

DISPLACED VOICES AND *ACCENTSCAPES* IN FRENCH AND FRANCOPHONE  
SUB-SAHARAN CINEMA:  
RECASTING, RESHAPING, AND RESTORING IDENTITY (-IES) IN  
TRANSNATIONAL FILMS

---

A Dissertation presented to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School  
at the University of Missouri-Columbia

---

In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

---

by

SETH A. COMPAORÉ

Dr. Valerie Kaussen, Dissertation Supervisor

JULY 2020

APPROVAL PAGE

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

DISPLACED VOICES AND *ACCENTSCAPES* IN FRENCH AND FRANCOPHONE

SUB-SAHARAN CINEMA:

RECASTING, RESHAPING, AND RESTORING IDENTITY (-IES) IN

TRANSNATIONAL FILMS

presented by Seth A. Compaoré,

a candidate for the degree of doctor of philosophy,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

---

Professor Valerie Kaussen

---

Professor Mary Jo Muratore

---

Professor Brad Prager

---

Professor Roberta Tabanelli

For my wife and son.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to acknowledge the Department of Romance Languages and the Department of Film Studies at the University of Missouri for having supported me throughout my dissertation writing process. Secondly, I would like to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Mary Jo Muratore, Dr. Brad Prager and Dr. Roberta Tabanelli, for taking the time to read my research and offer their welcome suggestions and insight. I am most grateful to my dissertation supervisor, Dr. Valerie Kaussen. Without her tireless effort the completion of this dissertation would not have been possible. Her academic support and encouragement were essential and valuable to my completion of this study.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Introduction: Making a case for “accentscapes” in French and Francophone films.....	1
Sound in cinema and “displaced voices” .....	1
Accents and language communities.....	4
Immigrant/transnational and accented films.....	9
Transnationalism.....	17
From Appaduari’s “scapes” and Higbee’s notion of “soundscape” to “accentscapes”.....	19
Michel Chion’s take on sound in cinema.....	25
Chapter Outline.....	32
Chapter 1: Locating accentscapes in contemporary sub-Saharan francophone documentaries: Migratory narratives and accented cinematic discourse as a site of linguistic resistance.....	37
Social and historical context and justification for the use of documentaries.....	37
Accentscapes in <i>Paris mon Paradis</i> .....	47
Accentscapes in <i>Le Point de Vue du Lion</i> .....	55
Linguistic discourse as a site of resistance in <i>Nous, sans papiers de France</i> .....	61
The homeland as a space of alienation.....	77
Chapter 2: Accentscape as reimagining the homeland: from calligraphic, musical, and tactile memories to restorative recollections in <i>Fatima</i> and <i>Amin</i> .....	82
Context and evolution of representations of North and sub-Saharan African immigrants in French and francophone films.....	82
Multilingualism and multivocality.....	85
Heteroglossia, language use, and accentscapes in <i>Fatima</i> .....	91
Language use and accentscapes in <i>Amin</i> .....	101
The homeland’s time and space and the trauma of separation.....	107
Calligraphic, musical, tactile, and olfactory memories of the homeland.....	111
Chapter 3: Accentscape as “other” spaces: From idyllic village to postcolonial rewriting .....	117
The making of <i>Adama</i> .....	117
Space, home, and its three-part sequence: homelessness, homesickness, and homecoming.....	121
The homeland’s idyllic chronotopes: nature, mountains, and African spirits.....	126

The two-fold animist conception of the spirits: the “vital breath” and the individual spirit.....	133
Accentscapes: Closed chronotope and the voices of the spirits.....	136
<i>Adama</i> : a re-appropriation of African images and a tribute to Senegalese riflemen..	144
Abd al Malik and <i>Qu’Allah Bénisse la France!</i> .....	148
Filming the <i>banlieue</i> before and in <i>Qu’Allah Bénisse la France!</i> .....	151
<i>Qu’Allah Bénisse la France !</i> : A false simulacrum of Kassovitz’s <i>La Haine</i> .....	157
Obscurantist Islam in multicultural France: Malik proposes a universal space.....	162
Bhabha’s third space: From Marivaux’s theatrical world to the <i>banlieue</i> of Saint-Denis.....	174
A Postcolonial rewriting of <i>Le jeu de l’amour et du hasard</i> .....	183
Conclusion.....	190
Accentscapes, initiation, and maritime journeys.....	191
Accentscapes: Foucault, Lefebvre, and De Certeau’s notions of space.....	194
Closed chronotope: a cinematic space for accentscape (Accentscapes in cars, buses, and trains).....	197
Accentscapes: Others, Outsiders, and creating communities and communal identifications.....	198
Appendix.....	201
Summaries of films in Chapter One.....	201
Summaries of films in Chapter Two.....	202
Summaries of films in Chapter Three.....	203
Summaries of other frequently referenced films.....	205
Works Cited and Consulted.....	206
Vita.....	216

## ABSTRACT

This study features notions of identity, language, integration, journeys of home-seeking and homecoming, and the wanderings of homelessness. It explores displaced voices and the self-coined term “accentscape” in ten films made by either established French film directors or less renowned and/or second-generation African immigrant film directors. Inspired by Arjun Appadurai’s term *ethnoscape*, accentscape refers to how accents construct meaning and social identities for the films’ exilic, diasporic, and postcolonial characters. I demonstrate the intervention of “accentscapes” by oral, vocal, and musical means, or in the film narratives as fragmented, emotive, and lyric structures.

In relation to Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of heteroglossia, accentscapes appear in linguistic landscapes challenging Eurocentric perceptions of the exilic or diasporic communities in France in *Nous, sans papiers de France* (Nicolas Philibert et al., 1997), *Paris Mon Paradis* (Eléonore Yaméogo, 2011) and *Le Point de Vue du Lion* (Didier Awadi, 2011). Accentscapes intervene by calligraphic and pictographic means in *Fatima* (Philippe Faucon, 2015) and *L’Esquive* (Abdellatif Kéchiche, 2004). Thirdly, as versions of Michel Foucault’s heterotopia, accentscapes are the counter-spaces that the postcolonial protagonists in *L’Esquive* (Kéchiche, 2004), *Adama* (Simon Rouby, 2015), and *Qu’Allah Bénisse la France!* (Abd al Malik, 2015) create in France to replace their homelands. Finally, using Michel Chion’s concept of sounds and voices that are left “wandering the surface of the screen,” this study shows “accentscapes” in *Fatima* (Faucon, 2015) and *Amin* (Faucon, 2018) as “wandering” sounds emanating from an interstitial context and negotiating between two sources characterized by the seen and the unseen.

## **Introduction: Making a case for “accentscapes” in French and Francophone films**

### **Sounds in cinema and “displaced voices”**

With changes in the global configuration of power, territoriality, and media associated with postmodernism and economic globalization, many French and francophone films from the past three decades deal with notions of identity, integration, and journeys of various kinds: home-seeking journeys; journeys of homecoming; and the wanderings of homelessness. This dissertation’s thematic framework will be structured around these key notions. Rather than approaching the themes of dislocation and exile through images and the visual, my dissertation explores how these themes are expressed through sound. Film studies have been historically less interested in sound than images due to its status as “non-representational” (i.e. unseen).<sup>1</sup> In this study, I highlight the importance of sound in cinema and what I define as “accentscapes”, a new way to read immigrant cinema. I will discuss a set of ten films directed by filmmakers whose ethnicities range from French, to Francophone African, and to second-generation Francophone immigrants.<sup>2</sup> As we will see, each of these works are part of what film scholar Hamid Naficy defines as “accented cinema.” “Accentscapes”, and how they intervene at key moments in these films, will be

---

<sup>1</sup> Sound in cinema refers to lip-sync dialogue, dubbed dialogue, voice-over narrative, music, special effects, ambient sound, and the absence of sound, or silence. When considering sound in film, it is helpful to differentiate between two types of sound produced on or off screen: diegetic sound and nondiegetic sound. Diegetic sound consists of dialogue, music, and environmental noise (breezes, traffic jams, etc.) that belong to the film’s internal world. Nondiegetic sound consists of noise that is not part of the film’s internal narrative space including soundtrack music and sound effects (Oumano, 26).

<sup>2</sup> This dissertation analyses the following films : *Nous, sans-papiers de France* (Nicolas Philibert et al., 1997), *Moi et mon Blanc* (S. Pierre Yaméogo, 2003), *L’Esquive* (Abdellatif Kéchiche, 2004), *Paris mon Paradis* (Eléonore Yaméogo, 2011), *Qu’Allah Bénisse la France* (Abd al Malik, 2014), *Fatima* (Philippe Faucon, 2015), *Adama* (Simon Rouby, 2015), *The African Doctor* (Julien Rambaldi, 2016), *Le Point de Vue du Lion* (Didier Awadi, 2016) and *Amin* (Philippe Faucon, 2018).

the main focus of this dissertation, but first several important terms and notions in cinema must be defined in this introduction.

Among the directors studied here, the French directors are often well-established critically and commercially, while the African and immigrant filmmakers tend to be lesser known. This is a statement itself on the film industry's marginalization of the "voices" of displaced or dislocated immigrant and African directors. Within the ten films under consideration, the voices of the protagonists are likewise "displaced." I use the term "displaced voices" to define the ways in which exile and diaspora alter voice and language. These vary depending on whether the protagonists are exiled, temporarily dislocated, or are members of long-standing diasporic communities. Displaced voices thus refers to the accents acquired by the protagonists as they learn to speak new languages, or to the ways that their native languages become hybridized with the languages of the spaces they pass through and of the communities they encounter on their journeys between Africa and France. In all these cases, the displaced voice is evocative of the emotion, conflict, struggles, and sometimes creativity that emerge from geographical dislocation. I employ the term displaced voices to describe and analyze both diegetic and non-diegetic music and diegetic sounds. The latter often alludes to the cultures and cultural values of the homelands left behind as well as to the cross-cultural and cross-class experiences of those dislocated and exiled from their homelands. Displaced voices, then, denotes how memory is represented in films centered on diasporic subjects, and how their distant homelands, cultures, and values are recalled and expressed through vocal, musical, and other aural signs.

The films studied in this dissertation all present juxtaposed and multilingual narratives and lost characters involved in various journeys of border and identity crossing. These fragmented narrative structures take place in numerous places, use flashbacks, and at times jump between different characters' stories in non-traditional ways. In terms of filmic technique, they emphasize narrative fragmentation and juxtaposition (of stories and discourses) through montage or abrupt cuts. The stories are represented as fragmented through flashbacks and movements back and forth between the homeland and the locations of exile. For example, Philippe Faucon's *Amin* (2018) alternates between two distinct time-space configurations of the protagonist's homeland and hostland. S. Pierre Yaméogo's *Moi et mon Blanc* (2003) duplicates many scenes that happened in Paris in the first half of the film by creating a mirror world in Ouagadougou in the latter half.

The filmmakers themselves often experience border crossings as they deal with various foreign and local state agencies, and with production and distribution norms and regulations. Since these films are often transnational co-productions, their directors must constantly negotiate between the filmic standards and practices of their home countries and those of the host societies in which they film.<sup>3</sup> Like their directors, these transnational films take their protagonists beyond the boundaries of their homelands on journeys of border and identity crossing that are not just geographical but emotional and psychological as well. Moreover, the directors, like their protagonists, engage in constant dialogue between their places of departure and their hostlands. They therefore create

---

<sup>3</sup> This is especially the case for African directors Pierre S. Yaméogo (*Moi et mon Blanc*, 2003) and Eléonore Yaméogo (*Paris mon Paradis*, 2011), the French director of African-immigrant descent Abd al Malik (*Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!*, 2014), and for French directors Simon Rouby (*Adama*, 2015), Julien Rambaldi (*The African Doctor*, 2016), and Philippe Faucon (*Fatima*, 2015 and *Amin*, 2018).

films that “speak” with local and global voices. Emblematic of these filmmakers’ own positions in-between the center and the margin, and the global and local, they represent the local, whether France or Africa, as situated in a larger global space and thus traversed by global cultures.

### **Accents and language communities**

One of the key components of all the films in this study is that the protagonists speak with accents. It is therefore necessary to first discuss the term “accent” and the diverse language communities in which accent can be found. According to Beth McGuire, accent refers to “how the traits of speakers of one language—including melody, pitch, lilt, stress, pace, resonance, phonetic variation, and vocal posture—get carried over to a second language to create a distinct and somewhat predictable way of speaking” (368). Accent also refers to the way a group of people speak a language that it shares with other groups of people. To this end, McGuire adds that “accent refers to how a particular group of people speak their own language and/or how they speak another language. So, a person from Mississippi will have a particular American accent of English, and when s/he speaks a language that is not their native language, like French, they will speak French with a Mississippi American accent” (368).

Hamid Naficy’s description of accent resonates with McGuire’s. He points to two main ideas when talking about accents in what he defines “accented cinema”: first, the cumulative traits in pronunciation that indicate where a person is from and, second, the stress laid on a particular word or syllable that catches the ear in the act of speaking (22-23). Even though the general perception among linguists is that it is impossible to speak without an accent, certain pronunciations in French, British English, American English,

and other languages are considered standardized. In addition, there are often regional accents within a standardized language or accent. For example, in standardized French pronunciation there are many regional accents including *parisien*, *phocéen*, or *marseillais*, *alsacien*, *provencial*, *corse*, and more.

In French cinema, the most common and preferred accent is standard French (normative French), known as *le français standard* or *le français parisien*, which is considered accent free and representative of the dominant middle and upper-class.<sup>4</sup> From this perspective, all films in which accented characters appear are considered accented. Each of the films I will discuss here present exilic, diasporic, or postcolonial subjects that have predictable “accented” traits when they speak French. Linguistically, the displaced subjects in each film constitute a “language community,” which Suzanne Romaine defines as “formed by those who use a given language for part, most, or all of their daily existence. Such communities may range in size from few individuals to many thousands of individuals in a region or a country or part of a large city” (446). In the films of this study, these language communities are composed of immigrants from African countries who migrated to the larger cities of France, or their descendants. As a result, they are often bilingual, and they express a sense of perceived solidarity based on their interactions in a particular language.

Moreover, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, accent does not only pertain to speech. It can also indicate emphasis on a visual element such as color or shape, or in music, a tonal shift of a note. In other words, accent alludes to a feature which gives a

---

<sup>4</sup> Worth noting, on the other hand, is a tradition in French cinema of films about the working class (*Pour un soir* (1931) directed by Jean Goddard and starring Jean Gabin, to choose one example) and a tradition of regional cinema (*Manon des sources* (1952) and *Jean de Florette* (1986) directed by Marcel Pagnol).

distinct emphasis to something. In the accented films analyzed hereinafter, I use the term “accent” to refer not only to voices and languages but also to the filmic emphasis given to an object or person by framing, camera distance, and duration. For instance, in Faucon’s *Fatima*, there is a distinctive visual emphasis, or accent, placed on a bowl of couscous during a scene in which Fatima is cooking for her elder daughter Nesrine. The lengthy close-ups on her indigenous culinary operation stress the importance Fatima accords to this dish from her homeland. In *Adama* (Rouby, 2015), within a context of colonialism, an anti-colonialist strategy is created by granting the indigenous protagonists point-of-view shots, close-ups, exclusive image duration, and large image scales.

Drawing from their interaction using French, Arabic, Lingala, Wolof, or Mooré in *Fatima* and *Adama*, the main characters correspond to what Etienne Wenger calls “communities of practice,” which are often constituted by informal groups who interact and communicate regularly (qtd. in Romaine, 447). In the films studied here, two main “communities of practice” can be identified based on the bilingual competence of their members, who are displaced diasporic and exilic subjects. The first group is made up children of second-generation immigrants, born in France in bilingual neighborhoods. These children demonstrate a native-like competence in French and a passive competence in the language of their parents. Examples of films that depict this first community of practice are *Qu’Allah Bénisse la France!* (Malik, 2015), and *Fatima*. The second type of community of practice is made of exilic characters whose journeys and “in-between” status between two or more places are the main subjects of the films. In contrast to the first group, the members of this community of practice demonstrate an active bilingual competence as seen in *Nous, les Sans-papiers de France* (Philibert et al., 1997), *Paris*

*mon Paradis* (Yaméogo, 2011), and *Amin*. In addition to speaking their native languages fluently, they speak French with an accent.

Communities of practice also refers to culture. In the first community of practice mentioned above, members only possess a passive command of their parents' language, yet they often share the norms, values, and knowledge associated with their parents' culture. In this community of practice, members demonstrate that culture and language can be separated. In contrast, the linguistic competence in French of the second group discussed above does not assure their adoption of the values and norms of French culture and society (and by implication, we cannot assume that the first group has fully adopted these norms either). This second group may reject most of the norms of their host country, or they may consciously or unconsciously elect to adopt certain norms necessary to their survival in France. Finally, they may choose to internalize or reject the images of "France" that they have been taught (rightly or wrongly), including, for example, that France signifies individual freedom, sophistication, civilization, or a respect for human rights and dignity. All of this holds true also for the first community of practice, composed of "immigrant" children born in France, although, we might say that, as natives of France, what is at stake is less their adoption, than their rejection of the French cultural norms to which they have been exposed, at least since entering the French school system, if not before. Their rejection of these norms is often a political act and an attempt to reconnect with their ethnic and cultural roots. For the second group, born outside of France and still speaking their maternal languages, reconnecting with their "roots" is less an issue. Postcolonial politics can be identified in the degree to which they are merely

“performing” French cultural identities, without authentically and emotionally identifying with them.

As Arjun Appadurai asserts, the driving force of any “immigrant community of practice” or “immigrant language community” is its imagination (6). Indeed, as Naficy points out, one of the setbacks that comes with exile is the gradual degradation and sometimes complete loss of the language of origin, which had served to express deep individual, regional, and national identities prior to exile (24). Imagination, then, is a means to preserve the original language and cultural beliefs of the homeland. Appadurai elaborates on the role of imagination as a “social practice” through which the exiled, immigrant, or diasporic subject gains agency in globalization’s spaces and realms of possibility: “the imagination has become an organized field of social practices, a form of work (in the sense of both labor and culturally organized practice), and a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individuals) and globally defined fields of possibility” (31).

Appadurai defines imagination here as collective, as a “social practice.” As such, imagination produces ideas of neighborhood, belonging, and micro-nationhood, and is another term for the cultural work performed by communities of practice, such as those found on the peripheries of major European cities. In France, such communities of practice are best exemplified by the specific cultures and languages of the *banlieues* of cities like Paris, Lyon, and Marseille. These peripheries constitute the geographical settings of many of the films examined in this dissertation. Although accent is somehow present in all films, accent is most noticeable and vivid in immigrant/transnational films, like the films of this study, which can be categorized as belonging to accented cinema. In

the following section, I will discuss immigrant/transnational films and how they fit into the broad category of accented cinema.

### **Immigrant/transnational and accented films**

My analysis in this dissertation draws on Naficy's influential book, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (2001) and Will Higbee's stellar book, *Post-Beur Cinema: North African Émigré and Maghrebi-French Filmmaking in France Since 2000* (2013). Naficy's book involves questions of accented voice, narratives based on orality, and the acoustic and epistolary aspects of transnational films (mainly produced in the third world). Transnational cinema operates outside of the beliefs and certainties of the homeland *and* the hostland, in between local and global spaces.<sup>5</sup> For Naficy, films made by exilic and diasporic filmmakers are defined as "accented," in contrast to mainstream cinema that is considered dominant and universal, therefore, without accent. The term "accented cinema" designates both the displacements and the production conditions of exiled filmmakers, as well as the accented speeches that emanate from the displaced characters within the films' diegesis. Accented filmmakers are those who find themselves in a situation of exile (forced or voluntary), or who belong to a distinct diaspora, and therefore, according to Naficy, make films with accents. Filmmakers in this category may speak with accents, but more importantly it is their filmmaking process, distinct from the dominant or hegemonic filmmaking style of the host countries, that earns their films the term "accented cinema." Naficy thus places the production of accents in cinema into the traditions of minor cinemas, presenting a discursive approach

---

<sup>5</sup> Indeed, according to Naficy, "Transnational cinema is concerned with the output of filmmakers who not only inhabit interstitial spaces of the host society but also work on the margins of the mainstream film industry. As a result, these filmmakers are multiple not only in terms of their identity and subjectivity but also in the various roles they are forced to play in every aspect of their films" (208).

to exilic and diasporic films. His work is therefore instrumental for my study on displaced voices in transnational films.

Situating accented cinema historically, Naficy claims that the unprecedented cultural and linguistic diversity of accented filmmaking is linked to immigration at the beginning of the twentieth century, which contributed to the development of accented cinema in the adopted countries of displaced filmmakers (7). In fact, immigrants have long played a major role in the development of twentieth-century literature and cinema, and in many cases their contributions to modern English literature and American cinema are held in high esteem, as in the case of Samuel Beckett, Joseph Conrad, Fritz Lang, and Otto Preminger. On the French side, exilic writers and filmmakers include Aimé Césaire, Assia Djebar, again Fritz Lang, and Léopold Sedar Senghor.

In the case of the United States, Naficy cites two major immigration waves that contributed significantly to American cinema.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, he states that there are two general groups of accented filmmakers that migrated West in order to live and make films. He situates the first group of immigrant accented filmmakers between the late 1950s and the mid-1970s.<sup>7</sup> The second wave of immigration emerges during the 1980s

---

<sup>6</sup> The first was around 1915, and the second, in the mid-1980s. Smaller immigration waves that involved national, racial, and religious conflicts followed. For instance, between the two world wars, a group of European immigrants from Germany and Austria who had left their homelands for professional opportunities and/or to escape Nazi control made their debut in American cinema. They first contributed to American cinema as filmgoers, then gradually extended their impact by becoming producers. For example, the Germans Ernst Lubitsch, William Wyler, and Marlene Dietrich, and the Austrians Hedy Lamarr, Fritz Lang, Max Steiner, Billy Wilder, and Peter Lorre. They further extended their contribution in the domains of distribution and exhibition. Additionally, what are termed, the poststudio “ethnics,” or the children of Irish, Italian, and Jewish immigrants, contributed to the emergence of the “Hollywood Renaissance.” This film movement, sometimes referred to as the “American New Wave” took place from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s. Directors such as Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, and Mike Nichols fit into this category.

<sup>7</sup> During this time major geopolitical events shook the world: the decolonization of what came to be known as the “Third world”; the Soviet Union’s invasion of Poland and Czechoslovakia; internal “decolonization” in the West such as the civil rights and antiwar movements in the United States; and the May 1968 uprising in France.

and 1990s due to the failure of political ideologies such as nationalism, socialism, and communism in Eastern Europe, the newly independent nations of Africa and elsewhere, the fragmentation of nation-states, the rise of Islam, the return of religious and ethnic wars, and the changes in European, Australian, and American immigration policies to disfavor non-western migrants.

It is this second wave of immigration that provides historical context for Higbee's *Post-Beur Cinema*, which traces the history of the North African émigré and Maghrebi-French filmmaking. Higbee situates the beginning of North African émigré filmmaking in France in the 1970s. However, the strict censorship laws that were effective in France until the mid-1970s prevented any filmmaker (French or African) from explicitly discussing the colonial question in their films, unless it was allegorically evoked. Then, from being an immigrant cinema in the 1980s, it became part of mainstream cinema in the 2000s (5). The Maghrebi-French and North African émigré filmmakers Higbee explores are accented filmmakers in a Nafician sense. In other words, their films feature North African immigrants who still often speak their Arabic dialect while in exile. Among the films discussed in this study, two films fall into the category of accented *beur* cinema presented by Higbee: Kéchiche's *L'Esquive* and Malik's *Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!*. Both French directors, Kéchiche and Malik, are the children of African immigrants that migrated to France between the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s, members of the first group of immigrants from the Maghreb. They are part of a successful group of Maghrebi-French and North African émigré filmmakers who "have produced a cinema that, more than ever, is simultaneously local, national and transnational in its approaches, references and outlook" (Higbee 2013: 4-5). Such access to mainstream production by

directors of Maghrebi origin in the French film industry suggests how these accented filmmakers have been, for the most part, accepted by the general public in France.

Despite their mainstream success, these films are indeed examples of authentic minority ethnic filmmaking, because they still speak to the minority ethnic, diasporic, and postcolonial communities from which they originate. Their ethnic minority authenticity can be found by examining the authentic spaces and people their films represent and make central. In this regard, we can claim that Kéliche remains in dialogue with both his homeland (Tunisia) along with his host society (France) when we examine the protagonists in his film *L'Esquive*, a group of adolescents who are mainly second-generation immigrants.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, these films remain authentic and speak to displaced communities because the filmmakers have gained access to the filmic apparatus of the “center.” Naficy stresses the accented filmmakers’ ability to speak using both their own displaced voices in their cinematic practices and their accents in the narratives of the films that they create.<sup>9</sup> The very fact that filmmakers have been able to make films in and with funding from the metropole means they have become visible subjects of history. The existence of their visibility and their “making” of cinematic history necessarily empowers their ethnic, diasporic audiences. Thus, “[accented films] resonate against the prevailing cinematic production practices, at the same time that they benefit from them” (4).

---

<sup>8</sup> I fully analyze *L'Esquive* in Chapters two and three of this study.

<sup>9</sup> Indeed, according to Naficy “accented filmmakers are the products of this dual postcolonial displacement and postmodern or late modern scattering. Because of [the filmmakers’] displacement from the margins to the centers, they have become subjects in world history. They have earned the right to speak and have dared to capture the means of representation. How marginalized they are within the center, their ability to access the means of reproduction may prove to be as empowering to the marginalia of the postindustrial era as the capturing of the means of production would have been to the subalterns of the industrial era” (11).

Naficy further divides accented films into three categories: exilic, diasporic, and postcolonial ethnic. Hereinafter, I will show how the filmmakers themselves or the main protagonists of the French and francophone films analyzed in this study fall into one or more of these categories. It is important to discuss Naficy's categories in detail here, because they are a point of departure for my term "accentscapes," which is an alternative, less-rigid categorization for the films of this study. Films from Naficy's first category, exilic accented cinema, are directed by exilic accented filmmakers. These are individuals or groups who voluntarily or involuntarily find themselves in a situation of external exile (12). *Paris Mon Paradis* and *Moi et mon Blanc* are two examples of this type of cinema.<sup>10</sup> Through their films, the filmmakers maintain a primary relationship with their countries and cultures of origin. Not only do they tend to view moments in their lives through a political lens, but they tend to represent their homelands and their people more than their own experiences of exile. Because they have been disconnected from the past due to the external political factors of exile, their relationship to the past is one of longing. One of the most intriguing characteristics of the exilic accented filmmakers is that their films' narratives display numerous scenes of epistolarity – instances where characters use formal letters to maintain a virtual relationship with the lost homeland.<sup>11</sup> In *Moi et mon Blanc* and *Paris mon Paradis*, the main protagonists indeed exchange significant amounts of correspondence with people in their homelands through the

---

<sup>10</sup> I discuss Eléonore Yaméogo's *Paris mon Paradis* (2011) in Chapter one and S. Pierre Yaméogo's *Moi et mon Blanc* (2003) in Chapters two, three, and the Conclusion.

<sup>11</sup> At times, the "epistle" in Naficy's discussion of accented cinema takes the forms not only of a note scribbled on a piece of paper or an email message, but also a telephone conversation. The epistolary mode in these films represents how the characters work to maintain an illusion of presence. According to Naficy, the epistolary style is counter hegemonic in terms of cinematic practices "because it challenges the authority of the classic realist films and their omniscient narrator and narrative system by its multivocal, multiauthorial, calligraphic, and free indirect discourses" (5).

writing of letters, email messages, phone conversations, or money transfers. For example, in the opening sequence of *Paris mon Paradis*, the director reads aloud her self-authored poem-letter addressed to Africa and the film's African viewers. In *Moi et mon Blanc*, the protagonist Mamadi receives three letters from Burkina Faso which are read in voiceover by the senders – his father, his fiancée, and his cousin. The epistolary form represents the exilic characters' relationship with their past which is one of longing; their distance from home is evoked in multiple layers of narration, multiple voices, and multiple accents.

After exilic filmmakers, Naficy identifies a second group called “diasporic filmmakers,” who are often second-generation immigrants whose parents left their homes in one of the immigration waves in the twentieth century. Abdellatif Kéchiche and Abd al Malik the directors of *L'Esquive* and *Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!* respectively are examples of this type of filmmaker.<sup>12</sup> Like exile, diaspora is characterized by rupture, pressure, and trauma involving forced dispersion of populations outside their homes. Unlike exilic filmmakers whose strong relationship with their past is materialized by portrayals of longing in their films, however, diasporic filmmakers seem to be less concerned with the representations of their homelands and their people.<sup>13</sup> Filmmakers who consider themselves part of a diaspora thus relate more to the present than to the past. This can be seen in both *L'Esquive* and *Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!* which depict the everyday life in France of second-generation immigrant adolescents without explicit reference to their parents' homelands. Furthermore, while the exilic subject maintains a

---

<sup>12</sup> I discuss *L'Esquive* in Chapters two and three and *Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!* in Chapter three.

<sup>13</sup> It is challenging to give a precise definition for the term “diaspora” because it has evolved from its original definition--the dispersion of the Jews--to refer to other displaced peoples in the world. The motivation behind forced dispersion could be trade, labor, colonialism, cultural migrations and refugee displacement (Naficy, 12). Due to the conflicting and diverse nature of identity depicted in diasporic films, Naficy claims that, among all exiled filmmakers, it is the diasporic filmmakers who provide the classic representation of accented cinema (14).

vision of returning home, the diasporic subject leans in favor of working to establish a “home” in the place in which he or she is currently living. Thus, the focal point of reference for diasporic filmmakers is the new country in which they reside. *L’Esquive* and *Qu’Allah Bénisse la France!* each take place in a *banlieue* of a major city in France—Paris for the former and Strasbourg for the latter—and the films’ focal points lean toward creating a place within these cities that feels like home. These films’ narratives, therefore, are less oriented toward retrospection, loss, and absence, and more on integration into France.

*L’Esquive* and *Qu’Allah Bénisse la France!* can also fit into Naficy’s third category of accented cinema which are films made by those whom he calls “postcolonial ethnic and identity filmmakers” (15). *Amin* and *Fatima* fit into this category as well.<sup>14</sup> This group is made up of exilic and diasporic filmmakers from the first two categories. They differ from these latter, however, because these are individuals whose families or themselves left their homeland shortly after decolonization to pursue an opportunity in the hostland that once colonized them. Postcolonial ethnic identity films are concerned with the process of becoming a subject of the former colonizing nation (in these cases, France) and are in active conflict with the dominant and established cinematic norms of this nation. Naficy argues that the key issues of postcolonial ethnic and identity cinema lay in the “politics of the hyphen,” such as African-American, Latino-American, and Asian-American (15). Connotations of the hyphen indicate a condition of subordination, implying that hyphenated filmmakers will never be accepted as full citizens. Abd al Malik, Abdellatif Kéchiche, and Philippe Faucon fall into this category of hyphenated

---

<sup>14</sup> I discuss *Fatima* and *Amin* in Chapter two.

filmmakers because of their ties with the African continent. Malik and Kéchéche are often identified by the hyphenated terms Franco-Congolese and Franco-Tunisian, because the former was born in France to Congolese parents (Congo-Brazzaville) and the latter migrated to France at an early age with his Tunisian father. Often referred to as Franco-Moroccan or Franco-Algerian, Faucon was born in Outja, Morocco to a French soldier and an Algerian *pied-noir* mother.<sup>15</sup> For Faucon, then, the hyphenation refers to two layers of identity due to the different races of his parents. The narratives of his two films, *Fatima* and *Amin*, put into dialogue the characters' homelands, their new society, and their respective national cinemas, as well as audiences, many of whom are similarly transnational, and whose desires, aspirations, and fears the films express. Nevertheless, Malik, Kéchéche, and Faucon's hyphenation could be interpreted in a more positive light, because the hyphen can also suggest an inclusive split identity, a marker of resistance to the homogenizing power of French cinema.<sup>16</sup> It works against essentialism and nationalism and seems to fit the way these filmmakers represent hyphenated identities through the protagonists in their films. The filmmakers' in-between identities resonate well with the blurriness of national boundaries created in their films as their protagonists cross over many borders. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, even the films' production makes it difficult to say precisely to which country they belong due to co-production protocols and programs. Having a production crew composed of members of various francophone countries is yet another way these films are transnational. In the next section, I will

---

<sup>15</sup> *Pied-noir* refers to a person of European origin who lived in Algeria during French rule, especially one who returned to Europe after Algeria was granted independence.

<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Naficy agrees with this assertion: "as a sign of hybridized, multiple, or constructed identity, the hyphen can become liberating because it can be performed and signified upon" (16).

discuss transnational cinema and how the films in my dissertation can be considered using various theoretical approaches concerning it.

### **Transnationalism**

In the twentieth and twenty-first century global and cultural economy, transnational migrations have become so common that transnationality in films can no longer be understood following the center-periphery binary. This leads Naficy to write that "...in transnationality, the boundaries between self and other [...], inside or outside, homeland and hostland are blurred and must continually be negotiated" (211). For example, the films in this study are part of a francophone regional phenomenon, but this does not diminish the presence of their local entities, since the ethnic groups that make up these francophone regions have as many differences as they do similarities. Similarly, the analysis of diasporic subjects may raise questions related to regional and local phenomena. Because of the blurred distinctions between local and regional phenomena, notions such as nation, nationality, homeland, hostland, and transnationalism are repeatedly questioned as ideological constructs.

In their mapping of the various definitions of transnational cinemas and their related problematics, Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim identify three primary approaches. The first is focused on a dual model of national/transnational in which the national model is constraining whereas the transnational "becomes a subtler means of understanding cinema's relationship to cultural and economic formations" (9). Such an approach is appropriate in analyzing Kéchiche's *L'Esquive* and Faucon's *Fatima*. The national/transnational duality is part of the filmmakers' nationality as they focus their cameras on immigrant communities in the Parisian *banlieues*, whereas the transnational

aply describes the dual identity of the films' protagonists who are mostly immigrants or second-generation immigrants in France.

The second approach to transnational cinema that Higbee and Lim have identified analyzes the transnational as a regional phenomenon within a particular film culture or national cinema. This approach applies well to Rouby's *Adama*, Rambaldi's *The African Doctor* (2016), and Malik's *Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!*, because in each of these films the protagonists move from their homeland to France, and sometimes return to their native country. Finally, the third approach is linked to diasporic, exilic, and postcolonial cinemas, and it focuses on the cinematic representation of cultural identities that challenge Western neocolonial models of nation and national culture. This approach applies especially well to diasporic, exilic, and postcolonial filmmakers working in Western countries and thus negotiating between global and local. The films of these directors are characterized by themes of immigration, loss, displacement, and the shifts in identity that these experiences generate. Films that challenge neocolonial national culture through the lens of exile or diaspora are Philibert et. al's *Nous, sans papiers de France* (1997), S.P. Yaméogo's *Moi et mon Blanc* (2003), E. Yaméogo's *Paris mon Paradis*, and Faucon's *Amin*.

In his seminal work *Modernity at Large*, Arjun Appadurai argues that, in the globalized and cultural world, transnational movements of populations from different nation-states challenge the idea of local communities as a "structure of feeling" defined by the modern nation-state (189-190). From the point of view of modern nationalism, neighborhoods should reflect a common sense of national belonging, but due to the constant circulation of people in the world, they have become transnational spaces,

despite the efforts of nation-states to produce compliant national citizens out of the populations living in them. Indeed, the nation-states' views on "birth control, linguistic uniformity, economic discipline, communications, and political loyalty" are often contested due to the movements of populations with alternative values (191).<sup>17</sup> The neighborhoods represented in the films of this study are indeed transnational spaces where borders, both geographical and metaphorical, are increasingly blurred and where multiple societies and cultures interact with one another. It is in these transnational spaces where my term "accentscapes" will make its appearance.

### **From Appadurai's "scapes" and Higbee's notion of "soundscape" to "accentscapes"**

I offer "accentscapes" as an alternative way to read immigrant cinema and understand it more broadly than Naficy's three categories of accented cinema allow. The term was inspired first by Appadurai and second by Higbee whose concepts I will define in this section before explaining "accentscapes" and revealing how they allow us to better understand immigrant cinema. In reference to transnational communities, Appadurai draws a framework of landscapes, composed of five dimensions of global cultural flows. Each is defined by fissures between economic, cultural, and national politics in the global economy: "(a) *ethnoscapes*; (b) *mediascapes*; (c) *technoscapes*; (d) *financescapes*; and

---

<sup>17</sup> Appadurai lists economic opportunity and humanitarian crises as the primary motivators of global human movements, but says that it can be linked to the increasing numbers of diasporic communities in major cities of Western countries (i.e. the Indian diaspora in the United States and the Maghrebin diaspora in France) which attract new migrants to join already existing diasporic communities (191). Appadurai also notes how new electronic and virtual communities are creating new forms of transnational identities that disrupt the primacy of the nation-state. Electronic media, from which virtual communities derive, includes a complex array of technological means for producing and diffusing news and entertainment, thus creating virtual imagined communities. Film, television in its conventional broadcasting forms or via satellite, fax machines, electronic mail, internet and, of course, social media such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter can all be cited mediators of transnational and cultural exchanges and communities that foster the formation of identification beyond the nation-state. Electronic media have created new ways of communication for communities across local and national territories. With these new forms of electronic communications, neighborhoods appear more and more transnational as they are no longer connected to territory, passports, or any other legal or political means of defining nations and their boundaries (192).

(e) *ideoscapes*” (33, Appadurai’s emphasis). In Appadurai’s framework, the common suffix -scape reimagines “landscape” in terms of the constant movement, fluidity, and irregular shape of communities and cultures. Each scape is a construct representing the perspectives of nation-states, multinationals, diasporic communities, religious, political, or economic movements, as well as micro-groups, such as villages, neighborhoods, or families. According to Appadurai, these extra-territorial or deterritorialized scapes function as building blocks similar to Benedict Anderson’s imagined communities (1830). Appadurai defines “ethnoscape” as a “landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and individuals that constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree” (34). Appadurai’s ethnoscape indicates the dispersed landscape formed out of group identity and found around the world, as well as the fluctuation of social, territorial, and cultural reproduction of group identity.

In the same vein, Will Higbee uses the term “soundscape” as he explores the soundtrack (monologues, dialogues, ambient sound, and music) in Maghrebi-French films since the 1980s, and invites scholars to explore the role of soundtrack and music in contemporary French and Francophone cinema (2009: 225). Higbee’s soundscape indicates the landscapes/layering of displaced audio in recent Maghrebi-French films, which simultaneously challenge Eurocentric perceptions of the North African diaspora and construct French minority identities. Higbee discusses his notion of soundscape in terms of the protagonists’ dislocation from their *bleds*, extremely rural, isolated, and insignificant villages in the Maghreb. For Higbee, “the Maghrebi-French or North

African immigrant voice is also frequently characterized by its displaced, silenced, or fractured qualities” (226). For example, often in these films, the white French petty criminals are significantly vocal and able to express their desires. In contrast, their Maghrebi-French counterparts are, for the most part, silent and unable to articulate or exteriorize their wishes (227). Furthermore, the dislocated voice is reinforced by visual dislocation: the protagonists are often filmed in long or wide shots to symbolize the character’s detachment from the *bled* (homeland) as seen from the spectator’s viewpoint. These long shots also suggest that the characters do not belong to the neighborhoods in France where they live. The formal distance between the protagonists and their homelands is also at times aural: the spectator is at times denied access to the protagonists’ intimate conversations with invisible relations in the homeland at key moments in the films.

Higbee determines three roles played by variations of accents or dialects. First, the sounds of Arabic or Berber are used to emphasize a character’s hybridity. Also, the Arabic or Berber dialect spoken by the North African immigrant’s parents functions as a communication barrier for their children and grandchildren who cannot understand them. Lastly, there is a marker of internal difference between the protagonists who were born in France and the members of their extended family who were born in the Maghreb but now live in France: their speech and accents (229-230). Thus, accents and dialects function in these films as markers of age, gender, class, or generation differences among the displaced accented subjects, who represent the North African diaspora in France.

Appadurai’s ethnoscape and Higbee’s soundscape clearly apply to the exilic, diasporic, and postcolonial language communities and communities of practice explored

in the films of this study. As Romaine indicates, these communities of practice are constantly adapting to the modern world as members find strategies by which they can interact and communicate with diverse individuals in the same neighborhood (447). They share communal practices which require the use of two or more languages to construct meaning and reconstruct their cultural identities prior to displacement.<sup>18</sup> I argue that the cumulative traits in the language use of the exilic, diasporic, and postcolonial protagonists of this study constitute a means of recasting, reshaping, and restoring their displaced identities and their lost homelands. I will use the term “accentscapes”, based on Appadurai’s notion of ethnoscape, to demarcate these traits.

“Accentscapes” redefine the important role played by accents in constructing meaning and social identities in the everyday life of the exilic, diasporic, and postcolonial communities of practice in these films. As ethnoscape refers to the landscape of a group’s identity, “accentscape” indicates the symbolic landscape created by the speakers’ displaced voices and the variation of pronunciation of their native language in a situation of exile. Because of the gradual degradation or potential loss of the displaced subject’s original language due to exile, “accentscapes” function as pockets of represented spaces, which serve to recreate the lost language community prior to displacement. Applied to passive bilingual protagonists<sup>19</sup> in exile, “accentscapes” refer to a symbolic counter-hegemonic recreation of a lost linguistic community by displaced subjects, who, because of the loss of their original language, create these communities of practice. They intervene into the narrative space by oral, vocal, and musical means at specific moments

---

<sup>18</sup> The languages used in films of this study are French, Arabic, Mooré, Lingala, Douala, and Wolof.

