LOCATING COLONISATION AND GLOBALISATION IN FRANCOPHONE AFRICAN FILM AND LITERATURE: SPATIAL RELATIONS IN *BOROM SARRET* (1963), *LA NOIRE DE…* (1965) AND *CINÉMA* (1997)

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Abstract

This article considers the figuring of space in three works from the post-Independence era of cultural production in Francophone West Africa: the films *Borom Sarret* (1963) and *La Noire de…* (1965) by Ousmane Sembène, and the novel *Cinéma* (1997) by Tierno Monenembo. The article examines the characteristic spatial tropes and practices of colonialism and globalisation. It then explores the use of horizontal and vertical figures in the three works above, concluding that the use of the horizontal and the vertical by Sembène and Monenembo can be read as forming a complex engagement with cultures of colonialism, neo-colonialism and globalisation.

Introduction

This essay will consider the figuring of spatial relations in three works from post-Independence Francophone Africa. The works are two films, *Borom Sarret* (1963) and *La Noire de…* (1965), by the Senegalese filmmaker and novelist Ousmane Sembène, and the novel *Cinéma* (1997) by the Guinean writer Tierno Monenembo.[1] Both Ousmane Sembène and Tierno Monenembo have been notable critics of colonial and post-colonial relations between Africa and the West, and both have commented in particular on the inequities in European relations with Africa. Ousmane Sembène has drawn attention to the hierarchies of centre and periphery which continue to structure the understanding in Europe of Africa and Africans:

> L'Europe n'est pas mon centre. L'Europe est une périphérie de l'Afrique. Si vous prenez la carte de l'Afrique, géographiquement vous pouvez y mettre l'Europe et l'Amérique et il nous restera encore de la place. Pourquoi voulez-vous ce tropisme? Pourquoi voulez-vous que je sois comme le tournesol qui tourne autour du soleil? Je suis moi-même le soleil. (Boughedir, 1983)

And Tierno Monenembo has commented on the importance of Africans elaborating a properly African perspective on themselves:

> Nous sortons d'une longue amnésie. Puis, il y a chez nous cette double intuition: l'Orient et l'Occident […] A partir du moment où nous nous regardons avec le regard de l'autre, nous nous perdons. Il faut une vision propre sur nous-mêmes. Il faut faire attention à notre propre regard, car c'est souvent le grand piège. (Saint-Éloi, 2000 : 5)

To a certain extent, such comments rehearse the spatial commonplaces used to metaphorize political power relations on a global scale. However, as this essay will argue, Sembène and Monenembo are highly conscious users of spatial tropes in their narratives, and it is thus

significant that they should turn to such spatial and geographical terms to frame their critique of the West's dominance of Africa.

The three works considered here come from two different periods of Francophone African writing and cinema. The two films by Ousmane Sembène date from the immediate post-Independence era. This was a period when new social and political formations were expectantly awaited, but when the physical space of countries such as Senegal remained demarcated by the divisions inherited from the departed colonial administration. *Borom Sarret* (1963) is set in Dakar, the capital of Senegal. The narrative follows a low caste carter for one day around the divided city, thus exploring the residues of colonialism in the post-colonial urban space as the carter travels the city. *La Noire de…* (1965) is set both in Dakar and in Antibes, and tells the story of a French family's African maid who leaves Senegal with her employers to follow her dream of living in the 'motherland' of France. The history of colonial and post-colonial relations between France and Africa is explored through the figuring of space, and particularly trhough the cinematography.

Monenembo's novel *Cinéma* published over thirty years later, in 1997, dates from our own current era of 'globalisation'. The narrative, however, is set in 1958, the year in which Guinea voted for independence from France. Guinea was the first colony to free itself from French colonial rule, yet its history from Independence until the 1980s, under its president and supporter of African unity Sekou Touré, has often been seen as one of national fragmentation. In particular, on the pretext of a 'conspiracy' against the ruling party, Guineans from the ethnic Peul or Fulani group were persecuted by Touré's ruling Malinke ethnic group. This had spatial repercussions, for non-nomadic Peuls in Guinea tend to be concentrated in particular geographical areas, such as the central Fouta-Djallon plateau where *Cinéma* is set. The protagonists of *Cinéma* are ehtnically Peul, and the novel is a historical novel insofar as it is set in 1958 during the period of change from colonial rule to independence. But the novel is also informed by perspectives coming from later developments in Guinea's post-colonial history: the violence that is unleashed as the narrative progresses no doubt foreshadows the violence of the post-Independence situation for Peuls in

