice of international trade. Élisabeth herself has become a tradable good; and she is subjected to the evils of human trafficking: she, too, is so desperate to get out of her country that she is vulnerable to any treatment one exerts on her. Another young woman, Nathalie, in spite of her youthful innocence at the beginning of *Branle-bas*, is also heading in the direction of most illiterate young girls – which, according to the narrative means prostitution or immigration. Antoinette is a seasoned prostitute “[...] comme la plupart des filles dans la même situation [et] Oui, bien sûr, Antoinette connaissait le joueur de base-ball [Grégoire, the pimp], intermédiaire quasi obligé de la plupart des filles avec les étrangers, surtout avec les toubabs” (89). However, she, like the other young women, is desperate to get out of her situation and begs Eddie to help her leave the country. Geneviève, the sorcière, runs Camp K8 by serving the international prostitution ring and is in collaboration with Grégoire's smuggling trade. She reels in young women and most likely condones their systematic rape on the monthly (or so) journey to the north.

As the female characters' stories exemplify, everyone in *Trop de soleil* and *Branle-bas* participates in the crimes of globalization. Beti creates interwoven relationships between seemingly innocent individuals, such as the “cineastes anglais qui venaient d'achever une nouvelle version des aventures de Tarzan sur fond de forêt équatoriale” and individual members who are a part of those groups – for instance, Grégoire, who, with his baseball cap, also

represents (culturally) Americans, who is suspected throughout the novel of having kidnapped Elisabeth and is a confirmed leader of the international trafficking and prostitution ring. (Beti, *Branle-bas* 43, 299) Beti forcefully denounces the treatment of women and their objectification as consumer goods. However, the narrative reserves a more pointed denunciation for “Whites” from the West. Throughout the text, the “Toubabs” are the lifeline of the prostitution ring both on the continent and in Europe: “Ah! Ces toubabs [cinéastes anglais ou américains]! chez eux, ils prétendent ne pas vouloir de bamboulas, mais, à peine débarqués chez nous, les voilà qui se jettent sur nos bamboulines et autres bamboulinettes comme la misère sur le pauvre monde” (44).

*Trop de soleil* and *Branle-bas* depict the violence of consumer-driven globalization and a wide array of its negative consequences. Beti describes globalization as creating chaos and mayhem, and having its harshest effects in Africa. There is, at the same time, some optimism veiled by Beti’s sardonic tone: the hope that Africans will overcome, as African-Americans did in the U.S.A during the civil rights struggle. Eddie in particular nurtures this vision. Reflecting on the imminent threat to the life of his friend, Zam, he believes that:

Nous sommes dans la même situation que les Noirs de Montgomery, Alabama, en décembre 1955. Je suis un grand admirateur de ce génial Black américain qui s’appelait Martin Luther King. Dans une situation comme celle-ci, qu’est-ce qu’il aurait fait ? Il serait descendu dans la rue avec ses partisans pour prier. [...] Une vieille négresse, revenant de son travail, était tranquillement assise sur la banquette de son autobus. Bon, un type s’amène et lui dit : ‘Laisse-moi ta place.’ Il était blanc. Ça se passait comme ça depuis des siècles à Montgomery [...] Si nous voulons que cesse la violence qui frappe notre pays, il faut aller le dire haut

et fort dans la rue, en priant, en dansant, enfin, n'importe comment, mais en faisant quelque chose, merde et merde ! (Beti, *Trop* 72-3).

These references to the civil rights struggle in the U.S. at once highlight the awareness of the world outside the African continent that marks Mongo Beti's third phase of writing. Moreover, recalling the struggle in the United States that directly addressed issues of citizenship, housing, immigration and the treatment of human beings in general is translatable, according to Beti's popular and passionate character Eddie, to the fight against the oppressive workings of globalization. Eddie thus enunciates a resistance to the ills of globalization. He wants to shout from the rooftops—do anything—to get the word out that globalization is a violent process. In the least, Mongo Beti achieves that by writing and publishing his last two novels.

## Chapter Five

### Framing Resistance to Globalization: Abderrahmane Sissako's *Language of Resistance* in *La vie sur terre* (1998) and *Bamako* (2006)

*Il y avait longtemps, trop longtemps que la grisaille, le silence et la détresse qui submergent le continent africain au sud du Sahara n'avaient été contredits par aucune lueur, aucun cri, aucun présage venus de ses profondeurs propres. Pour le monde noir, cependant, il s'agit là d'un état de choses endémique, s'il faut en croire le poète [Aimé Césaire...] – Cheikh Hamidou Kane (Cited in Traoré 9).*

*La chèvre a ses idées mais la poule aussi* – Proverb pronounced by Zégué Bamba in *Bamako*

In contrast to the fast-paced portrayals of chaos and mayhem that Karone and Beti present as symptomatic of globalization, Abderrahmane Sissako juxtaposes a life-threatening menace of frenetic consumer-driven globalization with slow-paced cinematic narratives in his two most recent features, *La vie sur terre* (1998) and *Bamako* (2006). Similarly to the novels of the late 80s and beyond, in these two films, Sissako poses the problem of Africa's exclusion from the global economy and its effects in a transnational context. His exposé mobilizes in particular the anti-colonial discourse of Martinican Aimé Césaire. Sissako also sharply critiques the international court system in order to counter the silencing and dehumanizing mechanisms of globalization as it is experienced by Africans. Depicting rural and urban contexts, respectively, the two films articulate a refusal of the continent's exclusion from policy discussions and the decision-making process. In the perspective of postcolonial theory, the refusal "to accept the terms of a discourse that totalizes experience and subordinates the subject to an order already established within the discourse" is an act of resistance (Harrow 248). Sissako's resistance is

clearly modeled after some of Aimé Césaire's principal ideas and is enunciated through an artfully crafted film language. Privileging the body and voice as cinematic sites, Sissako's language of resistance is achieved at once through discursive means, poetic imagery, *mise en abîme*, and a rich soundscape. In each of the two films, Sissako raises burning questions: Who can speak and who is silenced in globalization? How does one speak and how does one resist the dominant voices? And, finally, how does the body represent a site of contestation and thus come to symbolize resistance to globalization's assault on the human?

Sissako employs two principal methods to critique globalization as a phenomenon that at once forgets and silences the majority of sub-Saharan Africans. First, in *La Vie sur terre*, his insertion of Aimé Césaire signals an "armed" resistance—armed with the lens of his camera, that is, as the Martinican poet was armed with his pen. His use of this precise historic discursive language signals the continuous oppression that Europe exerts over Africans forty years following independence, placing Sissako's stance in his creative production alongside that of other Malian artists, writers, intellectuals and scholars, such as Aminata Dramane Traoré and Hamadou Hampaté Bâ—who each overtly recall Césaire's call for Africans to come to voice. Additionally, the filmmaker relies upon the familiarity of both his characters *and* his viewers with such a discourse to question a shared set of concerns about colonization and globalization. Sissako's stance of historical resistance is further rooted in the Césarian 'arme miraculeuse' with the framing device of the letter that the filmmaker, played by himself—albeit as Dramaana, a variation of his given name, Abderrahmane—writes to his father prior to his return to his native village of Sokolo, in southern central Mali. The voice-over narration of Sissako reading his letter aloud is another strategy that allows the filmmaker to enunciate his resistance from behind the camera by inserting himself as at once *auteur* and witness.

Secondly, as in *Bamako*, Sissako comments upon and rejects globalization's exclusion of Africa and African voices and their silencing on the international stage by using a wide range of traditional verbal expression. With striking examples, Sissako seeks to privilege and celebrate numerous aspects of African culture, such as orality and thus, points as well to the multiplicity of languages and cultural forms that exist throughout the region and manifest themselves as acts of resistance. According to Abiola Irele, orality sets rhythm, inflects voice and functions as a rhetorical device, evoking strong cultural connotations:

In African orality, we are plunged at once into the connotative sphere [...], signaled by the presence of those figurative and rhetorical forms of language that, as anyone who is familiar with African habits of speech is aware, occur as a frequent element of linguistic interaction on the continent. The culture itself offers prescribed forms of discourse, which define what one might call a 'formulaic' framework for the activity of speech and even for the process of thought. To this rhetorical level of linguistic usage belong the proverbs and the aphorisms, which have a special value in practically every African community, a fact that accounts for their widespread development as fixed forms, culturally prescribed (*African Imagination* 32).

Orality is thus at once a code, a stylistic imprint that the filmmaker inserts and, similarly to Sissako's narration of his letter to his father in *La Vie sur terre*, functions also as a voice-over evoking a storyteller in dialogue with his audience. At the same time, it privileges the expression of a multiplicity of cultures (through language and traditions) in resistance to the uniformization of globalization.

Further, in each of the films, Sissako utilizes and subverts imagery that compels the viewer to think critically about the deep-seated and far-reaching effects of the image itself in the context of globalization. Sissako thus produces a narrative of imagery that reveals the violence of the image, and takes on two major themes of globalization. He portrays global consumerism as at once the West's consumption of the image of the African and, likewise, as African consumption of American popular culture. For instance, in the role of a defense lawyer for the World Bank, Roland Rappaport implores the court to address the *truly global problems*: the environment, corruption, and terrorism. His words are discredited by a collage of visual imagery and sounds of women dying fabrics in the courtyard; a cut to the conversation between the photojournalist and the security guard at the moment when the first admits: "je préfère [photographier] la mort... c'est plus réel," his preference being not only for the body, but for the bodies of the dead; and, in the following frame of the same sequence the camera enters inside an elderly man's hut, showing the intimate scene of him on his deathbed because of an illness that had gone untreated. Rappaport's words are also accompanied by the squeaking of a baby's booties, underlining that an uncertain future—life or death?—lies ahead for coming generations. The juxtaposition of such images in the private courtyard with images and speeches made in the public international tribunal are exemplary of Sissako's rejection of dominant discourses that present Africa as irredeemably "suffering." Indeed, Sissako does not favor images of black bodies suffering shown in a void; thus, when he projects frames, such as the sequence mentioned above, his message is not intended to elicit the pity of a Western viewer, but rather to be a meaningful contemplation of the global factors that dehumanize those who are excluded from any benefits of globalization, as are the African masses.

