

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Daratt / Dry Season (2006)

Mahamat-Saleh Haroun (1961-)

OVERVIEW

Auteur Mahamat-Saleh Haroun is Chad's first feature film director. Born in 1961 in Abéché, Chad, Haroun studied cinema at the Conservatoire Libre du Cinéma in Paris, then journalism at the Institut Technique in Bordeaux. Haroun has produced several documentaries and short films. He has produced eight feature films, including *Bye Africa* (1999), *Abouna* (2002), *Daratt* (2006), *Sex, Okra and Salted Butter* (2008), *A Screaming Man* (2010), *Grigris* (2013), *A season in France* (2017), and *Lingui, Sacred Bonds* (2021). For a brief period, from February 2017 to February 2018, Haroun held the political post of Minister of Tourism, Culture and Crafts in Chad. Haroun's films have won him several awards and international accolades. In 2011, Haroun sat on the jury for the main competition that Robert De Niro chaired at the Cannes Film Festival. In 2012, Haroun was selected as a president of the 28th International Love Film Festival at Mons:

Film *Daratt* is a very slow, uneventful film about what it takes for brothers and sisters to arrive at peace when years of internal belligerence have built up resentment and revenge in people's hearts. The film develops such themes as war, revenge, love, redemption, and more. *Daratt* won multiple prizes, among which are the Yennenga Bronze Stallion and Best Photo Award at 2007 FESPACO, in Burkina Faso, the Special Jury Prize at the 63rd Venice International Film Festival, the UNESCO Award and the Amnesty International Award.

Background *Daratt*, the film's title, which means "dry season" in Chadian Arabic, is a metaphor for a country that, scarred by fifty years of war and the depletion of its human resources, remains a vast, dusty desert where no sap of life seems to have any hope of flowing. *Daratt* is also about the dryness of the Chadian people's hearts, hardened and dried out by 50 years of war and a vicious circle of revenge. But the film is not all about despair. Indeed, Haroun ignites a glimmer of hope in his young, main character. The making of *Daratt*, as Haroun explained, was a very trying experience. The film crew was surprised by the nth rebel incursion in N'Djamena, the capital, and the decision to continue shooting was made after serious consideration of the risks that continued to keep the crew and the actors uneasy until the end of the filming. Haroun says jokingly that the uneasiness under which *Daratt* was filmed added a zest of reality to the film. Ali Barkai (Atim) was in his first role as an actor. As for the character of Youssouf Djaoro (Nassara), the actor had already excelled in other roles prior to this film. This 96-minute drama in French and Chadian Arabic and shot in Abéché and N'Djamena was produced by Goï Goï Productions.

CHARACTERS

The grandfather A Chadian old man, who entrusts his grandson with the mission of seeking and killing the man who killed his son during the civil war

Atim A seventeen-year-old boy, who seeks to avenge his father's death

Nassara A war criminal, who has become a baker and ends up being a surrogate father to Atim

SYNOPSIS

The inhabitants of a small Chadian village have their ears glued to their short-wave radios, waiting to hear the fate of the civil war criminals tried by the Truth and Justice Commission. The whole village is shocked when the Commission decides on a general amnesty for all war criminals. Protests erupt in the village, punctuated by gunshots and the sound of soldiers' boots chasing down the dissenters. For Atim's blind grandfather, whose son, Atim's father, was murdered seventeen years ago, the commission's decision is a great injustice that must be rectified. Hence, the grandfather entrusts his son's pistol, which he has kept

