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NOTES

¹ In this article we refer to the following editions of works by Ousmane Sembène: *Le docker noir* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1973; first edition: Paris: Debresse, 1956); *O pays, mon beau peuple* (Paris: Presses Pocket, 1975; first edition: Paris: Le Livre Contemporain, 1957); *Les bouts de bois de Dieu* (Paris: Presses Pocket, 1971; first edition: Paris: Le Livre Contemporain, 1960); *Voltaïque* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1962); *L'Harmattan* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1980; first edition: Paris: Présence Africaine, 1964); *Le mandat, précédé de Véhi-Ciosane* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1966); *Xala* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1973); *Le dernier de l'Empire*, Tomes 1 & 2 (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1981); *Niiwam suivi de Taaw* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1987).

² See F. 1. Case, "The Socio-cultural Functions of Women in the Senegalese Novel," *Culture et développement*, 9, 4 (1977): 601-629; also: "Workers' Movements: Revolution and Women's Consciousness in God's Bits of Wood," *Revue canadienne des études africaines / Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 15, 2 (1981): 277-292.

³ For a discussion of this notion see Arun Mukherjee, *Towards an Aesthetic of Opposition: Essays on Literature, Criticism & Cultural Imperialism* (Ontario: Williams-Wallace, 1988), pp. 10-20.

⁴ Bessie Head, *A Question of Power* (London: Heinemann, 1974).

⁵ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *A Grain of Wheat* (London: Heinemann, 1967). Though this and the earlier works of Ngugi were written in English, his later works have been written in Gikuyu and then translated.

⁶ Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World* (Boston: Beacon, 1980).

⁷ Driss Chraïbi, *Le passé simple* (Paris: Denoël, 1954).

⁸ Assia Djebar, *Les femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* (Paris: des femmes, 1980).

⁹ Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (London: Heinemann, 1958).

¹⁰ Sada Niang, "Poétique linguistique de la littérature sénégalaise: Une analyse diachronique" (Unpublished manuscript).

¹¹ See Case (1981).

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¹² For a detailed explanation, see F. I. Case, "L'Analyse sociocritique du roman africain: problèmes d'une méthode," in *La lecture sociocritique du texte romanesque*, ed. G. Falconer & H. Mitterand (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert, 1975), pp. 49-62.

¹³ *Les bouts de bois de Dieu*, p. 224.

¹⁴ "Taaw," in *Niiwam*, p. 183.

¹⁵ See Nawal El Saadawi, *Memoirs from the Women's Prison* (London: The Women's Press, 1983).

¹⁶ "Taaw," in *Niiwam*, pp. 95-97.

¹⁷ "Lettres de France," in *Voltaïque*, p. 91.

¹⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre* (Paris: Maspero, 1968), pp. 79-81.

¹⁹ *Young Cinema and Theatre*, 3 (1970): 27.

²⁰ From an interview with Sembène in Dakar, Senegal, in 1978.

²¹ He was born and partly brought up in rural Casamance and is presently living in Dakar.

²² From an unpublished interview with Sembène in Atlanta in 1979.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Black Art*, 3, 3 (1979): 33.

²⁵ From an unpublished interview with Sembène in Dakar in 1978.

²⁶ From an interview with Sembène conducted by Jean and Ginette Delmas, which appeared in *Jeune cinéma*, 99 (December 1976 - January 1977): 14. (Author's translation.)

²⁷ D. T. Niane, *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali*, transl. G. D. Pickett (London: Longman, 1965), p. 1.

²⁸ Quoted in Luis H. Francia, "The Other Cinema," *Village Voice*, 17 May 1983, p. 63.

²⁹ Amadou Hampathé Bâ, *Aspects de la civilisation africaine* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1972), pp. 22, 26.

³⁰ Teshome Gabriel, "Third Cinema as Guardian of Popular Memory: Towards a Third Aesthetics," in *Questions of Third Cinema*, ed. Jim Pines and Paul Willemen (London: British Film Institute, 1989), pp. 53-54.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

³² Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 99.