In his works, Sissako demands of the viewer critical thinking and engagement with political issues in order that dialogue between the West and Africans may be achieved. His last two films project the message that African voices must inform “global” decisions, particularly those made about and for the continent. The excess of “consumer society” along with the West’s discourses on aid and how to “manage” the world economy are mirrored through images and soundscape which point to the major problems on the continent, such as a life-threatening lack of basic needs. Further, his films stand out as acts of resistance to the “consumer society,” by “shooting back,” or projecting images of Westerners back at them, showing them as consumers—consumers of Africa’s travails, consumers of their debts, consumers of their raw materials, of their sicknesses and of their poverty. Such images expose the violence of the “consumer society,” with its taste for visualizing the suffering of black bodies, sensationalizing their poverty, and pillaging their lands. These strategies allow Sissako to bring Africans to voice while at the same time denouncing globalization as a dominant force of Western design.

The emphasis that Sissako places on voice in order to expose and contest the systematic silencing mechanisms of globalization leads me to consider *La vie sur terre* and *Bamako* as allegorical films where voice and language speak for the body. The film itself, as visual and audio representation, acts at once to project images and to speak bodily experiences of globalization in Africa. Sissako’s political stance stands out in these films, particularly in the context of a debate among African filmmakers which gained momentum in the 1990s. For instance, Senegalese Joseph Gai Ramaka expressed disdain for his contemporaries’ critique of globalization because, in his view, one can hold a president (such as Senegal’s current leader, Abdoulaye Wade) accountable for misleading the country, but one cannot gain anything from denouncing the World Bank or IMF (Martin 214-15). Sissako evidently subscribes to the

opposing view, since in his most recent feature film, *Bamako*, he literally puts these very “global” agencies on trial.

Particularly in *Vie sur terre*, Sissako relies upon Césaire’s anti-colonial discourse sixty years after the publication of *Discours sur le colonialisme* (1955) and nearly a century after the poet’s “Cahier du retour au pays natal” (1939)—the two major texts which Sissako cites directly in this film and also references in *Bamako*. Thus, if we posit that these films produce a language of resistance, it seems essential to ask why the filmmaker turns to this particular thinker to frame his resistant stance, given that Césaire was concerned with a different set of issues—those regarding colonization. In the context of colonialism, Robin Kelley suggests that *Discours sur le colonialisme* might be seen as a “model for dreaming a way out of [the continent’s current] predicament” (Kelley in Césaire, *Discourse* 28). Perhaps that is indeed what Sissako is putting to work in his films. However, to make sense of this chronological leap in theory from the anti-colonial moment to responses critical of globalization, I find it most useful to turn to some of the late Édouard Glissant’s (1928-2011) theoretical concepts, especially since his ideas have developed from observing and living the transition to globalization after decolonization and departmentalization to the current moment. Further, in my view, Glissant’s concepts of “relation” and, more specifically, of the “tout-monde,” are particularly pertinent to this discussion, since his outright rejection of globalization is in itself a form of resistance to it. I believe that Sissako formulates an anti-globalization language of resistance along very similar terms. Just as Glissant outright rejects the form of globalization that dominates the world with an inequality that stems from the “lois du profit,” Sissako condemns this model and proposes, instead, an “other” type of globalization. Glissant proposes new terminology for current human interactions with his theory of “relation” and his notion of the “tout-monde.” Sissako appears to

be doing something similar by asserting African voices through language as cultural expression, and not accepting that one culture dominate another.

By language, I mean that which Glissant refers to as “langage” or “language use” (Glissant, *Poetics* 107). Distinct from its relational counterpart, “langue”—the language in which one speaks (French, English or Bambara, for instance)—Glissant’s concept of language (“language voice” or *langage*) is the means by which one understands the Other: ““I speak to you in your language voice [your tongue], and it is in my *language use* [my own language] that I understand you””<sup>67</sup> (ibid., my emphasis). In other words, one utilizes a language, such as French, in order to communicate; and the receiver understands the message based on his or her experiences; for Glissant this is the true meaning of multilingualism—the experiences one has in order to understand and truly communicate with the other without overpowering him or her. There is, however, a power dynamic that relates the two terms (*langue* and *langage*); and it is that dynamic which, in my view, perpetuates a discourse that presents globalization as positive for all while at the same time it excludes millions. First, according to Glissant, there exists a hierarchy of language (*langue*). In former colonies of France, French was (and remains) the dominant language used as a lingua franca as well as a language of governance and administration. This gives French an elevated position of power—the status of a dominant language; it is not only because of its wide use, but moreover because of its accordance with laws of the land. Glissant’s view of language informs his concept of the “tout-monde,” which in and of itself is positioned as resistance to globalization. In his view, globalization is a system of dominance that aims to create uniformity in a world that is diverse (*divers*). “In global relations languages work, of course, in obedience to laws of economic and political domination but elude,

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<sup>67</sup> I quote from Betsy Wing’s translation of, *Poetics of Relation*, but I will simply use “language” to refer to “langage” throughout this chapter.

nonetheless, any harsh and rigid long-term forecast” (107). In my view, the two films I discuss here challenge such power relations with the emergence of a resistant film language.

In *La vie sur terre*, Sissako compels the viewer to visualize and witness rural sub-Saharan African life and its soundscape through the eyes of a returnee—one who is familiar with the concept of the West and thus readily observes contradictions between the West and the African continent. In the first frames preceding the opening credits, the panning movement of the camera captures the wide variety of consumer products available to shoppers on the shelves of a Super Monoprix in Paris. Seen from the viewpoint of Dramaan, the sequence of shots incorporates a slow zoom in and out to simulate his attention to the vast array of groceries, cheeses, jewelry, toys and shoes and finishes with a high-angle shot of an even wider assortment of consumer products viewed from the ascending escalator. Inaudible dialogue during this opening sequence is followed by the crescendo of cash registers ringing up goods, highlighting the constant consumer activity. This opening sequence is contrasted a few frames later with an immediate cut to the image of a baobab tree, followed by a series of wide-angle slow pans across the vast terrain of the village of Sokolo (Mali). The image of the baobab allegorizes sub-Saharan Africa’s peripheral positioning in relation to the global economy, represented by the panoply of consumer products in the Super Monoprix. Sissako’s film is striking in that his narrative collage portrays consumerism as a continuance of imperial control reminiscent of colonization, albeit particular to the moment of the current globalization.

Indeed, the film portrays the harsh economic conditions characters face on a daily basis, mirrored through the frenzied, Western-driven consumerism. The slow visual pacing of the film contrasts sharply with the consumer sounds of the “vitesse folle de l’Europe” represented by the

pre-opening credits sequence in the Super Monoprix of which the narrator speaks in his letter announcing his return at the beginning of the film. Throughout the film Sissako emphasizes the tranquility of life in Sokolo with the nondiegetic soundtrack, which is a reminder to the viewers that “for much of the world's population ‘life on earth’ is still conducted on foot, by donkey cart or bicycle. Life in Sokolo is a far cry from the 21st century trumpeted in the West where the Information Superhighway moves everything in nanoseconds. This is the terrestrial reality which too often is ignored in virtual reality”.<sup>68</sup> The shot sequences that sweep the landscape are accompanied by Salif Keita’s melodic soft picking of his song, “Folon,” (“The Past”); in another instance, a track by Anouar Brahem offers harp-like chords that flow meditatively like waves as the men reposition their seats to find shade in the afternoon. Keita’s song, “Folon” works with readings of Aimé Césaire’s *Discours sur le colonialisme* (1955) throughout the film and excerpts from his long poem, “Retour au pays natal” at the beginning, to frame the narrative in a tone of resistance to Sokolo’s exclusion from the global economy. The filmmaker signals this anti-colonial stance directly in his voice-over letter to his father as well as through readings from Césaire’s *Discours* which are broadcast by the local radio station, “la Voix du riz,” and disseminated daily throughout the village through the speakers of portable battery-operated radios. As Keita’s and Brahem’s songs do nondiegetically, these diegetic transmissions throughout the village underscore the contrast with the visual panoply of a fast-paced frenzied consumerism exemplified by the Super Monoprix and the sounds of “globalization” which scatters its discourses across the community from Radio France International (RFI).

*La Vie sur terre* is an exilic narrative that emphasizes the return; but Sissako does something particularly interesting with it: he overlaps the nostalgia for his father’s village of

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<sup>68</sup> The distributor of this film in the U.S. offers this description in an anonymous review on its website. See “La Vie”.

Sokolo with the engaged narrative of Césaire, thus evoking a second nostalgia for an anti-colonial past in order to inform a discourse on human existence. The late Teshome Gabriel (1939-2010) writes of the “nostalgia for the vastness of nature” as a stylistic symbolization [of Third World cinema] where “the landscape depicted ceases to be mere land or soil and acquires a phenomenal quality which integrates humans with the general drama of existence itself” (33). The visual emphasis in this film on vast expanses of the land surrounding the village, horizontal sweeps of the camera across drought-ridden earth and of Nana Baby and Dramane riding their bicycles (the young woman has traveled 37 kilometers to visit her aunt) and the accompanying sounds of slow paced rural life—cows mooing, birds chirping—as well as the nondiegetic music (mentioned above) that accompanies these frames reveal noteworthy details about human existence in the area. Despite its beauty and serenity, food production is shown to be deeply hindered by lack of water and birds destroying crops; potable water itself is in short supply; and, reliance on bicycles for long distance travel alongside the presence of one sole malfunctioning telephone line evidence the absence of automobiles and a general degree of isolation from industrial and communications technologies that link “global” enclaves in ways that can benefit human life. The attention to these linkages between the land and the human in this film strongly suggests that Sissako’s message is “anti-global” as Césaire’s was anti-colonial. The film relies heavily on a series of comparisons between African past experiences of European colonization and its present predicament of globalization.

