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La Langue des Autres: The Linguistic Evolution of African Representation in French Popular Culture, Colonialism to Present

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LA LANGUE DES AUTRES: THE LINGUISTIC EVOLUTION OF AFRICAN REPRESENTATION IN FRENCH POPULAR CULTURE, COLONIALISM TO PRESENT

by
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Abstract

This thesis examines the linguistic representation of African peoples and cultures in French popular culture, specifically as this pertains to immigration. The foundational research question of this project is: how has the representation of Africans in French popular culture evolved since the colonial period? In order to answer this question, I examine seven sources of popular culture, all works of either literature or cinema, depicting three different time periods: 19th-century French colonization in Algeria (1830-1900), the post-World War II "Trente Glorieuses" [Thirty Glorious Years] (1945 to 1975), and the contemporary era (1990-present). I lay out and analyze the language present in each source of popular culture, and finally comment on the overarching evolution of language as supported by inter-period linguistic patterns. Based on this analysis, I argue that as relations between the "French" and "African" peoples have gradually become more intertwined, language used in French popular culture to refer to Africans has evolved to be less overtly racist and more nuanced, while nevertheless continuing to depict Africans as "other."

Translation Note

All translations that appear in this project are my own. As this is a paper founded on and centered around the French language, I found it important to include the original French citations in the body of the paper. All French words and phrases are either followed by a bracketed English translation or a footnote, with two exceptions: most terms that appear more than once are only translated the first time, and words that are exactly the same as their English equivalent (i.e., “bizarre”) are not translated.

…Elle avait entendu l'une de ses élèves dire : "Les Francais, ils sont racistes." Dans sa classe de sixième, il y avait une majorité d'enfants d'immigrés:
"Je ne veux plus jamais entendre l'expression "les Français" dans cette classe. Vous ne devez pas accepter que l'on vous sépare des autres, mais si vous vous séparez vous-mêmes, alors il n'y a plus rien à faire."
Zineb, pourtant née en France, avait rétorqué:
"Mais madame, on n'est pas comme eux.
–Et vous êtes comme qui ?
–Bah on est des arabes…"

[…She'd heard one of her students say: "French people are racist." In her sixth-grade class, a majority of the students were children of immigrants:
"I never want to hear the phrase "French people" in this class again. You don't have to accept being marginalized, but if you marginalize yourselves, then it's over."
Zineb, who had nevertheless been born in France, had retorted:
"But Miss, we aren't like them.
–Then who are you like?
–Well, we're Arabs…"]

Excerpt from *Soleil amer* by Lilia Hassaine, pp. 142-14

Introduction

This project is a qualitative analysis, pulling linguistic data from Francophone sources depicting three different historical periods. The chosen sources of popular culture are either works of literature or cinema, both conduits of the narratives that circulate within societies. To quote Edward Said:

> Readers of this book will quickly discover that narrative is crucial to my argument here, my basic point being that stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history (Said xii).

Through a close reading and analysis of my primary sources and the recurring terms therein touching on Africans, race, nationality, and immigration, I will attempt to answer the following research question: how has the language used to refer to Africans in French popular culture evolved from colonialism to the modern era? My principal goal in conducting this research was to gain a better understanding of the "French" perspective on those originating from Africa.

The three main timeframes that this project focuses on are nineteenth-century colonialism (1830-1900), the "Les Trente Glorieuses" period (1945-1975), and the modern era (1990-present). I chose these three periods because each marked a major

turning point in African-French relations. Due to both space and scope constraints, I chose to omit the first half of the 20th century from my area of analysis; while including this time period certainly would have resulted in a more thorough study, I chose instead to focus on historical moments defined by significant change in the levels of interaction between "French" and "Africans."

While there was not significant immigration from North Africa to France before the mid-20th century, there were many French citizens who relocated from the metropole to France's North African colonies, specifically Algeria, beginning in the 1830s. It is important to begin by examining this early wave of interracial relations (and tensions) in order to create a reference for studying immigration in future time periods. Moving forward, the economic boom of "Les Trente Glorieuses" prompted the first big wave of immigration from the African continent to France. This first influx of predominantly North African migrants fueled commentary from all sides discussing and passing judgment on the "other," generating talking points still used today. Finally, modern French culture is rife with conversations on immigration; it is a topic discussed in every facet of society, from children's literature to political debates to recording studio sessions. The cultural commentaries that we observe today on the subject are both the result of and ongoing response to interracial interactions going back centuries. They are worthy of study in order to attempt to predict how these sorts of conversations will take France into the future.

The word "African" in this paper is alternately used to refer to different groups composed of individuals with varying relationships to the African continent. In Chapter 1, it references native Algerians who still inhabit their home country. In Chapter 2, the

word primarily refers to individuals born in various African countries who then relocate to France and thus assume the role of "immigrant." This definition persists in Chapter 3, while simultaneously expanding to refer to the first-generation French children of African immigrants. As this project aims to emphasize,"African" and "French" are not mutually exclusive descriptors; my usage of such general words is not an endeavor to re-construct a barrier between the identities but rather an attempt to simplify the act of referencing each group.

Chapter 1 tracks the French depiction of Algerians throughout the development of French colonization of the country, specifically by focusing on two firsthand accounts of life in the capital city of Algiers. The ethnography *Alger, étude* by Ernest Feydeau largely relies on demeaning semantic fields and animal-coded metaphor to depict Africans as primitive and subhuman; alternatively, *Les femmes arabes en Algérie* by Hubertine Auclert utilizes more positive vocabulary while still resting on generalized stereotypes in order to suggest that Africans were need of French civilization. The linguistic patterns established in these earliest interactions between the two groups serve as a foundation for evolutions observed in subsequent chapters.

With the increased face-to-face interaction between traditionally "French" individuals and African-originating immigrants brought by "Les Trente Glorieuses," discussions over differences in race and religion necessarily came to the forefront of society. For the first time, white French people were forced en masse to reckon with their previously-held assumptions about "étrangers" [foreigners], and Chapter 2 discusses how this phenomenon was reflected in two sources of popular culture depicting the era. The film *La Noire de…* directed by Ousmane Sembène introduces a discussion on personal

pronouns as well as the reduction of African humanity through negative adjectives, while Lilia Hassaine's novel *Soleil amer* employs various semantic fields to craft a nuanced conversation on religion and family.

As this project moves into the modern age, the conversation at its core necessarily must grow to encompass the ever-evolving definition of "Frenchness." As such, Chapter 3 seeks to understand how both Africans and white French actors perceive Frenchness in the contemporary world, and does so by examining three modern examples of French cinema. Philippe Faucon's film *Fatima* re-emphasizes the association of immigrants and servitude. The romantic dramedy *Samba,* co-directed by Éric Toledano and Olivier Nakache, depicts the relationship between African immigration and labor through language centered on race and geographic origins. Finally, Mathieu Kassovitz's cult classic *La Haine* re-addresses the misuse of personal pronouns and the utilization of pejorative insults to portray Afro-descendant French youth as victims of white supremacy.

The evolution of vocabulary and linguistic patterns within the sources of each time period shows how French popular culture itself has evolved in order to redefine what being French really means. Each of the authors and directors whose works are analyzed in this paper wrestle with the concept of "Frenchness," exploring who is allowed to claim it and how it should be performed. Whether the creators intend to narrow or expand the term's inclusivity, the language they use to discuss the concept plays a crucial role in their argument.

Literature Review

The ways in which language has been used by colonial societies to talk about the peoples they subjugate, as well as the consequences of these linguistic choices, have been extensively researched. A reading of the pertinent secondary literature reveals various theoretical frameworks and patterns of consequence that I utilized while conducting my own research and analysis.

Colonial societies always approach the peoples they have colonized from a stance of superiority. This superiority is often racial. Indeed, one of the main motivations spurring French colonial policy in Africa, Asia, and the Americas was *la mission civilisatrice* [the civilizing mission], the effort to teach various indigenous peoples French customs, religion, and language in order to improve their livelihood. This view that Frenchness was the be-all and end-all of human evolution demonstrates that French society saw itself as superior to other peoples, especially non-white and non-Western peoples. As Westerners, the advancing wave of French imperialists could justify deciding "who is a good native or bad" because "we created them, we taught them to speak and think" (Said xviii). When French colonists relocated from their homeland to a colonial territory with the goal of producing a "detailed reportage of landscape, custom, and language, they inevitably [privileged] the center, emphasizing the 'home' over the 'native'" and reproducing the assumption that France was inherently more advanced than Africa (Ashcroft 5). This rigid belief that Frenchness was the epitome of humanity both stemmed from and sparked feelings of fear, disgust, hate, and pity, all of which were reproduced in the cultural and political productions published during the colonial period.

Furthermore, these discussions reinforcing false ideas of superiority did not end with decolonization. The patterns of conversation that originated with France's first invasion of Africa have remained firmly entrenched in French modern society. Because Frenchness has been fixed in the national psyche as white, Catholic, and male for centuries, French people have historically seen Africans as incapable of attaining Frenchness. From the country's very first foray into Algeria, Frenchmen approached native Africans (be they Algerian, Senegalese, or of any other nationality) searching for people to "be educated into 'our' civilization," without really believing this to be possible (Said xix). A clear example of this is the way in which the influx of Algerian immigrants to the metropole following decolonization was handled differently based on race: "While the French state worked hard to integrate pied-noir[1] 'repatriates' into French society, harkis[2] were shuffled into former internment camps and then isolated…State officials claimed that it was necessary to isolate this population because they were 'backward,' lacking education, and not yet ready to live freely in French society" (Fontaine 263-64). Additionally, "conservative commentators" of this time period "singled out North African 'Arab' men as a specific danger to the virtue of young French women" (Fontaine 266). This sort of language only perpetuated the already-widespread belief that Arab and African individuals were unworthy and, moreover, naturally incapable of living alongside French counterparts.

No wonder "the environment for non-European migrants from France's former colonies was notably hostile," as the French government itself made a habit of targeting this demographic with derogatory and condescending vocabulary (Fontaine 264). But this

[1] Literally "black-foot"; a term used to refer to white European settlers who relocated or were born in Algeria during the French colonial period
[2] Muslim Algerian soldiers who fought for France during the Algerian war for independence

was not a phenomenon unique to the instability of the immediate post-war period. The "anti-immigration rhetoric" of early Front National[3] campaigns in the 1970s also "had significant consequences as acts of violence against immigrant populations in France multiplied throughout the country" (Fontaine 280). Even today, "les pouvoirs publics durcissent régulièrement la législation sur l'entrée et le séjour des immigrés…des occasions regrettables…dont s'emparent certaines personnalités politiques" [public powers regularly tighten the legislation concerning the arrival and stay of immigrants…regrettable occasions… which certain political actors seize upon] (Khellil). The discussion beginning in the 1980s surrounding the decrease in funds allotted to largely migrant-filled HLM units[4] further displays how language utilized in anti-immigration propaganda has concrete political and social effects.

This political phenomenon leads to the theoretical framework of "color-blind racism," a term coined by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva in his book "Racism without Racists" (Bonilla-Silva 2). According to him, this particular form of discrimination, which has skyrocketed in the modern day, depends on "cultural arguments" to justify minorities' disfavored social standing (Léonard). In so doing, color-blind racism "blames the victim by attempting to identify cultural aspects of minorities and by explaining that they are inferior to the white normative culture" rather than fixating on supposed racial or biological inferiorities, thereby absolving the white actor of guilt (Léonard). In a "country that claims not to see color" (Pierrot), color-blind racism therefore becomes the foundation on which many white French base their prejudice.

