

Wasting and despised souls in Aminata Sow Fall's *Douceurs du Bercail*

Ebelechukwu Eucharia Iruka¹

Abstract

Migration remains a topical issue that has without doubt, some positive impacts of on Africans. However, poor governance, hardship and the widening gap between the rich and the poor have compelled many young Africans into this adventure of many tales. This paper reveals experiences from Migration in Aminata's Sow Fall *Douceurs du Bercail* (1998). It also beams a special focus on the plight of the female migrant by adopting Max Weber's (1978) social action theory. So long as Africans nations keep consuming "foreign" without aggressive agricultural revolution and local production of goods, they will remain economically dependent. Though the paper applauds the writer's attempt to solve this problem through the main character Asta, it, however, admits that migration has taken another turn today. The population that is affected the most is the educated youth. We must create pre-migration and post-migration counselling units in our tertiary institutions and they must be handled by former Migrants. Our youths must understand that there is more to this chimerical Eldorado. All is not rosy everywhere. The ministry of youth and sports should be highly involved in mitigating this exodus of our talented youth to the North by creating a local language unit in collaboration with the media and film producers for an aggressive publicity of the myth of Eldorado. The researcher maintains that Africans should reclaim their dignity by solving their problems by themselves. The crazy Migration we experience today can only come to an end if our governments become responsible (massive reduction of corruption, unemployment and underpayment).

Key words: Migration; dignity, trauma; female migrant; myth of Eldorado

Résumé

La migration reste un sujet d'actualité qui a sans aucun doute des impacts positifs sur les Africains. Toutefois, la mal gouvernance, les difficultés de la vie et l'écart agrandissant entre les riches et les pauvres ont amené beaucoup de jeunes Africains à se lancer dans cette aventure imprévisible. Cet article met en lumière, les expériences amères de la migration dans Douceurs du Bercail (1998) d'Aminata Sow Fall. Il met également l'accent sur la situation critique des femmes migrantes en adoptant la théorie de l'action sociale de Max Weber (1978). Tant que les nations africaines continueront à consommer à « l'étranger » sans révolution agricole agressive et production locale de biens, elles resteront économiquement dépendantes. L'article applaudit cette tentative de l'écrivain de résoudre ce problème à travers Asta le personnage principal, mais reconnaît toutefois que la migration a pris une autre tournure aujourd'hui. La population la plus touchée est la jeunesse éduquée. Nous devons créer des unités de conseil pré-migratoire et post-migratoire dans nos établissements d'enseignement supérieur et elles doivent être dirigées par d'anciens migrants. Nos jeunes doivent comprendre qu'il y a moins dans cet Eldorado chimérique. Tout ce qui brille n'est pas de l'or. Le ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports doit fortement être impliqué afin d'atténuer l'exode de nos jeunes talents vers le Nord, en créant une unité de langue locale en collaboration avec les médias et les producteurs de films pour une publicité agressive du mythe d'Eldorado. La chercheuse maintient que les Africains doivent réclamer leur dignité en résolvant leurs problèmes par eux-mêmes. De plus, cette migration folle que nous connaissons aujourd'hui ne peut prendre fin que si nos gouvernements deviennent responsables (réduction massive de la corruption, du chômage et de la sous-rémunération).

Mots clés : Migration ; dignité, traumatisme ; femme migrante ; mythe d'Eldorado

¹ Enseignante-chercheuse niveau 1, Docteur PhD, littératures d'expression française, University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria, ebelechukwu@unilag.edu.ng. Publication récente :

- a) EBELECHUKWU Eucharia & GLORIA CHIGO CHIDOKWE," (2021), Absurde et Existentialisme: Absurdités" in *Language and Pedagogical Issues in Education*, July 2021, Vitaman Educational Books in Collaboration with the Department of Arts and Social Sciences Education, University of Lagos, pp. 52-58.
- b) EBELECHUKWU Eucharia Iruka (2022), Le voyage comme invitation à la détox à travers « La Maison du berger » in *Akofena*. Revue scientifique des sciences du langage, lettres, langue & communication, Université Houphet Boigny, Côte d'Ivoire, n006v2.2022

Introduction

Post-independence Black writers denounced vices that retrogress the development of Africa and other and socio-economic realities, such as the exodus of young intelligent Africans for greener pastures overseas. The migration of Africans to other parts of the globe, and by whatever means, has become a topical issue. Its negative impacts cannot be de-emphasized. Migrants and refugees are most times viewed as confused beings. Tobie Nathan (2017: 25) describes them in *Les Ames errantes* as wandering souls who are vulnerably exposed to extremism and radicalization of all forms. He states: “Je voudrais rendre compte des destinées en mouvement”. He calls them moving destinies. Indeed, experiences from migration have resulted into repressed emotions, trauma driven inner bursts which have compelled Migrant writers such as Calixte Beyala (1987), Aminata Sow Fall (1998) and Fatou Diome (2003) to spare nothing to denounce the condition and dilemma of their people. Migrant is a word that defines a concept, just like Negritude and Tigritude. Initially coined by Jacques Chévrier in 2003, it is as Christopher Forster (2015) puts it,

“The works of a disparate yet distinct cohort of African authors born after independence, from the 1960s to 1980s. Most often they have lived both in and outside Africa” { } Migrant provides a new and sophisticated way of understanding immigration in the era of global capitalism; it lends a new perspective to the study of African literatures itself by bringing to the fore conditions of Diaspora, movement and migration”. (pp. 90-91).