The parallels Sissako makes between the two moments in Africa’s history are striking if one considers Césaire’s definition of colonization and the trope of consumerism that Sissako highlights as a dominant feature of globalization in this film. The poet describes the former as: “the adventurer and the pirate, the wholesale grocer and the ship owner, the gold digger and the

merchant, appetite and force, and behind them, the baleful projected shadow of a form of civilization which, at a certain point in its history, finds itself obliged, for internal reasons, to extend to a world scale the competition of its antagonistic economies” (Césaire, *Discourse* 33). Césaire’s language (*language use*) is about the consumer attributes of colonization and its “racist consequences” (ibid.). In this context, it is evident that Sissako is reposing questions that Césaire posed, such as whether “colonization [has] really *placed civilizations in contact?*” (ibid.). The filmmaker makes a particularly strong statement by translating the anticolonial discourse to the present global context.

A specific instance of comparison occurs at the beginning of the film when the visual emphasis on Sissako’s return journey across the plains to the village of Sokolo is overlaid with the voice-over of him reading his letter to his father. He enunciates his motivation for returning to the village and filming it: to tell its story; and in this context, he recalls Césaire’s notion of “le grand drame historique de l’Afrique,” which the latter described as Europe industrializing on the blood of Africa (Sissako, *Vie*; Césaire, *Discourse* 45). With the poet’s words, Sissako brings his viewer back to that moment where Europeans subjugated Africans through slavery and forced labor, for instance; but this time it takes place specifically in the context of the West’s celebration of the new millennium. The filmmaker infers that the African continent’s position in the global economy proceeds from its colonial history with Europe and that it continues to shed its blood to the advantage of excessive consumerism and technological advancement in the West. However, although every frame of his film contests the jubilatory “tout le monde fêtera [l’an 2000] dignement!” that blares through the global airwaves of RFI as its announcers shout over the raucous crowds across Europe, the USA and Japan, Sissako echoes Césaire’s warning against being an idle witness rather than active spectator: “Gardez-vous de vous croiser les bras en

l'attitude stérile de spectateur. Car un homme qui crie n'est pas un ours qui danse" (*Vie*; "Cahier" in *La Poésie* 21). The quote stands in as the filmmaker's direct address, framing the images and sounds, not to elicit the viewer's pity, or his scorn at the poverty or difference portrayed, but rather as an urgent call to see beyond the closed circuit that globalization for the current world economic system really is, and to see it through the eyes of *other* experiences. In this way, Sissako draws on the works of Césaire to point to the shortcomings or failures of the dominant discourse of globalization. He echoes the poet's call for an end to the life threatening consequences of agricultural distress and the severe lack of potable water—"fin pour la faim universelle, pour la soif universelle"—and proposes an *other* "global" solution to such problems that arise most often, as he says, in the bush. He directs his words this time to his brother, stating that without helping each other—brother to brother—the family cannot prosper; crops cannot grow in rural areas and illness, too, goes untreated. This message translates metaphorically to the larger world, where brothers are equal to human beings and the family a global network of humans helping humans.

Another noteworthy instance of comparison concerns the return of the main protagonist, Dramaana, which is overlaid with visual and audio frames that work together to highlight at once the reception of RFI's global radio broadcasts and the utter dearth of communications technology that keeps the inhabitants of the village of Sokolo from communicating outside of their village. Indeed, in stark contrast to the developed world, there is one telephone only in Sokolo located at the local post office; its connection is weak and unstable, and only the crippled postmaster, Keita, knows how to operate it. In one scene where Keita helps a young man to place a call to a relative in Europe, the post operator tells him: "Reaching people is always a matter of luck." Symbolically, the telephone scenes not only point to the body as a weakened, dependent being in

the context of current global communications, but, moreover, the absence of working technologies such as telephone and radio as two-way communications systems, emphasizes the remoteness of the village and, thus, its silence is shown to be a stark disadvantage in comparison to “global” cities, such as Paris, London, New York and Tokyo. Film scholar Michelle Stewart argues that such contrasts in Sissako’s film underscore the irony in globalization’s celebration of technology. While radio certainly provides “close ties to the larger world,” she writes, “this communication is very one-sided” (16). This is not only evidenced by the broadcasts of RFI, but is further accentuated visually in contrasting frames that show the local radio studio of “Radio Colon, La Voix du Riz”—once, as its two-part name suggests, installed by the colonizer to “educate” the people with its civilizing messages and, presently, operating as a local initiative for the people—as literally outmoded. Everything in this small space is old and dusty—not only the machines, which frequently fail to work, but also several magazine cutouts of blond, white (presumably French) models. These images show that the outside consumer society (of France) continues to maintain its one-sided dominant historical influence together with new “global” consumer technologies.

In contrast to the West’s *voice over* in globalization, most noticeable in this film by the constant beeping in of Radio France Internationale—a realist element introduced by the filmmaker, as indeed, RFI is an integral part of the everyday soundscape in taxicabs, commercial shops and on urban and village streets—Sissako achieves resistance with his choice not only to read his letter aloud as framing-device but also by giving the local radio – Radio Colon, “La Voix du Riz,” a central “voice” throughout *Vie sur terre*. Without local programming, radio merely symbolizes the false link that globalization supposedly provides between the continent and the industrialized world; however, Sissako utilizes radio technology to

make Sokolo's, Mali's and Africans' voices heard. The prominence of the villagers' "radio parlée" with its regular readings and commentary on Césaire's *Discours sur le colonialisme* allows the filmmaker to achieve two-way communication by voicing *another* story of globalization—at least inside the village. Furthermore, as a meta-narrative form of resistance, Sissako uses the medium of film to reach a mass audience well beyond the small rural village.

The emphasis on Africans' exclusion from technological advances and the modes of resistance present in the film reveal the filmmaker's concern not only for the inhabitants of the small rural areas in and around Sokolo, but for the experiences of Africans throughout the sub-Saharan region. In addition to those cited above, other scenes highlight characters' awareness of a fast-paced technology and consumer-driven globalization whose benefits have largely bypassed sub-Saharan Africa and its cultures. One noteworthy example is the visual dissonance in a scene where a young man gets his haircut. He is ogling advertisements in a magazine in the barber shop, which consists of a chair set up in the sandy walkways of the village center, a pair of scissors and a hand-held mirror the barber uses for his client to see. The young man's conversation is entirely focused on his envy and awe for consumer life elsewhere. He dreams, for instance, of the beauty he sees in his magazine such as: a Japanese 4x4; in another moment during his lengthy trim, an elder of the community poses for his annual portrait which the photographer takes using a magazine still image camera with an extending front (a model produced in the early 1900s). The young man getting his haircut tries to convince his interlocutor that, yes, whites *do* have electric fences and remote apparatuses to control them as a high tech security measure for their houses in Abidjan. The visual shots of the barber and his client and their conversation are literally mirrored through the photography session of the elder as well as a cut to a book titled, "L'homme de Sokolo," which is placed on the table at "La Voix du Riz".

The overlaying of these visual frames with the audio of the young man's speech as a sort of intermission between episodes of the "radio parlée" (with readings from Césaire) in fact subvert the silencing mechanisms of globalization by privileging the images of the actual individuals who make up the community of Sokolo (*les être-humains de Sokolo*) alongside the anti-colonial/anti-racist discourses of the celebrated poet. Sissako does not accept globalization as it streams in through the airwaves of RFI with its one-way communication and consequential silencing of Africans, diminishing their cultures, their race, and thus their very beings. Instead, he celebrates the African subject.

Sissako's 2007 film, *Bamako*, which stages a simulated trial of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, much like Mambety's *Hyènes* (discussed in Chapter 3), is an overt denunciation of globalization. Like Mambety's film, it is particularly critical of these international financial institutions and their restructuring programs (SAPs). It has received much attention in academic and public forums for its critical commentary on the subject, for instance in American universities as well as at numerous international film festivals, often times bringing cinema scholars together with economists to discuss the crossover between reality and the concerns present in the film. One view that has not been widely discussed and analyzed is the filmmaker's style, a sort of macramé of discursive modes woven together with compelling imagery toward the creation of his own film language of resistance. The adaptation of a Césarian "cri" to address the moment of globalization is also noteworthy in this film, albeit much more subtly than in his previous *La Vie sur terre*. Nonetheless, a subtext of anti-colonial discourses merges with the articulations that bring the characters of this film to voice against the present silencing mechanisms of western global dominance. One of the few overt references to the poet

in *Bamako* occurs during plaintiff Professor Keita's testimony where he cites Césaire's poem, "The Prayer of a Negro Child" in his address to the court. This example is significant in the context of the overall message that Sissako aims to convey through his film, which he stated in an interview: "J'ai toujours eu envie de faire un film qui dirait que, aux gens, les explications qu'on donne très souvent à la situation de l'Afrique, c'est à dire, sont très, trop simplistes pour moi. Dire que c'est parce qu'ils ont des chefs d'état corrompus et c'est tout, je pense que c'est pas la vérité [...]"<sup>69</sup>. With these words, Sissako points to a complex set of historic issues—just as the professor does in the film with the reminder he provides about the long history of Western dominance on African states that began with colonization. Sissako's concern is with an analysis that can go beyond the present internal political and economic problems, linking past and present, and rather, to an historical "global" experience. Keita's words, accompanied by a quick frame showing a young child, provide but one example where Sissako evokes the colonial past as integral to Africa's present predicament.

In *Bamako*, resistance to Africa's exclusion from the global economy is evident in the testimonies of the African plaintiffs who argue not only on behalf of Malian, but also Cameroonian, Ghanaian, Guinean, Ivorian, Nigerien and Senegalese experiences in their simulated trial against the IMF and World Bank. Moreover, the visual and audio framing of the proceedings produces parallel narratives of resistance by portraying everyday life inside and outside of the walls of the courtyard where the trial takes place. Sissako privileges scenes that reveal the absence of national industry as well as national programs, such as adequate health care and education as a result of the privatization campaigns led by the global institutions. The film shows these issues as directly correlated to the matters of the trial since—as the courtroom

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<sup>69</sup> I have transcribed the interview (2008).

debates signal again and again—one of the major activities of the IMF is the restructuring (privatization) of the national sector. Along with these issues, *Bamako* depicts Africa's exclusion through the integration of multiple narratives, such as the migration narrative, all of which show the language of globalization to be contradictory to the "realities" of the African experience. Emphasis on (mis)communication evidences that, like *La vie sur terre*, this film also relies upon language (*language use*) as a mode of resistance to globalization. Incorporated into this language is silence, which is very effective in the mode of resistance.