in a white handkerchief since his son's death, to his grandson, Atim, so that he can find and punish his father's murderer. With his grandfather's blessing, Atim sets off from his small village to N'Djamena, in search of Nassara, his father's murderer. In N'Djamena, Atim finally locates Nassara, who has rebuilt his life, become a devout Muslim, converted to a baker and married a charming woman far younger than himself. Nassara also does charity work, distributing bread every day to the town's poor children. Atim arrives at Nassara's bakery just as the baker is giving bread away to the beggars. Nassara, who believes Atim is looking for work, offers him a job as a baker's apprentice in his workshop, promising to make him a successful bread maker. However, driven by his desire for revenge, Atim sabotages Nassara's work and makes several attempts to shoot Nassara, but lacks the courage to pull the trigger. Nassara's teaching, which combines patience and firmness, succeeds in making Atim an excellent baker. Just as Atim begins to fall for Nassara's young wife, Aïcha, the master baker, who has settled comfortably into his role as Atim's surrogate father, asks to meet Atim's father, because he wants the latter's permission to adopt the boy. Atim takes Nassara to his village to see his grandfather. There, Nassara realizes that Atim is the son of a man he murdered during the civil war. When the blind grandfather orders Atim to carry out his mission of vengeance by killing Nassara, Atim fires two bullets into the air and tricks his blind grandfather into believing that Nassara is dead. Then the boy, guiding his grandfather by the hand, walks away from Nassara, lying in the desert sand, confused and ashamed.

SCENES

Listening to Commission's report In a small Chadian village, the entire population listens to the radio. The results of the Justice and Truth Commission on crimes committed during the civil war will be announced soon. Atim and his blind grandfather are also among those waiting for the commission's report. The commission announces that in order to break the cycle of violence, it has decided on a general amnesty for the whole country. Atim turns off the radio, visibly frustrated. He does not want to listen to the rest of the report. Atim tells his grandfather that he cannot understand this injustice. The old man remains silent. Clamors of protest denouncing impunity arise in the village. Gunfire erupts. Soldiers charge after the demonstrators.



Go avenge your father The grandfather unwraps a pistol from a white cloth. He hands it to Atim, telling him that it is his father's gun. The grandfather tells Atim to go and find Nassara and avenge his father. The grandfather tells Atim to be careful, because Nassara is a dangerous man. Atim sets off on his mission, with his grandfather's blessings. In a monologue, Atim tells us that his name means 'orphan'. He explains that his father was killed before he was born and that his father's killer was never brought to justice.

Atim finds his father's murderer The next day, Atim starts looking for Nassara's whereabouts. Atim learns that Nassara runs a bakery in a district of Ndjamen and goes there. Atim sees Nassara leave his house for the mosque, and Atim follows him. Atim watches as Nassara distributes bread to young beggars gathered in front of his bakery. Nassara approaches Atim. They size each other up. Nassara puts an electrolarynx to his throat and asks Atim what he wants. He replies that he is not here for charity. Nassara tells Atim to come back the next day if he wants a job. Nassara has competition. The truck of a rival bakery, *La Nouvelle Boulangerie*, fetches customers in front of Nassara's bakery. Nassara is clearly not happy. *La Nouvelle Boulangerie* offers prices 20% lower than Nassara's. Nassara threatens the rival baker.



Atim fancies Nassara's wife Atim returns the next day, his gun hidden behind his back. Nassara gives him a uniform and invites him to breakfast. Atim remains aloof. Nassara introduces Atim to his wife Aïcha. Aïcha's smile brings a smile to Atim's face. Atim asks Aïcha why she married Nassara. Aïcha asks him if he thinks Nassara is too old for her. She tells him she was only obeying her parents' request to marry him. Aïcha explains to Atim that her husband has to use an electrolarynx device to speak because during the war



someone tried to slit his throat in his sleep. Nassara catches Aïcha and Atim laughing at him. Aïcha immediately puts her veil back on when she realizes her husband's presence.

Nassara teaches Bakery to Atim Nassara is not satisfied with Atim's work at the bakery. Nassara advises Atim to put more love and attention into his work. Nassara tells Atim that he will make him a great baker.



Atim panics Atim approaches Nassara, gun in hand, while Nassara slumbers in his rocking chair. Atim trembles and cannot pull the trigger. Nassara wakes up, the young man panics and puts the gun back in his pocket. Atim paces nervously back and forth in front of Nassara. Atim announces that he forgot to put yeast in the flour. Nassara gets angry and spits in his face. Atim has ruined that day's batch of bread. Nassara has Atim pelted by the little beggars with the botched bread rolls.



