The Globalized Other: Patterns of Globalization and Exclusion in *Histoire de la femme cannibale* by Maryse Condé and *Le Ventre de l’Atlantique* by Fatou Diome

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ABSTRACT

MARY GREENWOOD: The Globalized Other: Patterns of Globalization and Exclusion in Histoire de la femme cannibale by Maryse Condé and Le Ventre de l’Atlantique by Fatou Diome
(Under the direction of Dr. Martine Antle)

The influence of globalization in contemporary society is widespread, generating spaces governed by international market forces rather than by local or national institutions and allowing the transmission of information and images to global audiences. Such phenomena seem to promote unprecedented deterritorialization and openness in that they obsolesce traditional boundaries. However, the economic forces shaping these new spaces and communications remain largely under the control of imperialist powers, allowing them to perpetuate practices of domination characteristic of colonialism. As Francophone authors, Maryse Condé and Fatou Diome often point out patterns of neo-colonialism, illustrating the extent to which global economies and media recreate colonial schemas of marginalization and exploitation. This thesis will explore intersections between globalization and neo-colonialism in Histoire de la femme cannibale (2003) by Maryse Condé and Le Ventre de l’Atlantique (2003) by Fatou Diome, and the narratological strategies they employ in the face of such marginalizing influences.
To my family, Anita, Dick, and Philip, who have never failed to provide me with support and inspiration
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Chapter 1

Introduction

The influence of globalization\(^1\) makes itself felt in almost every domain of contemporary society. For the purposes of this thesis, globalization refers to increased international trade and communication, encouraged by the liberalization of international markets and the development of high-speed communications technologies. Such developments have resulted in the generation of spaces\(^2\) governed by international market forces rather than by local or national institutions and the transmission of information and images to global audiences. These phenomena seem to promote unprecedented deterritorialization\(^3\) and openness in that they obsolesce traditional boundaries. However, the economic forces shaping these new spaces and communications remain very much under the control of imperialist centers of power, most noticeably the United States, but also European countries such as France. This continued influence allows these centers of power to perpetuate practices of domination and exclusion characteristic of colonialism within a globalized context. As Francophone authors, Maryse Condé and Fatou Diome occupy a

\(^{1}\) It is important to distinguish between the English term “globalization” and the French term “mondialisation.” Globalization refers to processes of economic deregulation that echo nineteenth century capitalism, often traced back to the conservative revolution of the 1980s, whereas “mondialisation” refers to more multidimensional processes of increasing economic and cultural independence that antedate globalization. For more information, consult *Dictionnaire de la globalisation: Le pouvoir des mots, les mots de pouvoir* by Jacques Gélinas (2008).

\(^{2}\) Here, space refers to both to geographic spaces such as a nation, a city, or a neighborhood; and to social spaces, such as a profession, or a family, or a community.

\(^{3}\) Here, deterritorialization refers to the obsolescence of traditional geographic and social boundaries induced by international communication and trade.
unique position within this global framework. Their works often point out patterns of neo-colonialism, illustrating the extent to which the global economy and the media recreate colonial schemas of marginalization and exploitation. This thesis will explore intersections between globalization and neo-colonialism in *Histoire de la femme cannibale* (2003) by Maryse Condé and *Le Ventre de l’Atlantique* (2003) by Fatou Diome, and the narratological strategies employed by these authors in the face of these marginalizing influences.

Most previous studies of globalization emphasize the newly reduced sovereignty of the nation-state, usually casting it as a result of economic liberalization. These processes of deregulation allow the influence of international markets to override that of local and national governments, as Benjamin Barber points out in *Jihad vs. McWorld*:

> Every demarcated national economy and every kind of public good is today vulnerable to the inroads of transnational commerce. Markets abhor frontiers as nature abhors a vacuum. Within their expansive and permeable domains, interests are private, trade is free, currencies are convertible, access to banking is open, contracts are enforceable (the state’s sole legitimate economic function), and the laws of production and consumption are sovereign, trumping the laws of legislatures and courts. (13)

This capacity of capitalistic forces to erode local and national institutions generates spaces in which financial concerns override civil liberties and protections. Barber bemoans this reduced sovereignty claiming that it jeopardizes democratic institutions and liberties ensured by the nation-state:

> In the tumult of the confrontation between global commerce and parochial ethnicity, the virtues of the democratic nation are lost and the instrumentalities by which it permitted peoples to transform themselves into nations and seize sovereign power in the name of liberty and the commonweal are put at risk. (7)

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4 In *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*, Kwama Nkrumah defines neo-colonialism as a system in which, “the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside” (ix). This thesis will deal primarily with the social and cultural implications of such tendencies of continued domination and exploitation.
Barber here posits that the structure of the nation-state is essential to democratic forms of government, and that its dissolution poses a threat to the liberties that such forms of government ensure. Maryse Condé and Fatou Diome express similar skepticism with regards to the influence of globalization, but differ from Benjamin Barber in that they emphasize the perpetuation of existing injustices, not the creation of new ones. As post-colonial subjects, they experience globalization as a continuation of colonialism whereby imperialist systems of exploitation are replicated.

Many scholars choose to examine globalization on the basis of stark binary oppositions. Such oppositions often hinge on the basic human need for some form of identity that is often frustrated by the homogenizing influence of globalization. In Globalization and its Discontents, Joseph Stiglitz has examined the extent to which global institutions intended to fight world poverty often exacerbate economic injustices, leading to “a growing divide between the haves and the have-nots” (5). In Jihad vs. McWorld, Benjamin Barber pits the “one McWorld tied together by communications, information, entertainment, and commerce” against “a Jihad in the name of a hundred narrowly conceived faiths” (4). Samuel Huntington, in The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order, posits that future international conflicts will revolve around civilizational rather than national

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5 “Globalization today is not working for many of the world’s poor… The problem is not with globalization, but with how it has been managed. Part of the problem lies with the international economic institutions, with the IMF, World Bank, and WTO, which help set the rules of the game. They have done so in ways that, all too often, have served the interests of the more advanced industrialized countries—and particular interests within those countries—rather than those of the developing world” (Stiglitz 214).

6 For clarification, I feel it is important to include Barber’s definition of Jihad: “I use the term in its militant construction to suggest dogmatic and violent particularism of a kind known to Christians no less than to Muslims, to Germans and Hindus as well as to Arabs. The phenomena to which I apply the phrase have innocent enough beginnings: identity politics and multicultural diversity can represent strategies of a free society trying to give expression to its diversity. What ends as Jihad may begin as a simple search for a local identity, some set of common personal attributes to hold out against the numbing and neutering uniformities of industrial modernization and the colonizing culture of McWorld” (9).
differences. In his examination of global communications entitled *L’Autre mondialisation*, Dominique Wolton points out the “discontinuité radicale entre l’émeneur et le récepteur” (19), pointing out the unidirectionality of international messages, often from the North towards the South, and the capacity for resentment and misunderstanding engendered by this directionality.

While such analyses are very useful in the examination of global phenomena, it is important to note that Maryse Condé and Fatou Diome inhabit the interstices of these dichotomies. Both authors hail from the colonial periphery, Diome from the former French colony of Senegal and Condé from the overseas department of Guadeloupe, but choose to write in the language of the metropole. These women exist in a state of *entre-deux* or ‘in-between-ness.’ They can neither assimilate into the homogenized space of McWorld nor claim the parochial identity of jihad, nor can they affiliate exclusively with any of Huntington’s warring civilizations. As published authors from colonized countries, they eschew Wolton’s schema of transmitters and receptors of information. This position of between-ness allows them to examine the modalities of such dichotomies and how centers of

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7 “A civilization-based world order is emerging: societies sharing cultural affinities cooperate with each other; efforts to shift societies from one civilization to another are unsuccessful; and countries group themselves around the lead or core states of their civilization” (Huntington 10).