Notably, the witnesses who speak at the trial do not speak the same *language* as the IMF/World Bank. On one level this means that often a witness speaks an African language, such as Bambara—the lingua franca among Malians especially at the markets and the most widely spoken language of Bamako and the surrounding region—which is translated on the spot into French. As the official language of the court, French maintains a position of power and offers a constant reminder of its colonial legacy and continuous potency in the context of globalization. Moreover, in addition to being the common language of the court, French also metonymically represents the rules of the court as *language*—the acceptable ways in which a witness may present proof for his or her argument, the order in which individuals may speak, the duration of their testimony and when they must conclude their remarks and sit down. The trial lawyers on both sides adhere strictly to these rules and deliver constant reprimands to African witnesses who do not oblige. The court language is also shown to be a form of one-sided communication; the court is ultimately the party responsible that turns on (and off) the loudspeakers that disseminate the court proceedings throughout the nearby streets just outside the compound. Each of these aspects of the French language and the language of the court shows it to be integral to the silencing mechanism of globalization.

On a second level, Sissako counters the dominant *language* by bringing African characters to voice (*language use*). He does so by highlighting, for instance, diverse traditions and indigenous languages that make up the social fabric of Malian and other African cultural areas. Stylistically, the filmmaker mirrors the multiplicity of languages/cultures as desirous in obtaining a voice in globalization by overlaying dialogue with other elements of the soundscape, such as the squeaking of a baby's booties, the droning hum of the loudspeakers when silence resounds, speech, and visual images of daily life that literally pass through or remain positioned inside the court/yard walls. The prosecution's witnesses engage a rigorous debate that effectively problematizes the *language* of the court so that the latter will hear the former and understand their experiences through the *language use* that such cultural expressions exemplify. Orality is one such expression, which plays a major role in bringing characters to voice in this film.

The most resonating example of orality as a means for characters to voice their resistance in *Bamako* occurs during the pre-credit opening sequence (and in a later scene toward the end of the film) with Zégué Bamba's elocution of his desire to tell his story and be heard. His arrival at the witness podium already elicits a quelling of his testimony by the court and, consequently, underlines the great rift that exists between the *language use* of the international court and that of a shepherd from rural Mali. In addition, difference—cultural, linguistic, of experience—is marked by Bamba's use of the indigenous language, Bambara, which is translated into French. In spite of the judge's repeated orders for him to sit down and wait his turn, Bamba does not accept being silenced; nor does he accept the rules of the court, which, as his words point out, are inorganic to the desire to speak, to let words out, to engage in dialogue: "Words are something [...] They can seize you in your heart. It's bad if you keep them inside." His utterance already evokes his culture—his *language use*—just with these few words. The insistence of the court

upon coming back when it is his turn to speak does not, however, suffice to keep him quiet; he is resistant to the court's—and by extension—globalization's silencing. He replies with a proverb, the meaning of which he explains: “The goat has its ideas and so does the hen. When you come for something, you have to do it [...] But coming and leaving without speaking [...] My words will not remain within me” (*Bamako* 4:40). Whereas he does not literally give testimony in this segment, these words of Zégué Bamba mark the first enactment of a language of resistance in the film. He replies in his own language—at once in the literal sense (*language voice*) as well as metaphorically (*language use*) in a way that effectively sets the stage for characters' refusal to remain silent throughout the entire trial. Moreover, this character returns to bear witness to his experiences toward the end of the trial, as he promised he would. He rises up and passes by the audience unable to contain his voice any longer; and, unlike during his first attempt, this time he seizes the attention of the court and everyone present inside and outside the walls of the compound—including the viewer, whose focalized gaze shifts directly to Zégué Bamba and the performative testimony he delivers. He speaks and sings in a language that no one understands and waves a fetish; and this intranslatability—of what he is saying, of the language he is speaking, and of the place he comes from culturally—makes his testimony stand out even more as a refusal of the language of the trial and what it represents in the larger context of globalization. It elicits a weighty silence from the judge and panel of lawyers as well as the audience and the viewer. Sissako's select editing and his choice to incorporate the scenes with Zégué Bamba show that the film advocates cross-cultural listening and an understanding of *other* experiences that—as the prosecution and this witness's testimony continuously makes clear—are routinely ignored, left out...silenced.

Other examples that bring witnesses to voice include multiple intervals of stark silence, which also evoke orality as a mode of expression. At the witness stand, Senegalese-born Samba Diakité only states his name and profession—a former primary school teacher—and when asked if he has something to state, he replies with a long moment of silence. For several seconds, the cameras inside as well as outside of the compound walls pan their lenses across questioning looks; outside, a couple of young men test that the loudspeakers are connected and have not shorted out; and quick cuts also focus on a woman nursing her baby to the tune of a child's squeaking shoes. These moments of Diakité's silence fall in the context of debates between opposing witnesses concerning the IMF and World Bank's role in maintaining conditions of unemployment, a feeble educational infrastructure and the overall position of Africans following the "cancellation" of their debt from previous loans. Diakité's resonating silence after stating his *former* profession contributes to a compelling testimony for the prosecution. It is clear that this elderly character has said enough and with carefully chosen words to press the point that his profession is of the not so recent past: an "*ancien* instituteur" (my emphasis). His silence accentuates other characters' arguments, such as that which Aminata Traoré verbally articulates during several minutes of screen time, concerning major problems of unemployment and "pauperization" as a direct result of privatization campaigns and the reshuffling (not "cancellation" according to her) of African countries' debt.

Another example where the film privileges orality as integral to cultural expression in resistance to the dominance of globalization and its impact on daily life is when a wedding passes through the courtyard and interrupts the court proceedings. Typical not only of Bambara society, but a tradition that many Muslim communities uphold across the sub-Saharan region, when a couple marries, it is a community rather than private event. The bride and groom parade

with their wedding party through the city or village streets, preceded and introduced by a singer, who in this case is a Malian griotte. As the procession passes through, the community gives money as a sign of their blessings and good wishes for the newlyweds. It is a lively, joyous event, which brings the community together. When the newly wedded couple and their celebrants pass through the court/yard, the judge declares a recess from the court proceedings for “social realities”. Following a quick visual cut to a small baby in a bath, all attention—led by the focalizing camera—turns to face the procession as the griotte directly addresses the judge (as well as the entire panel of lawyers and the viewer). She sings the praises of the couple and reminds him of the symbolic ritual of contributing to the couple’s good fortune; and, evidently assuming his role as a member of the community, he gives a few bills. The next rapid cut flickers on an elder literally on his deathbed inside a dark room on the periphery of the court proceedings. Finally, the trial resumes with Rappaport’s question, rhetorically inflected to serve his defensive argument, which he poses to Professor Keita: “Aren’t there people with money in Mali?” But what is important here is not solely the reply; rather, the most resonating act of refusal comes from the interspersing of this wedding scene and various other scenes that are presented as instances of ordinary life with the testimonies of silence. Together, all of these make a more forceful, compelling argument, when contextualized by the argumentative dialogue between the plaintiffs and defendants. Such instances are exemplary of the ways in which this film privileges the *language use* of Africans to tell an *other* story—a human story—of globalization.

Sissako also brings his characters to voice by adding various stylistic elements to his film, such as the blurring of fiction with reality. For instance, the film’s staging of an international tribunal blurs the imaginative space of fiction with “real” characters whose

arguments are nearly entirely unscripted. This creates a rich narrative texture not only by incorporating ad-lib debates between ordinary people (non-actors) and actors, but also with the filmmaker's deliberate insertion of characters who introduce elements of surprise, such as Roland Rappaport, Aminata Traoré, and Danny Glover, as well as Sissako himself. The presence of these figures whose real positions are well known in international politics and on the world art scene and the fictional roles they take on in the film add an essential element to it. Namely, their complexity—as at once “real” figures and “fictional” plaintiffs—reveals an authorial argument on the part of the filmmaker as *auteur*: the major problems of globalization for Africans can be approached simply by listening to and understanding the concerns, difficulties and issues that affect communities daily. The insertion of lengthy scenes with these figures/characters reveals a deep disconnection between the priorities of global superpowers and those of millions of people who are affected by the former's decisions and policies.

These scenes also ultimately give more importance to the testimonies of *other* witnesses who are for the prosecution of the IMF/World Bank and, likewise, diminish the credibility of the defense. For example, Rappaport's role as a staunch supporter of the IMF and legal witness on that side is striking in contrast to his real life position as a French lawyer and political activist who is known for his position against the very policies for which his character ardently argues. Moreover, an ironic scene during one of the breaks in the court proceedings in which he interrupts a cell phone conversation in English with IMF big-wigs in New York to haggle with a street vendor over the price of a pair of knock off Gucci sunglasses underscores the underlying theme of consumerism and its forceful presence in all aspects of the current globalization. Despite being off-stage, so to speak, this sequence of scenes shows a disconnect between local daily life and the “global” decisions and transactions being made. Here, the sequencing of frames

is remarkable: As a verbose and loud character, Rappaport argues that the most pressing global issues on which, he implores, Africans should work together with Europeans, include the environment, corruption and terrorism. Meanwhile, as another camera literally shifts the perceptive view of the film's audience, the issues most pressing for local Malian communities are shown to include basic health care, as evidenced by a cut to a man on his deathbed whose doctor claims there is nothing wrong with him and thus no way to medicate and save his life. (The women dying fabric inside the courtyard announce his passing later in the film.) The cut to the next scene shows Rappaport's interaction with the sunglass merchant, which ends with the consumer's elliptical sarcasm about the "bon prix" that the merchant says he will give to his European client. This is a noteworthy instance where Sissako plays with voices that are loudly expressed and juxtaposes them with silence. With a few moments to think about Rappaport's remark after the scenes mentioned above, silence becomes a more effective *language voice* and the viewer is compelled to consider the notion of buying and selling—consumer objects and ideas—alongside the discussion taking place inside the walls of the court about African debt to the IMF in a larger context.

