International Journal of Arts and Social Science www.ijassjournal.com
ISSN: 2581-7922,
Volume 5 Issue 1, January 2022

Home, Place and Displacement in Fatou Diome's *The Belly of the Atlantic* (2006)

Saliou DIONE
African and Postcolonial Studies
Cheikh Anta Diop University, Dakar (Senegal)

Bakaye TOGOLA
African and Postcolonial Studies
Cheikh Anta Diop University, Dakar (Senegal)

ABSTRACT: *This article examines the crucial question of displacement in Fatou Diome's The Belly of the Atlantic (2006). It highlights the motivations of Senegalese youths' migration to the West and the subsequent problems they face both in their host and origin countries. It also uncovers the unrewarding reality and myth of the West, viewed as the 'Eldorado' and 'the promise land' by many candidates as it analyzes the interconnectedness between home, space/place, and displacement. Resting on postcolonialism, Homi Bhabha's conception of homeliness and unhomeliness, relational space paradigm, and Diome's sociological approach and rhetorical strategies, the paper brings to light the problematics raised by hereness and thereness, space liminality, and identity in the mind of the migrants as they strive to find balance between happiness and suffering, success and failure, and self, other, and self-other.*

Key words: migration, place/space, Africa, Europe, identity.

I. Introduction

Migration is the movement of people from one place to another for a limited period or to live there definitely. In its broadest meaning, it is the "*mobility of people in search of subsistence food, better shelter and greater security*" (Aderanti, 1995: 89). Most people migrate because their environment does not offer them what they need, that is to say better human conditions whether in the economic, political, and socio-cultural levels. This was the reason why prior to slavery, many Africans had sometimes to travel distances to seek for food, shelters, and security (Aderanti, 1995: 89) due to natural disasters such as earthquakes, hunger, drought, flood, conflicts, and epidemic diseases. That movement of population was deepened by foreign intervention and colonization (Gebresellasie, 1993: 2). Therefore, people left their places in fear of being 'enslaved' or being submitted to the brutality of the colonial forces. As part of the politics of colonial settlement, others were forced to settle in some other places to serve the vested interest of the colonizers. Nowadays, most of the migrants who travel to the Western countries are from the countries of the Global South, particularly from Africa. They mainly flee their countries for diverse reasons that are economic poverty, political persecution, ethnoreligious conflicts for a 'shelter' in Europe. To escape those scourges, many of them hazard their lives to cross the Atlantic Ocean to look for 'greener pastures.' Young Senegalese are cases in point in this migratory flow to the West. This is what has influenced third-generation Senegalese female writer Fatou Diome to write *The Belly of the Atlantic* (Dione, 2006).

In fact, the movement of people has produced today what has come to be known as 'migrant literature' which reflects and tells the stories about the migrants or written by the migrants themselves. It mainly focuses on the social contexts in the migrants' country of origin which prompt them to leave, on the experience of migration

itself, on the mixed reception which they may receive in the host country, on experiences of racism, rootlessness, otherness, bilingualism or multilingualism, quest for identity(ies) that can stem from displacement and cultural diversity. Displacement, as a key concept in postcolonial theory, applies to the migrant situations of Diome's characters, whose physical displacement and sense of being and becoming socially or culturally 'out of place,' has an increasingly significant role in relation to some basic social foundations such as politics, economics, geography, and culture.

The Senegalese author's migratory experiences raise and bring to the fore the questions of home, place, and displacement as the migrants find themselves torn between two worlds. Diome's authored-text explores the issue of belonging and unbelonging, becoming and unbecoming with some central factors of flexibility encompassing positionality, intertextuality, as literary tools, to account for the representations of the *self*, the *other*, and the *self-other*, of the local and global socio-cultural, political, economic, and religious realities. It is through the voice of Salie, the protagonist-immigrant with multifaceted identities that Diome delves into the underbelly of the migrants' experiences in the Western world to account for their split subjectivities, transnational linguistic hybridity, the challenging movements posed by local and global spaces and places as characters that use self-reflectivity in their quest for home and as individuals who find themselves in situations of ambivalence. To this end, the article analyzes the aesthetic space and social space connectedness between *hereness* and *thereness*, and space discursive liminality as an eye-opener scope for strategic manoeuvre and negotiation.