Guinea, and there is also latent in the text knowledge of America's current global economic and cultural ascendancy, images of which pervade the novel. This mixed temporal siting of the narrative has spatial ramifications, and as the young male protagonist of *Cinéma* seeks his role models amongst the differing influences on his life, the complex strands of post-colonial Guinea's history are expressed through the spaces presented in the text.

This article will look first at some features of the models of space circulated by the imaginary geographies of colonialism and globalisation and then consider how space is configured in the light of this in the three works under discussion.

Colonial geographies of Africa

Europe's imaginary geographies of Africa long predate the history of direct European administration of these areas as colonial possessions. Images of Africans and Africa appear in all kinds of written documents from memoirs to official accounts, and also in visual representations, from the early modern period onwards in continental Europe. Sometimes these images borrowed from, and sometimes they added to, the literary and artistic legacy of Ancient Europe's contact with the African continent, but these pre-colonial images differ fundamentally from colonial images of Africa.

For the images of Africa and Africans arising from early mercantile and exploratory contact with Africa were not significantly used as *propaganda* in Europe or in Africa. As Europe's mercantile relations with Africa in this pre-colonial period consisted of private enterprises, and did not come under European State control, national resources were not implicated in these overseas operations, and no *national* legitimacy needed to be provided for, say, the French trading presence in Senegal.

It is only really with the onset of the 'High Colonial' period (roughly from the European scramble to partition Africa in the 1880s until the Second World War), that the images of Africa produced by European nations began to be a matter of internal political importance for

the European nation-state. For it is in this period that the colonial project needed to be framed for European audiences as a necessity: because the contemporary European colonial expansion required increasingly large investment abroad, this had to be legitimated for public opinion and the electorate at home. Thus Africans and Africa had to be presented as calling out for the presence of Europeans. Overarching national narratives of colonialism arose and were instanced across a range of institutions and in a range of forms — scientific, religious, philanthropic and economic, for example. These State-sanctioned narratives emphasised the economic and political benefits of colonialism to the home country, and colonialism's moral and physical benefits to Africa and Africans.

Overall, European colonialism can be seen as a project that was to a significant degree a spatial one. The Berlin conference of 1884-5 was concerned with the parcelling out of territorial 'lots' in Africa amongst the European powers. Within the frontiers of these 'lots', the European colonisers were particularly concerned to enforce borders and divisions, and to establish social hierarchies and oppositions of space, in order to make Africa knowable, administrable, and tameable (Black, 1997: 58-63). Much colonial ideology was aimed at the colonised populations: in particular, it aimed to make the colonisers' task easier by 'educating' out of indigenous populations their resistance to domination by Europeans. As David Spurr notes, 'The anxiety of colonial discourse comes from the fact that the coloniser's power depends on the presence, not to say consent, of the colonised. What is power without its object?'(Spurr, 1996: 11). France, with its assimilationist colonial project, was always particularly keen to gain the adherence of Africans to the colonial project, and the French colonial education services in Africa commissioned school textbooks particularly with these aims in mind (*Institut Colonial International,* 1931: 140, 152). These adapted French reading and writing primers and works of history and geography are strongly marked by colonial ideologies which figured Africa and Africans as the negative pole in an elaborate series of oppositions. Many of the formulations of the adapted textbooks are spatial ones, which teach Africans to view African space as organised according to usefully tendentious principles, and to recognise a geographical hierarchy in which France comes far above Africa. The adapted

geography textbooks are particularly informative in this respect, but some of the reading primers also contained geographical notes, and the following extracts give a glimpse of the spatial imaginings that these texts projected:

