

# DAVID DIOP

# FRÈRE D'ÂME

novel  
175 pages

LANGUAGE: French

RIGHTS SOLD: English world  
rights (Farrar, Straus and  
Giroux), French (Le Seuil),  
Italian (Neri Pozza).

To be published - August 2018



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**DAVID DIOP** was born in Paris and raised in Senegal. He currently lives in South West France where he is head of Arts, Languages and Literature Research Department at University of Pau. His research work embraces topics such as French literature of the 18th century and European representations of Africa in the 17th and 18th centuries.

*Frère d'âme*, Diop's second novel, is to be published in August 2018 as a lead title of the "rentrée littéraire" by Éditions du Seuil.

With a concise and penetrating style, David Diop captures a young Senegalese man's mind hurtling toward madness after experiencing the nonsense and horror of war and death. Using rhythm of the native language of the Wolof people, David Diop imparts urgency to almost every page.

That morning, at Captain Armand's whistle, two friends raised in Senegal far away from the cold entrenched camps of the French front, throw themselves in the battlefield surrounded by other soldiers. When Mademba Diop is deadly wounded, Alfa Ndiaye could not bear to finish him.

Even after his third supplication, Alfa Ndiaye did not kill Mademba. To take one's life is not a gesture within reach, not a human gesture. When Mademba dies, Alfa Ndiaye loses his mind.

Following each whistle call of Captain Armand, he now runs out of the trench towards the blue-eyed enemies. Then he picks one, kills him and carefully slices his hand with his sharp machete. Every time, he brings the hand back to the trench with him. One, two, three, four... eight hands. Alfa Ndiaye begins to scare his fellow brothers in arms.

Rumor has it, the once hero becomes dangerous. In their eyes, he must be a *dëmm*, a sorcerer and soul-devourer.

Removed from the hell of fighting, far from his native village of Gandiol and surrounded by a language he does not understand, Alfa draws his story and that of many other African soldiers during the World War I.

Written with an hypnotic style — reminding Ahmadou Kourouma's language — David Diop's *Frère d'âme* provides a subtle and powerful view of the turmoil of war and explores with poetry the dark side of men and the depths of madness.

« Pour tous, soldats noirs et blancs, je suis devenu la mort. Je le sais, je l'ai compris. Qu'ils soient soldats Toubabs ou soldats Chocolats comme moi, ils pensent que je suis un sorcier, un dévoreur du dedans des gens, un *dëmm*. Que je le suis depuis toujours, mais que la guerre l'a révélé. La rumeur toute nue a prétendu que j'avais mangé le dedans de Mademba Diop, mon plus que frère avant même sa mort. La rumeur effrontée a dit qu'il fallait se méfier de moi. La rumeur fesses à l'air a dit que je dévorais le dedans des ennemis d'en face, mais aussi le dedans des amis. La rumeur impudique a dit : "Attention, prudence. Que fait-il des mains coupées ? Il nous les montre et ensuite elles disparaissent. Attention, prudence." » **FRÈRE D'ÂME, DAVID DIOP**

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