II. Narrating the Aesthetic Space and Social Space Connectedness: Between *Hereness* and *Thereness*

Migration has been a topical issue for both poor and rich countries over the past few years. It is considered to be a scourge by the two sides of the Atlantic, with Europe as the favorite destination and Africa the point of departure. Most of the candidates have found themselves unemployed in their home countries, which accounts for their situation of hopelessness that leads them up to conceptualizing their displacement desire into a 'matter-of-death-or-life' pattern. Therefore, many of them are ready to hazard their lives to cross the Atlantic Ocean and get into Europe. Fatou Diome, in *The Belly of The Atlantic* (2006), informs the reader about this new life conception that brings together three different interconnected elements that are home, space/place, and displacement. They put into play the country of origin, the host country or country of destination, the boat, and the Atlantic Ocean or the water, all of them representing elements of place/space with very symbolic connotations. In *The Belly of the Atlantic* (2006), Diome displays some of the many reasons for Senegalese young people's migration to Europe. They include adverse socio-economic and environmental conditions engendered by an increase massive unemployment and economic disparities that are still differentiating factors between African and Western countries. Therefore, the narrator-writer, Salie, accounts for national and international migration because of not only the high unemployment and poverty rates but also the uncontrolled birthrates as enough reasonable motifs for them to flee to France, a country that many candidates to migration in the Senegalese author's narrative considered to be a paradise:

> Most of these boys inherit nothing but mouths to feed. Many of them are already heads of large families despite their young age, and they are expected to succeed where their fathers failed: in lifting their family out of poverty. They're burdened with responsibilities that are too much for them and drive them to the most desperate solutions (Diome, 2006: 128).

With the aim of caressing and achieving the dream of a social success, African young people in general and Senegalese ones in particular find solutions to economic and social constraints, which are theirs, in canoes of fortunes that defy the deadly waves of the Atlantic and the Mediterranean sea with a heart cry "*to paddle into Europe or die trying*" (Sene, 2018: 7). Madické, the heroine's brother and many of his generation of the island of Niodior in Senegal want to migrate because they are unemployed and the island is so poor that it cannot, according to them, offer them the kind of life they are dreaming about and yearning for. The dire poverty then becomes the leitmotiv that forces them to consider national (urban migration) and international emigration as the

only way of survival. For them, it is senseless to ask them to stay in the country since "*what are you offering in exchange for this dump?* [….] *What are you offering? To feed us as long as your holiday lasts? And then what are we supposed to do? You suggest we just wait patiently here until we starve to death?*" (Sene, 2018: 12). Unfortunately, many of them are unskilled and illiterate; but they do not want these to be hindrances towards fulfilling their dreams to go to 'greener pastures'. As such, some resort to sport activities as migratory means to reach one day 'the promise land' and 'the Eldorado.'

Many young Senegalese see Europe as a rich continent with limitless and never-ending possibilities. This state of mind accounts for 'the myth of superiority' of the colonial countries that is still maintained and promoted by their leaders. Through their behaviours towards the former colonizers, they influence the youth a lot to nurture the myth of an Eldorado and of a promise land that is located *there*, *somewhere else*, *elsewhere*:

> All those with important jobs in the country have studied in France. The wives of our successive presidents are all French. To win the elections, the nation's father first wins over France. [….]. Even our ex-president awarded himself retirement in France, so he would live longer (Diome, 2006: 32).

Therefore, many families and villages count on international migrants for food, education, and healthcare. The economic situation added to that of some successful immigrants push many young Senegalese to cross the Atlantic at the risk of their lives to seek for a better life. In most of the time they do not tell the reality of being immigrants in Europe. Some succeed, for example the man from Barbès was from a poor family whose parents thought that "*it is better to die than stay poor*" (Diome, 2006: 16). He went to France just after the Second World War at a moment when France needed workers for its reconstruction. Therefore, he represents the example of successful emigrant in the poor island of Niodior. He is the only one who owns a TV set in the island and his house has become a place of gathering for the population of the area during football matches. Despite the difficult living conditions in France, he describes the country as 'a paradise', thus constructing an image of the place that is assimilated with wealth and forging the dreams among Senegalese youths who now see migration as the only means of survival in a life in a country, in a place, Senegal, which is, in turn, painted as that of poverty:

> […]. Nobody's poor, because even those with no work are paid a salary by the state: they call benefit. You spend the day snoozing in front of your TV, and you receive the same as one of our highest-paid engineers! […]. Your wildest dreams can come true. You'd have to be a real idiot to come back from there poor (Diome, 2006: 57-58).

Diome's liminality of place/space narrative construction is informative of the in-between moments, the place/space between the inciting incident in the migratory plot construction and the protagonist's resolution through the accomplishment of her desire. This is expressive of the place/space economic disparities that exist between France and Senegal. This is also informative about the period of discomfort, of waiting, and of transformation that is expected all along the novel's story.