[3] Literally the "National Front," a far-right-wing political group known for its xenophobic views
[4] The abbreviation for "habitation à loyer modéré," or low-income housing. These communities are often located on the peripheries of large French cities and are predominantly inhabited by lower-class, immigrant, and non-white individuals

These “presumed cultural deficiencies” are made even more powerful when they are repeated by actors across society, and particularly in the political domain, to define African immigrants or non-white French individuals (Léonard). The words “illegal immigrant,” “polygamist,” and “welfare recipient” all summon to mind a particular image, whether the listener is conscious of it or not, because discussions about Arabs and other African migrants revolve endlessly around these terms (Pierrot). Accordingly, in the aftermath of the 2005 urban protests in France, “words related to religion — Muslims, veiled women… [made] this dashing entrance” in the national conversation surrounding the demonstrations, meaning that anyone consuming news coverage of the protests was drawing parallels, even unconsciously, between Muslims and danger posed to the republic (Pierrot). Similarly, when “protests are described as ‘émeutes’ or riots… French readers assume immediately that behind the shadows of black-hoodied figures…are young Black and Arab men, the perpetual ‘migrants’ of France, an assumption that comes from a history of discursive linking of ‘riots’ with Arab and Black men” (Parikh). The “color-blind racism” theory therefore shows how even if a government or media source subtracts overtly racial vocabulary from its language, it can still reinforce racist ideas through coded terms and stereotyped imagery.

All of this shows how critical language choice is in constructing a society’s opinion of different demographics, as language is “symbolic capital exerting symbolic violence… social classes are dominated even and especially in the production of their social image and their social identity” (Léonard). Language thus “becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of ‘truth’, ‘order’, and ‘reality’ become established” (Ashcroft 7).

Once this "reality" has been established by a dominant colonial actor, it often (and often quickly) turns into a cultural narrative, one that is reproduced over and over until it is nearly impossible to see it as anything other than truth.

Stories–another form of cultural narrative–that are centered on these same topics work alongside this form of state-sponsored rhetoric. Narratives create culture, and "in time, culture comes to be associated…with the nation of the state" (Said xii). Using this theoretical framework established by Edward Said in his 1993 book *Culture and Imperialism*, this means that over time, the books and films that French people consume and create come to define their conception of France, and, consequently, their conception of Frenchness.

More recently, however, "there's been an acceleration, an unveiling of sorts of everything that wasn't okay with… the narrative that we wrote and told about ourselves" (Pierrot). Though France has tried to create a "fantasy" surrounding race, believing that being a "color-blind" nation is a mark of social progress, it has become increasingly clear that such an approach is far from unbiased (Pierrot). Regarding cultural consumption in particular, "color-blindness"– wherein people choose which perspectives they are inclined to consume to as well as which they would prefer to ignore– only perpetuates pre-existing notions of who is and is not entitled to define Frenchness. Examples of such overlooked cultural contributors are "Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon," issued from "French colonial history and who were thinking about what it meant to be French but erased from the family photo album" (Pierrot). When French society accepts one demographic of "culture creators" and rejects others, such as the aforementioned Black "artists, writers, [and] thinkers," a dangerous pattern is reinforced: white Frenchness

continues to be seen as the norm, and Frenchness of any other color is deemed insufficient (Pierrot).

But it isn't just Frenchness that Arab and Black people are denied through these patterns–it is their humanity. This is because, in a holdover from historic beliefs of superiority, too often white French assume that to be a form-fitting French citizen (read: someone who fits the white Catholic male stereotype) is the only correct way to be a human. Any deviation is deemed incorrect or even immoral. Thus it is evident how colonial-era "cultural denigration, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model," remains a consequence of contemporary language choices (Ashcroft 9).

The goal of this project is to fill the gap in the afore-explained literature by proposing an analysis of how French popular culture, and not political rhetoric, approaches the conversation around Africans. Considering that the same tactics utilized by political actors are often recreated by authors and scriptwriters when creating their works, the political and cultural sectors of society cannot easily be isolated from each other, and indeed often work side by side to create one larger narrative. The consequences of language are immense, especially as they pertain to real human lives and issues, and it is therefore of the utmost importance to understand how this language has evolved over time.

Methodology

This project is a linguistic qualitative analysis, pulling from a variety of Francophone literary and cinematic sources over three historical time periods. My main

research technique involved recording the specific terms and vocabulary used to refer to Africans in said sources and understanding the connotations of these terms within the context of history. In doing so, I documented how and explained why this language has changed over time. I employed a close reading method in order to achieve this goal; utilizing such a technique was essential in order to understand both the surface-level denotation as well as deeper levels of meaning couched in these words' connotations. Understanding both the author's intended and unintended meanings in choosing a specific word or phrase demands a rigorous, analytical study of the chosen lexicon.

When analyzing a foreign language, a close reading technique becomes even more critical, as the literal translation of a word cannot always convey a word's literal and figurative meaning in the original language. In this way, analysis conducted through close reading becomes interpretation, taking the vocabulary of one language and turning it into something that a foreign audience can understand. The overall goal of close reading for this project was to lay bare various patterns and biases in the creators' choice of vocabulary for French and non-French speakers alike.

The figures of speech present in the wording of the original texts and films equally merited analysis. I pay particular attention to figurative language, approaching it through a linguistic lens to focus on tropes such as metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche. These are "tropes" in which "figures of speech in which a word or phrase is 'turned' or 'twisted' to make it mean something else" (Murfin et al. 264). Also utilized is the construction of semantic fields that work to negatively characterize various African individuals, groups, and cultures.

My analysis pulls from three time periods and seven primary Francophone sources. These sources were all created from different perspectives, and each one highlights a different aspect of the complicated Francophone depiction of "the African." Some sources are almost autobiographical, while others are almost entirely fictionalized. While fictional accounts are not inherently representative of reality, they do shed light on societal patterns and tendencies that have been reproduced enough to be portrayed in fiction. Additionally, all of my sources are narratives in their own way, as narratives are some of the most valuable phenomena to study while gauging cultural values. In looking at a variety of time periods and sources, I have put together a comprehensive view of this complex and intersectional topic.

As previously stated, all of my primary sources are in French. About half of my secondary sources were written in French; the other half were either written in or translated into English. Additionally, Arabic is employed in the movie *Fatima*. I occasionally made use of various translation services (specifically WordReference and Linguee) in order to understand the emotional and cultural connotations of certain words or terms. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

Chapter 1: 19th-Century Colonization

Introduction

France's colonial venture into Africa began with its first invasion of Algeria in 1830, which had previously existed under Ottoman rule. Though this attempted conquest was prolonged and incredibly violent, Algeria gradually gained a popular status among the metropolitan French population as a settler colony. This status, as well as French occupation of the country, lasted until the conclusion of the Algerian war of independence in 1962. Chapter 1 focuses specifically on the second half of the 19th century, during which settler colonialism played a major role in Algeria's governance, economy, and culture.

Both authors of the ethnographies analyzed in this chapter were white French citizens born in mainland France who spent a period of their adult lives living in Algiers and documenting their observations of the native people who lived there. Ernest Feydeau, author of *Alger, étude* [Algiers, a study], approaches Algerians with a combination of scientific curiosity and overtly racist assumptions. His condescending language choice inherently associates Algerians with servitude and animality. Hubertine Auclert, author of *Les femmes arabes en Algérie* [Arab women in Algeria], utilizes a more complimentary vocabulary than Feydeau on the whole, yet maintains a stereotyped view of Arab women and a harshly critical opinion of Islam.

Alger, étude

Ernest Feydeau published his ethnography *Alger, étude* in 1862 through Michel Levy Frères, a well-known publishing house that also worked with celebrities such as Honoré de Balzac and Victor Hugo. Throughout Feydeau's description of Algiers and its inhabitants, his account of native Algerians (be they Muslim or Jewish, Black or Arab, male or female) is overwhelmingly negative and condescending. In general, his description of non-Western cultures and traditions is disrespectful, and he often cites the necessity of "Frenchifying" the country to emphasize how little he estimated its inhabitants' peoplehood.

Feydeau dealt almost entirely in generalizations when describing the "races diverses" [diverse races] of Algiers' inhabitants (82). He refers to all members of a race in referring to one of them– "**l**'arabe," "**la** mauresque" [**the** Arab, **the** Moor] (60). He says explicitly in describing the Moor Anifa: "elle représente assez bien, pour moi, toute sa race" [she represents pretty well, for me, her entire race] (67). Readers observe a nearly identical comment in Feydeau's chapter on Algeria's Jewish population: "un jour…je vis une autre Juive qui…pouvait personnifier toute sa race" [one day... I saw another Jewish girl who...could personify her entire race] (188). Similarly, in utilizing the preposition "chez,"[5] Feydeau implies that all people belonging to one race speak and act the same: "chez [la Mauresque], comme chez la femme arabe, il y a une préoccupation incessante de tromperie" [[Moor women], like Arab women, have an incessant preoccupation with infidelity] (161). This type of language shows that Feydeau had a

[5] "Chez" is a preposition with various meanings ranging from "from" to "at one's house." In this context, Feydeau uses it to generalize all people falling under one specific category (race).

grossly underdeveloped understanding about the groups he was observing, relying on simple generalizations to paint a biased picture of their lives.

Feydeau is open about the fact that he classifies his subjects with "traits généraux" [general traits], but alongside this he acknowledges the occasional exception to his constructed categories to whom these traits "ne peuvent pas s'appliquer" [cannot apply] (180). There are, as he phrases it, "des exceptions en tout" [exceptions in everything] (180). According to the author, Arab people "ont leurs défauts…mais…aussi leurs vertus" [have their flaws…as well as their virtues], implying that each individual belonging to the larger group shared the same flaws and strengths (148). Among these shared characteristics, Feydeau cites dishonesty and vanity as well as patience and courage, showing that he was at least capable of according positive attributes to the Algerian population. The fact that the positive aspects directly follow such derogatory and generalized commentary, however, largely undermines the would-be praise.

Through Feydeau's method of speaking about the various Algerians whom he describes, it is evident that he does not see them as human beings, and for a host of reasons. While introducing a section on "Moor women," Feydeau states, "[elles] sont intéressantes, parce qu'elles nous offrent des types à étudier, –les seuls que nous puissions étudier de la race musulmane" [[they] are interesting, because they provide us models to study, the only ones that we can study of the Muslim race] (110). This makes it clear that first and foremost the author finds these women valuable and worth spending time with because he sees them as scientific subjects. He makes a similar comment while talking about "les Biskris," a people from the Biskra commune: "Ils sont fort curieux à observer" [they are extremely interesting to observe] (221). Feydeau thus shows that he is

not interested in learning *from* these people, and is only interested in learning *about* them because he sees them as "other," foreign, oddities to analyze from an outsider's perspective and a white Frenchman's privilege.

Feydeau also continually emphasizes his view that Algerians, no matter what race or social status they might claim, are uncivilized, primitive, and therefore in need of the benefits offered by French colonization. Arab chiefs embarrass themselves by drinking absinthe "sous prétexte de civilisation" [under the pretext of civilization] (74). Algerians are "fort difficiles à gouverner" [extremely difficult to govern] (83). If the French were to let them alone, "[ils] ne demanderaient pas mieux que d'abuser de leur liberté" [they would ask for nothing more than to abuse their freedom] (83). In using such condescending description, Feydeau attempts to imply that his motherland had done well to take the "barbares" [barbarians] (148) under its wing.