<sup>19</sup> Passive bilingual protagonists refer to diasporic bilingual characters in the films of this study who, on the one hand, have competence in French (the language of their new countries), and on the other hand, understand the language of their parents, but cannot speak it fluently.

in the films to demarcate the accented subjects' original individual, regional, and national identities. They also constitute multiple landscapes which become hybridized, thus creating an apparent hybrid social landscape in the film. Further, they are sonic indicators of the accented subjects' homeland and past, and they complement visual markers of difference and belonging such as style of dress, cooking, and parenting.

I will discuss “accentscapes” mostly from a postcolonial approach. As the African culture claimed about *Négritude*,<sup>20</sup> “accentscapes” are emotional by nature rather than rational. They emphasize community over individuality, wholeness over division. “Accentscapes” appear at specific moments in the films as an aesthetic tactic, indicating traits in spoken French that constitute a means of challenging fixed notions of ethnicity and identity. For example, in *Nous, sans-papiers de France*, “accentscapes” are evoked through an emphasis on the voice of the speaker, Nadjiguène Cissé, what Chion calls vococentrism.<sup>21</sup> The primacy of an accented voice in the sonic space accompanying Cissé’s face in close-up gives a deeper meaning to the cause of the undocumented immigrants living in France. This scene represents an abrogation of the official normative discourse by an accented discourse, whose adoption underscores the unequal treatment to which immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb are subjected in France, particularly when it comes to immigration policies. Cissé’s direct speech generates an

---

<sup>20</sup> Leopold Sedar Senghor used *Négritude* to work toward a universal valuation of African people. He advocated a modern incorporation of the expression and celebration of traditional African customs and ideas. The importance of emotions in the *Négritude* movement is that, whereas the Western conception of knowledge is based on rationality, the traditional African conception of the world is emotional. This means that the *raison d'être* of art or poetry in Africa is not to reproduce or embellish reality but to establish the connection with what he labeled the sub-reality that is the universe of vital forces.

<sup>21</sup> According to Chion, vococentrism refers to the privilege given to the human voice over all other sonic elements by the viewers in cinema. Viewers tend to focus on the human voice first and then on other cinematic/audio elements. In every audio mix, the presence of a human voice instantly sets up a hierarchy of perception (1999:5).

“accentscape” (i.e. a landscape of accents) proper to her identity and culture. Speaking for undocumented immigrants who share the same condition of unlawful residency, Cissé’s voice evokes aural characteristics with which they are familiar. Because of their shared experience and common sense of belonging through their exilic and postcolonial conditions, they identify with the screened person who embodies Cissé’s accented voice.

These aural characteristics are the main subject of investigation in *Sonic Space in Djibril Diop Mambety’s Films* by Vlad Dima. In this original work, Dima reflects on Mambety’s remarkable storytelling ability and how the filmmaker pushes the use of sound to the narrative foreground in his films. This atypical use of sound results in “the creation of narrative planes”—what Dima refers to as “aural narrative planes—that perpetuate the oral traditions of African stories” (1). Sound thus reveals itself as a primary narrative tool in Mambety’s work. Indeed, Dima argues that: “By emphasizing the development of the aural and narrative capabilities of sound in cinema, Mambety offers the postcolonial subjects and the postcolonial spectator the possibility of reappropriating both a lost space and a complex identity through sound” (2).

Dima’s investigation of sonic spaces in Mambety’s work intersects with my definition of “accentscape” in several ways, the most significant of which is the emphasis on sound in films as a means of restoring postcolonial African identities. The postcolonial accented filmmakers in this study learned from the traditions of postcolonial cultural modes of production, the first generation of which included Mambety, who was also a trailblazer of West African cinema. As Naficy points out: “Accented films are also created in a new mode that is constituted both by the structures of feeling of the filmmakers themselves as displaced subjects and by the traditions of exilic and diasporic cultural production that

preceded them” (22). In other words, the sub-Saharan African directors in this study used filmic techniques and identification codes promoted by the first African film directors, such as Mambety himself and Ousmane Sembène.

Mambety’s approach to sound in his films leads to the creation of several sonic spaces which are phantasmagoric, diegetic, and extradiegetic. The phantasmagoric voice, which can be heard but not seen, is like Michel Chion’s *acousmêtre*, which he defines as “a talking and acting shadow” or “a voice [that] has not been visualized” (1999: 21).

Chion’s *acousmêtre* occurs in several of the films of this study. In the final section of this introduction, I will elaborate on Chion’s theories and various terms on sound and explain how they are instrumental to this study.

### **Michel Chion’s take on sound in cinema**

Often referred to as one of the most important documents on sound is Sergei Eisenstein’s *Statement on Sound* (1928). With the advent of talkies, Eisenstein along with Vsevolod Pudovkin and Grigori Alexandrov wrote a manifesto that did not strongly advocate for the use of sound in cinema. Although they agreed that sound was a major innovation in cinema, they argued against the overuse or careless use of sound that could risk altering the image’s dynamics (i.e. the film’s montage). Rather, they argued in favor of an “audiovisual counterpoint” in which sounds function metaphorically as independent signifiers.<sup>22</sup> Audiovisual counterpoint involves a meaningful contradiction between what is heard and what is seen on the screen. An audiovisual counterpoint happens when a source of an off-screen non-diegetic sound occurs simultaneously with an off-screen

---

<sup>22</sup> This argument is understandable considering Eisenstein’s revolutionary use of montage in his films.

*diegetic* sound.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, an audiovisual counterpoint occurs when the source of a sound is not perceptible within the frame. Chion's *acousmètre* is likewise an unseen sound, but a sound that aligns with what is seen on the screen.<sup>24</sup>

Arguably the most influential of sound theorists, Chion echoes Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov. None of these critics advocate for sound in film as an independent element, but rather they suggest that it be integrated into the visual medium. In *Le Son au Cinéma* (1985), Chion analyses sound in film as a complementary element that can create emotions in relation to the narratives of the film. However, he claims that sound by itself, without the image, cannot accomplish this. The concept of a "sound field" or soundtrack in cinema, he argues, relies entirely on what the image reveals; that there is no "sound field" in cinema; it is the image that gives sound its real and imaginary dimensions (30-31). For Chion, sound functions in cinema only in relation to image. For instance, collecting all sounds, voices, background noises, and music of the film *Fatima* and putting them together in the narrative's order would not provide an intelligible and coherent depiction of Fatima's life in the *banlieue*, even to an attentive listener. Chion especially appears to validate the primacy of image over sound in film when he indicates that the so-called soundtrack is most often not an autonomous structure of sounds, but rather a juxtaposition of messages (content, information, and sensations) that find their meaning in the way they are distributed across the spaces of the filmic field.<sup>25</sup> Chion

---

<sup>23</sup> An example of this would be the sound of a train whistle during a scene depicting a family dinner. In such a scene, the audio (the train's whistle) contradicts the visual (the dining family).

<sup>24</sup> An example of this would be the voiceover of an adult narrating the story of their childhood while this story plays on the screen. Many more examples of *acousmètre* will be evoked in the various films of this study.

<sup>25</sup> According to Chion, however, it is safe to talk about an "image track". The silent film is living proof that an "image track" can exist.

defines sound in cinema as the element that is seeking its place in the film's space (82). Using this idea of sound as a displaced character, this study will examine the entity - the human body, the protagonist - that produces the sound and examine its dialogue or speech. Just as sound seeks its place in a film's space and sometimes beyond in the implied off-screen space, the border-crossing and displaced protagonists in each of these films seek their place as they engage in spatial journeys.

Drawing from the current conceptions of diegetic sound and nondiegetic sound, Chion introduces the concept of the "tricycle of sound" to show that sound has two basic modes regarding its source: seen and unseen (32-33). These divide into three cases of sound: the first one is a visualized sound (on-screen); and the last two are acousmatic sounds<sup>26</sup> (off-screen). The first case of acousmatic unseen sound is diegetic—part of the film's internal narrative space—and the second case of acousmatic sound is non-diegetic and includes sound that does not belong to the film's internal world (sound effects and music). The merit of Chion's tricycle of sound is that it validates the view that sound is practically never intended as an independent entity but is rather a means to facilitate our understanding of sound as a sign, for example the spoken language, or sound as a clue, for example a police siren (78). An example of off-screen sound appears in *Amin*, when Amin returns to his native Senegal from France and arrives at his extended family's residence at midnight. In the distance, the sound of dogs barking breaks through the dark background. This off-screen sound reinforces the sense of suspense and anxiety surrounding Amin's return home and indicates a significant deterioration of his

---

<sup>26</sup> Acousmatic sound is a sound that viewers hear without seeing its source.

Senegalese identity since his departure fifteen years ago. In short, he returns home as an outsider.

Chion continues to deny the existence of an independent soundtrack that is as dynamic as the image-track in *The Voice in Cinema* (1999) and *Film, a Sound Art* (2009). In the former, he argues that sound in film plays a secondary role to image in providing coherence in the narration. He refutes the idea of the existence of an autonomous soundtrack, at least in narrative films.<sup>27</sup> In *Film, a Sound Art*, Chion continues to claim that “there is no soundtrack”, this time focusing on the fundamental differences between the visual shot and its audio equivalent (225).<sup>28</sup> However, despite his numerous claims denying the existence of an autonomous soundtrack in film, his position on the autonomy of the auditory dimension of film in *Film, a Sound Art* is less radical than in his previous works *Le Son au Cinéma* and *The Voice in Cinema*. In fact, although he states that “there is no sound track”, his theoretical approach seems to favor a clear definition of the auditory dimension of film as a fundamental component in film (diegetic sound) that possesses aural, formal, rhythmic, or musical qualities just as the image does (225). A

---

<sup>27</sup> Indeed, Chion goes so far as to claim that “There is no soundtrack. [...] The proof is that so-called synchronous sounds are most often forgotten as such, being “swallowed up” by the fiction. The meanings and effects generated by synch sounds are usually chalked up to the image alone or the film overall” (3).

<sup>28</sup> The shot, a visual unit that includes both spatial and temporal dimensions, he says, is the basic unit by which to edit images. The shot is immediately recognizable and accepted by all as a visual unit because it is within a frame and it forms a piece of temporal continuity between two splices. However, it is challenging to talk about a single cinematic unit in the editing of sounds, because sounds already fall into categories such as syllables, words, sentences, dialogues, musical phrases, and musical and instrumental events. Furthermore, while editing images, it is difficult to join two different temporal shots in a way that the splice is unnoticeable, yet it is simple to link two sounds made at different times without disrupting the audio flow (225-228). The key element in Chion’s refusal of the existence of a soundtrack is its lack of frame. He uses the word “frame” in place of “image”, speaking of what contains the image, not only what is seen or contained. He says that “the visual shot is a container of time and space with definite spatial and temporal borders, whereas with sound it is the just the opposite” (226). A fundamental fact about the frame regarding the image is its condition of preexistence. The frame can thus dictate the format of the image and even impose a certain hierarchy in the disposition of the images. For example, one can discuss the content or the texture of the image. The same cannot be said with respect to sound because sound, which is not framed, is a formless audio element.

film's image is not more important than its sound, he claims: "The absence of a frame for sounds inevitably creates a dissymmetry between what we see and what we hear. But it is a common mistake to interpret this dissymmetry as a hierarchy, and we should not fall into this habit of thinking (227)." In lieu of placing sound and image in opposition, which leads some critics to suggest that sound outshines image only if detached from it, Chion proposes that: "Instead of saying that film sound is subservient to the image (the classical formulation) or reversing the equation, couldn't we just say that sounds and images both devote themselves to the constitution of narrative cinematic space-time?" (228).

Instead of speaking about "soundtrack" in narrative film, Chion introduces and recommends using the term "sound channel," which is made up of auditory elements originating from a variety of sources such as original sound effects, voices recorded in the studio, voices and sounds recorded during shooting, and original or interpreted music:

Although there is no soundtrack, there is [...] something I prefer to call, so as to avoid confusion, the *sound channel*. By this I mean that in parallel with the flow of images, and synchronized with them, is a flow of recorded sounds of diverse origins and natures, grouped together onto a real or virtual recording medium.

(228, Chion's emphasis)

Chion's concept of sound channel is made literal in Mathieu Kassovitz's use of sound in *La Haine* (1995). Kassovitz's film displays a physical contrast between Paris and the *banlieue*. Paris represents the center of power wherein resides the bourgeois society while the *banlieue* is portrayed as an exotic hell that only attracts the attention of the media when riots and violence occur. The *banlieue* is presented as a crowded, lively, and dynamic place in which sub-Saharan or North African immigrants mostly reside whereas

Paris is depicted as silent and refined. So as to match the visual differences with sounds, Kassovitz films the *cité* (i.e. the *banlieue*) during the day in stereo sound (using two or more sound channels), but he films Paris at night in mono sound (using only one sound channel). The use of mono sound in the scenes portraying Paris symbolically alludes to the monoculture of the dominant white population at the center of the city. In contrast, the use of stereo sound in the scenes portraying the *banlieue* represents most precisely the diversity of its residents. Similar uses of mono or stereo sound channels abound in *Moi et mon Blanc*, *Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!*, *Fatima*, and *Amin*. For example, in *Moi et mon Blanc*, many of the scenes filmed in Paris depict nighttime using mono sound, while the capital city of Burkina Faso, Ouagadougou, is filmed during the day and employs multiple sound channels. Moreover, in *Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!*, *Fatima*, and *Amin*, the use of stereo sound is indicative of the diversity of *banlieue* residents and immigrant communities. Because these films tend to stress the exiled protagonists' multivocal and multilingual characteristics, the use of stereo sound appropriately produces diverse sounds from the *banlieue* or their homelands.

Using Chion's theory of "sound channel", this study will explore how displaced sounds can suggest more than just a simple signifier/signified reading of the various displaced auditory instances. My approach to displaced sounds will fall in line with Chion's theoretical approach regarding the auditory dimensions of film in his work *Film, a Sound Art*. In addition, Chion's "tricycle of sound" will constitute a major resource in my discussion of displaced voices in relation to the spaces from which they emanate. Because films such as *Amin*, *Paris mon Paradis*, and *Moi et mon Blanc* deal with displaced characters that migrate from their homelands to a hostland, a contrastive

approach to the displaced voices and sounds, using Chion's tricycle theory, will unveil how these sounds are produced and what they might suggest in relation to the spaces of departure and destination.

In *Audio-vision: Sound on Screen* (1990) Chion argues that noises in film can produce physiological and affective responses in the viewers based on their sensory experience of the real world. Regarding sound effects, Chion claims that sensory experiences, which operate through the intersection of sight, sound, hearing, and touch, appear as "clumps of conglomerated sensations" (113). Because these sensations simultaneously come in various forms (visual, aural, sonorous, odorous, etc.), onscreen they cannot easily be separated from one another. Chion's observation on the physiological and affective responses of the viewers to sounds in film seems apt in describing his definition of "rendering", which is when:

[...] the film spectator recognizes sounds to be truthful, effective, and fitting not so much if they reproduce what would be heard in the same situation in reality, but if they render (convey, express) the sensations [...]. Sound lends itself to rendering (and not reproducing) because of its flexibility with respect to the causal identification. (488)

An example of a small environmental sound that conveys sensory feelings is the final scene of Luca Guadagnino's 2018 film, *Call me by your name*. In this scene, a long shot of the protagonist, Elio, depicts him intently staring at a burning fire in the fireplace at his parents' house as he attempts to process the loss of his first love. For a long moment, the camera insists on his face, making the viewers feel his pain. Then, the end title appears on the screen next to Elio, followed by the credits. As the credits continue to appear, the

camera does not fade away from Elio's dolorous expression. What resonates directly with Chion's concept of rendering is the continuous background sound of the crackling fire. The flames consume the wood in the fireplace, and Elio is consumed with pain. The intersection of the visual insistence on Elio's face and the sustained crackling sound of the burning firewood make the viewers feel his pain and experience the trauma of his breakup for an extended amount of time. Likewise, several significant moments in the films of this study, show how the interconnectedness of images and sounds on screen can trigger perception of true-to-life and lived experiences in the viewers, or even convey knowledge about how an experience must feel in the body, and will be discussed in detail in the body of this dissertation.

At unexpected moments in the films in this study, accentscapes appear as sounds and voices that occupy an in-between state when they are produced, meaning that they are "neither entirely inside nor clearly outside" according to Chion. These sounds and voices left to wander the surface of the screen are reminiscent of Régis's pilgrimage lilt in *Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!*, in the angry and slow pitches of Frida and Krime's voices in *L'Esquive*, and in Madjiguène Cissé, Adama, and Mamadi's stress in *Nous, sans-papiers de France, Adama*, and *Moi et mon Blanc*. Accentscapes also appear in the speeches of Patrice Lumumba, Kwamé N'krumah and Thomas Sankara in *Le Point de Vue du Lion*, Amin, and Fatima's rhythm and melodies, and in Amadou Balaké's song in *The African Doctor*.

## **Chapter Outline**

This dissertation analyzes discourses pertaining to immigration, postcolonialism, and transnationalism which are expressed formally and stylistically via "accentscapes" in ten

films. I argue that these films include symbolic landscapes of accents—in other words “accentscapes”—created by the protagonists’ displaced voices and their various pronunciations of languages while exiled in France. The study therefore includes perspectives representing both the homelands and the hostlands of the displaced protagonists, as well as their colonial history. The films’ various “accentscapes”, as well as their shared concerns with national and transnational identities, are highlighted here by both contextual and formal readings. All ten films present protagonists whose voices suggest “accentscapes” reflecting on national issues, and that often reverberate *beyond* national borders by addressing local and global concerns. This dissertation is divided into three chapters organized by the main characters’ immigration statuses in France: undocumented immigrants and sans-papiers (Chapter one); lawful immigrants (Chapter two); and French citizens of African origin (Chapter three). Each chapter begins with a thematic overview, followed by a discussion of the selected films, an analysis of their political and historical backgrounds, and a description of their “accentscapes”.

Chapter one engages with questions of illegal immigration, exclusion, racism, and integration involving France and its former West African colonies. Uncovering the history of migration linking France to its former colonies and exploring current restrictive immigration policies in France, this chapter examines how three documentary films function as political critiques and exposures of injustice. Indeed, *Nous, sans-papiers de France* (Nicolas Philibert, et al., 1997), *Paris mon Paradis* (Éleonore Yaméogo, 2011) and *Le Point de Vue du Lion* (Didier Awadi, 2011) give a voice to the often voiceless victims of these restrictive policies, allowing the victims to directly testify for themselves. Drawing from Seymour Chatman’s ideas of story-space and discourse space,

I argue that the voices of these migrants, undocumented immigrants, and even those of the filmmakers, are pushed to the foreground of the narratives as accentscapes intervene in both the story-space and the discourse-space of the films (96). As symbolic counter spaces, “accentscapes” challenge negative perceptions of sub-Saharan African migrants and hegemonic cinematic practices by strategically using the characters’ ethnicities, collective interventions, and fragmented, lyric and emotive narrative structures to single out the accented pronunciation.

Chapter two explores the multilingualism and multivocality depicted in Philippe Faucon’s *Fatima* (2015) and *Amin* (2018). The characters in these films are members of bilingual communities who employ their dual linguistic heritage differently inside their respective family units than in the public sphere. This chapter considers notions of instability in the home and social belonging in order to examine the characters’ diverse use of language. The function of the various sociolects, referred to as the “contemporary French of the *cités*” or French slang, and how they create a condition of heteroglossia in a Bakhtinian sense is addressed. I suggest that “accentscapes” in both films constitute multiple landscapes that create clearly hybridized social hierarchies. Moreover, “accentscapes” create sonic indicators of the accented subjects’ homeland and past, and compliment visual markers of difference/belonging such as style of dress, cooking, and parenting. Attention is also drawn to the protagonists’ memories of their homelands by analyzing precise moments in the films when “accentscapes” intervene. These “accentscapes” allow the characters in exile to reimagine the harmonious Algerian, Moroccan, and Senegalese homelands of their past.

A main characteristic shared by the three films in Chapter three is the depiction of journeys of deterritorialization. In Simon Rouby's *Adama* (2015), the main character, deterritorializes from the comfort of his idyllic Senegalese village to reterritorialize in Paris. In Abdellatif Kéchiche's *L'Esquive* (2004) and Abd al Malik's *Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!* (2015), the journey is from the *banlieue* to the city center. *Adama* is the only animated narrative film in this dissertation, and the only film to depict an organic indigenous community living in a naturally protected haven – a Senegalese village shadowed by a majestic mountain range. In this film the deterritorialization and reterritorialization process leads the accented protagonists to a reassessment of the meaning of “home”. In Malik's film, the process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization creates a universal space that stretches beyond the boundaries of the main city and its suburbs. Kéchiche's film presents a group of young Maghrebi-French protagonists who appropriate an artifact of French high culture: Pierre de Marivaux's play, *Le jeu de l'amour et du hasard*. I argue here that accentscapes occur musically, pictographically, and calligraphically in the film's narrative.

Finally, in my conclusion, I continue my discussion of *L'Esquive*, *Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!* and *Adama*, first exploring how the initiation and maritime journeys in these films constitute key moments in which accentscapes appear. I briefly examine the journeys of the displaced protagonists as meaningful initiations either to the cultures and traditions of their homelands or to the realities and laws of their hostland. I also examine the role maritime journeys play in creating transitional “other” spaces, thus accentscapes, within the narratives of the films. As they cross many borders in these three films, the protagonists not only go through physical transformations, but psychological and

emotional ones as well. Using Bakhtin's notion of a closed "chronotope", I show how transitional spaces such as cars, buses, and trains are favorable to the appearance of "accentscapes" due to the alienation and confinement the exiled characters experience in these places. The notions of "accent" and "vocality" are then revisited in the light of my findings. My conclusion points to new directions for the analysis of "accentscapes" as a way of avoiding rigid categorization in French and francophone films. It shows how accented French defines the "other" as an outsider, but also provides a means of creating communities and communal identifications among diverse immigrant groups.

Film summaries of each principle film discussed in this dissertation are in the Appendix.

All translations from French to English, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

**Chapter 1: Locating accentscapes in contemporary sub-Saharan francophone documentaries: Migratory narratives and accented cinematic discourse as a site of linguistic resistance**

**Social and historical context and justification for the use of documentaries**

This chapter analyses three recent sub-Saharan Francophone documentaries that highlight sub-Saharan African migrants living in France : *Paris mon Paradis* (Eléonore Yaméogo, 2010) ; *Le Point de Vue du Lion* (Didier Awadi, 2011) ; and *Nous, sans-papiers de France* (Nicolas Philibert et al.,1997). Migratory narratives such as the ones seen in these documentaries were first represented in francophone African literary and cinematographic classics such as Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *L'Aventure ambiguë* (1961) and Ousmane Sembène's *La Noire de...* (1966).<sup>29</sup> These post-independence works centered around themes of experience, exclusion, xenophobia, and racism. Kane's novel questions assimilation rules in France and the dilemma of reconciling Senegalese Islamic faith with the materialism of modern Europe; indeed, the protagonist Samba becomes increasingly alienated from both the Western world and his Senegalese beliefs. Sembène's film depicts the disenchantment of Diouana, a Senegalese maid working in France, as she experiences harsh treatment from her French employers. The struggles faced by sub-Saharan immigrants in France represented by Kane and Sembène are also themes treated in the three sub-Saharan Francophone documentaries in this chapter.

It is important to emphasize that Sembène and Kane's works were made immediately following the African colonies' independence. Immigration to France from former

---

<sup>29</sup> In English, *La Noire de...* is known as *Black Girl*.

French colonies was viewed and treated much differently at this time in the late 1950s. According to sociologist Aminata Traoré, in her work *L'Afrique humiliée*, in the 1960s, French borders were effectively open to former colonial subjects because there was a need for laborers (67-68). Thus, former colonial populations were allowed into France to fill the gap in the workforce. In fact, both Kane and Sembène's works were released during the period of unprecedented economic growth of *Les Trente Glorieuses*.<sup>30</sup> During this time, France needed cheap labor from Africa to aid in the rebuilding of its social and economic structures, which had been devastated by both World Wars. Restrictive immigration policies began to be implemented in France with the advent of the Bonnet-Stoléru law in 1979,<sup>31</sup> and these strict policies are still in place in Europe today. France, Italy, and Spain, among other European countries, for example, have now militarized their southern borders, and in the former French colonies, obtaining a visa to France requires a lengthy and expensive bureaucratic process.<sup>32</sup> In contrast to the past, these policies indicate European authorities' attempts to discourage African migration into the European continent.

Since the late 1970s, political critiques of the restrictive immigration policies laid out in the Bonnet-Stoléru laws and attempts to expose their injustice have also grown. For example, Traoré analyzes contemporary French political discourse and mainstream media coverage of African migrants, identifying racism when they are referred to as "invaders."

---

<sup>30</sup> *Les Trente Glorieuses* refers to a period of economic policy introduced in 1944 in France, which was followed by thirty years (1945-1975) of rebuilding and unprecedented growth.

<sup>31</sup> The Bonnet-Stoléru law was introduced in 1979 and prevented immigrants' families from joining them in France. Under this law, the French government sent numerous immigrants back to their African countries with no possibility returning to France. Also see pages 82-83 of this dissertation.

<sup>32</sup> Traoré notes that the current conditions for issuing visas in the French embassies of sub-Saharan francophone countries are quite shocking and deceptive. In addition to the expensive and numerous fees, providing valid proof of financial support makes going to France impossible for the majority of West Africans (156).

According to Traoré, European political leaders and mainstream media should consider the reasons young Africans cross the Mediterranean Sea in unsafe dugout canoes (121). Instead of acts of madness, deliberate assaults, or even expressions of a desire to invade Europe, these border crossings should be considered courageous acts motivated by despair. Indeed, putting their lives at risk in order to reach Europe is the way these young Africans reject and resist the misery of the African continent, for which the former European colonizers must take significant responsibility.

Francophone African filmmakers in the 1960s used fiction films to make political critiques and expose injustice. Kane and Sembène are thus examples of engaged artists, whose novels and films carry strong political content meant to influence spectators. This was a norm throughout the continents of Africa, Asia, and South America during the period of decolonization and following. Engaged artists generally believed they could better reach audiences through realist fiction than through documentary. According to Colin Dupré, although the first francophone African films were made in the documentary style, documentaries were not developed as a genre during the African post-independence period (49-50).<sup>33</sup> Indeed, in the early years after independence, African cinema was concerned with gaining its own cinematic space. In other words, its goal was to make African films that dealt with African realities to present to African populations, and with some exceptions, this explains why many realist fiction films from the early years after independence are especially didactic in terms of their politics.

In the contemporary period analyzed here, while fiction films often remain political in subtle ways, documentary is the genre *par excellence* used to expose injustices and make

---

<sup>33</sup> Paulin Soumanou Vieyra's *Afrique sur Seine* (1955) and Moustapha Alassane's *Aouré* (1962) are two examples of the earliest francophone African films.

political critiques. Engaged contemporary filmmakers use documentary to address issues in the world's developing nations, such as neocolonialism, dictatorship, poverty, education, racism, and so on, the same issues that Kane and Sembène addressed in their realist fictions.

This shift to documentary is due, in part, to the production and distribution requirements of African films. Most companies and not-for-profit institutions that produce francophone films are based in Western countries, for example the *Centre National de la cinématographie* (CNC).<sup>34</sup> These Western-based funding entities often hold films to strict constraints. In other words, the length of the films, the filmmakers' styles, and their personal viewpoints must adhere to the production institution's guidelines. Often, because of the sensitive subject matter of their documentaries, engaged filmmakers are reluctant to collaborate with Western production companies, which might want to dictate the look and content of their films. For instance, mainstream cinematic distribution was not one of filmmaker Aïcha Thiam's main concerns when she made her short documentary, *Le Cri de la Mer* (2008). Instead, Thiam chose two non-mainstream production organizations: *Conseil International des Radios-Télévisions d'Expression Française* (CIRTEF)<sup>35</sup> and *Radiodiffusion Télévision Sénégalaise* (RTS)<sup>36</sup> to co-produce her film. Even without the support of mainstream production companies, *Le Cri de la Mer* was presented at various festivals—including the *Festival du Film Court*

---

<sup>34</sup> The *Centre National de la cinématographie* (CNC) was founded in France in 1946 and is controlled by the Ministry of Culture and Communications. Among its responsibilities is to create funding policies for French cinema with the goal of financially supporting films and to protect and distribute French film heritage.

<sup>35</sup> The *Conseil International des Radios-Télévisions d'Expression Française* (CIRTEF) is a francophone organization whose responsibilities include overseeing the collaboration of francophone national radios and televisions and promoting francophone images.

<sup>36</sup> *Radiodiffusion Télévision Sénégalaise* (RTS) is the Senegalese State's public broadcasting company.

*Francophone de Vaulx-en-Velin* (FFCF)<sup>37</sup>—and other events organized by groups supporting immigrants. The subject of Thiam’s film, whose title can be translated to “The Cry of the Sea”, is the tragic death of a young Senegalese immigrant bound for the Canary Islands in a canoe. The film depicts how the young man’s mother then devoted her life to fighting against illegal emigration, which, as we learn, accounts for the deaths of more than 3,000 young Senegalese nationals.

*Nous, sans-papiers de France* is a precise example of how, in France, documentary filmmaking has become the preferred form of choice for engaged filmmakers, as the film contributed to launching the *sans-papiers* political movement. Responding to the issues facing undocumented immigrants in France, multiple French filmmakers combined their efforts to create a three-minute documentary to protest the Debré law of 1996 which penalized any French citizen who helped an undocumented immigrant.<sup>38</sup> Another example of *cinéma engagé*, the feature length documentary *Paris mon Paradis*, exposes the struggles that characterize the lives of African immigrants in Paris, juxtaposing these with the simple but joyful life the immigrant left behind. Like Sembène’s *La noire de...*, *Paris mon Paradis* portrays and demystifies the myth of France as an “Eldorado” by addressing immigrants’ negative emotions such as loneliness, precarity, and shame. As for Awadi’s documentary, *Le Point de Vue du Lion*, it exposes similar migration issues from the political viewpoint of pan-Africanism. His film focuses primarily on the

---

<sup>37</sup> The *Festival du Film Court Francophone de Vaulx-en-Velin*, is an annual film festival held in Vaulx-en-Velin, France that celebrates francophone short films.

<sup>38</sup> Jean-Louis Debré is a conservative French political figure. He proposed a bill in 1996 that reinforced the control of illegal immigration and punished any French citizens who illegally aided any undocumented immigrants.

migrants who have not yet been able to reach Europe due to the strict policing of European borders, and many scenes are thus shot on the African continent. In the same vein as Thiam's *Le Cri de la Mer*, Awadi's film also chronicles the journeys of several Africans attempting to reach Europe by sea. He also interviews African intellectuals and former political leaders who place blame for the current tragedy on both the former colonizers and the African countries themselves. As a pan-Africanist, Awadi asks probing questions concerning the pillage of African resources by the West, the inefficiency of political classes in Africa, the lack of democracy in countries such as Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Mali, and the lack of solidarity between the elite and poor Africans who must migrate to survive.

An especially valuable justification for making documentaries over realist fiction is that they give voice to those who experience injustice. Documentaries allow for the direct testimony of victims, enabling real people to tell their stories in their own words. From a postcolonial standpoint, the engaged filmmakers in this chapter rewrite the colonial narrative and critique its persistence by granting voices to those rendered silent and objectified by neo-colonial and xenophobic discourses. For example, *Le Point de Vue du Lion* shows migrants attempting to reach the European continent via the Strait of Gibraltar at the cost of their lives. However, the documentary also reveals, through the words of the migrants, the underlying cause for their dangerous journey: they wish to escape the extreme poverty in Senegal brought on by the looting of fishery resources on the Senegalese Atlantic coast by Western fleets. The viewer, thus, is invited to see the issue from the migrants' perspective. While Europe, and especially France reinforced strict border policies that criminalize illegal migrants, the migrants consider themselves

ordinary people who are looking for a better life. Indeed, as they describe, they had the right to do so according to international laws. In the case of Yaméogo, making a documentary film (*Paris mon Paradis*) allowed her to tell her own experience of immigration to France. Other filmmakers (like Yaméogo) are familiar with life in exile and share their subjects' experience, which enables them to take ownership of the issue of undocumented immigration from Africa to France while denouncing its tragic consequences from the inside.

It is necessary to now briefly discuss the changes to the laws regarding migration from Francophone Africa to France since the 1970s, the time of Sembène's *La noire de...*, to the current era of Philibert, Yaméogo, and Awadi. As mentioned above, immigrants could enter France in the 1960s without a visa, but the unequal treatment and cultural conflicts they encountered upon arrival kept them in a position of quasi-slavery. For example, in *La noire de...*, Diouana, an immigrant from Senegal is confined to an interior and enclosed space in the large apartment owned by her French employees who treat her poorly and pay her irregularly. Diouana remains silent, but her voice is heard through the film's revelation of her interior thoughts, communicated through voice-over techniques. While the conditions of migration have changed, the attempt to give voice to the migrant persists, and like Sembène's Diouana, the protagonists in each of the documentaries discussed in this chapter benefit from varying degrees of freedom of expression afforded to them by the filmmaker. However, unlike in earlier periods, irregular conditions of exile do not prevent them from expressing themselves in documentaries that grant them visibility and voice. Furthermore, recent documentaries represent the different conditions facing African immigrants: strict border policing; the militarization of the European

southern borders; and severe conditions of issuing visas in the French embassies of African countries. The underlying causes of illegal immigration, these conditions have contributed to a feeling of discontent among the former colonized populations. Further, a feeling of betrayal is shared by the migrants and immigrants depicted in the three films. They unanimously consider France's restrictive immigration policies as a betrayal of a shared history and a lack of consideration of what the former colonizer gained from over 100 years of colonization and exploitation. Whereas Madjiguène Cissé, the spokesperson in *Nous, sans-papiers de France* indicates French legislation that contributes to turning vulnerable legal immigrants into unwanted guests, Bintou in *Paris mon Paradis* indicates how a sub-Saharan immigrant in Paris feels excluded despite her legal status. In *Le Point de Vue du Lion*, out of thousands of sub-Saharan African migrants who wait on the Algerian and Moroccan coasts to enter Europe, only a few will reach their destination, only to be met by harsh conditions.

This chapter will contextualize Traoré's term "sense of betrayal" felt by former colonial populations in these three documentaries (156). This sense of betrayal, evoked in separate instances in the three documentaries, can be categorized in one of two ways. First, francophone African populations, especially those who fought in the two World Wars and the colonial wars of Algeria and Indochina, felt that they have been betrayed by the former colonizer. In fact, critics and leaders in former French colonies say that France has never truly recognized or properly compensated the African soldiers who fought for the country.<sup>39</sup> Yaméogo's film evokes this betrayal through the testimony of a homeless

---

<sup>39</sup> After giving citizenship to several African soldiers who fought in wars over 50 years ago, President François Hollande said at a ceremony in the Elysée Palace in Paris in 2017, that his country owes these men a "debt of blood." The honored veterans were between the ages of 78 and 90 (Kuo, 2017).

African veteran (Amoro), whose military pension is not enough to pay for housing in France. Many French citizens do not fully understand how or why there are African immigrants or descendants of African immigrants in French territory. A thorough knowledge of the history of France, reveals that the ancestors of many French of African origin, did not come to France on their own. Indeed, they often did not want to leave their African homelands but were taken from their families to aid France during wartimes. *Paris mon Paradis* helps to set the record straight for those colonial populations experiencing a sense of betrayal of the first kind.

The second type of betrayal felt by African postcolonial populations results from the numerous counterproductive fiscal agreements and development projects associated with neoliberalism and globalization funded by their former colonizers. These counterproductive projects have contributed to worsen the fragile economic situations of francophone African countries, thus increasing their national debts. Awadi's documentary addresses the issue of the money owed to Western investors. On this point, Traoré, interviewed in the film, states:

For three hundred years, Africans have been under the European juggernaut of globalization [...]. It is difficult to speak of globalization when people are not even free to go where they want. No nation has the right to say that it will choose its migrants based on workforce needs. Unless European countries stop stealing African natural resources, the current migration issue will not get better. (2011)

Traoré's quote highlights how Western countries have long taken advantage of African resources by describing globalization from an African perspective. As she implies, instead of beginning in the 1980s with the unfair trade politics of an open global market,

globalization begins with the slave trade and colonialism and its exploitation of African labor and resources. Centuries of exploitation can explain the extreme poverty in Africa despite the presence of abundant natural resources. Sadly, in the early post-independence period, African leaders talked about economic and social development, while today they talk about fighting hunger. Neoliberal structural readjustment plans that require taking out loans and thus amassing deep debts to Western nations and international lenders have made the economic situation in most African countries go from bad to worse.

Additionally, I will analyze how the two senses of betrayal are articulated through accentscapes. Jean-Marc Moura's *vocalité*, "narrative as story", and "narrative as discourse" will provide the lens for examining each film's accentscapes. According to Moura, *vocalité* (vocality) means two things: first, the voice that comes from the story (the actions, the characters, and the settings as represented by the author's cultural codes); and second, the voice that comes from the discourse, that is, the expression, the means by which the content is communicated in postcolonial writings (124). Moura adds that voices in postcolonial writings highlight two types of narrative: "narrative as story" (what is said); and "narrative as discourse" (how it is said). Moura's focus on narration and voice allows me to examine the extent to which each film positions the migrants as narrators who determine both the story and how it is told. Exploring voice and narration in these films necessarily allows us to identify their accentscapes. As we shall see, accentscapes are created by the migrants themselves both spontaneously and in order to resist dominant political narratives, while filmmakers use these accentscapes to resist dominant *cinematic* narratives about Africans and migration.

## **Accentscapes in *Paris mon Paradis***

*Paris mon Paradis*, released in 2011, is the first feature documentary by Burkinabe director Eléonore Yaméogo. She received her initial training in filmmaking during film shootings in Burkina Faso before attending the *Institut supérieur de l'image et du son de Ouagadougou* (ISIS), where she obtained a degree in audiovisual studies. In interviews, Yaméogo explains that, as a child, she always dreamed of Paris as an ideal city, a Garden of Eden of sorts, in which all is perfect. Her dream turned into a nightmare when she first arrived in Paris and experienced Parisian life as an African immigrant. Not only did the Eiffel Tower not look as beautiful as she had imagined, but she soon realized that the African immigrants who had come before her and who had always depicted Paris as an idyllic city, had been lying to cover up the extremely precarious conditions in which they lived and of which they were ashamed. This disillusionment led Yaméogo to film her experience and those of her fellow African immigrants, so as to document the complex truth of the African immigrant in France and understand and demystify the idealized stories of Paris.

Yaméogo's work gained prominence at film festivals in Montréal (*Vues d'Afrique*) and Bujumbura, Burundi (*Festival international du cinéma et de l'audiovisuel du Burundi*), and was selected for the best African documentary film at the *Festival panafricain du cinéma et de la télévision de Ouagadougou* (FESPACO), Africa's largest film festival, in 2012.<sup>40</sup> It was produced by "Overlap Films," a French production company whose goal is to support fiction and documentary film projects that bear the

---

<sup>40</sup> The *Festival panafricain du cinéma et de la télévision de Ouagadougou* (FESPACO) is a film festival held biannually in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. It accepts for competition only films made by African filmmakers and chiefly produced in Africa.

strong signature of authors from different cultures. Yaméogo's film chronicles the journeys of several West African undocumented immigrants who move to Paris, hoping to find the paradise of their dreams. Indeed, for immigrants and their families in the homeland, immigration to France is often regarded as a journey of success and a reason for happiness. Yaméogo highlights the devastating disillusionment met by most of these immigrants upon arrival in France. Further, Yaméogo touches on issues linked with undocumented immigrants' distorted representation of the Western world, such as the loss of their bearings.

Moura's idea of vocality in *Paris mon Paradis* illuminates, on the one hand, the roles played by the voices of the narrator and of the immigrants being interviewed. On the other hand, it indicates the structure of the narrative transmission and its manifestation—in other words, the ways in which the events are narrated. Because this film only focuses on journeys of West Africans in Paris, the events are told from the West Africans' point of view. Vocality as a setting appears in the many bureaucratic challenges the immigrants face in Paris as they attempt to find proper housing, legal documentation, and employment. The film also unveils techniques proper to choral storytelling as stories are recounted by several different sub-Saharan African immigrants who have in common distorted notions of the Western world, miserable living conditions, and the hope for a better future. Although Yaméogo uses a choral style to structure her film, there is only one narrative voice: her own voice-over before each segment introducing the four main characters. She is the omniscient and omnipresent narrator who recounts the stories of the other characters, who in effect speak through her. The stories of the immigrants are told chronologically, but each character's individual story is ultimately intertwined with the

others and organized by theme. For instance, in one of the opening sequences, the protagonists discuss their arrival in Paris and how they began their precarious lives in exile. Whereas one immigrant, Shaba, slept outside on a public carousel for months, another immigrant, Bintou, slept in a telephone booth for a week. By intertwining the protagonists' testimonies Yaméogo's granting of visibility and voice to the oppressed immigrants is framed and organized by victims of the issue presented, making Yaméogo present even when she is not speaking, since she determines how the events are narrated.