In addition, in the eyes of the population of the Island, Wagane Yaltigué, commonly called El Hadji because he went to pilgrimage to Mecca, is among the porotypes of the emigrants who encourage migration and see France as an 'Eldorado.' The character informs [us] about his economic situation in that host country where he was very poor and lived in a slum. Despite that, as a returnee, he is admired by his folk and his status has changed from a poor to a rich person. Therefore, in Diome's migration context, place/space defines the status of the individual that is categorized as rich or poor depending on which or from which side of the Atlantic they are or come from. Space and place then become measurement tools used by Senegalese young people to further deepen their intention and motivate their decision to leave. Once in Senegal, because he has changed place, he is now considered to be a rich man and an example of an 'easy successful migrant.' His properties in the Island that are composed of shops and pirogues serve as mirrors for the young generation to both dream about and long for;

> If the older men had given up trying to raise themselves to his level, the younger ones, on the other hand, would imagine themselves in his place. Originally from a very poor and humble family, he'd become one of the most powerful men of the

> region, and even if some islanders made a show of austere pride, they were happy to profit in town from the benefits to be gained simply by claiming to be related to him (Diome, 2006: 82-83).

Unlike the man from Barbès and El Hadji, many other young people like Moussa, the eldest child of an African family who left school early in order to serve his extended family, migration can fail and the result has been disastrous for him. Diome's dichotomic narration of displacement is telling of two possibilities with two choices to make: success and failure, and leaving and staying. As a way of drawing the attention of African youth in general and Senegalese youth in particular to migration as being like a 'gamble' in which losing is also one of the possibilities to take into account. To this end, she proceeds in her description of the reasons why he had decided to travel. Poverty and the burden of the family had compelled him to leave his village for M'Bour where he was engaged in as a sailor before being quickly convinced by a Frenchman who introduced himself as a recruiter for a big football club in France. The motive is to make Moussa, once in the French capital, Paris, understand that those who come from the so-called paradise do not always tell the truth to those who stay in the country. They rather maintain the same myth with a view to constructing a mythic image of themselves and enticing envy. What he finds is an unrewarding reality that leads him from difficulties to difficulties. This young player with a bright future cannot adapt to the reality in France. Isolated by his team members who are in majority white, Moussa cannot even score a single goal. Diome's literary communication is that of story-telling in which there is an experienced person (narrator) delivering a message to an audience composed of an inexperienced younger generation (youth). This literacy technique is sourced African oral tradition, whose purpose is to educate and give warnings. Her narrative and characterization strategies are then embedded with moral lessons based on oppositional examples as a way of warning the candidates to migration what they are likely to find and that the dreams in their minds are based on falsehood and myths.

In fact, Diome's account of Moussa's story is very telling of the possibility of failure in the migration enterprise. She describes his life in France as an illegal immigrant without ID after being chased from his training center, which has led to his arrest and expulsion to Senegal emptyhanded. He has succeeded in reaching his village thanks to the generosity of one of his close relatives who have bought him a one-way bus ticket. Once back to his former place, the one he had hated and left, the villagers have organized three days of festivities to welcome him as a way of perpetuating this tradition of welcoming their migrant returnees, the same way as with the others from the Island who had come back from France.

The festive welcoming is also an expression of expectations that should be translated with giving, which puts the returnee migrant in a situation of discomfort and dis-ease as evidenced by the taunting from the village idiot who makes fool of him, reminding rightly or wrongly that "*everybody who has worked over there built houses and shops as soon as they came home. If you haven't brought anything back, it's because you're a failure*" (Diome, 2006: 74). For his psychological ease, well-being, and comfort, he finally decides to stop hiding himself and tell the truth to his parents about his sojourn in France. From that moment he is never considered to be a 'been-to' and, consequently, all the criticisms he has been subject to a few days after his return have stopped. Unable to bear humiliation and the pressure of his parents, the young footballer has even hinted at committing suicide as he regretfully utters that "*atlantic carry me away. Your harsh belly will be softer to me than my bed. Legend says you give shelter to those who seek it*" (Diome, 2006: 75). In that regard, the Atlantic Ocean becomes a place that represents both a travelling and killing instrument for African migrants who can die on the crossing and be engulfed in its belly or succeed in the crossing. Diome's metaphoric use of the sea is also that of home, a cemetery, a grave, and an eternal dwelling for those who have given up the soul in the crossing. Moussa has travelled to France with the hope of being received by the president one day like many other Senegalese sportsmen performing in that country. His tragic end embodies his failure and shattered dreams.