Another example showing how little Feydeau valued Algerian humanity is his belief that the people of Algeria only existed to please and serve Westerners. He comments that "si les Mauresques avaient assez d'intelligence pour rester elles-mêmes et conserver les usages orientaux, je crois qu'elles plairaient davantage et plus longtemps" [if Moor women had enough intelligence to remain themselves and preserve their Oriental customs, I think they would please more and longer] (166). This characteristic seemed to be of utmost importance for Feydeau, as he demanded it from nearly all races. Algerian Jews, for example, who Feydeau implied were grateful to the French for liberating them after the initial occupation, "ont éprouvé le besoin de nous servir" [displayed the need to serve us] (175). By foisting on Algerians a natural urge to oblige

Western humors, Feydeau denies their ability to exist as complete human beings on their own, unaffected by Westerners.

If Feydeau encountered someone who did not "contenter…les yeux" [please the eyes] (227), like Black women "décidément pas faites pour plaire aux Occidentaux" [decidedly not made to please Westerners] (219), he reserved the right to criticize the individual in whatever category it pleased him–physical, cultural, and behavioral. Accordingly, the author had a habit of lamenting the various traditional musics he encountered in Algiers, calling them "atroce" [atrocious] (121), "infernale" [infernal] (123), and "barbare" [barbaric] (206). He said that the dress of certain magistrates is "bizarre" (153). All of these disrespectful adjectives show that as soon as his scientific aims ceased to support a minimal level of respect, he immediately resorted back to openly judging his "subjects."

Another way in which Feydeau denies the humanity of the Algerians is by reducing them to the jobs that they perform, tying in the idea that the French population equated Africans with servitude before anything else. This reduction is an example of synecdoche, a rhetorical device in which the speaker uses "a part of something… to present the whole" (Murfin et al. 474). In utilizing this linguistic trope, Feydeau focuses on (and stereotypes) one aspect of Algerians–their form of employment–rather than opening his discussion up to nuances amongst this demographic. Throughout his extensive description of the jobs he observed various demographics performing, he remains focused on only one idea–servitude. Sometimes he does this in a less overtly racist manner: "le Kabyle se loue comme manoeuvre…et… cultivateur; le Biskri comme portefaix; le M'zabite comme baigneur" [the Kabyle hires himself out as an unskilled

laborer and farmer; the Biskri as a porter; the Mozabite as a swimmer], and sometimes he does not: "la negresse [se loue] comme servante; et le nègre, sans doute par amour pour l'opposition des couleurs, blanchit les maisons" [the negress hires herself out as a servant; and the negro, without a doubt out of love for the opposition of colors, whitewashes houses] (80). Even though these jobs might have been commonly performed by the races Feydeau assigned them to, the fact that he was creating a definition of each group around its members' form of employment portrays a service-centered opinion of natives rather than a human-centered one.

One of the more disturbing ways in which Feydeau dehumanizes Algerians is by infantilizing them, especially when speaking about women. The universal "Moor woman's" "parfaite ignorance…[contribue] à sa corruption" [perfect ignorance…[contributes] to her corruption] (155), and these same women have "un certain besoin de distractions enfantines" [a certain need for childish distractions] (162). Feydeau's favorite servant of a friend, a Black girl named Yasminah, is described as carrying herself with an "air juvénile" [juvenile air] (212). But this classification is not only applied to young women: Arab men are also "impitoyables dans leur logique, comme les femmes et les enfants" [pitiless in their logic, like women and children] (180). Black people are described as possessing a "philosophie enfantine" [childlike philosophy that, according to Feydeau, makes them more compliant to the "vicissitudes de la vie" [vicissitudes of life] (204). By positioning himself, a white Frenchman, as an adult and non-white Algerians as children, Feydeau suggests that he is inherently worthy of the authority he wields over them.

In some cases, Feydeau furthers this infantilization to the point of fetishization. It is very apparent that he has a sexual interest in the aforementioned servant Yasminah, whose "traits corrects" [pleasing features] he describes extensively (211). The hope of seeing her "bras nus" [naked arms] and "pieds mignons" [cute feet] motivated Feydeau to return to her master's house often, and he even admits that at the time of writing his account, he dreamed of her still (211). But Yasminah is not the only young woman–or person–that Feydeau feels entitled to sexualize. In discussing Miriam, a young Jewish girl, Feydeau describes her as "une créature mignonne…à l'air soumis" [a cute creature with a submissive air] (185). This pattern of description even applies to certain men Feydeau interacted with, such as an unnamed Black soldier who possessed a face "modelée sur le type grec le plus pur" [modeled after the purest Greek archetype] and was therefore dubbed "un Apollon de marbre noir" [an Apollo of black marble] (208). The act of fetishization necessarily denotes a lack of respect, and as Feydeau displays throughout his book, he unfailingly applies this lack of respect to every group he encounters.

Feydeau's stance on the superiority of his own race, and therefore the inferiority of all others, is a somewhat complicated one. He states, rather matter-of-factly, that Frenchmen "regarderons longtemps encore [les Arabes] comme des êtres issus d'une race inférieure" [would see [Arabs] as beings originating from an inferior race for a long time to come] and that "nous les estimons peu" [we think little of them] (147). However, at a later point, he seems to lament this same racism as it applies to the "Black Apollo" mentioned above, having noticed a certain "tristesse" [sadness] (209) about his person: "Sentait-il la sévérité du sort qui, en lui donnant un teint d'ébène, le reléguait injustement

et à jamais dans les grades inférieurs ?" [Does he sense the gravity of the fact that, in giving him an ebony tint, he has been unjustly and forever relegated to an inferior rank?] (210). This comment holds a subtle air of condamnation, regretting the fact that this individual was looked down upon solely because of his race, and yet it still implies that Feydeau saw the inferiority of non-white peoples as inherent.

Yet another method which Feydeau used to deny the humanity of those he wrote on was by explicitly comparing them to animals. He did this frequently and non-selectively: Jews became "chiens en quête" [dogs on the hunt] (103), an Arab soldier dubbed "un singe aimable [et] élégant" [an amiable [and] elegant monkey] (143), "pure-blooded" Blacks called "patients comme des bêtes de somme" [patient as workhorses] (204). This use of metaphor and simile directly equates the concerned demographics with non-human life forms, implying that in Feydeau's mind, animals and Algerians possessed similar levels of humanity.

A final pattern consists of Feydeau's persistence in pitting "Western" values against those of Algerians. According to him, "les mœurs de l'Orient, non-seulement *[sic]* ne ressemblent pas à celles de l'Occident, mais elles en sont la contre-partie" [the customs of the Orient not only do not resemble those of the West, but are the complete opposite] (154). This indicates that Feydeau viewed the values and societal norms of Algerians, a homogeneous group in his eyes, as inherently opposed to France's own. He also implies that this is a mutual opinion by asserting that Algerian Muslims feared French "éducation libérale, trop élevée, qui, selon eux, ne peut se concilier avec…les mœurs des musulmans" [liberal education, too advanced, which, according to them, cannot be reconciled with… Muslim customs] (171). In steering the discussion in such a

direction, he is putting the blame for these seemingly irreconcilable cultural differences on the "other" and thus failing to take responsibility for (or even acknowledge) his own internal biases.

Because of this prejudicial mindset, the process of "Frenchification" is subtly presented as both necessary for the Algerian population to undergo in order to be respected by the French, and ultimately useless for them to totally achieve. Feydeau's discourse around the Jewish population in Algiers emphasizes this idea. The author characterizes Algerian Jews as a people who imitate Europeans in the apartments, furniture, and cutlery that they choose to live in and use; even their French is spoken "très-purement" [very purely] (208). Yet it is clear through Feydeau's overt antisemitism that this effort has little to no effect on the esteem that French people afforded the Jewish community.

Speaking to this point, in his chapter aptly titled "Les Juifs" [The Jews], Feydeau repeatedly makes offhand and overtly antisemitic comments, reflecting the antisemitic tendencies in both France and Algeria of his time. As previously mentioned, in embracing "Frenchness" more successfully than their compatriots, the Jews of Algeria separated themselves from other Algerians in the eyes of the French; however, they were still deemed lesser by the latter. Feydeau repeats the frequently-heard narrative that Jews are greedy: "ils… ne songent qu'à s'enrichir, toujours le nez au vent pour voir s'il ne leur apportera pas quelque bonne aubaine" [they think only of making money, always going where the wind blows to see if they can find a good bargain] (177). He also freely comments on their physical descriptions (as he does with all other "races"), saying that they wear certain fashions "afin de s'enlaidir un peu plus" [in order to make themselves

even uglier] (179). This blatant lack of respect stems from Feydeau's refusal to see Jews as human beings. He also implies that this inferiority is more than just a behavioral issue, saying that the "Jew problem" is something biological, something literally rooted in Jewish blood. His comments such as "Il y a dans le sang des gens de cette race je ne sais quoi de maladif" [There is in the blood of these people something inexplicably sickly] (184) and "[les Juives] ont le sang appauvri, cela se voit…!" [[Jewish women] have poor blood, that's evident!] (195) show to what point the antisemitic views on European Jews of this period were emphasized in the language concerning colonial Jewish populations as well.

Les femmes arabes en Algérie

Hubertine Auclert, who began her career as a *femme de lettres* by founding the feminist newspaper *La Citoyenne*, published her book *Les femmes arabes en Algérie* as a combination ethnography and call to action in 1900. Auclert took up the Muslim woman's plight in great length in her account, so her linguistic approach to her human subjects is often markedly different from Feydeau's. Through focusing on European violence committed against Algerians and the victimization of Arab and Muslim women by both European and Algerian men, Auclert establishes and highlights a portrayal of Algerians that is mostly absent from Feydeau's book. Her vocabulary is also generally more positive than Feydeau's, as she makes a point to compliment and praise certain aspects of Algerian culture. Finally, the authors' publications are separated by a forty-year difference, meaning they were written by people belonging to two different

generations, and may therefore demonstrate a small evolution of language within the colonial period.

While Auclert does bring some new language to the discussion, there remain in her description certain vocabularic patterns similar to those used by Feydeau. One example is her liberal utilization of animal-coded metaphor when describing Algerians. Authority makes "des moutons" [sheep] out of Arab men (Auclert 9). A Muslim daughter is sold by her father like a "génisse" [heifer] (53). Unlike Feydeau's usage of this sort of metaphor, however, Auclert does not solely use it to condemn. She also uses animal-coded language to paint Algerian women and children as fragile birds in order to highlight their helplessness in the face of Arab and white men alike. Young Arab children become "oisillons," [baby birds] (18) and similarly, Muslim women are "oiseaux en cage" [caged birds] wishing to gain their freedom and fly (25), "colombes effrayées" [frightened doves] in the face of white would-be wooers (32). By consistently utilizing the metaphor of a bird to describe this demographic, Auclert paints a clear picture of how she interpreted Arab women and children: as an innocent and powerless subset of Arab society, standing out in stark contrast to their violent and immoral Muslim husbands and fathers.

One of the benefits of Auclert's account is her explicit commentary on how French and European administrators "barbarically" and "savagely" mistreated their "indigène" [indigenous] subordinates (30). "Les administrateurs adversaires de l'assimilation…scandalisent [les Musulmans] tellement par leurs brutalités et leurs injustices" [the administrators opposed to assimilation…scandalize [Muslims] exceedingly through their brutality and injustices], calling them "Bicot, Kebb [chien]"

[dog], and other "noms…odieux, obscènes ou ridicules" [odious, obscene or ridiculous names] (30). This pattern of behavior clearly shows how widespread and destructive verbal violence directed towards North Africans was throughout the colony. As such, Auclert's account is the first in this project that frames Africans as victims of unjust French prejudice, a pattern that will persist throughout the following chapters.