An important feature of Yaméogo's voice-over in *Paris mon Paradis* is its identification with the undocumented African immigrants who arrived in France before her. First-person narration abounds in the film. In the opening sequence, reading a poem in the form of a woman's letter addressed to the African continent, Yaméogo identifies herself as a sub-Saharan African immigrant who is leaving her African homeland, and further identifies herself with other African immigrants who share her experience. A lyric poem, however, it emphasizes the *je* and the speaker's emotions. The poem thus announces the film's focus on the single narrative voice that speaks for herself and for others:

Afrique, ma riche et pauvre Afrique  
Afrique, où peu à peu j'ai désespéré de trouver ma place sous ton soleil.  
Aujourd'hui, je te quitte les yeux pleins de larmes,  
Demain je te reviendrai le cœur plein de joie et les bras chargés de cadeaux.  
Je te quitte pour cette terre merveilleuse, où tout est plus beau,  
Cette terre lointaine mais pleine de promesses.  
[Africa, my rich and poor Africa

Africa, where little by little I lost hope of finding my place under your sun.  
Today, I am leaving you with eyes full of tears,  
Tomorrow, I will come back to you with a heart full of joy and arms full of presents.  
I am leaving you for this wonderful land, where everything is more beautiful,  
This far-away land full of promises.]

Crucially, this poem-letter constitutes the first instance in which accentscape intervenes in this film. The symbolic landscape of accents is created by Yaméogo's displaced voice as she reads her poem-letter in the voice-over. Although she is reading in standard French, her accent suggests a Francophone West African woman. When Yaméogo herself briefly appears on screen prior to the first immigrant's testimony, her African ethnicity is indeed confirmed. Her letter symbolizes the first act of detachment from her homeland, which she is heartbroken to leave, and her voice takes on an acousmatic presence, becoming an example of Chion's *acousmêtre*.<sup>41</sup> As this "talking and acting shadow" composes her letter, a shot of a plane taking off is superposed onto the shot of the letter. Whereas the good-bye letter implies her process of emotionally detaching from the African continent, the ascending plane indicates her physical departure or detachment. Both signify her state in between Africa and France, and here, the accentscape evokes the doubled and in-between identity of the African woman who speaks perfect French. As the narrator indicates in her poem-letter, despite her emotional attachment to Africa, she feels obligated to leave the motherland because it can no longer provide for her needs. But the

---

<sup>41</sup> See page 26 of this dissertation for Chion's definition of *acousmêtre*.

accentscape created by the letter suggests that she is already in France resisting the conditions of exclusion she discovers there.

While the homeland is somehow rendered inferior in the letter due to its poverty and the opening sequence, Paris is magnified and idealized. Like Yaméogo, the immigrants highlighted in the film arrived in France with similar utopian visions of Paris. Such an ideal perception of Paris corresponds to that of Diouana in Sembène's *La noire de...* Indeed, Diouana dreams so much of France as the promised land that everything about her home city, Dakar, disgusts her. Prior to reaching France and filming her documentary, Yaméogo had attempted several times to go to France but was denied a visa. Discussing the myth of Paris as an Edenic city with Stéphanie Trouillard, Yaméogo states that "Paris had become a myth for me. If they kept rejecting my visa application, it was because this country had to be wonderful." It is clear from the other testimonies shared in *Paris mon Paradis*, that the myth of Paris as paradise is a common motif that leads immigrants to migrate to France.

According to Shaba and Bintou's testimonies, the devastating disillusionment of African immigrants immediately follows their arrivals in France. Now faced with shame and the impossibility of return, these undocumented immigrants regard their respective homelands as natural and beautiful lands lost to their failed journey. Although her poem-letter highlighted the poverty of the African continent, Yaméogo, in contrast, maintained a close relationship with her motherland. This is suggested by the repetition of the word "Africa" three times in the first two lines of her letter. The letter is a precise case of calligraphic accentscape. The calligraphic close-up of the French text on the screen is synchronized to the narrator's accented pronunciation. The handwriting resembles the

open time-space of the homeland's nature and modest conditions, and the accented voice is complemented by the calligraphic accents. Not only does this vocal and visual combination of accents recreate a lost language community and its customs in a situation of exile, it also transforms the spectator's relationship to the film. Instead of merely watching, the spectator must now watch and read at the same time.

Despite having been able to meet up with other Africans in France, Yaméogo questions her migration to France in the film when she sees the appalling living conditions of her fellow African immigrants. This scene depicts numerous African immigrants walking on the streets of a *banlieue* of Paris. Then, while her voice-over asks if she will ever be able to live in the beautiful Parisian neighborhoods located in the city center, the camera pans over the sixth and seventh arrondissements revealing prestigious landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower and the Luxembourg Gardens. There is thus a dislocation between her disenchanted voice and the longshot depicting the charming city. Even though she can see its beauty from far away, her accented voice cannot occupy the sonic space of the heart of Paris. This exemplifies Chion's notion of audio-visual contradiction, which occurs when "what the voice-over narrator says is believed by what we see" on the screen (1999: 473). The narrator wishes to experience the city center of Paris; however, her status as an African immigrant prevents her from doing so. This audio-visual contradiction symbolizes thwarted experience that allows Yaméogo to relate to the *sans-papiers* in her film, whose stories also reveal unfulfilled dreams and contradictory experiences.

Another way that *Paris mon Paradis* exposes injustices and makes political critiques of the immigrants' miserable conditions is through the narrator's tone of voice. Yaméogo

narrates the film in a slow tone of pathos that dictates the overall slow pace of the film. This pacing is symbolic of the experience of waiting, which is an inevitable part of life for an undocumented immigrant. Along with the case of the pictographic accentscape mentioned above in the poem-letter scene, the somber mood of Yaméogo's film indicates a symbolic counter hegemonic recreation of her lost linguistic community. This conforms with Naficy's take on accented cinema:

If the dominant cinema is driven by the hegemony of synchronous sound and a strict alignment of the speaker and voice, accented films are counterhegemonic insofar as many of them de-emphasize synchronous sound, insist on first-person and other voice-over narrations delivered in the accented pronunciation of the host country's language, create a slippage between voice and speaker, and inscribe everyday nondramatic pauses and long silences. (24)

In this accented film, both the voice-over narration and the monologues of the protagonists are indeed dominated by pauses and moments of silence. Not only do these silent moments work to reinforce the narrator and protagonists' subdued tone of voice, but they also contribute to a silent revolution on behalf of undocumented immigrants. In this study, exilic protagonists are often silent in comparison to their French counterparts because they are unable to voice their desires in French or they are deprived of basic rights in France. The silent atmosphere functions as an important feature of Yaméogo's film. The uncharacteristic silence of the protagonists in *Paris mon Paradis* is a stylistic choice that the director uses to recreate their clandestine conditions. An example of this silence is in a scene when the undocumented immigrants are shown standing under a

bridge not speaking to one another, while all around them unorganized and dirty piles of sleeping bags, cloths, and tattered tents reveal their living conditions.

Furthermore, a sequence in *Paris mon Paradis* recalls the roots of the *sans-papiers* movement, which is highlighted in *Nous, sans-papiers de France*. The sequence opens with a group of undocumented immigrants from Mali sleeping outside in tents after having been evicted by French authorities from the social housing originally allocated to them by the French government. The immigrants then organize a peaceful protest in front of the prefecture to voice their concerns. The protest ends brutally when the protesters become victims of state police brutality. Yaméogo includes footage of this police brutality in her documentary: children are seen being separated from their mothers as an unresponsive pregnant woman is being dragged on the ground by police officers.<sup>42</sup> This tragic sequence recalls a major incident involving the *sans-papiers* of the Saint-Bernard church in Paris in the summer 1996, when a group of undocumented immigrants went on a hunger strike to protest their miserable living conditions. They were forcibly removed by police who broke into the church with an axe. This event was highlighted by the French media, which contributed to making the causes of undocumented immigrants visible in France.<sup>43</sup> By inserting disturbing footage into her documentary, Yaméogo denounces police brutality regarding *sans-papiers* in France and shows that undocumented immigrants are not just passive victims. Indeed, in the scene prior to the police intervention, the immigrants use their accented voices and African kitchen utensils, such as pestles and cooking pots, as instruments to protest their eviction. As they

---

<sup>42</sup> This footage was filmed by the National Institute of Archives (INA).

<sup>43</sup> Indeed, *Nous, sans-papiers de France*, the final film discussed in this chapter, was filmed in response to this event one year later.

sing in both French and their indigenous language, they perform their accentscape in the hostland's public space. Thus, they are resisting dominant political discourse, by altering or accenting it in the public sphere.

In another scene, a group of African immigrants from various sub-Saharan African countries illegally relocate together to an empty government building. The sonic space of the vast building resounds with multiple accentscapes reflecting their different nationalities and ethnic tribes. Accentscapes here function as a counterhegemonic discourse against negative perceptions of the postcolonial immigrants. This same dystopian view of Europe as an Eldorado is the focal point of the next film discussed in this chapter, *Le Point de Vue du Lion*.

### **Accentscapes in *Le Point de Vue du Lion***

*Le Point de Vue du Lion*, released in 2011, is the first feature documentary of the well-known Senegalese rapper and pan Africanist Didier Awadi. Due to its political engagement, the film gained notoriety at film festivals in Africa and Europe, including the Cannes film festival in 2012. Although it did not win a prize in Cannes, it earned visibility in Africa and in Western countries. Awadi is arguably the most visible figure in Francophone West African Hip Hop. As a founding member of Positive Black Soul (PBS)<sup>44</sup> with Duggy Tee, Awadi toured France, Europe, and the United States several times contributing to the international popularity of Hip Hop. He released numerous albums with PBS, and in 2002, he released his first solo album *Kaddu Gor (Word of Honour)*, which received the World Music Award in 2003 from *Radio France Internationale* (RFI). As an engaged musical artist, Awadi was famous for making

---

<sup>44</sup> PBS is one of the first francophone African Hip Hop groups.

political statements about injustice, neocolonialism, corrupt African leaders, and Western imperialism in his songs. Thus, in terms of political critiques, the transition from music with strong political content to engaged documentary filmmaking was natural for Awadi. *Le Point de Vue du Lion* was produced by his own production company “Studio Sankara,” in Dakar.<sup>45</sup> This studio is known for producing engaged rap and African music. His film was distributed by *AfricAvenir International*, a pan Africanist non-governmental and non-profit organization based in Cameroon that engages in political education and information dissemination in Africa and worldwide. *Le Point de Vue du Lion* shows that Africans suffer from the strong domination of their former colonial powers, mainly France, and that this Western domination is held in place by complicit and corrupt African leaders.

In *Le Point de Vue du Lion*, Awadi presents two opposing viewpoints: that of Westerners who argue that the “invasion” of African migrants is destroying Europe; and that of Africans who claim that Africa is not poor but impoverished by Western powers. Awadi includes interviews with several migrants, intellectuals, and former and current African officials who give their opinions about the real causes of the migration problem. The documentary especially identifies and denounces the main cause of poverty in Senegal: the looting of fishery resources on the Senegalese Atlantic coast by Western fleets.

*Le Point de Vue du Lion* gives voice to a group of migrants who are waiting in Africa for opportunities to reach European soil. In other words, it portrays sub-Saharan Africans

---

<sup>45</sup> Awadi named his production studio after Thomas Sankara, a former president of Burkina Faso who was assassinated during a military coup in 1987. Sankara’s pan Africanist vision and controversial positions regarding the West greatly influenced many Africans, in particular Awadi.

ready to embark on long transnational journeys. The migrants are unable to live fulfilling lives in their homelands due to war, drought, political instability, and lack of education. Awadi's film demonstrates how strict European border policing, reinforced on the national and transnational levels, is now taking away the migrants' only hope of escape from these situations: the right to travel. Western Europe has literally turned its territories into impenetrable fortresses. As a result, sub-Saharan African migrants decide to reach Europe via illegal maritime routes with the help of smugglers. According to Hadrien Mathoux, they have increasingly taken long and dangerous paths: passing through the Strait of Gibraltar; departing from the coasts of Senegal and being forcibly placed in migrant camps in the Canary Islands when discovered by authorities; departing from the Algerian, Moroccan, Tunisian, and Libyan coasts and again being detained on the Italian islands on their way to Europe. These dangerous routes lead to the sinking of many boats and the drowning of numerous migrants. Emmanuel Blanchard estimates that, since 1988, more than 15,000 African migrants have died while trying to enter the European union via the Atlantic Ocean or the Mediterranean Sea.

In a socially and politically motivated tone, Awadi's documentary denounces this unfortunate situation and proposes to promote positive images of African migrants that differ from those disseminated by political discourse and mainstream media. His approach is similar to that of Traoré, who critiques the negative perceptions expressed in contemporary political discourses in France and in the mainstream media's coverage of African migrant journeys. Thus, this documentary reflects Traoré's engaged position as well as Awadi's own political activism, both translated into his poetic cinematic language. By interviewing forty-four individuals—including African migrants—Awadi

allows African and French intellectuals, writers, and former African politicians to give their opinions about the current state of migration. In addition to the interviews, he includes archival footage of African heroes from various nations, such as Thomas Sankara (Burkina Faso), Patrice Lumumba (The Democratic Republic of Congo), and Kwamé N’krumah (Ghana). Filmed in medium shots and closeups, his film probes the faces and words of the young Africans he interviews to discover their reasons for leaving their homelands for Europe.

The film opens with footage of sub-Saharan migrants brought to the Canary Islands by European authorities. In this sequence, the island residents’ fear of an African invasion is made clear by the burnt dugout canoes shown in the background. The following sequence, in which the first-person plural “we” dominates, reminds the viewer of a tragic event in 1998 when two young boys were found dead in the landing gear of a plane arriving in Brussels. The boys’ identification documents revealed that they were from Guinea and their names were Yaguine Koita and Fodé Tounkara, fourteen and fifteen years old, respectively. A heartbreaking letter addressed to the officials of Europe accompanied the two bodies. One of the characteristics of Yaguine and Fodé’s letter is the plural subject “we,” used to speak for all young Africans who suffer from lack of education, war, and poverty. In a similar way, the first-person plural “we” is used in Awadi’s documentary which attempts to show solidarity with African migrants and to show them speaking as one. Awadi also allows the migrants to control their own representations. Awadi himself is almost never seen when asking questions to his interviewees. Instead, he intentionally plays the role of Chion’s *acousmètre* in order to

increase the visibility of the sub-Saharan African migrants.<sup>46</sup> Even the migrants who die during their maritime border crossing benefit from this visibility through the testimonies of the migrants who survive. In other words, *Le Point de Vue du Lion* intervenes to restore their humanity. Illegal migration is a collective mission - some attempts will succeed while others fail - but those who perish somehow did not die in vain because their deaths allowed others to reach their point of arrival.

By incorporating an array of multilingual speakers made up of African migrants, former government officials, and African intellectuals with diverse viewpoints about the issue of undocumented immigration, this film destabilizes the omniscient narrator and the narrative approach of mainstream cinema and journalism. Thus, the first instance of accentscape here is found in the collective nature of the enunciation. This accentscape functions as what Foucault calls a heterotopia, a symbolic counter space, because it challenges dominant negative perceptions of sub-Saharan African migrants and hegemonic cinematic practices by relying on characters' collective interventions, diverse ethnicities, and fragmented, lyric, and emotive narrative structures.<sup>47</sup> Before the opening credits, Awadi warns viewers about his personal treatment of the images and sounds in the film. First, he indicates that his film is not of the same quality as the films of Steven Spielberg or Spike Lee. Then, he states up front the goals and the political ideology behind his film: “Notre but est de faire passer un message panafricaniste. Que l’on ne s’attende pas à une naïve objectivité. Notre projet est subjectif. La démarche est

---

<sup>46</sup> See page 26 of this dissertation for Chion's definition of *acousmètre*.

<sup>47</sup> Foucault defines heterotopia as a sort of counter-space, or a localized utopia, created by adult societies to replace real places and that seem perfect to children. According to Foucault, Western society creates these “other” spaces to contest the established places in which we live. Examples of some heterotopias are gardens, cemeteries, mental institutions, assisted living communities, nursing homes, and prisons (1-2).

révolutionnaire. Nous assumons.” [Our goal is to deliver a pan Africanist message. Let us not expect a naïve objectivity from this. Our project is subjective. The method, however, is revolutionary. We take responsibility for this]. The subjective nature of Awadi’s project can be understood by his radical position as a pan Africanist artist. He believes that Western countries *always* want to take advantage of underdeveloped African nations, which they divided according to Western needs and desires during the colonial era. These divisions still greatly influence and prevent African nations from prospering. The only hope for Africa to be a better place, for him, is for *all* African nations to come together and rely only on each another and their own resources, removing themselves completely from European support and control. Awadi emphasizes his use of the plural (collective) first-person “we” in the pre-text, using multiple authentic voices to tell their own stories in the film. From then on after this scene, he withdraws himself from the frame and no longer appears, creating a polyphony that gives voice to the migrants, yet another example of Chion’s *acousmètre*.<sup>48</sup>

Additionally, the film’s French title *Le Point de Vue du Lion* [*The Lion’s Point of View*] evokes a case of accentscape because it refers to a well-known West African proverb that says: “Until lions have their own historians, hunting stories can only sing the glory of the hunter.”<sup>49</sup> The “lions” in the film are the African populations while the “hunters” and the “historians” are the Western countries. As Awadi indicates, the narratives of African migrants are too often told by the Western media and those who erected the walls at the borders of Europe. The main objective of this documentary is to

---

<sup>48</sup> See page 26 of this dissertation for Chion’s definition of *acousmètre*.

<sup>49</sup> This popular idiom is used, for instance, in the ethnic languages Mooré (from Burkina Faso) or Dioula (from Ivory Coast). It implies that a hunting story from the hunted lion’s perspective would greatly differ from the hunter’s version of the same story.

act as the historian of those rendered silent and objectified by the “hunters,” and thus give those deemed “illegals” the chance to share their own stories. In the third and final film discussed in this chapter, *Nous sans papiers de France*, another group of voiceless individuals are given the chance to speak: undocumented immigrants.

### **Linguistic discourse as a site of resistance in *Nous, sans papiers de France***

*Nous, sans-papiers de France* is a multi-directed, three-minute, short documentary coordinated by filmmaker Nicolas Philibert, that followed an official complaint of filmmakers exposing certain French political leaders as oppressors of illegal immigrants. This complaint, known as *l'Appel des 66 cinéastes* [*The Manifesto of 66 filmmakers*], appeared in February 1997, and served the cause of the undocumented immigrants or *sans-papiers*. Before analyzing accentscapes in *Nous, sans papiers de France*, I must first briefly situate it as a part of the direct involvement by French filmmakers in favor of the *sans-papiers*.

Although the presence of immigrants has become an increasingly passionate issue in France for leaders across the political spectrum since the 1980s, the main debate in contemporary France remains how to adequately integrate immigrant populations into the nation. As Andrew Higson points out, on one side, films can contribute to promoting positive images and views about a marginalized nation to the outside world by “giving a brand name [...] and noting how national labels become crucial at prestigious prize-giving ceremonies” (69). On the opposite side, films about illegal immigrants and *banlieue* residents in France reveal disturbing images about French political and social practices and challenge the negative stereotypes and perceptions about immigrants and their descendants that circulate in much French popular culture. Such stereotypes also

frequently appear in the media and are disseminated by far-right political parties like the *Front National* (FN), which often portray these populations as unwilling to integrate into the rest of French society. Thus, films that centerstage immigrants and *banlieue* residents can contribute to creating a more diverse collective French identity as well as a counter hegemonic discourse. For instance, representations of polygamy in *Amin* or halal butchering practices in *Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!* serve to diversify the image of France.

The participation of French filmmakers in major social campaigns involving the defense of the differences and identities of French populations such as immigrants is not new, but rather, it began in the period of decolonization. For Michel de Certeau, May 1968 marks the moment when all people in France, regardless of race or origin, began to demand recognition by the bourgeois French state. This period of contestation was a *coup de force* condemning the bourgeois state and society in general to adapt to the “plural cultures” in France (qtd. in Rigby, 151). It led to the emergence and the visibility of marginal cultures in both metropolitan France and the former colonies. At this time, filmmakers such as Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut questioned the credibility of the French state's institutions going as far as to participate in the interruption of the Cannes film festival in 1968. Among other major social campaigns in France supported by filmmakers are: the anti-Algerian war protests of the 1950s; the *beur* movement in the early to mid-1980s, which received considerable media attention; the emergence of the *sans-papiers* movement in the 1990s; national protests against social disintegration in 2005; and the protests of the *gilets jaunes*, the “yellow vests,” in 2018 and 2019.

In the wake of the *sans-papiers* movement at the end of 1990s, the direct involvement and demonstrations by French filmmakers in favor of the *sans-papiers* resulted in *l'Appel des 66 cinéastes*, published on 11 February 1997. A few years later, *Nous, sans-papiers de France* was released in response to the Debré law.<sup>50</sup> *Nous, sans papier de France* gives the marginal populations targeted by the Dubré law a voice, allowing them to express their accentscapes.

The three-minute documentary features Madjiguène Cissé, one of the main spokespersons of the *sans-papiers* movement, addressing their manifesto to the nation. The film consists of a single fixed shot on Cissé's face, in close-up and on a neutral background, as she assertively reads the text of the manifesto while staring into the camera. In the closing credits, the names of 175 film professionals who supported the project are displayed on the screen. The manifesto, which was first published in *Libération*<sup>51</sup> on 25 February 1997, expresses the collective nature of this protest:

Nous, sans-papiers de France, avons décidé, en signant cet appel, de sortir de l'ombre. Désormais, en dépit des risques encourus, ce ne sont plus seulement nos visages mais aussi nos noms qui seront connus. Nous proclamons : Comme tous les sans-papiers, nous sommes des gens comme tout le monde. Nous vivons parmi vous, pour la plupart, depuis des années. Nous sommes venus en France avec la volonté d'y travailler et parce qu'on nous avait dit qu'elle était la "patrie des droits

---

<sup>50</sup> As a reminder, the Debré law criminalizes any French citizen who helps an undocumented immigrant: It allows the confiscation of the passports of undocumented immigrants; it allows French authorities to fingerprint immigrants who apply for public housing; and it limits judges' powers of granting immigrants the rights to stay in France in certain necessary cases. Also see page 41 of this dissertation.

<sup>51</sup> *Libération* is a center-left-wing French daily newspaper in France, founded in Paris by Jean-Paul Sartre and Serge July in 1973 in the wake of the protest movements of May 1968. The *Manifeste des sans-papiers* was published in a supplement of *Libération* on 25 February 1997 entitled "55.000 noms contre la loi Debré" ["55,000 names against the Debré law"].

de l'homme" : nous ne pouvions plus supporter la misère et l'oppression qui sévissait dans nos pays, nous voulions que nos enfants aient le ventre plein et nous rêvions de liberté. [...] Puisque les exemples de l'Italie, de l'Espagne, du Portugal, et à plusieurs reprises de la France même, démontrent qu'une régularisation globale est tout à fait possible, nous demandons notre régularisation. Nous ne sommes pas des clandestins. Nous apparaissions au grand jour. *Libération* (2/25/1997)

[We, undocumented immigrants from France, decided, by signing this manifesto, to come out of the shadows. From now on, despite the risks involved, it is no longer only our faces but also our names that will be known. We proclaim: Like all undocumented immigrants, we are people like everyone else. We have lived among you, for many of us, for years. We came to France with the will to work and because we were told that France was the “homeland of human rights”: we could no longer bear the misery and oppression in our countries, we wanted our children to have food and we dreamed of freedom. [...] As examples from Italy, Spain, Portugal, and on several occasions, from France show, a massive regularization is always possible, we ask for our regularization. We are no longer clandestine. We appear in broad daylight.]

The tone of her diction sums up the urgency of the *sans-papiers* situation in France and the importance of the manifesto as a counter hegemonic text. Cissé's reading highlights the miserable living conditions of the *sans-papiers* and the requests for their regularization and proper integration into French society. Filmed in one take and in a solitary close-up, Cissé stresses repressive laws endorsed by leading French politicians

that contribute to turning legal immigrants into illegal guests. Moreover, she emphasizes key republican principles which regulate the *sans-papiers* residency status yet exclude them from social and political participation.

In order for the *sans-papiers* movement to touch a relatively large audience and have a significant impact on policies in favor of the immigrant communities, the directors of *Nous, sans-papiers de France* opted for a simple and realistic visual aesthetic for the film. The intentional lack of an introduction of the only character in the film and the abrupt opening of the speech symbolically suggests the anonymity and the denial of undocumented immigrants who are deprived of basic rights. The mise-en-scène of the solitary close-up reproduces an undocumented immigrant hideout. This resonates with the notion of inferiority and self-depreciation from which postcolonial subjects in postcolonial narratives tend to represent themselves. Because the colonized subject has internalized a European set of values, he/she often learn to regard himself/herself as inferior. As leading political officials in France use the derogative term *clandestins* to describe the illegitimate circumstances in which undocumented immigrants hide, the darkness in the overall mise-en-scène of *Nous, sans-papiers de France* illustrates the hidden aspect of an undocumented immigrant's everyday life. The dark background of the solitary fixed shot from which Cissé abruptly erupts mimics the political rhetoric about the growing immigrant communities in France, which according to state discourse in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, accused many immigrants and *banlieue* residents of being the root cause of France's social issues such as criminality, unemployment, and delinquency. Repressive policies have contributed to keep the *sans-papiers* on the run.

Yet, despite being considered inferior and reduced to an invisible status, the film shows how illegal immigrants possess voices: they echo in Cissé's speech. For a viewer who is familiar with the French accent of a post-colonial African subject, Cissé's enunciation generates linguistic and cultural clues indicating her Senegalese origins. In other words, the grammatical constructions she chooses to speak about the everyday life of a *sans-papier*, the linguistic variations that shape the sound of her words, and even her facial expressions, express accentscapes. Cissé is a *sans-papier*, and thus is considered voiceless because she is not represented by the state. In this short film, however, her negated voice is heard, as is that of immigrants in similar displaced circumstances because of their common experience. For instance, the below passage of her speech contains numerous uses of the plural first-person "we" or "us" as personal pronouns in formal sentence structures. While Cissé's accented pronunciation of the consonants "r" and "s" recalls her Senegalese linguistic heritage, the plural first-person point of view indicates a multivocal text. In addition, the plural voices of the other unseen *sans-papiers* whom she represents, resonate with Chion's concept of *acousmètre*.<sup>52</sup> From all over the world, their acousmatic presence echoes via Cissé's voice:

Nous subissons les conditions de travail que nous imposent les entreprises et que vous pouvez refuser plus facilement que nous, car être des sans-papiers fait de nous des sans-droits. Nous savons que cela arrange beaucoup de monde. Nous produisons des richesses et nous enrichissons la France de nos diversités.

*Libération* (2/25/1997)

---

<sup>52</sup> See page 26 of this dissertation for Chion's definition of *acousmètre*.

[We are exposed to barbaric working conditions imposed by companies and which you can more easily refuse than we can, because being undocumented renders us people who have no rights. We know that this situation suits a lot of people. We produce wealth and we enrich France with our diversity.]

Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin indicate in the *Empire Writes Back*, that appropriation and abrogation are key strategies by which postcolonial narratives function as counterhegemonic discourses. Likewise, the directors of *Nous, sans-papiers de France* expose the meaning of political rhetoric concerning undocumented immigrants by combining hegemonic discourse with an obscure set and dark background, thus making a critical statement about state perceptions of the immigrant. First, appropriation occurs via formal discourse in this film. Cissé's formal speech functions as an appropriation of the manner in which French state officials address the nation. Additionally, on the one hand, her command of the French language, articulated in a correct use of grammar and a precise vocabulary, contrasts with the informal way in which immigrant communities communicate amongst themselves. On the other hand, it also indicates her high level of education which is not the case for most of the inhabitants and immigrants of the *banlieue*.<sup>53</sup>

The visual aspect of Cissé's close-up suggests her clandestinity while still ensuring that she is clearly visible in the foreground despite her dark skin and the dark background. Similarly, despite being called *clandestins* in France, immigrants are seen populating the streets of French major cities, this partly because of repressive laws that

---

<sup>53</sup> Cissé, a teacher in Senegal, initially came to Paris to visit her daughter who was a university student there. She joined the protest of the *sans-papiers* after spending some time with some undocumented immigrants in Paris. She adhered to their cause then became one of the spokespersons.

deny them housing and prevent them from contributing professionally to French society. Secondly, with the solitary and somber close-up of Cissé, the directors of *Nous, sans-papiers de France* suggest a symbolic abrogation of the political stage from where speeches are typically made. The directors substitute the usual clear, lit, and assuring environment from which leading politicians, for example Jean-Louis Debré and Jacques Chirac, address the nation, with an obscure setting and a dark background.<sup>54</sup> The lengthy, yet often empty, political discourses of leading French politicians are replaced by a more sincere, honest, and precise speech coming from a displaced subject who speaks the language of the Republic with mastery, yet who relates to the daily reality of undocumented immigrants. The directors' postcolonial strategies of appropriation and abrogation act as a means of expressing the accentscapes that alter and resist typical French state discourses on immigrants.

Additionally, there is a sonic distribution of accentscapes in Cissé's speech. This sonic distribution can be separated out into oral, vocal, and accented elements. Cissé appropriates the formal discourse of the French state's leading politicians when they address the nation by vocal means. The oral aspect involves storytelling — a method of preserving the past deeply important to African culture. Like the storytelling approach of African griots, Cissé evokes the collective identity of immigrants by speaking of the honorable and strong African communities which they inhabited prior to their displacement. Unlike Cissé, French politicians' stories and discourses about immigration often portray African immigrants as miserable invaders. Cissé's storytelling approach

---

<sup>54</sup> Former President Jacques Chirac's speech "*Le discours d'Orléans*" or "*Le bruit et l'odeur*" from 19 June 1991, is archived and can be easily located on the website of the *Institut national de l'audiovisuel* (INA).

promotes a positive image of *sans-papiers* different from those disseminated by political discourse and mainstream media. Whereas Jacques Chirac speaks about “the noise and the odor” of African immigrants<sup>55</sup>, Cissé evokes their humanity, integrity, and courage:

Nous sommes, en général, entrés régulièrement sur le territoire français. Nous avons été rejetés arbitrairement dans l'illégalité par le durcissement de lois successives qui permettaient aux préfetures de ne plus renouveler nos titres de séjour et par les restrictions apportées au droit d'asile qui n'était plus accordé qu'au compte-gouttes. [...] Nous sommes parfois des célibataires qui permettons souvent à notre famille de survivre au pays ; mais nous vivons fréquemment aussi avec nos conjoint(e)s et nos enfants nés en France ou venus tout petits. Nous avons donné à nombre de ces enfants des prénoms français ; nous les envoyons à l'école de la République. Nous avons ouvert la voie qui devrait les conduire à l'acquisition de la nationalité française, que bien des Français, parmi les plus fiers de la détenir, tiennent eux-mêmes de parents ou de grands-parents nés à l'étranger.

*Libération* (2/25/1997)

[We have, in general, entered French territory legally. We were arbitrarily rejected into illegality due to the rigidity of successive laws that allowed prefectures to no longer renew our residency permits and limited the right of asylum, which was granted to only a few of us. [...] We are sometimes single people that often support our families back in our countries; but also, we sometimes live with our spouses and children born in France or who came to France as children. We have given many of these children French names; we send

---

<sup>55</sup> See above footnote.

them to the school of the Republic. We have paved the way for them to acquire French nationality, which many French people, among the proudest of you, hold from foreign-born parents or grandparents.]

This statement illustrates how immigrants generally enter French territories with good intentions. They are often single individuals, single parents, or smaller families with children. Instead of showing real historical footage of *sans-papiers* living in major cities of France to portray a realistic point of view, the directors privilege the method of oral tradition to express the marginal conditions of the *sans-papiers*.

The vocal aspect of Cissé's speech is a strategy counter to classic Western cinema, which tends to privilege image over sound. Further, in *Nous, sans-papiers de France*, voice is privileged over any other sonic element to report the root causes of the negative perception of the *sans-papiers*. Chion discusses this vococentrist power of human voice in cinema: "in actual movies, for real spectators, [...], there are voices, and the everything else. In other words, in every audio mix, the presence of a human voice instantly sets up a hierarchy of perception. [...] the presence of human voice structures the sonic space that contains it" (1999:5).<sup>56</sup> A fortiori, the presence of an accented voice in the sonic space portrayed in Cissé's closeup gives a deeper meaning to the cause of the *sans-papiers*. It works as an abrogation of typical official and formal French discourse, using an accented discourse to condemn the immigration policies in France that result in unequal and unethical treatment of immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb who are accented subjects.

---

<sup>56</sup> Also see page 23 of this dissertation.

The direct speech of Cissé, an accented, exilic, and postcolonial subject, thus represents an accentscape. Here accentscape, as a means of counter hegemonic discourse resists negative perceptions of immigrants, derived from the accented aspect of the sonic distribution. The accentscape alludes to landscapes of accents proper to the original identity and culture of the speaker. Since many undocumented immigrants share the same condition of unlawful residency, Cissé's voice evokes aural characteristics of the spaces of exile with which they are familiar. Because of their shared experience of exilic and postcolonial conditions and their sense of communal belonging, they understand the person that speaks Cissé's accented voice. They relate to the notes it sings, the words it carries, and the traits by which she is defined as a postcolonial displaced subject with a voice.

This leads to the notion of audience, which grants social and cultural importance to a protest such as the *sans-papier* movement. Upon its release in 1997 and as part of its promotion, *Nous, sans papiers de France* was projected in major movie theaters across France prior to the feature films. This was meant to exhibit the protest to the maximum number of audiences as possible in order to expose the French state's unequal treatment of the *sans-papiers*. Nathan Abrams, Ian Bell, and Jan Udris characterize the concept of audience as "slippery, shapeless, evasive, and rather hard to define" (46). To contrast the audience and the spectator, they state:

Where the spectator is an individual, the audience is a collection of individuals transformed by a shared experience, where the spectator is constituted by psychological and textual relations, the audience is organized around categories of

ethnicity, class, gender, age, education, and so on. Furthermore, the audience is a construct and can never be understood in a pure, unadulterated form. (46-47)

Since Abrams, Bell, and Udris point out the challenge of understanding the audience of a film, it seems wise to consider the audience of *Nous, sans papiers de France* in terms of the national versus the transnational binary. At the national level, an audience which feels sympathetic to the cause of the *sans-papiers* is heterogenous and is made up of many people from various groups (white French citizens, minority French citizens including indigenous [autochthonous], non-indigenous [immigrants], and diasporic communities). While all people from such an audience respond in favor of the protest for humanitarian reasons, a large part of this audience constitutes a language community with a tacit understanding of the accentscapes portrayed through Cissé's speech since they share knowledge of sociolinguistic norms operating within their community. When the film is shown outside of France, such an audience can be considered in relation to the homelands from where the immigrant communities living in France originate (Maghreb and Sub-Saharan Africa). Not only is this audience outside of France often bilingual, its members speak French with an accent, as does Cissé, since they are an autochthonous or indigenous population transformed by a colonial past. However, such an audience may not relate to the accentscape alluded through Cissé's speech because there is a disconnect between a *sans-papier's* perception of immigrant life in France, Cissé for instance, and how the common young sub-Saharan Africans imagine Europe. For these young sub-Saharan Africans, the motivation to leave their homelands is mainly fueled by media (television plays a key role, for example) or fantasies about Europe often told by former

migrants. In short, economic reasons lead most of them to embark on long journeys of which the dangers they are vaguely aware but ignore the extent.

Furthermore, the content of Cissé's speech, which is also the manifesto of the *sans-papiers* movement, evokes the limitations of several key Republican principles and current policies regulating issues of immigration in France. The ideological circumstances that have enabled the emergence of state discourses about undocumented immigrants since the 1980s are in part the products of policy shifts by French political parties on both ends of the spectrum. Historically in France, rigid immigration policies, with a goal of making it difficult for immigrants and their families to arrive and remain in France, occur when right-wing governments are in power and the far-right political party is on the rise.<sup>57</sup> With promises to change such radical right-wing policies, the French left wing, traditionally associated with the defense of vulnerable groups in French society, has nonetheless always failed to reverse the offending legislation. Cissé also recalls unkept promises made by the then current and former administrations in her speech: "Le Premier ministre de la France avait promis que les familles ne seraient pas séparées : nous demandons que cette promesse soit enfin tenue et que l'expression réitérée des principes d'humanité par le gouvernement soit suivie d'effet" (*Libération*, 2/25/1997). [The Prime Minister of France had promised that families would not be separated: we ask that this promise be finally kept and that the government's repeated expression of the principles of humanity be implemented.] This failure across the political spectrum to recognize undocumented immigrants and to pass state laws in their favor becomes the

---

<sup>57</sup> For example: the Debré bill in 1996 (see pages 41 and 63); the laws implemented in March 2004 under President Nicolas Sarkozy's right-wing leadership concerning religious symbols in schools; and other major policies introduced in 2005 under Sarkozy to eradicate linguistic and cultural particularism.

focal point in Cissé's speech. The format of documentary-direct speech and independent non-commercial mode of representation refer to the situation of the *sans-papiers* in 1997, which are still relevant to today's immigration policies under current president Emmanuel Macron. The darkness in Cissé's closeup mirrors the inconsistencies and confusions created by accumulated immigration policies that still manage to confine undocumented immigrants to their current condition.

Placed in historical context, pieces of Cissé's arguments can be contrasted with populist anti-republican discourses from several French heads of state since President De Gaulle.<sup>58</sup> These hegemonic discourses are relayed by national media in a way that implicitly favors certain immigrants as more desirable than others. For instance, the Schengen agreement gives more rights to certain immigrants to remain and work in France based on their countries of origin, for example, those from Great Britain and members of the European union—such as Spain or Italy (“The Schengen area,” 4). On the other hand, the French state considers immigrants from the Maghreb or sub-Saharan Africa as unwelcome in France or less desirable than immigrants from Europe. To contradict this negative rhetoric, which depicts African immigrants invading France, the directors of *Nous, sans-papiers de France* opted to present an accented speaker. Cissé begins her speech by indicating how many undocumented immigrants come to France by legal means but then find themselves in unlawful circumstances due to both local and national-level repressive legislation denying them the right to work and thus denying

---

<sup>58</sup> In 1945, General Charles De Gaulle sent a letter to Pierre-Henri Teitgen, his Minister of Justice, warning against the invasion of migrants from the Mediterranean and Oriental regions, who could potentially change the population of France. De Gaulle suggested that his minister prioritize the naturalization of immigrants from Northern Europe, for example, those from Belgium, Luxembourg, or the Netherlands (de Gaulle). De Gaulle continued warning in 1959 that Arabs and Muslims were incompatible with French Catholic heritage (Peyrefitte, 52).

them the ability to provide for themselves and their families. Several times, Cissé's speech evokes past statements made by one of several France officials and policies that have publicly made it difficult for immigrants from the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa to remain in France.<sup>59</sup> At worst, these anti-republican discourses have contributed to make these subjects feel left out of French society.

If, on the one hand, the French state seems more concerned with strict protection of its borders from massive immigration entry, on the other hand, state officials have been less compassionate regarding the misery and precarity of undocumented immigrants living in the major cities of France. In her accented speech, Cissé indicates how immigrants financially support their families in their homelands while, at the same time, they contribute economically to French society by paying income taxes when they are given a chance to work. Cissé notes that many of them have legally lived in France for a relatively long period of time. However, because of repressive policies, they are left to live and work in clandestinity. In the second part of her speech, Cissé lists the accommodations that the *sans-papiers* movement requests from the state. One is a

---

<sup>59</sup> De Gaulle, mentioned above, was not the only French president to do this. Many generations of presidents followed in his footsteps, even those who most recently held office. In 1989, François Mitterrand, while tackling immigration from the Maghreb, stated that “the zero tolerance in regard to foreigners on France soil had been reached since the 1970s” (Boggio). In 1991, Jacques Chirac stated that it was better for France to have economic immigrants from Poland, Spain and Portugal, and he made headlines with the infamous racist discourse mentioned earlier “*le bruit et l’odeur*” [the noise and the smell] when speaking of African immigrants living in working-class housings (Petit). In 2005, Nicolas Sarkozy called for a firm punishment of the Republic which violated his “immigration by choice” law, which favored the immigration of skilled workers who filled critical labor gaps in France. The immigrants had to be, however, well educated, fluent in French, and have a concrete reason (i.e. a job) for migrating to France. In fact, even the current president Emmanuel Macron’s immigration policies fall in line with those of his predecessors Sarkozy and François Holland. Macron’s August 2017 speech on immigration mirrors French state immigration policies of the past three decades: while advocating for the replacement of economic immigrants by granting political asylum to more refugees, Macron affirmed that “there is no country in this world that could welcome all immigrants” (qtd. in Boggio). This statement resonates with former Prime Minister Michel Rocard’s speech in 1989, in which he stated that “France can no longer host all the miseries of the world. France must remain who it is, a land of refuge, [...] but nothing more” (qtd. in Boggio).

massive regularization of undocumented immigrants to prevent exploitation and modern slavery. In fact, according to Alexandra Saviana, even though government agencies seem to disagree on the exact numbers of *sans-papiers* living within the limits of France, they estimate that between “200,000 to 600,000 undocumented immigrants, with an average of 300,000 illegal active workers live in France.” These workers contribute to the success of numerous companies in various domains such as construction, restoration, cleaning, and landscaping, by providing cheap labor. Additionally, those *sans-papiers* who are somehow permitted to work at government agencies, for example, in the social security office, or who possess employment contracts by illicit means, illegally contribute to state taxes.