³³ Sections of this essay have appeared in my "France's Bureau of Cinema: Financial and Technical Assistance Between 1961 and 1977—Operations and Implications for African Cinema," *Society for Visual Anthropology Review*, 6, 2 (Fall 1990): 80-93.

³⁴ *Consortium Audiovisuel International* Final Report, 10 May 1979.

³⁵ Guy Hennebelle, "Entretien avec Jean-René Debrix," *L'Afrique littéraire et artistique*, 43 (1977): 77-89.

³⁶ Interview with Lucien Patry, Paris, 9 July 1987, in "Francophone African Cinema: French Financial and Technical Assistance 1961 to 1977" by Claire Andrade-Watkins, unpublished dissertation (Boston University, 1989), pp. 20-22.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 149-151.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Interview with Lucien Gohy, Paris, 16 July 1987, in "Francophone African Cinema" by Andrade-Watkins, p. 156.

⁴⁰ Paulin Vieyra, *Le cinéma au Sénégal* (Brussels: Organisation Catholique Internationale du Cinema et du l'Audiovisuel, 1988), p. 38.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 164-165.

⁴² "Francophone African Cinema" by Claire Andrade-Watkins, p. 156.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

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⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 160-161.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

⁴⁹ Unpublished interview with Gaston Kabore, Secretary General of FEPACI and Burkinabe filmmaker, November 1989, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁰ [The exceptions were Sembène and Ngugi. Ngugi arrived after the others, and when he did, Sembène got up and embraced him heartily, with tears in his eyes—both in joy at seeing someone he had not seen in some time, and in regret that Ngugi remains in exile from his beloved homeland, Kenya. Editors.]

⁵¹ Earl Lovelace, *The Dragon Can't Dance* (Harlow, England: Longman, 1985), pp. 23-24. Reprinted with the permission of the copyright holder, André Deutsch, Limited.

⁵² [See Langston Hughes' poem "I, Too." Editors.]

⁵³ [i.e. the Basilique de Yamoussoukro, constructed in the natal village of President Houphouët-Boigny. Editors.]

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Claire Andrade-Watkins is a member of the faculty at Emerson College (Boston), where she teaches Film Studies. She is co-editor of *Black Frames: Critical Perspectives on Independent Black Cinema* (1988).

Toni Cade Bambara is a Philadelphia-based free-lance writer, filmmaker, and lecturer with nearly a dozen screenplays, two novels, and several short stories to her credit. Her novel *The Salt Eaters* (1981) won the American Book Award that year, while her film "The Bombing of Osage" earned her the Best Documentary Award from the National Black Programming Consortium in 1986.

Frederick Ivor Case is a professor of French and the current Principal of New College, University of Toronto. Aside from several publications on Sembène's writing, he is the author of numerous articles on Caribbean literature and on Islamic discourse in African literature. Among his more important works are *Racism and National Consciousness* (1979) and *The Crisis of Identity: Studies in the Guadeloupean and Martinican Novel* (1985).

Mbye Cham teaches literature and film at Howard University. He specializes in African and Caribbean film and has co-edited *Black Frames: Critical Perspectives on Independent Black Cinema* (1988). His latest publication is *Ex-iles: Essays on Caribbean Cinema* (1992).

Earl Lovelace is a novelist and playwright who lives and writes in Trinidad, while teaching literature at the University of the West Indies. His novels are *While Gods Are Falling* (1965), *The Schoolmaster* (1968), *The Dragon Can't Dance* (1979), and *The Wine of Astonishment* (1982).

Ngugi wa Thiong'o is one of Africa's best known writers, with six novels to his credit, including *Weep Not Child* (1964), *A Grain of Wheat* (1967), *Petals of Blood* (1977), and *Matigari* (1987). He was detained for a year by the Kenyan government, and since 1982 he has lived in exile. His book of critical essays *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* appeared in 1986. He is Professor of Comparative Literature and Performance Studies at New York University.