Un homme riche et puissant n'a pas seulement des propriétés dans la ville qu'il habite ; il en a le plus souvent dans différentes localités […] Il en est de même d'une grande nation : elle doit posséder au dehors des territoires qui forment ce qu'on appelle ses colonies […] La France, qui est une grande et puissante nation, et qui a une flotte considérable, a, naturellement, de nombreuses colonies. (Machuel, 1902 : 237)

L'Afrique Occidentale Française est un pays naturellement riche. […] Mais, tout riche qu'il soit, ce beau pays ne réalisera toutes ses aptitudes que le jour où ses habitants se seront mis résolument au travail […] L'habitant de nos possessions africaines n'a que trop de tendances à se contenter des fruits que lui tendent les arbres et du peu d'eau que le soleil lui laisse. A cet enfant insouciant, nous avons le devoir de révéler ce que son pays peut devenir […] Cela justifie amplement l'enseignement de la géographie dans nos écoles africaines. (Hardy, 1913 : 78)

La nature a favorisé **l'Europe.** Son climat et la fertilité de son sol permettent presque partout les cultures […] L'ingéniosité des ses habitants a su tirer parti de tous ces avantages […] **L'Afrique** est encore peu développée, sauf au Nord et au Sud depuis longtemps colonisés. […] **La France** possède des territoires qu'elle administre et qui s'appellent des colonies. **La France** instruit les habitants et améliore leur façon de vivre. Elle elle fait œuvre civilisatrice. […] [L'] unité géographique *[de l'Afrique Occidentale Française*] est encore augmentée par le fait qu'elle est sous une autorité unique, celle du Gouverneur Général de l'Afrique Occidentale Française. (Rousseau, 1927 : 16, 18, 31, 33)

The spatial schemes that emerge from documents such as these can be categorised fairly simply. France is always foremost in any geographical survey: she may be preceded by Europe as a whole, but only in order to show France's particularly favoured position within the continent. Africa is never presented as an entity in its own right, but always as the negative term in a comparative structure. Thus the continent is always compared unfavourably with Europe in terms of its extreme climate and lack of population, and when the document is intended for the teacher, it will often also include comments on the lack of industriousness and education of Africa's inhabitants. Permanent buildings, railways, roads and cities are particularly emphasised as marks of civilisation: France's superlative cities and efficient infrastructure are contrasted with the scattered, non-permanent dwellings of Africa, and the lack of passable thoroughfares linking one part of the continent to another. This rhetoric contrasting France and Africa is taken one step further with the question of borders: proper countries such as France have clearly delineated natural borders, but these have to be brought to Africa to bring order, progress and transparent administration to the continent and its inhabitants. In short, everything that is praiseworthy is to be found above 36 degrees North: Europeans will bring these praiseworthy things to Africa, but Africa will always lag behind.[2]

Many critics have pointed to the pervasive verticality of much of this colonial spatial imagining, which has its corollary in visions where Europe and Europeans are perched at the top. They find themselves in high buildings such as the Eiffel tower, the pinnacle of European engineering achievement in 1889; on promontories such as the Victoria Falls or Mt. Kenya in Africa — thus instancing the 'Monarch of all I survey' trope, as Mary Louis Pratt has termed it (Pratt, 1992: 201-207); or first in a list of human and moral qualities which place Africa last. This spatial imagining of Europe at the pinnacle is replicated in taxonomies which allow Europe, and more particularly here France, to take up the prime position in the binary oppositions on which colonial epistemology is predicated (Loomba, 1998: 47; Said, 1995: 96-98): black/white, bad/good, naked/clothed, savage/civilised, extreme/temperate, backwards/progressive, pre-industrial/industrial, and so forth.

The photographs reproduced in figures one and two provide interesting examples of the transference of these tropes into visual discourse.[3] There is a clear dichotomy established through the photographic composition between white mastery (in practical and social terms) and black apprenticeship, and this is encoded in both narrative and spatial terms. The white instructors physically hold the globe between their hands, symbolically demonstrating their monopoly of abstract knowledge and 'mastery' of the world. Moreover, the very composition of these two photographs reproduces the characteristic spatial tropes of colonial relations, for in each the white figure is at the top, higher, dominating and surveying beneath him or her the vassal-like ranks of native Africans. These photographs dating from the last decades of French colonial rule were used by the photo agency NAUD/Afrique-Photo and by the United Nations, and they illustrate the extent to which relations of global domination were sufficiently naturalised to be circulated as undisturbing visual truisms even in the years when independence movements across Africa were vociferously contesting this dominant/dominated formation.