Previously put together in the 1997 aftermath of the Debré law, Cissé’s speech is still vibrant in the current political context because it outlines the complexities of two recent circulars,<sup>60</sup> the first by Emmanuel Valls under President Francois Hollande in 2012 (“Circulaire du 28 novembre 2012”), and the second by Gérard Collomb under President Emmanuel Macron in 2018 (“Maladie...”). The former circular made it possible for undocumented immigrants to become regularized through employment. It stipulates that for undocumented immigrants in France to be considered for regularization, they must present a contract of employment, possess proof that they have lived in France for at least five years, and demonstrate a perfect command of the French language. These policies constitute a challenge for the *sans-papiers* who are unable to obtain an employment contract due to the potential legal trouble this would cause for their illegitimate employers, and who face the challenge of demonstrating a flawless command of French.

---

<sup>60</sup> A circular (*circulaire*) is a written communication that has the potential to turn into a new law.

The second circular allows law enforcements to track down undocumented immigrants in hospitals, public dispensaries, and mental institutions. The existence of such policies in the current political climate indicate that the *sans-papiers* manifesto presented in *Nous, sans papiers de France* is still relevant today for undocumented immigrants in France.

### **The homeland as a space of alienation**

To conclude this chapter, I would like to discuss reasons why francophone African immigrants are leaving Africa, their homeland. A common feature that resounds in *Paris mon Paradis*, *Le Point de Vue du Lion*, and *Nous, sans-papiers de France* is the depiction of the African homeland as a space of alienation where there is no hope. They expose the causes that lead young sub-Saharan Africans to long journeys whose dangers they rarely ignore. There are, of course, personal motivations, specific to each migrant or immigrant. Whereas in *Paris mon Paradis*, the motif for leaving the homeland is based on the myth of Paris as an Edenic city, often maintained by media or fantasies told by former migrants, in *Le Point de Vue du Lion* and *Nous, sans-papiers de France*, the protagonists leave their homeland due to economic and political reasons. Most importantly, these three films show that the objective causes that drive young sub-Saharan Africans to leave their countries include harsh economic realities for which western countries, particularly France, are directly responsible. In *Paris mon Paradis*, Shaba and his fellow immigrants discuss how French authorities have been exploiting African labor resources for years with the complicity of African officials. Cissé, in *Nous, sans-papiers de France*, takes a similar position when she alludes to the contributions made by the *sans-papiers*, who work in the shadows, to state income taxes. Indeed, France's responsibility for the impossibility of surviving in Africa, and thus the mass migration abroad, constitutes the

main topic of discussion in the first segment of *Le Point de Vue du Lion* in which several African intellectuals give their opinions on the economic and political causes of African emigration. From a postcolonial perspective, two realities are suggested here. On the one hand, the migrants interviewed in Awadi's film indicate a feeling of inferiority as they try to enter the space of the former colonizers. By internalizing contemporary discourses on sub-Saharan African migrants, the journeyers learn to regard themselves as inferiors. As John McLeod notes, the notion of self-depreciation is often linked to the former colonized people's (here the accented migrants) internalization of a European set of values (18). On the other hand, the African artists, writers, and former government officials in this film seem well-aware of the former colonizers' colonial methods. They even seem to possess the power to counterattack France's neo-colonial, xenophobic discourses. They master the language of the former colonizer. Therefore, unanimously, they reject France's state law of "immigration by choice" promoted by President Nicolas Sarkozy in his 2005 speech.<sup>61</sup>

Moreover, the same rhetoric of stealing African resources intervenes in *Paris mon Paradis* when Shaba and his friends discuss the political classes and economic struggles of their respective homelands. Shaba evokes how Senegalese fishermen are reduced to extreme poverty because of inefficient agreements that former President Abdoulaye Wade made to open the Senegalese coast to Western fishing companies. Similarly, *Le Point de Vue du Lion* clearly incriminates the plundering of Senegalese fisheries by foreign fleets. This film also uncovers the process of impoverishment of fishermen, their families, and the entire network of transformation and marketing they were sustaining.

---

<sup>61</sup> See footnote 59 on page 75 of this dissertation.

According to M. Thioune, an advocate for Senegalese artisanal fishing, Senegalese authorities were warned by local experts and non-governmental organizations of the irreparable consequences of unfair agreements on national artisanal fishing in the 1990s. These agreements, which are still ongoing, allow factories of rich countries (France and Japan) to rake the fishes off the Senegalese coastline. Consequently, local fishermen nowadays, who have been robbed by these massive boats, are no longer able to feed their own families. The only option left for them is to leave for Europe where they hope to find jobs.

Furthermore, the intervention of novelist Dibril Tamsir Niane in *Le point de Vue du Lion* is worth noting as he refers to neocolonialism as the main cause of African political and economic struggles. According to Niane, the former colonizer did not let go. As soon as the colonial system was over, neocolonialism took over. He defines neocolonialism as the recolonization of the African continent through economic means, using other Africans. Niane's take echoes the current situation of francophone African countries' national debts. Not only is there a lack of economic growth and improvement in healthcare and education in these countries, but the nations have also accumulated substantial debts and have reached a state of counterproductivity.

All the above interventions, including those of emigrants narrating their difficult journeys, correspond with the definition of accentscape as counter hegemonic discourse against negative perceptions of the postcolonial subjects and immigrants. Based on Moura's dual meaning of vocality, the speeches heard in all the interview scenes featuring African and French intellectuals function as the reasoning voices on the issues of irregular immigration. On the one hand, as singers, writers, and former African

government officials from countries of emigration, they speak for the emigrants, migrants, and immigrants with whom they identify as accented subjects. On the other hand, they condemn this discourse supporting the idea that migrants are naïve victims who perish due to their own dangerous illusions. They also denounce the perception of Europe as a paradise in the eyes of the foreigners disseminated to the European public a flattering representation of its own continent. Participants such Aminata Traoré, Chantal Colle, Bience Philomina Gawanas, and Alphadi and Adama Samassekou display stylistic clothing selections representing their African countries of origin. While Traoré, for instance, is portrayed in three different scenes wearing different traditional Malian fabrics called *bazin brodé*,<sup>62</sup> Colle is wearing traditional Guinean fabrics in her scenes. Along with their accented speeches, the clothing choice of each interviewee plays the role of cultural resistance, allowing their accentscapes to generate landscapes of accents proper to their original identities and cultures. This position echoes former Burkinabe President, Thomas Sankara, whose speech footage is shown in the film: “for Africans, the best way to live freely in dignity is to live as Africans.” The clothing choice here works as a case of leading by example. It is important that young African migrants feel connected to the African continent in order to have an identity. African political leaders must lead the way, as do the participants in *Le Point de Vue du Lion*, to help those who are leaving the continent feel African. Perhaps this could work as a starting point for solving issues related to irregular immigration. Accentscapes in *Paris mon Paradis*, *Le Point de Vue du Lion*, and *Nous, sans-papiers de France* allow us to empathize with immigrants and their situation in France as well as understand African politics and the role of Western

---

<sup>62</sup> *Bazin* is a traditional and artisanal fabric from Mali. *Brodé* means the fabric is “embroidered”.

countries in the issue of illegal immigration from francophone Africa to France. In my next chapter, I will discuss documented immigrants in France who, although they enter the hostland by legal means, still face many obstacles and therefore use accentscapes to recall their homeland.

## **Chapter 2: Accentscape as reimagining the homeland: from calligraphic, musical, and tactile memories to restorative recollections in *Fatima* and *Amin***

### **Context and evolution of representations of North and sub-Saharan African immigrants in French and francophone films**

Before analyzing accentscapes in *Fatima* and *Amin*, two feature-length French films that depict North and sub-Saharan African immigrants, the first section of this chapter discusses the evolution of such representations in French and francophone cinema. Recent French and francophone films often portray the *banlieues* of France as sites of multilingualism and put two types of protagonist figures on center stage: the *banlieue* resident and the African immigrant. In his *Post-Beur Cinema*, Will Higbee explains this evolution of representations of North African immigrants or Maghrebi-French protagonists in Maghrebi-French or French films. Before and during the 1970s, representations of North African immigrants seem to remain trapped in colonial imaginary while displaced subjects from the Maghreb are portrayed as servants or exploited sexual partners, for example in Julien Duvivier's 1937 *Pépé le Moko*. Francophone films directed by North African emigrants tended to represent France as a temporary space for the displaced and persecuted protagonists, while the homeland and a possible return there were often suggested in the narratives. For instance, Ali Ghalem's *L'Autre France* (1977), released shortly before the enactment of the Bonnet-Stoléru immigration laws in 1979, stresses "the racism and exploitation suffered by immigrants from the Maghreb" (Higbee, 2013: 6).<sup>63</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> In 1979, the Bonnet-Stoléru immigration laws marked a turning point in French immigration history. With the advent of the economic crisis linked to the first oil shock, French President Jacques Chirac's

In the 1980s, representations of North African immigrants in Maghrebi-French films tend to go beyond France and to likewise present the homeland as a multicultural *banlieue* which, according to Higbee, creates “diegetic spaces that are at once local and global” (3). While young North African protagonists in the films of the 1980s learn to respond to the North African heritage of their immigrant parents, for instance in Gerard Blain’s *Pierre et Djemila* (1987), Maghrebi-French film characters of the 1990s “ultimately, either find themselves relegated to a marginal space or state of limbo in the narrative, or remain firmly placed in the localized, deprived socio-economic space of the *cité*” (4). Also, the films of the 1990s remain focused on the social realist conventions of *beur* and *banlieue* filmmaking and present the young *beur* protagonists as indifferent and hostile toward French society, as in Malik Chibane’s *Hexagone* (1994).

Films directed by Maghrebi-French filmmakers of the 2000s have inherited the transnationality of earlier *beur* and *banlieue* films of the 1980s and 1990s. However, they not only offer possibilities for exchange between those of French and North African origins, they also provide a more diverse range of socio-economic spaces occupied by the displaced North African protagonists in these films, moving beyond the trend from the mid-1990s of the *banlieue* as the dominant space for characters of Maghrebi origin (4). Recent francophone African films portraying sub-Saharan African protagonists also shift away from the traditional narrative of migration from Africa to France.<sup>64</sup> Instead of focusing on images of the African subject who appears inferior to their former Western

---

government suspended immigration to France, closing its borders to African immigrants. These laws are often cited as the first anti-immigration policies that led to illegal immigration in France, because they prevented African immigrants already in France to legally return to their homelands and their family members to legally visit them in France. Also see page 38 of this dissertation.

<sup>64</sup> This traditional migration can be seen, for instance, in Diouana’s journey in *La noire de...* (1966)

colonizers and problematizing their ultimate return to Africa, films such as *Moi et mon Blanc* (2003) and *The African Doctor* (2015) twist the traditional narrative of migration from Africa to France. In *Moi et mon Blanc*, the main protagonist's white counterpart leaves Paris for Burkina Faso, and in *The African Doctor*, the African protagonist opts to live in an extremely rural village in France, leaving behind a thriving urban setting in Africa.

Finally, representations of North and sub-Saharan African immigrants in Maghrebi-French films of the 2010s, such as the two films analyzed in this chapter, Philippe Faucon's *Fatima* (2015) and *Amin* (2018), resonate very much with those of the 2000s. These representations, including the theme of a multilingual speech community, began to appear in Maghrebi-French films or French films portraying Maghrebi-French protagonists toward the end of the 1980s, as in Mehdi Charef's *Le Thé au harem d'Archimède* (1985). In addition, there is a shift in Maghrebi-French filmmaking from immigrant cinema in the 1980s to national cinema in the 2010s. The Maghrebi-French films of the 2010s engage in an accented style that makes the dominant cinema communicate in a minoritarian dialect (also seen in *Fatima* and *Amin*). Minoritarian dialects have a socio-political aspect and refer to the non-elite or subordinate populations in the *banlieue* in relation to another group that is socially and politically dominant. Moreover, displaced and accented characters tend to move from their passive background position in films of the 1980s, to the foreground as main protagonists of cinematic representations of the *banlieue* in the 1990s, and even beyond the marginal space of the *banlieue* in films of the 2010s. *Vénus Noire* (2010), *Mektoub, My Love: Canto Uno* (2017), and *Mektoub, My Love: Intermezzo* (2019), all directed by the Tunisian-born

French director Abdellatif Kéchiche are prime examples of recent French films shifting away from the local marginal space of the *banlieue* as the dominant or the only focal point of the film.

### **Multilingualism and multivocality**

The two films discussed in this chapter, Faucon's *Fatima* and *Amin*, likewise showcase displaced and accented characters and their multilingualism. They present various language communities that live in the *banlieues* of two major cities of France (Lyon and Paris). This chapter considers how both protagonists and other characters who are members of their bilingual communities use their dual linguistic heritage inside their respective family units and in the public sphere. It first explores the functions of the various sociolects referred to as *le français contemporain des cités* (contemporary French of the *cités*) also known as French slang. A third film, Kéchiche's *L'Esquive* (2004), will be used briefly for comparison to *Fatima* and *Amin* on this point. Then, using scenes from *Fatima* as an example, the chapter will show how these sociolects create a condition of heteroglossia in a Bakhtinian sense. Finally, the chapter will analyze the various accentscapes in each film and how they intervene at specific moments allowing the displaced protagonists to revisit their homeland, even sometimes while remaining in exile.

In both films, the use of multilingualism indicates two main groups: a bilingual community and speakers of French slang. First, there is a strong presence of bilingual communities in both films: The Maghrebi-French protagonists speak in either fluent French or an Arabic dialect in *Fatima*; and in *Amin*, the accented characters switch between French and Wolof or between French and an Arabic dialect. Second, the

Maghrebi-French protagonists in *Fatima* privilege the use of normative French and a French slang defined by Anne-Caroline Fievet and Alena Podhorna-Policka as the contemporary French of the *cités* (213). Moreover, the linguistic behaviors of the displaced protagonists in these two films indicate ethnic and identity markers because they deal with two sets of cultures: those who have been exiled from their homelands; and those who are part of a more distant diaspora. The relationship they maintain with their original language and their two linguistic heritages determines the modalities of the accentscapes they inhabit. In this study, the terms “bilingual” and “multilingual” are interchangeable and indicate the routine use of two or more languages in a community.

In this chapter concerned with representations of bilingual communities in French films, “community” refers to the *banlieue* residents and the immigrants who live in the working-class housing located on the outskirts of the larger cities of France. These communities constitute, according to Colin Baker and Sylvia Prys Jones, “language communities” formed by members who interact in a given language for part, most, or all their daily life (96). The individuals living in these language communities, located in the *banlieues* of France, are part of larger communities, themselves located beyond the borders of France, in which they participate to a certain extent as portrayed in the two films examined in this chapter. In *Fatima*, the protagonists, Fatima and her two daughters Nesrine and Souad, live in a crowded *banlieue* of Lyon populated by immigrants from the Maghreb. They belong to a language community with which they interact in an Arabic dialect from Algeria. In *Amin*, language communities with strong ties to the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa spend most of their daily existence in bilingual practices. The protagonists Amin and his brother Ousmane, who are from Senegal, use

Wolof as their language of everyday interaction in the *cit * of Saint-Denis, as do the other Senegalese characters. At work however, they interact in French with members of other non-French language communities.

In contrast to *Fatima* and *Amin*, which feature displaced protagonists interacting in their native languages within their language communities, K chiche's *L'Esquive* portrays a group of young Maghrebi-French classmates whose members switch between normative French or popular French and the urban sociolect derived from French, in other words, a French slang properly adapted to the dialect of their *cit *.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, *L'Esquive* features French slang to its fullest extent, a trend of the *banlieue* films from the late 1990s and 2000s beginning in 1995 with the artistic and commercial success of *La Haine*.<sup>66</sup> The obvious reason for the lack of Arabic dialect in *L'Esquive* is that most of the young protagonists, though part of a diaspora from the Maghreb, were born in France. Thus, these young Maghrebi-French protagonists tend to identify as French. The lack of an Arabic dialect in *L'Esquive* is in line with Naficy's claim that one of the setbacks that accompanies a situation of exile is the loss of one's original language (18). What is crucial in *L'Esquive* to the definition of language community, is the interaction of the young second-generation immigrants based on their practices of both standard French and the French slang of their *cit * at specific moments in their daily life.

The practice of these two varieties of French in *L'Esquive* raises the difficulty of distinguishing language from dialect (sociolect here). French slang can be defined as an informal collection of sociolects spoken by the youth of the *cit s*. These hybrid languages

---

<sup>65</sup> *L'Esquive* will be analyzed in detail in Chapter three. I mention it here simply to compare the diasporic language community depicted in this film with those depicted in *Fatima* and *Amin*.

<sup>66</sup> Kassovitz's *La Haine* is considered the first breakout among films that incorporate "contemporary French of the *cit s*" or French slang (Wagner, 224).

constitute a blend of normative French, popular French, argot, backward slang or *verlan*, and words or expressions borrowed from foreign languages—for example in this study, Arabic dialects, Bambara, and Wolof. All French slangs differ greatly from normative French due to their stress patterns, word scissions, prosody, and poetic delivery. In the context of the *cités*, the language is opposed to the adult residents' mode of expression and represents for the youth a means of affirming their group identity. Whereas dialect and sociolect are synonyms, sociolect can be defined as a dialect of a social class in the context of this study. A definition of dialect seems necessary to apprehend the concept of French slang. To distinguish language from dialect, Jeff Siegel focuses on mutual intelligibility between the two. Speakers of two different dialects of the same language can understand each other but speakers of two different languages cannot:

In sociolinguistics, the term dialect refers to the varieties of the same language that differ from each other in vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar, and that are associated with particular geographic regions or social groups. [...] The determination of two varieties belonging to the same language depends on the common perception of the speakers of these varieties, and not on a technical decision made by linguists. That said, however, it is still generally the case that first and second dialects as defined here are more similar to each other than first and second languages, therefore more mutually intelligible. (2)

There is certainly a great deal of truth in Siegel's assertion. Although they represent varieties of normative French and indicate similar features, the French slangs spoken in *Fatima* by the diasporic Maghrebi-French characters, Souad and her friends, are specific to the socio-cultural realities of the marginal spaces (the *cités*) portrayed in the film. In

other words, they are proper to Lyon. Because *Fatima* and *Amin* are multilingual, multivocal, and multi-accented, they emphasize accents, intonations, voices, and music to shift the focus away from the constant dominance of a visual that centers on the urban confinement of the *banlieues*. The focus is then redirected toward a recollection or re-creation of the protagonists' homeland values. These values challenge fixed Eurocentric assumptions of cultural identity and nation as well as negative perceptions of the North and sub-Saharan African immigrants living in the *banlieues*.

This preoccupation with recreating the values from the homeland functions as the political aspect of the films. One scene in *Fatima* illustrates a case of on-screen calligraphy, when Fatima is seen riding in a train and writing on a notepad shortly after leaving her daughter Nesrine's new apartment at medical school. Her hand's movement from right to left indicates that she is writing in Arabic. Then, she is seen back in her apartment and on her bed, again writing in a notebook. The writing tablet fills the film's frame and a text in her native Arabic dialect is revealed along with a French translation in the subtitles. By synchronizing Arabic words with Fatima's interior monologue, Faucon allows her vocal accent to counterbalance her written accent. As a result, her accentscape is exposed to the viewer, not vocally but calligraphically and visually. This case of accentscape here works in a sense that her voice becomes visible in the calligraphy and thus replaces the alienating space of the train. With this cinematic manipulation, Faucon invites the audience into Fatima's ethnic and cultural spaces.<sup>67</sup>

Writing about the stylistic characteristics of accented films, Naficy states that "the accented style is itself an example of free indirect discourse in the sense of forcing the

---

<sup>67</sup> Faucon was born in Oujda, Morocco to an Algerian mother. He is thus familiar with Moroccan and Algerian cultures and socio-linguistic norms.

dominant cinema to speak in a minoritarian dialect” (25). Faucon is himself a displaced subject because he was born in the Maghreb. Several of his films indicate a pattern of incorporating displaced protagonists from the Maghreb, Arabic dialects, and sub-Saharan African languages into the narratives.<sup>68</sup> The same can be said of several of Kéchéche’s films.<sup>69</sup> Minoritarian dialect first refers to the contemporary French of the *cités* spoken by protagonists in *L’Esquive* and *Fatima*. Here, minoritarian dialects also have a socio-political dimension as they refer to the non-elite or subordinate populations of the *banlieue* in relation to another socially and politically dominant group. Second, minoritarian dialects indicate the artistic choice of the directors to privilege the use of French slang. In *L’Esquive*, the urban sociolect is pushed to the limit in such a way that there is no longer a mutual intelligibility between normative French and the French slang of the *cité* of Saint-Denis. In *Fatima*, there are several North African communities living in Fatima’s *cité*, and the individual members of these communities are each part of some even larger Arabic language communities in which they participate to varying degrees. As a result, the French slang spoken by the youth of these communities, Souad and her young friends for example, contain numerous Arabic words and *verlan*. Their words intertwine in such complex ways that they become unintelligible for the adults of these communities. By forcing the dominant cinema to speak in French slang and thus be bilingual in a way, Faucon gives this sociolect the status of a language born within the limits of the *banlieues* which invites the French public to give legitimacy to its practices.

---

<sup>68</sup> *Samia* (2000) and *La Desintégration* (2011) are two examples.

<sup>69</sup> *La Faute à Voltaire* (2000) and *La Graine et le Mulet* (2007) are two examples.

### **Heteroglossia, language use, and accentscapes in *Fatima***

The way Fatima and her two children speak French and Arabic inside their family unit, and the way they interact with other members of their French-Arabic bilingual community outside of their family unit reflect Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia. According to Bakhtin, in his *Discourse in the Novel*, heteroglossia describes the coexistence of varieties within a singular linguistic code, or an internal layering of language (1073-1074). For him, this internal stratification of language informs the interaction between its social and class dialects, professional jargons, languages of generations, age groups, and languages of short trend. Furthermore, heteroglossia consists of languages that serve the sociopolitical purposes of the day, even of the hour. It is concerned with the multivocality and the multiplicity of accents at work in language, the variety of social speech types, and the diversity of voices interacting with one another. Bakhtin bases his theory of heteroglossia on the stylistic uniqueness of the novel, which according to him, consists in the combination of subordinate and autonomous components into the higher unity of the work as a whole (1078). Just as the style of a Bakhtinian novel is to be found in the combination of its styles, the language systems in *L'Esquive*, *Fatima*, and *Amin* consist of the multiplicity of individual voices and the diversity of social speech types. Accentscapes appear at the boundaries of the internal stratification of French, Wolof, and Arabic into sociolects, group behaviors, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, the languages of the authorities, and more.

Thus, while the multivocality of the bilingual protagonists in *Fatima* determines their exilic, diasporic, and postcolonial traits, the types of discourses they enunciate within the

film indicate the relationship they maintain with their homeland, Algeria, and their adopted land, France. Language use by bilingual parents can either express their deep attachment to their homeland or reveal their commitment to integrate into their new country or hostland. For example, Fatima's ex-husband, the father of Nesrine and Souad, only speaks in normative French, although with his slight foreign accent he is portrayed as an exilic character from Algeria. In all the scenes in which he interacts with his daughters, his strong command of French reinforces, not only his willingness to integrate into French society, but a situation of voluntary acculturation which does not display any traits of his homeland. His monolingual use of French is an example of a choice made by first-generation immigrant parents to keep all communal practices of their homeland except the mother tongue, because they want to make their children's integration into their new country as easy as possible. However, his overall interaction with his two daughters illustrates Bakhtin's heteroglossia defined as languages of generations and age groups that serve the social purpose of a specific moment. He speaks to his younger daughter Souad in an informal register of French that is appropriate for a teenage girl of her age. His calm demeanor comforts and reassures her as she struggles with her mother's more rigorous parental control. He has the opposite relationship with his elder daughter Nesrine, however. In the only scene between the two of them, they argue in a confrontational formal register of French. The formal, angry speech he uses to speak to Nesrine contrasts greatly with the informal, relaxed register he uses when speaking to Souad.

### **Conversation between Souad and her father in his car**

Father : Pourquoi tu dis qu'elle est une cave, qu'elle est une ânesse ? Tu lui as dit ou tu lui as pas dit ? [Why did you call her useless? An ass? Did you or didn't you?]

Souad : (*crying*) Ouais, je l'ai dit ouais. [Yeah, I did, yeah.]

Father : Pourquoi tu parles comme ça à ta mère ? [Why do you speak to your mother like that ?]

Souad : (*crying*) Parce qu'elle nettoie la merde des autres. [Because she cleans other people's shit.]

Father : Et toi? Qu'est-ce que tu vas faire de ta vie ? [And you? What are you going to do with your life?]

Souad : (*crying*) N'importe quoi mais pas ça. Je préfère voler et aller en prison que faire ce qu'elle fait. Elle fait l'esclave du matin au soir. Elle part, il fait nuit. Elle rentre, il fait nuit. C'est un vrai torchon, ma mère.  
[Anything but that. I'd rather steal and go to jail than do what she does. She slaves away from morning 'til night. She leaves, its nighttime. She comes back, its nighttime. My mother is a nothing but a rag.]

### **Conversation between Nesrine and her father in her apartment at medical school**

Father : Ses femmes sont jalouses et ignorantes. Ne te préoccupe pas d'elles. Réussis vite. Si tu réussis, tu seras libre. Tu fais ce que tu veux de ta vie. Il est à toi, le briquet ? [ These women are jealous and ignorant. Forget about them. Just succeed. If you succeed, you can do as you please. Is this lighter yours?]

Nesrine: Non, c'est à Leïla. [No, it's Leïla's. (*her flatmate*)]

...

Father : Mais, si elle fume, certainement, tu vas t'y mettre toi aussi. [But, if she smokes, naturally, you will too.]

Nesrine : Qu'est-ce qui te fait dire ça ? [What makes you say that?]

Father : Parce que c'est comme que j'ai commencé quand j'étais jeune au foyer. On était deux dans la même chambre. Mon copain fumait. Alors, j'ai fumé moi-aussi. [Because that's how I started smoking when I was young in the dorm. I had a roommate. He smoked. So, I did too.]

Nesrine : Mais, nous on a chacune sa chambre. Et elle fume sur le balcon. [But we have separate bedrooms and she smokes on the balcony.]

Father : C'est bien. Mais si tu commences à faire comme elle, et les gens te voient fumer dehors, tu imagines un peu ce qu'ils vont dire de toi ? [Good. But if you start smoking, and people see you smoking outside, can you imagine what they will say about you?]

Nesrine : Qu'est-ce qu'ils vont dire? [What will they say?]

Father : Tu sais bien. [You know very well.]

Nesrine : Les femmes qui fument sont des ...Mais tu te préoccupes de ce que disent les gens maintenant. Tu viens de me dire de m'en foutre, et là juste à cause de la cigarette, ça devient grave.

[Women that smoke are... So now you care what people say. You just told me not to listen to what people say, and now, because of a cigarette, suddenly it matters.]

Father: Parce que la cigarette, c'est mauvais. [Because smoking is bad.]

Nesrine : Oui, mais, pour toi, il ne faut pas qu'une femme fume. [But for you, it's only women who shouldn't smoke.]

Father : Les autres femmes, je m'en fous. Mais toi ? Non. [Other women, I don't mind. But you? No.]

These two conversations display Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia. Each of these dialogues serves a different social purpose: First, a father speaking in an informal French to comfort his crying teen daughter; and second, a father using a range of language registers from standard to formal to chastise and instruct his elder daughter, a mature young woman. While visiting Nesrine's apartment, the father shows his traditionalism, despite only speaking French, when he complains about her roommate's smoking habit. During the intense exchange, he alludes that it is normal for men to smoke, but not for women. Although they converse as adults, one senses much resentment in their conversation. Implicitly, Nesrine is still upset that he left her mother for another woman. He imposes strict and traditional rules on his daughter who disagrees with his non-traditional marriage.

Unlike her ex-husband, Fatima is portrayed as an exilic subject, illiterate in French, who maintains a strong relationship with her homeland. She only speaks in an Arabic dialect to her daughters and the members in her language community. However, despite her illiteracy in French and her inability to speak French correctly, she demonstrates a firm oral and written command of her native language. Fatima also remains strongly attached to her homeland's values, the benefits of which she repeatedly reminds her daughters. Because she is unable to speak and understand French correctly, she maintains

a complex relationship with her daughter Souad, who resents at times her Algerian ethnicity. For displaced exilic subjects like Fatima, the need to reduce the cultural gap between their children and themselves requires an appropriation of the language in which these children speak and think.

Fatima's attempt to appropriate French is illustrated in a scene that takes place in her French-as-a-second-language classroom. A French text is shown in close-up complemented by the instructor's standardized French accent as she instructs Fatima. Unlike in the writing scenes that take place in her bedroom where she is comfortable and in control, Fatima appears alienated and unsettled here as she learns to identify basic French words. Although she writes fluently and poetically in Arabic, she is unable to write a comprehensible word in French. The teacher's voice directs Fatima to circle only the word *prénom* (first name) in a list of words written in French. Fatima slowly and with uncertainty circles the assigned word. The typographic close-up in this scene functions as a metaphor of Western culture. The teacher's tone of voice perhaps insinuates that French does not belong to Fatima. The *mise-en-scène* of this scene contrasts significantly to that of the calligraphic scenes mentioned earlier in which Fatima writes confidently in Arabic. The closeups on her notebook insist on her rapid and poised writing pace, and an interior monologue synchronized with her writing presents her as an autonomous writer. Fatima's calligraphic texts in Arabic constitute, for her, a means of deterritorialization in a deleuzian manner from the oppressive order. Her right-to-left writing pattern initiates a counter hegemonic gesture to the French subtitle. While the film's frame is used as a writing tablet in which her original Arabic dialect language is revealed and translated, the confined space of her bedroom contrasts with the limitless possibilities of her writing,

which suggest the open structures of her homeland's sandy landscapes, mountains, and customs, hence her accentscapes. In the comfort and private space of her bedroom, Fatima is an independent thinker and writer. In fact, her bedroom, like her writing, constitutes an intimate private space. Here, she speaks for herself. Misunderstood by Souad at home and ostracized in the public sphere due to her Algerian identity, Fatima is constrained to write in Arabic to escape the linguistic oppression of French surrounding her and her limited possibilities for work as an illiterate immigrant. Moreover, her writing expresses her deep longing for her native Algeria.

Bearing in mind Bakhtin's definition of heteroglossia, Fatima's use of French and Arabic varies depending on the domains in question. Her minimal use of French at work corresponds to Bakhtin's professional jargon. As part of a group of janitors in a public school, Fatima uses a repertory of professional expressions in French to communicate with her colleagues and supervisors. Fatima's competence in French is limited to a basic level and for professional purposes only. Fatima also communicates in French with doctors after she has a bad fall at work and suffers from an ongoing shoulder pain. She can be considered a passive bilingual, which means that she has a relatively good understanding of French but speaks it poorly. In other respects, Fatima only speaks an Arabic dialect at home to her daughters, who respond in French. This is typical for second-generation immigrants and *banlieue* residents portrayed in *banlieue* films, who maintain a distant and weak relationship with the original language of their parents. Unlike their children, exilic parents maintain a strong relationship with the past and their native language which they tend to speak dominantly.

Fatima's use of different languages based on where she is and to whom she is speaking reflects Suzanne Romaine's definition of "diglossia." According to Romaine, in communities where bilinguals live, the choice of language by individuals depends widely on social, cultural, and political factors (454). Each language or variety in bilingual communities serves a specialized function and is used for a particular purpose. These communities are characterized by diglossia, which refers to "a kind of functional specialization between languages (referred to as high and low) so that the language used within the home and in other personal domains of interaction between community members is different from the one used in higher functions such as government, media, and education" (454). In the context of this study, Arabic dialect is considered a low language. Therefore, it is spoken at home by Fatima and within the limits of her language community. In contrast, French, which is spoken at work and at the university, is considered high, as it represents state institutions such as government and education.

Souad's language use in *Fatima* could demonstrate a residual and deteriorated relationship with Arabic, which she understands but cannot speak. Nesrine, however, appears to speak both French and Arabic despite being a diasporic protagonist. Because of the distant relationship they maintain with their homeland, diasporic subjects often suffer gradual deterioration or complete loss of their original language (Naficy, 24). In the inaugural scene of the film, Nesrine speaks an Arabic dialect to Fatima while they are waiting to get a tour of an apartment Nesrine is hoping to rent. When the landlord sees Fatima's Algerian headscarf and wide dress, they are immediately dismissed without a tour. In the following scene, showing her frustration, Nesrine tells her mother in French that she was warned of the potential bad impression her mother's ethnic garments might

make. Due to her appropriate use of both Arabic and French, Nesrine can arguably be considered an active bilingual, while Souad is a passive bilingual, meaning she understands Arabic but cannot speak it.

Further, as bilingual diasporic subjects, Nesrine and Souad's language use illustrates Homi K. Bhabha's notion of "third space" in the production of meaning in a multicultural society. According to Bhabha, the "third space" is this unrepresentable in-between, contradictory, and ambivalent space from which cultural identity always appears in a context of colonialism or postcolonialism (55). This space calls into question the argument of an inherent originality of cultures. Negation and negotiation are often major characteristics that postcolonial subjects articulate in the ambivalent process of their hybrid identities. Whereas Nesrine's appropriate use of both Arabic and French indicates a negotiation between her Algerian roots and her French identity, Souad's abundant use of French slang illustrates her resentment toward her Algerian homeland and a negation of the normative French which represents the language of the former colonizer.

As a filmmaker, Philippe Faucon is well-known for his successful use of inexperienced or unknown actors in his films. In addition, what contributes to the success of *Fatima*, which won three César awards at the 2016 Festival de Cannes, is the play on languages in the film and Faucon's ability to reconcile simple linguistic features with the *mise-en-scène*. In fact, an instance of diglossia intervenes in the variety of French used at various moments in the film. While most scenes involving educated adults or depicting state institutions such as hospitals and universities feature normative French, Souad and her friends speak French slang in most of the street scenes. At home, Saoud consciously switches her language use from French slang to normative French because she is aware of

her mother's limitations with the French language in general. Also, Fatima is unfamiliar with the complex syntax and prosody of Souad's very informal slang. In two key scenes, casual mother-daughter conversation during dinner turns into French language instruction. In the first scene, Fatima asks Souad the meaning of the word *persuadé* (persuaded), which she memorized during a previous exchange with her part-time employer from the French sentence *Je suis persuadé* (I am persuaded). In her answer to her mother, rather than precisely defining *persuadé* as *convaincu* (convinced), she provides a simple definition appropriate for her age group, telling her mother that *persuadé* means "I know more than you." In the second scene, Nesrine corrects her mother when she attempts to say in French "my happiness is fulfilled."<sup>70</sup> Fatima begins her sentence in Arabic dialect ("When my daughters are happy...") and ends it in French (...my happiness is fulfilled."). In her correction, Nesrine puts a stress on a nuance that is important in French. She says: "Mother, your happiness is complete, and you are fulfilled. Not your happiness is fulfilled." In bilingual societies, language switching, or language mixing, often occurs based on the mutual understanding of the speakers and their perceived social relationships. In this example, Fatima's language proficiency and fluency in Arabic explain her language switching. She has trouble expressing herself in French and her language switching indicates a linguistic deficiency in French. As a postcolonial subject, Fatima finds herself in a complex situation where her daughters are drifting away from their Algerian identity while she feels unable to catch up to their level of Frenchness. As a passive bilingual, she can relatively understand French even though she is unable to speak it fluently. The phrasal construction "my happiness is fulfilled"

---

<sup>70</sup> *Quand mes filles sont heureuses, mon bonheur est comblé.* (When my daughters are happy, my happiness is fulfilled).

could indicate the dominance of her Arabic dialect, thereby her accentscape, because such a construction may be correct and accurate in this dialect.

### **Language use and accentscapes in *Amin***

The diasporic and postcolonial ethnic protagonists in *Fatima* are portrayed in the French national context. They reside in Lyon, a major city of France, and their homeland is implicitly evoked through aesthetic strategies which move their displaced voices into the foreground at specific moments. While the diasporic protagonists in *Fatima* are engaged in journeys of home-seeking or identity-seeking, the representations of their lives in exile or as part of a diaspora are characterized by confined spaces of residence, hostile social conditions, integration issues, and the fast-paced life in the modern world. In *Amin*, by contrast, the postcolonial ethnic protagonists cross the borders of their homelands and engage in reterritorializing as well as deterritorializing journeys. They are involved in migration to France and reverse migration back to Senegal or Morocco. In the film's national and transnational contexts, life in the homeland and life in exile are explicitly portrayed through the contrast between markers of space and time, which are either open or closed. For instance, whereas the physical representations of Amin's native Senegal stress nature and rural openness, communal indigenous practices, and solidarity, his life in Paris is marked by claustrophobia and confined places as he navigates through small working-class housings, public transportation, immigration paperwork, and employment on a construction site.

The postcolonial ethnic protagonists in *Amin*, also by contrast to certain protagonists in *Fatima*, are fully bilingual, demonstrating an active competence in the two languages they use: French and Wolof for Amin and his Senegalese language community; and

French and an Arabic dialect for Abdellaziz and the exilic members of his language community. Faucon made *Amin* in such a way that each space and its mise-en-scène corresponds to a domain of language use for a particular purpose. French, for example, is the language of work for the postcolonial protagonists who are employed in construction. Its knowledge and use therefore respond to their economic necessity. On the other hand, Wolof and an Arabic dialect are the languages used at home by the two distinct groups in the protagonists' respective housing projects in the *banlieues*, as well as the languages used to accommodate for the lack of face-to-face interaction the protagonists have to the original language communities back in their respective homelands. In other words, they extend their original language communities from the homeland transnationally - into the *banlieues*. By extension, this language use can be seen as a way to preserve the cohesion of the Senegalese and Arabic communities and maintain the practices of the original communities despite geographical dispersal. In fact, Wolof is literally presented as a "home language" because it is exclusively spoken by all the protagonists in the sequences featuring rural Senegal, Amin's native country.

To a certain extent, viewing the two displaced language communities living in Saint-Denis as subparts of the larger communities of the homeland relies on a considerable degree of abstraction as suggested by Anderson, who argues that nation-states are "imagined communities" which have come into existence in part due to the spread of national languages and print literacy (qtd. in Appadurai, 33). In *Amin*, the idea of Senegalese and Moroccan nations as imagined communities with a shared and secure identity is fortified by the protagonists' transformation of their *cité* in Saint-Denis to a bound public sphere, in which members consider themselves as belonging to coherent

language communities, parts of larger communities respectively in Senegal and in Morocco.<sup>71</sup> The lack of everyday face-to-face interaction with the larger community back in Senegal does not seem to affect this cohesion.

Accentscapes referring to Senegal and Morocco in *Amin* are expressed through sociolinguistic norms operating within the bilingual community, themes of loneliness, alienation, and sadness, as well as by musical means. Faucon's mise-en-scène clearly delineates the homeland Senegal and the hostland France. Amin and his fellow exiled workmate, Abdellaziz, reside in confined immigrant housing in the Parisian *banlieue* of Saint-Denis. The representation of Amin's life in exile stresses the small size of the apartment he shares with his brother Ousmane and the proximity of the individual units within the building. This evokes a claustrophobic state despite the apparent solidarity among the Senegalese and Maghrebin communities living there. The temporality is portrayed through the structure of Amin's everyday life, which consists of either working at a construction site or resting in his residence. Looking at the sociolinguistic norms of the bilingual residents in Amin's *cit *, the characters' choice of language use serves a specific function and reinforces the notion of diglossia. Wolof is the language within the working-class residences, while French constitutes the language of economic necessity at work. Moreover, the Senegalese national identity in *Amin* resonates with the experience of belonging to a community soaked in Senegalese traditions and rituals. In fact, the entrance of the working-class housing in which Amin resides doubles as a bustling open-

---

<sup>71</sup> Similar characteristics are displayed in *Fatima* through Fatima's strong attachment to her Algerian indigenous traditions. In fact, the *cit * in which she resides is predominantly populated by displaced subjects who share an Arabic dialect and similar traditions and habits of dress. However, this sense of belonging to an imagined community that is part of a larger transnational community tends to diminish in *Fatima* when considering her two daughters, Nesrine and Souad, who seem less attached to their homeland. As a matter of fact, Souad insists in several instances that she hates her Algerian roots.

air market similar to the organic open-air market depicted in the sequences set in Senegal. The dining hall inside of the residence in France reflects the familial atmosphere of the collective dinner of the homeland. In addition, the shared identity and sense of belonging are reinforced by monetary contributions from all members of the Senegalese community in France to help finance a local school in Senegal.

The *mise-en-scène* of Amin's residence in Saint-Denis constitutes a simulacrum of his homeland in Senegal. Not only do accentscapes form part of this portrait, but they significantly appear through proverbs, jokes, and pieces of formulaic speech interjected by the exiled protagonists at appropriate moments in the film. For instance, Amin and a Senegalese food vendor, a fellow exiled subject, appreciate a joke at the entrance of his residence as evidence of their shared knowledge of sociolinguistic norms. After she asks Amin about his forthcoming trip to Senegal, he responds that he will definitely miss her *yassa*<sup>72</sup> because she cooks it better than his wife. The woman then replies that Amin is a dishonest flatterer and the two burst into laughter. While both are exiled in a transnational context of the French *banlieue*, they behave as if they were ordinary members of a Senegalese speech community within a local context of the homeland. Another intervention of a joke evoking the sociolinguistic norms within an Arabic speech community happens when Sabri, a Moroccan exiled protagonist, talks to two waitresses in a bar located in the *banlieue* of Saint-Denis. In this scene, the representation of an Arabic community suggests that the members of the community are regular clients of the bar. They meet here daily to interact after a long day of labor. Stressing the transgressive nature of drinking in Morocco, Sabri tells the two Moroccan waitresses that he can drink

---

<sup>72</sup> Yassa is a popular Senegalese dish.

in France, but he cannot drink in his homeland. While they appreciate his joke, one of the two female characters adds that Sabri would get his face smashed in if he dared to drink in Morocco. As evidence of their tacit understanding of this joke, they all burst into laughter.