8 Though Wolton’s work deals primarily with *mondialisation* rather than globalization (see note 1), many of the processes of informational development to which he refers occur specifically within the context of contemporary neo-liberalism and are thus of great pertinence to this discussion.

9 It is interesting to note the autobiographical element of each of these novels. Each of the protagonists adopts a trajectory similar to that of her creator. Like Maryse Condé, Rosélie leaves Guadeloupe, travelling to France, to Africa, to America and to England. (For more on autobiographical elements of Condé’s work, consult Ionescu’s “Histoire de la femme cannibale: du collage à l’autofiction.”) Like Fatou Diome, the protagonist of *Ventre de l’Atlantique* emigrates from Senegal to Strasbourg after marrying a Frenchman (Thomas 243).

10 Wolton’s analysis will still prove vital to this thesis, in particular with regards to my analysis of the role of international televised media in *Ventre de l’Atlantique* in Chapter 3.
power and processes of exclusion developed by colonial practices are maintained in globalized economies and societies.

_Histoire de la femme cannibale_ recounts a series of voyages, leading the protagonist Rosélie from her native Guadéloupe to Paris to the Central African Republic to New York to South Africa where the primary action of the novel takes place. Rosélie experiences a certain sense of alienation in all these places, never truly assimilating into any particular community or culture. She often attributes her isolation to the stigma she experiences because of her race. The novel deals extensively with the persistence of racism and racial stereotypes inherited from practices of colonialism and slavery. Condé presents these phenomena through the economically defined space of the tourist attraction, which she portrays as a space in which local culture has been suppressed for the benefit of wealthy tourists. The second chapter of this thesis will examine Condé’s presentation of the tourist attraction through the lens of Augé’s concept of the _non-lieu_ or non-space. Augé’s analysis of such highly commercialized spaces provides a perspective of hypermodernity that contrasts somewhat with Rosélie’s experience, describing them as spaces where the past has been marginalized resulting in a sort of cultural amnesia. The disjuncture between the forgetfulness of the _non-lieu_ and Rosélie’s painful experiences of colonial memory makes Augé’s work particularly pertinent to this thesis.

Condé illustrates dynamics of neo-colonialism not only through the non-space of the tourist attraction, but also through Rosélie’s interracial relationship with Stephen. Throughout this relationship, Stephen, the white male, assumes a dominant role, subjugating Rosélie, the black female. Condé uses this relationship to illustrate interracial dynamics of alienation and exploitation. These characters also present distinct attitudes towards questions
of representation and art. This thesis will examine both the political and artistic questions posed through this relationship, relying heavily on Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s *Kafka: pour une littérature mineure* in its analysis of Condé’s ethics of expression and representation.

Like Rosélie, Salie, the protagonist of *Le Ventre de l’Atlantique*, must deal with a certain sense of deracination, as she cannot completely assimilate either into the community she left in Senegal, nor into French society. She constantly struggles to meet both the challenges of living as an immigrant in France and the hopes and expectations of her family in Africa. *Le Ventre de l’Atlantique* also deals with the alienation experienced by young people in Senegal (a formerly colonized country), who perceive France (the former colonizer) as the locus of all opportunity. This alienation indicates that although Senegal has now been an independent country for decades, the colonial distinction between the metropole (France) and the periphery (French colonies) persists within contemporary political and cultural dynamics. The third chapter of this thesis will use Wolton’s ideas concerning global communications to explore the role of televised media in perpetuating this colonial relationship. It will also examine the protagonists’ use of writing as a means of creating a deterritorialized space in which she can express the disparate elements of her experience.

These experiences of immigration and Otherness illustrate the extent to which standards of exclusion inherited from the colonial era (especially those concerning race) remain in effect in contemporary society. These standards of exclusion contradict the deterritorialization seemingly implicit in the definition of globalization. From the position of marginality occupied by the two protagonists, it is interesting to note their gravitation towards the dominant group. Salie immigrates to France and shows no intention of returning
to Africa. Rosélie, the protagonist of *Histoire de la femme cannibale* eschews the French metropole as the destination of her travels, passing through the country only temporarily. Her more varied itinerary seems to denote liberation from colonial influence, but she experiences the same dynamics of domination and exploitation in her relationship with Stephen. Her independence is only illusory. The authors themselves demonstrate this tendency as well, choosing to write their novels in French, the language of the colonizer, and appropriating other cultural idioms including references to classical mythology and popular culture.

Such tendencies appear to indicate a desire to assimilate into the dominant order. However, the authors’ use of French language and culture are in fact highly subversive. Their appropriation of the French language allows them to utilize the language for their own purposes. These authors employ the French novel as a means of expressing ideas and concerns outside those of the dominant order. Their works focus on people and phenomena often ignored by mainstream society. Their position of marginality with regards to the dominant order allows them to critique it, while simultaneously participating in the dominant discourse. This polyvalence greatly enriches their texts, eliminating the possibility reducing them either to a simple reaction against or gesture of conformity towards the dominant discourse.

In order to understand the works of Maryse Condé and Fatou Diome, it is necessary to examine the context in which they were written. Dynamics of globalization and neo-colonialism play an important role in each of the novels examined here. These authors write from a complex position with regards to both French and global society. Their status as Francophone authors simultaneously implies a certain degree of marginalization and
assimilation, in that they write from outside the French metropole but within the French language. This ambiguous position allows them to provide alternative ideas and criticism to the genre in which they write, effectively destabilizing it from within.
Chapter 2

Histoire de la femme cannibale

Rosélie Thibaudin, the Antillean protagonist of Maryse Condé’s Histoire de la femme cannibale, exists in an almost constant state of rootlessness, traveling to a wide variety of locations. In each new place, she encounters the same dynamics of racism, oppression and violence that characterize Franco-Antillean relations. These experiences displace the colonial relationship, illustrating the extent to which such dynamics are actually global phenomena. In this chapter, I will explore the intersections between globalization and marginalization in Histoire de la femme cannibale. This novel is one of Condé’s most recent, and it illustrates global dynamics of racism and oppression in an incredibly rich context that deserves detailed examination and reflection. Previous studies of this work have dealt almost exclusively with the figure of the cannibal in Maryse Condé’s work. Mariana Ionescu and Kathryn Lachman focus on the concept of literary cannibalism, a process of appropriation and subversion of diverse cultural elements.11 Ionescu argues that Condé’s use of external references is so extensive that her work can be characterized as a “roman-collage” (157). Other studies have focused on the cannibal as a figure from the colonial imaginary that Condé has appropriated and subverted in her novel. Such interpretations hinge on the place that the cannibal held within that colonial imaginary, namely that of “Europe’s radical and

11 “Treating Histoire de la femme cannibale as a test case, Condé incorporates so much foreign material into her narrative that the text simply cannot assimilate it all: we find quotes from novels, film, popular songs and opera; allusions to her previous novels, to her autobiographical trajectory and to academia; recipes and fragments from newspapers; as well as a wide array of contemporary and historical references to Africa, the Antilles, and the United States. Condé thus develops a striking aesthetic of indigestion, where dissonant elements cannot be integrated and instead stand out in the narrative as a subversive critique.” (Lachman, 72)
primitive other” (Rosello, 36).\textsuperscript{12} This figure of the cannibal as the other will be instrumental in my exploration of processes of exclusion in Condé’s work, but this chapter will focus on more general patterns of domination and the globalized space in which they occur rather than on the specific figure of the cannibal.\textsuperscript{13}