As for Salie, the heroine, the marginalization in her living place and the desire to be free from all criticisms have been her driving force to migrate: she was born out of marriage and so looked at as an illegitimate child, which is synonymous with being a 'devil.' She was discriminated by the populations of the island and even her classmates who stated that there were "*lucky for us she's a girl. There is no danger she'll spread her name among us*" (Diome, 2006: 51). Thus, she is not an ordinary immigrant, that is to say she did

not go abroad for economic reasons, but for exilic reasons, for a quest for freedom. For her, "*exile is my geographical suicide. Stripped of my history, I am drawn by abroad which does not judge me by the errors of the fate, but for what I've chosen to be; they are the gauge of my freedom, of self-determination*" (Diome, 2006: 161-162). She left her place of birth, Senegal, and followed her husband to another place, France, in order to flee the humiliation of being treated as a 'devil' for something she is not responsible for:

> […] the immigration is not only the poor exploited people, it is always this. The immigration also concerns people who leave for their emancipation, who leave on behalf of their freedom, who leave for many other reasons that the asylum does not perceive necessarily. There are certainly some people who migrate for economic reasons, but others who migrate for worth living reasons. It is the case of the female character of this novel (Mbouguen, 2006).

Thus, France becomes a shelter country to run away from what reminds her of who she is in her home country. In fact, in referring to the concept of exile and home, Diome is exploring the complexities of some aspects of African culture as she also discusses the devastating impact of European cultural imperialism on African experiences. She describes how Salie's change of place is also representative of her change of home. In so doing, the Senegalese author is eyeing up Edward Said's theoretic contention of exile's influence on creating identity crisis as also an attempt and door-opener to resolve Salie's inner identity crisis and dilemma in endeavoring to form an individual identity while struggling from the burdens of both her first home country's and second home country's (post)colonial heritages. The exile stems partly from the character's conflicting sides which she seeks to fix and, as such, views displacement as the only solution available to her. The contradiction also allows Diome to present to the reader a contradictory character who is at the same time the embodiment of the contradictions that taint Senegalese society where people have to pay the price for faults they should not be taken accountable for. Salie has left a society she considers to be oppressive without realizing that she is seeking to find home in another place where her exile also parallels the Senegalese experience with an oppressive French culture that undermines her sense of worth, had once defined her, because of her being African, as a 'primitive savage.' Therefore, Salie becomes a contradictory figure who simultaneously searches for a home to be and to become, and beefs up and shakes the (neo)colonial authority. Diome resorts to opposing forces that create conflicts in the individual's mind. Thus, the conflict she creates within her story comes in four types: Salie's conflict with herself, her conflict with the other members of her community, her conflict with the two environments in which she evolves (Senegal and France) and her conflict with the supernatural.

Like Salie, Sankèle is also another female character of the novel that has left her homeland for the 'promise land' in order to avoid a forced and early marriage. She has been proposed to the man from Barbès without her consent. For her parents and uncles, this marriage will be an opportunity to take their daughter to Europe and allow them to reap the fruits of the trip. As she is against the idea of getting married at her young age, she begs her father to cancel the union. The reasons she evokes are that she does not love the man and he lives very far from Niodior. As a resilience strategy to what she believes to be a form of gender oppression edicted by the patriarchal ideology against the female subject, she allows her beloved Ndétare to impregnate her. This act, which is a form of history-remaking if one refers to Salie, is considered an abomination, whereby the child will be thrown in the belly of the Atlantic by the old fisherman who is nobody but her own father. Searching for a home through migration becomes the only option available to her to escape from her society's rejection. Therefore, she moves first to the city and then to France in order to pursue the freedom she is aspiring for and avoids a tragic end.

Moreover, Diome's wrestler's fiancée also follows the same migratory trend. Like Salie, as a female character, she migrates because of what her society considered to be 'cultural shame.' She has got a baby in the absence of her future husband and this latter with the consent of his parents has refused to get married with her. She leaves the village for the city where she gets married to a famous trader. The teacher, for his part, has migrated by force because of his ideological differences with the government. Though other factors of mass migration are natural disasters such as famine and drought, the heroine finds it unfair that in "[…] *the twenty*

first century, the west is growing obese while the third world starves" (Diome, 2006: 117) as to refer to Yasmin in Leila Aboulela's novel *The Translator*: "*Our (the third world countries) children are dying of hunger while the rich count their calories*" (Aboulela, 1999: 13). Diome places her characters within luminal spaces, the space of the exile and of the non-exile in which, as Sene states, one has to be "*conscious of the status of the image and of the merchandise value imposed by the logic of capitalism among all migrants who crossed the Mediterranean Sea*" (Sene, 2018: 12).