In *Douceurs du bercail* (1998), Aminata vividly presents the psychosocial experience of the African migrants, having studied and spent a great part of her life in France. With a critical tone, she narrates their ordeal in “Le pays des *Toubabs*”, a term connoting the White man’s country in her Senegalese Wolof language. Her people, a race, is battling for survival in France, whereas all they have to live in abundance in life is within their reach. Aminata seems to cry for the beloved Continent as she juxtaposes the conditions of female and male African migrants. Though her work has been looked into in various perspectives, this paper critically looks into this aspect of her work. Her thoughts on migration are thoroughly examined, with the aim of restoring the dignity and pride of the African. The paper highlights the plight of the migrant, the attendant consequences and some factors that lead to the mental and physical escape of young Africans. It suggests ways of curbing this great menace facing Africa and other underdeveloped countries of the world. While the researcher does not feign to ignore some positive effects of migration, so many questions on whether it is worth swallowing the pill of shame arising from migration abound. Does it really worth all the nightmares and troubles? Must Africans travel to develop? Does Africa not have something to offer to the World? Must Africa always depend on other nations to survive? How can Africans restore their dignity?

1. The Concept of Dignity

The word dignity refers to “the quality of being worthy of esteem or honor”. The only creature that yearns to be honored, esteemed, or appreciated, is Man, a dignified creature superior to other creatures, and endowed with a higher intelligence and creativity. Animals could be intelligent but not as creative as man. Birds for example, build nests and ants, anthills, but they cannot beautify it. Humans also have a linguistic structure. They live in an organized society;

They are according to Blaise Pascal, des “roseaux pensants”, in other words, “thinking reeds”. Pascal (1958: 96) states:

« L’homme n’est qu’un Roseau, le plus faible de la nature, mais un Roseau pensant. Il ne faut pas que l’univers entier s’arme pour l’écraser. Une vapeur, une goutte d’eau suffit pour le tuer. {...}. Toute notre dignité consiste donc en la pensée. C’est de là qu’il faut nous relever et non de l’espace et de la durée, que nous saurions remplir. Travailler donc à bien penser. Voilà le principe de la morale. »

Translated as follows by the Gutenberg Project (1958):

“Man is but a reed, the most feeble thing in nature, but he is a thinking reed. The entire universe need not arm itself to crush him. A vapour, a drop of water suffices to kill him. {...} All our dignity consists, then, in thought. By it, we must elevate ourselves, and not by space and time which we cannot fill. Let us endeavour, then, to think well, this is the principle of morality.”

Our thoughts therefore should be conditioned by principles of morality that are devoid of “vapours” of hate, evil, or killing “drops of water” as Blaise Pascal (1958) rightly pointed out. Of course, Pascal was only trying to project how feeble or demoralized one could be, when assaulted or denigrated. On a normal basis, the only drop or vapour of water that can kill is one that contains a poison. The Metaphor here is that humans are like water and there are poisonous waters that reflect humans whose hearts are filled with the poisonous drops and vapours of wickedness, intolerance, racism and hatred. Aminata Sow Fall (1998) denounces these poisonous drops and vapours that have taken over the heart of Humanity because they assault the dignity of the fellow being. She also decries blinded African souls who fail to realize that they have being undignified, cheated and shamed; Dignity must be reclaimed, oppression rejected, human right defended, as one singer rightly sang, to achieve justice for all. Dignity becomes thus, a reality when we respect the social rights or inclinations of others. This is why Hans Kolstad (2012: 5) avers that {...}. a person’s dignity is understood with respect to certain outer standards {...} certain moral, social or religious values by which we form our judgment of the person in question.

In the same vein, Immanuel Kant (2012: 37) asserts that “rational beings are called persons because their nature already marks them out as an end in itself”. According to him, “Every man is to be respected as an absolute end in him, and it is a crime against the dignity that belongs to him as a human being, to use him as a mere means for some external purpose. Kant (2012: 38) states further, “Act such that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means”. This statement reflects the fundamentals of dignity which according to Oliver Sensen (2011), “is grounded on the notion of inherent, intrinsic values with intrinsic or inherent values that an object has in “itself” or “for its own sake”, as an inner property”. Sensen (2011: 17-20) further points out: “it is not because others have a value that we should respect them, but it is because one should respect them that they have an importance and a dignity, for value (dignity) is not a metaphysical property that exists out there”. In other words, mutual respect is sacrosanct for human coexistence.

Going further, Norman Ajari (2019) and Tanella Boni (2006) in particular, give us a clearer understanding of the word dignity as it extends to culture and integrity of the human body. This

is important for this study because the human body appears to have reacted against dehumanization, dishonor and manhandling. Tanella Boni (2006) who admits the complexity of the term, refers to it as follows:

« Le mot dignitas nous renvoie tantôt au respect que mérite une personne humaine, tantôt au respect dû à soi-même. Parfois, c'est de l'honneur qu'il s'agit. Mais l'honneur, comme le fait remarquer Simone Weil, est « ce besoin vital de l'âme humaine qui n'est pas comblé par le respect, car celui-ci est « identique pour tous et immuable » tandis que « l'honneur a rapport à un être humain considéré non pas simplement comme tel, mais dans son entourage social». « L'honneur a besoin d'être reconnu parce qu'il est lié à quelque haut fait, à une tradition, à une histoire qui est celle d'un individu, d'une famille, d'un groupe. L'honneur est de l'ordre de la grandeur et de la réputation. Il peut être aussi terni et bafoué. Voilà pourquoi, dans de nombreuses cultures, il doit être vengé dans la violence ou dans le sang, par une action d'éclat qui, seule, « lave » la honte qui pourrait l'entacher. » (p.65)

Dignity connotes the respect of the fellow being and of self. It is embedded in honour and linked to the history, tradition or culture of an individual, a family, or group of persons... It has a reputation which must not be tarnished. If brought to disrepute in some cultures, it must be avenged of, even at the price of violence or bloodbath. This is why Boni (2006) points out an integrity aspect of dignity in relation to the human body, which, of course, calls for morality:

« L'intégrité du corps humain, vivant ou mort, sa transformation en objet, en animal ou en chose nous donne l'occasion de penser la dignité humaine ou son manque, mais aussi l'une des manières qu'elle a de conforter sa présence: par la parole. Connaître l'homme, se connaître soi-même, c'est connaître son âme, comme le pense Platon. » (p.66)