My analysis of these dynamics will depend heavily on Marc Augé’s concept of the non-lieu or ‘non-place.’ Augé defines the non-lieu as a space that cannot define itself “ni comme identitaire, ni comme relationnel, ni comme historique” (100). The accelerated pace and extended influence of capitalistic economic exchanges inherent in globalization reduces these spaces to their economic function, obsolesc ing any historical or cultural value. As a result, such spaces do not permit any form of collective identification, but generate “solitude et similitude” (130). The inherent amnesia of non-lieux commodifies colonial history while reproducing colonial dynamics of exploitation under the guise of international capitalism. On a more individual level, Rosélie also encounters the perpetuation of colonial dynamics of domination and exploitation in her interracial relationship with Stephen, who assumes complete control of the relationship and usurps her sense of agency. Condé uses both Rosélie’s experience of the non-lieu and her relationship with Stephen to express skepticism with regards to post-colonial promises of a more egalitarian society. Condé’s historically informed appraisal of these spaces exposes their underlying inequalities. She also uses Rosélie’s relationship with Stephen to explore questions of expression, representation and imperialism in art. Through her geographically displaced experience of domination and exclusion, Rosélie manages to overcome the overwhelming solitude of the non-lieu by

\textsuperscript{12} Dawn Fulton’s “Unfamiliar Cannibals: Postcolonial readings in Histoire de la femme cannibale” (Fulton, 124-142) also adheres to this interpretation of cannibalism. 

\textsuperscript{13} For an additional perspective on the question of cannibalism consult Karen Lindo’s “Shame and the Emerging Nation in Histoire de la femme cannibale” (in Feasting on Words, 51-70).
cultivating a sense of solidarity with all oppressed people and to assert her right to self-expression.

Rosélie’s story is one of constant migration, deracination and solitude. She begins her life in Guadeloupe, an overseas territory of France that never claimed its independence. Her travels begin with her studies in Paris, a typical journey for a colonial subject, but eventually lead her to a wide variety of locations including the Central African Republic, England, Tokyo, New York, and South Africa. Despite her voyages beyond the reaches of the Franco-Antillean relationship, Rosélie repeatedly encounters the same patterns of racism and exclusion everywhere she travels. Though she recognizes that every city has its “personnalité singulière” (Condé 46), a common thread of violence and racism runs through all of her experiences. When asked why she chooses to remain in a country as racist as South Africa, she responds, “Si le racisme est plus mortel que le sida, il est aussi plus répandu, plus quotidien que les grippes en hiver” (40). At one point, Condé sardonically subverts the cliché of the patchwork quilt as a metaphor for human diversity, using it to describe a world sewn together by animosity and discrimination:

Jour après jour, sous tous les cieux, toutes les latitudes, que d’incompréhension ! Que d’insultes ! Que d’avances ! Elle comparait sa vie à une de ces couvertures qu’elle avait achetées aux Amish, lors d’une visite en Pennsylvanie : mosaïque de tissus de textures différentes, toujours de coloration peu lumineuse. Coton brun, les années à N’Dossou; laine grise, les jours à New York; feutrine violette, l’existence au Cap; velours noir depuis la mort de Stephen. (86)

The omnipresence of violence and exclusion sometimes leads Rosélie to mentally conflate locations. At one point, Rosélie falls asleep listening to the sirens in Cape Town, South Africa as if they were the noises of Times Square, New York:

Cette nuit-là, chez Dido, elle s’endormit dans le tintamarre oublié: clameur des ambulances, hurlements des voitures de police, aboiements des sirènes
Rosélie’s experiences transpose the colonial experiences of exclusion and racism to a
globalized space.

Rosélie attributes her inability to assimilate into any particular community to these
patterns of exclusion. On the one hand, she feels rejected by most white people who either
shun or ignore her, but also often encounters a certain degree of reproach from the black
community for not being sufficiently militant. Her “cousins indépendantistes” regard her as
“leur bête noire” because of her political indifference (171). Rosélie must also face the
criticism of her black friends who perceive her interracial relationship with Stephen as a
betrayal of “la Race” (81). She thus finds herself caught in the crossfire of racial animosities
inherited from the colonial era. This position leads her to adopt an attitude of skepticism
with regards to optimistic rhetoric promising a future of interracial harmony and
understanding. Stephen employs such rhetoric when proposing the move to post-apartheid
South Africa, claiming that the country was embarking on a new post-racial chapter in its
history: “Ils seraient aux premières loges pour observer comment des communautés autrefois
ennemies apprenaient à s’entendre” (46). This glowing account of a new order in South
Africa contrasts sharply with Rosélie’s experience of the place: “Le pouvoir, là-bas à
Pretoria, avait beau se gargariser de discours: devoir de pardon, nécessité de vivre ensemble,
Vérité et Réconciliation, il n’y avait dans ce bout de terre que des tensions, de la haine, le
désir de vengeance!” (91) Here, Rosélie sets forth an alternative vision of interracial
relations, based not on the euphemistic rhetoric employed by the dominant group (here

14 “Ils ne tourneraient pas la tête dans sa direction. Elle n’irritait plus, elle ne choquait plus. Elle était
redevenue invisible. Triste choix! Exclusion ou invisibilité!” (47)
represented by Stephen and the government of South Africa), but on her personal experiences of violence and hatred.

In dislocating these patterns of violence and oppression, Condé deterritorializes these phenomena, denying them any cultural specificity and relocating them within a globalized space. Rosélie herself inhabits this globalized space, unable to claim any particular community or culture as her own. Her constant sense of transitoriness exemplifies what Marc Augé terms the *non-lieu*, or a space that can be defined as “ni comme identitaire, ni comme relationnel, ni comme historique” (100). Augé uses the term to refer to highly homogenized spaces developed to facilitate the accelerated circulation of goods, services, and people in contemporary society. *Non-lieux* are often spaces of commerce and transit. In *Histoire de la femme cannibale*, the *non-lieu* most often takes the shape of a tourist attraction. The most glaring example of this tendency is Condé’s description of Bermuda, “cette Angleterre à la Walt Disney, aussi artificielle qu’un royaume de poupées avec ses maisonnettes dignes des nains de Blanche-Neige sous leurs toits blancs.” This “jardin d’Éden pour touristes fortunés” is created through the suppression of local culture, replacing local cuisine with “cette cuisine sans saveur, capable de s’adapter à tout palais, qu’on nomme continentale,” and offering cultural presentations featuring local singers singing Frank

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15 [La surabondance spatiale du présent] s’exprime, on l’a vu, dans les changements d’échelle, dans la multiplication des références imagées et imaginaires, et dans les spectaculaires accélérations des moyens de transport. Elle aboutit concrètement à des modifications physiques considérables: concentrations urbaines, transferts de population et multiplication de ce que nous appellerons “non-lieux”, par opposition à la notion sociologique de lieu, associée par Mauss et toute une tradition ethnologique à celle de culture localisée dans le temps et l’espace. Les non-lieux, ce sont aussi bien les installations nécessaires à la circulation accélérée des personnes et des biens (voies rapides, échangeurs, aéroports) que les moyens de transport eux-mêmes ou les grands centres commerciaux, ou encore les camps de transit prolongé où sont parqués les réfugiés de la planète. (48)

16 Fulton explores the violent aspect of tourism as its own form of cannibalism, characterizing it as “a phenomenon that wields its destructive force through the commodification of other cultures and histories. Since this destruction occurs primarily in the mode of consumption, the metaphorical link to the figure of the cannibal is difficult to ignore.” (129)
Sinatra standards (Condé 148). Condé perceives this homogenizing influence as an imposition. The apparent impartiality of the “cuisine sans saveur” and the Frank Sinatra standards hides the real local culture and cuisine, which have been suppressed for the benefit of the wealthy occidental tourists. These dynamics of repression and exploitation echo the imperialistic influence of former colonial relationships.