Colonial and post-colonial geographies in *Borom Sarret, La Noire de…* and *Cinéma*

The three works that will be considered here date not from colonial rule of Africa, but from the post-colonial era. What then, is the relevance to these works of *colonial* representations of space? Nicholas Thomas argues in the introduction to his work on colonialism's culture that although State-administered colonialism lasted generally less than a century, the ideological justifications for colonialism were circulated so powerfully that colonial ideology persists in European and African culture and institutions, even in today's post-colonial era (Thomas, 1994: 1-2). This persistence of colonial ideology is one reason why the three works I will consider here dialogue with and critique the colonial imagination of space.

The other reason is that the concrete spatial actions of colonialism, which stemmed from its imaginary geographies, continue to structure the spaces of Africa today. For example, all

three narratives considered here are set in urban Africa, and the very existence of most African cities is the legacy of colonialism, as is their urban geography.[4] Contemporary African cities are to a great degree colonial constructs, initially alien spatial complexes which are nonetheless now firmly embedded in the realities of modern Africa. The colonial city was built around the implementation and maintenance of binary distinctions: there was the white district and the native district, public buildings and private dwellings, the suburbs and the town centre, the town itself and the peripheral shanties. Essentially, colonial space was demarcated according to a logic of visibility: it was not enough to know that such distinctions exist, they had to be seen patently to exist in concrete space and time, and to give rise to a 'corrrect', desired form of spatial practice which could be taught, as the following extract rehearses:

Les trois enfants visitent la ville

1. La vue d'ensemble de la ville. Si possible, conduire les élèves à un endroit d'où l'on voit toute la ville ; à défaut, faire examiner des gravures.

2. <u>Les diverses parties de la ville</u> : les faubourgs, les quartiers. Les rues, avenues, boulevards (la chaussée et les trottoirs.) Les places, les squares et jardins publics. Les édifices publics (faire trouver leurs noms : écoles, églises, poste, tribunal, gare, caserne, etc.) Les principaux magazines (les faire énumérer.)

3. Une rue large et une rue étroite ; une rue animée, bruyante, et une rue paisible ; une rue encombrée et une rue déserte.

4. Circuler dans la ville ; suivre le trottoir ; traverser la rue ; visiter la ville. L'habitant d'une ville s'appelle un citadin. (Davesne, 1953 : 216)

Such demarcations continue to structure the contemporary post-colonial, global-era, African city, as recent commentators have argued (Simon, 1992: 145-155; Abdullah, No Date, No Page Numbers).

Yet indigenous demarcations of land use in West Africa suggest an inverse understanding of the relationship between space and social distinction: along the Niger river,

for example, fishermen, pirogue builders and herders have use of very distinct and different parts of the river and its banks, plains and waters, but these gradated distinctions, though formalised, are not made visible on the land itself, for space is not perceived as external to or separate from human social distinction, but as part of it (Moorehead, 1989: 256-272). Thus markers of spatial distinction are internalised as part of social function; space is not something outside the self on which social distinction is inscribed, but is instead conceived of as an entity entering into a dynamic, and evolving, interaction with self and community.

Borom Sarret

In *Borom Sarret*, the conflict between the African human and the inhuman post-colonial city is very stark. The protagonist Borom Sarret is portrayed as having lost his history in the city; and when he tries to recover it, by paying a passing story-singer to relate the deeds of his ancestors to him, he unwittingly parts with what will be his last money for the day. Verticality takes on extreme significance in this film: Borom Sarret is excluded from Le Plateau/'The Heights', the smart, upper portion of the town where the whites and rich bourgeoisie live. These 'Heights' are policed, the visible divisions in the city thus being strictly and visibly enforced. When Borom Sarret strays into 'The Heights' to make some money by taking a young bourgeois man home, he is caught and stripped of his livelihood, his cart. Moreover, he loses his past and history again too: the medal from the Second World War, which he would have been given for fighting for France, falls from his pocket as he searches for his papers, and the policeman confiscates it. As Borom Sarret returns miserably home, mulling over just whose fault it is that life in Dakar has become so hard, he passes in front of the imposing monument to Senegal's Independence, a notably phallic structure. The camera pauses on the monument in all its impassive verticality, emphasising the persistence of these vertical structures even within the Independence era, and the exclusion of ordinary Africans from the city in which these structures operate.