Jean Zoungrana (2020) explains Norman Ajari's (2019) concept of dignity as drawn from African philosophy, a notion that refers to a collection of theories from Africans or People from African Descent. They project the Black race have as having one identity, same history (victims of slave trade, colonization and denigration). The decolonial attests to some extent, the dehumanization of the Black race. Lewis R. Gordon (2008,13) defines Africana Philosophy "as an area of philosophical research that addresses the problems faced and raised by the African diaspora". Ajari however, links the concept of dignity to this philosophy after defining it through in the lens of Jean Pic, Emmanuel Kant and Jürgen Habermas who respectively, present the concept of dignity from an angle of conflict between human and inhumane, in the person who has a value, as prescribed by African philosophy and in the nationalisation of dignity through the norms and constitutions of European notions. However, Ajari reveals an opposition between liberal democracy partisans which is an expression of dignity and those who counter it. He opines that liberal democracy cannot destroy the root causes of human sufferings in the society. To a larger extent, Ajari is right because vapours of hatred, violence, racism, injustice seem to be deeply rooted in our societies today. They undignify the human soul, human relations and interactions, as can be found in *Douceurs du Bercaïl*.

1.1. Robbed dignities in *Douceurs du Bercaïl*

The passionate" fever "to travel overseas does not come without pains or gains. Many Africans today, "roam" the deserts and "sail" across oceans in droves for greener pastures. In the course of this adventure, some are blown into the sea by high seawaves and wicked storms. As they "swim" for survival, they end their journey in the belly of the ocean, an unfortunate situation

Fatou Diome describes in *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique* (2003). Salie, the main character, her half-brother Madické and others, reveal the chimerical concept of Eldorado in Diome's master piece. Salie who represents the writer herself, lives in France while Madické lives in Niodor, their native land, besides the Atlantic coast. Like his peers, Madické dreams of traveling to France, a land of all possibilities, full of wealth, streets possibly made of gold, where he can become a footballer like those foreign players he admires at the tele-centre in Niodor. Diome presents a mix of adventure, dilemma, illusions, question of identity, a transcultural phenomenon, a fusion of cultures and its psychological, moral and economic impacts, as well as a mental underdevelopment in the sense that majority of the characters in her book refuse to believe that everybody is not rich in France, in spite of Ndetare's counsels: "La France, ce n'est pas le paradis. Ne vous laissez pas prendre dans les filets de l'émigration" (p. 157). Consequently, they are finally « caught by the wicked net of migration », their Dreams finally shattered and buried in the ocean. They finally rob themselves of their dignities, or should one say nature robbed them of their dignities? The truth is that some of them were forced to embark on this sinister journey; however, a choice was made either for them or by them and someone should be held responsible for the actions. Asta, main character of our text, was very sensitive about this. She chose not to swallow the pill of shame, but decided to define her existence.

Asta's tale is, of course, different from others, owing to the fact that she is a migrant with legitimate documents. As a Senegalese professional drafted to represent her company in a World Economic Forum, she experienced a nauseating treatment at a Caucasian airport. A female custom officer subjected her to a humiliating search by commanding her to remove her suit, shoes and inner wears; Hands in gloves, the officer swept her body in a downward movement, maneuvering her brassiere to her knees, and later on, in an upward movement around her skirt. The climax of this disgusting search was when a finger from a stubborn hand hit her navel and tried to gain access to a tightly closed arena:

« Elle lui balait tous les parties du corps en passant sous le soutien-gorge, descendant jusqu'aux genoux, remontant sous la jupe. Ce qui a fait Asta frissonner de dégoût, un ongle bute contre son nombril... Asta réalise qu'une main insolente bifurque et cherche à forcer un passage ferme, c'est alors qu'elle s'écria jamais! » (p.27)

Asta promptly reacted in disgust by tightening her fist around the officer's neck. She refused to be undignified. Like Sartrean existentialists, Asta, demonstrated her freedom and choice to decide on her fate. She affirmed a liberty and existence that considers the presence of others, for in her story, lies another story that brings to the fore, the unending debate on African migration. Recall that Asta was undignified by the disgusting and dehumanizing touch of the Caucasian custom officer. Her cultural instincts and self-value, as well as other factors were the catalysts of her violent reaction. Aminata Sow Fall's work is also very rich in linguistics projections, an adequate mastery of the French and Wolof languages. This suggests in a way, the main thrust of her thought which is centered on a conciliation of both identities, however, without injury to one and in every aspect. According to Michieletto (2015),

“Elle intègre dans son écriture les genres oraux africains et le roman, le Wolof et le français, et souhaite le même processus conciliateur avec les valeurs de la culture ancestrales et celles qui ont atteint l'Afrique pendant et après la colonisation » (p.208)

Consequently, the paper does not only portray Asta's experience, but the various forms of humiliations Africans are subjected to, in the name of Migration. Something has definitely gone wrong. And this, we attempt to present as we move further in this write-up.

1.2. "The milk and honey" in Africa gone "sour"?

Our concept of milk and honey is drawn from *The Holy Bible* (2014). According to Deuteronomy 26: 9: "And he has brought us to this place and has given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey." The phrase is a metaphor of a fertile land with human and natural resources and abundance of wealth. This represents the real image of Africa, a mosaic of people with cultural diversities and natural resources. Without exaggeration, the milk and honey in Africa is being sapped and Africa is becoming a moving continent. One would have thought the outcry against colonization and the subsequent decolonization of Africa would restore her ever-flowing milk and honey. This is far from being real!