Auclert's perspective on French superiority over Algerians is a complex one. She comments multiple times that "la francisation" [the Frenchification] (37) of the country was a positive thing, saying that "le peuple arabe a… tout à gagner à devenir français" [the Arab people have… everything to gain by becoming French] (22) and that France would do well to "mettre en valeur le pays" [increase the country's value] (32) by constructing new roads and railroads. This vein of commentary suggests that, despite certain claims to the contrary, she believes that French management of their "belle colonie" [beautiful colony] was more beneficial to its people than Algerian self-governance (21). She also comments that "des arabes francisés" [Frenchified Arabs] were "une élite en l'humanité" [an elite amongst humanity], implying that coming into contact with French values and habits morally elevated the Arab people above their lowly base nature (16).

Auclert also intimates an inherent opposition between French law and Koranic law, which she describes as uncivilized, and paints French customs and practices as morally superior to Islamic ones: "le droit coutumier musulman [est] si formellement en contradiction avec notre droit français" [traditional Muslim law so entirely contradicts our French law] (47). It is useful to mention that she approaches this conversation specifically while condemning the legality of child marriage and polygamy in Algeria,

practices which she describes as being commonplace amongst the Algerian Muslim population. She asks, “la loi française baissera-t-elle toujours pavillon devant le Koran” [will French law forever bow before the Koran] (50) and condemns the fact that “la France monogame [a] laissé la polygamie…subsister” [monogamous France [has] allowed polygamy to persist], implying that it was France’s duty as a morally superior society to eradicate the immoral practices of its colonial subjects (63). She also makes an explicit call for assimilating the Arab population into the French one by saying:

> On a déjà laissé trop longtemps les arabes garder leurs lois, leurs mœurs, leur langue. Ne croyez-vous pas qu’il est urgent d’en faire des enfants de la République, de les instruire, de les assimiler aux français ?
>
> [For too long we have allowed the Arabs to keep their laws, their customs, their language. Don’t you believe that it is urgent to make them children of the Republic, to instruct them, to assimilate them into French people?] (69)

This clearly shows that, unlike Feydeau, she thinks Arabs are both capable and worthy of assimilating into the French population. However, she still considers the French language, customs, and laws better for Algerians than their own, ultimately highlighting a cultural perspective of superiority that she claims to overlook racially.

Related to the previous point is Auclert’s negative portrayal of Islam, and specifically how men profited from polygamy and child marriage within the parameters of the religion. While no one is refuting Auclert’s claim that child marriage is a completely immoral institution, it is difficult to know precisely how often it occurred in Algeria at the time of her writing. Nevertheless, Auclert indiscriminately lumps married Muslim Algerian men together into one category in order to imply that they are all child

rapists. While child marriage certainly existed in the country at this time, the fact remains that without a firmer understanding of *how* commonplace it was, Auclert's extreme condemnation of "l'excès de bestialité" [excessive bestiality] (68) of Muslim men could indicate a proclivity to rely on preconceived French stereotypes of "la débauche musulmane" [Muslim debauchery] (50) rather than taking a more unbiased approach to depicting the Algerian demographic.

To support her point, Auclert describes Muslim fathers as committing an "attentat à la nature" [attack against nature] in selling their daughters to older husbands (48). The Muslim man who participates in this system has "les mœurs les plus dissolues" [the most dissolute morals] (59). Though Auclert admits that the Franks, too, were once a polygamous people, she maintains that in France "la civilisation [a chassé] devant elle la polygamie aussi anti-naturelle que contraire à la dignité humaine" [civilization [chased] away polygamy, which is as unnatural as it is contrary to human dignity] (63). As this is not the case in Algeria, the author therefore calls its residents uncivilized and unnatural by default. She is adamant that this "état de barbarie" [state of barbarism] present amongst Muslim men must cede to "l'état de civilisation" [state of civilization] of which she insinuated France would be the provider (69).

The people opposed to these men are the wives and daughters whom Auclert depicts almost uniquely as victims. These "pauvres femelles" [poor females] (2) are "les êtres…les plus opprimés, les plus privés de liberté" [the most oppressed, the most liberty-deprived beings] (23-24). This sort of language both stems from and evokes a sense of pity, and though it may not be unwarranted, it is important to remember that "pity is a gaze from the top rather than an engagement as an equal with the other"

(Parikh). Additionally, Auclert asserts that Muslim women are abused at the hands of "toutes les races" [all races] and "dans toutes les langues" [in all languages] (2). They are "enterrées vivantes" [buried alive], held under lock and key by jealous and unfaithful husbands, "cloîtrées…comme des carmélites" [cloistered like Carmelites[6]] (24). With this depiction of Muslim women, Auclert implies that they exercise absolutely no free will; they must bend to the wishes of the men who lord over them. It is in this way that she ends up reducing Algerian women to a simple stereotype just as Feydeau did (albeit a stereotype less fetishized and based a little more firmly on reality).

Utilizing this portrayal of Muslim women as prisoners of their husbands, fathers, and religion, Auclert makes a call to action while appealing to French sympathies and justice. "La République n'ira-t-elle pas au secours des petites victimes?" [Will the Republic not come to the rescue of these little victims?] she asks, elevating France's role from authority figure to savior of the damned (50). Already, she claims, Muslim women searching a divorce from their debaucherous and polygamous husbands prefer to seek out "l'impartialité des tribunaux français" [the neutrality of French courts] (82). In this way she establishes a partnership between Muslim women and the freedom that France offers, momentarily ignoring the blatant lack of universal suffrage in her own country to support the idea that France was significantly more progressive than Algeria.

Auclert goes on to expand upon this idea, however, by promoting a sort of solidarity between French and Arab women. She does this by lamenting the disenfranchised status of French women while concurrently condemning the injustices perpetuated against Arab women and children: "Si les femmes avaient en France leur part de pouvoir, elles ne permettraient pas que sur une terre francisée, subsiste une loi

[6] Women belonging to the Carmelite sisterhood, an order of Catholic nuns.

admettant le viol des enfants" [If women in France had their share of power, they would not allow to persist on French territory a law permitting child rape] (49). Similarly, she says that if French women could vote, "il y a longtemps que leurs sœurs africaines seraient délivrées de l'outrageante polygamie" [their African sisters would have been delivered from the offenses of polygamy a long time ago] (63). In blaming the Arab woman's plight on the French woman's inability to vote, Auclert binds these groups together. However, she still maintains a clear imbalance of superior and inferior players in the relationship by posing French women as the saviors of their Arab "sisters."

Throughout Auclert's book, she makes overtly positive comments targeting various races, compliments largely absent from Feydeau's account. The Arab population comports itself "très dignement" [in a very dignified manner] (17); is a "noble race" (33) and "si bien douée" [extremely talented] (64). She describes natives as intelligent, clever: "le tact, la haute raison se rencontrent communément chez les indigènes" [tact and sophisticated reason come together in the Indigenous person] (17). In seeing these attributes, she claims that "on ne peut…dire qu'il est de race inférieure" [one cannot say that he is from an inferior race] (18). She does, however, make one offhand comment that reflects the nuance of her prejudice particularly well: "on est parfois surpris, saisi d'admiration, en entendant la sagesse parler par la bouche du majestueux peuple arabe" [we are sometimes surprised, overcome with admiration, to hear the wisdom spoken by the mouth of the majestic Arab people] (17). This comment evokes the modern-day conversation surrounding racial microaggressions: for example, calling a Black individual "articulate," while potentially well-meaning, indicates the speaker's internalized presumption of Black inferiority. Auclert, while attempting to speak

positively on Algeria's “diverse races” (and while certainly succeeding in speaking more positively than Ernest Feydeau), nevertheless still falls prey to nineteenth-century stereotypes painting non-whites as naturally inferior.

Conclusion

Overall, the depiction of Algerians in 19th century sources of popular culture emphasizes their supposed primitivism and subhuman nature. Feydeau’s account of Algiers and its diverse inhabitants is one of scientific curiosity mixed with an overwhelming conviction of self-superiority. His overt racism, cultural disparagement, and sexualization of native Algerians shows that he did not really see them as human beings. Auclert’s approach is less contemptuous from a racial point of view, but remains condemning from a moral, cultural, and religious one. Even in her relatively more positive account, she portrays Africans–specifically Muslim women and children– as beings without agency, who are innocent and uneducated and therefore in dire need of French guidance to evolve. There is also heavy emphasis from both authors on the need to “Frenchify” Algeria, implying that native management of the country was subpar to the benefits brought by French authority and development. All of these patterns show how deeply white superiority was ingrained in the mindsets and the language of this time period, even if people such as Auclert claimed to keep the interests of the “indigènes” at heart.

Chapter 2: Les Trente Glorieuses

Introduction

In order to help meet the country's increasing labor requirements during the thirty-year economic boom known as "Les Trente Glorieuses," the French state encouraged members of its empire, most often single young men, to immigrate to the mainland for work. This post-war period also witnessed a massive wave of decolonization that swept through France's colonies and liberated multiple African countries from direct French authority. In the aftermath of this, many former colonial subjects made their way to the metropole to profit from new economic opportunities.

In total, the number of foreigners (of both African and non-African origin) living in France increased from 1.6 million in 1946 (Barou) to 3.9 million in 1975 ("France, Portrait"). The most predominant African country initially represented in this migratory wave was Algeria; in the 1960s, demographic patterns expanded to include a substantial percentage of Moroccans ("Immigrés"). The number of sub-saharan African migrants, notably Senegalese in origin, also began increasing during the same time period (Timera et al.). Thus, whereas most French citizens (such as Feydeau and Auclert) were once required to travel in order to interact with Africans, in the mid-1940s the two groups began coming into direct contact on a much wider scale. Immigration to France existed before this period, of course, but the size of the post-war flux was unprecedented and would immediately and drastically change the future of discussions surrounding migration in the country.

This dynamic is duly reflected in media depicting the time period. In Ousmane Sembène's 1966 film *La Noire de…* [Black Girl], the audience observes a tendency continued from Chapter 1 to dehumanize Africans through exoticization, fetishization, and association with labor. The film also introduces the concept of respect being denied to African immigrants through condescending personal pronoun choice. In Lilia Hassaine's novel *Soleil amer* [Bitter sun], immigrants continue to be inextricably linked to labor. Hubertine Auclert's depiction of Muslim Arab men as immoral also makes a reappearance. There is, however, a nuance underlying Hassaine's portrayal of this demographic that Auclert lacks.

La Noire de…

The first source depicting this period's shift in dynamics is the film *La Noire de…*, released in 1966 by Senegalese director Ousmane Sembène. Senegal had officially decolonized by the time of the film's release and therefore was technically no longer French; however, the work was a collaborative French-Senegalese production, and as such I consider it a source of French popular culture. Though the film received mixed acclaim at first, it has been widely recognized as an important piece of postcolonial African filmmaking in the decades since its original publication. The narrative, based on a 1962 short story by Sembène, follows a young Senegalese woman named Diouana who comes to work for a white family in France. Through Diouana's experience in their household, viewers witness the racism and prejudice of white French in the 1960s.

Sembène employs the usage of informal personal pronouns in his film in order to stress the fact that many white French of the time did not see Africans as their equals.

The French language possesses two pronouns meaning "you": the polite and formal "vous," and the more familiar and informal "tu." "Tutoiement," the act of addressing someone as "tu," is often used while speaking to children, and can thus be indicative of authority or superiority on the part of the speaker. Depending on the context, it can also be a sign of disrespect, implying that the speaker does not consider the interlocutor to be their equal. Diouana, the adult Senegalese woman at the center of *La Noire de…*, is only ever referred to as "tu" by her white employers (whom she calls "Madame" [ma'am] and "Monsieur" [sir]). This is a blatantly disrespectful pattern of speech in stark contrast with the fact that she only refers to them as "vous."