III. Space Discursive Liminality as an Eye-Opening Scope for Strategic Manoeuvre and Negotiation

Migration has some profound social, economic, political, and cultural effects upon [African] migrants, their origin and host countries. It has then both positive and negative effects on both sides of the Atlantic. That is one of the reasons why the space discursive liminality that Senegalese novelist Diome has created provides a greater scope for strategic manoeuvre and negotiation (Bhabha, 1990: 297). This is evidenced by either the displacement or remaining choices and decisions made by the different characters of the story between staying, leaving, and going back. In fact, leaving one's homeland for another place has enormous consequences on the individual's personality, identity, motivation, education, and self-definition. In moving from one place to another, a person severs most of the bonds that once held them to their community's social groups and provided status:

> Through migration the individual sheds many social obligations, and in turn is shorn of nearly all the benefits of group association. For his position and status in the group and classes of the new community do not come automatically. Moreover, his peace must be determined during a period of trial and testing. The migrant's status in the new community may be vastly different from what it was in the old. Cut adrift from all former and special interest groups, separated from class identification, the individual must gain a place for self in new groups, establish position in the vertical, or class structure of the new community. The migrant abandons the role of "native" and assumes that of "Stranger," and the process of becoming accepted, i.e., of gaining a place in a new social grouping, and finding a position in the class system may be neither rapid nor pleasant (Smith, 1948: 292).

A case in point is when Moussa's father complains about his son's ways of dressing which, according to him, is contrary to the tradition. From then on, how fashion is related to the individual's culture becomes, for Diome, a scope for identity expression as edicted by the place where the individual evolves. The father is angry at not seeing his son wearing an African cloth, *Thiaya* or *Sabador*. He slams the attitude, saying "*I saw your photo, you are not wearing a Thiaya or a sabador now, and that worries me. Are your clothes hiding other changes in your personality? Nothing changes on the outside without changes on the insides*" (Diome, 2006: 69).As he hints at a possibility of change in his son's psyche and way of life, in so doing, the father is acting as a psychanalyst, psychologist, and diviner insofar as she is seeking to decipher what is running in his son's mind, consciousness, and subconsciousness. Like the protagonist 'been-to' Samba Diallo in Senegalese writer Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure* (Kane, 2012)who embodies the types of individuals who have fallen under the influence of the culture of Western modernity, Diome's heroine Salie, who has moved to France as a student, is also facing the same scourge. After years of studies there, Samba Diallo is having problems to reconcile with his Diallobé culture, which is embedded with Islamic values, and that of the West. Faced with the impossibility to do so, he proclaims to be the two and among those who inhabit the third space that is a product of the African and Western cultural mixture. Therefore, these types of characters in Diome's literary text are either torn between *sameness, anotherness*, or *twoness,* which are respectively related to three different spatial and temporal categories that include *here, there or somewhere else/elsewhere, and herethereafter* with each attached to either home, place or/and displacement. This state of mind is evidenced by Louis Tyson who argues that "*to be unhomed is to feel not at home even in your own home because you are not at home in yourself: your cultural identity crisis has made you a psychological refugee*" (Tyson, 2006: 14).

Indeed, it is precisely in reading between the borderlines of the nation-space that one can see how Diome's migrant characters come to be constructed within a range of discourses of either a double narration scope or multiple narration movement. The aim is to prove that Diome's characters are not simply parts of cultural and historical events or parts of patriotic body politic (Bhabha ,1990: 297).In this regard, the author's focus on 'liminality', combined with an analysis of her social characters' discursive practices of identity position taking, allows to describe the individuals' identity accounts in three different social contexts with characters who have been static, known as *national sameness*, characters who have experienced going through a transformational change from one 'identity position' to another, and characters' sense of being in-between two identity positions for a prolonged period of time. The liminal experience of the author's migration actors in the first situation might be referred to as *transitional betweenness*, with liminality as pertaining to a relatively time-constrained phase in-between two identity positions, the second as *perpetual betweenness*, with liminality as an ongoing state of affairs, balancing on the national boundaries in-between two or more social categories (Ybema, Beech & Ellis, 2011: 1).Thus, Diome's Salie finds herself torn between her country of origin, Senegal, and that of her destination, France. This puts her in a situation of double bind insofar as she cannot make a choice, which plunges her into a state of mind the authors refers to as "*the me from here and the me from there*" (Diome, 2006: 160)In so doing, the novelist refers to the 'interstitial' space depiction strategy to feature characters like Salie who find themselves located between two cultures and express their sense of belonging to neither the guest nor the host countries, and construct their third space, known as the 'interstitial space.' Diome is then concerned with bringing to light, using multiple narration strategy-types, the *national sameness*, the *transnational betweenness*, and the *perpetual betweenness* characters, which are embodied in the national, transnational, and perpetual [space] liminality. To make this narrative enterprise possible, she has leaned on displacement mapping strategy, a technique used in geometry, to enable her to put into play a triangular spatial contour that is composed of Africa-France-Africa.