The "milk and honey" in Africa has gone "sour". It has a damaging effect on the teeth. It has become acidic through corruption, bad governance, money laundering, mismanagement of public funds, medical tourism, poverty, unemployment, neocolonialism, overpopulation and many more. These ills have created more dreadful problems like cyber-crimes, terrorism, a higher rate of prostitution, religious wars, ethnicity, kidnapping, human organ harvesting and a very tense and hostile environment to live in. Today, the miracle word for Nigerian youths is "Jaapa", a slang derived from the Yoruba language denoting "to escape, to run swiftly or to remove yourself from a situation", and to where? Overseas because the country is no longer promising. This is the situation of an average African. He dreams of crossing to the other part of the world for greener pastures, for better living conditions. But most times, this dream becomes a nightmare.

1.3. The Aborted dreams of the African migrant: A look at Yakham in *Douceurs du bercail*

« *Je suis venu pour tenter ma chance, après avoir cartouché à la fac de médecine en 1ère année.* » (p. 116) This is Yakham, a 29 years old gifted and intelligent young man, the hope of his parents, saying, he went overseas to try his luck, after dropping out from the faculty of medicine in his first year. Before traveling, Yakham indulged himself into dubious acts, such as traveling papers falsification and fake certificate grades. This reminds us of the ridicule most certificates from underdeveloped nations are subjected to overseas. Just like their bearers, they are considered worthless and scrutinized for acceptability, in systems and social integration.

Aminata is pointing out a problem of all times, the mirage and pains that surround these unfortunate departures of Africans, as most times, valuables are sold to afford air tickets. Yakham's poor mother became a debtor, erroneously believing that all will be well as soon as her son gets "there". She left as collateral for the money lent to her, the jewelry she inherited from her ancestry:

« On a remis trois bijoux que sa mère a hérités de son arrière-grand- mère au monsieur qui s'occupe de son voyage, au démarcheur et Daba sa mère avait signé une reconnaissance de dette avec des traits mensuelles pour le billet d'avion. » (p.124-125)

The risks and dangers associated with the “*Jaapa*” movement are clearly visible in Salvador Calvo’s film *Adú* (2020) where characters defy all odds to travel overseas. In the film, one of the Caucasian actor’s states: “You know, the problem of Africa, Mateo, they all leave: Teachers, Politicians, and Nurses; and if they all leave who the fuck is gonna fix things?” My grand dad always said if France had put up a fence in the Pyrenees (mountain in France) Franco wouldn’t have died in his bed. When the Africans see the fence, they think it says, you are not welcome. This is a forbidden territory for you. But do you know what the fence really means? And what that fence really says? SOLVE YOUR PROBLEMS”

Many Black folks today are aware that all is not rosy elsewhere. Unfortunately, they still prefer to leave Africa and face what they call a milder nightmare. According to them, “there is nothing in Africa”:

« Nous reviendrons...Nous recommencerons...Il n’y a plus rien au pays, on ne peut rien y faire. La quête du matériel et le prix à y mettre: bosser dur! Bien bosser à se casser les os et acheter de belles choses qu’il y a là-bas. Les habits, les nourritures, économiser de l’argent, en envoyer aux parents, attraper la tuberculose même à cause du froid » (p.19)

Returning to these places after deportation is a kind of suicide because for some like Donald Trump, former president of the United States of America, their influx constituted a nuisance and danger to the society. Trump burst out:

“{.....} We are talking about security. We are not talking about religion. Our country is out of control. They’re going, tens of thousands of people having cell phones with ISIS flags on them? ... They’re not coming to this country. And if I’m president and if Obama has brought some to this country, they are leaving. They’re going. They’re gone. What they are doing, they are having a baby. And then all of a sudden, nobody knows...the baby is here.” (Siegel: 2019)

They are the rejected and stigmatized, even the women and children among them.

1.4. The image and fate of the female migrant

I decided to look into the fate of the female migrant. This is because they are the most vulnerable in every form of social oppression, wars or persecution. From Alain Mabanckou who denounces the tribulations of the black race in Paris in *Bleu-Blanc-Rouge* (1998) to Female writers like Fatou Diome, Calixte Beyala and Aminata Sow Fall, the woman, who is generally considered a weaker sex, bears the brunt of calamities that befall society. In her book titled *C’est le soleil qui m’a brûlée*, Beyala presents the condition of a female migrant Ateba, a prostitute humiliated by her client and in *Petit Prince de Belleville*, she narrates the story of Abdou Traoré, a frustrated and unemployed migrant, with many wives who no longer have regards for him and the African culture, probably because of the new environment they live in. The bloated population of migrants and their living conditions is a gory tale as their hosts become violent and unreceptive by the day, even when some are allowed to stay in diplomatic arrangements. Former president of France, Jacques Chirac (1991) once said:

« Notre problème, ce n’est pas les étrangers, c’est qu’il y a overdose. {.....} Il est certain que d’avoir des Espagnols, des Polonais et des Portugais travaillant chez nous, ça pose moins de problèmes que d’avoir des musulmans et Noirs.... Comment voulez-vous que le travailleur français qui travaille avec sa femme et qui, ensemble gagnent environ 15000 Francs, et qui voit sur le palier à côté de son

HLM, entassée, une famille avec un père de famille, trois ou quatre épouses et une vingtaine de oses, et qui gagne 50000 francs de prestations sociales. Sans naturellement travailler! Si vous ajoutez à cela, le bruit et l'odeur, eh bien le travailleur français sur le palier devient fou. Et il faut le comprendre. Si vous y étiez, vous auriez la même réaction. Et ce n'est pas être raciste que de dire cela. Nous n'avons plus les moyens d'honorer le regroupement familial. »

The image of the immigrant woman is vividly revealed in Chirac's outburst. It goes beyond her femininity and captures her motherly instinct and her position as a home and nation builder. She is inundated in a polygamy without space, full of odours that irritate their host, with kids swarming the European streets and considered dangerous species. In these conditions, the woman throws into the wind, the culture of African fidelity and submission to the husband, and embarks on a forced prostitution to survive and make her large family also survive. Her host who believes they exploit the finances of the French government with their large and poorly maintained families, and that the benefits they receive are to the detriment of the French citizens, gets more furious towards them because "they cannot house all the misery of the world», says Michel Orchard (1989).