Diouana is also disrespected in the way that white French people exoticize her Senegalese culture. One afternoon Madame tells Diouana that they are having guests for lunch, and to "prépare-nous un bon riz au mafé" [make us some good rice with *maafe*][7]. There are multiple levels of exoticization at play in this interaction. First of all, Madame expects Diouana to innately know how to make what she considers a traditional Senegalese dish, despite the fact that Diouana, in her own words, "n'[a] jamais été cuisinière" [was never a cook]. This shows that Madame considers all Senegalese people the same, as possessing the same skills and knowledge and capable of performing the same tasks. The idea that Diouana might not fit into her stereotyped view of the Senegalese population would likely have never occurred to her.

Her mistress' culinary request also confuses Diouana because of the fact that "À Dakar, jamais le cuisinier de Madame n'a préparé du riz" [in Dakar, Madame's cook never made rice]. The fact that Madame requested this dish in France, despite not eating it while she lived in Senegal, shows that she was catering to the expectations of her

[7]A stew or sauce eaten in multiple Central and West African countries

French guests and trying to show off her knowledge of "authentic" Senegalese cooking. The lunch guests' expectations are met and they are satisfied with their "vraie cuisine africaine" [real African cuisine], even though Diouana implies that she intentionally made the dish less spicy than it would be in Senegal (presumably in order to cater to her audience).

The assumption that French people understood Senegalese culture well enough to judge the authenticity of its food shows the level of exoticization present in French society during Les Trente Glorieuses. White French had their own perspective of the country, and they did not want to be confronted with anything that would force them to change this narrow mindset. An offhand comment by one of the lunch guests– "Depuis leur indépendance, les noirs ont beaucoup perdu de leur naturel" [since their independence, the Blacks have lost a lot of their natural character]–reinforces this idea. The fact that the speaker saw all Black people as a monolith, and then felt qualified to speak on their supposed "natural state," shows that exoticism of an imagined Africa (as opposed to an understanding founded on reality) played a profound role in the French consciousness during this time.

The film also shows how easily this exoticization could develop into fetishization, and how this process eliminates African agency. During the same lunch party, Diouana is serving the table when a guest kisses her, saying as explanation, "Je n'ai jamais embrassé une Négresse" [I've never kissed a negress]. This blatant fetishization is clearly unwelcome–someone remarks afterwards "j'ai l'impression qu'elle [Diouana] n'est pas contente" [I get the feeling she [Diouana] isn't happy]–but her feelings are not taken into account against a white Frenchman's desire to *faire la bise* [exchange a cheek kiss] with

an African woman. The man's actions, as well as the fact that Diouana had no real choice to rebuff his advances, speak to the idea that French exoticization and fetishization of Africans stole the latter's agency as well as their humanity.

The character from whom Diouana receives the most disrespect is her female boss, "Madame." While Madame seems to treat Diouana relatively well during their time in Dakar, her behavior completely shifts once they relocate to France. Diouana wonders a few weeks after her arrival: "Pourquoi Madame me traite-t-elle tout le temps?" [Why does Madame shout at me all the time?]. During the climax of the movie, once Diouana has become completely disillusioned with her life in France as well as her employers, her mistress verbally assaults her with a host of insults: "folle" [crazy], "fainéante" [lazy], "ingrate" [ungrateful]. These adjectives depict Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's color-blind racism theory, as Madame is blaming Diouana's personality flaws, rather than her biology, in order to justify her supremacist views. The use of such negative language shows how little respect Madame afforded her employee, and how little she valued Diouana as a human being.

The linking of Africans with servitude, a pattern already observed in Feydeau's *Alger, étude*, also plays a large role in the film. The language that Madame and Monsieur, as well as their white French friends, use to refer to Diouana is often overtly associated with labor: she is called the "bonne" [maid] and the "cuisinière" [cook] multiple times. This is an example of metonymy, a linguistic trope "in which one thing is represented by another that is commonly and often physically associated with it" (Murfin et al. 264). In an echo of verbal patterns employed by Feydeau, Madame uses these metonyms to reduce the whole of Diouana's personhood to one part of her: the work she performs. In

doing so, she displays her refusal to see Diouana as a complete being, choosing instead to keep her locked in a tightly-defined box of "servant" rather than "human."

Continuing this pattern of associating Africans with labor, even though Diouana believed that Madame was bringing her to France in order to take care of the children like she did in Dakar, she quickly finds that she is expected to maintain the apartment and cook for the family as well. Despite the fact that Diouana is, in her own words, neither "cuisinière, ni femme de menage" [cook, nor cleaning lady] the family assumes she will take on these additional duties as soon as she comes to France. In this way, her value becomes even more wrapped up in the services she can perform for French employers the moment she becomes an immigrant: in Senegal she was only a nanny, while in France she is expected to be a cook and maid as well.

Madame's insistence that Diouana dress like a maid re-emphasizes the fact that she sees her as worth nothing more than a servant. When Diouana first arrives in France, she makes a habit of dressing herself in nice dresses, pearl necklaces, and heels. After she has been working in the apartment for a few weeks, Madame makes it known that she has a problem with this: "Tu n'es pas à la noce. Change de tenue !" [You're not going to a wedding. Change your outfit!] and subsequently presents Diouana with an apron to wear instead. Multiple times throughout the film, she also tells Diouana to take off her heels: "enlève tes chaussures, n'oublie pas que tu es une bonne" [Take off your shoes, don't forget that you're a maid]. The fact that Madame continually forces Diouana to change her clothing (and at one point even physically puts the apron on Diouana herself) shows that she is trying to force Diouana into her mental image of a maid.

Madame's insistence that Diouana reduce herself in order to fit Madame's opinion of her only grows more oppressive as the film progresses. At one point she says to Diouana, "si tu ne travailles pas, tu ne mangeras pas" [if you don't work, you won't eat], explicitly linking Diouana's worth to the amount and quality of work that she completes. If Diouana is a servant rather than a human being, then obviously she does not deserve the basic human necessities to live as long as she fails to meet her employers' expectations. Once Diouana understands that this is how her French master and mistress see her, she refers to herself as "leur prisonnière" [their prisoner] and then their "esclave" [slave]. The evolution in the intensity of language she uses to describe herself emphasizes just how unwaveringly French opinions of Africans, particularly African immigrants, were associated with labor during this time, even in a context where the country had legally put an end to slavery and colonization.

Soleil amer

Journalist and author Lilia Hassaine, a third-generation Algerian-French citizen, published her novel *Soleil amer* in 2021. The book tells the fictionalized story of Naja, a woman from Algeria who moves her family to France in the early 1960s after her husband Saïd immigrates there for work. The story takes place over the course of three decades, highlighting the latter portion of the "thirty glorious years" and the difficulties that immigrants faced during that time. Alongside questions of race and immigration, it also discusses how religion and generational differences affected the relationships both between Africans and white French, and within immigrant families themselves during this time period.

One of the central dynamics in *Soleil amer* is the protagonist Naja's friendship with Ève, Naja's white French sister-in-law. Hassaine's representation of their relationship and Ève's background provides certain insights into how white French people reacted to the gradual integration of immigrants into French society during the 60s and 70s. One of the first themes relating to this is that of white French people taking pride in mixing races and classes for appearances rather than in an attempt to effectuate any lasting social change. Take, for example, the circumstances surrounding the meeting of Ève and Kader, her Algerian husband (and Naja's husband Saïd's brother): they first cross paths at a mutual friend's house "qui mettait un point d'honneur au mélange des classes" [who made it a point of honor to mix classes] (Hassaine 41). The fact that this mutual friend, who was incidentally a professor at the Sorbonne, took pride in mixing socioeconomic classes shows that throughout this time period it was gradually becoming more en vogue for left-leaning French people to outwardly express how accepting they were of different cultures and nationalities. Additionally, when it came time for Ève's bourgeois parents to introduce their son-in-law to their friends, they:

> ...étaient ravis de montrer à leur cercle combien ils avaient dépassé l'idéal social et égalitaire pour l'appliquer en actes. Ils étaient fiers d'exposer leur gendre qui, disons-le, "n'avait rien d'un ouvrier" (43).
>
> [...were delighted to show their circle how much they had gone beyond the social and egalitarian ideal to put it into practice. They were proud to show off their son-in-law who, let's face it, "was nothing like a working-class man."]

This shows how white and, more specifically, educated, upper-class white French people sought to diversify their socioeconomic and racial encounters in search for acclaim, not social progress.

Outside of this insulated bourgeois sphere, immigrants were predominantly seen as workers. When the story begins, Naja's husband Saïd has already worked in France for five years and had gone from "manoeuvre" [unskilled laborer] to "ouvrier spécialisé" [skilled worker], but knew that "il n'evoluerait plus" [would not advance any further] (19). This is because he knew his French colleagues and superiors were not likely to ever consider him a potential candidate for a managerial position; he was fixed in their eyes as a low-level worker. Hassaine emphasizes this idea even more explicitly in describing the difficult work-life conditions Saïd and his fellow immigrant laborers faced upon their arrival in France: "années de travail à la chaîne…les bidonvilles…des dortoirs où les ouvriers s'entassaient à six ou sept sans intimité" [years of assembly-line work…the slums…dormitories where the workers were piled six or seven high without any privacy] (20). These men, predominantly coming to work from French colonies right before the wave of decolonization swept through the former empire in the 1960s, were "considérés comme simples outils de travail" [considered as simple work tools] by both their employers and the society around them (20).

Hassaine implies that this treatment weighed on the men, pushing them to abuse alcohol as well as their female family members. One night Saïd comes home early from work and finds Naja still wearing makeup that Ève had loaned her; "d'un geste de rage, il…l'attrapa par les cheveux, tremblant. Il empestait l'alcool" [in a fit of rage, he caught her by the hair, shaking. He reeked of alcohol] (25). Later in the story, Naja reflects on

her husband's behavior towards her as well as her older daughters: "Saïd la frapperait quoi qu'elle fasse. Maryam et Sonia recevaient aussi des coups" [Saïd would hit her no matter what she did. Maryam and Sonia also received blows] (36). This picture of Saïd is completed by commentary from his childrens' point of view: "leur père…partait toujours trop tôt et rentrait toujours trop tard… bousillé par l'alcool" [their father…always left too early and always came home too late… wrecked by alcohol] (60). In emphasizing this character's propensity to violence and alcoholism, Hassaine is reinforcing the idea that the vices of Arab men detrimentally affect their entire families.

Hassaine also puts an emphasis on Saïd's dedication to "Algerian" traditions, which she primarily depicts in a negative light, especially in the way this affects his oldest daughter. Maryam, who is eleven when the family moves to France, is forced by her father to leave high school and get married as soon as she turns fifteen. Despite Maryam's obvious objections to marriage–she attempts to run away after Saïd announces his intentions–Saïd goes about his fatherly duty of finding her a suitable fiancé with enthusiasm. At one point Ève comments internally on how her niece is being treated: "Maryam est une enfant, qu'on mariera comme on vend du bétail" [Maryam is a child that they're marrying like you would sell cattle] (46). Maryam's youth is emphasized once more during the description of her wedding: "on l'avait maquillé avec des fards à paupieres et du rouge à lèvres, on l'avait déguisée en femme" [They had done her makeup with eyeshadow and lipstick, they had disguised her as a woman] (62). In highlighting the fact that Saïd forced his daughter to be a child bride, Hassaine re-emphasizes the idea that Muslim marriage traditions are cruel and immoral.