Verticality, then, is marked very negatively in the narrative of *Borom Sarret*, and the cinematography is used to underscore this: crippled beggars crawl below Borom Sarret along

the ground, highlighting that there are those worse off even than Borom Sarret, who at least has a means to make a living. The policeman who stops Borom Sarret in 'The Heights' towers over him as the carter attempts to retrieve his fallen medal from the ground. The tall, white hospital, colonial building *par excellence,* which dwarfs all those who enter it, is portrayed as a place of death and not life. Both its height and its 'whiteness' stand accused here, for the woman in labour who is taken there by the carter loses her child, and we see her husband emerging with the swaddled dead baby in his arms; Borom Sarret then drives him to the cemetery.

But while verticality is negatively marked, horizontality has a more positive value in the film. For example, the carter's journey around the city brings him into contact with those who are in a worse situation even than he and his family are, such as the cripples, and the couple who lose their child. With these people, he expresses solidarity by his acts, thoughts, and words. Also in his travels across the city, he encounters the 'griot' or storyteller who sings of his ancestors. While this is portrayed as a moment of unwise escapism for Borom Sarret, it does give the sense that the carter can reconnect momentarily with an identity beyond that simply of an impoverished proletarian who is excluded from portions of the space of the city he nominally inhabits.. It is in attempting to cross from the horizontal city where he works to the vertical city from which he is excluded, that Borom Sarret loses everything – the cart that is confiscated (along with his medal) is his whole livelihood. Borom Sarret appears defeated by the vertical geography of the colonial, and now post-colonial city, by its abstract rather than horizontal, more human geography: 'The Heights' tower over him, as do the policeman and the clinic, while the great upright needle of the monument to Independence remains static and impassive as he passes dwarfed beneath it.

La Noire de…

If Borom Sarret loses his livelihood because of the persistence of the colonial city's verticality even in Independence days, Diouana, the black maid of *La Noire de…* loses her life because of the vertical relations in which she is trapped in post-colonial Dakar and in France,

in Antibes. In Dakar, she has lived with her family in one of the native areas of the city which is divided off from the rest of the city by a busy road, and reached by crossing a road bridge. Here, dwellings are low, jostled together, and people freely circulate on a horizontal plane: the district itself is not portrayed as rife with hierarchical divisions. Further, even when Diouana is in the home of her white employers in Dakar, the house is open-plan with doors thrown open onto the streets and garden outside, and Diouana moves relatively freely in this white area of the city as she accompanies her employers' children to school or at play.

At this point in the narrative, it is true that Diouana is confined in her role as black children's maid in the white household in Dakar. Nevertheless, she has relative autonomy and earns money which liberates her from the life of indigence that had begun to threaten, and allows her freedom in the city: she and her fiancé take walks together through Dakar, untrammelled by the same strictures as hemmed in Borom Sarret. Diouana's nonchalant dance across Dakar's war memorial on one of these walks, and her enthusiastic embracing of consumer values make important points: they illustrate the extent to which she believes that money has freed her from the strict hierarchy which had structured Africans' relations with the French in the past. However, this war memorial sequence of the film foreshadows ironically Diouana's own death in the service of the French: for the 'monument aux morts' in Dakar commemorates those Senegalese who lost their lives 'in the service of France'; Diouana's carefree dance shows her blind to the parallels with her own situation, and towards the end of the film her death receives no such glorification via a monument, only a brief, uncomprehending write-up as a 'fait-divers' in *Nice-Matin.*