In contrast to the confinement and estrangement evoked through the *mise-en-scène* of Amin's life in exile, the sequences featuring his native Senegal are characterized by spacious landscapes and colorful natural décor. The open space of Amin's homeland is represented by a large organic Senegalese community rooted in its natural place with well-established indigenous traditions, and the exclusive use of Wolof. French is noticeably absent in every scene depicting Amin's homeland. This serves two functions. First, the exclusive use of Wolof even by the bilingual protagonists constitutes a linguistic demarcation between the homeland and the hostland, the local and the transnational. While the use of French and Wolof, or French and an Arabic dialect, indicates exiled filmic space, the exclusive use of Wolof points to the natural landscape of the homeland. Second, the exclusive use of Wolof constitutes a postcolonial strategy for Faucon to give a voice to the displaced protagonists, whose life in exile is often characterized by silence. It is worth noting that although French is an official language in Senegal, it is not the language of day-to-day conversation used by most Senegalese people. They typically speak to each other in their indigenous languages, even though French remains a language of prestige and social mobility in Senegal. Faucon seems indeed less interested in depicting French as an official language in Senegal and more focused on showing how Wolof functions as the *lingua franca* of the local people. He even showcases Wolof as the language of the educated class and the administration to the

detriment of French. For instance, the customs officer at the airport in Senegal only speaks Wolof when Amin arrives at the checkout. In a similar fashion, the teachers and the students at Amin's former school only speak Wolof during the sequence filmed there.

While several sequences in *Amin* involving the Senegalese and Arabic language communities in exile initiate circumstances of diglossia, which tends to highlight their accentscapes, Bakhtin's heteroglossia seems to be dominant in the sequences depicting Amin's family in his homeland.<sup>73</sup> According to Bakhtin, what is striking in instances of heteroglossia is the internal stratification of any single national language into social dialects that serve the specific purposes of the precise moment. Upon his return to his homeland, when Amin speaks to his three children telling them how much he missed them, he uses a language appropriate for their age groups – telling Demba, his eldest son, what a fine-looking young man he is and Marème and Awa, his daughters, of his pride for their good grades in school. This discourse to his children consists of flattering expressions and formulaic speeches in Wolof. In contrast, intimate conversations between Amin and his wife Aïcha always seem tense and overshadowed by the loneliness their fifteen-year long-distance relationship has created. Aïcha insists that she and the children return to France with Amin and he emphatically disagrees. Unlike Aïcha, who is rendered unhappy by Amin's displacement, Amin's brother Mohamed sees Amin's journey as an economic opportunity for his extended African family. Therefore, conversations between the two brothers tend to stress how Amin's journey can support the homeland, the place to which one day he intends to return.

---

<sup>73</sup> Whereas diglossia is characterized by knowledge of a second language and switching from one language to another depending on the domains of use, heteroglossia is defined by the variety of social speech types within a single language.

### **The homeland's time and space and the trauma of separation**

Return to the homeland is indeed a recurrent theme in *Amin*. There are two cases of return in the film. On the one hand, a physical return to the homeland involves Amin and Ousmane as they each migrate back to Senegal from France once during the film. On the other hand, a symbolic return occupies the mind of Abdellaziz, a Moroccan immigrant, who goes back to his homeland, not physically but mentally or symbolically, via musical means, by playing a traditional flute. Both representations of return are characterized by open structures of home and spaciousness. This falls in line with Bakhtin's notion of "chronotope", which literally means "time-space," with which he defines the representations of spatial and temporal frames or patterns in literary texts (250).

Chronotope refers not only to a "unit of analysis" for studying texts in terms of their representations of spatial and temporal patterns, but also to a visual for analyzing cultural elements that produce these patterns. As a unit of textual analysis, cinematic chronotopes allude to certain specific spatial and temporal filmic spaces in which the events take place (250). *Amin* contains both closed and open spatial and temporal (space-time) settings. Whereas the scenes of the homeland occur in primarily open chronotopes, those depicting life in exile happen in closed chronotopes.

*Amin* imagines the home and exile in specific chronotopes that differentiate the spaciousness of the homeland with the isolated space-time of exile. The sequence following Amin's arrival at the airport in Senegal begins with the chronotope of Senegalese nature and rural lands full of verdant hills and valleys covered with bushes and various plants. As Amin and his two relatives remain quiet during the car ride, his homeland's green nature suggests it is the rainy season. The congested and small open-air

market at the entrance of Amin's French residence, the dusty and dim lighting of his *cit *, and the hostile environment of the construction site where he works are replaced by an open rural landscape and an authentic open-air African market in bright daylight. In addition to the variety of local food products and the artisanal clothing at the local market, Amin's native Senegal portrays "traditional temporality" in almost every activity involving his family. The fast-paced life in exile and the small interactions within the community contrast with longer interactions with the local members of the community in Senegal. A cha, for example, takes her time to bargain the price of a t-shirt with a vendor. The two locals go back and forth discussing the price at length to finally come to an agreement. In another scene at the local market, A cha walks to buy from vendors of local food products which they have displayed on the ground. She stops in front of the tamarind vendor, picks up a box, and sorts out only the good tamarinds from the pile, which upsets the vendor.

Another instance of temporality in Senegal involves the slow-paced walking and transportation of the protagonists to local sites. A cha, her mother-in-law (Amin's mother), and her three children walk from their house, take a *taxi-brousse*,<sup>74</sup> and finally catch a bus in order to reach the market. Whereas fast-paced walking within the *banlieue* or at work in France serves an economic necessity for Amin and all the exiled protagonists, slow-paced walking in the homeland always includes significant stopovers to greet extended family members, close friends, and neighbors. It therefore plays an important role in connecting members of a close community. In places such as the open-air market or the fountain, members of Amin's community get their food and water all

---

<sup>74</sup> A *taxi-brousse* is a form of local transportation that carries people, food products, and even animals.

while having the opportunity to meet their relatives and acquaintances there. In contrast, the mise-en-scène of Amin's life in France suggests significant interior locations and closed settings such as the confined space of Amin's apartment unit in the immigrant housing project and the overwhelming construction slabs at his work. While Faucon's filming of Amin's homeland favors long shots, mobile framing, and long takes, his filming of life in Saint-Denis includes tight shot composition, barriers within the mise-en-scène such as heavy machines and building's pillars on the construction site, and repetition. For instance, Amin is seen clocking in and clocking out several times at the entrance of the construction site which suggests fast temporality and alienation.

*Amin* also portrays the displaced protagonists' loneliness, sadness, and alienation on both sides of the Mediterranean. Despite the apparent sense of solidarity and belonging to a place, a people, a community of language, a culture, and customs among residents of the working-class housing in Saint-Denis, members of the two Senegalese and Maghrebin language communities seem to suffer from the loneliness and deprivation of exile. In fact, *Amin* is after all a tale about those whose lives are split in two. Cut off from their past, their homeland, and their roots, Amin, Ousmane, Abdellaziz, and Sabri are in constant negotiations between their homelands and their hostlands. They therefore have an urgent need of filling in the gaps in their unfinished lives abroad by recreating images and sounds of their homes. For instance, there are pictures of Amin's wife and three children on the wall of his confined apartment right above his small bed, and his nighttime routine consists of looking at these pictures before falling asleep. Likewise, Abdellaziz keeps pictures of three of his children, the ones who live in Morocco, in his wallet. These two

illustrations symbolize the characters' attachments to their native lands, hence their accentscapes.

The notion of an unfinished life for exiles like Amin and Abdellaziz is associated with trauma of separation and estrangement. Both protagonists fundamentally are in a discontinuous state of being. Often Amin is portrayed as lonely and his voice displaced and silenced. During his brief visit to Senegal, Amin seems physically present but mentally absent. The long and silent car scene after he is picked up at the airport reflects Amin's inability to vocalize the trauma of life in France, and the pressure he feels to satisfy the needs of his wife, children, and extended family in Senegal. Amin's silence and displacement in *France* is illustrated several times when Gabrielle, his French girlfriend, picks him up after work. Gabrielle attempts to break the silence during the car rides by asking questions, yet Amin remains silent, unwilling to answer. Whereas the white French woman is able to speak and articulate her thoughts, her counterpart African immigrant is in a position of silence.

Elsewhere in *Amin*, the trauma of separation is shown to also affect the families and descendants of the protagonists back in their homelands. Amin's wife Aïcha is portrayed as sad throughout the film due to the fifteen-year separation from her husband, and the constant financial pressure from her extended African family. When she is not fighting with her brother-in-law about money, she is strongly insisting to Amin that she and her children accompany him to France. In short, because of her husband's journey, Aïcha's life is characterized by a sense of homelessness and constant struggle. The discontinued and unfinished lives of Amin, Ousmane, and Abdellaziz, and the repercussions

experienced by their families resonate very well with these verses taken from a poem of Mahmud Darwish:

The taste of earth... the motherland.  
Shield me with your eyes.  
Take me as a relic from the mansion of sorrow.  
Take me as a verse of a tragedy;  
Take me as a toy; a brick from the house

So that our children will remember to return. (qtd. in Said, 361)

Said's reference to Darwish's poem reinforces the notions of loneliness, alienation, and sadness from which exiles and their descendants suffer. In order to cope with the trauma of separation, the protagonists in both *Amin* and *Fatima* must often return to their homeland. When they cannot do so physically, they must find alternative ways to return. In the final section of this chapter, I will discuss alternative means of return to the homeland through accentscapes in both films.

### **Calligraphic, musical, tactile, and olfactory memories of the homeland**

Another way the protagonists in *Fatima* and *Amin* return to their homelands is through their memories. In fact, accentscapes in both films tend to appear in instances featuring memories. At specific moments, whereas the tensions regarding exile result in closed chronotopes, the nostalgic representations of the homeland are associated with meaningful symbolic objects. Sometimes, an object taken from the homeland into exile becomes a powerful synecdoche for the homeland, because it allows the displaced subject to recreate the harmonious environment which they once shared with their coherent and organic community. These nostalgic representations produce open chronotopes. For Amin, the important objects evoking his beautiful bright home are the pictures of his family over his bed, and for Abdellaziz, it is his flute, a precious instrument that plays

notes evoking memories of his Moroccan homeland. In two scenes representing these two protagonists alone in their respective confined apartment units, the idyllic homeland associated with these objects is juxtaposed to the closed time-space of their current lives in exile. What is substituted to the confinement and alienation of their lives in Saint-Denis is a staging of a metaphoric reunion with their families. At the intersection of the open and closed chronotopes—their memories of their homelands and their current exiled situations—in each of these scenes, accentscapes intervene to reimagine their former harmonious homelands.

The chronotopes are not just visual but also involve human senses and memory. Jeffrey Olick proposes two distinct definitions regarding memory: “collected memory” and “collective memory” (335). He defines collected memory as the individual act of remembering the past. This personal level of memory alludes to the cognitive work of individual people, which operates within the framework of a sociocultural environment. Indeed, it echoes Abdellaziz’s recollections of his native Morocco. Despite being displaced and split between his homeland and his hostland, Abdellaziz remains strongly attached to his native Morocco via an indigenous melody he plays over and over on his flute. The repeated musical phrase removes him from the here and now of the hostile social conditions of the *banlieue* and transports him back to his *bled*. As in *Fatima*, accentscape in *Amin* is also calligraphic. Before beginning to play his flute, Abdellaziz writes the title of his song, “Djamila,” in Arabic on the glass of his apartment’s window. *Djamila* is a girl’s name in Arabic and means “beautiful and graceful.” The windowpane acts as a barrier between the apartment and the open sky in the background and suggests Abdellaziz’s dislocation from his homeland. The calligraphic sign on the windowpane

suggests the open structure and beauty of his homeland's oasis, sandy landscapes, and mountains as opposed to the confinement of his bedroom. The beautiful and graceful melody of his flute indicates his longing for his beautiful *Djamila*, his homeland. While his native Morocco is evoked here as feminized idyllic nature, his life in exile is defined by the confinement of his small apartment unit, whose psychological space is reduced even further by his inability to secure a retirement after thirty years of labor in France. In addition, "Djamila" as the title of his music is reminiscent of his past and lost love for the beautiful Moroccan wife that he might never see alive again. The last sequence of the film supports this view as a plane takes off with the suggested dead body of Abdellaziz after he suffers a tragic fall from the roof of a residence. While the plane is leaving, his French-born daughter, Houria, plays the indigenous melody as homecoming hymn for him with his precious flute. Even though the ultimate return to Morocco remains challenging for Houria and Abdellaziz's other daughter Selima, who are now separated from their father by death and still distanced from Morocco by miles, they inherit a valuable piece of their roots when they inherit his flute.

Olick refers to collective memory as the creation of shared versions of the past (335). This group level of memory appears through interaction within small social groups as well as large cultural communities. In fact, an interior scene of the dining hall in Amin's apartment complex in France recreates the communal traditional meal scene of his homeland. Numerous Senegalese immigrants gather around dinner tables to enjoy the traditional Senegalese dish, *yassa*, and talk about their common difficulties of life in exile. Although this scene takes place in Paris, it evokes memories of their homeland's communal dinners but also their Senegalese traditions: rural way of life; greetings; family

gatherings; and the traditional way a meal is to be eaten. As Amin walks in to join his fellow Senegalese, the camera captures the steaming bowls of *yassa* filling the dining hall. This creates an olfactory memory of the communal Senegalese meal which viewers cannot help but experience. The overcrowded tables and the festive atmosphere in Amin's dining hall imitate the communal dining practices proper to large Senegalese families, which often include a patriarch, his wives and children, and the families of his sons. Moreover, this group dining experience informs not only the collective memory of Senegalese family gatherings, but it also substitutes the difficulty or impossibility of a return home for these immigrants with a metaphoric reunion with members of a language community. In other words, a dining hall in Paris, filled with the aroma of *yassa*, helps Amin and his fellow Senegalese immigrants cope with the trauma of separation.

In similar fashion, a scene in *Fatima* reproduces the preparation of an Algerian local meal. In the scene in which Fatima is making couscous for her elder daughter Nesrine, there is a distinctive visual emphasis on the couscous. The image scale and duration of the close-ups on her indigenous culinary operations indicate the beloved attention Fatima devotes to the homeland dish. Also during the couscous-making scene, a visualized sound reverberates: as Fatima mixes the couscous grains with water using both hands, the friction of the grains in her hands echoes a characteristic sound representing her tactile memories of her Algerian village. In addition to the visualized sound of the grains in this scene, an off-screen acousmatic sound of a traditional Algerian song can just be heard coming from either a radio or a television inside the apartment. Whereas the characteristic sound of the grains represents most precisely Fatima's tactile memories of

home, the extremely tuned-down traditional Algerian song alludes to Fatima's distant past and her longing for her native Algerian village.

In another scene involving accentscapes, Fatima experiences a symbolic return to her homeland as she sits alone in the confined space of her bedroom sorting through her Algerian artisan jewelry. As they did in *Amin*, accentscapes occur at the intersection of open and closed chronotopes in this scene in *Fatima*. The open chronotope involving the artisan jewelry suggests memories of Fatima's wedding which are encoded in an open time-space of her idyllic Algerian village. The closed chronotope of her tight bedroom is juxtaposed to vivid memories of intimate traditional moments that she had with her Algerian family prior to her exile. These meaningful moments are reflected through the visualized tinkling sound of the jewelry as Fatima moves them around on the bed. A series of close-ups reveals the precious pieces of jewelry - four bracelets, two pendants, two necklaces, and a ring. As the frame scales back, another close-up shows Fatima's sad face as she dumps the small bag containing her jewelry. She then meticulously sorts them, putting the ring and a pendant back into the small white bag and gingerly placing the remaining jewelry in her wallet after a long moment of hesitation. The following scene, in which Fatima heads to the jewelry shop with Nesrine, helps the viewers understand why she is sorting through the cherished items. Although Fatima remains very attached to these valuable souvenirs from her homeland, she chooses to sell them to financially support Nesrine's education in France.

*Fatima* and *Amin* are two feature-length French films that depict North and sub-Saharan Africans living in precarious situations after immigrating to France. Unlike the undocumented immigrants from Chapter one, Fatima, Amin, and other protagonists in the

two films are in France by legal means. However, as the films show, having legal status in the hostland does not guarantee integration with its people or customs. Frequent physical or symbolic returns to the homeland are necessary for these protagonists to cope with the trauma of separation from their homes, and at times, their families. For them, varied use of two or more languages and accentscapes of many kinds constitute a means by which they can recreate memories of home.

### **Chapter 3: Accentscape as “other” spaces: From idyllic village to postcolonial rewriting**

As we saw in Chapter two, francophone films that portray *banlieue* residents and immigrant communities living in France often deal with two sets of realities: the homeland of the displaced protagonists and their hostland (which is France in this study). In this chapter, I will discuss three films: *Adama* (2015) by Simon Rouby; *L'Esquive* (2004) by Abdellatif Kéchiche; and *Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!* (2015) by Abd al Malik. While the narratives of *L'Esquive* and *Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!* metaphorically suggest the protagonists' homelands and a possible return to them, *Adama* clearly portrays the main protagonist's native African village in idyllic scenes magnifying the natural beauty of its cliffs and valleys. For each film, I will first discuss the journeys of deterritorialization of the protagonists: from the village to the metropole in *Adama*; and from the periphery to the city center in *Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!* and in *L'Esquive*. As I will show, each process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization in these films leads the protagonists to a reassessment of the meaning of home. I will then discuss the meanings of home, place, and space in these films, and show how the homeland is depicted. Finally, I will analyze how accentscapes are evoked in different manners.

#### **The making of *Adama***

Since it is the only animated film in this study, before discussing the notion of home, journeys of deterritorialization, and accentscapes in *Adama*, I will give a brief introduction of the film and its production conditions. *Adama*'s French director, Simon Rouby, was born in 1980 in Lyon and began his artistic career as a graffiti artist in the 1990s. Later, he accessed other artistic mediums such as painting and sculpture which

would go on to influence his animation in *Adama*. In addition to Rouby's rich artistic background, he studied and excelled in film directing at Gobelins in Paris and CalArts in Los Angeles.<sup>75</sup> His most recent short film, *La Marche*, was produced in 2010 by NAÏA Productions, the same production company that, in 2015, co-produced *Adama*, Rouby's first animated feature-length film, along with another production company, Le Group Ouest.<sup>76</sup> Due to the power and richness of its narrative and its formal originality, the film won numerous significant awards: the Best of Fest Award at the Chicago International Children's Film Festival (2015), the Best Feature Film at Anim'est, the Bucharest International Animation Film Festival (2015), and the André Martin Prize at the Annecy International Animated Film Festival (2016).

In terms of materials used in the making of *Adama*, "Rouby adopts an unusual evocative and nostalgic style of animation by combining CGI human figures, whose appearance is based on laser-scanned sculptures, with a series of still images" (Antichi). In other words, because Rouby reckons that computer animation is limited in terms of freedom of creation, he combines it with traditional techniques such as inks, drawings, sculptures, and fluids. He thus makes use of his numerous artistic talents by incorporating them into his filmmaking. In addition, *Adama* contains different West African accents (from Senegal, Mali, and Benin, for example) recorded without dubbing. This means that he does the montage of the audio-visual mix of *Adama* in an unusual way. Instead of

---

<sup>75</sup> In fact, the two films Rouby made for his graduation at these two schools, *Le Présage* and *Blind Spot*, were both shown in many international festivals: Cannes, Clermont, San Diego, Bucarest, Ottawa, Taiwan, and more.

<sup>76</sup> The usual producers of animated feature films are mainstream productions companies, and these companies insist on deciding on the final look of their films. Because of *Adama*'s sensitive subject matter - colonization and the recruitment of African troops by France's colonial empire - Rouby wanted to have a full control over *Adama*'s final look and did not wish to work with the usual producers. He thus struggled at first to find a producer for his first feature film project.

creating the animation to capture the voices on it, he first records the voices of the performers, then includes the animation. As a result, *Adama* is a *chef d'oeuvre* of blended artistic styles and techniques.

The uniqueness of the animation in *Adama* allows it to be categorized as both realism and fantasy. In his review of the film, Samuel Antichi notes how Rouby's unique filmmaking style skillfully highlights both a disturbing historical event, the infernal Battle of Verdun, and the traditional magical power in a pre-colonized West African society:

Animation can be a powerful way to depict personal stories, as it boasts distinctive aesthetic and narrative characteristics that have the capacity to show what is otherwise difficult to represent with live-action images. [...] *Adama's* imaginative coming-of-age odyssey is inspired by the real-life stories of West Africans who were recruited by the French Army to fight in Europe during World War I.

Two main aspects are clearly featured in *Adama's* narrative: the story of Adama, the main character, and the retelling of a historical event from the period of French colonization, which links francophone West Africa and France.

Because Rouby is French and normative French is, for the most part, the principle language of the film, one might question his position as the creator of a film concerning West Africa. In this regard, it is worth noting that, although he is not a francophone African director, he spent several years in Senegal as a young graffiti artist where he saw firsthand the ongoing impacts of French colonization on this former French colony. Furthermore, Julien Lilti, the screenwriter of *Adama*, is very familiar with the subject

matter of the African veterans known as “Senegalese riflemen,” who fought for the French empire during World War I. Indeed, he has family ties in North Africa and lived in Burkina Faso in 2002, during which time he conducted personal interviews with descendants of the deceased Senegalese riflemen.

The story in *Adama* begins in 1916 in the Northern cliffy region of Senegal. Adama, a twelve-year-old Senegalese boy, lives in a remote village surrounded by mountains. Beyond the cliffs of his homeland, the outside world, known as the “world of breaths,” stretches to modernity where the *nassara*, the white men, reign. One night, Adama’s older brother, Samba, disappears. In an act of courage, Adama defies the authority of the elders of his village and goes beyond the cliffs to look for him. With the unwavering determination of a child becoming a man, Adama embarks on a quest that takes him beyond the seas, to France, to the front lines of the first World War in order to free his brother and complete his own initiatory journey. What is most striking about Rouby’s film is that it goes back in time to the colonial era in West Africa, recreating an authentic African ethnic group which remains organic despite the presence of the colonizing forces in the region. This indigenous tribe is revealed to be intact and without any French influence because of the protection of the cliffs surrounding its village, but most importantly because of traditions, rituals, and beliefs in their traditional way of living. Now that we have discussed the conditions and background information related to the production of *Adama*, we can move to an analysis of the film, beginning with a discussion of the notions of home, space, and place, and taking a look at how this film fulfills the myth of the traveling hero.

## **Space, home, and its three-part sequence: homelessness, homesickness, and homecoming**

The notion of “home” has a long tradition in Mediterranean, Western, and African thought, and resounds with a multitude of meanings. In Homer’s *Odyssey* for instance, home constitutes a place of belonging and a sanctuary in which the exiled hero is warmly welcomed after he returns from his perilous and circular journey. In the context of the Renaissance, Joachim Du Bellay’s poem “Heureux qui comme Ulysse” presents home as a domestic abode, a secure place in which one strives to return. In Voltaire’s *Candide*, home is described as the safe garden in which the hero returns after a long journey across the world during which he appropriates the wisdom of multiple cultures. For the poet of the *Négritude* movement, Leopold Sedar Senghor, home is his birthplace Joal. In “Joal”, a poem from his collection *Chants d’ombre* (1945), his homeland is evoked as a native Senegalese village and a point of departure for Senghor and appears in visions that arise from revived memories during his exile in France. Whereas the Western notions of home mentioned in the above examples emphasize rationality and indicate writers that express themselves in a context of freedom, the African notion of home in the context of the *Négritude* movement stresses emotions from the viewpoint of colonized subjects. Indeed, Senghor’s recollections of revived memories in his poem “Joal” are in line with the definition of accentscapes as landscapes of accents which reimagine the harmonious homeland from the past.

The organic native home of Senghor, his birthplace Joal, falls into Michel de Certeau’s criteria of “place” because of its harmonic configuration, the social relations and roles of its indigenous inhabitants, and their communal rites and traditions as

described by Senghor in his poem. According to De Certeau, “a place is the order in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. [...] A place is thus an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability” (1984: 117). Similarly to Senghor’s *Joal*, social stability and human warmth reign in the cliffy indigenous village depicted in *Adama*. Features in the eponymous film also reflect the notion of place in contrast to the film’s other central location: the desolation and barbary of the French battlefield of Verdun.

While home is characterized as the realm of the known, what is not home can be defined as the realm of unknown. Thus, a common denominator of the above representations of home is the notion of stability. Unlike place, De Certeau sees “space” as an unstable element which “is composed of intersections of mobile elements” (117). In other words, he means that a space constantly changing due to social practices involving the mobility of the members of a given society, while place, on the other hand, is a segment that people imbue with special meaning and value. Considering the stable characteristic of place, home, or the homeland for the displaced protagonists in this study, can be defined as a safe, stable, and secure place while space refers to unstable fields that the mobilities of the displaced protagonists transform.

*Adama*’s long journey from his place, to many spaces, and back again includes a three-part sequence of departure, initiation, and return characteristic of the world’s great myths. According to Brendan O’Donoghue, in many world myths, the hero’s adventure begins in response to a call prompting him to leave home (homelessness). He then ventures into the realm of the unknown and faces a series of initiatory challenges

(homesickness). Upon completion of the initiatory phase, he will finally return home (homecoming) (5). This triad indeed corresponds to the three stages of Adama's journey.

First, the call prompting Adama to adventure, and thus homelessness, is to find his brother Samba and bring him back to the village. The state of homelessness signifies more than merely being without a home, and modern conceptions of homelessness carry various meanings. For instance, the notion of homelessness reaches a significant point with Blaise Pascal in *Pensées*.<sup>77</sup> For Pascal, homelessness lies in modern men's sense of insignificance in the universe. Man, he says, is swallowed up in the infinite immensity of a world which he knows nothing about. As a result, he feels hopeless and powerless. A feeling of hopelessness and powerlessness is indeed a recurrent theme in the films of this study. For Adama, as he ventures beyond his homeland into the unknown world of Western civilization, he goes through various states of paranoia, panic, and anxiety. His life in exile tends to stress sites of confinement, claustrophobia, and destruction in a desolate Paris. Indeed, he seems swallowed up by the vastness of a city in ruin and devastated by the war.

Furthermore, the modern sense of homelessness for Pascal comes from the dread and fright caused by the vastness of the universe. According to O'Donoghue, with the advent of the new astronomy, and the notion that "humanity and the Earth [...] are traumatically displaced from being at the centre of a structured universe [and are now] in a universe without centre and which has no determinate places," modern conceptions of homelessness account for a shift in how humanity sees its place in the universe (34). This

---

<sup>77</sup> Though Pascal was writing about early modernity during the Renaissance period, the feelings he describes towards modernity resemble very much the feelings expressed by the exiled, displaced, and diasporic characters in the films of my study.

vision of a universe without a center resounds with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's notion of "rhizome" in *A Thousand plateaus* (2010). Here, Deleuze and Guattari critique Western knowledge and propose a "rhizome," an adventurous mode of thinking, which is anti-hierarchical and does not follow a traditional centralized structure. Thus, they substitute the genealogical and evolutionary conception of Western knowledge, symbolized by a rooted tree, with the rhizome. They note that, unlike "a rooted tree, a rhizome is a tree that grows between things and produces offshoots in unexpected directions" (1448). A postmodern sense of homelessness arises from rhizomatic thinking, because it leaves behind the genealogical and evolutionary model of the Western conception of knowledge. In short, a rhizomatic thinking has no root from which it departs.

The narrative structure of *Adama* follows a rhizomic pattern which destabilizes the omniscient narrator and the unitary narrative system of the dominant cinema. For instance, the animated film features multivocal and multilingual protagonists, and its fragmented narrative structure overlaps various spaces covering a historical narrative: it is, at the same time, the true story of the Senegalese riflemen who fought in the French ranks during World War I; and the fictional story of a small Senegal boy in search of his brother. At the level of cinematic practices, not only does Rouby's film portray exiled African protagonists who speak with accents, he incorporates into his film the protagonists' direct discourse (an abundance of the first person "I"), the indirect discourse of the filmmaker acting as the narrator, and the free indirect discourse of the film (the social and political issues the film portrays). The combination of these three discourses create various filmic spaces and voices that contaminate the unitary narrative

system. The multivocality of the displaced protagonists' voices at times makes it unclear to the viewers who is speaking and to whom.<sup>78</sup> While the characters Adama, Samba, Djo, and Abdou experience homelessness during their journeys, the rhizomic pattern of the films' narrative structures evokes Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "minor" as opposed to the model of the dominant cinema.

During his quest for his brother Samba, the initiation process that led to his state of homelessness, Adama also suffers homesickness. As O'Donoghue notes, homesickness, which is the aching for home, or nostalgia, finds its true meaning in the term "convalescent" (38-39). To convalesce, in Greek *néomai* and *nostos*, means to return home. Adama first experiences homesickness during the sequence in which he leaves his native land by boat. On the vessel en route to France, several African recruits get seasick and are seen throwing up on the deck. This suggests that the unstable boat constantly rocking on the unfamiliar sea is an alienating space for them. Accentscapes also occur by musical means to signify homesickness at specific moments in which Adama faces tribulation in France: extreme hunger; a harsh winter; and the violence of the battlefield. Upon his arrival in France, as Adama is fleeing from the customs officers, he meets a young man named Maximin who says he is also headed to Paris. Following Maximin, Adama jumps into the back of a truck headed in the right direction, but Maximin turns out to be a thief, and he steals Adama's gold leaving him no means to pay for a place to stay. While Adama sleeps outside in the bitter cold, he has a vision in which a crazy

---

<sup>78</sup> Indeed, some confusion intervenes during scenes involving African magic. For example, there is a recurrence of African spirits speaking through the bodies of men. When Abdou, a crazy musician, is forcefully thrown into the boat leaving for France, he experiences a trance and the spirits speak through him. Similarly, Adama experiences a trance reliving Abdou's prophecy during his first night in the Western world.

African musician plays a *Fula* flute and warns him about the alienating nature of the Western world. The haunting notes of the West African instrument trigger Adama's longing for his native village. He dreams of his mother calling him to the dinner table as she serves a traditional meal. Here, Rouby inscribes a sonorous memory of a harmonious family dinner to indicate Adama's attachment to his homeland. Thus, in addition to the notes of the flute, flashback is an important narrative device used to materialize homesickness, thus accentscapes in *Adama*. The flashback encoded in the dream substitutes the difficulty of an immediate return home for Adama with a vivid memory of his near past, helping him cope with the trauma of separation. Just as a convalescent is on the road to recovery, the young African boy aches for his home and aims to return to it.

The third stage of Adama's journey indeed leads him back home. Adama's homecoming constitutes a magical return to the homeland, during which he and Samba are guided by the protective spirits of their village to a hidden passageway on the battlefield in France. This passageway leads the two displaced protagonists directly back to the cave on the hilltop overlooking their village in Senegal. This final stage of Adama's journey coincides with the final step in the myth of the traveling hero and leads him back to the Edenic village from which he came. As we will see in the next section, this idyllic village constitutes a fantasy space of Africa untouched by the modern world and colonialism, in which African spirits thrive.

### **The homeland's idyllic chronotopes: nature, mountains, and African spirits**

*Adama* is preoccupied with the representation of an Edenic village located in West Africa, precisely in the Northern region of Senegal. Its narratives tend to emphasize bloodline, ethnicity, familial affiliations, and an unspoiled haven as home of its

eponymous protagonist. Thus, it offers before-the-fall images of an African homeland, an earthly paradise where African subjects live in close harmony and deep sympathy with nature. While there is a certain realism to such representation, it is also known as a fantasy space of Africa untouched by colonialism and modernity. Of course, such places existed during the colonial period, but perhaps they were not Edenic gardens entirely isolated from the degradations of European modernity and colonialism. In *Adama*, Rouby seems to suggest that, while other traditional West African tribes have suffered the destruction of its homelands and the erosion of its former structures and authorities such as their languages and cultures, Adama's organic village remains uncontaminated. The open cinematic forms by which it is portrayed sound familiar to Bakhtin's notion of "chronotope" (250).<sup>79</sup> In *Adama*, the sequences of Adama's mountainous village embody open chronotopes. The mise-en-scene favors external locations such as a lake, trees, and mountains. To establish a deep connection between the villagers and their surrounding uncontaminated nature, the film opens on a medium shot of Adama, motionless and eyes closed, moving under the lake. As he opens his eyes and swims up to the surface of the water to catch his breath, a group of children are seen playing in the crystal-clear lake, framed against a majestic blue sky. This unearthly visual is followed by a series of shots which reveal Samba, Adama's brother. From a position high above the lake, Samba stares down at the lake and the traditional housing near it and performs a spectacular dive into the water from the top of the mountain. The next lateral travelling shot depicts the intimate natural landscape of the village comprised of traditional houses, green meadows, and magnificent mountain ranges. In this idyllic setting, life unfolds against the backdrop

---

<sup>79</sup> See page 107 of this dissertation for a discussion of Bakhtin's chronotope.

of protective mountains, which surround the habitations, the lake, and the luscious meadows.

Indeed, Adama's village is equivalent to Bakhtin's concept of an "idyllic chronotope," which consists of family idyll, love idyll, and agricultural idyll which puts emphasis on nature and natural order (225). Idyllic chronotope favors the unity of a folkloric time, which is expressed in the special connection between time and space. In *Adama*, the idyllic chronotope appears to be spontaneous and accidental due to the protection of the mountains surrounding the village against any potential invaders or enemies. On the one hand, this can be associated with realism considering that traditional African societies, which are closer to an ancient agricultural epoch, remained until Western colonization of Africa. It is often suggested that colonialism affected many Africans (especially those outside the city) much less than is assumed. They continued their traditional practices and ways of life and avoided the "white man". They also maintained direct relationship to their lands, nature, and traditions as depicted in *Adama*. On the other hand, in terms of filming, the idyll open chronotope is suggested by longshots of the cliffy village, panoramic shots of the mountains surrounding it, mobile framing of its traditional housings and meadows, and long takes that locate the characters Adama, Samba, their parents, and the elders of the village within their harmonious place. Certain aspects of nature and culture in the idyllic chronotope of the village fall in line with Edenic gardens. In many myths, (including the Bible), the "garden" symbolizes a pre-fall or prelapsarian innocence, that is often threatened, and to which the hero desires to return. The garden can also be a symbol of nostalgia. In other words, it represents the nostalgia of all Africans, including the Senegalese riflemen, who had to leave their homes or who

remember a period before colonialism, during which their village was like an Edenic garden.

Although the mountain range surrounding Adama's village is purely fictional, it also expresses nostalgia for an authentic perfect ancient world and the desire to return to that world. The mountain here is feminized and associated with motherhood and reproduction. The film reproduces the conservative politics of gender by associating female traits with the mountain and its protective culture (fortress) and men with action and adventure (the main character Adama). Not only does the beautiful mise-en-scene of the cliff and the feminine gender of the French words *falaise* (cliff), *montagne* (mountain), and *colline* (hill) posit the mountain as feminine and maternal, but also Adama's return to it is considered a reunion with his homeland and his mother. In fact, in the two pivotal scenes which depict Adama's departure from his homeland and his return, he goes through a cave at the top of the cliff which constitutes the only gateway to the outside world. If Adama leaving through the opening of a cave into the unknown world represents the beginning of his initiation, his return symbolizes a renaissance, or a rebirth. This tentatively echoes with Plato's *Allegory of the Cave* which often metaphorically refers to a woman's uterus as a cave. Moreover, the mountain range plays a significant part in *Adama* because mountains have historically been associated with spirituality. Indeed, the origins of several major world religions include mountains as sacred spiritual sites: Mount Zion in Israel; Mount Hira in Saudi Arabia; and Mount Kailash in Tibet, for example. Similarly, inside the cave at the mountaintop there is a wooden statue wearing a traditional bamboo hat representing the village's traditional African divinity. During Adama's departure and his magical homecoming, it is suggested that this traditional

African divinity is watching over him. Not only does it reveal to him the magical pathway leading out of the village to the Western world, but it allows him to return home safely through a magical underground gateway connected to the cave.

The family unit presented in *Adama*'s community resembles large families in traditional African society. The ethnic community as a whole has a chief, and each large family within the community has a leader, a patriarch, who is generally the firstborn of the oldest generation. The patriarch is often referred to as "father" or "grandfather or "the elder." He exercises his authority over all members of the family, but his power does not extend outside of those members in a family based on male descent. He leads the family with instructions of customs and traditions and religious rituals. In one sequence in *Adama*, a patriarch is shown leading a youth initiation ceremony which includes a traditional swearing-in ceremony to the African divinities. One of the patriarch's important functions is to make sure significant sacrifices are regularly offered to the wooden statue in order to ensure its protection against any evil-minded intruders. Thus, the patriarch is also the family's spiritual guide, securing safety for his family by means of pleasing the gods.

Rural and traditional houses also lend a sense of stability and safety to the village in *Adama*. A dominant chronotope, the homes have been harmoniously built into the slopes of the mountains that circle them. This traditional architecture makes *Adama*'s village a place of belonging, meaning, and purpose. Indeed, Rouby uses ethnographic realism here by choosing the architecture of Sudanese populations (Sarakollé, Bambara, Bobo, Gourounsi, Dagari, Haoussa, etc.) in the West African regions. The common features of the houses consist of a clay quadrangular wall and a flat roof that makes up a terrace,

which is made of wooden logs leaning on the walls by their ends and covered with clay. Although the renowned French ethnographer, Maurice Delafosse wrote in the early part of the twentieth century, his observations on African tradition hold true, especially for a story that takes place in the World War I era.<sup>80</sup> According to Delafosse, the structures of the houses of African tribes often indicate the mobility of the tribes within the regions (161). Unlike the nomadic Peuls of the West African region, whose hemispheric huts are entirely built in straw to accommodate their nomadic patterns, the tribe depicted in *Adama* is exclusively sedentary and place bound. In addition to the secure fortress that the cliffs create from the outside world, the solid structures of the houses evoke De Certeau's notion of place as a stable haven.<sup>81</sup>

Rouby's depiction of the cliffy village as the last uncolonized fortress in the middle of a colonized region also sounds similar to Michel Foucault's notion of heterotopia as a localized utopian space or counterspace.<sup>82</sup> From a cinematic standpoint, the village in *Adama* is a heterotopia because it controverts traditional patterns of identification by putting the indigenous protagonists and their customs in the foreground of the narrative, while it relegates the colonizing forces to the background. In other words, this cinematic strategy constitutes the other space to the conventional representations of the colonized in colonialist films. Further, Foucault's heterotopia is reflected in the imperialistic ambition of France to create this other perfect space, a colonial empire in West Africa, even though

---

<sup>80</sup> Maurice Delafosse was a very important and foundational French ethnographer and also a colonial official. Although he wrote important works on West African ethnic groups, he was banned from the colonies because he did not agree with the policies. For instance, he pleaded for the breeding of a Franco-African race, through the *métissage* (cross-breeding) of French men and indigenous women, that would be "conducive to the elevation of the African race and favorable for the development of France's influence in Africa".

<sup>81</sup> See page 121 for de Certeau's definition of place.

<sup>82</sup> See footnote 47 on page 59 of this dissertation for an explanation of heterotopia.

this will consequently result in the destruction of an indigenous people's institutions and history. *Adama* also gives us a glimpse of the territories seized by the colonizers in the Sudanese region in the sequence revealing the recruitment port. The diversity of the recruits, each one dressed in a Senegalese riflemen uniform, indicates how much African culture and history were destroyed in the process of colonization. This explains why Foucault considers the colony as a naïve and illusory "other" space (7). In fact, the recruitment ship itself is a heterotopia as we know that, historically, ships have played a major role in the Western colonization of the Third World. This "piece of floating space" is the means by which French colonizing forces reach the coast of West Africa and then colonize the indigenous people by significantly deforming their economic, political, and cultural structures (7).

In a context of traditional African society, Foucault's heterotopia echoes *Adama's* secure village portrayed as an idyllic garden. The village is naturally protected by cliffs and mountains and comprises a repertoire of natural and customary resources such a lake, plants, fields, traditional houses, and a caved temple at the top of the cliffs. Communal practices bind the inhabitants together in a harmonious way. In addition, members of the tribe share sociolinguistic norms and customs operating within the community as proof of their strong sense of belonging. Because the garden is also protected by the ancestors' spirits and the spirit of the cliffs, it appears invisible to the eye of the colonizer and remains so far unspoiled by the process of colonization.

As a counter space, this secure garden constitutes an imaginary last refuge for members of indigenous African tribes to preserve their cultural identity, hence their accentscapes. Because it features an abundant open chronotope, *Adama* suggests that the

present of the protagonist is often experienced ex post facto by means of nostalgic recollections of a lost Eden. Let us recall that, in 1914, the French colonial empire recruited thousands of colonized West Africans from its colonies to compensate for the numerical inferiority of its army compared to that of Germany. For these exiled young recruits, an idealized homeland—including its meaningful cultural activities—is necessary to cope with the trauma of separation. So, the accentscape here consists of a metaphorical reunion with the nature, land, and traditions of the homeland before the fall. Elsewhere, in *Adama*, accentscapes have more to do with the indigenous language community itself than the language spoken by its members. Instead of appearing through distinctive pronunciations of words or a language, accentscapes function as representational spaces which put emphasis on conventional identification mechanisms on behalf of an indigenous language community traditionally denied them in Western cinema. For example, in a context of colonialism, Rouby grants points of view, exclusive image duration, and larger image scale to the indigenous protagonists as an anti-colonialist counterstrategy. As part of the Edenic garden, African spirits are active daily. These spirits and the various ways in which they manifest themselves in *Adama* are discussed in the following section.