The connection between the tourist attraction and colonial dynamics is repeatedly emphasized throughout Histoire de la femme cannibale. The novel begins with a description of Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela was once incarcerated and which has now been transformed into a tourist attraction (11). In the same paragraph, Condé describes the segregation of Cape Town, referring to “la misère des bas-fonds” and “la splendeur du centre” (11-12). Such a dichotomy echoes the colonial distinction between the periphery and the metropole. This description emphasizes the author’s skepticism towards optimistic discourse regarding interracial relations. The conversion of Robben Island from a concentration camp into a tourist’s paradise commodifies painful memories of apartheid and anesthetizes them. The shameful history of apartheid is thus memorialized and obsolesced while the racism that undergirded apartheid remains very much alive. Condé emphasizes the extent to which the lot of the colonized remains unchanged, pointing out that most black people still live off of “les emplois subalternes qu’ils n’avaient pas cessé d’occuper” (12).

Condé’s characterization of the non-lieu as a perpetuation of systems of exploitation contrasts with Augé’s insistence that the anonymity of the non-lieu can provide a sense of liberation for “ceux qui, pour un temps, n’ont plus à tenir leur rang, à se tenir à leur place, à

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17 The former place of torture converted into a tourist attraction appears repeatedly throughout the novel, as Condé describes an Afrikaaner plantation, now overrun with tour buses, and Monticello, Thomas Jefferson’s plantation, where “des Africains-Américains engoncés dans des casaques” currently sell souvenirs, such as “des cendriers faits d’authentiques garrottes” (108).
surveiller leur apparence” (127). According to Augé, the anonymity offered by the homogenized space of the non-lieu effaces traditional forms of identity, and with them, traditional hierarchies. This supposed obsolescence results from the sense of amnesia induced by the immediacy of interactions in the non-lieu:

Au total, tout se passe comme si l’espace était rattrapé par le temps, comme s’il n’y avait pas d’autre histoire que les nouvelles du jour ou de la veille, comme si chaque histoire individuelle puisait ses motifs, ses mots et ses images dans le stock inépuisable d’une intarissable histoire au présent. (131)

According to Condé, this amnesia offers no liberation from historical hierarchies but, ironically, prolongs them. The economic forces holding the new world order in place maintain a certain continuity with the imperialist forces of the colonial era. Condé challenges these forces by pointing out the perpetuation of colonial hierarchies and injustices.

If the perpetuation of racial injustice in contemporary globalized society finds its expression on a sociological level in the non-lieu, Rosélie experiences such inequalities personally in her relationship with Stephen. From the beginning, Stephen assumes control of the relationship, directing Rosélie’s actions and usurping her voice. Though the primary action of the story occurs after Stephen’s death, Rosélie allows Stephen’s voice to narrate the story of their relationship, choosing “à revivre leur première rencontre à travers les propos de Stephen” (29). Rosélie’s voice only occasionally surfaces to correct Stephen’s misrepresentations, and then, only in parentheses : “Tu portais une robe verte à dessins orange. (Qu’est-ce que c’est cette robe verte ? Il a rêvé. Le vert est une couleur que j’abhorre)” (30). Here Stephen’s distortion of the past imposes an image of Rosélie that does not correspond to her true nature. He constructs a vision of the past according to his own desires and fantasies, while Rosélie’s objections remain muted between parentheses. The
extent to which Stephen controls this discourse is highly reminiscent of colonial systems of representation.

Stephen’s account of their meeting echoes imperialist discourse in many other respects, casting himself in the virile role of the explorer and Rosélie as the mysterious yet passive object of his discovery:

Les femmes noires, c’était un monde opaque, impénétrable, l’inconnu, le mystère. L’envers de la lune. Tu avais l’air tellement perdue, tellement vulnérable que je me suis senti par comparaison paisible et puissant. Dieu le Père. (30)

Stephen’s description of Rosélie situates her within a network of stereotypes concerning her race. He imposes qualities of mysteriousness on her, casting her as an Other, someone to be referred to in third person. At the same time, by describing Rosélie as enigmatic, he transforms her into a mystery to be solved and thus posessed.

It is also important to note the emphasis that Stephen places on Rosélie’s vulnerability. This emphasis implies that Rosélie cannot manage on her own and desperately needs Stephen’s help. His insistence on Rosélie’s helplessness is reminiscent of the colonial propaganda concerning la mission civilisatrice, according to which it was the Europeans’ duty to conquer other parts of the world in order to share the benefits of western civilization. Throughout the novel, Stephen assumes that he knows what is best for Rosélie, patronizing her to such an extent that he undermines her sense of self-worth. A desire to dominate subtly motivates all of Stephen’s numerous attempts to further Rosélie’s artistic career. He rationalizes his decision to enroll Rosélie in the École nationale d’arts plastiques in N’Dossou by pointing out that art "ne s’invente pas, elle obéit à des règles" (42).

Stephen assures Rosélie’s acceptance into the school through his social connections with the

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18 Condé describes the school itself as “le dernier cadeau de la France à N’Dossou” (42), indicating yet again the continued influence of colonialism in Africa.
director, forcing Rosélie into a position in which all of her accomplishments become attributable to favoritism rather than to her own merit. Rosélie becomes unable to create anything and comes to think of herself as "seulement une vulgaire bonne élève" (43). In trying to harness Rosélie’s artistic abilities, Stephen appropriates them for himself and silences Rosélie. Thus the dynamics of imperialism inherent in colonialism replicate themselves within the relationship between Rosélie and Steven, as within globalized society.

In light of the imperialist nature of globalized society, the means of resistance and self-affirmation employed by Condé and her protagonist deserve some attention. Because the influence of globalization is so all encompassing, the only spaces of resistance available to Rosélie are those of her own creation, necessitating artistic expression. Both Rosélie and Stephen gravitate towards art, and throughout the novel, Condé cultivates a stark opposition between Stephen and his affiliation with literature and Rosélie’s desire to paint. Stephen’s fascination with literature stems from a desire to shape a certain discourse, to give form to his fantasies and to control the way in which things are represented. His tendency to dominate any conversation appears repeatedly throughout the novel: "Il parlait pour deux. Jamais raseur cependant, débordant d’allusions littéraires sans pédanterie et d’anecdotes sur les pays qu’il avait visités" (25). Stephen employs his wealth of literary knowledge as a means of actualizing his desire to assume the role of the speaker and to transform those around him into a receptive audience. The manner in which he chooses to present the moment at which he and Rosélie met makes the encounter seem "poétique, fictionnelle" (29). Here he uses literary devices to distort reality to better suit his desires.