When Diouana moves from Dakar with her employers to Antibes in Southern France, she finds herself unpaid, a skivvy to increasingly irascible and savage whites, a virtual prisoner in their tower-block apartment from which she can only look longingly at the views of Antibes and the Mediterranean outside, except when she is sent out to go shopping. Her relationship with her employers becomes one where black is increasingly dominated by white, and the cinematography of the film emphasises this in its numerous shots of an interior décor with black and white floor tiles, or wall coverings, patterned in geometric opposition. And in the

décor as in the narrative, black is always swamped by white. Further, the film includes some subtle ironisation on European hierarchies of culture, for the Mediterranean sea on which Diouana gazes is presented in colonial geography text books as the cradle of European civilisation; and yet Diouana's Mediterranean employers are far from civilised, but inhuman, dishonest, savage and childish: indeed, they illustrate all those negative qualities which colonial discourse attributes to Africans, while Diouana remains dignified and humane to the end of the film. Diouana's final act of resistance to her exploitation is to slit her wrists while lying in the whites' bath. By this act she becomes what they had always treated her as – a mere object over which they towered intellectually, culturally and financially. The 'horizontality' of Diouana's death is thus ambiguous; for it may be an ironic act of revenge, a 'look how you always considered me' kind of statement. On the other hand, it is perhaps an admission of defeat, implying a refusal to contest the hierarchy in which black is always the negative term, and submission to the hierarchy. And Diouana's death does trouble her employers to a certain extent, staining their bath and their consciences enough to have them attempt to compensate her family in Dakar. Nonetheless, it seems that her death will quickly be forgotten, and so while the film portrays vertical relations of hierarchy and domination negatively, it is not clear that the horizontal plane is presented as an effective plane of contestation.

Cinéma

The narrative of *Cinéma* is set in a town depicted as the pure product of colonialism, a town conceived by the colonial railway builders as a transit point and now, on the eve of independence, both spatially marginal and populated by the marginalised:

L'air de Mamou attirait les malfrats et les gueux, les fous, les monstres inimaginables. Quoi de plus naturel que d'abriter une telle populace, s'agissant d'une bourgade conçue sous les funestes auspices du chemin de fer ! […] Mamou — cité sans nom et sans mémoire […] — était condamnée dès l'origine à tenir lieu de bordel, d'asile et de bivouac ! (Monenembo, 1997 : 157-8)

Mamou's historical contingency makes it a town without name or memory, a chimera of a place unrooted in real and present Africa. It is thus significant that *Cinéma* is in large measure a narrative about the authority on which social existence is based. The first-person narrator of the novel, the young boy Binguel, rejects the authority of his father and his two mothers, Peul (Fulani) Muslims. He also rejects the accumulated authority represented by his family's religious and cultural background, encapsulated in his rejection of the authority of his Koran School teacher. He rejects too, but remains fascinated by, the authority of his schoolmistress Mlle Saval who teaches in the French colonial school. Binguel disobeys and answers back to his family, and plays truant from both Koran school and the colonial *école primaire*. All of these authorities and the set of hierarchies in which they place Binguel are rejected in favour of the tutelage of Benté, the slightly older tearaway and self-styled 'Oklahoma Kid'. The 'Oklahoma Kid' recognises no authority apart from that of the models of behaviour given by the heroes of the American Westerns which he and Binguel watch in the town's cinema. The cinema and the two schools, French and Koranic, function as spatial metonymies for the competing social and cultural value systems in which Guinea on the eve of independence is enmeshed. For Binguel, the values propagated by American cinema win out every time against those proposed by the hierarchies both of the family's Peul and Muslim culture, and of French metropolitan culture.

In *Cinéma,* verticality is fully appropriated by Binguel under the tutelage of his mentor in crime, Benté. A whole opening portion of the narrative is narrated by Binguel from up at the very top of the iron pole which serves as the town's flag pole, where he has climbed; and his friend Benté is referred to as someone who travels by climbing over fences and roof tops, thus eluding the exclusions imposed by the town's upright barriers and in some sense making them his own. Binguel refers to himself as living 'Sur cette colline, peut-être la plus escarpée de Mamou, d'où je pouvais tout voir' (Monenembo, 1997 : 102), and many events are recounted by the young narrator from on high: the last 14 July parade that the town will see (because of Guinea's independence from France) is watched from up a mango tree, for example; the

narrator can thus 'look down' on those who always look down on the Africans, the French. Indeed, Binguel comments that, '[Ils] nous regardent toujours de haut comme s'il ne leur arrivait jamais, à eux, de saigner ou de péter' (Monenembo, 1997 : 147).