In fact, displacement then breaks social consciousness, family, social, regional, and national ties. It makes the individual become '*other* or *stranger'* in their own country as confirmed by one of Diome's characters when regretfully saying that "*and yet, for me, returning is the same as leaving. I go home as a tourist in my own country, for I have become the other for the people I continue to call my family*" (Diome, 2006: 116). Migration also brings about hardships and griefs, particularly when it is a forced one as it is, for instance, the case of Sankèle who has been compelled to leave her country because she has been refused to get married with her beloved Ndétare and married by force to the man from Barbès, an old man leaving very far from Senegal, in France.

> In a society where permanent settlements are the norm, the movement of persons from one place to another, results in the severing of most significant social bonds and ties. Emigration entails disruption of the established social structure in the communities of origin. But immigration also plays its part by introducing new and often times conflicting ethnic and cultural elements into the social groups at the place of settlement. Thus migration makes social adjustments inevitable on the part of both the groups losing members and those receiving additions (Jones, 1983: 278).

Because it is difficult to live as illegal and unskilled migrants in Europe, they are sorted into important and non-important migrants, that is to say productive and unproductive ones. As such, like during the period of the slave trade when only valid people were selecting to accomplish the voyage, here the sick persons are not authorized to migrate to Europe, for they have nothing to offer. But even without any degree they represent fortune hunters for their employers, but non-productive beings for themselves insofar as "*as illegal immigrants with no qualifications, you'll find it a hard slog if you are lucky enough not to get picked up the police, who'll bundle you onto the next plane home*" (Diome, 2006: 26). They are victims of racial segregation, in addition to their status as 'racially and economically *apartheidized* beings,' for "*in Europe, my brothers, you're black first, citizens incidentally, outsiders permanently, and that's certainly not written in the constitution, but some can read it on your skin*" (Diome, 2006: 124).

Moreover, the cultural effect of migration becoming more pronounced when migrants speak different languages or/and have religions and customs that differ from those of the host populations, Diome leans on a complex rhetoric of social reference, to paraphrase Homi Bhabha, where the claim to be represented provokes a crisis within the process of signification and discursive address, to create a contested cultural territory, a 'third space territory,' where people must be thought in double-time and as part of the historical object of a nationalist pedagogy, and gives the discourse an authority that is based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin or event (Bhabha, 1990: 297). In many cases, the migrants are often negatively portrayed and considered hostile or threatening (Gebresellasie, 1993: 4). For instance, in his training center Moussa has been treated by his team-mates as a 'monkey': "*Hey! Darkie! Pass! Come on! Pass the ball, it is not a coconut!* […] *So? You think you've got balls? Don't worry, we'll show you. We'll take you to the Bois de Boulogne one of these nights. You'll be invisible, but you'll see everything*" (Diome, 2006: 66). Under such circumstances, they may be required to adjust to a new culture and way of life by ignoring their own culture and traditions, an assimilation process is not easy either.

Therefore, as long as migrants live in a new cultural environment, "*they have to bear some of the physical and social distinctions of the foreigner, never completely understanding their social surroundings, and are unable to adapt themselves completely to the changing cultural environment*" (Smith, 948: 292). Coming from a community with social values where everything must be shared, Wagane Yaltigué called El Hadji has turned more capitalist than socialist. He now gives more importance to the material objects than his pirogue workers. In so doing, he links everything to money over human being. An analysis of Yaltigué-turned El Hadji's self-positioning points out that transitional 'liminars' like him abandon 'old' identities and construct 'new' identities in their relations with their other *alter egos*. He sometimes oscillates between 'in' and 'out', 'same' and 'other', and between an inclusive and exclusive 'us' depending on where his economic interest lies. Diome's reference to the concepts of liminality and identity is then very telling insofar as it enables the reader to grasp to what extent they may help to generate a grounded understanding of how social actors manoeuvre through socially complex, dynamic, and demanding situations (Ybema, Beech & Ellis, 2011: 1).

Economically, migration affects both origin and destination places positively and negatively. Many of those who opt for displacement leave in the hope of making fortune and returning back home to build their homeland. That is what accounts for Salie's built up-migration philosophy, according to which the migrants have the obligation to succeed so as to not return home empty-handed and in shame. For her, the migrants have "*to be the family's social security*" (Ybema, Beech & Ellis, 2011: 124). They are expected to contribute to the building of both sides of the Atlantic insofar as the successful migrants pay taxes in their host country and send remittances to their origin country. Thus, like El Hadji, they can build infrastructures such as mosques, shops, houses, and hospitals to benefit their countrymen. They can also create jobs as El Hadji has done in hiring many youths in his pirogues. They send capitals to those who are staying at home so that they can set up small commercial businesses or undertake money-making projects. This is the case of Salie, who has sent some money to her brother Madické in order to deter him from re-attempting an 'uncertain adventure' and allow him to open up a grocery. Salie's action towards her brother constitutes a moral lesson for all youths nurturing the idea of migrating abroad as the only way of earning a living and making their lives meaningful. This is also to show that home does not always represent a place of failure; it can be turned into a place of success.