This fictitiousness is Rosélie’s primary objection to literature: "Pour elle, les histoires qu’on écrit n’arrivaient jamais à la cheville de la réalité. Les romanciers ont peur d’inventer
l’invraisemblable, c’est-à-dire le réel" (26). Rosélie’s dissatisfaction with literature appears at first to be its inability to faithfully represent its object. However, the difference between literature and Rosélie’s paintings is not so much that her paintings more accurately depict reality, but that her paintings seem to abstain from the business of representation all together. Rosélie’s mother often questioned her about her childhood paintings, asking, "Qu’est-ce que ça représente ?" (42) Her lover Ariel describes her work as "influencée par les néo-expressionistes allemandes" (177). Rosélie’s desire to paint stems not from a desire to represent but a desire to express: “Un sang furieux inondait son cœur, sa tête, ses membres et elle peignait, peignait des journées entières, tentant de traduire avec ses pinceaux le partage de ses sentiments. Rage. Régpulsion. Séduction” (49). Rosélie’s attitudes about art are fundamentally different from Stephen’s because of a fundamental difference in motivation, the desire to represent versus the desire to express.

Rosélie and Stephen’s differences with regards to art can be traced back once again to their respective positions of subordinance and dominance. The act of representation implies the ability to impose one’s version of things or events on the object of representation. As Edward Said points out in Culture and Imperialism, "The capacity to represent, portray, characterize, and depict is not easily available to just any member of just any society" (80). Stephen’s ability to represent and his control over literary discourse are closely related to the dominant position he assumes in his relationships with those around him. Thus manipulated, the literary discourse assumes a normalizing function, allowing him to consolidate his authority, "keeping the subordinate subordinate, the inferior inferior" (Said, 80). Rosélie’s refusal to create representative art is, in fact, a refusal to engage in politics of domination.
Condé’s decision to define literature as an imperialist form within a novel deserves some attention. Her choice to criticize the very genre in which she works has a destabilizing effect on the entire novel. She situates the novel within a discourse of domination and oppression all the while working within that very discourse. Such destabilizing tactics invite an examination of Condé’s work guided by the Deleuzian concept of minoritarian literature. Such literature "n’est pas celle d’une langue mineure, plutôt celle qu’une minorité fait dans une langue majeure. Mais le premier caractère est de toute façon que la langue y est affectée d’un fort coefficient de déterritorialisation" (Deleuze 29). As a Francophone author, Maryse Condé is certainly a minority working within a major language. By writing novels in French, she manages to work within the dominant discourse. Her position of marginality with regards to that discourse allows her to challenge it from within.

Condé’s devalorization of the novel is the most noticeable means by which she destabilizes the dominant discourse. Her use of language throughout the book also has a deterritorializing influence, as she adjusts her use of language to accommodate the globalized space in which her novel takes place. Words from other languages appear at numerous points in the text, disrupting the linguistic unity of the text. The most commonly used of these languages are Creole and English. The use of Creole is an obvious assertion of the author’s Caribbean identity. It is important to note that the Creole words in this novel are

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19 It is important to distinguish Deleuze’s use of the term “déterritorialisation” from the definition of its English counterpart found elsewhere in this thesis. In The Deleuze Dictionary, Adrian Parr defines “déterritorialisation” as “a movement producing change. In so far as it operates as a line of flight, deterritorialisation indicates the creative potential of an assemblage. So, to deterritorialise is to free up the fixed relations that contain a body all the while exposing it to new organizations” (67). When referring to the Deleuzian concept of “déterritorialisation,” this thesis shall use terms such as “destabilization,” referring to the production of change within a system described by Adrian Parr.
almost always glossed, that their presence always demands an explanation. The English words, on the other hand, are almost never glossed. Their presence is justified by the predominance of English in the new globalized economy. Condé often ends chapters with English words drawn directly from popular songs or expressions. If Creole is the mother tongue from which the protagonist has been deracinated, English is the language into which the protagonist is forced to assimilate. Most of the novel takes place in English speaking places such as New York and South Africa. The bulk of the novel is devoted to describing Rosélie’s relationship with Stephen, a scholar of Irish literature. Condé does not allow the French language to encompass a unified linguistic field, but sandwiches it between the influences of the protagonist’s mother tongue and those of the global space in which the novel takes place.

Histoire de la femme cannibale also fits the Deleuzian description of minoritarian literature in the extent to which Rosélie’s individual story converges with collective political concerns. According to Deleuze and Guattari, minoritarian literature is produced under such sociopolitical constraints, that individual concerns cannot be understood outside political and collective dynamics. Though Rosélie appears to spend her life in the isolation of the non-

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20 An example of Condé’s use of Creole: “J’essaie de survivre et de guérir mon lenbe! Maladie d’amour! Chez moi, on dit ‘lenbe’!” (25)

21 Examples of this tendency include, “I am in a New York State of mind” (87) and “Sometimes I feel like a motherless child” (127).

22 Stephen’s own position of marginality deserves exploration in this context. Although Stephen embodies many traits of the dominant group, he is in fact marginalized because of his sexuality. Fulton goes so far as to compare his sexual alterity with Fiéla’s presumed criminal history: “Stephen’s hidden narrative is not only adultery but also homosexuality. In this respect his secret suggests a striking parallel to Fiéla’s, as a narrative that provokes intense social anxiety” (136). The extent to which his affinity for literature represents a desire to dominate and control those around him is mitigated by the fact that he studies Irish authors, who in turn constitute a minority within the tradition of British literature.

23 “Le second caractère des littératures mineures, c’est que tout y est politique. Dans les «grandes» littératures au contraire, l’affaire individuelle (familiale, conjugale, etc.) tend à rejoindre d’autres affaires non moins
lieu, her experiences are inextricably enmeshed within the broader social issues of exploitation and racism. Through these experiences, Rosélie manages to forge bonds of solidarity, not based on race, ethnicity, or culture; but on common experiences of exclusion and discrimination. Towards the beginning of the novel, Rosélie justifies her inability to enjoy hunting, claiming that she cannot help but identify with the hunted.24 The people with whom she surrounds herself all share experiences of loss and suffering. Her cook Dido is a widow who lost her son to AIDS. The night watchman Deogratias barely escaped from the genocide in Rwanda. After Stephen’s death, Rosélie becomes a medium, offering her clients not so much prophecies as "Guérison de cas reconnus incurables" (18). Rosélie’s identification with those who suffer gives her the power to heal. The person with whom Rosélie most strongly identifies is Fiéla, a woman accused of murdering her husband, chopping him into pieces, and leaving him in the Freezer. It is from the underlying implications of cannibalism in this accusation that the title of the novel is inspired. In this context, cannibalism represents the furthest possible degree from civilization,25 and being accused of cannibalism represents the most severe form of ostracism. When Rosélie feels shunned, she assumes that people are thinking of her as "cette descendante des cannibales" (107). At the end of the novel, the moment when Rosélie chooses to reject an offer to enter a

24 “Pas sa faute si elle souffrait du complexe des victimes et s’identifiait à ceux qui sont poursuivis” (14).

25 “In Western discourse, cannibalism has functioned as a term of absolute alterity, as a line of demarcation between the thinkable and the unthinkable, between self and other, between human and inhuman. The figure of the cannibal provides a site of radical opposition for Western understandings of the self, encapsulating notions of savagery and moral depravity against which civilization can define itself: to consume another human represents an act of no return, the ultimate social threat that cannot be accepted into coherent narratives of community” (Fulton, 126).
relationship with Manuel and to assert her own identity through artistic expression is the moment in which she most strongly identifies with Fiéla: "Fiéla, est-ce toi ? Est-ce moi ? Nos deux figures se confondent" (317). Rosélée’s form of solidarity transcends traditional forms of identification, allowing her to identify with all those who have been Othered.