But the two young boys, while usurping or eluding verticality, find themselves increasingly marginalised, and verticality is not positively marked in the narrative: 'Tout ce qui vit haut perché finit par tomber: Regarde un peu ce qui arrive aux arbres!' (Monenembo, 1997 : 108). Under Benté's supervision, Binguel becomes 'l'Homme de l'Ouest', the man from the West, or the man *of* the West. Imbued with the rough and ready justice seen in the Westerns these boys love, Binguel shoots a man in a drunken brawl in which Benté is stabbed. Thus Binguel, modelling his life on cinematic versions of the founding values of the United States, becomes a murderer and an outcast. 'L'Homme de l'Ouest' here comes to embody and act out what are shown to be the rotten values inherent in the encroaching value system of the West.

These complex rejections of models of moral and cultural authority in a novel which is set on the eve of independence from colonial rule offer an important critique of Franco-African and American-African relations. At one level, the failure of colonial rule in *Cinéma* is encoded in the figure of the Mlle Saval, the school teacher, desirable and compassionate, but remote and condescending, who herself becomes a tragic outsider in the town as the presssure towards independence increases and the views of Guineans and of French *colons* polarise. But *Cinéma* also opens onto a critique of forms of cultural domination in the present era of American world dominance, for it is the American cultural models which this text marks as particularly pernicious: attractive and apparently meritocratic, offering the possibility of individual fulfilment outside the strictures of the accumulated authority of the community, the wholehearted embracing of them nonetheless appears to end in disaster for the African youth portrayed.[5]

Conclusion: Globalisation and Space in *Borom Sarret*, *La Noire de…* and *Cinéma*

In none of the works under discussion here is the narrative set in the current era of economic and cultural 'globalisation', roughly from the 1990s onwards. *Borom Sarret* is set in a city which is still, in essence, a colonial city demarcated by zones of exclusion and inclusion which are local and visible. *La Noire de...*, widens the geographical field of the narrative to include both the post-colonial African city in which money is the key to freedom, and the French city (Antibes) in which colour is still a bar to freedom. Interestingly, *La Noire de…* engages fairly fully with issues of consumerism through the character of Diouanna, whose hopes for life in France centre above all on being able to go clothes shopping in the best French stores guided by her French mistress. Further, issues of travel and tourism arise: the opening shots of *La Noire de…* are of a steamer slowly heading for France, and the one colour sequence of the film is a parodic, picture-postcard skip around sunny Antibes. Thus *La Noire de…* includes in its analysis of early post-colonial domination of Africa by Europe elements which, historically, have fed into the development of the phenomenon known as globalisation: that is, the growth of consumer society and the development of mass travel by Europeans and Americans for leisure/pleasure. In *Cinéma*, foreshadowings of Anglo-American *cultural* globalisation are depicted, as indigenous cultures and French colonial cultures are supplanted by the celluloid dream-worlds of Western film.

It is worth noting that globalisation for Francophones is a particularly thorny issue, and connects both to questions of authority and verticality, and to questions of fragmentation and horizontality. Globalisation in trade terms relies *not* on the existence of one, homogeneous, equal and universalised globe, in contrast to what is suggested by the ideological construct of the 'global village'. Rather, it relies on what economists term 'local advantage' —— the lack of homogeneity in the world , the cheapness of labour or raw materials in one part of the globe that makes it possible to gain competitive advantage in another part of the world. Indeed, the global capitalist's nightmare would be the disappearance of local and regional economies and the flattening out of local advantage, the death of the vertical and the triumph

of the horizontal. For France therefore, globalisation poses a power paradox: habituated to powerful economic links with Africa because of the African franc zone, France's cultural and economic advantage in Africa is threatened in the global era; and yet in the era of American domination, African countries might choose to align themselves with France as an act of resistance to this domination.