### **The two-fold animist conception of the spirits: the “vital breath” and the individual spirit**

As Nazi Boni indicates in *Crépuscule des Temps Anciens* (1962), the religion of black Africans in traditional African societies is animism, which consists of beliefs in the all-mightiness of spirits.<sup>83</sup> Boni’s chronicle covers three centuries of stories from Bwamu, a

---

<sup>83</sup> Nazi Boni was a politician from Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso). In 1948, Boni was elected to the French National Assembly on behalf of the Voltaic Union. Boni also is the author of *Crépuscule des Temps*

small region in Burkina Faso inhabited by the Bwawa or Bwan people. In his chronicle, Nazi highlights the customs, traditions, and beliefs in the organic West African village where the indigenous Bwan live in close harmony and deep sympathy with nature. The story ends with the anti-colonial rebellion of the Bwan against the French colonial army in 1916, and the death of the main protagonist Térhé symbolizes the fall of the Edenic Bwan village. The conception of the spirits in Boni's chronicle is very similar to those in the Edenic village in *Adama*.

Far from the dualist conception of Christianity which opposes God to Satan, the good to the bad, the spirits in Bwamu are not, by essence, good or bad. For that reason, the Bwan must constantly invoke their favors by consistently praying, giving offerings, and making sacrifices. These acts of worship are proven to deter the spirits' anger and assure their protection against enemies. Moreover, Boni establishes two immaterial concepts of spirits, in addition to the physical body of every animate being, that could shed light on the spirits depicted in *Adama*. From the Sahara's regions to the Cape of Bonne-Espérance, the animist conception of the spirits in traditional black African societies is two-fold: the "vital breath" and the individual spirit (240). The "vital breath" is a sort of fluid without personality, will, or intelligence. Its primary role is to animate the material part of the human being by communicating life and movement to it. Despite its divisible and eternal characteristics, the vital breath is not subjected to any cult. Unlike the vital breath, the second principle of spirits in the precolonial village of the Bwan involves the existence of individual spirits which are born at the same time with the bodies that house

---

*Anciens*, which was published in 1962 and is considered the first novel/chronicle of Burkina Faso. His chronicle explores the precolonial existence of the ethnic group Bwawa/Bwan, their traditions and customs, and their legendary anti-colonial rebellion against the French army in 1916.

them. This individual spirit forms the true personality of the human being to whom it communicates its will, thoughts, and needs. While the vital breath allows the human or animal's limbs to move, the decision of the movement comes from the individual spirit. In the animist conception, when death occurs, it is because the vital breath has left the envelope (the human body) due to the fact that its leading spirit has been neutralized by another spirit stronger than it. For example, in Boni's chronicle, the protagonist Térhé is poisoned by an evil-minded old man and becomes very sick. The oracle of the village then confirms that Térhé's individual spirit has been neutralized, and that his vital breath will soon leave his body (244-245). From an animist viewpoint, as soon as the individual spirit of the dead no longer has the vital breath to command its human body and to limit its movements, it becomes even more powerful. As a result, the individual spirit is deified. This is indeed the reason that traditional Bwan society celebrates the cult of the dead.

Boni's conception of the vital breath and the individual spirit in a traditional Bwan society constitute a framework for understanding the two worlds portrayed in Adama's organic village: the physical world and the invisible world. Like each animate being who possesses an individual spirit, in addition to the vital breath and the body, natural elements such as mountains, cliffs, rivers, rain, wind, sky, and land also possess powerful spirits. These invisible spirits are sensitive, omnipresent, and omniscient, and can be intentionally or unintentionally offended. They must be flattered with offerings, prayers, and sacrifices, or they will give harsh punishments. Being familiar with how the spirits manifest themselves in a traditional African village allows us to now discuss how accentscapes constitute an alternative way for the spirits to "speak" through possession,

dreams, and music. As we will see, this type of accentscape intervenes at specific moments during the protagonists' exile in which the film features closed chronotopes.

### **Accentscapes: Closed chronotope and the voices of the spirits**

In contrast to the open chronotopes of the Edenic village, the story in *Adama* also embodies Bakhtin's notion of closed chronotope, which has a spatial and a temporal dimension. Whereas the mise-en-scène of the film's village favors open meadows, a lake, a waterfall, and a mountain range, the mise-en-scène of the Western world (Paris) consists of closed settings such gutted buildings, the basement of a cabaret, military trucks and trains filled with soldiers, and battle trenches. In fact, the chronotope of the modern city is extremely claustrophobic, turning Paris into a chaotic war zone. A gloomy lighting scheme creates a mood of melancholy and depression, which is noticeable on the faces of the displaced characters Adama, Djo, and Samba, as well as their French counterparts. Rouby presents the outside world beyond the cliffs as unstable spaces where chaos, vanity, and imperialist forces reign. From living a harmonious life in their protected paradise where every communal and traditional activity has a meaning and a purpose, Samba and Adama find themselves in a state of alienation in an unfamiliar and unwelcoming land. As Samba's patriarch warned, the world outside of the boundaries of the village, *le monde des souffles* (the world of breaths), is full of the unknown and of mystery.

In his work *Story and Discourse* (1978), Seymour Chatman elaborates two parts in a narrative: a story (*histoire*) and a discourse (*discours*). While story is made up of content (the chain of events) and "existents" (the characters and settings), discourse forms the expression, the means by which the story is communicated (19). In other words, the story

is the *what* in a narrative, and the discourse is the *how*. In *Adama*, accentscapes intervene in both the story and the discourse. First, accentscapes appear in many aspects of the discourse of *Adama*'s narrative. As a hybridized animator who has crossed the lines of disciplines in the field of animated filmmaking, national identities, and history with *Adama*, he is often questioned for making an animated feature film about a developing culture as a Westerner. Because the film is inspired by the true story of the Senegalese riflemen who fought in the French ranks during World War I, but also is the fictional tale of *Adama*, Rouby is seen as an outsider who acts like an insider. At the same time, he is also perceived as an insider who cross-examines the outside. By mixing and juxtaposing sculpture, drawing, graffiti, and painting with computer animation, and traditional techniques with fluids, history, story, magic, realism, musical components, and different West African accents, he creates and theorizes from both sides of the divide: colonizer and colonized. It is exactly at the intersection of these multiple forms and styles that accentscapes occur as landscapes of distinctive numerous qualities in a text.

Accent here refers to a specific quality and is not exclusively related to speech, but to the collaborative nature in which *Adama* was created. For his shorter animated films, *Le Présage* and *Blind Spot*, Rouby collaborated with many artists. He applies this same standard of collaboration to *Adama*; the film indeed benefits from the inputs of diverse artists such as Julien Lilti, the screenplay writer, Adrien Dupont, the character modeler, and Jeanne Irzenski, the animation director. Thus, not only does Rouby's animation style tell the story of a West African boy, it also conveys the stories of the other creators with whom Rouby collaborates. With his camera, like a pen, Rouby adds layers of artistic accents borrowed from all these artists into the creation of his film. In addition,

accentscape as the speaker's "landscapes of accents" resounds in the voices of his characters. In fact, the West African accents of his film's characters are extremely distinctive and diverse. Whereas the mad griot Abdou's voice clearly displays a Congolese accent, Adama's voice suggests traces of an accent from Mali, the country of origin of the parents of performer-actor Azize Diabaté Abdoulaye.

Accentscapes also intervene in the story of the film's narrative, often as the acousmatic voices of African spirits at specific moments in exile when the film features closed chronotopes. When Adama, Samba, and Abdou, the mad musician, experience the confinement of the boat and the alienation and horror of the war in France, there is an acousmatic presence of the spirits of Adama's village, who intervene as talking shadows or *acousmêtres*.<sup>84</sup> I argue that accentscapes of the film are an alternative means of communication for the spirits, who speak through possession, dreams, and music. As traditional Africa is being threatened in the narrative, so are these invisible entities, the spirits of the ancestors who inhabit rocks, trees, rivers, etc. and are everywhere. In this regard, the speech of the displaced characters who are in a trance is accented because they speak the spirits' words with the accent of the spirits' themselves. The first instance of trance occurs in the moving ship that is taking the newly recruited Senegalese riflemen to France. Abdou, the first to get seasick, falls into a mysterious trance, and in a hypnotic moment he professes these words to his fellow riflemen on the deck: "Of all the provinces, of all the nations / You come to worship a golden statue and money [...] / And when they collapse it will lead you into a furnace / Except those that will have not forgotten / that will not have forgotten / the place from where they came." With these

---

<sup>84</sup> See page 26 of this dissertation for Chion's definition of *acousmêtre*.

words, the musician warns his fellow indigenous recruits about the illusory power of material possessions in Western society and the dehumanizing nature of the war. An important element in this scene is the timbre of Abdou's voice. As his speech becomes loud and ritualistic, his gestures become more and more powerful, and the tone of his voice turns abnormal. This suggests that, like *acousmètres*, the African spirits are speaking through Abdou's body in trance. This also falls in line with Chion's concept of "audiovisual dissonance" which consists of an effect of diegetic contradiction between a particular sound and a distinct image (1999: 475). The strange sound produced by Abdou's human body contrasts with the immaterial nature of the spirits' voices while at the same time allowing them to speak. In addition, while Abdou's trance is framed in medium shots depicting the bright crescent moon and the gloomy sky in the background, the accented speech of the spirits echoes in the vast ocean symbolizing their omnipresence.

Another instance of accentscapes as the voice of the African spirits intervenes during Adama's vivid dream during his first night in Paris. As he sleeps outside in the extreme cold, in the confined space of the devastated Parisian neighborhood, Adama experiences a trance and relives the mad musician's prophecy. A significant feature in this scene is the superimposition of three vocal lines in the audio-visual mix: the spirits' voices; Abdou's voice; and Adama's voice. Adama is speaking the spirits' words in an oratory and traditional manner, while the images on the screen switch between the bodies of Adama dancing and Abdou holding his flute. The visual is accompanied by the steady beat of an indigenous drum, the tom-tom, which recreates an atmosphere of an African storytelling night as a warm and comforting substitute for the cold and alienated Parisian

space. After this trance, it appears that the spirits and Abdou follow Adama during his journey. Abdou's multiple appearances alongside Adama in the film, his *Fula* flute, and his prophetic messages make him an authentic African griot who has been given the spiritual mission is to guide Adama throughout his journey.

In parallel with the spirits' guidance of Adama's heroic quest, the Samba's departure from the idyllic village is portrayed as a curse by a malefic spirit. Indeed, Samba is convinced to leave his native village due to the influence of Western materialism: he is charmed by the technological and mechanical advances of Western civilization and the gold that he receives from the French recruiters at the harbor. Prior to the initiation ceremony in the village, Samba already does not feel the same sense of belonging he once did as a member of his community. The opening sequence of the film illustrates his sense of dislocation when he is seen jumping from the cliff into the lake while the patriarch and others search for him to begin the ceremony. The dislocation is further suggested when he disappears. In this regard, after Samba willingly leaves his Edenic homeland, charmed by the Western spirit of materialism, the patriarch sadly confirms to his father Boubacar: "The child that I tried to initiate yesterday was no longer the son to whom you gave birth."

Accentscapes again intervene as the voices of the spirits in the final sequence portraying the French village of Verdun when the spirit of the cliffs of the homeland reveals itself on the battlefield. In this situation, Samba clearly benefits from their invisible care and protection. As mentioned above, Nazi Boni's chronicle of the Bwamu region insists on the importance of the cult of the dead, and the cult of the names of the ancestors, which guarantee the protection of the spirits in difficult times. The Bwan

communities celebrate their ancestors through prayer, offerings, and sacrifices, and in return, the spirits of their ancestors, who always operate on an invisible principle, intercede in favor of their families. Similar protection of the spirits inhabits the diegetic space of the battlefield of Verdun in the film as Adama and Samba bravely witness the horror of the war. As bullets hit the battleground near Samba nearly missing him, and bombs blast the trenches without hurting Samba who is nearby, the spirit of the cliffs reveals itself once again through Abdou, who uses his own body to shield Samba. While their fellow white and French soldiers run to hide themselves in the trenches, Samba and Adama remain exposed and unharmed despite the German infantry launching several offensives.

The voices of the spirits resonate through Abdou's possessed voice and through the notes of his flute. There is a superimposition between the sound of the blasts and the musical notes of the flute in the battlefield. As a result, an "auditory dissonance" intervenes as the sound of the explosions contrasts with the melody of the flute (Chion, 1999: 475). At certain moments in this sequence, the comforting melody overpowers the unbearable sound of the canons and airstrikes. With the sound of the *Fula* flute invading the battlefield of Verdun, accentscapes proper to Adama's village work here as pacifist counterhegemonic sound against the tyranny of war. Similarly, whereas shots of the heaven weaponry seem to decrease in image scale, shots of Abdou playing his flute tend to increase in image scale. Even better, Abdou, in trance still, awakens Samba from his alienation by making three small incisions on the sides of each of his eyes. He later then directs the two boys toward an underground mystic gateway leading them directly to their homeland, all this from the battlefield of Verdun.

A central impulse animating *Adama* is exactly this effort to reclaim a past and a homeland that once appeared intact and natural with a strong sense of belonging prior to the arrival of the *nassara* (white men). The word *nassara* itself, repeated several times by the exiled protagonists, constitutes an instance of accentscape referring to Adama's indigenous language and other indigenous languages of nearby communities whose members were also part of the French army recruits. Prior to French colonization of West African lands, traditional African societies were composed of multiple tribes with as many differences as similarities. In this regard, the term *nassara* used in the film is one of the linguistic similarities in several West African dialects, with some slight differences in its pronunciation depending on the speaker's indigenous language. For instance, Boni uses *nansara* or *nansarawa* in his chronicle of the Bwamu region showing how different ethnic groups in Upper Volta called the French explorer, Louis-Gustave Binger, when he arrived there in 1888 (220-223). These two indigenous dialectal terms, which mean "white man" or "red god" fall in line with the meaning of *nassara* in Rouby's film. In *Adama*, *nassara* means "white man" or "stranger". The French subtitle of the film, *Le Monde des Souffles*, which translates to "The World of Breaths" in English supposedly derives from a formulaic speech in the African dialect spoken in Adama's village. It indicates the world of the *nassara*, those who have mastered the speed of the wind. The word "breaths" here takes on several meanings. First, "breaths" refers to wind-powered and steam-powered machines, the products of Western civilization that helped to expand the colonies of France, for instance, in the early 1900s. Such a harnessing of nature goes against traditional African ways of interacting with the natural world as in Adama's Edenic village. Second, the term "breaths" references the world of spirits which, as we

have seen, constitutes an integral part in traditional African societies. The world of breaths in the film thus must be understood in relation to the black African's concept of the individual spirits of people, animals, and objects, as described in Boni's chronicle.

In terms of *mise-en-scène*, *Adama* suggests two distinct treatments of the wind or breath in its filmic spaces. Whereas Adama's homeland favors a strong presence of spirits, in the form of the wind, that populates the invisible open domains of the village such as the mountains, the lake, and the trees, life in exile is dominated by steam-powered, gas-powered, and flying machines such as cars, trains, boats, and airstrikes. For instance, when Adama leaves the fortress of his village, a strong wind blowing in the open landscape leads him in the direction of the harbor. In addition, Rouby contrasts the protective spirits of Adama's village to the toxic gas used by the French and German troops on the Verdun battlefield. In a similar manner, he opposes the melodious breath of the *Fula* flute to the loud explosions of bombs, and the telltale voice of Abdou to the angry shouting of the French soldiers. The film seems to suggest that, whereas the wind from the village is the vital breath, or the source of life, the wind in the Western world serves a destructive purpose in the form of deadly weapons. In the final sequence, not only does the breath of the West African flute have a healing power, it also helps establish the powerful contributions of the Senegalese riflemen in World War I and recall meaningful cultural values from the African society. Showing these traditional homeland values gives the director an opportunity to highlight colonized Africa in a respectful way, which is indeed one of Rouby's main purposes for this film.

### ***Adama*: a re-appropriation of African images and a tribute to Senegalese riflemen**

Because *Adama* abounds in fantastical events and the predominance of African spirits, some legitimate questions concerning the narrative plausibility may erupt. Rather than realism as a goal, *Adama* constructs reality as a style. This means that its primary goal is not to present reality as immediately conveyed by an animated studio's work, but reality as a set of strategies aimed at reconstructing customs and beliefs that are inherent to traditional African societies. Colonialism reached its peak between 1900 and the end of World War I, which corresponds to the period represented in Rouby's animated film. One cannot stress enough how the military, economic, political, and cultural domination of European powers over the indigenous tribes of Africa contributed to erase a huge part of their cultural patrimonies. Early colonialist films such as the Lumière Brothers' *Nègres Achantis. Danse d'hommes* in 1897 and Georges Méliès's *Le Voyage dans la lune* in 1902 set the stage for French colonial missions in sub-Saharan Africa, which supposedly were meant to bring civilization to indigenous tribes who were lacking in culture and history. In Léon Poirier's *La Croisière noire* (1924) and Baron Gourgaud's *Chez les buveurs de sang* (1932), the colonized is portrayed in an unflattering light. Robert Stam and Louise Spence establish three ways in which the colonized subjects are absent in the colonialist representations (238-239). First, the absence of the representations of the oppressed group itself, second "the structuring absence" of the colonized people's history or institutions, and lastly the absence of the language of the colonized. In response to such colonialist images of African tribes, Rouby's *Adama* portrays an opposite view as its cinematic images reflect the values of African culture and that speak in African voices.

The entire story is told from the perspective of the child-hero with a predominance of his African spirits.

Even though the film is entirely made in normative French, markers of Adama's original dialect (Wolof as suggested by the Senegalese location of the village) are noticeable in the translation process, often appearing in Rouby's indirect discourse in French. The first time Adama sees a car in France, for example, he expresses an instance of accentscape when he refers to it as a "moving steel sleigh", a word-for-word translation of his indigenous dialect. Furthermore, when Adama finds himself homesick in Paris and dreams about his family, we get a glimpse of sociolinguistic norms operating within the tribe. In the dream, his father, Boubacar, and Samba are working in a traditional forge and Boubacar is giving his elder some advice, to which Samba repeatedly replies "Yes, Father." The formulaic conversation between father and son constitutes the format of traditional African society, and the linguistic choices made by both protagonists play an important role in constructing meaning and social identity. This instance of accentscape within Adama's dream allows him to reconnect with values from his homeland and gives Rouby an opportunity to highlight traditional African society in a positive light.

In addition, not only does Rouby's *Adama* go back into the past to destabilize the perspective from which colonialist stories are often told in films, but it challenges the spectator's positioning. In colonialist films, or Western films, the spectator is placed in a position that captures his attention and his sympathy for the white colonizers, whereas the colonized is vilified. In films such as Julien Duvivier's *Pépé le Moko* (1937), for example, the focus remains on the police headquarters and the residence of the white

criminals in the colonies, and the spectator does not develop any close relationship with the colonized subjects. In short, the film forces the spectator into having a colonialist perspective. Author André Gardiès calls this spectator positioning “the space of the spectator.” Gardiès’s space of the spectator refers to the relationship that the spectator maintains with the space presented in the narration. In the eye of the conventional spectator, a film set in the early 1900s should reflect colonialist point-of-view conventions. In other words, an accurate depiction of the colonial world should make the colonizer the focal point in the narrative. However, *Adama* presents counter strategies that exploit conventional identification mechanisms on behalf of indigenous protagonists. These counter strategies are presented in three orders in the film: a re-appropriation of the African image; a historical recognition of the Senegalese rifle men; and a valorization of African customs and beliefs.

The inaugural sequence of *Adama*, in which the indigenous children are shown swimming in the lake, consists of a statement upon colonialist cinema which resumes African cinematic space to stereotypical images. At the same time, it pays tribute to anti-colonial films that reveal how European powers oppress indigenous people by slaughtering them, expropriating their lands, and exploiting them as slaves. Rouby’s cinematic counter strategy also aims at rejecting these flawed images that colonized African people lack culture and history. Before the first negro-African film *Afrique sur Seine* (Paulin Vieyra, Mamadou Sarr, et al.) comes to existence in 1955, one of the recurrent images of Africa in European cinema is naked African children swimming and playing in a pond. In the best of these films, for instance René Vautier’s *Afrique 50* (1956), even the filmmakers’ effort to indicate an anticolonial style by granting point-of-

view shots to the colonized, does not guaranty a non-colonialist perspective of the films, in which the colonialist forces are just present in the background. Rouby recreates the same diegetic space of swimming children in a pond as a means of restoring the flawed images of African indigenous tribes. Instead of images of curious African children playing in their seized territories, the opening sequence of *Adama* introduces a group of African youth from the last uncolonized refuge swimming peacefully in the lake of their unexplored homeland. With idyllic images of Adama's village presented as an organic, authentic, and auto-sufficient African tribe, Rouby cuts loose with the stereotypical images of unsustainable institutions and patrimonies in Africa which populate colonialist cinema.

Another way Rouby re-appropriates the African image, is bringing to the foreground of *Adama* the Senegalese riflemen. *Adama* is a tribute to these men who fought with their French counterparts allied in the battlefield of Verdun. Senegalese riflemen, *les Tirailleurs sénégalais*, were the African soldiers of the colonial infantry in the French army. Initially recruited from Senegal beginning in 1857, the recruitments were eventually extended to the main sub-Saharan regions of the French colonial empire. During World War I, up to two hundred thousand Senegalese riflemen fought in the French army on diverse fronts, including during the Battle of Verdun, the war's longest battle. By recreating the Battle of Verdun, during which the spirits of Adama's village triumph over Western weapons of mass destruction, Rouby pays tribute to the thousands of Senegalese riflemen who lost their lives in the Great War without any official recognition for their contribution to the allied victory from the French state until the end of 1990s. In this way, *Adama* attempts to put an emphasis on a population generally

denied a voice and a perspective in mainstream representations of World War I. Consequently, the sequence of the battlefield exploits conventional identification mechanisms on behalf of the two African boys and their magical African powers and relegates the white characters to the background. For instance, Adama is granted access to the center of the battlefield in numerous close-ups, and even better, he is displayed neck and neck with a low-flying German bomber as the audience is permitted a virtual intimacy of the war experience. In the same sequence, Samba is seen fearlessly firing back at the German bomber as his white counterparts take cover. This acts as a reminder of the bravery and courage of the Senegalese riflemen. Conventionally presented in colonialist cinema as shadowed figures, here Rouby magnifies his African protagonists through larger image scale, close-ups, and bright natural lighting which highlights meaningful values about their African culture. In short, Adama and Samba are portrayed as speaking subjects who witness the experience of the valiant Senegalese riflemen, and as a result, they embody the power of their African culture. Rouby further highlights the lure of this idyllic African homeland by allowing Adama and Samba to return there at the end of his film. As we have seen in *Adama*, the protagonist's journey of deterritorialization went from the village to the colonial metropole and back again. Now, we will turn our attention to two accented films featuring postcolonial representations of journeys from the city center to the periphery.

### **Abd al Malik and *Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!***

In his first feature film, *Qu'Allah Bénisse la France! (Qu'Allah)*, based on his 2004 book of the same title, director Abd al Malik tells the semi-autobiographical tale of Régis and his journey from his *cit *, Neuhof, into the city center of Strasbourg. In the sections of

this dissertation dedicated to *Qu'Allah*, I will show how, although imitating *banlieue* cinema that came before, Malik goes further than including their recurrent aesthetic and sociological tendencies in his film. He does so by tackling the complex subject of Islam in France and introducing a third element in the spatial representation of *Qu'Allah*: the universal space. This space constitutes a multicultural entity based on the love of others despite differences and stretches beyond the boundaries of the main city and its suburbs making movements of deterritorialization and reterritorialization in a Deleuzian manner a necessary ingredient.

Since *Qu'Allah* is autobiographical and an adaptation of Malik's first book, it is important to briefly review Malik's education and musical career in order to understand his relationship with the marginal space of the *banlieue*, from which his music originates, and official France. Abd al Malik, born Régis Fayette Mikano, is a French rapper and poet of Congolese descent. He was born on March 14, 1975 in Paris, then lived briefly in his father's homeland, Congo-Brazzaville, until 1981, when his family moved to Strasbourg so his father, a political science graduate, could complete his studies in journalism after he was awarded a scholarship from the Congolese government. Malik grew up with his six brothers and sisters in this Alsatian city, precisely in the heart of a *banlieue/cité* named Neuhof. Because of Malik's love for literature, he studied philosophy and classical letters at the same time as he founded the rap group N.A.P (New African Poets) in 1988 with three childhood friends, his cousin, and his older brother. His first great commercial successes were his book in 2004 and his second solo album, *Gibraltar* in 2006.

Among major issues related to the *banlieue* in France, Malik portrays Neuhof, the *cit * in which he grew up, as a prosperous nest and an exotic hell to obscurantist Islam. He describes the exotic feel of Neuhof in his book : “La *cit * de Neuhof, dans la *banlieue* sud de Strasbourg, ne comptait alors que deux familles noires : nous serions la troisi me. L , nous allions conna tre la pr carit , la mis re sociale et l’ostracisme – les immigr s, surtout leurs fils, savent avoir la dent dure entre eux” (14). [There were only two black families in the *cit * of Neuhof, in the *banlieue* of Strasbourg. We were the third. There, we were going to learn about instability, social misery, and ostracism – the immigrants, and especially their sons, were very hard on each other.]

In his first film, *Qu’Allah*, based on his own experience Malik offers authentic images of his Alsatian *cit *, Neuhof, and prefers filming away from the normally abundant Haussmannian d cor featured in French films. He tells his story using iconographic images that appear in meaningful ways in several sequences. *Qu’Allah* centers on the journey of R gis Mikano, the gifted son of African immigrants who is raised with his two brothers in Neuhof by their Catholic mother. While delinquency becomes an integral part of his daily life, rap constitutes a necessary and vital passion. *Qu’Allah* also addresses the problem of obscurantist Islam which Malik experiences as a teenager. Regis and his friends experience obscurantist Islam, and the narrative structure presents it as follows: First, R gis, Pascal, Samir, Rachid, and Mike are estranged from the values of the Republic; Then, Regis converts to Islam while Samir is radicalized; Finally, R gis embarks on an initiation journey to Morocco. Islam, for R gis, is a spiritual initiation. He will soon discover love and find direction in a multicultural France.

Keeping this background information in mind, I will now discuss representations of the banlieue in films prior to *Qu'Allah*. Then I will show how various cinematic spaces in *Qu'Allah* contribute to the representations of the *banlieue* as an exotic hell and discuss how images of the rise of radical Islam in the French *banlieue* are conveyed. Finally, I will show how accentscapes appear at specific moments in the narrative of the film.

### **Filming the *banlieue* before and in *Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!***

Although French cinema was born more than a hundred years ago, it was not until 1988, with the release of Jean Claude Brisseau's *De Bruit et de fureur*, that contemporary stereotypes of the *banlieue*, such as delinquency, criminality, and unemployment, first emerged from the cinematic landscape. From then on, representations of the *banlieue* in French cinema often reveal sites of miserable living conditions. According to Ginette Vincendeau and Myrto Konstantarokos in their respective articles concerning perhaps the most well-known *banlieue* film, Mathieu Kassovitz's *La Haine*, *banlieue* films typically present two realities: the main city center and the periphery. Just as the authors of the French New Wave broke the rules of the mainstream "quality tradition," *banlieue* filmmakers, Kassovitz for instance, innovate a cinema representing France's cultural diversity. This multicultural France has been progressively becoming visible on the national scene since the middle of the 20th century.

In the same line of thoughts, Carrie Tarr focuses on the films *Le Thé au Harem d'Archimède* (1985) by Mehdi Charef and *Hexagone* (1994) by Malik Chibane in her essay on *beur* and French identities. It is necessary to note the confusion and pejorative connotation that the term *beur*, often meaning "Muslim, Arab, and immigrant," contains. Tarr mentions the use of the term "African-American cinema" in the United States

instead of “black cinema” to recognize a race linked to a cinematic genre without affecting its hybridity (85). According to Tarr, the rise in *beur* film production in the 1990s constitutes both a rejection of the misery attributed to this cinematic genre and a recognition of a *beur* national identity part of French heritage. More recently, the concept *cinémas de banlieue* (*banlieue* cinema) seems more appropriate to indicate the works of white French filmmakers or Maghrebi-French filmmakers for the reason that their films have in common the ethnic diversity of the underprivileged class living in the *banlieue* regardless of their origins. Tarr’s perspective on the problematic of the term *beur* could shed light on our analysis of the spaces in *Qu’Allah* as the similar multicultural communities populated its diegetic space.

A review of the term *banlieue* also seems necessary here. In France, *banlieue* constitutes the territories that surround the dominant part of the major cities. In France, they constitute municipalities that are administratively independent of the main cities. According to Higbee, *banlieues* are not equivalent to the American term “suburbs” because they have a socio-cultural and contemporary context that needs to be indicated (2007: 38). He defines *banlieue* as “rundown *cités* (working-class housing projects) located on the periphery of larger French cities dominated by violence, unemployment, criminality, and social exclusion, and populated by alienated male youth of immigrant origin” (38). This perception of the *banlieue* is relayed by the media which contributes to the stereotype of large sensitive public housings where the existence of a parallel economy and phenomena of urban violence prevail. At the end of the 1960s, large foreign communities settled in France and the number of people living in the cities increased considerably. This contributed to the fluctuating number of low-income housing units or

HLMs. As a result, the boundaries between the city center (the pride of the Republic) and the *banlieues* (homes for the less fortunate of the French society) became more and more visible.

The representation of immigrant housing in *Qu'Allah* fall in line with the characteristics noted here by Higbee:

North African immigrants and their descendants comprise a disproportionately high proportion of the population living in the working-class *banlieue* of larger French towns and cities. Early generations of economic (mostly male) migrants from the Maghreb were housed either in bidonvilles (shantytowns) on the urban fringes, or else in cheap accommodation in immigrant districts or larger French cities. With the halt of official immigration from the Maghreb in 1974, however, and the introduction of the policy of *regroupement familial* a year later, local government officials in France were forced to provide housing for the newly arrived workers and their families. (38)

Malik's articulation of the diegetic and narrative spaces within the *banlieue* or the *cit * resonates with Higbee's definition. A common denominator among all protagonists in *Qu'Allah* is that they are all second-generation immigrants or their children. As revealed in the film, R gis has no physical contact with his Congolese homeland which he only experiences through communal practices inherited from his parents. The focal point for him is the "here and now" of his new home and the past constitutes a raw material that he uses to enter a new context. In transnational French films such as *Qu'Allah*, involving diasporic protagonists and portrayed *banlieue* residents, accentscapes appear in two modes. First, accentscapes may appear through the various distinctive pronunciations of

words or a language in the conversations of the multicultural *banlieue* residents. In *Qu'Allah* this type of accentscapes populates voice-over singing narration and utterances of multivocal and multilingual protagonists. Second, accentscapes may function as representational spaces which put emphasis on conventional identification mechanisms on behalf of immigrant communities traditionally denied rights by the Republic.

The following technique used by Malik is a prime example of an accentscape that stresses the physical representation of a space mainly populated by *banlieue* residents. Malik uses an artistic twist as a prologue to introduce Neuhof. In the opening sequence, just before the arrest of Régis and his friend, Malik opts more for a documentary approach rather than fictional as he displays banal shots of several sensitive districts of Strasbourg and its immigrant residents. Traffic signs successively show Lingolsheim, Hautepierre, Meinau, and Neuhof, followed by footage of the streets, residents, and their daily activities. This segment of images as in a documentary unveils the precarity, social misery, and ostracism of these sensitive districts of Strasbourg. Malik even includes footage of police interventions and real arrests to bring an authentic feel to his autobiographical account. In *L'Espace au Cinéma*, André Gardiès states that space as depicted in a narrative film maintains a close relationship with the characters it contains (108). This relationship often establishes inclusion or exclusion, convergence or divergence, closure or opening; and each narrative develops a spatial order. By using this prologue before displaying the title, Malik wants to set the tone for the complex relationship the residents maintain with the *banlieue* which is presented as sites of “want to be” (*le lieu du vouloir-être*) and “want to do” (*le lieu du vouloir-faire*) according to Gardiès, but lack the “ability to be and to do” (*le lieu du pouvoir-être et du pouvoir-faire*)

(83). As a result, Malik's depiction of Neuhof, like most *banlieues*, is characterized by unemployment, exclusion, discrimination, and obscurantist Islam. Furthermore, another instance of accentscape intervenes in relation to the Alsatian influence in the region. The series of close-up shots on the traffic signs indicating the names of the *cités* reveal the region's Alsatian German heritage. Not only are the diasporic protagonists in *Qu'Allah* already displaced subjects due to their parents' African origins, but their new home Neuhof is also bilingual or multilingual (French, German, and Alsatian) as a result of its rich history. In Malik's book, he indeed describes Neuhof as the most dangerous of all the *cités* in Alsace with the euphemism *du Neuhof à la taille d'une ville* [Neuhof is a small town, but has a big-city feel], to emphasize the extent of its social issues despite its small size (14).

Considering various physical forms and the architecture of the working-class housings in *Qu'Allah*, the physical space of the *cité* includes agglomerations of horizontal, vertical, circular, and angular buildings. These spaces constitute scenes of diversity, social discrimination, delinquency, and marginalization. Malik highlights Neuhof's conglomerates of housing estates through longshots that stretch beyond its 2,246 hectares (14). First, the viewer is made aware of the physical confinement of Neuhof in the sequence in which Rachid is shot by a member of a rival gang while Régis and his other friends run away. While he runs, the viewers perceive in the background the horizontal sprawl of the similar buildings of the *cité* which seem to amplify the imminent danger. Another emphasis on the verticality of the public housings appears in the sequence in which Régis and his friends are sitting on a couch located in the center of the backyard of their housing complex. They are there to divide the loot they have stolen from the

residents and tourists of Strasbourg-center. Because the working-class housings are high, they cover up the gang's illicit activities. Also, sitting in the center of a green space gives them an opportunity to momentarily escape their enclosed reality. Finally, in a third scene, Régis sits under a tree facing a concrete building in the shape of a giant polygon as Nawel comes out onto one of the balconies of the building and smiles at him. A sense of confinement is portrayed by the sad gray color of the buildings and their uniform balconies, which serve as spaces to hang laundry out to dry, and to store bicycles and mopeds.

In this respect, Laurence Moinereau evokes heterogeneity, dislocation, and fragmentation to characterize the ruling anarchy which reigns in the *cité* in *banlieue* films. In *Qu'Allah*, Neuhof is a heterogeneous space due to the diverse origins of the main protagonists: Régis, Pascal, and Bilal who originate from Congo-Brazzaville; and Rachid, Samir, and Nawel, who are *beur* and Maghrebin. Neuhof also appears as a fragmented space due to the rivalry between multiple gangs. While Régis and his friends like rap music and pickpocketing, other gang members prefer robberies and drug trafficking. A prime example of anarchy intervenes in the sofa sequence against the backdrop of the *cité*'s buildings. Régis, Mike, Rachid, Samir, and Pascal are discussing on the sofa while in the background bicycles and linens are hanging from the balconies of the buildings.

As for dislocation, the physical environment of the homeland is recreated within the *cité*. For instance, Nawel's apartment is decorated with traditional items from the Maghreb. Colorful pieces of fabrics are hanging from his balcony giving the facade a feel of the Maghreb. In addition, the use of elliptical exchanges makes it difficult for the

spectator to ascertain private conversations between Régis and Nawel. This emphasis on the position of detachment between the protagonists and the viewers constitutes an instance of accentscape. Moreover, the opposition between the *banlieue* and Strasbourg-center relies heavily on two types of shots. Several scenes portray an overview of the housing estates in Neuhof shot from the rooftop while the cathedral and the university representing institutions of the state and symbols of Strasbourg-center are shot from low-angle. These filming techniques that highlight the difference between the city center and the periphery are also seen in the classic *banlieue* film, *La Haine*, which served as a model for Malik's film. In the next section, I will discuss the many similarities between the two films and introduce the one significant way they differ.

### ***Qu'Allah Bénisse la France ! : a false simulacrum of Kassovitz's La Haine***

As a director, Abd al Malik was greatly influenced by the artistic style of Mathieu Kassovitz, the director of *La Haine* (1995). In an interview with Claire Vassé, Malik reveals that *La Haine* is the first *banlieue* film that has done justice to the *banlieue* to the extent that it constitutes a sincere testimony of the *cité* even though it is a judgment seen from the outside:

Pour moi, c'était la première fois qu'un cinéaste voulait vraiment montrer la *cité*, avec amour mais aussi avec une démarche artistique. Découvrir ce film gamin a été fort pour moi, presque fondateur. Et puis après, j'ai rencontré Mathieu Kassovitz, je suis devenu son ami, on a eu de grandes discussions. C'est lui qui m'a poussé à être réalisateur. (3)

[It was the first time I had seen a filmmaker truly depict the *cité*, with love and an artistic approach. Discovering this film as a child was a big deal for me. After I

met Mathieu Kassovitz and I became his friend, we had some great discussions.

He is the one who pushed me to become a director.]

Not only did Malik choose to shoot his film in black and white just like *La Haine*, but his film's structural and systematic dimensions are also similar to those in Kassovitz's film.

By reviewing Gardiès's cinematic spaces in both films, it is striking how close they resemble one another. Gardiès defines four spaces in narrative film: cinematographic space; diegetic space; narrative space; and the space of the spectator. In this comparison of *La Haine* and *Qu'Allah*, I will only refer to Gardiès's first two spaces. First, cinematographic space refers to the screening conditions at the movie theater per se (1993:18). By entering the projection room, the spectator moves from a "social subject" to a "spectacular subject" in agreement, of course, with the cinematographic institution (18). Not only does *Qu'Allah* replicate *La Haine*'s iconic, verbal, and musical characteristics, but also its ability to go mainstream as a *banlieue* film that speaks to the minority ethnic, diasporic, and postcolonial communities from which it originates. Gardiès defines the second term, diegetic space, as the space portrayed within the frame. The young protagonists' journey from Chanteloup-les-Vignes to Paris in *La Haine* resembles Régis and his friends' path when they leave their *cité* Neuhof to go to Strasbourg-center. Paraphrasing Ferdinand Saussure's dyadic take of language and speech, Gardiès operates a distinction between space and place by stating that place is the speech of space (71-72). Whereas space is a construct that one imagines, place is a reality one can see. As a result, the place materializes the space in film because the former is tangible and concrete unlike the latter, which is abstract and immaterial. For instance, while the space of the *banlieue* in these *banlieue* films is envisioned as a construct in

general, the places that appear in the narrative of both films are confined working-class housings, miserable skylines, and the figures of immigrants and *banlieue* residents.<sup>85</sup>

In the light of Higbee's definition of the *banlieue* or *cité*, if we consider the diegetic space (Gardiès's second term) portrayed in *La Haine* et *Qu'Allah*, we agree that there are many similarities between these two films. Both films reveal the physical, social, and moral differences between the *cité* (Chanteloup-les-Vignes and Neuhof) and the city center (Paris and Strasbourg). Gardiès indicates that one feature of realistic narrative films consists of creating an analogy between the values of both the diegetic place and the social place that the film portrays (76). Based on previous knowledge, the film uses referential clues of the places (diegetic and social) to create expectations for the viewer. In other words, such films should reveal, according to Gardiès, that one does not partake in similar activities in the wealthy neighborhoods near the Champs-Élysées as they do in the *quatre-vingt-treize* (the ninety-third city district of Paris, which is Saint-Denis).

Logically, then, the *cité* is seen as a mythical place where the absence of the father figure is significant. The scenes in *Qu'Allah* that set the tone for single parenthood are those which portray the apartment of Régis's mother, Madame Mikano. Early in the morning, the modest dining room is the central space in the apartment to which all the other rooms are joined. Régis greets his mother and serves himself a bowl of cereal. His younger brother Pascal joins him as their mother leaves the room through one of the bedroom doors. The absence of their father in this scene reveals the ordeal of his mother

---

<sup>85</sup> Gardiès's third term, the narrative space refers to the spaces in the narration instead of the space of the narrative. Because any narrative is a story of a subject in relation to a particular space, the narrative space indicates the function of a space in the narration. Finally, as for the space of the spectator, Gardiès defines it as the relation between the viewer and the diegetic space and his processing of the narrative space. As mentioned above, this study does not use Gardiès's third and fourth space for comparison of *La Haine* and *Qu'Allah*.

who, as Malik points out in his book, fell into alcoholism after the departure of her husband. In *La Haine*, the protagonists Hubert and Vinz are also affected by this phenomenon of single parenthood. Hubert lost his father at an early age, and Vinz, who is raised by his grandmother, also suffers from the lack of a father figure. David-Alexandre Wagner explains that this could be behind the common impulsive behavior of young protagonists in *banlieue* film:

...il semble patent que monoparentalité, absence paternelle ou problèmes au sein de la famille sont considérés comme un facteur explicatif, explicite ou implicite, du comportement anormal ou délinquant des jeunes personnages jusqu'à la fin des années 1990. Dans quasiment tous les films où c'est le cas, on remarque un cas de délinquance, même s'il n'y a pas pour autant un manichéisme automatique. Ainsi, les jeunes sans père ou dans des familles anomiques ne sont pas obligatoirement condamnés à la délinquance, mais les risques sont là. (79)

[...it seems evident that single parenthood, the absence of a father, or familial problems are considered factors to explain, explicitly or implicitly, the abnormal or delinquent behavior of young characters until the end of the 1990s. In almost every film in which that is the case, delinquency exists, even if there is not an intentional mechanism for this. The fatherless youth or those in atomic families are not automatically condemned to delinquency, but the risks are there.]