Sada Niang is Assistant Professor of African and Caribbean Literature at the University of Victoria, British Columbia. He is the author of numerous articles in internationally known journals, and the co-author of two monographs: *Elsewhere in Africa*, published in Paris by Hatier in 1978, and *African Continuities (L'Héritage africain)*, published by Terebi of Toronto in 1989.

Françoise Pfaff teaches in the Department of Romance Languages at Howard University, Washington, D.C., and is the author of *The Cinema of Ousmane Sembène, A Pioneer of African Film* (1984) and *Twenty-five Black African Filmmakers* (1988).

John Wideman is a novelist who teaches literature at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. His *Sent for You Yesterday* was awarded the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction in 1984. His other novels include *A Glance Away* (1967), *Hurray Home* (1970), *The Lynchers* (1973), *Hiding Place* (1981), and the recent highly acclaimed *Philadelphia Fire: A Novel* (1990).

The Editors: Thomas Cassirer is emeritus Professor of French, and Ralph Faulkingham, professor of Anthropology, at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Samba Gadjigo is associate professor of French at Mount Holyoke College. Formerly associate professor of Black Studies and English at Amherst College, Reinhard Sander now teaches in the Department of Africana Studies at the University of Pittsburgh.

APPENDIX

A Select Bibliography of Ousmane Sembène's Written Works

Le docker noir (Paris: Debresse, 1956). Translated into English by Ros Schwartz and published as *The Black Docker* (London: Heinemann, 1987).

This first work of fiction by Sembène depicts the betrayal suffered by an African writer whose novel is published under false pretenses, and the betrayal suffered by African workers who lead a miserable existence in Marseille. This novel is also a fictional reconstruction of race relations between the French and the exiles from France's colonies in Africa and the black diaspora. Autobiographical in its orientation, it set the political tone for a new breed of works by French-speaking African writers.

O pays, mon beau peuple (Paris: Le Livre Contemporain, 1957).

Sembène's second novel is a lyrical work. Through Oumar Faye's tragic fight for land and freedom for his people, the author explores the issues of race relations, racial intolerance, and mixed marriage in a colonial setting. Sembène focuses on the odyssey of a young Senegalese man who returns from France to the Casamance in southern Senegal with a white wife and the dream to liberate his countrymen and women from colonial exploitation. Oumar's death at the end of this novel points to the tragedy lived daily by colonized people under French rule.

Les bouts de bois de Dieu (Paris: Le Livre Contemporain, 1960). Translated into English by Francis Price and published as *God's Bits of Wood*, with an introduction by A. Adu Boahen (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1970).

By far the most widely read and studied of Sembène's novels, *God's Bits of Wood* is a fictionalized reconstruction of the railroad workers' strike in 1947 that for months paralyzed traffic between Bamako, Thies, and Dakar. A celebration of the people's power and determination to control their own destiny, this work has also been hailed by critics as one of the first African novels to formulate the idea of women as active agents in the historical process of liberating (politically, economically, and culturally) the African continent. Most of all, the novel depicts the different changes that can affect an entire people engaged in a fight to free themselves from foreign exploitation.

Voltaïque (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1962).

With this collection of thirteen stories, Sembène broadens the scope of his artistry. The texts assembled here range from tales ("Mahomoud Fall"), to fables ("Commugauté"), short stories ("Devant l'histoire," "Prise de conscience," "La noire de . . .," and "Voltaïque," a story on the origin of tribal scars). The themes in these stories range from the portrayal of African exiles and polygamy to women's power and political consciousness.

L'Harmattan (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1964).

Like *God's Bits of Wood*, this novel is based on historical events that had far-reaching effects on West Africa's political transformation: the 1958 referendum on the future of France's African colonies, organized by General de Gaulle. Set in an unnamed African capital, the story recreates the climate of excitement, hope, fear, and deception experienced by a whole generation of Africans at that time. Through its robust characters, the novel also traces the different political orientations of the intellectual elite on the eve of independence.