Francophonie, the 'linguistic commonwealth' model which French governments have used to reassert French authority in the post-colonial era, can be understood as forming a cultural bulwark against the Anglo-American tide. However, behind the apparently inclusive rhetoric inherent in *Francophonie*'s idea of a 'linguistic community' — a notion emphasising horizontal rather than vertical relations — it can be seen to trap those who buy into it in another set of vertical, hierarchical relations, where France is returned to the summit. The Cameroonian writer Mongo Béti commented recently that African writers are drawn to Francophonia because of the perceived prestige and real economic power of the 'centre', that is, of France:

Il y avait des auteurs africains réunis autour du thème de la francophonie. Je n'ai pas compris pourquoi. Cette récupération procède d'une demande des Africains. Ils veulent et l'argent du centre et l'attrait du centre. (Saint-Éloi, 2000 : 6)

To this extent, Francophonie's tropes of horizontality can be understood as a legitimating discourse smoothing the passage of vertical relations of economic and cultural domination.

Thus verticality, hierarchy and authority are still important issues for Francophone African writing and cinema even in the post-colonial, supposedly flattened-out era of globalisation, for relations of domination continue to impose themselves, and the rhetoric of the horizontal becomes problematic. In particular, it is no coincidence that in their critique of the workings of relations of domination through space, the three works considered here encode both the vertical and the horizontal as largely negative.

It was noted earlier that in indigenous African spatial understandings, space is often seen as always already inscribed within the social realm. In general terms, the colonial imaginary conceived of space as external to the self, as a domain upon which one could act the better to administer the populations that inhabited it: one lived 'in' space, one did not create space by interaction with it. It was thus an inert realm which could be remodelled, not a realm which was in process. The African spaces shown in the works studied here are traversed by the marks of this will to administer, and characters are defeated by this divided, non-human space. But the imaginary geographies of the Western which so fire the protagonists of *Cinéma* are not presented as a solution, no doubt because of the legacy of another strain of colonialism which they encode. What is valorised instead, I would argue, is agency. In *Borom Sarret*, despite the defeat of the carter, the narrative ends not with stasis but with the carter's wife taking up the search for a livelihood. Diouana's death in *La Noire de…* similarly figures defeat and resistance in tension, as argued earlier. And in the first person narrator of *Cinéma* the reader is presented throughout with the voice of Binguel's subjectivity and with his constant rejection of models of authority in which this narrating 'I' is subjugated. Thus all three narratives can be seen to promote in the end a vision where resistance to the spatial tropes of colonialism and globalisation may be defeated in one location, only to re-emerge in, or be displaced to, another site.

Endnotes

[1] Sembène, Ousmane (dir.) (1963) *Borom Sarret* Senegal, 1963, 35 mm, black and white, 18 min; Sembène, Ousmane (dir.) (1965) *La Noire de…* Senegal, 1965, 35 mm, black and white, 80 min; Monenembo, Tierno (1997) *Cinéma.* Paris: Éditions du Seuil.

[2] The pervasiveness of this discourse can be gauged by the extent to which the satire in Bernard Dadié's text (Dadié, 1959) is based on these very same commonplaces. See for example, pp. 63-64 and p. 126.

[3] Photographs reproduced from Bancel, Nicolas, Blanchard, Pascal and Delabarre, Francis (1997: 174, 177).

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[4] For details of urbanisation and its history in Africa see, for example, O'Connor, Anthony (1983) and Tarver, .James D. (ed.), (1994).

[5] It is a moot point whether the final revelation of Binguel's hero status in the very closing lines of *Cinéma* should be read as merely an ironic comment by the police officer, prefacing Bineguel's arrest; or as a structural irony which gives a final positive gloss to the possibilities of Anglo-American globalisation despite all that has preceded this moment; or as an embedding of political critique of contemporary Guinea into the ending of the narrative, because the police officer's comments, if read as non-ironic, would valorise murder of 'Cette ordure de Bambâdo' (p. 217), and would thus legitimate wanton violence against a Bambâdo, the chronicler caste of Peul society, pointing to a repression of Peul culture, as well as to a symbolic death of Peul — and perhaps by extension African — narrative.

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