Additional instances where the blurring of fiction with reality serves to draw out resistance to the dominant *language* of globalization include lengthy scenes with political and cinematic figures, such as Aminata Dramane Traoré and Danny Glover. In her lengthy testimony, Traoré, playing the role of a writer and critical thinker about Africa, echoes the same message as witness for the prosecution in the film as in her actual critical work, *Afrique humiliée* (2008). In juxtaposition, the defense makes every effort to discredit her allegations as unfounded and uninformed because she is *merely* a writer. Glover, a Hollywood star and co-producer of *Bamako*, and also a long time human rights activist, particularly concerning African issues, plays

the role of a Bambara man; and he speaks Bambara in the film. His character dreams of nothing more than obtaining a post as security guard for the Israeli embassy—when (and if) one opens in Bamako. In another role, however, Glover, alongside Sissako and postcolonial filmmaker Elia Suleiman, play ruthless cowboys in the spaghetti western film within a film, “Death in Timbuktu.” The blurring of fiction and reality in these exemplary scenes are merely a few of the instances where Sissako deftly manipulates image through a mirroring technique that ultimately points to globalization as a system that is set up by and in service of the consumer society.

In the quiet of the evening, when the court/yard is returned to those who live inside the compound, the viewer sees a family—mostly children—settling in to watch a movie on TV. After some technical difficulty that the national public newscaster/presenter passes off as normal, the opening scenes roll: The setting is the Sudanic-style adobe walled city of Timbuktu. The streets are rather still, with the exception of a young woman and her baby and a boy; the camera zooms in close enough on the boy on a bicycle to decipher the word “Rambo” painted across its frame. Cut to the stars of the film, two sets of rivaling cowboys—obviously from out of town—take their places for a shoot-out. When one cowboy tells another to “spare the kids,” the action in this movie takes on a life of its own, though still, mostly, imitating the cowboy western. Instead of shooting one of the other cowboys, the first to draw his pistol strikes down a man, a villager who was just passing through the streets. As this film within a film continues with some bullets hitting the rival cowboys, others ricochet, and the next fallen victim is a woman. The camera (of the film within a film) zooms in on her inert body; and the baby she had been carrying lies crying on her stomach. The camera shifts to show the viewer (of *Bamako*) the attentive eyes of one of the boys in the family as he watches his family’s evening entertainment. Cut back to the small TV screen: The cowboys gather as the shooter is roaring with laughter. He says: ‘I fired once and

two fell.’ And, at this, most of the other cowboys fall over laughing hysterically. The main camera shifts once again to film the family watching the scene; and after a brief moment of silence, all the young children join the cowboys in laughter. Danny Glover’s character (one cowboy) is appalled; and he shoots the cowboy that started the hysteria. The scene erupts into a full on shoot-out; and, although the cowboys are mostly just putting bullets in the air, one frame zooms in on the dead cowboy and the title screen appears: “Death in Timbuktu” (*Bamako* 39:47).

By creating this *mise en abîme*, where the viewer watches a film (*Bamako*) and the characters in the film look back at this viewer as they watch a film, Sissako carries out an interesting critique of globalization and the dominance of western consumerism in particular. Using again an American genre—though this time one that has had tremendous popular success in West Africa—the filmmaker likens the ruthless violence of the cowboy in the film to the fatal destruction of globalization. While the *western* symbolizes in so many ways America and the popular culture it has exported throughout most of the globe via Hollywood, it also stands in as a metaphor for the pleasure in consuming violence and the violence of the image. Sissako’s cowboy movie asks the viewer of *Bamako* to rethink such enjoyment, and not on the grounds of some kind of moral purity that rejects violence on the big screen for being unwholesome; rather, he mirrors the viewer through the little children who are led to laugh as they watch the killings of an innocent man, woman and the uncertain fate of a motherless child. Here Sissako takes a stand against the normalcy of projecting on the big screen the African bodies—dead, slaughtered, or hungry or poor—that the West has created through its media empires (Hollywood in this case and RFI in *La Vie sur terre*).

Evidently aware of the West’s unfair portrayals of Africans as savage, needy, famished and stricken with disease, *Bamako* also brings to the fore and deliberately contests those

discourses by mirroring the active role of the West in sustaining problems, such as violence, poverty, untreatable illness, and death. Visually, the film shows the West literally imposing itself inside the walls of a family compound in order to attempt to defend the actions of the global institutions the defense represents. In this way, the five cameras that Sissako uses draw the viewer into life on the continent as a sort of reality as opposed to the West's "reality" that dominates lives through media, consumerism, and global policies. Further, metaphorically, the international court itself—which the court in the film represents (or even parodies)—is also shown to be at once a product and a recipient of the benefits of a closed system. Emblematic of this closed system is the filmmaker's very choice to represent court proceedings, because it points to the broader question of an open—public (democratic?)—globalization in contrast to the closed system of a small elite engaged in privatization schemes. In an interview, Sissako reminds his listeners and viewers that, indeed, the "procès c'est un genre américain."<sup>70</sup> Sissako utilizes the genre as a primary narrative in order to expose and resist the dominance of the West. The formal setting and proceedings of the court are a metaphor for the dominant language of the global powers and the privatization they promote. This draws attention to the setting of the film itself. Sissako's film literally creates a space where the effects of globalization are shown to be tantamount to local, daily life as well as to the country overall. The court/yard doubles as the interior of a family compound and at the same time serves as the international court for the legal proceedings of Sissako's fictional trial of the IMF/World Bank. The visual and audio texts that make up the soundscape inside and just outside the walls of this court/yard tell a parallel story: Sissako's critical examination of globalization and consumerism. In this way, the soundscape

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<sup>70</sup> See interview by Scarlet.

provides an alternate narrative that shows and comments on the negative effects of globalization on the privat/-ized, daily lives of African children, women and men.

With his emphasis on pairing voice and silence as an instrument for expressing bodily experience in this film, Sissako also tackles an important theme of globalization—immigration—showing that whereas there are no borders for consumer products, humans do not flow so easily across lines of political demarcation, particularly when seeking a better economic situation. Indeed there are tight border controls for humans, and the consequences prove to be fatal. The film evokes this through a striking flashback scene in which a group of thirty young Africans—from Guinea-Conakry, Ghana, Liberia and Mali—embark upon a trek across the Sahara desert in hopes of immigrating to Spain. The journey becomes one of death rather than of immigration as they are all turned away upon reaching the borders of Morocco and Algeria. This is all told (and shown) in narration form by a young male witness, Madou Keita, who is among the few to survive the trip; and his testimony is paired with imagery which in effect gives much more resonance to the story of the young men and one young woman. Particularly forceful is the insertion of a series of projected images accompanied by a silent soundtrack—as if the viewer of the film, *Bamako*, is now watching another film—that match the actions and movements of the group in the desert exactly as Madou Keita recounts them in his testimony. In addition, interspersed among these frames is a series of cuts to the daily activities inside the courtyard: young women dying fabric as they listen to the story of the youths; a young Malian man the same age as the migrants who stares directly into the camera, framed by two pieces of dyed cloth; a pool of water rung out from the dye process, deep red in color, seeping yet stagnant on the earth of the courtyard as if it were blood; and, finally, an audio track where a small group of men and women speak of the recent passing of their friend, Raymond, whose cause of death is an

unexplainable “nothing” since there were no health services to help him (*Bamako* 33:04). In a rapid cut back to the desert, the camera projects silent frames that follow a long trail of ants traversing the sea of sand.

An obvious interpretation of these last images is that the fallen bodies will merely lie in the desert’s expanse, to be carried away by tiny critters if they do not simply disappear into the quicksand first; the scene may also be interpreted as an allusion to the transience of the lives of the people who have died, who have no means of inscribing any permanence in their existence. Another reading of each of these frames taken together recalls Olivier Barlet’s critique of colonial images of Africans that treated the “Other” as anthropological object. The aim in the first part of his book, *Les Cinémas d’Afrique noire* (1996) is to decolonize the imaginary by moving away from a view toward understanding Africans, their histories and their cultural values. The title of his first chapter, “Des être humains, pas des fourmis!” is a very pointed refusal of the images that colonial anthropological films projected (11). In my view, the metaphoric trail of ants in Sissako’s film within a film is a call to consciousness to recognize the ways in which globalization can negatively affect human lives. Whereas the global system relies upon African migrants and immigrants to carry out laborious tasks both on the continent as well as in global cities, such as Paris, their labor is not rewarded with laws and policies that incorporate, value and protect them. Rather, the blood they shed provides for the benefits of globalization from which they are excluded because, as the visual narration suggests, they are insignificant like ants—in the system.

Finally, Sissako forges a critical examination of the oft-discussed theme of development, and on this matter, his film seems to make an argument for the right to development. The *auteur* masterfully seizes on a current controversial issue—the environment—as exemplary of how

Western discourses silence and displace African voices in international discussions of prioritizing and upholding human rights standards. Through the characters' debates in the trial, representatives of the West and the IMF privilege environmental rights as among the most important global issues; and Sissako weaves this discussion of the environment masterfully in with visual and audio frames showing that Africans are still in desperate need of potable water, food, and adequate health care. The message is that the continent does need development—industry, for instance. Indeed, as an effect of the global consumer market, most of the African continent has not developed industry.