In these aspects, *Soleil amer* reinforces certain assertions that Hubertine Auclert established in *Les femmes arabes en Algérie*: the portrayal of Muslim men as alcoholic, physically violent, and too willing to put their daughters up for sale. Auclert's opinion that "le mariage Arabe est un viol d'enfant" [Arab marriage is child rape] (Auclert 42) is vividly evoked in both Hassaine's descriptions of Maryam's youth and small size– "elle était si menue, si petite" [she was so slim, so small] (Hassaine 62)–as well as the animalistic simile Ève uses to characterize Saïd's treatment of his daughter. (Recall that Auclert, too, compared the marriage of young Arab women by their fathers to a cattle trade: "La vente d'une jeune fille s'accomplit sans plus de cérémonies que la vente d'une génisse" [The sale of a young girl is completed with no more ceremony than the sale of a heifer] (Auclert 53)). Indeed, it is easy to imagine that Auclert would agree with Ève's opinion that Saïd is a "monstre" [monster] (Hassaine 32).

Though Hassaine appears to concur with Auclert's characterization of Arab and Muslim men, one difference between the representations of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is the inclusion of context. Auclert is rather quick to generalize all Muslim men as violent and immoral, while Hassaine provides more nuance in her description of Saïd. She implies, for example, that he was deeply traumatized by the massacre of Algerians by Parisian police in October of 1961:

> Saïd…n'avait pas oublié…la manifestation à laquelle il avait pris part avec ses amis….Le souvenir des cris, des bousculades, les corps qui s'écrasent contre les pavés, ne l'avait jamais quittée (38).

> [Saïd…hadn't forgotten…the protest in which he'd taken part with his friends…the memory of the cries, the crush of the crowd, the bodies flattened against the cobblestones, had never left him.]

Naja's internal commentary when she first reunites with Saïd in France also suggests that rather than being an inherently violent individual, her husband had changed as a result of the discrimination he had faced in the metropole: "Son mari n'était plus le même" [Her husband was no longer the same] (20). This is then expanded to generalize the entire group of male Algerian immigrants at that time: "ces hommes avaient été coupés de leur famille et des plaisirs de la vie. Ils étaient nombreux à avoir sombré dans l'alcool" [these men had been cut off from their families and the pleasures of life. Many of them had succumbed to alcohol] (20). At a later point in the book, Saïd wins a raffle at a local carnival, but is unable to bring himself to voluntarily accept the prize. What should be a celebratory moment thus turns into a revealing one: "Paralysé par la discrétion qu'on avait exigée de lui pendant tant d'années, ses jambes ne répondaient plus…Il était incapable de se manifester" [Paralyzed by the discretion that had been required of him for so many years, his legs no longer responded…he was incapable of presenting himself] (50). Readers observe through this scene that French people may have tolerated the presence of immigrants during Les Trente Glorieuses, but as a price they were expected to be discreet, polite, silent. Hassaine's decision to add more depth to Saïd's personality is not an attempt to negate his poor behavior, but it does show an effort to see him as human, an effort that Auclert was not equally inclined to exert.

Soleil amer's apparent critique of certain Muslim traditions also differs slightly from that of the nineteenth century. Recall that Auclert made a point to say that Algerian

Muslim traditions were inferior to French ones, and Feydeau asserted that Algerians themselves were opposed to French education, which was apparently too liberal and too advanced to be reconciled with "les mœurs des musulmans" [Muslim customs] (Feydeau 171). Hassaine takes a slightly different approach while discussing Maryam's marriage. She attempts to level the playing field between France's purported "liberal" morals and Algeria's "backwards" ones by reminding her audience that when 15-year-old Maryam was married off by her father in 1968, "marier une fille de quinze ans était autorisé en France" [marrying off a girl of fifteen years was legal in France] (37). In making the clarification that child marriage was legal in both countries, the author seemingly rejects the narrative that Algeria alone should be saddled with the guilt of such immorality.

She remarks in the next sentence, however, that "au même moment, Paris s'embrasait pour la liberté sexuelle" [at the same moment, Paris was impassioned by the fight for sexual freedom] (37). Hassaine therefore complicates the discussion, stating that though France was just as guilty of child marriage as Algeria on a legal level, Paris (here symbolizing France as a whole) was also embracing sexual liberty and therefore shaking off older (read: "backwards") traditions of love and marriage. As she implies that this movement was absent in Algeria, the condemnation of the African country remains in place, although she presents her critique with a more nuanced argument than Auclert or Feydeau.

The novel also explicitly suggests that children seen as "French" are treated better and have better opportunities than children seen as "foreign." One of the story's most interesting dynamics is that between Amir and Daniel, Naja's twin sons born after she reunites with Saïd in France. As Ève and Kader are seemingly unable to have children,

Naja agrees to let her brother- and sister-in-law adopt one of the boys to raise as their own. The boys grow up ignorant of the fact that they are twins, instead believing the family narrative that they are cousins.

At one point post-childbirth while Naja is debating whether she is prepared to give up one of her sons, she imagines all that he could profit from as the child of a French woman, including "la promesse d'un avenir sans nuages. [Naja] voyait la liberté qu'il aurait, les rêves qu'il saurait réaliser. Avoir le choix, tout était là" [the promise of a cloudless future. [Naja] saw the freedom he would have, the dreams he would be able to make come true. Having a choice, everything came down to that] (27). As the two children, Daniel and Amir, grow, the former's imagined future becomes reality, and the societally-imposed differences between the twins become more and more apparent. Daniel, considered "French" thanks to his white mother and upper-class status, has access to education, job opportunities, and an elevated social rank from which Amir, a recognized immigrant, is excluded.

It does not take long for Daniel to figure this out. During a conversation with his adoptive grandfather, who explains to him that he can be anything he wants to be when he grows up, the three-year-old Daniel asks, "Amir aussi, il pourra tout avoir, comme moi ?" [Amir too, can he have everything, like me?] (65). His white grandfather hesitates for a moment, then replies: "Non, Daniel. Pour Amir, ce sera sûrement plus difficile" [No, Daniel. For Amir, it will surely be more difficult] (66). And it is, effectively, more difficult for Amir. While Daniel squanders the expensive university education and lucrative job opportunities made available to him by his wealthy family, Amir is forced to work back-breaking hours to put himself through school and support his mother. This

novel therefore shows that French distrust and disdain of immigrants were so embedded in the society of this time that even children who shared the same DNA were treated differently because of constructed perceptions around their origins.

The story of Nour, Naja's youngest daughter, offers another perspective on French representation of second-generation immigrants. Nour was born in Algeria but made the move to France when she was five, thus spending most of her childhood and adolescence surrounded by French assumptions of her Arab family. As she grows older, she often uses her mother as a scapegoat for her disdain. She is contemptful of the slow life Naja leads, commenting, "il y avait…tant de mondes à découvrir, mais Naja coupait chaque jour ses navets et ses carottes, l'air serein" [there were so many worlds to discover, but every day Naja cut her turnips and her carrots serenely] (83). Through Nour's internal monologue in this passage, it becomes clear that she resents what she sees as her family's shortcomings, most likely basing this dissatisfaction on what she sees as a dissonance between Naja's everyday life and a more "French" way of living.

Alongside subtle discrimination that she subsequently internalizes, Nour is also witness to overt French contempt of her family. One day when she accompanies Naja to pick up some papers from the social security office:

> A l'accueil, une secrétaire toute fripée, un genre de raisin sec à lunettes, les reçut avec un mépris tel que Nour eut du mal à se contenir. La femme leur demanda d'epeler le nom de chacun des membres de la famille, *y compris les enfants décédés,* levant les yeux au ciel chaque fois que Nour lui donnait un prenom. Elle ponctuait chacune de ses phrases d'un soupir, *mon Dieu, mais vous êtes combien*

> *?*... Da sa voix de crécelle, elle posait des questions inutiles, sur la profession…de la mère, qui était femme de ménage *comme tout le monde ici, décidément* (111). [At the front desk, a wrinkled secretary, a sort of raisin with glasses, received them with such disdain that Nour had a hard time containing herself. The woman asked them to spell the name of each family member, *including deceased children,* rolling her eyes every time Nour gave her a name. She punctuated each of her sentences with a sigh, *My God, how many of you are there?*...With her rattle-like voice, she asked useless questions about the profession of the mother, who was a cleaning lady *like everyone here, that's for sure.*]

Nour, who had so thoroughly internalized this sort of scorn that she had been exposed to since arriving in France, "en voulait à sa mère d'avoir fait cinq enfants, chaque fois c'était une torture d'épeler un à un les prénoms *exotiques* de ses frères et soeurs" [resented her mother for having had five children, every time it was a torture to spell out one by one the *exotic* names of her brothers and sisters] (112). It is this "episode dégradant" [degrading episode] that proved to be her last straw; on the day she turns eighteen, Nour leaves the family home and does not return. This shows how French ideas of immigrants could be reabsorbed into immigrant families themselves, turning children against their parents because of their failure to live up to a set of externally-imposed expectations.

Conclusion

The sources analyzed in this chapter make it clear that despite the social progress supposedly indicated by decolonization, the white French population continued speaking

very pejoratively about and towards non-white immigrants as they began arriving in France post-World War II. They continued to exoticize and fetishize non-white individuals even as the context shifted from Africa to France. During this period, immigrants continued to be seen as vessels to complete labor rather than human beings. Additionally, Islam, the predominant religion of African-originating immigrants, continued to be portrayed as completely incompatible with existing French values.

However, the shift in the perspective that appears during depictions of Les Trente Glorieuses allows Africans to assume the more central roles they were previously denied. Had Diouana and Naja appeared in the sources from Chapter 1, for example, it is reasonable to assume that they would have been depicted with no nuance and as having no agency. The person telling their story would have either fetishized or infantilized them, either way reducing them to a simple stereotype.

In Chapter 2, however, the creation of popular culture has opened up to include perspectives other than those of traditionally white French. As such, Ousmane Sembène, Senegalese himself, had the opportunity to portray the real struggle of a Senegalese woman struggling under the weight of racism in "postcolonial" France. Lilia Hassaine pulled from her own family origins in order to portray the trials of a first-generation immigrant navigating the social tumult of the '60s and '70s in a complex, multifaceted way. The depiction of Africans has evolved so that they, once relegated to a simple scientific subject or fetish *by virtue of who was telling their story,* can now be the main characters, and enjoy the nuance that accompanies such a role. Negative French opinion of Africanity has not necessarily improved, and in both the film and the novel, racism and prejudice take extreme tolls on all main characters. However, the shift between

19th-century colonialism and Les Trente Glorieuses in who creates the stories being told speaks to a positive evolution in the overall depiction of African people.

Chapter 3: Modern Day

Introduction

This chapter draws on three films from the contemporary era, which I loosely define as beginning in the early 1990s with the coming of age of the first-generation French children of Les Trente Glorieuses-era immigrants. Each of the films discussed in this chapter demonstrates both a positive evolution in language referring to Africans and a continuity in racist semantic connotations. In many cases, the actual words used are changing to be less overtly prejudicial, but are being replaced with terms that–while not openly racist–have been racialized by society. This means that the conversations surrounding Africans and African immigration are gradually being couched in new language, while still resting on the same arguments as they have since Chapter 1.

Chapter 3 also expands the discussion of what it means to be French in a modern context. The demographic changes France has undergone over the past century mean that the historical definition of French people as white and Catholic is no longer the only acceptable one. There has been pushback against this, however, as primarily right-wing actors fight to reserve the concept of Frenchness for white individuals. As most of the African-originating immigrants in France are non-white, the refusal to allow them the opportunity to choose a French identity circles back to racism.