By using the term “intentional mechanism”, Wagner is expressing reservations, so as not to generalize the case of delinquency as the absolute cause of single parenthood in any *banlieue* film. On the other hand, delinquency is very often associated with police brutality.

In *La Haine*, as in *Qu'Allah*, the diasporic protagonists are left without any parental guidance in a society where the only father figure is the police. Vincendeau, in her article on *La Haine*, substitutes the police with the term “bad fathers” (316). In *La Haine*, the diasporic protagonists from the *cité* Chanteloup-les-Vignes display a visceral hatred towards any form of authority. The similar feature also appears in *Qu'Allah* in which a heavy police presence fills the gap left by the missing father figure. For instance, the opening sequence of *Qu'Allah* portrays a clash between Régis’s group (Regis, Pascal, Samir, Rachid, and Mike) and the police. A close-up shot reveals four of the gang members (Regis, Samir, Rachid and Mike) walking down a street in Neuhof. A police patrol car approaches behind them, in the background. As soon as the friends notice the presence of the police behind them, they seem bothered. A shot-reverse shot combo unveils them looking at looking at one another and then at the police car. Suddenly, Rachid throws a rock at the police car and the whole gang runs away. The next shot reveals all four of them being arrested and put into the back of the police officers’ patrol car. This sequence clearly supports the conflicting relationship between the police and *banlieue* youth. Throwing a stone at the authority constitutes a way for Régis’s gang to delineate their territory (the *cité*) and to disapprove the police presence. Considering the similarities in *La Haine* and *Qu'Allah*, Kassovitz clearly had a huge influence on Malik to the extent that shot-composition, framing, and image scales appear identical in both films.

Although their similarities bring them closer in many ways, there is an important point that sets Malik’s film apart from *La Haine*: the theme of religion and the problematic of Islam in contemporary France. Even better, in addition to the mere periphery/center

opposition in *La Haine*, *Qu'Allah* portrays a third space which is the universal space. This space follows Deleuze and Guattari's anti hierarchical and rhizomic way of thinking (1448).<sup>86</sup> Fundamentally based on the notion of "becoming", their model emanates from the rhizome, a constant way of reinventing itself to reintegrate harmoniously into one's society. This integration implies movements of deterritorialization—stepping outside of the boundaries of France and the ruling order—and reterritorialization (returning to France) on behalf of the main diasporic protagonist Régis. Because it stretches outside of France, Malik's universal space diverges from his *cit * of Neuhof and Strasbourg-center. Malik's cinematic approach itself presents a solid case of accentscape. Similar to a bilingual individual who naturally adds a particular trait to the way he or she speaks a second language, Malik's *Qu'Allah* is arguably a carbon copy of Kassovitz's *La Haine* in many ways, yet with universal space as its particular trait of speaking. In the next section, I will discuss how Malik offers a universal space in his re-working of *La Haine*.

### **Obscurantist Islam in multicultural France: Malik proposes a universal space**

The issue of obscurantist Islam in France goes hand in hand with less fortunate communities (*banlieue* residents and immigrants) living in marginal space such as the *banlieue*, or the *cit *. Considering the *banlieues* as the result of an overstretch of France's main cities, it makes sense that they are often viewed as major urbanization issues by the well-off of French society. Therefore, in the context of the *banlieue*, the urban sprawl often implies a social relegation. Since 1981, many French governments have attempted to address the issue of the *banlieue* and have failed to come to an efficient resolution. At

---

<sup>86</sup> See page 124 of this dissertation for the initial discussion of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome.

worst, it seems that the precarious living conditions of certain *banlieues* have progressively deteriorated despite an unprecedented media attention.

The *banlieue* as a produced space resonates with Henri Lefebvre's triplicity of space. In his seminal work *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre reflects on how human groups in society contrive to produce their spaces, and how the actions of these groups disturb the balance of the ecosystems of their spaces (38). He then proposes a triad to help understand the three moments of social space: the spatial practice; the representations of space; and the representational space. Spatial practice refers to the perceived space, the practical basis of the perception of the outside world. It includes a close association between daily routine (everyday life) and urban reality (the routes and networks that connect the workplaces, private lives, and leisure activities). Secondly, representations of space constitute the dominant spaces in a given society because they refer to conceptualized spaces. These are the spaces created by the center, the spaces of the decision makers. They come from accumulated scientific knowledge, which makes them the spaces of the scientists, planners, urbanists, engineers, etc. who determine what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived. Finally, representational spaces are inclined to systems of non-verbal signs and symbols. They refer to "spaces as directly lived through its associated images and symbols," the spaces of inhabitants and users (39). Representational spaces go beyond physical spaces and are dominated by areas which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. Drawing from Lefebvre's three concepts of space, the *banlieue* portrayed as spatial practice (perceived space) in *Qu'Allah* indicates rundown working-class housing projects (*cités*) located on the periphery of larger French cities in which mostly African immigrants and their

descendants reside. On one hand, such perception of the *banlieue* evolves to a conceptualized space created by the media and state institutions which characterize the *banlieue* as a site of marginality, violence, exclusion, and radicalization. On the other hand, the *banlieue* considered as a representational or lived space by the diasporic protagonists (especially Régis), offers some prospective that challenges generalized preconceptions about the *banlieue* and its inhabitants.

Since the 1980s, a significant number of French city management projects have emerged, and this reinforces the vision of the *banlieue* as a conceived space created by the center or the decision-makers. Sociologist Renaud Epstein mentions a few methods among which the Jacobin and neo-conservative approaches appear in *Qu'Allah*.

According to Epstein, the Jacobin approach was conceived to provide uniformity to disadvantageous neighborhoods (3). In this approach, the State's main goal consists of eliminating local differences in order to achieve equality for all citizens and preserve the unity of the Republic. This explains why all the buildings that stretch out to the horizon in several panoramic shots of *Qu'Allah* look almost identical. In fact, Malik provides a metaphorical description of the working-class housing of his *cité* in his book that sheds light on the French state's Jacobin approach: "Nous étions tous hébergés dans des logements sociaux regroupés en tours et en barres interminables dont on rénouvait perpétuellement la façade. Je dis « presque tous » parce que la ville avait alloué à des Gitans sédentarisés, le Polygone, fatras improbable de baraquements délabrés" (15). [We were all housed in government working-class housing made of old towers and steel that needed constant renovation. I say "almost all of us" because the city had allocated the Polygon, a cluttered jumble of dilapidated homes, to the gypsies.] The term *la ville* (the

city) is used to reference the power of the State which is the initiator of the Jacobin policy. The main defect of this approach is that, by making all working-class housings identical, it isolates the peripheries from the main city or city-center (*le centre-ville*). In the film, during the sequence following Pascal's arrest, a wide shot unveils Régis fulminating on top of a roof while the housing estates endlessly stretch to the nocturnal background. As a result, Régis looks swallowed in the dark immense décor of the *cité*. Malik also puts an emphasis on the heights of the housing estates whose identical white facades are presented through panoramic shots and vertical or lateral travelling shots. Accentscapes here reside in Malik's insistence on the uniformity and the height of the housing estates in Neuhof which reinforces the idea of imprisonment.

In addition to impacts of the Jacobin approach, impacts of the neo-conservative policy are portrayed in *Qu'Allah*. This policy makes it appear as if the *banlieues* are warzones into which the Republic must send its law enforcement officers to restore order. To a certain extent, its main goal is to reconquer the territories of the Republic lost into the hands of radicalized delinquents and impulsive second-generation immigrants. Epstein uses the terms *caïds* (gang members) and *barbus* (the bearded ones) in reference to *banlieue* youth who supposedly infest major French cities because of their violent extremist behaviors. In the opening sequence of *Qu'Allah*, Malik places real footage depicting riots, arrests, and a strong police presence among shots of Régis and his group's encounter with the police and their arrest. This works as a clear illustration of French's state neo-conservative policy. Régis's group is presented as the *caïds* that spread terror through Neuhof and even in Strasbourg-center considering the numerous scenes in which they are involved in pickpocketing, robberies, and drug dealing. The term *caïd* itself

evokes an instance of accentscape in relation to the Maghreb because in their Arabic language, the word means “Arab military commander”. Characterizing Samir and Rachid as *caïds* of their *cit * recalls their Maghrebin origin. Likewise, Malik’s film alludes to the figure of the *barbu* through a consistent representation of Muslims and the Maghrebin community living in Neuhof. In fact, Samir represents the prototype of the *barbu* as he becomes radicalized toward the end of the film.<sup>87</sup>

The *banlieue*’s growing issues in France constitute a real challenge for the authorities to the extent that several recent governments have attempted to find a resolution. For instance, when Nicolas Sarkozy was serving his second term as the Minister of the Interior, under President Jacques Chirac, urban development policy heavily relied on a neo-conservative method. As the head of the Department of Homeland Security, Sarkozy used issues related to the *banlieue* for his own political agenda. Sarkozy used derogatory terms such as *racaille* (scum) or *nettoyer au K rcher*<sup>88</sup> (deep cleansing) in 2005 to describe young Muslim immigrants and *banlieue* residents following riots in the Parisian housing estates in Clichy-sous-Bois and Aulnay-Sous-Bois. As a result, there was further anger, riots, violence, and generalized protests reminiscent of May 1968 according to Craig Smith (1). In response to such violent riots, Sarkozy’s administration campaign pledged to restore order in the *banlieues*, considered territories the Republic had lost to violence, criminality, and illegal immigration. A recent case of France’s officials dealing with the issue of the *banlieues* is the *plan Espoir Banlieue* (The Hope-for-the-Banlieues

---

<sup>87</sup> Winding back twenty years earlier, in *La Haine*, Kassovitz first materializes the neo-conservative approach by showing scenes of riots in the *banlieue* of Chanteloup-les-Vignes. Because of his anger toward authority and law enforcement, Vinz, for instance, is a prototype of the *caïd*. An implementation of the Jacobin policy through the architecture of Chanteloup-les-Vignes is also suggested in *La Haine*.

<sup>88</sup> K rcher is a famous deep-cleaning product. According to Sarkozy, the housing estates in *La Cit  des 4000*, located in La Courneuve, need a deep cleaning with K rcher. (Neumann et al., 2007)

Plan) under President François Hollande, which was unsuccessful due to the extent of France's social fracture. In short, the rhetoric of France's officials is that *banlieues* have become a real threat to the integrity of sovereignty of the Republic. Epstein describes this threat as “ incarnée par les figures archétypiques des *caïds* et des *barbus*, les premiers faisant régner un ordre mafieux dans les quartiers, pendant que les seconds chercheraient à y imposer des normes communautaires et religieuses” (3). [[This threat is] incarnated by the archetype figures *caïds* and *barbus*, the former who govern the neighborhoods with a mafia-like order, and the latter who seek to impose religious and community norms there.]

One sequence in *Qu'Allah* is particularly effective in illustrating the French authorities' neo-conservative method when dealing with the *banlieues*. The police are conducting a search at the Mikano's apartment and the confined space becomes the scene of police brutality toward *banlieue* residents. Madame Mikano remains unseen because she is being held back by an officer, while a medium shot depicts her three sons violently immobilized on the floor. The search ends when all three boys are arrested because Régis's younger brother, Pascal, had smuggled a bag of drugs into their home. This sequence consequently demonstrates the firmness the State intends to use in order to regain control of the *banlieues*. Moreover, in this same scene, Madame Mikano remains unseen until the police leave with the boys and she follows. However, her presence is materialized by her panicked voice as the camera's focus remains on her immobilized sons. Chion calls this kind of temporary acting and talking shadow a visualized *acousmètre*.<sup>89</sup> In addition, because she is an accented protagonist and her voice wanders

---

<sup>89</sup> See page 26 of this dissertation.

the surface of the screen in this scene without immediately entering it, the viewer empathizes with her screaming, the pleading voice of a mother in distress, hence her accentscapes.

Evidently, the figures of the *barbu* and the *caïd* populate the *banlieue* portrayed in Malik's film. In fact, they are associated with Islamic practices and norms that are incompatible with French republicanism. Perpetrators of recent terrorist attacks in France such as Charlie Hebdo and the Bataclan in 2015 grew up in *banlieues* similar to Neuhof. In this respect, Gilles Bastian states that no environment in France generates as much fear and fantasy than *banlieues*. Because of that, numerous researchers in sociology have attempted to understand economic and political motivations, as well as the media hype that contributes to turning *banlieue* youth into the scapegoats of France's social issues. This resonates with Lefebvre's notion of conceived space. Because they are interconnected, discussions of Islam and the *banlieue* lead to a consideration of the role of Islam in French society from the prospective of Malik's film. Islam is the second largest religion in France behind Christianity (Cesari, 36). Despite its strong presence, it is unfortunately characterized by images of violence. It appears as if Islam is opposed to modernism and French secularism which make it look incompatible with French republicanism's insistence that immigrants and second-generation immigrants must adapt to norms established by the Republic (37). Among other resentments, some French people find issue with the visibility of Islam on the public sphere. In short, public appearance of religious signs violates the famous law of laicity voted in 1905. One sequence in *Qu'Allah* addresses the issue of public visibility in relation to Islam. When Régis first converts to Islam, he becomes radicalized and intolerant of anything else in

society that is not related to his obscurantist vision of the religion. In a key scene, his brother Bilal tells him that Islam is not just wearing Islamic garment and rejecting any relationship with non-Muslims. Considering Islam as an exclusive religion in the way that Régis and Samir practice it in the above-mentioned sequence, it seems as if Islam, unlike Christianity and Judaism, has failed to conform to the French law of laicity. For instance, recent issues involving Muslim women wearing their burkinis at public pools and beaches in France revived a public controversy about the visibility of Islam in the public sphere which started in 1989 with the headscarf debate.

Furthermore, another issue in relation to Islam that *Qu'Allah* addresses is the presence of multiple Muslim friaries in French *banlieues* which contribute to portray these communities as communitarians. On May 6, 2003 in Paris, Georges Sarre, spokesman for the *Mouvement républicain et citoyen* (Citizen and Republican Movement) in France highlighted the danger of fundamentalism and communitarianism. In his defense of secularism and republican values, Sarre states that, unlike republican citizenship, communitarianism reduces the individual subject to his/her ethnic or religious identity. While citizenship opens to the other, integrates common values, and unites in a collective project, communitarianism divides, opposes, and leads to racism and exclusion. In *Qu'Allah*, the sequence depicting Rachid's funeral echoes somehow with Sarre's definition of republican citizenship. While the presence of multi-ethnic characters shows unified *banlieue* residents gathered to pay their respects to Rachid, Malik uses an instance of on-screen typography as a supplementary mode of narration in one key shot. While his camera remains fixed on a group of men, several names of victims whose causes of death are related to stereotypes of the *banlieue* (violence, criminality, drugs, and prostitution)

appear on the screen. The names displayed in the one-screen typography also imply their religious affiliations: Christianity; Islam; and traditional religions. Thus, what begins as an Islamic funeral turns into a collective funeral representing a multicultural France. Neuhof's young residents, who prematurely lost their lives, join their voices together beyond the grave as soon as their names are transcribed on the screen. They are "...not yet seen, but [...] remain liable to appear in the visual field at any moment" yet another example of Chion's *acousmètre*.<sup>90</sup> This key, solitary, and on-screen typographical shot is a prime instance of accentscapes.

In view of the republican values highlighted in Sarre's speech, *Qu'Allah* also conveys the value of citizenship through Régis's journey. Born in a *banlieue* where precarious conditions predispose most of its youth inhabitants to failure in life, Régis uses education as a weapon to build his republican values which includes the acceptance of others despite their differences, as did Malik in reality. Despite being a descendant of an immigrant and a Muslim from the *banlieue*, Régis, like Malik, adopts the values of French republicanism by using his Sufi faith and his passion for music. Samir, on the other hand, develops the communitarian behaviors evoked by Sarre. This communitarian way of thinking goes hand in hand with obscurantist Islam in the *banlieue* portrayed by Malik. Obscurantist Islam is incompatible with the republican values and leads to extremism and fanaticism. As depicted in *Qu'Allah*, it relies on hate preaching in makeshift mosques and heinous attitudes toward non-Muslims and certain Muslim communities. It falls within the dark realm of fundamentally separatist Islamic practices. As presented in the film, obscurantist Islam thrives in an environment in which the young

---

<sup>90</sup> See page 26 of this dissertation for Chion's definition of *acousmètre*.

protagonists break ties with the values of the French Republic. In the opening sequence, for instance, a series of close-ups introduces Neuhof as a State-prioritized urban periphery with social issues such as illegal immigration, precariousness, unemployment, confinement, and criminality.

On the other hand, even though *Qu'Allah* portrays Neuhof as a site of fanaticism and obscurantism, Malik uses a cinematic rhetoric that allows a harmonious cohabitation between Islam and Christianity inside the Mikano's apartment. A masterful scene takes the viewer into the private space of the confined apartment. Régis wakes up to the sound of his alarm in the room he shares with his two brothers. The ringing of the alarm gradually merges with the voice of his brother, Bilal, reciting his morning Muslim prayer. A lateral travelling shot unveils iconographic figures such as posters depicting urban culture on the wall and books organized in shelves. A close-up reveals a Koran on the shelf and a painting of Jesus Christ on the wall. With this scene, Malik offers a symbolic representation of the two main religions of France. Despite the confinement, every resident of this apartment respects the religion of the others. Madame Mikano is Catholic, her elder son Bilal is Muslim, Régis is in the midst of a spiritual crisis, and Pascal does not seem to have any religious affiliation. Consequently, the various religious icons in the apartment resonate with Malik's universal space. In other words, Malik's ambition is to extend the harmonious religious cohabitation inside the apartment to all of France.

Furthermore, the segments of the film that best portray obscurantist Islam are those that are devoted to Régis's conversion to Islam and Samir's radicalization into a fundamentalist Muslim. Second-generation immigrants and French born youth often suffer from spiritual and religious instability because of the precarious conditions of the

*banlieue* environment, and partly due to the extent to which their parents are integrated into French society. Their religious convictions often indicate a reintegration of their family's religious tradition. Danièle Hervieu-Léger evokes the case of a young Muslim girl from an immigrant background who says that Islam was the religion of her parents, but in the last two or three years, it has become hers as well (8). In light of her statement, it appears that the reintegration of the family's religious tradition often aims at preserving a cultural heritage of the previous generation by their children. According to Cesari, first-generation Arab immigrants living in France often find themselves nostalgic for the customs of their countries of origin, and they often have the desire to bring their customary and religious practices to France (36). The protagonist Samir in *Qu'Allah* seems to maintain a close relationship with his parents' customs and religious practices. He adopts obscurantist Islam that tolerates no other religion in Neuhoef and believes it is his mission to enlighten the unbelievers. After spending some time with Samir, Régis indeed seems influenced by his radical beliefs: he refuses to shake hands with a female fan one day as he leaves the university. In several scenes, Samir is critical of the everyday life of his *banlieue* community members whose social practices he judges as *haram* (forbidden) or *halal* (permitted) according to his version of Islam. Samir even gives up his career as a rapper to devote himself entirely to Islam.

Regis's initiation trip to Morocco gives a new perspective to the film *Qu'Allah* as it broadens the film's notion of space. Malik's universal space stretches behind the boundaries of France. Its meaning is two-fold. First, it is a liberating space as opposed to the exotic hell created by the precarious conditions of Neuhoef and the insulting abundance of Strasbourg-center. Régis was indeed suffocating in the *banlieue*, which

Malik reveals when Régis is shown screaming on the top of the building, a result of his spiritual crisis. Secondly, Régis's journey to Morocco has a spiritual goal and the universal space represented by Morocco is lifesaving. The scene on the boat leaving for Morocco is dazzling: the sea light is in harmony with the vast space and symbolizes the voice of purity. Here, the boat itself is a liberating factor, resonating with Foucault's notion of the boat as heterotopia par excellence.<sup>91</sup> Consequently, the boat constitutes another floating space by which Malik reaches the most precious present: a spiritual maturity. This initiation journey also portrays the idea of being receptive to others despite the differences. Malik places great emphasis on the intensity of light and white color during this scene in order to show the acquisition of faith based on the love for others.

Despite the stereotypes linked to the presence of radical Islam in France, Islam is a religion of peace compatible with France's diversity. Malik's contribution to strengthening the ideals of the Republic is undeniable, and his commitment to finding a universal space helps him bring these ideals to the periphery and the city center, making him a voice for both. He demonstrates the possibility of originating from the *banlieue* and developing a love for the French Republic and its cultural artifacts, such as French literature. In the third and final film analyzed in this chapter, *L'Esquive*, I will discuss another film that demonstrates the love of French canonical texts within the space of the *banlieue*.

---

<sup>91</sup> See footnotes 47 on page 59 of this dissertation for a definition of heterotopia.

### **Bhabha's third space: From Marivaux's theatrical world to the *banlieue* of Saint-Denis**

In parallel with *Qu'Allah* and *Fatima*, Abdellatif Kéchiche's *L'Esquive* (2004) also depicts the life of diasporic protagonists living in the *banlieue*. The deterritorialization in this film is not dependent on the characters' physical movement as in the previous two films. Instead, *L'Esquive* is about rewriting an eighteenth-century French canonical play, *Le jeu de l'amour et du hasard*, by Pierre de Marivaux. In the *banlieue* represented in *L'Esquive*, the young protagonists use language in new ways to accomplish their journey of deterritorialization.

A Maghrebi-French director, Kéchiche's ambition in making *L'Esquive* was to rewrite a canonical play representative of high French culture. In Marivaux' play, Silvia, a young woman from the bourgeoisie, is engaged to marry Dorante, a young bourgeois man she has never met. She is afraid to marry him without knowing what type of man he is. Dorante is planning to visit her very soon to officialize their engagement, and Silvia develops a plan: she obtains her father, Monsieur Orgon's, permission to exchange roles with Lisette, her servant, in order to better observe her future husband. Meanwhile, Orgon receives a letter from Dorante's father explaining that his son intends to switch roles with his servant, Arlequin, in order to observe Silvia! Orgon, who sees this as an opportunity to play a game of love and chance, allowing the two youngsters to fall in love without consideration of their social statuses, decides not to tell his daughter of Dorante and Arlequin's switch. Happily, the play ends with the union of two couples: the young bourgeois, Silvia and Dorante; and Lisette and Arlequin, their respective servants.

This canonical French text conflicts with the marginal culture known to the *cité* represented in *l'Esquive*. This is illustrated by the teen protagonists' use of the language of their *cité* to enhance the dialogue of the play. By doing so, they set out to transform Marivaux's play with the marks of their community. Unlike *Fatima* which portrays a bilingual language community and its various uses of language among members of a family unit and in spaces outside of the community limits, *L'Esquive* presents a group of first-generation Maghrebi-French teenagers. They are primarily in the public space of their neighborhood and interact with one another in French slang. Despite the absence of speakers of an autonomous African language in *L'Esquive*, the group of teenagers constitute what Wenger defines as a "community of practice," which can constitute casual groups of people with a shared repertoire of communal practices, who interact or communicate regularly (qtd. in Romaine, 447). Two important elements in a bilingual community of practice are 1) ways of communicating and 2) passive competence in one of the two languages this community is supposed to understand.<sup>92</sup> These various characteristics of a community of practice are strongly present in *L'Esquive* because of the diasporic attributes of the young protagonists. One of the behaviors noted within a diasporic community is the gradual deprivation or complete loss of the original language of the parents prior to their displacement (Naficy, 24). As implicitly mentioned in the film through some brief references to the Maghreb, Frida, Krimo, and Rachid maintain a distant relationship with their parents' homelands, as does Souad in *Fatima*. Except Krimo's mother, who briefly intervenes in a few scenes, the protagonists' parents are not seen in *L'Esquive*. These young Maghrebi-French *banlieue* residents focus on their new

---

<sup>92</sup> Also see pages 6-8 and pages 21-22 of this dissertation.

country, which they intend to conquer by the means of an expressive sociolect: French slang.

Considering the linguistic habits of the teens in *L'Esquive*, what distinguishes the contemporary French of the *cit *, or French slang, from normative French is the shared repertoire of communal practices based on the vulgar nature of the urban sociolect, its hybridized and borrowed words and expressions from Arabic, and its intonations and prosodic variances. This serves various purposes. First, the verbal violence of the French slang supposedly reflects the stereotypes of violence and delinquency attached to the *banlieue*, from which Saint-Denis in *L'Esquive* is not exempt. To be respected by rival youth communities, a community of practice in the context of the *cit * must express itself in an aggressive way that linguistically demarcates its territory in the *banlieue*. Also, the way in which Frida, Lydia, and Krimo communicate represents a marker of cultural identity linked with the diversity of the population living in the *cit *. Despite being white, Lydia is a *banlieue* resident and part of the less fortunate of French society. With such a portrait, K chiche shifts away from the exclusive black and *beur* rhetoric of *banlieue* residents in French films depicting the inhabitants in the working-class projects. As a result, this puts a stress on how the language works in the film. From a linguistic standpoint, *L'Esquive* is monolingual. There are several borrowings from dialectal Arabic in the almost incomprehensible conversation between Frida, Lydia, and Hanen such as *bled*, *ca d*, *bougnoule* (an ethnic slur meaning raghead), and *Maboul* (That's insane!). Even viewers familiar with the francophone world find it difficult to follow the youths' various verbal altercations, which in terms of urban sociolect, are pushed beyond

comprehension. This indicates Kéchéche's intention to juxtapose the French slang of Saint-Denis to Marivaux's literary and refined text.

Certain concepts in postcolonial theory can shed light on the community portrayed in *L'Esquive*. First, the group of Maghrebi-French protagonists appropriates Marivaux's play, which is an artifact representing French culture. Bearing in mind that *banlieue* films are often dominated by criminality, delinquency, and precarity, including a canonical text representing the cultural values of the Republic in the film's narrative, is quite unprecedented. The appropriation of Marivaux's play by the protagonists can illustrate these two major characteristics—negation and negotiation—which Bhabha indicates as manifestations of his notion of third space in relation to postcolonial subjects' ambivalent articulation of their hybrid identities (37).<sup>93</sup> Because of this ambivalent process, diasporic subjects, on the one hand, often remain distant from cultural artifacts representing the high culture of their new country, like Souad in *Fatima*. On the other hand, they appropriate canonical works of their new countries and attempt to make them familiar with varying degrees of success, as in *L'Esquive*. In addition, descendants of once-colonized subjects often attempt to challenge colonial discourses in order to produce new modes of representation. As the youngsters rehearse for the play, they switch between their version of French slang and the classical theatrical language of Marivaux. By doing so, there are traces of accentscapes at the intersections of the various switches from one language to the other. For example, Krimo reveals his inabilities to incarnate the character of Arlequin through several linguistic lapses and/or linguistic residues of his original language during the rehearsal scenes. His diasporic dispositions are evoked

---

<sup>93</sup> See page 99 of this dissertation for a discussion of third space.

through his inability to correctly articulate Marivaux's play verses in the classroom rehearsal scene, while he reenacts Arlequin.

### **Krimo's broken enunciation in a rehearsal scene**

#### **Krimo as Arlequin.**

Enfin, ma reine, je vous vois et je ne [écart] vous quitte plus, car [écart] j'ai trop pâ-[écart]-ti d'avoir [écart] manqué de votre [écart] présence, et j'ai cru que vous [écart] esqui-[écart]-viez la mienne. Marivaux, Acte III, Scène VI.  
[Finally, my queen, I see you and I will no [lapse] longer leave you, be-[lapse]-cause I have suf-[lapse]-fered too much [lapse] away from your [lapse] presence and I believed that you were [lapse] avoid-[lapse]-ing mine.]

#### **Lydia as Lisette**

Non, non... (Lydia instructs Krimo to stop then gives him some performing advice).

Further, his failure to punctuate Marivaux's play lines as indicated in the original text astounded his teacher in the classroom rehearsal scene.

#### **Krimo as Arlequin** (mumbling inaudibly in front of his classmates).

Ah ! Madame, sans lui [écart] j'al-[écart]-lais vous dire de belles choses, et je n'en [écart] trouverai plus que de com[écart]-munes à cette heure, hormis mon amour [écart] qui est extraordinaire. Mais à propos de mon [écart] amour, quand est-ce [écart] que le vôtre lui tiendra compagnie?

[Ah! Madam, without him [lapse] I was [lapse] going to tell you beautiful things, and I will [lapse] find only common [lapse] ones at this hour,

except for my love [lapse] for you, which is extraordinary. But by the way  
of my [lapse] love, when will [lapse] yours feel likewise and hold me  
company?]

Significantly, there is a slippage between Krimo's intonation of his lines and Marivaux's original play. As a result, Krimo's interpretation of the play's verses produces an accentscape deriving from his Maghrebin origin as well as the linguistic habits of the *cit  *. Moreover, the group's sociolect features an incomprehensible intonation which can be noticed in Krimo's articulations of the lines. His teacher keeps insisting that he correctly articulate his lines and pause whenever the punctuation indicates to do so in the text. She even suggests that Krimo puts himself in Arlequin's shoes for a moment, which he is incapable of doing. This resonates with the moral of Marivaux's play, which is that we are conditioned by our home environment, and no one can escape their original social status. As a shy and quiet teen, Krimo remains introverted and unable to articulate his desires throughout the film.

Additionally, the postcolonial diasporic community in *L'Esquive* is presented as heterogeneous: Krimo and Frida represent the differentiation between postcolonial diasporic protagonists. Such differentiation could be related to the country of origin of their parents, the relationship they maintain with the language of their new country, and the linguistic stability in their respective family unit within the *banlieue*. On one hand, Krimo is portrayed as a silenced teenage boy with a low self-esteem, who often displays a sense of inferiority. During the outdoor rehearsal scenes, he is often unable to say a word while his counterpart female protagonists vibrantly exchange with each other. Furthermore, his inability to understand and formulate lines of the theatrical speech

makes him an outsider. In the classroom scenes, there is a predominance of normative French, in which most of the diasporic protagonists comply, mainly due to the formal atmosphere of the classroom and the lecture of the teacher. Krimo's nature as a daydreamer and a drifter is established in the first bedroom scene and later in the film. The wall of his bedroom is covered with drawings of a ship sailing on the sea.<sup>94</sup> Three successive close-ups reveal three of the eight drawings indicating the same pattern: blue sky, blue sea, and ships with orange sails. A similar drawing of a ship on the sea is seen on the wall in the background of the classroom performance scene later in the film. The link between the recurrent appearance of the sailing ship drawing and Krimo's drifting nature suggests a utopian subtext, referring to a distant homeland. The pictorial sea as presented in these drawings by Kéchiche draws on the representation of the sea in François Truffaut's *Les 400 Coups* (1959), which alludes to freedom and plenitude. Instead of a boy running toward the sea at the end of Truffaut's film, Kéchiche inserts drawings of a sea alluding to Krimo emotionally and linguistically running away from his language community, French society, and thus from languages. The evocation of the ship in the sea also acquires an allegorical meaning that can explain the itinerary of his parents' migration to France, or perhaps how he can escape his infernal condition in the *banlieue*. Because Krimo is mute, an accentscape is introduced by pictorial means representing his longing for this distant and unknown homeland. The title of the film *L'Esquive*, meaning "escape," "evade," or "dodge," justifies Krimo's elusive nature.

In addition, the Maghrebin homeland or the *bled* of the diasporic protagonists is never explicitly evoked in *L'Esquive*. The native homeland is portrayed from a position of

---

<sup>94</sup> It is suggested that these drawings were given to him by his father, who is in prison. When Krimo's mother goes to visit her husband, she brings the drawings home with her.

dislocation and absence. Krimo, as well as the viewers, are denied access to the aural appearance suggesting the homeland in the scene where he is memorizing Marivaux's play at home while an unseen radio receiver briefly plays an Arabic song. In the audio mix, the brief presence of the Arabic song is overpowered and dismissed by the clarity of the voice and dialogue of Krimo and his mother. This resonates with what Chion considers "sounds that are neither entirely inside nor clearly outside (of the screen), and [...] left to wander the surface of the screen" (1999: 4). In this scene, the brief Arabic song, not only articulates a specific case of accentscape by aural means, but also articulates the cultural dissociation between first-generation immigrant parents and their children born in France. While Krimo's mother certainly remains attached to traditional songs of her homeland, Krimo appears indifferent to this intimate moment and is busy memorizing the lines of Marivaux's play which he cannot properly pronounce. This scene also raises a question about the difference between memorizing words and appropriating or internalizing them. In particular, it falls in line with the idea that while first-generation immigrant parents express a feeling of attachment toward their homeland cultural values, their French born children express a feeling of detachment toward the *bled* and French culture, as in Krimo's case.

Another postcolonial diasporic protagonist in *L'Esquive*, Frida, is vocal, expressive and displays a high self-esteem. Unlike Krimo, she interacts in many kinds of ways within her community at school and in their *cité's* public spaces. She displays a thorough knowledge of the sociolinguistic norms operating within her community. Along with the other female members of her community, Frida's language use reflects Bakhtin's

heteroglossia.<sup>95</sup> While normative French is her language of interaction in the classroom scenes, she communicates with her friends in French slang within the limits of their *cit *. This sociolect is also the language used to direct the rehearsal of the play in the open air in their neighborhood. Instructions regarding the play are given by the teen performers and often the audience. Traces of Arabic appear in the teens' interactions during the first outdoor rehearsal scene involving Rachid and his friend Hanane as the audience members. When Hanane sees Lydia in her performance dress, she says twice: *Walai, elle est belle, Mabrouk* [I swear, this is beautiful. Congratulations] in a French-Arabic mix to express how beautiful she looks. This sentence begins with a clause in Arabic followed by a clause in French and ends with a word in Arabic.<sup>96</sup> This echoes with Tej K. Bathia and William C. Ritchie's definition of code-mixing which "refers to the mixing of various linguistic units (morphemes, words, modifiers, phrases, clauses, and sentences) primarily from two participating grammatical systems within a sentence. In other words, code-mixing is intra-sentential and is constrained by grammatical principles and may also be motivated by social psychological motivations" (376). Such an accentscape via code-mixing often intervenes during emotional outbursts like this one. Frida and Lydia, for instance, switch from their urban sociolect to Marivaux's literary speech as they cross borders between their real lives and Marivaux's theatrical world. They understand the function of code-mixing as their respective roles change from teens in Saint-Denis to actors performing an eighteenth-century play.

At crucial theatrical moments in the film, unlike the other teens, Krimo seems incapable of performing the appropriate switch from French slang to Marivaux's classical

---

<sup>95</sup> Bakhtin's definition of heteroglossia can be found on page 91 of this dissertation.

<sup>96</sup> *Walai*, and *mabrouk* are Arabic words, while *elle est belle* is in French.

language. In response to Lydia calling him out on his incomprehensible pronunciation and lack of punctuation between utterances in the role of Arlequin, he often claims: “Mais, c’est la même chose” [But, it’s the same thing]. For example, Krimo deforms Arlequin’s line in Act III, Scene VI: “Je voudrais bien pouvoir baiser ces petits mots-là, et les/cueillir sur votre bouche avec la mienne.” [I would much like to be able to kiss these little words, and to pick them from your mouth with mine]. He substitutes the formal noun “votre bouche” [your mouth] with the informal term “ta bouche”, thus creating a *coup de théâtre*. Krimo clearly is not bothered by his inability to articulate Arlequin’s lines eloquently. Frida, on the other hand, appears to thrive while impersonating her character, Sylvia. Whereas Frida is fully able to articulate her thoughts, Maghrebi-French Krimo is in a position of silence because Marivaux’s refined theatrical language does not express his interiority.

### **A Postcolonial rewriting of *Le jeu de l’amour et du hasard***

Among all its important features, Marivaux’s signature use of magnified language is his most striking characteristic. He demonstrates a subtle and sincere use of language which allows the readers to apprehend the characters beyond their misleading and delusive appearances. From one act to another, as the actors’ language evokes the eighteenth century, it divulges the characters’ true social conditions. Dorante and Silvia speak as if in an eighteenth-century “salon”, while Lisette and Arlequin sound like eighteenth-century peasants. Most importantly, the language in the play plays a dual role of communicating self-awareness and expressing one’s feelings. Marivaux was a language expert. His dichotomic language in *Le jeu de l’amour et du hasard* functions to reveal the exterior and the interior of his characters. Language exposes everything: from

the social condition of his characters to their innermost feelings. When the action of the play becomes psychological, the dialogue becomes the main provider of meaning. It either accelerates the rhythm or slows the pace. For instance, the dialogue between Silvia and Lisette in the first scene of Act I reveals the relationship between these two regardless of their social conditions, that the former is the member of the bourgeois and the latter is the servant. Far from contrasting with Marivaux's eighteenth-century skilled and astute language, Krimo's inarticulate speaking style and Lydia's inexhaustive French slang indeed share some similar linguistic functions. Just as Marivaux's characters progressively betray themselves by means of language, Kéchiche's protagonists in *L'Esquive* give their social identities away by their chosen way of communication.

Furthermore, the concept of "minor literature" as defined by Deleuze and Guattari, sheds light on Kéchiche's postcolonial and diasporic rewriting of this canonical play representing France's high culture. Minor literature, they say: "...does not come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language" (16). *Le jeu de l'amour et du hasard* is considered a major work of French literature and the ambition of Kéchiche to rewrite its theatrical discourse by means of its performance by diasporic French-born protagonists highly transforms its language. Not only do the diasporic protagonists appropriate Marivaux's language by performing the play in its literary substance, but they graft their minority Maghrebin identities into the play during the various rehearsal sessions. Deleuze and Guattari note three characteristics of minor literature that resonate with Kéchiche's appropriation of Marivaux's play: "the deterritorialization of the language; the connection of the individual to political immediacy; and the collective assemblage of enunciation" (18). Just as, Czech Jewish

authors from Prague write in German, or Ouzbekans write in Russian, the Maghrebi-French director of *L'Esquive* makes his film entirely in French with a high coefficient of deterritorialization. In other words, the film's language use switches from Marivaux's classical language to normative French or from theatrical formal French to French slang. Traces of Arabic and the influence of the diasporic Maghrebin protagonists refer to Kéchiche's Tunisian accentscapes.

The first instance of deterritorialization occurs at the level of artistic genre. Constantly, *L'Esquive* switches back and forth from a eighteenth-century play performance to a *banlieue* film, challenging the elitist values of Marivaux's play with the popular values of the *banlieue*. For instance, when Krimeo replaces the formal "your" of *votre bouche*—your mouth, with the informal *ta bouche*, or when Marivaux's theatrical language is transformed into a language accessible to those in the *cit e*. K echiche puts side by side Marivaux's subtle, meticulous, and flattering language and the straightforward youth sociolect, mirroring from the metropole of central Paris to the city's outskirts in Saint-Denis. Thus, Marivaux's original text is not deformed during the performances by the young Parisians, except for Krimeo. The theatrical language that they use to direct the play is stripped of its grammatical rigor and grace becoming an aggressive urban language of confrontation. The last case of deterritorialization resides with the implicit displacement of the diasporic protagonists in the film who move from the Maghreb to France. Because they maintain a distant relationship with the original language of their parents, they engage in the here-and-now of their new home by interacting in French slang as well as the formal French of Marivaux, which they are required to memorize.

They become nomads and gypsies in relation to their parents' language and to standard French.

Deleuze and Guattari's second characteristic of minor literature is that it is political. Unlike major literature, which is often concerned with the subjects' personal experiences, for example, marriage, family dramas, or work-related issues, all the individual intrigues in minor literature can be interpreted as being immediately connected to politics. With precisely this in mind, it is important to look at the juxtaposition of the two artistic forms (film and theater) in *L'Esquive*, and how the diasporic community and their use of urban sociolect relegate Marivaux's play to the background of the narrative. As a result, the social issues and political themes of delinquency, social inheritance, and integration in relation to the marginal young protagonists are moved to the foreground. Similar to Silvia's long tirades in *Le Jeu de l'Amour et du Hasard*, the young female protagonists communicate in an aggressive and inexhaustible manner. For instance, Lydia is a well-known extravert who always speaks her mind, and Frida's words invariably erupt in every scene in which she intervenes. In the first outdoor rehearsal scene, Lydia endures Frida's anger, because she brought Krimo to rehearsal. Frida explodes, unleashing all her anger onto Lydia. She uses profanity and a lengthy exchange commences all because Lydia brought an outsider into their rehearsal. This vibrant argument eclipses Marivaux's play, pushing it to the background. Kéchiche further captures the emotion of the tense situation by a series of several close-up shots. The camera work in the sequence is something to note, as the extreme close-ups of Frida, Lydia, and Krimo's faces add to the tension and sense of the fight between the two young women. For instance, several times in this scene, the camera moves from an extreme close-up shot of Frida's violent outburst

to a reverse close-up shot of Lydia harshly responding. Then, Kéchéche includes a close-up of Krimo's anxious face who remains silent, and a medium shot of Hanane and Rachid who are attempting to calm down their angry friends. The speed of the dispute makes it difficult for the audience to understand what is happening during this verbal altercation. The camera's frantic moving cuts and the rage of the two female voices add to the sensory overload of violence. The audience can only catch its breath for brief instances, when Kéchéche inserts a static close-up shot of Krimo's mute face in-between the agitated shots of Frida and Lydia.

Deleuze and Guattari's third characteristic of minor literature, the "collective assemblage of enunciation," is reflected through the collective value of the sociolinguistic norms within the adolescents' community. With a common sense of belonging and a perceived solidarity that bind the diasporic protagonists together in mutual engagement, Lydia, Frida, Nanou, Magali, Rachid, and Krimo experience deterritorialization as they move between Marivaux's formal language and their sociolect. In a revolutionary fashion, their style of French slang appears as a political means to make oneself heard by the dominant culture and authorities. The *banlieue* sociolect, thus, functions like the political activism of Deleuzian minor literatures. The slang's often-indecipherable nature, even for a francophone viewer, indeed politicizes cinematic sound itself: Chion describes sound in cinema as "the element that is seeking its place" (1984: 91). The language and accentscapes of these minor characters are also seeking their place.