Generally, thanks to the migrants, the Niodior islanders who are fishers and farmers can make both ends meet in case of bad harvest and fish scarcity. In fact, Diome's use of double-narrative strategy allows her to also portray individuals who do not believe in the 'stay-home motto.' This is the case of some parents in the novel, like Sankéle's parents and uncles, who want their daughter to get married with an emigrant. For them, "*it was a good match; he lived in Europe and his family no longer depended on the harvest being plentiful. More than one father wished to give him his daughter's hand*" (Diome, 2006: 86).

Yet, Diome, through Salie, proceeds with her story-telling moralistic and warning strategy to show that international migration destroys self-reliance and promotes dependency, and underdevelopment (Gebresellasie, 1993: 4). When Salie has returned to her native Niodior to see her parents, people have self-invited to a

ceremonial cooking without asking her point of view. Therefore, instead of being a source of development, migration sometimes reinforces laziness among young people:

> I know this social rule is profoundly humane, but when it's abused it mostly benefits the lazy by maintaining permanently in chronical dependence, I was supposed to feed these self-invited guests without batting an eyelid, for fear of being seen as a western individualist, an unnaturally selfish person, from the moment I arrived. As for the few people with reservations, islanders living in the city and new recruits to modern society, they soon resorted to genealogy to justify their presence. But everybody knew the crowning argument: 'she comes from France,' they'd say, and the general implication of this little was more eloquent than any speech (Diome, 2006: 116-117).

Madické, his friends and many other people from the island depend on the migrants for their food, healthcare, and other projects like commerce. They do not rely on their work force and think that those who are abroad have plenty of money and do not lack anything. The majority of the youths who constitute the working force of the locality have migrated, leaving only old people who cannot plough their fields or fish and migrant wives surrounded by their children who consume on credit (Diome, 2006: 20).

In addition to decreasing the spaces suitable for farming, migration provokes brain drain. Like Salie, the heroine, who is studying in order to be useful one day for her country, realizes that many of those who are staying in France are composed of thousands of doctors, engineers, and technicians who have been given an education and trained for free to serve Senegal but have moved to France to serve the French Republic, adding sorrowfully that "*even our ex-president awarded himself retirement in France*" (Diome, 2006: 32).The departure of skilled workers constitutes, then, a real underdevelopment factor for the place of origin and a development factor for the place of destination.

IV. Conclusion

This article has scrutinized the question of migration by both skilled and unskilled documented and undocumented African migrants in general and Senegalese ones in particular as dealt within Fatou Diome's *The Belly of the Atlantic* (2006). It has shown that migrating without any skill and diploma is likely to pave the way for disappointment, failure, sufferings and even death. Various reasons push young Senegalese to engage in national and international migration. While listing out the many persons who dream about going overseas for economic reasons, Diome also portrays others who leave in search of freedom, for studies, for gender inequalities, marginalization, among other causes. In this regard, the paper has castigated the Western point of view about migrants who are essentially being seen as fortune-hunters.

However, in the migration analysis process, the paper has been mainly concerned with uncovering the interconnected elements of home, place/space, and displacement in Fatou Diome's*The Belly of the Atlantic* (2006). How myth and reality intercede and influence people's decision to leave or to stay; how they intercede between past, present, and future in influencing catastrophic or happy events and individual's identity have been some of the points raised. It has further demonstrated the interconnectedness that exists between space liminality and the migrant's identity *here* and *there*. To this end, the focus has been on how these notions have been built up in Diome's rhetorical strategies of *hereness*, *thereness*, space liminality and identity that inform *sameness*, *anotherness/otherness*, and *twoness a*s the story unfolds with its narration of three different spatial and temporal categories that encompass *here*, *there*, and *herethereafter.* To this end, the types of migrants who strive to find balance between happiness and suffering, success and failure, and *self*, *other*, and *self-other* have been scrutinized as well.