2. Asta's outburst and possible interpretations

As revealed in our text of study. Asta is a divorcee, a mother, a worker, a builder and in particular, a female migrant. For some reasons unknown to us, or yet to be verified, she decided to leave behind, her youngest child and son, Fara Diop, nicknamed Paapi, in Africa, but sent her two daughters, Mariam and Sira overseas to live and study, perhaps for some kind of emancipation or enlightenment. Paapi remained a trinity that filled the vacuum of father, son and a husband who will respect the African culture and the institution of marriage, for it is assumed that male migrants neglect the sanctity of marriage. On the other hand, the female migrant seems to be full of resentment and aggression. Asta is one of such. As a result, the social action theory of Max Weber will be adopted to unveil possible causes of her aggression.

2.1. The Max Weber social action theory as instrument of interpretation of Asta's reactions

Social action theory opines that natural sciences cannot really define the human behaviour but various socio-economical interactions and their impacts on human endeavours. The theory asserts that Natural sciences are not quite appropriate to study humans because they deal with matter. To understand and explain the behaviour of matter, it is sufficient to observe the outside. Atoms and molecules do not have consciousness: they do not have meaning or purpose that direct their behaviour. Matter simply reacts unconsciously to external stimuli. It "behaves", as they say, in scientific language. As a result, a natural scientist observes, measures and imposes an external logic on that behaviour to explain it. But humans have consciousness, thoughts, meanings, intentions, and an awareness of being. According to **Haralambos & Holborn** (2013:16), Weber (1978) opines that sociological explanations of action should begin by observing and interpreting the subjective "states of mind" of people, as suggested by the theory of interactionalism, and with particular emphasis on the process of interaction. Where positivists emphasize facts and cause and effect relationships, interactionists emphasize insight and understanding. Since it is not possible to get inside the heads of actors, the discovery of meaning must be based on interpretation and intuition. For this reason, objective measurement

is not possible and exactitude of natural sciences cannot be duplicated. Since meanings are constantly negotiated in ongoing interaction processes, it is not possible to establish simple cause-effect relationships, though some sociologists argue that the sociology is limited to an interpretation of social action.

In relation to the theory therefore, we will look into Asta's world and the decisions she makes. Our concept is that decisions are manifested in reactions. The brain processes them and other body organs respond accordingly. The following are Asta's decisions:

- She decided to get married
- She decided to get a divorce
- She decided to send her female children overseas
- She decides to leave her son in her ancestral home
- She almost strangled a white officer who conducted a humiliating search on her

These decisions of hers have possible interpretations and reactions:

- Asta may have been forced to get married or may have been attracted to her husband's wealth, handsomeness or fame.
- Asta could have been victim of domestic violence and, of course, she was. She was married to the short ugly Senegalese Diouldé who plays football abroad, son of a vegetable seller in the local market of Senegal, who beats her in public and at the slightest provocation, avoids their home and forbids her from seeing her friends
- Asta may have discovered that the girl child should not be used as a baby machine, she must be educated. Recall that Asta is a graduate of sociology and journalism.
- As indicated in the novel, Asta restrained her son from traveling abroad because of the gruesome death of Banda, a young man she met in South Africa. In his state of loneliness and despair, Banda had solicited her help. He had wanted her convey a message to his mother, but was shot few months later by a militia tracking illegal gold diggers. This is also the plight of many foreigners in South Africa. Asta's deportation could also have discouraged Paapi who decided to stay back and study economics in Africa.
- Asta may also have discovered that it is good for a male African to stay behind and continue to perpetuate the ancestral genealogy to uphold our cultural heritage. She promotes the symbol of the male child in Africa.
- It may as well be for fear of psychological trauma and for fear of losing her son's love the way she lost that of her husband while staying together overseas, or for fear of being acculturated.
- Asta's reaction against the officer, who was doing her work, could be the reflection, the evidence or picture of her state of mind. She could have developed some aggression because of her condition as a divorcee, of sole parenting individuals, and as a former punch bag of her husband. Consequently, at the slightest provocation, she reacts aggressively. This particular scene was, **however**, necessary for her to discover the dungeon called "le dépôt". Here, her career as a sociologist and journalist took a great turn as she discovered the plight of despised souls. This, she presents to the world, through the ink of Aminata Sow Fall (1998).

2.2. “Le Depot”: Meeting point for shattered dreams

Generally, a depot is a place for the storage of large quantities of equipment, food or goods. Contextually, it is the dumping site for migrants, the illegal ones in particular. One begins to wonder why young talented Africans with promising future like Yakham leave the shores of Africa in droves and end up being dumped in dungeons. According to Asta, “la crise mondiale de l’économie a fait des Noirs des robots de l’argent qui est le roi en notre siècle” (p. 87). Money, of course, is the king of our century as she rightly points out here; it succeeded in blinding and transforming the Black race into money robots who no longer care about the harsh conditions meted out on them. Yakham, Asta, Dianor, Codé and many more got themselves locked up in “le Dépôt”, an overpopulated dungeon, a cave-like enclave situated at the Caucasian airport, and a prison for three major races: Blacks, Mulattos and Arabs, all wretched of the Earth, as illustrated by Franz Fanon (1961), with pathetic narratives. They were billed for deportation.

2.3. The discovery of Codé in Le dépôt and its Significance

One of the voices that reproaches the condition of the depotians is Codé. She says :

« Les Blancs nous chassent comme des malpropres alors qu’on les reçoit en Afrique, ils se sentent à l’aise, au Sénégal, nous n’avons jamais expulsé personne même pas pour rendre leur monnaie aux autres. Jamais nous n’avons traité l’étranger comme un troupeau pour l’abattoir. C’est honteux... Nous n’avons rien inventé...» (p. 16)

Of course, Blacks still worship Whites in Africa. They treat them majestically. Unfortunately, this gesture is not always reciprocated in the White man’s country. The deplorable condition in which migrants are packed, waiting to be deported in plane without concrete destinations and flight programmes is heartbreaking. For me, it is a reflection of the African government, one without flight plans and destination. To the Africans, the European seems to say:” You want independence, you got it, stay home with your hunger and your diseases” (p. 48).