This is significantly clear in the rehearsal scenes that take place outdoors. In the private rehearsal scene of Act III, scene IV of Marivaux's play, Lydia realizes that Krimo has absolutely no talent for theatrical performance. So, she decides to give him some

advice. She shows him how to negotiate his entry onto the stage and how to properly occupy the space. She enacts the way Arlequin stands and moves on the stage as indicated in the play. She then shows Krimo how to properly articulate his lines. After several attempts, Krimo continues to botch his stage entry and cannot properly articulate even his first line of dialogue. He awkwardly murmurs: “Finally, my queen, I see you and I will no longer leave you, because I have suffered too much away from your presence and I believed that you were avoiding mine” (Marivaux 2015: 67). Refusing to be discouraged, Lydia instructs Krimo to “enter the skin of Arlequin.” Most importantly, she repeatedly asks him not to denature the original text when Krimo inadvertently changes words in the verses. The most striking element in this scene is that Kéchiche refocuses the viewer’s attention, not on Marivaux’s text, but on the process of directing the play. In their urban sociolect, Lydia proceeds in a didactic manner to correct Krimo’s mistakes. This illustration reveals to what extent Kéchiche’s aesthetic approach to a sociolect and displaced voices moves Marivaux’s play to the background. It seems indeed that he is less interested in Marivaux’s play and more focused on how the protagonists translate it, absorb it, and thus deterritorialize it. So, it is the process of deterritorializing the play, which they must do, in order to perform it. In this regard, Kéchiche’s postcolonial rewriting of Marivaux’s play echoes with Bhabha’s notion of third space, which is a contradictory and ambivalent space representing sets of values of both the former-colonizer and the post-colonial subject in a multicultural society.<sup>97</sup> So, the sociolinguistic norms operating within such a community move to the foreground as a means of

---

<sup>97</sup> See page 99 of this dissertation for a discussion of third space.

questioning French literary traditions and their fixed notions of social inheritance and identity.

## **Conclusion**

As I am writing this conclusion, all the countries of the world are facing an unprecedented pandemic known as COVID-19, a form of coronavirus. The United States and the rest of the world has been trying to hold off this disease with measures ranging from health screenings at airports to restrictions on travelers from China, Italy, and Spain, among other countries, testing centers for the virus, self-quarantine, isolation, and stay-at-home orders. It affects everyone, but the working class, who live in cities and cannot work from home are harder hit. The new universal rule is now social distancing and long hours of recommended confinement for those who have been infected. In terms of mobility, there are some similarities between the current state of our lives in limbo due to the spread of the disease and the lack of mobility in the lives of the numerous protagonists discussed in the films of this study. Indeed, it is worth noting that confined spaces and feelings of estrangement are notions that abound in the narratives of the films analyzed here. When we fight against a disease that invades our public spaces, affects lungs and airways, and can quickly spread from person to person, it challenges us to rethink the ways that we move in and use public spaces, and how we can create a healthy environment around us. Just as COVID-19 dictates our daily movements and changes the ways we accomplish our social and professional activities, we are living in liminal spaces, transitional spaces, out-of-body states, and waiting spaces like most of the characters in the films discussed. Although film studies provide the core of this research project on francophone African immigrants living in France and their accentscapes, its objectives and implications are far broader. This is because it recognizes that films are informed by and reflect the socio-political climate and environments that surround us. What it teaches us is that everyone, at some point, experiences spaces of

liminality. COVID-19 constrains us today in liminal spaces (airports, cruise ships, hospitals...) and in a collective state of waiting (houses, apartments, ...). For the migrants and immigrants in this study, this reality defines their lives.

### **Accentscapes, initiation, and maritime journeys**

One of the most intriguing features of the films analyzed here is that they contain transitional spaces and places in their narratives. As the protagonists cross many borders and engage in many journeys, they spend long periods of time in transitional spaces. These liminal spaces are borders, seaports, airports, and vehicles of mobility such as cars, buses, trains, and boats. Because these spaces are characterized by the lack of freedom, lack of access to vital items in life such housing and proper food, and the sense of exclusion, they constitute privileged sites of accentscapes. The liminal spaces that emerge from the films of this study can be organized into three groups. First, there are fixed transitional places such as airports (*Amin* and *Moi et mon Blanc*), seaports (*Adama*), and train stations (*Paris mon Paradis*). Second, *Fatima*, *Amin*, *Le Point de Vue du Lion*, *L'Esquive* and *The African Doctor* all contain numerous instances of mobile transitional spaces such as cars, busses, trains, and boats. Lastly, *Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!*, *Adama*, and *L'Esquive* suggest symbolic transitional spaces such as spaces of initiation and memories of distant homelands.

Maritime journeys in this study, which feature transitional spaces, are presented in two modes. On the one hand, they are materialized by long journeys in boats that begin on the coasts of the main protagonists' African homelands. The journeyers often do not get to their destination, which is Europe or France, due to strict border policing. In *Le Point de Vue du Lion*, Tunisian, Algerian, and Morocco coastlines constitute the fixed transitional

spaces in which the displaced subjects wait for an opportunity to enter Europe by illegal means. The oppressing force in this film is usually in the form of French political leaders,<sup>98</sup> and an overwhelming feeling of nostalgia and loss that the migrants constantly feel. Another example is *Paris mon Paradis* where the exilic protagonists find themselves in a state of homelessness in Paris. The agents of power that appear in both *Le Point de Vue du Lion* and *Paris mon Paradis* are, in several cases, Western nations, migration control officers, and restrictive immigration laws. It is worth noting that these two films are both documentaries and all displaced subjects involved are exilic characters. The documentary mode seems here more effective for the filmmakers to achieve the postcolonial goal of revaluing voice, and the agency of those formerly colonized. In these films, the directors make strong political statements about immigration and expose the injustice experienced by the migrants and immigrants they interview. Very often, the main motif that leads the protagonists to leave their homelands is that they have lost faith in the homelands' institutions due to political ineptitude and corruption. *Adama*, the only animated film of this study, fits into this group of films because it depicts a journey from Africa to France. I argue that *Adama*, unlike the two examples above, follows the format of a great myth because it intertwines fantasy and realism, and includes a three-part journey of departure, initiation, and return. This film goes back in time to the colonial era in West Africa, recreating an authentic African ethnic group which remains organic despite the presence of the colonizing forces in the region.

On the other hand, maritime journeys in this study involve diasporic protagonists as they cross many borders and engage in home-seeking journeys, journeys of

---

<sup>98</sup> For example, former French president Nicolas Sarkozy's notion of "immigration choisie" (immigration by choice). See footnote 59 on page 75 of this dissertation.

homelessness, and homecoming journeys. Often, these borders are not just physical, but they are also psychological, cognitive, and metaphorical. Whereas exilic protagonists (*Le Point de Vue du Lion*, *Paris mon Paradis*, *Adama*, and *The African Doctor*) tend to migrate from Africa to France in search of better living conditions and opportunities, the diasporic protagonists in *L'Esquive* and *Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!* initiate the reverse north-to-south trip, which is considered a homecoming journey. They deterritorialize from France and embark in homecoming journeys in order to recover and heal from the alienation of the Western world. For instance, in Kéchiche's *L'Esquive*, a maritime metaphorical journey is suggested through the recurrent drawings of a ship sailing on a sea. This alludes to Krimo imagining a return to the homeland. Krimo feels alienated in the *cit * and longs for this distant and unknown homeland. Similarly, the diasporic protagonist, R gis, in *Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!* initiates a physical return to the homeland on a boat. The scene illustrating his departure for Morocco contains a wide-open space of the sea and a moving boat. This contrasts with the claustrophobic environment of his Alsatian *cit *, Neuhof. A pan shot reveals R gis standing on the deck with his arms wide-open as if he is flying, suggesting a feeling of freedom and plenitude.

Another important characteristic of the films analyzed here is the recurrent use of initiation as a liminal space. In *Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!*, the main protagonist transitions from Christianity to radical Islam. He then finally discovers Sufism, a peaceful Islam, which leads him to embark on his journey to Morocco where he learns Sufi values. Another example of initiation is *L'Esquive*, in which a group of teens, mostly North African descendants, are initiated to Marivaux's canonical text representing the cultural values of the French Republic. Furthermore, initiation in Rouby's *Adama* is presented as

a liminal space. As Nazi Boni shows in his chronicle *Crépuscule des Temps Anciens* (1962), an initiation rite is an important social practice in a traditional African society. It constitutes a transitional stage during which a child transitions to a man in order to integrate himself into the men's social group. More than mere décor, the battlefield of Verdun is an initiation space in *Adama* and is essential for the transformation of Samba. As he witnesses the horror of the war, he is initiated into manhood by the spirits of his village. This opens his eyes to the imperialist and destructive nature of Western civilization.

### **Accentscapes: Foucault, Lefebvre, and De Certeau's notions of space**

In literature on space, the above observations on maritime and initiation journeys as liminal spaces pertain to the notion of accentscapes in relation to Michel Foucault's heterotopia.<sup>99</sup> In many ways, accentscapes are heterotopic. First, they constitute counter-spaces because they challenge hegemonic cinematic practices by aesthetically and strategically using the actors' ethnicities, first-person narration, voice-over narration, and fragmented, lyrical, and emotive narrative structures to highlight the accented pronunciation. Secondly, accentscapes are imagined linguistic spaces that the displaced exilic, diasporic, and ethnic minority protagonists create while abroad to replace the homelands from which they have been separated.

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre reflects on how human groups in society contrive to produce their space. He elaborates several possible approaches based on disciplines such as history, ecology, architecture, and economy (38).<sup>100</sup> In a capitalist society, for instance, an ecological approach of how groups produce their space needs to

---

<sup>99</sup> See footnote 47 on page 59 of this dissertation.

<sup>100</sup> See page 163 of this dissertation.

start by considering the natural ecosystems surrounding them. Then, it needs to consider how the actions of these human groups might disturb the balance of these ecosystems. Lefebvre then proposes a triad to help understand the three moments of social space: spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space. According to Lefebvre, spatial practice refers to perceived space, the practical basis of the perception of the outside world. It includes a close association between daily routine and urban reality, i.e. the routes and networks that connect the workplace, private life, and leisure activities.

Lefebvre's spatial triad can shed light on how space is represented in the films of this study. First, the perceived space is expressed through the way that the exilic, diasporic, or postcolonial journeyers are perceived. In *Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!*, and *L'Esquive*, the diasporic young protagonists, respectively living in the working-class housing of Neuhof-Strasbourg and Saint-Denis-Paris, are arguably portrayed as delinquents and criminals to reflect the marginal social space in which they inhabit - the  *cité*  or the  *banlieue* .

Moreover, Lefebvre's representational spaces come the closest to what we mean by accentscapes in the films mentioned above. A representational space reflects one's own experience. In this respect, Lefebvre states that "the heart as lived is strangely different from the heart as thought and perceived" (40). Misrepresented, stereotyped, and stigmatized along their exilic, diasporic, or postcolonial identity journeys, the displaced subjects in these films construct a representational space in their host countries which fits them best. They create a site of resistance in which a variety of accents intervene to single them out from hegemonic representations. This site of resistance echoes Bhabha's

notion of third space.<sup>101</sup> It is precisely in this accented third space, this site of linguistic resistance, that accentscape emerges.

Further, Lefebvre's spatial triad is somehow in line with De Certeau's definition of space as a social practice. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, De Certeau contrasts *espace* (space) to *lieu* (place) in an attempt to better define these two similar but different notions. As we recall from Chapter three, De Certeau's, "space is composed of intersections of mobile elements [... In contrast] to place, it has thus none of the univocity or stability of a proper" (117).<sup>102</sup> Place must be considered according to the established relations that it maintains with the elements that coexist in it. A place is thus an instantaneous configuration of positions. It implies an indication of stability. This implies that whereas space is characterized by the mobility of the elements that coexist in it, place becomes space once there is an action of mobility involving the use of the bodies of the members of a group or society (for example, the gestures of working or walking...). In other words, a space is a place that constantly changes due to social practices involving the mobility of the members of a given society. De Certeau argues that "space is a practiced place", which is equivalent to Lefebvre's "spatial practice." Lefebvre thinks that the spatial and social practices of modern society contribute to decipher its space. In a similar fashion, he thinks that, as everyday life runs its course in modern cities, as the walkers constantly find themselves in motion, they change the streets (places) defined by urban planners into spaces by their perpetual movements. They lack places, so they constantly move through spaces in their quest for a proper place. De Certeau adds that "to walk is to lack a place. It is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a

---

<sup>101</sup> See page 99 of this dissertation for a discussion of third space.

<sup>102</sup> Also see page 122 of this dissertation.

proper” (103). For De Certeau, a place is a segment that people imbue with special meaning and value. Whereas his notion of place is stable, space is unstable. As the exilic and postcolonial subjects cross many boundaries in their host countries throughout their quest for a better life, they drag their accents along with them. This marker of otherness that follows them in their journeys, sometimes to their advantage and sometimes to their detriment, expresses accentscape.

**Closed chronotope: a cinematic space for accentscape (Accentscapes in cars, buses, and trains)**

A peculiar feature in most of the films in this discussion is that they depict mobile transitional spaces and symbols of displacement in both the hostland and the homeland. The most striking characteristic of these mobile transitional spaces is that accentscapes erupt at precise moments during emotional outbursts when the protagonists seem challenged by the difficulties of their lives. Claustrophobia prevails in the shot composition, mise-en-scene, and narratives of films that portray transportation of a group of people in exile. In *Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!*, Régis and his friends are arrested by the police, and in addition to the brutality they face, the phobic space in the confined police station increases their discomfort and estrangement. In *Amin*, there are numerous scenes in which the protagonist goes to work in his company's small vehicles. Similarly, in *Fatima*, the exilic protagonist waits every night for the cleaning company minivan to pick her up. Since these vehicles travel through large cities, crowded urban spaces, and include long periods of waiting at train or bus stations, they are instances of alienation during which accentscapes appear. In addition, sequences featuring trips in personal vehicles present moments of emotional meltdown. Whereas Souad and Nesrine each cry

in the cars taking them home in *Fatima*, Régis's uncle lectures his nephews in his car after bailing them out of jail in *Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!*. On the other hand, the open chronotope of the scenes depicting mobile vehicles in the homeland suggests freedom and happiness. Since these vehicles travel through the countryside and wide-open spaces, they suggest a harmonious relationship between the inside closed space of the vehicles and the outside open space of the verdant nature.

### **Accentscapes: Others, Outsiders, and creating communities and communal identifications**

In this study, I have attempted to show how a selected body of contemporary French and francophone sub-Saharan films address contemporary issues regarding immigration to France, and how accentscapes appear in the narratives of these films. I define accentscapes as the symbolic landscapes created by the speakers' displaced voices and the variation of pronunciation of his/her language in a situation of exile. In addition, because the displaced protagonists in the films deal with constant movements in their journeys, whether local or global, national or transnational, physical or emotional, they evoke accentscapes through the accented voices or speeches that transform the places they occupy. This notion of accentscape is stressed in *The African Doctor* by the Congolese accents of Zantoko and his family who move to a rural French village. This film includes a strong use of French and Lingala in a local French community. Another example, *Moi et mon Blanc* exposes a juxtaposition of journeys involving the two main protagonists, Mamadi and Franck, as well as a juxtaposition of accentscapes. As Mamadi embarks on a journey from his homeland, Burkina Faso, to France to complete a

doctorate in international law at the Sorbonne, his white counterpart Franck goes on a reverse journey from France to Burkina Faso to escape the wrath of drug dealers.

Furthermore, I argue that since the independence era, African francophone filmmakers use fiction films to make political critiques. Today, contemporary fiction films are still political at times, but they more subtly present injustices, racism, and xenophobia in relation to African immigrants living in France. Filmmakers who wish to make strong political statements about immigration and expose the injustice towards these marginalized groups have thus turned towards documentaries. In the three documentaries of this study, *Nous, sans-papiers de France*, *Paris mon Paradis*, and *Le Point de Vue du Lion*, accentscapes function as counter hegemonic discourses against negative perceptions of the postcolonial immigrants.

From a postcolonial standpoint, accentscapes in the films of this study manifest themselves through accented speeches, voices, noises, or the music of or about the displaced characters, which, in return, evoke the cultural traits of the specific African ethnic group from which they departed. Accentscapes also indicate the linguistic transformations made to the hegemonic language which serves as a linguistic model in these films. So, accented speeches become a means of expressing the otherness of the displaced characters when they seize the hegemonic language and replace it in a discourse adapted to their homelands' distinctive cultural qualities.

Lastly, I propose that discussing these films in terms of accentscapes becomes a way of avoiding rigid categorizations such as exilic versus diasporic, or identity versus postcolonial, which are based on where the filmmakers were born, made their films, or

situated their films. Indeed, all of the films in this study, no matter their conditions or places of production, or the community they feature, demonstrate accentscapes.

## Appendix

### Summaries of films in Chapter One

#### ***Paris mon Paradis* (Eléonore Yaméogo, 2011)**

In her first feature documentary, *Paris mon paradis*, Eléonore Yaméogo, highlights the stories of numerous immigrants from francophone West Africa who moved to France in search of a paradise. The disillusionment these young Africans face when they arrive in Paris and other major French cities is devastating. For the first time in their lives, they face the physical discomforts of going to bed hungry and sleeping in the streets. The film emphasizes their emotional testimonies, and the tireless struggles that characterizes their new lives: the inability to find housing; the reality of unemployment; the loss of cultural references; and their hopes to return home. *Paris mon Paradis* questions the gap between the fulfilled dreams of the luckiest immigrants and the disenchantment of the others.

#### ***Le Point de Vue du Lion* (Didier Awadi, 2011)**

Based on real interviews, which took place between 2006 and 2010, this film conveys its message through metaphor, using a well-known African proverb: “Until lions have their own historians, hunting stories can only sing the glory of the hunter.” Africans are likened to the hunted and voiceless lions, as the film depicts how their history has been silenced by the domination by their former colonial powers (i.e. the hunters and the historians) in currency, military bases, and multinational companies. Through an array of interviews about the true causes of the migration problem, Awadi presents two opposed viewpoints: that of Westerners who argue that the “invasion” of African migrants is destroying Europe; and that of Africans who claim that Africa is not poor but impoverished as a result of the Westerners’ actions. The film reveals its director’s pan

Africanists ambition by including images of the anti-imperialist speeches of Thomas Sankara (from Burkina Faso), Patrice Lumumba (from the Democratic Republic of Congo), and Kwamé N'krumah (from Ghana). Awadi proposes African unity as a solution to the migration crisis.

***Nous, sans-papiers de France* (Nicolas Philibert et al., 1997)**

*Nous, sans-papiers de France* is a three-minute short film featuring Madjiguène Cissé, a well-known figure of the *sans-papier* movement, reading the movement's manifesto that was originally published in the French daily newspaper, *Libération*, on 25 February 1997. In a single take, Cissé is seen in close-up articulating the text in her accented speech. We learn, through her reading, how many *sans-papiers* arrive in France by legal means and arbitrarily become illegal as a result of repressive legislation.

**Summaries of films in Chapter Two**

***Fatima* (Philippe Faucon, 2015)**

Fatima is an Algerian immigrant who lives with her two daughters, Souad and Nesrine, in a working-class housing project in Lyon. Whereas Fatima frequently argues with 15-year old Souad, a teenager in revolt, she and 18-year old Nesrine, who is just beginning medical school, get along very well. To make a living, Fatima works as a cleaning woman at night. She speaks French poorly, and is constantly frustrated by her inability to fully communicate with the local French people she meets in the public sphere. Fatima's principle purpose in life is to ensure that her daughters have the best possible future in France. Unfortunately, one day, she falls on the stairs at work and is forced to take a break from her fast-paced, work-filled routine. While on medical leave,

Fatima begins to write about her experiences and feelings in Arabic. This exercise liberates Fatima to express what she is unable to articulate in French.

**Amin (Philippe Faucon, 2018)**

Amin is a Senegalese immigrant who has been living in Saint-Denis, France for over fifteen years when the film begins. He works on a construction site to support his wife Aïcha and their three children who still live in Senegal. Although Amin sends money home regularly, visits during his vacations, and always arrives with numerous gifts, his wife is unsatisfied with this way of life. Aïcha would like the family to move to France together, but Amin is against the idea. His life in France revolves around long hours at work and jovial communal gatherings with other African immigrants with whom he lives in a working-class housing project. One day, Amin meets a divorced French woman and develops a sexual relationship with her. The woman's daughter disapproves of their relationship, and even Aïcha notices that something has changed between her and her husband. Despite the French woman's attachment to Amin, the film ends as Amin is beginning the construction of a new house in Senegal, revealing his intention of returning to his homeland in the near future.

**Summaries of films in Chapter Three**

***Adama* (Simon Rouby, 2015)**

From a fictional yet scenic village naturally protected by a magnificent mountain range and somewhere in Northern Senegal, the child-hero of this story, Adama, initiates a long journey that leads him to the bloody battlefield of Verdun, France during World War I. Adama's adventure includes the three-part sequence of departure, initiation, and return found in all of the world's great myths. He leaves his secure and safe homeland in

response to an undeniable call: to save his brother who has been recruited by the French army as a Senegalese rifleman. First braving the treacheries of the ocean on a recruitment ship, then surviving the horror of the battlefield during the Great War, Adama successfully accomplishes his quest and returns home with his brother Samba by the end of the film.

***Qu'Allah Bénisse la France ! (Abd al Malik, 2014)***

*Qu'Allah Bénisse la France!* is an adaptation of Abd al Malik's eponymous book based on his real-life experiences. Regis (Abd al Malik) is a culturally gifted boy who dreams of success for his rap band, but he must accept drug money for the sake of his project. Discovering Islam and finding love along the way, he bears with the harsh loss and paybacks of delinquency, until he finds the strength to express himself through music and slam-poetry and ultimately becomes a major artist on the French music scene.

***L'Esquive (Abdellatif Kéchiche, 2004)***

In *L'Esquive*, a group of young Parisians from the *banlieue* are rehearsing for an upcoming school performance of *Le jeu de l'amour et du hasard* in their neighborhood. Krime is a young evasive and taciturn boy in the midst of teenage angst. In love with Lydia, he decides to replace his friend Rachid as the character Arlequin in the play, to get close to Lydia who is playing Lisette. However, his plan backfires. At the worst moment, Krime tells Lydia of his love and his desire to go out with her. His ex-girlfriend Magali is furious, and the stubborn Lydia finds herself in a complicated situation. In addition, Krime's shyness and clumsiness prevent him from playing the role of Arlequin with any success. In short, by opening his own Pandora's box, Krime fails in playing Arlequin and

further isolates himself. Rachid finally takes back his role as Arlequin and the play is a success.

### **Summaries of other frequently referenced films**

#### ***Moi et mon Blanc* (S. Pierre Yaméogo, 2003)**

Mamadi is a doctoral student from Burkina Faso who studies political science at the Sorbonne with the help of a stipend from his home government. When the governments of several West African countries discontinue the stipends, Mamadi can no longer pay his rent and is thrown out of the boarding house where he lives. With the help of an older cousin, he finds a job at a parking garage. One day at work, Mamadi finds a bag full of money and cocaine left behind by two drug dealers, who were chased out of the garage during a false alarm. When the dealers return for the money, they threaten Mamadi who turns to his French colleague, Franck, for assistance. Franck and Mamadi decide to keep the money, but pursued by the dealers, they have no choice but to flee France and escape to Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, where they establish and start a new life.

#### ***The African Doctor* (Julien Rambaldi, 2016)**

Seyolo Zantoko, a newly graduated doctor from Congo, longs to escape from the government of dictatorship in his homeland. He finds a job in a small rural village, Marly-Gomont, in the north of France and moves there with his wife and young children. The locals, who have never been in contact with African people, do not trust Seyolo and his family. The Africans struggle to integrate into this new life, but Seyolo is determined to win the villagers' trust. He eventually succeeds and in the end is considered one of the most respected doctors in the area.

## WORKS CITED AND CONSULTED

- Les 400 Coups*. Directed by François Truffaut, Performances by Jean-Pierre Léaud, Albert Rémy and Claire Maurier, Les Films du Carrosse, 1959.
- The African Doctor*. Directed by Rambaldi, Julien. Performances by Marc Zinga, Aissa Maiga, Bayron Lebli, Médina Diarra. Prod. E.D.I Films, Curiosa Films, Moana Films, 2016.
- Afrique sur Seine*. Directed by Paulin Soumanou Vieyra, and Mamadou Sarr, performances by Paulin Soumanou Vieyra, Mamadou Sarr, Marpessa Dawn and Annette M'Baye, Groupe Africain, 1955.
- Anderson, Benedict. "Imagined Communities". *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Second Edition. Vincent B. Leitch, General Editor, W. W. Norton and Company 2018 pp. 1830-1839.
- Antichi, Samuel. "Redefining reality through fantasy." *Cineuropa*, 18 Nov. 2015. <https://cineuropa.org/en/newsdetail/301880/>. Accessed 20 January 2020.
- Aouré*. Directed by Moustapha Alassane, performances by Soumana, Zenabou, 1962.
- Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. University of Minnesota Press, 1996.
- Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in post-colonial literature*. London, Routledge, 1989.
- L'Autre France*. Directed by Ali Ghalem, performances by Ahmed Taybi, Mohamed Abaid and Mahieddine Abdelkader, Diffusion Internationale des Films du Tiers Monde, 1977.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Edited by Michael Holquist,

translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Discourse in the Novel". *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*.

Second Edition. Vincent B. Leitch, General Editor, W. W. Norton and Company 2010 pp. 1072-1104.

Bastian, Gilles. "S'arracher à sa *banlieue*." *Le Monde*. 10 Aug. 2015,

[www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2015/10/08/s-arracher-a-sa-banlieue\\_4784779\\_3260.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/livres/article/2015/10/08/s-arracher-a-sa-banlieue_4784779_3260.html). Accessed 15 January 2016.

Bathia, Tej K, Ritchie, William C. "Social and Psychological Factors in Language Mixing". *The Handbook of Bilingualism and Multilingualism*. Second Edition. Edited by Tej K. Bathia and William C. Ritchie, Blackwell Publishing, 2013 pp. 375-390.

Bhabha K. Homi. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.

Blanchard, Emmanuel. "Le coût des frontières." In *Liberté de circulation : un droit, quelles politiques ?* Paris, Gisti, 2011,

[https://gisti.org/publication\\_som.php?id\\_article=2126#1eb](https://gisti.org/publication_som.php?id_article=2126#1eb).

Accessed 15 January 2020.

Boggio, Philippe. "L'adieu d'Emmanuel Macron à l'immigration." *Slate*, 6 Aug. 2017,

[www.slate.fr/story/149523/emmanuel-macron-immigration](http://www.slate.fr/story/149523/emmanuel-macron-immigration). Accessed 10 February 2020.

Boni, Nazi. *Crépuscule des temps anciens*. Dakar, Présence Africaine, 1962.

*De Bruit et de fureur*. Directed by Jean-Claude Brisseau, performances by Bruno Cremer, François Negret, and Vincent Gasperitsch, Centre Nationale de la Cinématographie, 1988.

- Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. University of California Press, 1984.
- Cesari, Jocelyne. "Islam in France: The Shaping of a Religious Minority." *Muslims in the West, from Sojourners to Citizens*. Ed. Yvonne Haddad-Yazbek. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 36-51.
- Chatman, Seymour. *Story and Discourse. Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Cornell University Press, 1978.
- Chion, Michel. *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. Translated by Claudia Gorbman, New York: Columbia University Press, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Film, A Sound Art*. Translated by Claudia Gorbman. Columbia University Press, 2009.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Le Son au Cinéma*. Paris : Cahiers du Cinéma, Éditions de l'étoile, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Voice in Cinema*. Translated by Claudia Gorbman. Columbia University Press, 1999.
- "Circulaire du 28 novembre 2012." *Gisti*, 6 June 2018, [gisti.org/spip.php?article2957](http://gisti.org/spip.php?article2957). Accessed 10 February 2020.
- Le Cri de la Mer*. Directed by Aïcha Thiam, performances by Yaye Bayam Diouf and Serigne Ndiaye Bouna, *Conseil International des Radios-Télévisions d'Expression Française and Radiodiffusion Télévision Sénégalaise*, 2008.
- Delafosse, Maurice. *Les Arts de l'Afrique Noire*. Parkstone International, 2012.
- Deleuze, Gilles. Guattari, Félix. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. University of Minnesota Press, 1986.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "A Thousand Plateaus". *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Second Edition. Vincent B. Leitch, General Editor, W. W. Norton and Company, 2010, pp.

1446-1463.

Dupré, Colin. *Le FESPACO, une affaire d'Etat(s)*. Paris, L'Harmattan, 2012.

Eisenstein, Sergei., V. Pudovkin, and G. Alexandrov. "A Statement on Sound." *Film Sound*, edited by Elisabeth Weis and John Belton. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985, pp. 83-85.

Epstein, Renaud. "Le « problème des banlieues » après la désillusion de la rénovation". *Métropolitiques*, January 18, 2016.

Ervine, Jonathan. *Cinema and the Republic. Filming on the margins in contemporary France*. Cardiff University of Wales Press, 2013.

Foucault, Michel. "Les hétérotopies." *France-Culture*, 1966.

<[oiselet.philo.2010.pagesperso-orange.fr/OC/Foucault.%20Conference.pdf](http://oiselet.philo.2010.pagesperso-orange.fr/OC/Foucault.%20Conference.pdf)>.

"La France après la guerre." *UnLivredusouvenir*, 2009,

[www.unlivredusouvenir.fr/france-apres-guerre.html](http://www.unlivredusouvenir.fr/france-apres-guerre.html). Accessed 10 February 2020.

Gardiès, André. *Cinéma d'Afrique Noire francophone : L'espace-miroir*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989.

\_\_\_\_\_. *L'Espace au cinéma*. Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1993.

Gaulle, Charles de. "Lettre Adressée Par Le Général De Gaulle à Pierre-Henri Teitgen, Garde Des Sceaux, Le 12 Juin 1945." *Un Livre Du Souvenir - La France Après La Guerre – La Politique De La France En Matière De Naturalisation*, Éditions La Découverte, 2009, [www.unlivredusouvenir.fr/france-apres-guerre.html](http://www.unlivredusouvenir.fr/france-apres-guerre.html).

*La Haine*. Directed by Mathieu Kassovitz, performances by Vincent Cassel, Hubert Koundé and Saïd Taghmaoui, Sony, 1995.

Hervieu-Léger, Danièle. "Le miroir de l'islam en France." *Vingtième Siècle. Revue*

- d'histoire* 66. Numéro spécial: Religions d'Europe (2000) : 79-89.
- Hexagone*. Directed by Malik Chibane, performances by Jalil Naciri, Farid Abdedou, and Hakim Sarahoui, Production Antonio Olivares, 1994.
- Higbee, Will. "Displaced Audio: Exploring Soundscapes in Maghrebi-French Film-making". *Studies in French Cinema*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2009, pp. 225-241.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Post-Beur Cinema : North African Émigré and Maghrebi-French Filmmaking in France Since 2000*. Edinburgh University Press, 2013.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Re-presenting the Urban Periphery: Maghrebi-French French Filmmaking and the *Banlieue* Film". *Cineaste*, Winter 2007, pp. 38-43.
- Higbee, Will and Song H. Lim. "Concepts of Transnational Cinema: Towards a Critical Transnationalism in Film Studies." *Transnational Cinemas*, vol. 1, no. 1, Intellect Limited, 2010, pp. 7-21.
- Higson, Andrew. "Limiting imagination of national cinema." *Cinema and Nation*. Edited by Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie (eds), London: Routledge, 2000, pp. 63-74.
- Hoare, George, Sperber, Nathan. *An Introduction to Antonio Gramsci: His Life, Thought and Legacy*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.
- Kane, Cheikh H. *L'Aventure Ambiguë*. Paris : Editions 10/18, 1961.
- Konstantarokos, Myrto. "Which Mapping of the City? *La Haine* and the *cinéma de banlieue*." *French Cinema in the 1990's: Continuity and Difference*. Ed. Phil Powrie. Oxford : OUP, 1999. 160-171.
- Kuo, Lily. "France is giving citizenship to the African soldiers who fought its wars over 50 years ago." *Quartz Africa*, 17 April 2017, <https://qz.com/africa/960851/france-gives-citizenship-and-full-pensions-to-african-soldiers-who-fought-its-20-century->

[wars](#) . Accessed 10 February 2020.

Lefebvre, Henri. *La production de l'espace*. Paris : Economica, 1974.

“Maladie (1) : textes législatifs et réglementaires - circulaires - jurisprudence - Défenseur des droits.” *Gisti*, 18 Jan. 2020, [gisti.org/spip.php?article6298](http://gisti.org/spip.php?article6298). Accessed 10 February 2020.

Malik, Abd al. *Qu'Allah bénisse la France*. Paris : Albin Michel, 2004.

Mathoux, Hadrien. “Crise des migrants : un accord boiteux pour l'Union européenne.” *Marianne*, 29 June 2018, [www.marianne.net/societe/crise-des-migrants-un-accord-boiteux-pour-l-union-europeenne](http://www.marianne.net/societe/crise-des-migrants-un-accord-boiteux-pour-l-union-europeenne). Accessed 10 February 2020.

McGuire, Beth. *African Accents: a workbook for Actors*. New York: Routledge, 2016.

McLeod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 2000.

*Mektoub, My Love: Canto Uno*. Directed by Abdellatif Kéchiche, performances by Shaïn Boumedine, Ophélie Bau and Salim Kechiouche, Quat'sous Films, Pathé, 2017.

*Mektoub, My Love: Intermezzo*. Directed by Abdellatif Kéchiche, performances by Shaïn Boumedine, Ophélie Bau and Salim Kechiouche, Pathé, Quat'sous Films, 2019.

*Moi et mon Blanc*. Directed by Pierre S. Yaméogo, performances by Serge Bayala, Pierre-Loup Rajot, and Anne Roussel, Dunia Productions, Les Films de l'Espoir, 2003.

Moinereau, Laurence. *La vision de la banlieue parisienne dans le cinéma français de 1958 à 1988*, MA thesis. Paris X-Nanterre, Nanterre, 1990. Print.

Moura, Jean-Marc. *Littérature francophone et théorie postcoloniale*. Paris, PUF, Coll. Écritures francophones, 1999.

- Naficy, Hamid. *An Accented Cinema. Exilic and Diasporic filmmaking*. Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Nègres Achantis. Danse d'hommes*. Directed by Auguste Lumiere, and Louis Lumière, performances by Auguste Lumiere, and Louis Lumière, Lumière, 1897.
- Neumann, Laurent, Ploquin, Frédéric. "Ce que les médias n'osent pas dire." *Marianne*, 8 Sept. 2007, [www.marianne.net/societe/ce-que-les-medias-nosent-plus-dire](http://www.marianne.net/societe/ce-que-les-medias-nosent-plus-dire). Accessed 8 August 2019.
- La noire de...* Directed by Sembène Ousmane, performances by Mbissine Thérèse Diop, Anne-Marie Jelinek, and Robert Fontaine, Filmi Domirev, 1966.
- Nous, sans-papiers de France*. Directed by Nicolas Philibert, et al., performance by Madjiguène Cissé, VF, 1997.
- O'Donoghue, Brendan. *A Poetics of Homecoming: Heidegger, Homelessness and the Homecoming Venture*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011.
- Olick, Jeffrey. "Collective memory: The Two Cultures." *Sociological Theory*. Volume 17, No. 3, 1999 pp. 333-348.
- Paris mon Paradis*. Directed by Eléonore Yaméogo, performances by Ambroise "Shaba", Bintou Nakanabo, and Amoro Traoré, Overlap Films, RTV, CNC, 2011.
- Pascal, Blaise. *Pensées*. Christian Classics Ethereal Library, Grand Rapids, MI, 2002.
- Petit, Fanny. "Le "piège" du regroupement familial ?" *Gisti*, July 2006, [www.gisti.org/spip.php?article84](http://www.gisti.org/spip.php?article84). Accessed 10 February 2020.
- Peyrefitte, Alain. *C'était De Gaulle*. Gallimard, 2016.
- Pierre et Djemila*. Directed by Gérard Blain, performances by Abdelkader, Djedjigua Ait-Hamouda and Jean-Pierre André, Cercle Bleu, Films A2, 1987.

- Pinazza Natália. *Journeys in Argentine and Brazilian Cinema*. New York : Palgrave MacMillan, 2014.
- Le Point de Vue du Lion*. Directed by Didier Awadi, performances by Eric Coco Tanja, Zeal Mwake, Clarisse Soh and Hervé Bourges, Studio Sankara, 2011.
- Qu'Allah bénisse la France*. Directed by Abd al Malik, performances by Marc Zinga, Sabrina Ouazani, and Larouci Didi, Ad Vitam, 2014.
- Le Retour d'un Aventurier*. Directed by Moustapha Alassane, performances by Moustapha Alassane, Zalika Souley and Djingarey A. Maïga, Argos Films, 1966.
- Rigby, Brian. *Popular Culture in Modern France*. New York, Routledge, 1991.
- Romaine, Suzanne. "The Bilingual and Multilingual Community." *The End Book of Bilingualism and Multilingualism*, Second edition, edited by Tej K. Bhatia and William C. Ritchie, Blackwell publishing, 2013, pp. 445-465.
- Sarre, Georges. "Déclaration de M. Georges Sarre, porte-parole du Mouvement républicain et citoyen, sur la défense de la laïcité et des valeurs républicaines contre la montée des intégrismes et des communautarismes." Meeting of Ligue Internationale Contre le Racisme et l'Antisémitisme. Paris. 6 May 2003.
- Saviana, Alexandra. "LR et les migrants : l'intox de Valérie Boyer sur des naturalisations "dans le dos des Français"." *Marianne*, 18 April. 2018, [www.marianne.net/politique/lr-et-les-migrants-l-intox-de-valerie-boyer-sur-des-naturalisations-dans-le-dos-des](http://www.marianne.net/politique/lr-et-les-migrants-l-intox-de-valerie-boyer-sur-des-naturalisations-dans-le-dos-des). Accessed 10 February 2020.
- "The Schengen Area." Edited by Dimitris Avramopoulos, *European Commission*, European Commission, [ec.europa.eu/info/index\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/info/index_en).
- Senghor, Leopold. S. *Chants d'ombre*. Paris : Seuil, 1945.

- Smith, Craig. "Riots Spread From Paris to Other French Cities." *NY Times*,  
 www.nytimes.com/2005/11/06/world/europe/riots-spread-from-paris-to-other-french-cities.html. Accessed 15 March 2016.
- Stam, Robert, Spence, Louise. "Colonialism, Racism, and Representation." *Film Theory And Criticism. Introductory Readings*. Fifth Edition. Leo Braudy, Marshall Cohen, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 235-250.
- Tarr, Carrie. "Beurz n the Hood: The Articulation of Beur and French identities in *Le Thé au Harem d'Archimède* and *Hexagone*." *Studies in French Cinema UK Perspectives 1985-2010*. Ed. Will Higbee and Sarah Leaby. Bristol: intellect Bristol, 2011. 81-94.
- Le Thé au harem d'Archimède*. Directed by Mehdi Charef, performances by Kader Boukhanef, Rémi Martin and Laure Dithilleul, Centre National du Cinéma et de l'Image Animée, 1985.
- Traoré, Aminata. *L'Afrique humiliée*, Paris, Fayard et Pluriel, 2008.
- Trouillard, Stéphanie. "Paris mon paradis : anatomie d'un mythe." *SlateAfrique*, 29 May 2011, <http://www.slateafrique.com/2053/paris-mon-paradis-enfer-migrants-france>. Accessed 10 February 2020.
- Vassé, Claire. Interview with Abd al Malik. *Les films du kiosque et Ad Vitam*. (December 10, 2014): 3-7.
- Vénus noire*. Directed by Abdellatif Kéchiche, performances by Yahima Torres, Andre Jacobs and Olivier Gourmet, MK2 Productions, France 2 Cinéma, 2010.
- Vincendeau, Ginette. "Designs on the *banlieue* : Mathieu Kassovitz's *La Haine*." *French Film: Texts and Contexts*. Ed. S. Hayward and G. Vincendeau. London: Routledge, 2000. 310-327.

*Le Voyage dans la lune*. Directed by Georges Méliès, performances by Victor André, Bleurette Bernon, and Jehanne d'Alcy, Georges Méliès, 1902.

Wagner, David-Alexander. *De la Banlieue stigmatisée à la cité démystifiée : La représentation de la banlieue des grands ensembles dans le cinéma français de 1981 à 2005*. Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2011.

## VITA

Seth Abdoul Compaoré was born in Abidjan, Ivory Coast and grew up in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. He completed his undergraduate work at the University of Ouagadougou, earning a bachelor's degree in French literature and Cultural Management. Following his undergraduate studies, he spent some time in France and then became a French language teacher for high-school students in Yako, Burkina Faso. In November 2009, he relocated to the United States to pursue employment and education. After a brief stay in New York City, he moved to Louisville, Kentucky where he worked at the oil refinery, AAK, and eventually enrolled in a graduate program at the University of Louisville. In 2015, he received his Master of Arts in French literature from the University of Louisville. He then joined the doctoral program at the University of Missouri where he completed his Doctorate in Francophone cinema and Film Studies in May 2020.