Le mandat, précédé de Véhi-Ciosane (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1966). Translated into English by Clive Wake and published as *The Money Order, with White Genesis* (London: Heinemann, 1972).

Adapted into a film as "Mandabi" in 1968, "The Money Order" represents Sembène's first and uncompromising look at the human tragedy of post-colonial Africa. Under the combined effects of an imposed cash economy, an alien administrative system, and illiteracy, the hero Ibrahima Dieng casts a new light on the despair experienced by those left out and forgotten by the empty promises of a corrupt political and economic leadership.

Xala (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1973). Translated into English by Clive Wake and published as *Xala* (Westport: L. Hill and Co., 1976).

Like "The Money Order" this almost farcical novel focuses on contemporary Senegal. Here Sembène uses the image of sexual impotence as a metaphor for the new African comprador bourgeoisie's incompetence, vanity, and inability to lead the newly independent nation. The novel also documents the shocking and widening gap between a self-absorbed wealthy elite class and the multitudes living in extreme poverty.

Le dernier de l'Empire, tomes 1 & 2 (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1981). Translated by Adrian Adams and published as *The Last of the Empire: A Senegalese Novel* (London: Heinemann, 1983).

The context here is by now familiar: nepotism, incompetence, and the abuse of public power rampant in many African states in the decades following independence. Set in independent Senegal, the novel dramatizes the military

coup that has been a plague on Africa's political landscape, jeopardizing political stability and economic development.

Niiwam (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1987). Translated into English and published as *Niiwam and Taaw: Two Novellas* (Oxford and Portsmouth, N.H. Heinemann, 1992).

This work is a collection of two short stories: "Niiwam," which gives the title to the collection, and "Taaw." "Niiwam" tells the story of the peasant Thierno, whose young son Niiwam dies while they are in Dakar. Through Thierno's nightmarish bus trip with his son's body on his knees from the hospital morgue to the Muslim cemetery of Dakar at Yoff, Sembène introduces the reader to the human, material, and moral decay that the fetishism of money has caused in modern urban Africa. As for "Taaw," the dominant theme is the cruel reality of life in suburban Dakar, with its unemployment, poverty, drugs, and lack of moral leadership. We see here as well other themes important to Sembène: generational conflict, teenage pregnancy, and the oppression of women by a culture of patriarchy. But as with many of his other works, "Taaw" ends with a note of rebellion and a hope for a better future for all the oppressed.

Films Written and Directed by Ousmane Sembène

Ousmane Sembène's films are distributed in the United States exclusively by New Yorker Films, 16 West 61st Street, New York, NY 10023, telephone: 212-247-6110. To date, they are available for rent or for purchase in both 16 mm and 32 mm formats, but not on videotape.

"L'EMPIRE SONHRAI" 1963

Sembène's first film is a documentary on the history of the Songhai empire, produced by the government of the Republic of Mali. In French. 16 mm. Black and white. 20 minutes.

"BOROM SARRET" 1963

Spare masterpiece of protest against economic exploitation. Depicts the typical daily encounters of a cart driver in Dakar, Senegal. In French with English subtitles. 16 mm. Black and white. 20 minutes.

"NIAYE" 1964

Narrated by a village griot, "Niaye" is the tragic tale of a young girl whose pregnancy scandalizes her community. A visiting worker is accused of being responsible for the pregnancy, but subsequently it is discovered that her own father is the culprit. The community strives to keep the scandal from the French colonial administration. In French. 16 mm. Black and white. 35 minutes.

"LA NOIRE DE. . ." 1966

Sembène's first feature film, known in English as "Black Girl," made a profound impression at several international film festivals in 1966. The evolution of the African cinema can probably be dated from this point. Shot in a simple, freewheeling style reminiscent of the early New Wave, it tells a direct, bitter, unambiguous story of exile and despair. The heroine, Diouanna, is a Senegalese maid taken to the Riviera by her French employers. It is only when she is out of Africa that she realizes what being African means: it means being a thing, no longer Diouanna, but "the black girl." Jean Vigo Prize, 1966. In French with English sub-titles. 16 mm. Black and white. 60 minutes.