In *Histoire de la femme cannibale*, Rosélée’s experience is one of constant deracination and otherness. Condé uses these experiences to communicate skepticism with regards to phenomena that supposedly represent the obsolescence of traditional hierarchies. Though Rosélée’s experience of such phenomena as the *non-lieu* and the interracial couple do surpass traditional boundaries and taboos, they only reproduce colonial dynamics of racism and exploitation. Through this portrayal, Condé transposes these dynamics to a global level, thereby illustrating the extent to which international economies perpetuate existing inequalities. As mentioned earlier, the very title *Histoire de la femme cannibale* refers to stereotypes about Africans initially conceived during the colonial era and used as justification for imperialist practices of domination. By identifying with the cannibal, Rosélée identifies with the Other, with those who cannot assimilate into mainstream society. It is only through cultivating alternative bonds of solidarity that transcend traditional boundaries of race and nationality and through asserting her own right to self-expression that Rosélée is able to escape from these inferiorizing dynamics.
Chapter 3

Le Ventre de l’Atlantique

Fatou Diome’s first novel, Le Ventre de l’Atlantique (2003), deals with feelings of alienation experienced by the protagonist Salie, a Senegalese woman who has immigrated to France. As an immigrant, Salie often feels torn between the expectations of her family in Africa and the realities of life in Europe. Caught between Senegal and France, Salie acquires the critical distance necessary to examine the relationship between the two countries.

Previous studies of Le Ventre de l’Atlantique have explored many of the socio-political dynamics unearthed by this novel, especially the continuation of French influence over its former colonies and the ways in which that influence shapes patterns of migration in globalized society. This chapter will build on those observations, exploring the interplay between globalization and neo-colonialism in Fatou Diome’s work, especially in the domains of televised media and international soccer. This chapter will also examine how immigration and globalization complicate the relationship between the protagonist and the space in which she lives, and the narratological strategies that Diome employs in order to communicate that complexity.

In the very first chapter of the novel, the protagonist describes her inability to reconcile her existence in France with the expectations of her family:

Mais combien de kilomètres, de journées de labeur, de nuits d’insomnie me séparent encore d’une hypothétique réussite qui, pourtant, va tellement de soi

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pour les miens, dès l’instant que je leur ai annoncé mon départ pour la France? J’avance, les pas lourds de leurs rêves, la tête remplie des miens. (15)

As an immigrant, Salie must simultaneously work within the constraints imposed on her by the host culture and meet the unrealistic expectations of her family. This cleavage between the reality of life in Europe and the way that life is perceived in Africa forms the backbone of Thomas’ analysis of Diome’s text.27

Thomas illustrates the extent to which African perceptions of France are informed by colonial dynamics. His analysis focuses primarily on the stories of “L’homme de Barbès” (Diome 93), a successful immigrant who has returned to Senegal and maintains his social status by idealizing his experiences in France rather than telling the truth about the difficulties he faced there, and references that Diome periodically makes to colonial works.28 Such references reinforce the concept of “colonialisme mental” to which Diome refers explicitly.29 The influence of France, as experienced by the colonial writers referenced by Diome, continues to make itself felt through the idealized stories of successful immigrants like “l’homme de Barbès.”

Such observations are useful in an analysis of Diome’s text. However, the influence of the media (especially television) in perpetuating colonial dynamics deserves more attention. The television occupies an important place in the life of the protagonist’s village.

27 “The relationship between the socioeconomic realities in France and the distorted projections from Africa concerning those circumstances provides the central disconnect that Diome proposes to analyze.” (Thomas, 246)


29 “Après la colonisation historiquement reconnue, règne maintenant une sorte de colonisation mentale.” (Diome 53)
The villagers gather to watch the only television in the village at the home of its proprietor, none other than l’homme de Barbès. The television offers the villagers tantalizing images of a world beyond their reach:

Pour la première fois de leur vie, la majorité des habitants pouvaient expérimenter cette chose étrange dont ils avaient déjà entendu parler: voir les Blancs parler, chanter, danser, manger, s’embrasser, s’engueuler, bref, voir des Blancs vivre pour de vrai, là, dans la boîte, juste derrière la vitre. (56)

This passage unequivocally indicates the source from which the images on the television screen come: the television’s role is to transmit images of white people. The villagers do not seem perturbed, but rather intrigued by the extent to which white people dominate this medium. The villagers accept the images on the screen as truth, while the passage notes that these images remain “juste derrière la vitre.” The television communicates images and messages from “des Blancs,” without inviting the receptors of these messages to partake in any sort of dialogue or to participate in the world that they present. In doing so, the television serves as the most visible representative of unbridled capitalism in post-colonial Africa.

The influence of televised commercials in Diome’s text follows illustrates the tendency of globalization to simultaneously impose itself on and exclude people living in third world countries. The villagers are repeatedly offered images of products to which they do not have access:

À la télé, plus rien que de la publicité. Coca-Cola, sans gêne, vient gonfler son chiffre d’affaires jusque dans ces contrés… où l’eau potable reste un luxe. Surtout, n’ayez aucune crainte, le Coca fera pousser le blé dans le Sahel! (20)

Here, the television serves as a tool for international capitalism, promoting the products of major corporations, even to people who have no real use for such products. The receptors of such promotions can only partake in a sort of virtual consumption, absorbing the images on
display rather than the actual products marketed by those images. Diome points out this tendency through the example of “une troupe de gamins rachitiques” (20) watching a commercial in which a child consumes an ice cream cone:

Les glaces, ces enfants n’en connaissent que les images. Elles restent pour eux une nourriture virtuelle, consommée uniquement là-bas, de l’autre côté de l’Atlantique, dans ce paradis où ce petit charnu de la publicité a eu la bonne idée de naître. (21)

From the ice cream commercial, the children learn to regard Europe, and France in particular (in this case the source of the televised images) as a sort of distant paradise where all of the products they see in commercials can actually be consumed. Because the commercials promote products that the villagers cannot actually purchase, they come to learn that the commercials are not actually directed at them. Even in non-commercial programs, such as news broadcasts, the villagers encounter the frustration of images that were tailor-made for someone else’s consumption. The villagers cannot even understand what the people on television are saying, because this communication occurs solely in French rather than Wolof. The incompatibility between the villagers’ needs and priorities and the images offered them by the media, indicates a fundamental disconnect between the generators of these images and their receptors.

In L’Autre Mondialisation, Dominique Wolton examines the implications of such a disconnect, noting the extent to which intercultural communication remains obfuscated despite the rapid development of communication technologies. He attributes this inability to communicate to a disconnect between the creators and the receptors of information:

30 It is important to note the status of the French language in Diome’s text. In the diglossic situation currently in effect in Senegal, French is perceived as “la langue de la réussite” (93). When describing Madické’s inability to understand reporters on television Diome notes, “Cette langue, il l’a souvent entendue et même vue. Oui, il l’a vue, chez lui, cette langue porte des pantalons, des costumes, des cravates, des chaussures fermées; ou alors des jupes, des tailleurs, des lunettes et de hauts talons. Oui, il reconnaît cette langue qui fait la musique de bureaus sénégalais, mais il ne la comprend pas et ça l’irrite” (23).
Voilà quelle est *la* grande révolution de ce début de siècle en matière de communication : la prise de conscience d’une *discontinuité radicale entre l’émetteur et le récepteur*. Avec pour conséquence l’importance des facteurs socioculturels : le même message, adressé à tout le monde ; ne sera jamais reçu de la même manière par chacun. (Wolton 19)

Wolton points out that on an international level, the emitters of information come largely from the North, and people from the South are expected to passively accept this information, regardless of cultural differences. This dichotomy between emitters and receptors of information constitutes a new form of imperialism. As Wolton points out, above, reactions to this imposition of information are varied and unpredictable.