In *quartier de la gare*, the overcrowded migrants constitute a nuisance in the space. They live in a ruined, unhygienic, indecent, noisy and abandoned hotel building, a place for all kinds of fleshy deeds, promiscuity, dances, and African dishes. They could be whisked out of the building in the middle of the night in a raid for the depot and thereafter, shamelessly parked in a chartered plane for repatriation to their homelands. This was the fate of the 227 clandestine immigrants parked together in a plane, in sultry conditions that awaken the sexualities of their male counterparts, as well as their keepers, the males raping the females; All of them traumatized, confronted by racism, crisis of identity and unhappy to return to an arena of bad governance and sufferings.

2.4. Africa, a Continent full of guilt

The problems of Africa are so deeply rooted that I consider not to expatiate on it any further because it is another topic entirely. I would rather state it in a few sentences. I do not consider the West as the major enemy of the Black race, just as opined by Aminata Sow Fall. We are our problem. Post-independence Africa is full of bad, corrupt and greedy leaders. Bad Africa could be compared to beautiful houses on piles of refuse and people are indifferent about it.

Murder, theft, cybercrimes, terrorism, as well as abductions, and allied problems such as school drop outs, illiteracy and the strong desire to travel out for greener pastures are on the rise. For Aminata, Africans have failed Africans. Africans have shamed Africa, the bed rock of humanity. Aminata also wants the Whiteman to ponder on his role in the whole situation. With a white mouth (through Anne, a white lady in the novel), she implicates the Caucasian in the whole issue, by rejecting all prejudices accorded to the black folk. Anne's father was a colonial administrator. She had spent 10 years in Africa and her symbolic friendship with Asta reveals a great message.

2.5. The Symbolic Friendship of Asta and Anne as a Message for Fraternity and Existence

Asta and Anne had met by chance. Both ladies had something in common: their four-letter names begin with the letter "A", they were from two different races and they met each other in a common maternity ward of a public hospital. The venue of their meeting is a symbol of the world as a public place open to all, regardless of one's race. This implies that all are born into the world, and accepted by the world. It is Humans that create problems in the world. Both women had just given birth to premature babies. Anne's baby was placed in an incubator and Asta's in a warming cradle. Incubator and warming cradle play the same role and indicate that no race is beyond misfortune. The misfortune may come in different manners. Their friendship began here. Anne discovered African solidarity through Asta and her mother who had once been to Africa. Kindness, hospitality, the beauty of cities and of women, the duty to make the foreigner feel at ease, sharing, mutual aid, solidarity even among poor people are what actually connotes the African soul.

However, Anne sees in this African solidarity, a parasitic behaviour and a dependency mentality that kills autonomy, effort and creativity. According to Anne, if Africa continues to depend on others (Europe), she will not make it. She has to take up her responsibilities, wake up from her sleep, work and invent and not consume only. Poverty has become a norm to many Africans who do not seem to worry about it:

« Pieds nus, emmitouflés de pagnes pour ne pas être reconnus, on dépose derrière des palissades, juste devant la porte: habits, céréales, œufs, viandes, poissons, quelques pièces ou billet de banque. Et la vie continue sans gloire pour les uns, sans honte pour les autres. la fierté n'était pas l'apanage des riches, la pauvreté n'était pas considérée comme une tare » (p.155)

The description above is a vivid presentation of the lifestyle of many in Northern Nigeria, where poor Almajiris are seen wandering about in rags, barefooted, hungry, beggarly looking, and depending on the elite who give them crumbs for survival and consider it their fate. Today, they have become a thorn in the flesh of not only their people, but the nation in general.

To ease Anne's worries, Asta presents two Africa to her: a new Africa, full of hope, which refuses to sink, which rejects parasitism, and another real one, resigned and shown on television, starving, chaotic and at war. The latter, according to Aminata, is lost in great weddings and funerals celebrations. The more misery there is, the more one celebrates in Africa. The money that could have spent for capital developments is wasted on frivolities, such as pilgrimages to holy lands, celebrations of falsehoods and many more (Wouri's sister for example had to conceal her son's failure in examination by organizing a big party for him because her

neighbour's child succeeded in his examination). In such societies, corruption is endemic. In connection to this, Yakham says:

« A quoi bon travailler dur dans l'honnêteté et l'abnégation si c'est pour récolter tant de malheurs, être à la merci des types sans foi qui volent jusqu'à notre avenir et nous poussent à la ruine » (p.117).

Aminata is a writer of all times. She does not only condemn the social ills of her epoch but those of today as well. She also has some reservations about modern technology.

« J'adore mon siècle, le progrès et le confort qu'ils me procurent. L'ordinateur l'internet et le multimédia me fascinent, mais il m'arrive de me demander avec une certaine angoisse, je dois dire jusqu'où nous irons avec ces merveilles. J'ai peur qu'elles nous asservissent ou dénaturent » (P.139)

« Binding wood to wood » to reduce enslavement and as advised by La Grande royale in Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure* (1961) becomes necessary.

3. The Asta Project as a positive risk against African Migration

Not everything works as conceived by majority of Africans in Europe. There are lots of uncertainties. Yakham worked hard to survive by engaging himself into many undignified jobs in the areas of building, rubbish removal, handling in markets, washing of corpses because of the lack of authentic papers. He represents the unhappy migrant.

The European, on the other hand, often get suicidal, in spite of his better living conditions. Aminata denounces this absurdity of life through Anne's brother who wasted his life for losing his job, his wife and two children. This portrays the nothingness of life. How can one explain this paradox? A world where physical and moral misery spreads its wounds in the very belly of the people who have in abundance, who live in a land full of milk and honey?