This phenomenon is broached in all three cinematic sources covered in this chapter. The 2015 film *Fatima* establishes a positive linguistic evolution regarding

personal pronoun choice. However, the narrative re-emphasizes the idea that labor is the main lens through which French society views African immigrants. The 2014 blockbuster *Samba* perpetuates the stereotype of Black immigrants as unskilled workers and addresses the idea that French opinions of immigrants are influenced by perceptions of geographic origin. The 1995 cult classic *La Haine* [Hate] makes the "vous" versus "tu" overcorrection clear, a culmination of the evolution tracked since Chapter 2. Finally, abusive language choice by authority figures highlights the unstable conditionality of the respect that French society affords migrants.

Fatima

The 2015 film "Fatima" was directed by Moroccan-born Philippe Faucon, and is based on the semi-autobiographical writings of Moroccan author and poet Fatima Elayoubi (Goodfellow). The film was well-received by critics, taking home the prize for Best Film at the 41st César award ceremony and earning Faucon the prize for Best Adapted Screenplay. The central narrative centers on a single mother of Moroccan origin living in France with her two daughters; she works temporary jobs as a cleaner and struggles to feel at home in her second country due to her lack of French proficiency. She is overworked to the point of exhaustion and as a result eventually suffers an injury at work. This grants her a leave of absence, during which she begins to express herself through a personal diary (written in Arabic, her native language). Throughout the story, Fatima is shown navigating turbulent relationships with her children, her immediate community of fellow Maghrebi immigrants, and the various French personnages she encounters (mostly employers and doctors).

This film emphasizes a few language patterns in an effort to portray the way Fatima is received by her French contemporaries. The first calls back the question of personal pronoun usage discussed in Chapter 2. Each of Fatima's various employers formally address her as "vous" and not "tu," even when they are dissatisfied with her or her work. This suggests a shift in what society deems as appropriate language to use in producing popular culture; the movie implies that it is no longer acceptable for white French to refer to immigrants as "tu," which is a marked evolution from the representation shown in *La Noire de…* Now even immigrants, whom France has historically held in contempt, merit the small amount of verbal respect and professionalism that "vous" accords. Of course, this depiction is not necessarily reflective of reality, and should not be mistaken as representing a universal truth. But the fact that this piece of media decides to enforce such a display of respect suggests an emerging cultural value, if not in practice then at least in theory, which did not exist as a principle fifty years prior.

Fatima's self-usage of negative adjectives simultaneously shows how French society perceives her, and to what extent that negative external opinion weighs upon her. During a conversation with one of her daughters, Fatima utilizes words such as "menteuse" [liar] and "voleuse" [thief] to describe how her employers see her. Through this line of dialogue, it is made imminently clear to both Fatima and the viewer that even after having made the conscious decision to hire her, her employers almost always hold her in suspicion. This could be attributed to a multitude of reasons–her Maghrebi origin, her Muslim status (she wears *la voile* [literally "the veil," a hijab/headdress] in public at

all times), her unease speaking French–all of which mark her as existing outside of the acceptable (read: white, Christian) French national identity.

Fatima also emphasizes how modern French people tend to overlook the individuality of Africans, especially within a context of labor. Towards the end of the film, Fatima has a conversation with one of her doctors (and a fellow Arabic speaker) during which she reads an entry from her journal aloud. In the passage, she continually refers to herself and her fellow *femmes de menage* [cleaning ladies] as "some Fatima":

> That [French] woman could not go to work without some Fatima. She couldn't buy perfume or fine clothes without some Fatima….Every day that woman entrusts her keys, her home, her kids, to some Fatima... She comes home at night to a house…cleaned by Fatima.

Her emphasis of the phrase highlights her impression that French employers–in Fatima's case, French women–see immigrant laborers as faceless and nameless. The individuals who make up this mass of sameness are not worth being differentiated between. Fatima, and her colleagues of similar origin, are seen simply as vessels to complete a service, not human beings possessing individual names or personalities. They are the economic cogs who ensure that the country runs easily for the people who hire them–people belonging, for the most part, to a specific social echelon, fitting a specific demographic, and subscribing to a specific ideological definition of "Frenchness."

Such an emphasis on servitude ultimately denotes a refusal to see immigrants as anything other than laborers. This genre of representation means that any attempt to treat these individuals as something other than a body to work for French employers is rendered null. In this way, it is reminiscent of *Alger, étude,* in which Feydeau

systematically categorizes Algiers' various ethnic groups by the jobs they perform. Society acknowledges the utility of immigrant labor, while both generalizing and dehumanizing the people who perform it.

The film also highlights the important role that language fluency plays in the respect that French people afford African immigrants. During another conversation with the aforementioned doctor, Fatima makes the following remark:

> My daughter and her friends live in a world that's French, and I don't speak French. Which is why we are looked down upon. We are not respected. It's destroying our children. They want to be proud. How can they be proud?

With this comment, Fatima explicitly acknowledges the fact that being unable to speak French negatively influences how the French people with whom she interacts view her (and, subsequently, her children). This film therefore establishes the idea that language mastery is a necessity for French people to afford immigrants respect. Without a sufficient level of French competency ("sufficient" of course being subjective), immigrants are "looked down upon" and continually disrespected by the society in which they live.

Samba

The 2014 film *Samba* profited from a notably large budget–approximately 14 million euros– due to previous box-office success enjoyed by its directors, Olivier Nakache and Éric Toledano. The movie tells the fictional story of the eponymous main character, an immigrant from Senegal who finds himself served an OQTF[8] after ten years

[8] Obligation de quitter le territoire française, or an "obligation to leave French territory." The French government's official eviction notice.

of working in France to support his family back home. Typical of a big-budget blockbuster, the movie is "highly polished [and] widely appealing," catering what is often a polemic subject–an illegal immigrant's struggle for citizenship– to as wide an audience as possible (Debruge 2014).

As soon as *Samba* introduces its main character, the audience observes that Samba's workplace–a dishwashing room in the back of a restaurant– is staffed entirely by Black workers. As the film unfolds and viewers see Samba interact with some of these individuals, they come to understand that the majority of workers are of immigrant (largely African) origin. This racial depiction of restaurant-employee demographics is reflective of the current French job market. According to a 2021 report by the French research institution Dares, 22 percent of restaurant-related jobs in France are held by immigrants, a large overrepresentation of the actual foreign population (which accounts for about ten percent of the entire population) (Jullien, Alibert). Thus, *Samba*'s portrayal of immigrants in this way is relatively realistic; however, it also helps illustrate how prevalent the image of immigrants as laborers is in the French psyche. This points to a stereotype that is very easily (and very often) over-emphasized as a taken-for-granted trope, leading to the continuation, rather than the challenge, of the idea of immigrants as simple workers.

Similarly to *Fatima*, Samba is almost entirely addressed as "vous" and "Monsieur" by the white French he comes into contact with, even when he is being held in a detention center or filing paperwork as a recognized *clandestin* [undocumented immigrant]. Compared to the way in which Diouana, another Senegalese immigrant, is referenced in *La Noire de…*, this shows a significant evolution in the way immigrants are

portrayed in French media. This fictional representation, as previously mentioned, is by no means indicative of an absolute rule. French people did not miraculously start addressing every immigrant as "vous" in the period between the 1960s and 2010s. However, we must be able to acknowledge this reality while *also* acknowledging a clear evolution in the way that pop culture depicts a group that has historically been disrespected. This evolution can and should be interpreted as indicative of gradually-changing cultural values, even if these values are not yet universally applicable.

Samba also shows that race and country of origin are important factors shaping French opinions of immigrants. The titular character's friend Walid, who hails from Algeria, intentionally rebrands himself upon his arrival to France, changing his name and backstory in order to present himself as a Brazilian named Wilson. When Samba interrogates him as to the reason behind this choice, the conversation goes as follows:

> Quand je suis arrivé à Paris, je galérais... Je suis tombé sur un groupe de brésiliens sympas. Et je me suis rendu compte que pour le boulot, les nanas, tout… tout est plus simple quand tu dis que t'es brésilien. Alors je suis devenu Wilson.
>
> [When I got to Paris, I had a hard time... I fell in with a group of nice Brazilian guys. And I realized that for work, for chicks, for everything…everything is simpler when you say that you're Brazilian. So I became Wilson.]

The fact that Walid's experiences while presenting as a Brazilian were more desirable than his experiences as an Algerian suggests that the French hold a prejudice against North African immigrants that does not extend to South Americans. This opens up a conversation about actual versus perceived race as it pertains to French acceptance of

outsiders; obviously Wilson's race was no different than Walid's, but it was only accepted when people believed he was from Brazil. What matters, therefore, is not necessarily the fact that a foreigner may be non-white, but *where* that non-whiteness is from. We can therefore infer that only certain non-white immigrants are willingly adopted into the nationally-constructed idea of "Frenchness."

La Haine

La Haine is one of the best-known French films of the modern era, still considered "une oeuvre culte" [a cult classic] thirty years after its debut (Romani 2023). The movie was created during an era when France was interested in "banlieue culture," in both aesthetic and political terms. Following the post-war boom in immigration, there was a widespread governmental push to erect affordable housing (also known as HLMs) on the outskirts of large cities, in which to funnel bodies freshly-arrived on French soil. Amidst other revolutionary currents in the 80s and 90s, and following the subsequent degradation of said facilities, people across the country began taking note of the discrimination against those who called the *cité* home–a population overwhelmingly immigrant and lower-class in nature.

La Haine was born out of this atmosphere of immigration- and race-focused political activism. It follows three friends from an immigrant *cité* outside of Paris as they grapple with the effects of police brutality on their community. Vinz, a young Jewish man harboring deep animosity towards the police, is both the friend and the foil of Hubert, a Black pacifist unwilling to come into direct confrontation with the law. Saïd, their friend of Arab origin, completes the trio and often plays the role of mediator between the others. As the friends make their way through both their home banlieue and a section of Paris,

the phrase “jusqu’ici tout va bien” [so far, so good] is repeated multiple times, forcing viewers to reckon with the unsustainable precarity of the current socio-political climate.

One of the first phrases illustrating the French perspective of Africans in *La Haine* is thrown by Hubert at a white reporter. The journalist, looking to interview *banlieue* locals about the anti-police riots which took place the night prior, calls out to the trio of protagonists from a van. All three young men take offense to this, and in order to incentivize the woman and her camera crew to leave, Hubert yells, “C’est pas Thoiry ici!” [This isn’t Thoiry!] When Vinz asks what “Thoiry” is, Hubert responds, “un zoo qu’on visite en voiture” [a zoo you visit in a car**].** Hubert thus explicitly says that he interprets French fascination with his community as equivalent to people observing animals in a drive-in safari. This shows how people from outside the *banlieue* have made a habit of making Hubert feel alien, like he does not really belong to the same world as they do. They see him as something to study in order to understand, not as a fellow human being. Even a century after the publication of Ernest Feydeau’s racist ethnography, this interaction shows how white French are still attempting to analyze the “foreign population” as “other.” The curiosity that prompts this sort of scientific study may be well-meaning, but it remains demeaning and dehumanizing. When curiosity takes the place of humanity, one group necessarily places itself in a role of superiority over the other. It is equally important to note Hubert’s retort, however. His refusal to accept the reporter’s ogling shows that unlike in Feydeau’s time, contemporary would-be scientific subjects have gained enough enfranchisement to tell unwelcome outsiders to get lost (and to see this wish respected).