Within the village presented in *Le Ventre de l’Atlantique*, reactions to televised images vary, often depending on age. The young people “s’extasièrent à la vue des beaux stades et du court reportage,” relishing in the chance to see sports coverage. For Madické, the younger brother of the protagonist, the television’s most important function is to broadcast images of soccer games. Soccer provides the primary means by which the protagonist manages to maintain communication with Madické:

À quelques milliers de kilomètres de mon salon, à l’autre bout de la Terre, au Sénégal, là-bas, sur cette île à peine assez grande pour héberger un stade, j’imagine un jeune homme rivé devant une télévision de fortune pour suivre le même match que moi. Je le sens près de moi. Nos yeux se croisent sur les mêmes images. Battements de cœur, souffle, gestes de joie ou de désarroi, tous nos signes émotionnels sont synchronisés la durée d’un match, car nous courons derrière le même homme: Paolo Maldini. (Diome 15)

Because of soccer’s status as an international sport, Diome is able to use it as a metaphorical space in which to explore global patterns of power and identification. Throughout most of the novel, Diome refers almost exclusively to European teams. The novel begins with a match during the 2000 European Cup, during which the children from Diome’s island
identify almost exclusively with the French team and French players, despite the presence of other national teams:

> Pourtant, la télévision montrait aussi d’autres clubs occidentaux. Mais rien à faire. Après la colonisation historiquement reconnue, règne maintenant une sorte de colonisation mentale: les jeunes joueurs vénéraient et vénèrent encore la France. À leurs yeux, tout ce qui est enviable vient de la France. (60)

Senegalese soccer teams pass almost without mention, even though, as Salie points out when Madické asks her to help him immigrate to France and find a position with a French soccer team, local teams do exist.\(^{31}\) The invisibility of Senegalese teams from the international scene is indicative of the weak sociopolitical position held by Senegal in globalized society.\(^{32}\) Furthermore, the children’s exclusive affiliation with French teams indicates the persistence of colonial mentalities within postcolonial society. Madické is alone in choosing to idolize an Italian player, Paolo Maldini. Yet even Madické believes that the only path to success leads through France:

> Mon frère galopait vers ses rêves, de plus en plus orientés vers la France. Il aurait pu désirer se rendre en Italie, mais il n’en était rien. Les fils du pays qui dînent chez le président de la République jouent en France. Monsieur Ndétéare, qui lui apprenait la langue de la réussite, avait étudié en France. La télévision qu’il regardait venait de France et son propriétaire, l’homme de Barbès, respectable notable au village, n’était pas avare en récits merveilleux de son odyssé. (93)

Through these affiliations with soccer teams, Diome situates Senegal within a global order in which it receives no recognition and despite which its people continue to identify with former colonial powers.\(^{33}\)

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\(^{31}\) “Et puis, tu n’as qu’à trouver un bon club au pays, il y en a aussi.” (160)

\(^{32}\) Diome bitterly notes the inferior position afforded to Senegalese people by the global economic order, “Sur la balance de la mondialisation, une tête d’enfant du tiers-monde pèse moins lourd qu’un hamburger” (214).

\(^{33}\) Towards the end of the novel, Diome modifies this dynamic, documenting the Senegalese victory over France in the 2002 World Cup (272). This victory affords her characters an opportunity to reappropriate their national identity and pride. Diome tempers her description of this victory however, with her description of the French
While the young people clamor towards the television as a means of seeing international soccer, the adults “restèrent sans réaction,” preferring “la lutte traditionnelle” to soccer, unable to see how any of the information transmitted concerns them in any way (58). The young people are eager to assimilate into the globalized space from which these images emanate, while the adults remain attached to traditional values and are skeptical of televised images. The concurrence of the desire for modernization and the desire to retain traditional values is a recurring theme in Diome’s novel. The people of Diome’s village simultaneously obsess over the possibility of immigration to France and react against the possibility of becoming “occidentalized.” When Salie is unable to meet her brother’s demands or criticizes his decisions he often accuses her of having assimilated too much into Western culture: “Tu crois avoir percé tous les mystères à l’école! T’es vraiment occidentalisée! Mademoiselle critique maintenant nos coutumes. Et d’ailleurs, comme t’es devenue une individualiste, tu ne veux même pas m’aider” (161). Throughout the novel, Diome emphasizes the extent to which the people of the protagonist’s village cling to traditional customs as a form of resistance against occidental influence. The protagonist often reacts strongly against such customs as polygamy, high birth rates, and sexism. At one point the village schoolteacher Ndétare also remarks the rise of fundamentalism in Senegal:

Et même, ça s’est aggravé, depuis que les prédicateurs ont entrepris de traverser le désert pour venir déverser leur obscurantisme religieux par ici… En écoutant les informations, je me rends compte que de faux dévots sont en train d’envahir le pays. (217)

The rise of fundamentalism and the perpetuation of unjust social customs are forms of resistance against a dominant order, whose ideas and values are disseminated through media suppression of celebrations, preventing Senegalese immigrants from relishing in their country’s victory (279). The incident adds a note of optimism to the novel, without seriously challenging the international hierarchies discussed above.
such as television, and whose priorities are often contrary to those of subaltern populations.

Wolton notes that the dominance of such imperialistic forms of communication often elicits hostile reactions from their receptors:

> Internet et l’ensemble de techniques de communication seraient alors assimilés à l’impérialisme culturel occidental, créant des réactions violents, dont de nombreux exemples émaillent l’histoire de ces trente dernières années, où s’exacerbent les questions de territoire, les irrédentismes culturels et religieux. (25)

In Diome’s work, the sense of expropriation experienced by the villagers who are the receptors of messages from a culture that devalorizes and excludes them indirectly encourages the continuation of unfair social practices.

Caught between the increasingly rigid culture of her native village and the exclusivity of French society, how does the protagonist herself negotiate the challenges of life in globalized society? Her experience is often one of overwhelming frustration and rootlessness: “Pourtant, revenir équivaut pour moi à partir. Je vais chez moi comme on va à l’étranger, car je suis devenue l’autre pour ceux que je continue à appeler les miens” (190).

As an illegitimate child, Salie was never afforded the opportunity to integrate fully into her own community, and must seek to prove her worth elsewhere:

> L’exil, c’est mon suicide géographique. L’ailleurs m’attire car, vierge de mon histoire, il ne me juge pas sur la base des erreurs du destin, mais en fonction de ce que j’ai choisi d’être; il est pour moi gage de liberté, d’autodétermination. (262)

On the other hand, Salie cannot completely integrate into French society either. Throughout the novel, whenever Salie is in France, she is alone. Her only personal contact is with the postal worker who delivers her “convocation à la Direction régionale des renseignements généraux relative à ma demande de naturalisation” (248). The intimate but oppressive contact that Salie experiences in Africa is replaced with the coldness of the French bureaucracy.
This bureaucracy dictates the standards that Salie must meet in order to remain in France, such as the health examination. Diome traces these standards back to processes of exclusion employed during the colonial era: “Ainsi donc, la maladie est considérée comme une tare rédhibitoire pour l’accès au territoire français. Remarquez, à l’époque où l’on vendait pèle-mêle le nègre, l’ébène et les épices, personne n’achetait d’esclave malade” (248). The standards of acceptance within French society are inherently racist, and Salie will always face exclusion while she remains in France.