Far from lamenting, Asta embarked on an honourable project, worthy first of herself and then of Africa. She develops ten hectares of almost free land in Bahka, with a loan of 10 million she received from three organisations to finance her project (digging of a canal near the river for irrigation, buying of land for production). She deployed her knowledge of sociology in the project, employed most of the returnees and benefited from the moral support of her people. Asta reminds us of Voltaire (1759): «le travail éloigne de nous trois grands maux: l'ennui, le vice et le besoin s». A resourceful and beneficial work is a treasure.

On the acquired land, Asta and others cultivated medicinal plants. They planted the « guewê », an insignificant herb considered as a divine gift, with large black and brown buds forming sprays at the root, with an odour that is well known for making incense jars, and which is very profitable, because within a few months Asta and Company had sold enough guewê to buy other tools and pay some workers to dig a canal. She added some export crops such as cotton, groundnuts, maize, and their foreign species from Anne. They transformed those items into finished products at the same location. Poultry, cotton production, dyeing, pottery, selling of good herbs, all the products labelled "DOUCEURS DU BERCAIL"

The plants from Anne are very symbolic. They connote a rendez-vous with global solidarity, sincere cooperation with Africa, an invitation to the development of Africa by Africans in the

Diaspora, the contribution of the West to Africa, the unconscious and natural conciliation of cultures because we need each other.

For the shamefully deported, these activities are symbols of a reclaimed personality and dignity, a goal that has been achieved with much effort and some pains. This is because Dianor, the driver of *Asta and company* lost his sight in the rice plantation as a result of a viper venom. Nevertheless, the viper was killed. He victoriously accepted his fate by saying: « la vraie cécité est celle qui frappe l'Esprit et le cœur. Je n'ai plus des yeux, mais j'ai ma tête, mes membres, des oreilles pour entendre les bruits du monde et surtout j'ai une voix et un cœur ». In other words, true blindness is that which strikes the Spirit and the heart. I no longer have eyes, but I have my head, my limbs, ears to hear the sounds of the world and above all, I have a voice and a heart

Truly, Anne was exceptionally anti-racist. However, her symbolic death could be compared to a racial plant buried in the ground to die (death of racism) and germinate afterwards into a plant of universal fraternity. The presence of Anne's husband presence during the first festival of harvest in Nataangué portrays this fraternity; and by this, Aminata is calling on other races to shun racism and allow the fire of solidarity to keep blazing. She says: "In spite of everything, I will continue to preach. Let us love our land, we will water it with our sweat and dig it with all our strength, with courage. The light of our hope will guide us, we will harvest and build. Only then will we be able to travel the roads of heaven, earth and water without being cast out as outcasts. We will no longer be travelers without luggage. Our calloused hands will meet others in warm handshakes of respect and shared dignity. (p. 88)).

She advises the female folks to get married but not without carving a niche for themselves. The migrant strives to work for the development of his fatherland. He who does not dream of the Happiness of his homeland is a sinner. The migrant must be hopeful like the refugees René Philoctète (1989) is describing below:

« Les réfugiés mesurent du regard leur terre, voudraient la baigner du parfum d'eau, d'écorce, de feuilles auxquels ils ajouteraient du sel. Pour la force, la pureté. Ils comptent des toits qui poussent. Une école pour la liberté, un hôpital pour la compréhension, des syndicats pour le travail, une église pour l'amour. Et savent qu'ils ont un monde à construire »

Aminata Sow Fall declares that love, mutual respect and reason will save humanity from its nightmares and defy hatred, massacre and genocide. She urges us to be fiercely determined never to give in to dismay, and never to mirror ourselves in the aseptic comfort of resignation or indifference. We must be tolerant because all men are born equal; we must say no to racism, yes to love beyond races and beliefs. We must build and it is time to build Africa with strong institutions, strong legal frames and infrastructures that will prevent our people from being undignified and despised like Asta, or being wasted in the belly of the Atlantic.

Hunger must, first of all, be dealt with, through an agricultural revolution, as can be found in our text of study. This is a reality. However, agriculture must involve mechanization to attract the teeming youth that leave the shores of Africa for greener pastures. They should be sincerely engaged through subventions from the African States to promote Food sufficiency, Export and Production. Pre-migration and post-migration counselling units should be created in our

tertiary institutions and they must be handled by former Migrants. In addition, the ministry of youth and sports should be highly involved in mitigating this exodus of our talented youth to the North by creating a local language unit in collaboration with the media and film producers for an aggressive publicity of the myth of Eldorado. Africans should reclaim their dignity by solving their problems by themselves. Indeed, the crazy Migration we experience today can only end if our Governments stop politicizing and paying lip services on this issue. Governments should be more responsible by engaging in massive reduction of poverty, unemployment and underpayment to prevent the growing number of young escapees.

Conclusion

Through fiction, the paper presented the plight of migrants and factors that lead to the mental and physical escape of young Africans. Emphasis was laid on the plight of the female migrant who is a victim of rape, emotional and domestic violence, and imbalance by her role of a mother. The paper suggested ways of curbing this great menace facing Africa and other underdeveloped countries of the world. While the researcher did not feign to ignore some positive effects of migration, because there is no denying that life in Europe has its own advantages, the main objective was to present the dehumanizing conditions of teaming youths who continue to leave Africa and thereby making this land of treasure, an « orphaned » entity « orphaned » by the foolishness of her people ; For how do we explain a the following absurdity that sees for example, a “yam producer paying for the yam he produced to be boiled and resold to him for a higher price?” This is the sad story! There is brain drain of everything in Africa! We must not continue to give “our yams to be boiled for us when we have all it take to boil them, eat and enjoy them!” Even the boiler is tired of our stupidity”. This paper is therefore a clarion call for African leaders to wake up and explore our resources for the benefit of the populace. All we must consume from the West is expertise and exchange of ideas and not commodities. If we must, it should be those we cannot produce in our region. We must also manufacture, and by this, restore the dignity of the Black race. As Pascal (1958) rightly stated. Man is a thinking reed. All human races are therefore thinking reeds but the African race seems not to think well. “*Yalla yalla bey Sa toll*” (The hands that pray should also act) says Aminata Sow Fall.