In *Bamako*, Sissako portrays this through the constant activity of women dying cloth by hand in the courtyard or other women spinning cotton by hand in their rooms. In this sequence, the camera cuts back and forth to the women dying cloth and Aminata Traoré giving her testimony: “la mondialisation déstabilise, déshumanise!” The message is that it destabilizes the economy—setting Africa’s market economy constantly at the mercy of the world economy and, as a result, dehumanizes. Each of the witnesses for the prosecution provides proof for Traoré’s claim—even more “loudly” than she does; and they are summed up as well in the prosecution’s closing arguments: the first lawyer to speak on this side is but one to declare the World Bank and “its accomplices” guilty of “crimes against humanity” (*Bamako* 1:29:18; 1: 36:25). He maintains that SAPs have caused deadly destruction; statistically, for instance, he reports to the court that “fifty million African children are scheduled to die over the next five years. Three million are scheduled to die of malaria next year [...]” and he concludes by condemning the World Bank for having privatized the world (*Bamako* 1:30:24-1:31:57). Another lawyer for the prosecution, who pronounces the World Bank “guilty” in his closing remarks, condemns the hypocrisy of the West, citing the example of Paul Wolfowitz’s (then president of the World Bank) speech a few

weeks prior to the trial in which he lamented the death of millions of children in Africa, while at the same time, argues the lawyer, he conceived of the American-led war in Iraq. The lawyer makes this point by stating that the cost of that war is more than what could provide water to the entire African continent (*Bamako* 1:33:57). Each of these examples, as conclusive statements, also echo another claim made by the second witness of the trial, Aminata Traoré. Her conviction that globalization is a world that is “ouvert aux Blancs, mais il n’est pas ouvert aux Noirs” points to the racializing undertones inherent in the system of globalization (*Bamako* 22:30). In *Bamako*, as in *La Vie sur terre*, Sissako’s cinematic “cri” echoes that of other artists whose cultural productions I have examined in this dissertation and that rings out with a message similar to that which the Sokolo postmaster gives to Dramaan when he finally receives a call from Paris. Indeed, both films show that the current mechanisms in place assure that for some, the system of globalization brings great fortune and benefits, whereas for *others*: “Reaching people is always a matter of luck.” Each of these two films reaches out to people through the film medium in an act of resistance to the historically rooted system that continues to hinder two-sided communication, evidently essential according to Sissako, if globalization is indeed to valorize rather than relegate the human to the category of waste.

## Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have argued that there is a corpus of fictional works written and produced as a response to sub-Saharan Francophone Africa's experiences of globalization which distinctly emerged in the 1980s. These novels and films all produce narratives in which consumerism as an effect of globalization shows itself to have far-reaching negative effects; and they all share common themes and tropes. Sissako's two films, which I discussed in Chapter five, show globalization as displacing and relegating Africans to the periphery of the global economy. The resolute demand for a voice in globalization that resounds throughout Sissako's last two films is exemplary of how novelists and filmmakers incorporate resistance into their narratives. In *La vie sur terre* and *Bamako*, the filmmaker focuses on certain modes of resistance that are common throughout the corpus I have analyzed in this dissertation. First are the characters' struggles to come to voice when confronted with a dominant system that silences them. In another mode, Julie Madola, in *Les Beaux gosses*, is one character whose experiences show how such a mechanism is—at its extreme—related to the commodification, objectification and sexualization of the body.

Moreover, along with such representations of globalization as an inherently violent system that destabilizes culture and community and destroys life, all of the works show the disappearance of bodies to be relational to the difficulty and vulnerability that characters have in imagining and imaging themselves into the “consumer society” discourse of globalization. For instance, in my Chapter two I provide a literary analysis of how Rawiri focuses on the body as a site of contradiction and violence in which her main protagonist, Toula, not only struggles to conform to the image(s) that globalization demands of her, but understands that her journey has

merely shown her the fragility of her existence as a young African woman and as an African in the face of globalization's economic stranglehold. Ultimately, she refuses to accept it and seeks agency on her own terms. Similarly, as I showed in Chapter three, Mambety's characters in *Touki Bouki*, Mory and Anta, also set out on a journey to image themselves into the (Western) consumer society. Whereas the first feature warns against the encroachment of Western—European and American—consumer ideals, the falsity of the youthful protagonists' dreams only becomes apparent in *Hyènes*. In the latter film, Mambety's emphasis on Ramatou's broken body reconstructed as well as on the disappearance of Dramane's body leads the viewer to question the value of one's existence – not only of these two characters but of the entire community of Colobane – much like Rawiri does in her novel. This group of novels and films are also similar in that they present allegorical narratives, and through allegory, writers and filmmakers also blur fiction with reality.

The most urgent concern in relation to the disastrous effects of globalization in the novels and films I have examined in this dissertation shows itself to be the value of human life, metaphorically represented by the consistent disappearance of bodies. Indeed, that value, whether novelists and filmmakers choose to privilege the themes of abandonment or migration, to portray the greatly disadvantageous positioning of women, or to launch an outright denunciation of global institutions, such as the IMF and World Bank, commonly shows itself to be the underlying issue. For instance, in *G'amèrakano: au carrefour*, the dénouement culminating in the disappearance of Angwé's body shows the fragility of African economies to be the predicament of an entire generation of young women and men. Toula's ultimate rejection of the consumer society is the direct cause not only for her renewed banishment to the daily struggles in the urban slum (a symbolic death), but also the (real) death of her true love, Angwé ;

and both, markedly, are shown as the results of African economies' exclusion from the global market. The threat this presents to human life is likewise central to Pathé Diop's *La Poubelle* with the final scene depicting Camara relegated to the immense dump of Dakar, symbolically rejected and eliminated by globalization. Mambety emphasizes the force with which consumerism and the notion that people can be bought and sold overcome social and cultural life, first with his two marginal characters and then, more urgently, with the figure of Ramatou as an embodiment of the World Bank and the power she wields over the cast of marginal characters in *Hyènes*. The disappearance of Dramane's body not only symbolizes his individual death, but with the bulldozer scene that takes place during the final credits, it is evident that his symbolic death points to the far-reaching effects of globalization on entire communities. Further, throughout Karone and Beti's narratives, alongside the disappearance of bodies, the insistence on the unrelenting violence and rampant killings that permeate communities desperate to take part in globalization as a result of global inequalities, points loudly to the interconnectedness of daily struggle, ethnic conflict and genocide.

By presenting a counter-narrative of the African experience, the novel and film alike reject the normative discourse of the West. In other words, these works bring to voice an *other* experience than that which proponents of globalization refer to as a global economic "interdependence"<sup>71</sup> and "a force that has brought so much good" and "benefited millions" (Stiglitz, *Discontents* 4). This leads me to conclude that the very writing and production of these works are acts of resistance to the current consumer-driven globalization; further, this notion expands the allegory to let the reader see these works as artifacts that are not global but "worldly," or "of the world," to take up Édouard Glissant's concept of the "tout-monde."

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<sup>71</sup> For the World Bank, IMF and United Nations, globalization is synonymous with the "interdependence" of countries. See, for instance, World Bank publication, "Globalization and International Trade."

Glissant's theory of the "tout-monde" states that cultures need to communicate with one another, speak and listen to one another. Glissant also argues that one's cultural opacity cannot be revealed/made transparent.

In his view, full access to another's culture—to the nuances of one's *langue* and *langage*—is a form of coopting that culture and thus creates an opening for a dominant power to translate such transparency into force and violence, which take the form of hegemonic control. Further, when one culture overtakes another, violence is also perpetrated against text, as a film or novel, for instance, become absorbed and transformed by the hegemonic culture. Glissant's notion of *opacité* is itself a form of resistance to this process.

Coming to voice through language thus shows itself to be a major strategy of resistance in these works. In each of the novels and films I examine, globalization is identifiable as a system of dominance that relies upon its own constructed language. This language does not emerge from a void; it is clearly derived from the colonial discourse of Western superiority (and presumed African inferiority). This is evidenced, not only with constant references to the colonial or neocolonial past and the construction of the Black as a savage and an inferior race or the African as childlike and incapable of leading an independent nation,<sup>72</sup> but also with illustrations of the present world structure in which Africans do *not* flow freely across borders or control their own economies. For instance, dreams of migration to "Paris le paradis" – or anywhere in Europe or America – are presented as a "way out" of the current predicament. This is the aim of Mory and Anta in *Touki Bouki*, Élisabeth in *Trop* and *Branle-bas*, Mobio in *Les beaux gosses* (a character who has made the journey and idealizes Black America). Each of these

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<sup>72</sup> Mbembe writes that the colonized were categorized as "animal" and non-human beings; and, similarly, see Mamdani regarding the colonizer referring to African subjects as a "child race." See Mbembe *Postcolony* 1-2; Mamdani *Citizen* 4.

characters buy into the idea that life is better in the West. These literary and cinematic allusions to Paris “le paradis” are signs that evoke the legacy of colonial education, and their insertion in novels and films that span the decades following independence up through the present reveals the force with which this aspect of France’s so-called *mission civilisatrice* captured a collective imaginary that idealizes the *métropole*. Observing such references in each of the works I mention and their appearance as late as 2000 in Mongo Beti’s *Branle-bas* points to the fact that Paris as a sort of paradise still shapes contemporary African views as the place to go to achieve freedom.