Moreover, the study has focused on Diome's double and multiple narrative strategies. Cases in point are the man from Barbès and El Hadj who describe overseas as a 'paradise' and hide the real [dire] living conditions of migrants, and Salie the heroine and Ndétare who demystify the idea according to which the West is an 'Eldorado' or a 'promise land' insofar as they are eye-witnesses to the difficult living conditions of African

migrants in general and Senegalese ones in particular in France. They are confronted with problems of housings, discrimination, exile, homesickness, uprootedness, and otherness on both sides of the Atlantic, meaning in their first and second homes.

Analyzing Diome's*The Belly of the Atlantic* (2006) has brought to the surface the migration politics of the heroine Salie and the teacher Ndétare who seek to deter the youths from the island to nurture the idea of illegal and undocumented migration. Thus, in lieu and place of helping them to leave, they rather propose to create money-earning projects and opportunities that can maintain them in their place. It is for this reason that Salie, a scholar-migrant, has sent money to her brother Madické so that he can open up a grocery at home and 'emigrate' from his head the ideas of leaving, an action which is risky because full of life uncertainties. In fact, Diome's awareness call and moralistic lesson is that "*we should give to our children the first key of dignity, education, and the possibility to build a descent existence in their countries so that exile will no longer be their fatality and that travelling also becomesfor them, at the end, an adventure rather than a suicide*" (Diome, 2006: 117).

References

[1.] ABOULELA Leila (1999), *Translator*, New York, Black Cat.

[2.] ADERANTI Adepoju (1995), "Migration in Africa: An Overview," in Jonathan Baker &Tade Akin Aina (ed.), *The migration experience in Africa*, Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.

[3.] BHABHA K. Homi (1990), *Nation and Narration*, New York: Routledge.

[4.] DIOUF Ndiaga (31 octobre 2013), "Fatou Diome : Au nom de tous les bâtards du Sénégal…,"http://www.pressafrik.com/Fatou-DIOME-Au-nom-de-tous-les-batards-du-SENEGAL_a114379.html, retrieved on April 4th 2020.

[5.] DIOMEFatou (2017), *Marianne porte plainte*, Paris, Flammarion.

[6.] ---------- (2006) *The Belly of the Atlantic*, London, Serpent's Tail.

[7.] FLAHAUX, Marie-Laure *et al*. (November 21, 2009 in Dakar), "Partir, revenir : tendances et facteurs des migrations africaines intra et extra-continentales", dans BEAUCHEMIN, Cris *et al*., (éd.), *Entre parcours de vie des migrants et attentes politiques, quel co-developpement en Afrique subsaharienne ?*, Sept communications scientifiques présentées lors de la Table ronde sur les migrations entre l'Afrique et l'Europe (Projet MAFE), https://www.ined.fr/fichier/s_rubrique/19556/dt_166_151111.fr.pdf, (Retrieved on April 3rd 2020).

[8.] GEBRESELLASIE Yohannes (March 1993), "International Migration in Africa: An Overview," *Refuge, Vol. 12, No.8*.

[9.] JONES Huw(1983), *A Population Geography*, New York, New York Harper and Row Publishers.

[10.] KANE Cheikh Hamidou (2012), *Ambiguous Adventure*, New York Melville House Publishing Brooklyn.

[11.] MBOUGUEN Hervé, (November 25th2003) "Interview of Fatou Diome", http://www.grioo.com/info1151.html, (retrieved on April 5th 2020), see also Valérie Hoekstra (June 16, 2016), "Le ventre de l'Atlantique de Fatou Diome: entre témoignage et distance," Bachelor Dissertation, Université Radboud Nimègue.

[12.] NELLYROBIN (Septembre-novembre 2007), "Migrations en Afrique de l'Ouest, une longue histoire," *Grain de Sel*, no. 40, http://www.inter-reseaux.org/IMG/pdf/12_dossierGDS40.pdf, (Retrieved on April 3rd 2020).

[13.] SENE Abib. "The Hail-Mary Pass of the Wretched of Emigration in Fatou Diome's*The Belly of the Atlantic*." *International Journal of Literature and Arts*. Vol. 6, No. 1, 2018, pp. 7-13.

[14.] SMITH T. Lynn (1948), *Population Analysis*, New York, New York: McGraw Hill Publication Ind.

[15.] TYSON Louis (2006).*Critical Theory Today, A User- Friendly Guide*. 2th Ed. New York: Routledge. Quoted in Tahereh Siamardi, Karaj, Iran (2016)."The Situation of Colonial 'Other' in V. S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas*". *Advances in Language and Literary Studies* of the Australian International Academic Centre, Australia, Vol. 7.No. 1. pp. 122-129.

[16.] YBEMA S. B., BEECH, N., & ELLIS, N. (2011). "Transitional and perpetual liminality: An identity practice perspective." *Anthropology Southern Africa*, *34*(1&2), 21-29.