References

- AJARI, Norman (2019). *La Dignité ou la mort. Éthique et politique de la race*, Paris: La Découverte, coll. Les Empêcheurs de penser en rond
- BEYALA, Calixte (1987). *C'est le soleil qui m'a brûlée*, Paris: Stock.
- BEYALA, Calixte (1992). *Petit prince de Belleville*, Paris: Albin Michel
- BONI, Tanella. La dignité de la personne humaine. Paris: PUF, 2006/3 no. 215. P.67-7
- CHEIK, Hamidou Kane (1961). *L'Aventure ambiguë*, Paris : Présence africaine.
- CHEVRIER, Jacques. “Afrique(s)-sur-Seine: autour de la notion de migritude dans Notre Librairie, nos 155-156, 2004. 96-100.
- CHIRAC, Jacques, Speech given during the “Rassemblement pour la République”, Orléans, 21/06/ 1991, *Le Monde*
- DIOME, Fatou (2003). *Le Ventre de l'Atlantique*, Paris : Anne Carrière.
- FANON, Frantz (1961). *Les Damnés de la terre*. Paris: Maspéro.
- FOSTER, C. I. (2015). Home to Hargeisa: Migritude, Pan-Africanism, and the Politics of Movement from *Banjo to Black Mamba Boy*. *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*, 38(2). <http://dx.doi.org/10.5070/F7382025975> Retrieved from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0hw1z4xm>,
- GORDON. R. Lewis (2008). *Introduction to Africana Philosophy*: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Cinétismes (varia), Vol.1 – n°2, février 2023

CINETISMES, Douala, Cameroun

BP: 3132, FLSH, FREF, ESSEC, Université de Douala, Cameroun

<https://www.revue-cinetismes.com/>

ISSN-L 2791-2973 // E-ISSN 2791-2981

- HABERMAS, Jürgen (1997). *Droit et Démocratie, entre faits et normes*, Paris: Gallimard
- HARALAMBOS & HOLBORN (2013). *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*. 8th Edition. London: HarperCollins, p. 16
- THE HOLY BIBLE. *King James Version*. (2014). Lagos: The Bible Society of Nigeria, p. 282
- KANT, Immanuel (2012). *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, May Gregor Translation, UK: The Press Syndicate of University of Cambridge, p.p.37-38
- KANT, Immanuel (1785,2012). *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, Jazzybee Verlag
- KOLSTAD, Hans "Human Dignity as Key to confront the future" in *Likeverd*, Oslo, Norway. 27-30 August 2012.
- MABANCKOU, Alain (1998). *Bleu-Blanc-Rouge*. Paris: Présence africaine.
- MICHIELETTA, Anna (2015) «Aminata Sow Fall: itinéraire d'une pionnière». Textes réunis et présentés par Alioune Diaw et Cheikh M.S. Diop. *Interculturel Francophonies,II*, Tolomeo
- PASCAL, Blaise (1958). *Les Pensées*, Gutenberg Project (EBOOK 18269) EN Introduction by T.S. Eliott (New York: E.P. Dutton). Léon Brunschwig Trans. Section VI, The Philosophers, p. 96
- PIC, Jean de la Mirandole, *De la dignité de l'homme* (1486), *Discours de la dignité de l'homme* (1486), in *Œuvres philosophiques*, éd. et trad. Olivier Boulnois, Giuseppe Tognon, Paris, PUF, coll. "Épiméthée", 1993, éd. bilingue latin-français
- PHILOCTETE, René (2020). *Le Peuple des terres mêlées*, Port au prince: Deschamps.
- ROCHARD, Michel, Interview sur TF1 "Sept sur Sept" le 03 décembre ,1989
- SIEGEL, J. Larry (2019). *Criminology: The Core*. 7th Edition, University of Massachusset, Lowell
- SENSE, Oliver (2011). *Kant on Dignity*, vol. 166 in the Series Kanstudien Ergänzungshefte, Der Gruyter Verlag, Berlin, Boston pp. 17-20
- SOW Fall, Aminata (1998). *Douceurs du bercail*. Abidjan: N.E.I
- TOBIE, Nathan (2017). *Les Âmes errantes*, Paris: Iconoclaste.
- TAYLOR, Paul. .C; »Contemporary Africana Philosophy' The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Fall 2021 Edition.Edward N. Zalta(ed). URL=" https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2021/entries/africvana contemporary
- VOLTAIRE (1759, 1983). *Candide ou L'optimisme. La princesse de Babylone et autres contes*. Paris: Librairie générale française, p.124
- WEBER, Max (1978). *Economy and Society*. Oakland: University of California Press
- WEIL, Simone (1949) *L'enracinement, prélude à une déclaration des devoirs envers l'être humain*, Paris, Gallimard 1949, coll. Folio essais.
- ZOUNGRANA, Jean (2020) « Norman AJARI, *La Dignité ou la mort. Éthique et politique de la race* », *Questions de communication* [consulté le 10 janvier 2023. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/questionsdecommunication/22683>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/questionsdecommunication.22683>

Filmography

ADÙ, 2020 *Film on African Immigration; Social Issues Drama*, Spain. Directed by Salvador Calvo; Written by Alejandro Hernandez.

Webography

Merriam-Webster <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dignity>

Francetvinfo.fr/culture/livres/rentrée-littéraire-les-ames-errantes-5-questions-a-tobie-nathan_3357361.html

<https://www.gallimard.fr/Catalogue/GALLIMARD/Folio-Sagesse/L-homme-es-un-roseau>

<https://www.collinsdictionary.com>

<https://doi.org/10.1515/97833110267167.VII>

<http://www.cambridge.org>

<https://www.netflix.com/Adù>