One particular exchange that occurs when the friends are in Paris engenders a couple of discussions on the interpretation of immigrants in French society. At one point after the friends arrive in the city, they find themselves in an art show, eating hors d'oeuvres amongst a solidly bourgeois group of gallery-goers. An altercation eventually breaks out when the friends try to flirt with a pair of young white women, one of whom ends up saying to Saïd, "Vous êtes agressif. Comment vous voulez qu'on vous respecte?" [You're aggressive. How do you expect us to respect you?]. It has been well established by now that the "vous versus tu" issue has evolved since the postwar period. Now, however, *La Haine* portrays it as having overcorrected itself. White French now insult immigrants while incorporating "vous" in the slight. The respect that the word is supposed to denote is absent; it suggests that the speaker is going through the motions rather than actually addressing her internal prejudice. "Vous êtes agressif" is still a condemnation indicative of deep-seated disdain, even if the speaker is employing a more respectful pronoun. The usage of "vous" is the most basic display of respect in the French language and is entirely necessary for media to depict immigrants as equals, but its usage alone is not sufficient to confirm profound cultural change. The implications of language used, not surface-level denotation, must also be taken into account.

The second part of the woman's phrase– "Comment vous voulez qu'on vous respecte ?" speaks to the level of conditional respect at play in the interaction. In saying this, the woman acknowledges that "on" (white French) *do not* respect "vous" (Africans, immigrants, non-white French of African origin). In her eyes, respect is something to be earned by Afro-descendants, not freely given. The group's collective search for respect is addressed and recognized as being attainable, but only from a bottom-up approach. It is

not the responsibility of French people to make an internal change, it's up to the immigrants to make a behavior change and conduct themselves in ways more worthy of respect. This indicates the lingering refusal on the part of French society to self-analyze and reflect on long-standing internal biases, instead choosing to continue shifting the blame of inequality on "them."

La Haine therefore displays the dichotomy of modernization currently at play as shown through popular culture. A small evolution illustrated by some steps (notably basic verbal respect) in the right direction has taken place, yet there remains an intense and occasionally violent element of racism, prejudice, and discrimination. This discrimination comes from all corners of society: bourgeois critics attending an art show, a taxi driver refusing to service the trio, and the police forces in both Paris and their home *banlieue*, for example. There is a specific hypocrisy present in the language of Paris' police force, however, that warrants closer inspection. When the friends first arrive in the city and Saïd asks a policeman for directions, the officer addresses him as "Monsieur," a label seeming to both surprise and please Saïd. However, the hypocrisy of the police is put on full display once Saïd and Hubert have been taken into custody and are violently subjected to both physical and verbal mistreatment. One of the aforementioned policemen says while taking Saïd into custody, "Tu bouges pas, mon gars," [You stay put, buddy]. In using a term such as "mon gars," which is often indicative of a more familiar, affectionate relationship between speakers, the man is mockingly flaunting his position of authority. He knows his social status is much higher than the Arab teenager's, and therefore does not feel any obligation to treat him with respect. Furthermore, over the course of their abuse, both Saïd and Hubert are called "gonzesse" [little girl], "fils de chiennes" [son of a

bitch] and “fils de pute” [son of a whore]. All of these terms are used in the interest of completely ravaging the intended targets’ integrity and as such indicate a total lack of basic human respect on the part of the police.

This goes to further the point on “conditional respect” previously highlighted; one policeman may respectfully address someone of African origin, while his colleagues (or potentially even the same officer in a different situation) is entirely capable of reverting to overtly racist and discriminatory behavior. This sort of comportment belies the purported advancements in equality supposedly ushered in by the modern era. In this way, the movie continues to emphasize the idea that immigrants are only seen as worthy of respect as long as they know their place. As soon as they step outside the very thin category of “acceptable” behavior, the police (representing the entire French nation) feel entitled to strip them of their humanity. If respect is conditional then it is not fundamental, meaning it is not inherent within the way society views and treats the concerned group.

La Haine also suggests that in the modern day, French people place more emphasis on immigration status than race while depicting Africans and Afro-descendants. This may be because “immigrant” is easier to “other” than all the potential races of the world. For example, the police are shown as grouping all “banlieusards” [*banlieue* residents] together and holding them in contempt, whether they’re Black or Arab or Jewish, simply because of the immigrant community they come from. Both Hubert and Saïd are called “la malaise des banlieues” [the *banlieue* disease] and “race de suceuses” [race of cock suckers] despite being from different ethnicities, because they come from the same hometown.

Finally, this film shows that if French society cannot define immigrants by their occupations, as it has historically done, it will resort to judging them by their (mis)behavior. The word "casseurs" [troublemakers] is used two separate times over the course of the movie–first by a newscaster describing the anti-police protest preceding the film, secondly by one of the abusive Parisian police officers in an effort to insult his victims. Describing the aforementioned protest as an "émeute" [riot] instead of using a word less negatively charged ("manifestation" [protest], for example) also shows how French media often focuses on the actions of protesting immigrants rather than the injustices they are acting against. The same abusive officer previously mentioned uses the word "racaille" [scum, rabble] while addressing Hubert and Saïd, making it clear that to him, an individual representing the authority of the French state, all banlieue youth are uniquely defined by their unacceptable behavior.

In the spring of 2020, *La Haine* director Mathieu Kassovitz confirmed the rumor that he would be adapting his film for the stage. "La Haine: the musical" is set to open in Paris in October of 2024. It is clear that the movie's continued relevance in pop culture speaks to a continuation of the social problems it discusses, problems intimately linked to the way in which the white French population views the overwhelmingly immigrant and racial minority of the banlieue. Kassovitz himself purposefully calls attention to the fact that France's social climate has not sufficiently advanced in the years since 1995; according to the theater hosting the play's debut en scène, the director's goal is to "souligne le caractère éminemment actuel du film" [highlight the eminently current nature of the movie] ("La Haine"). To more explicitly emphasize the idea of continuity, the strap line of the play's promotional posters alludes to the film's ominous mantra,

"Jusqu'ici tout va bien." Thirty years later, the phrase now reads, "Jusqu'ici rien n'a changé" [So far, nothing's changed] ("La Haine").

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have observed that despite certain advancements in the language surrounding immigrants, modern linguistic patterns largely retain a sense of white superiority over the African-originating "other." The effect of this on French ideas of national identity is not to be understated. Reserving the right to "Frenchness" for those who fit a very specific set of criteria has and will continue to result in non-white immigrants perpetually existing in the role of "outsider," a dangerous pattern to perpetuate in an increasingly polarized world.

However, these sources also show that French Afro-descendants are continuing the process begun in Chapter 2 of reclaiming their right to speak, to tell their stories, and to perform "Frenchness" in their own way. Africans are now not just the main characters of their stories, but also the heroes who can realistically dream of triumphing over French prejudice. Fatima takes French classes in order to read her daughter's name on the list of university students who passed their first medical exam. Samba fights to gain the right to French soil, and he fights to stay in the country even after he is denied. The teenagers in *La Haine* critique French police because they know, as residents and citizens of France, they deserve to be treated with humanity rather than looked down upon with disdain. These various reclamations demonstrate that France is, indeed, a country with an evolving sense of self, and that popular culture remains one of the most important mediums through which to transmit one's "Frenchness."

Conclusion

There are multiple overarching themes that appear in the descriptive vocabulary from these three time periods. Whether these themes are depicted through vocabulary or figurative language, they primarily serve to paint Africans as inferior to whites. As such, most of the themes coalesce around one common factor, both a cause and a consequence: white French refusal to see Africans as able and worthy of claiming Frenchness.

Furthermore, the portrayals transmitted through linguistic tropes such as synecdoche and metonymy subjugate the African "other" to the scrutiny of the colonizer through simultaneous comparison and contrast. In utilizing tropes that paint the "indigène" as just similar enough to the Frenchman, while at the same time isolating and highlighting his fatal differences, white French commentators refuse to valorize their African counterparts as human beings. The employment of such a rhetorical straw man argument reduces African individuals and communities to one or two aspects (often overtly racist or blatantly exaggerated), thereby denying the concerned groups the full scope of nuanced personhood.

Another layer of figurative language at play in these sources is the construction of dehumanizing semantic fields. Among other themes, white French authors alternately use associated lexical terms to emphasize Africans' supposed animality, propensity for certain negative traits (such as servitude, alcoholism, and violence), and inherent subordinate nature. In so doing, they more fully dehumanize the concerned communities.

All of these examples of figurative language disenfranchise Africans of self-determination and additionally deform their personhood so that the Frenchman is able to reconstruct “the African” as his own creation: simple, primitive, and most importantly, forever inferior.

The concrete effects of such pejorative linguistic patterns have been made eminently clear in the string of immigration laws France has passed over the past few decades. Of the nearly three dozen immigration-centered laws that have been passed since 1980, most have ultimately served to tighten the qualifications immigrants are required to meet in order to qualify for French citizenship (Harzoune). The most recent addition in this long lineup, the Loi Immigration 2023 [2023 Immigration Law] (also referred to as the Loi Darmanin after its sponsor, Minister of the Interior Gérald Darmanin), has faithfully followed suit and “fragilisé la condition des étrangers en France” [destabilized the condition of foreigners in France] in numerous ways (de Wenden). The most notable restrictions proposed touched on family regroupment and immigrants’ access to social services.

Nevertheless, the overarching evolution of language observed in the previous chapters speaks to the gradual progression of attitudes circulating in French society towards inclusion. While this progress is slow and nonlinear, it should still be acknowledged that social conventions have, on the whole, improved since the 19th century. For example, it is increasingly unacceptable to use the sort of blatantly racist vocabulary that was so prevalent in Ernest Feydeau’s time. The opportunity to participate in and create popular culture has also widely expanded over the past few decades to include non-white and non-French-originating creators, meaning that the French public is

gradually being exposed to new viewpoints (such as Ousmane Sembène's *La Noire de…*). Thanks in part to these advancements, some small linguistic steps forward have been taken, to include the increased utilization of "vous" to address non-white actors (*Samba*, *Fatima*), who, in turn, refuse to accept the exoticizing and fetishizing ogling of French onlookers (*La Haine*).

To come back to the legal sphere, we also note progress. The French Parliament approved the Loi Darmanin on December 19th, 2023. However, just a month later, on January 25th, 2024, the Conseil Constitutionnel[9] decided that significant parts of the law were unconstitutional. For example, the restriction of family reunification was judged to be illegal, as was the termination of second-generation immigrants' automatic access to *jus soli*. This small judicial refusal to deny migrants' rights to pursue French citizenship mirrors the evolution in the cultural sphere that this project has delved into.

All in all, the definition of "Frenchness" is changing. Though its meaning is and will remain contested in the social sphere, the evolution of linguistic patterns used in works of French popular culture to address Africans, African immigrants, and French Afro-descendants incontestably proves that the conceptual rigidity of "Frenchness" is gradually becoming more inclusive. Whereas in Ernest Feydeau's day being fully French was an identity restricted to white Catholic males, individuals who do not fit into that narrow mold have fought for centuries to represent themselves and their communities as worthy of the same respect. The linguistic patterns observed in this project bear witness to their success, as well as the social progress slowly but surely making its way through French society.

[9] A body that serves to review the constitutionality of legislation voted by the French Parliament and Senate

Inscrites dans l'histoire nationale, [les africains] contribuent…à dessiner le nouveau visage de la société française contemporaine.

[Inscribed in the nation's history, [Africans] are helping to sketch the new face of contemporary French society.]

Excerpt from *Les Africains en France* by Timera et al.

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