Given her inability to integrate either into French or Senegalese society, Salie feels most at home in spaces of her own invention. Torn between her cultural ties to Africa and France, she must create a deterritorialized space in which both affiliations can be expressed: “Enracinée partout, exilée tout le temps, je suis chez moi là où l’Afrique et l’Europe perdent leur orgueil et se contentent de s’additionner: sur une page, pleine de l’alliage qu’elles m’ont légué” (210). Salie turns to writing as a creative process whereby she can create the space that her hybridized personality, simultaneously African and European, demands. The blank page becomes a metaphor for openness and infinite possibility.

Diome’s text parallels this hybridity, incorporating a wide number of cultural references, both Senegalese and European. Such references include traditional sayings, religious references (both to Islam and to Christianity), and literary references. The literary references are of particular interest because Diome often references authors of widely disparate national origins in one phrase, establishing a certain equivalency between these

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34 “On ne piétine pas deux fois les couilles d’un aveugle, dit-on, une fois suffit pour qu’il soulève sa marchandise dès que des bruits de pas lui parviennent.” (17)

35 “Et les prières? Et le ramadan? Vous croyez que je fais tout ça pour rien, moi?” (18); “Mes économies étaient mon corps du Christ, ma peine muée en gâteau pour les miens. Tenez, mangez mes frères, ceci est ma sueur monnayée en Europe pour vous! Hosannah!” (192)
voices. Diome includes one such catalog when Salie enumerates her debt to Ndétare, the schoolteacher from her village:

Je lui dois Descartes, je lui dois Montesquieu, je lui dois Victor Hugo, je lui dois Molière, je lui dois Balzac, je lui dois Marx, je lui dois Dostoïevski, je lui dois Hemingway, je lui dois Léopold Sédar Senghor, je lui dois Aimé Césaire, je lui dois Simone de Beauvoir, Marguerite Yourcenar, Mariama Bâ et les autres. (66)

Diome here characterizes literature as a transnational space, as a sort of heritage whose value is unlimited by nationality or cultural identification. It is within such a deterritorialized space that Diome attempts to insinuate her work. Literature fulfills the promise of an open deterritorialized space—the very promise on which globalization fails to deliver.

Diome’s work intertwines themes of alienation, deracination, and self-actualization. Her work illustrates the extent to which globalized communications, especially televised images, simultaneously impose themselves on third-world receptors and exclude them from the society of consumption to which they refer. These patterns of imperialism and exclusion sometimes incur hostile reactions towards the occidental society from which they emanate. Such dynamics result in the generation of rigidly exclusive societies into which marginalized persons, such as Diome’s protagonist, cannot possibly integrate. Writing provides a space in which such marginalized persons can express the disparate elements of their experiences. Diome’s protagonist perceives literature as a transnational dialogue in which she can successfully participate. It is through hard work and creativity that Salie manages to challenge the inequalities and exclusivity inherent in globalized society.
Chapter 4

Conclusion

The globalization of contemporary economies and communication systems has weakened traditional borders and generated new spaces, governed by market forces rather than local or national governments. Despite the tremendous impact of such developments, they have not significantly altered the dynamics of power and exploitation inherited from the colonial era. As Joseph Stiglitz points out in *Globalization and its Discontents*:

> Giving developing countries their freedom (generally after little preparation for autonomy) often did not change the view of their former colonial masters, who continued to feel that they knew best. The colonial mentality—the “white man’s burden” and the presumption that they knew what was best for the developing countries—persisted. (24)

This continuation of the colonial mindset and the accompanying patterns of domination and exploitation within globalized society constitute a common thread throughout the novels examined in this thesis. Though Fatou Diome and Maryse Condé come from very different backgrounds (Diome coming from a poor Senegalese family and Maryse Condé coming from a middle class family from Guadeloupe), their experiences as Francophone women lead both of them to situate their experiences of globalization within colonial history. Both of their protagonists make the choice to leave their country of origin, and both encounter dynamics of domination inherited from the colonial era in contemporary settings and relationships. Neither protagonist is capable of assimilating, either into the community in which she was born or the one to which she immigrates. Both protagonists demand creative forms of self-
expression in order to validate their feelings and experiences. Such similarities form a common framework through which these highly unique texts can be compared.

Both Rosélie and Salie experience alienation with regards to their respective native communities and choose to travel to distant countries. The protagonists’ respective trajectories differ greatly. Rosélie leaves Guadeloupe, an island that remains under French jurisdiction and has never achieved independence, and rejects the French capital as her destination, travelling instead to a wide variety of places in Europe, America, Africa, and Asia. Salie on the other hand, leaves Senegal, a country that has been nominally independent for decades, and travels to France, choosing to remain in the former metropole. In travelling outside the reaches of the Franco-Antillean relationship, Rosélie seems to escape colonial influence. However, throughout her travels, she encounters the same dynamics of domination and exploitation that characterize the colonial relationship. Her experiences thus transpose that relationship into a global space, exposing the universality of these phenomena. Salie’s trajectory specifically emphasizes the continuation of French influence on Senegal, exposing the extent to which traditional imperialist centers maintain control over their respective spheres of influence.

Both authors use extended metaphors to explore the continuation of colonial relationships within globalized spaces, both geographic and social. Within these spaces, international market forces have eroded traditional boundaries and institutions but maintained traditional criteria of exclusion. Condé uses Rosélie’s interracial relationship with Stephen to examine the perpetuation of white, patriarchal influence within post-colonial society. Diome uses the globalized space of international soccer as an illustration of hierarchal relationships between countries and the continuation of colonial relationships between those countries.
The protagonists of both books experience intense feelings of isolation and
deracination, finding it impossible to establish a sense of belonging anywhere they go. The
marginalizing influences of globalization are so omnipresent that these protagonists must
create spaces in which to express their identities. They generate these spaces through artistic
expression, using art as a means of validating their experiences. When Rosélie entitles her
self-portrait ‘Femme Cannibale,’ she assumes the position of alterity imposed on her through
this label as a place from which to challenge the dominant order. Salie, who considers
herself to be “exilée en permanence” can only truly feel at home in the literary spaces of her
own creation (294). The protagonists’ have very different preferences concerning artistic
forms. Rosélie turns to painting, not as a means of representing her vision of reality, but of
expressing her emotions. Her paintings do not portray real or imagined objects, but express
the feelings that Rosélie experiences in response to social and racial injustices. She views
literature as an imperialist endeavor whereby the authors impose their version of reality on
their objects of representation. Condé’s choice to express such ideas about literature within a
novel indicates a desire to appropriate and subvert this dominant medium. Having
characterized literary discourse as a tool of the dominant order, she appropriates this tool and
uses it for the expression of alternative ideas and concerns. Salie, on the other hand, views
literature as a global heritage of universal value. As mentioned earlier, she perceives the
blank page as an open space in which she can assert her unique values and identity.

The striking similarities between these highly unique works indicate the extent to
which globalization poses similar challenges to people in widely disparate situations. The
overwhelming hegemony of capitalistic market forces replicates patterns of colonial
dominance, depriving disadvantaged populations of any sense of agency. Both authors
illustrate the extent to which the expropriating influences of neo-colonialism inherent in contemporary processes of globalization often elicit hostility and frustration from those who feel such influences imposed on them. The protagonists, in their search for creative means of self-expression and deterritorialized spaces that transcend traditional schemata of colonizer versus colonized or oppressor versus oppressed, present a unique alternative to such dynamics of imperialism and hostility. In pointing out these dynamics, these authors simultaneously give voice to the concerns of minoritarian populations and work within the dominant discourse, using the language of the colonizer to articulate the experiences of the colonized. By working creatively within the dominant discourse these authors successfully expose and challenge patterns of exclusion in globalized society.
WORKS CITED