Additionally, there is the overall sentiment that accumulating material possessions will bring happiness; and, since the valorization and promotion of consumer objects originate from the West – from the panoply of goods that fills the largest dump of Dakar in *La Poubelle* and the magazines and boutiques that captivate Toula and Ekata in *G’amèrakano* to the luxurious villas and palaces in Beti and Karone’s novels or Linguère Ramatou’s golden limbs and the excess of imports she brings to Colobane – sometimes the migration narrative is replaced with an alternate journey. Noteworthy is the fact that whereas the West is depicted as the source from which value and values related to consumer objects are created (or imagined), the actual mass-produced goods are manufactured neither in the West nor on the African continent (for the most part). However, while Western capitalists manufacture goods overseas in order to maximize profits by paying out the lowest possible wages and incurring lower operational costs, in Africa, there is by in-large no investment, by anyone, in aspects of the infrastructure that could benefit African populations themselves, and further, when investment occurs (for instance in the processing of commodities such as cocoa, timber, or cotton) it is not in manufactured goods that could be exported and generate revenue. Finished products, especially valuable ones such as automobiles or motorbikes, are exported back to Africa and unaffordable for the average person. With respect

to traditional crafts, a great deal of creativity and inventiveness has been displayed by cooperatives in many countries (Ghana, Kenya, South Africa) that recycle materials such as plastic, produced from the refuse of imported commodities; these are then sold on the international crafts market. The important point remains that in spite of its resources the African continent does not produce the goods people need or goods that are exportable at advantageous rates. The social upheaval caused in Nigeria in January 2012 when President Goodluck Jonathan abolished oil subsidies is symptomatic of the dependency created even when African countries dispose of considerable wealth. Indeed, the immense revenues generated by Nigeria's oil production, one of the major world outputs, do not result in low gas prices for Nigerians, as the oil has to be exported as crude and refined elsewhere, and no investment in Nigeria's obsolete refineries takes place. Violent protests ensued, as people expressed rage at being denied the subsidies, seen as a minor compensation for the wealth that does not trickle down their way by any means. In this regard, Africa's predicament is heightened by the necessity to purchase staple foods, such as rice, from Thailand, motor bikes for transportation from China, or clothing from Bangladesh or Panama—even if Mali, for example, had grown and exported the cotton for the latter. Thus, the notion that consumer goods originate in the West is doubly bitter: in effect, it is their desirability that originates in the West and that is promoted with all the strength that Western cultural ideology can muster, but the goods that will effectuate that desirability are inscribed in the global circuit of production, exploitation and consumption.

Various forms of migration journeys are thus marked by dreams of social mobility in which one can take part in the global economy by mimicking Western styles of dress and behavior (which have become “global”) and remain on the continent. Such dreams put the idealization of the West into language with voice-over and visual icons in *Touki Bouki*, through

Ramatou's speech in *Hyènes*, omniscient narration and irony in *La Poubelle*, *Trop* and *Branlebas*, and dialogue between Ekata and Toula or Toula and her grandmother in *G'amèrakano*.

These are some examples of how the language of globalization at once builds up the West as superior and identifies flows of people and goods as one of its major aspects. However, in sharp contrast to the imminent erasure of borders as an effect of globalization as some scholars, such as Appadurai and Albrow envision, rather, the force with which multinational corporate conglomerates operate across borders is met with powerful states that try to ward them off or compete with them for stakes in the global market. Thus, far from nullifying borders, economic and financial globalization reinforces the nation-state, and in turn, its borders are also being reinforced. The fictional works I've analyzed respond to this phenomenon with narratives of ethnic and regional violence, of the general displacement of peoples and, within a nation's own borders, physical borders separating social classes are reinforced. The latter is easily observable in the gated communities of the developing world (the "Alphaville" of Brazil or the "Urban fortress" of South Africa, for instance). Recent events in Santiago, Chile underscore the dangerous effects of establishing such legalized boundaries: a serious infringement on civil rights with the separation of peoples so extreme it is viewed by some citizens as a form of apartheid.<sup>73</sup> A few isolated instances in the novels and films specifically reference the notion of gated communities—and not in the context of a national political elite. Most obvious is Sissako's film, *La Vie sur terre* in which the young man who dreams of owning a beautiful Japanese 4x4 as he gets his hair trimmed also informs his barber of the Whites' houses in Abidjan whose metal, motorized gates open remotely.

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<sup>73</sup> See media reports of reactions to Santiago's gated community's bylaws forbidding maids and other household staff to walk (rather than be bussed and thus supervised and escorted) through its streets, for instance, Vergara.

These examples brings us back to the notion of origins and how Western dominance further means that the West promotes and exports its ideas and references to race, ethnicity and sexualization. In contrast to the “language” of consumer-driven globalization, characters and narrators are shown to have a different language from that which is depicted as foreign and imposed upon them. By enunciating the exclusion of the African from any decision-making process in globalization, and moreover, his/her actual annihilation, symbolized most urgently by the disappearance of bodies, authors and filmmakers underscore the important role of voice in resistance to such exclusion.

#### Future Directions of Scholarly Inquiry

In this dissertation I have discussed what has emerged as *one* set of issues with which writers and filmmakers engage in their reflections on globalization. However, the view of globalization that these novels and films elicit is but one framing of the complex workings of the political and economic structures in a global context. This study thus has focused on an historical poetics responding to a particular phase. As artistic responses to Western-driven globalization and its impacts on human lives in specific enclaves of the sub-Saharan region of Francophone Africa, it is essential to underline that these works respond to social, economic and political conditions of a certain historical moment and in the specific context of former colonies of France. They reference French colonial history and the emergence of the West as a global power with accuracy and precision. In some works—especially in Mambety’s films—communist China and the former U.S.S.R. additionally show themselves as contending powers; however, all of these artists give more attention in their narratives to Africa’s historical relations with France. Given the many overt references to such a past, my study is a useful topical model and one that

examines closely the very short time period of approximately thirty years during which these writers and filmmakers disseminated their responses to globalization.

In order to compare and contrast and expand the themes I have found relevant to sub-Saharan Francophone Africa, it could be of interest to examine works that also respond to the transition from neocolonialism to the “global age” in works from the Anglophone and Lusophone regions, as well as in the Arabo-Francophone Maghreb and the countries of the Horn of Africa and in Southern Africa. However, whereas such a period study across Africa’s regions would inevitably reveal overlaps and singularities among regions, at the same time, it is very dependent on a present perspective that is rapidly changing with, for instance, a close eye on the swift rise of capitalist China and the ways in which its involvement across the African continent is changing or on momentous political events, such as those revolutionary movements that are part of the larger Arab Spring and which are being fought on African soil. Major political transformations that are still taking place, for instance, in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, mobilizing citizens in Morocco, or supposedly lying dormant, in places like Algeria, are but a few excellent examples of the extremely fast pace with which various workings of globalization are occurring. Moreover, these few examples evidence that there are other perspectives besides those of the unequal power relationship between Africa and the West that would offer approaches capable of bringing depth to the study of globalization in Africa.

One notion this study has relied upon is the concept of the West as a more or less one-dimensional cultural construction and placed France and the USA together as a homogenous entity. A breakdown of the West as a unit would greatly enrich future work on globalization and Africa. It is indeed noteworthy, firstly, that whereas France invests heavily in its Ministry of Culture (and has done so historically), the United States does not even have such a body in its

government. Secondly, as Baudrillard's work on the consumer society does reveal and Mambety's film *Touki Bouki* additionally illuminates, political tension between the two powers had significant impact on society and the art that was produced in each place. The Harlem Renaissance and the number of writers who fled to Paris and gathered with others from the triangular transatlantic zone (West Africa, the French Antilles, the U.S. and France) provide a good point of entry into a discussion that renders problematic the notion of the West and, by extension, its oppositional status with regard to Africa. From that historical period forward, additional tensions stand out that deconstruct the notion that the two powers are part of a unified whole.

Many recent developments evidentiary of the agency with which Africans are confronting global issues today provide models worth examining. Theoretical problems that I raised in my dissertation (from a Western perspective of consumerism) seem to be announcing a need for different theoretical models: For instance, the notions of citizenship, the nation-state, and democracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are ripe for study from a perspective that does not constantly revert to imagining the West and its historic-philosophical conceptualizations as central and determining. Further, questions concerning the movement of people and issues of migration/immigration could expand in future studies to include nomadic crossings and other notions of borders and, such examples would necessitate a deeper understanding of the political and economic relationships between African spaces. The problems of violence and the treatment of women, their changing positions in society and identity affiliations would expand as well to include changing perspectives (in a global context) on ethnicity (for instance in the Ivory Coast), clans (as in Somalia), and tribes (for example in Libya).

The mobilization of millions who are part of the Arab Spring is not the only sign that there are indeed other voices, other agendas, and other notions at work in globalization, and artistic creation reflects this. Evidence of this is filmmakers' attention to a positive action in the political landscape across the continent. One of the most recent examples, which antedates the events of the Arab Spring of 2011-2012 but nevertheless addresses some of the same issues, is the docudrama, *An African Election* (2010), which spans three months during the 2008 campaign and presidential election in Ghana. Showing this to be a landmark election for instituting change from the ground up as well as a renewed hope in the country's leadership, Ghanaian-born Jarreth Merz includes a pointed awareness of the potential extremes that the eruption of violence (especially during elections) could bring about. He shows political contenders on both sides as well as the overseeing African election commission (political officials of ECOWAS) vocalizing the concern that they do not want anything to happen in Ghana like what occurred in Zimbabwe or Kenya as those countries were leading up to their elections. These insertions into contemporary narratives reveal the struggles that are taking place across the continent as nations of 40-50 years continue to build their own models of democracy. The inclusion of detailed references to regional politics underscores that individual countries are not looking to the West for models of democracy, but rather to their own histories and to histories of countries throughout their regions or across the continent (as Latin American countries did as well).

As some of these recent events highlight, there are many complexities to regional alliances, some of which have been in existence since the late 1950s, and all of which continue to expand and develop today. On the one hand are regional politico-economic agencies that function as trade blocks, such as the African Economic Community (AEC), a subsidiary organization of the African Union (AU) or the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA). Across

the continent and beyond, there are thus regional trade blocks that have their own regional banks, all of which aim to work together to organize and improve the economies of the participating countries. And sometimes, there is political and military cooperation within these blocks, which include the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Central Bank of West African States (named as such in 1959/BCEAO), the Council for the Transference of Currency of the Second Monetary Area (CEDEAO), the G77, a caucus of which African countries are a part and ban together with developing nations in order to voice their concerns and positions with a more resounding collective voice. The reality of globalization thus includes a great many actors that are *not* Western. Of course, exclusionary processes remain, such as the customary practice of the World Bank having an American president while the IMF's managing director is typically (and has historically been) European. The arrest of Dominique Strauss-Kahn opened debates concerning whether each agency might allow a developing nation to hold the position of power, but the United States and European nations coalesced instead to maintain the block that their governance of those agencies maintains.