"MANDABI" 1968

Based on Sembène's short novel *The Money Order*, this feature film is a deceptively simple story of a man who receives a money order from his nephew in Paris and attempts to cash it. "Mandabi" is a deeply moving, witty, masterful portrait of a vain man whose vanity pales against the chicanery and callousness of the youthful ambitious *petite bourgeoisie*. In Wolof with English sub-titles. 16 mm. Color. 90 minutes.

"TAAW"

1970

Taaw is a young unemployed man in modern Senegal who fends off accusations of laziness for his unemployment and makes a home for his pregnant girlfriend who has been rejected by her family. In Wolof with English sub-titles. 16 mm. Color. 24 minutes.

"EMITAI"

1971

"Emitai" is a historical film that functions also as a timeless allegory. In his clear, spare style, Sembène depicts the clash between French colonists and the Diola of Senegal in the closing days of World War II. It is the women who provide the first voice of resistance and the film conveys their social power as the retainers of ancient myths, rituals, and recent history. In Diola and French with English sub-titles. 16 mm. Color. 101 minutes.

"XALA"

1974

Sembène's savage and hilarious satire of the modern African bourgeoisie was heavily censored in Senegal. Forsaking the more obvious (and politically acceptable) targets of European exploitation and racism, Sembène here zeroes in on a far touchier subject: the entire blackfacing of white colonial policies after independence was granted. The hero of the film is a self-satisfied, westernized Senegalese businessman who is suddenly struck down with the *xala*, an ancient Senegalese curse rendering him impotent. His vain search for a cure becomes a metaphor for the impossibility of Africans achieving liberation through dependence on western technology and bureaucratic structures. In French with English sub-titles. 16 mm. Color. 123 minutes.

"CEDDO"

1976

An exciting political thriller concerning the kidnapping of a beautiful princess is used to examine the confrontation between opposing forces in the face of Muslim expansion. The *ceddo*, or commoner class, refuse to submit to Islam. Set loosely in the 19th century, "Ceddo" is not strictly a historical film, as it ranges far and wide to include philosophy, fantasy, militant politics, and a couple of electrifying leaps across the centuries. In Wolof with English sub-titles. 16 mm. Color. 120 minutes.

"CAMP DE THIAROYE"

1989

Towards the end of 1944, at a bleak military transit camp in Senegal, soldiers from several parts of Africa who have fought with the Free French army to overthrow fascism in Europe, await demobilization, severance pay, and a trip home. French Captain Raymond sincerely tries to convince his Senegalese NCO Diatta that the massacres by French troops, such as that in which Diatta's parents were killed, are a banished phenomenon from the Vichy past. The film's dialectic is intent on proving him wrong. By the end, Raymond has been ostracized as a Communist by his fellow officers, and gradually the attempt by

the French command to cheat the African veterans out of their severance pay provokes a mutiny. The French response is an armored attack on the camp with a near total loss of life. "Camp de Thiaroye" is true both to the historical record of the massacre and to the underlying culture of European imperialism. In Wolof and French with English sub-titles. Color. 153 minutes.

"GELWAAR"

1992

In choosing "Gelwaar: An African Legend for the 21st Century" for the opening of the 13th Pan-African Film Festival (in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, February 1993), the organizers of this event sought to honor Ousmane Sembène as the father of African cinema. "Gelwaar" is based on a true story: The body of Pierre Henri Thioune, alias Gelwaar and leader of a Christian community, is mistakenly delivered to Muslims who bury him in a Muslim cemetery following the teachings of Islam. When the mistake is found out, the Christians seek to recover "their" body. Sembène in this film develops familiar themes: real versus imaginary independence, women's emancipation, the brain drain to the West, and dependency on foreign aid. In Wolof and French with English sub-titles. Color. 115 minutes.

A Critical Bibliography on Ousmane Sembène's Works

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