On the other hand, more and more politico-centric global agencies are receiving increasing leadership from Africans. The International Criminal Court (ICC) is one. This agency, based in The Hague, just elected Fatou Bensouda, a woman from the Gambia, to serve as head prosecutor for the court. The choice to bring an African to this position was a very conscious one, given the high number of cases it deals with concerning events on the African continent. Interesting debates are already taking place that will test the effectiveness of this strategy: For instance, Laurent Gbagbo has been charged by the court with war crimes. With an African lead prosecutor, there is room for expanding critical perspectives (that do not obviously serve the interests of Western-driven economic agencies) on debates such as the political power struggle

between Gbagbo and his rival, now president of Ivory Coast, Alassane Ouattara, and the deep questioning of citizenship and democracy that their nation is struggling with. Also, in January 2012, in cooperation with Kenya, the ICC decided to try four top-ranking Kenyan politicians (deputy Prime Minister Uhuru Kenyatta, former minister William Ruto, radio host Joshua Arap Sang and civil service chief Francis Muthaura) for their role in the violence that killed over 1000 people after the 2007 presidential elections. Similarly, indigenous or national models of reconciliation are exemplary of ways in which African communities have banded together without any reference to the West and its models. With more Africans committed to human rights and justice for the African continent in leadership positions that give them increased visibility and allow their voices to be heard more on a global scale, debates could shift and further alter the theorization of globalization.

I began this dissertation with the central questions: What are African experiences of economic globalization? And how are artists responding to its effects? Further, how do artists' responses to globalization have great bearing on the aesthetics of their works—and even on their very material content? It is essential to consider that just as some of the recent social revolutions (in Iran and Tunisia most notably) have relied upon newer technologies, such as cell phones and applications, such as Twitter, likewise artists rely increasingly upon and include in their creations a more diverse range of media and tools for social communication. For instance, whereas earlier films were produced in 35 mm film, more recently digital productions are much more common. African filmmakers of earlier periods used communication tools, such as radio and TV to promote and distribute their works, and incorporated them in their narratives to develop themes and tropes; today, use of the internet is but one of a new wellspring of media that will continue to necessitate innovative theories for the future. Artists are engaging their viewers and readers of

the fourth phase—the 21<sup>st</sup> century popular access to films as well as text is reaching exponential levels in some places. Rapid digitized video production in Nigeria has allowed Nollywood viewers to consume affordable films inspired by the popular Yoruba traveling theatre; and more recently the tiny handheld cameras have also incorporated the tradition of the theatre of development as another Nigerian (people's) narrative model. In another medium, Djibouti-born Abdourahman Waberi adds to his vast and fast-growing literary oeuvre an online blog, ironically titled, "Africa is a Country". In light of new technologies and our interactions with them, how are we to read the contemporary narrative creations as responses to the fourth phase of globalization? How will different technologies—blogs, tweets, social media for networking—aid in articulating pressing questions about the global economy and its human effects? What modes and methods will scholars adapt in order to discern, dissect and examine them?

My findings have led me to view globalization as above all a form of politics rather than a supposed benign economic phenomenon. I analyzed how the current struggle for economic and political power across the globe is in many ways distinct from imperialism. Nonetheless, at the same time, countries vying for control rely upon many of the same mechanisms and strategies. For instance, when the USA wants something, this country might just send in the troops to achieve its aims; or, it may assert its influence by vetoing an issue on the UN Security Council (as it did on the issue of Palestinian statehood). However, the United States is not the only power that maintains great political sway in the world today. China and Russia continue to do as well, and more recently Brazil in Latin America and India in Asia have risen in ways that complicate the notion that a few major powers contend for hegemony. Further, Wallerstein's claim that the political and the economic are interconnected brings to light additional interrelation with the cultural. One issue this reveals is that economic rights are not limited to the realm of economics.

I arrived at these new formulations of the problem at the heart of the inquiry by looking back and forth from theories of globalization, of postcolonialism, of the “consumer society” and of human rights to actual portrayals of experiences of globalization on the ground in Africa in literary and cinematic texts.

I found that allowing the fictional works I examined to speak as artistic texts opened up an historical poetics. Film theorist, David Bordwell, is one scholar who uses the term “historical poetics” in relation to cinema. In his 2007 book, *Poetics of Cinema*, his notion addresses how films are made in a specific historical moment and the effects it produces in such a context. Bordwell inscribes authorial intention in a film, and this can translate not only to indicate a cinéma d’auteur, but also evokes that the filmmaker consciously takes a political stance. The making of the film itself is one side of a political act that functions as a complement to the film’s content and the interpretations it elicits. The filmmaker is thus equipped to recast the way one perceives of inter-cultural relations; as a result, he or she is also (ideally) actively engaged in producing rhetorical changes to such perceptions and has influence over future cultural interactions. In my view, Bordwell’s conceptualization of poetics is useful to see how the cinematic as well as literary representations I examine are responding to a certain historical phase. Further, I use “poetics” to draw attention to the rich texture of these works—their various modes of cultural expression, their strength (even in novels) in producing visual narratives, and their appropriation of narrative structures (such as the courtroom drama in Sissako’s *Bamako*) as a means of de-centering representational strategies associated with the Western canon as the supreme literary or cinematic standard or model. Finally, an historical poetics is revealing of the meta-discourse inscribed in these individual works and in grouping them together as a corpus.

In contrast to economic treatises—often hailed for their contributions to so-called “high theory”—literary and cinematic texts allow us to see or witness in order that we may do just that: see, be witness. Sissako’s *Bamako* is particularly noteworthy in that this film at once recalls Césaire’s anticolonial posturing and attempts to respond to the long-debated postcolonial theoretical problem of whether the subaltern can speak. And he frames this in the context of a third historical phase: globalization. As critical practitioners who are invested with the task of interpreting, disseminating and deepening the understanding of such texts, scholars in the humanities play an extremely important role in the process of elucidating such historical poetics. They can effectively maintain a much needed dialogue to challenge the unrelenting positivism toward globalization that economists promote with statistics and systemic interpretive methods of reviewing empirical data. Moreover, there must be much more frequent conversation between the humanities and the social sciences, in order to achieve a much-needed theoretical reassessment of globalization as a political, cultural and economic system, as well as a better understanding of the ways discourses such as race, ethnicity and gender serve to either maintain or break down historically grounded power structures.

As my study has shown, art can present all of the elements of social, economic and political life with immediacy to its audience and all at once; whereas, in contrast, a sociological analysis or an economic treatise would privilege one or more variables in a systematic study within yet another set of invariables. The Humanities in general, and literary and cinematic representations more specifically, allow us to compute the human costs of globalization. The creation of multidimensional characters is one strategy that enables fiction to break out of the proverbial “box” and discern the oppressive processes of globalization. Mambety’s *Linguère* Ramatou—and her past and present relationships with Dramane and the community of

Colobane—exemplifies the ways in which individual members of society can be at once victims of globalization and its very enablers. However, the cast of characters in this film offer much more. Their actions and trajectories allow the viewer to better understand the cultural wealth of Senegalese society as well as its own auto criticism. Additionally, local and national politics and social struggles that are brought to the fore provide insight into issues that complicate the country's interactions with globalization. More than anything, such elements of a fictional narrative allow Senegalese (in this instance) to speak their experiences of globalization and to weigh its effects on daily life in a way that does not rely upon didacticism or rigid argumentation. The artists whose works are the focus of this dissertation make it clear that they are ready to bring about new perspectives on globalization with voices that are unrelenting and determined.

Finally, this dissertation has allowed me to see that it is essential to approach literary and cinematic responses to globalization from a conceptual framework that is able to look beyond the increasingly outmoded postcolonial models of center and periphery. It is thus imperative to deconstruct the notion of “the West and the rest,” and not only with an awareness of the most recent threats Asian countries, such as China, are posing to the leadership of Western states, such as the USA, in the world political economy as historian Niall Ferguson has warned.<sup>74</sup> One must also acknowledge the limitations of newer paradigms, such as Atlantic Studies, which historians launched in the 1980s in an effort to refract attention on the colonizer and the colonized by examining more closely the triangular relations between Europe, the Americas and West Africa from the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade henceforth. Such study gained significant momentum across the humanities since the 1990s and has generated innovative and extremely valuable research as

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<sup>74</sup> See Ferguson.

well as meaningful criticism. One problem scholars have raised concerns the notion of limits, for instance, where to fit in literary representations that depict human and trade transactions between zones outside the Atlantic, such as the Indian Ocean, and the French West Indies. This is one example that points to a more resonating critique of Atlantic Studies, which is the tendency to privilege the power of the United States over that of Europe at once by focusing on the potential failures of a united contemporary Europe in comparison to the imperial leanings of the U.S. and as a way of concentrating the production of knowledge in the USA. One might also argue that even newer formulations of the North versus the South are subject to similar criticism. It has been claimed that novelists, such as Yodi Karone, have produced novels that are ideal objects of inquiry for the examination of the triangular trans-Atlantic relations. (See my discussion of “Parisianism” in Chapter 4). However, *Les Beaux gosses* and the corpus of works I examined constantly probe and problematize the notions of center and periphery. They show that there are multiple centers and multiple peripheries; and, moreover, they implore us to reformulate our basic assumption that Western Europe and North America represent any sort of center.

Expanding this study to include, as I suggested for future study, fictional works from across the continent is one approach that I believe will allow scholarship on Africa and globalization to move further beyond the binaries inscribed in postcolonial studies and to break free as well from the confines of the triangular Atlantic studies where either Europe or America stands out as the main attraction. In addition, looking to parallel studies outside the Atlantic zone of influence will aid tremendously. One place to start is by adopting different academic approaches. Looking to Sahelian studies, for instance, could offer one opening into parallel studies that necessitate different formulations of inquiry into the notion of borders, the role of the state and the patterns of regional and “global” economic trade and transactions. Rather than

delimiting geopolitical space to determine center(s) or periphery/ies, Sahelian studies address issues relevant to countries (and in some cases, such as Mali, parts of countries) and their populations living at the border of the Sahara desert. Such a perspective intrinsically rejects any basic assumption that Western Europe and North America form the center of a center/periphery model. Such adaptations to the theoretical apparatus would allow a richer study of how to read African cultural production as principal texts that contest and destabilize the hegemonic aspect of globalization.

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