Nassara hurts his back Aïcha flirts with Atim in Nassara's absence. Nassara hurts his back. He cannot walk. He collapses. Atim refuses to assist him and looks at him with disgust. Aïcha comes to her husband's aid, and Atim finally intervenes.



Atim celebrates his success Nassara asks Atim to come and live with him. Atim is visibly disturbed by Nassara's show of affection for him. Nassara asks Atim to run the bakery for the day. Atim bakes a beautiful batch of bread. The young man is jubilant with joy. He distributes bread to the beggars. Nassara still has not recovered from his ailment, and Atim helps him get to the mosque. Nassara introduces Atim as his son to a man going to the mosque. Atim gets angry and abandons him on the way to the mosque.



Aïcha has a miscarriage Atim returns home, determined to kill Nassara. Atim sees Aïcha arrive in tears. She has had a miscarriage. The young man consoles her.

Nassara is distressed Nassara tells Atim they will not work today. With the old man out of the yard, Atim joins Aïcha in her bedroom. She invites him to sit on her bed. Atim takes her hand and caresses it. Nassara is not back yet. Atim goes looking for him and finds him drinking. Nassara laments that God has let him down. He says nobody loves him. And that he knows Atim does not love him either.

I want to adopt you Nassara tells Atim that he would love to adopt him, and to do that, he has to talk to his father. Atim suddenly stands up, visibly exasperated. Aïcha goes over to the young man and confides that Nassara really does love him like a son. Aïcha leads Atim towards the old man, who hugs him.



I need to meet your father Atim no longer wants to stay with Nassara. He goes to get his things to leave. Nassara tells him that he will go with him to meet his family. Nassara insists he needs Atim's father's permission to adopt him. He tells Atim that his life has taken on more meaning since Atim came to live with him.



Atim lets Nassara live Atim and Nassara arrive in front of Atim's grandfather, who is waiting for his grandson in the desert. Nassara recognizes Atim's grandfather. The grandfather asks his grandson to



avenge his father's death. Atim shoots two bullets into the air and lets Nassara live. The blind grandfather is satisfied. He thinks Nassara is dead.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

THE GRANDFATHER Atim's grandfather is a nostalgic, rebarbative and resentful man. For seventeen long years, the old man raised his grandson with the intent of revenge. However, as Atim breaks free from his authority by going to N'Djamena, the old man fails to instill his culture of hatred in the youngster.

Vengeful memory Atim's grandfather is a man who has trouble letting go of his past. He clings to it like a lifeline, or takes refuge in it in the face of a present he can no longer control. The vestige of this glorious past is the superlative image he has of his son, Atim's father, whom he says was a lion. Now that the lion has been killed by Nassara, the grandfather has kept the lion's pistol jealously guarded in a white cloth for seventeen years, waiting for the grandson to exact justice by killing Nassara. This, for the grandfather will be the revenge of the lion, the return of old glories.

Backward If it were left to Atim's grandfather to design the future for Chad, it would be a country steeped in blood through a culture of vendetta. The grandfather is certainly a product of this antiquated mentality that considers that blood must necessarily be washed with blood, and that a justice system that is bent on reforming criminals is irrelevant. The grandson, whom this old man sends onto a punitive mission to redeem family honor, learns otherwise and breaks the old, vicious cycle of vengefulness that is so dear to his grandfather.

Resentful Atim's grandfather is a resentful man. Having lost his son to an assassin during the civil war 17 years earlier, he has lived for revenge. 17 long years could not erase his resentment. On the contrary, the grandfather nurtures this resentment in his grandson until the day he realizes that the Chadian government has decided to wipe the slate clean on the war crimes of all Chadians. The grandfather's resentment grows even stronger, and he arms his grandson with his father's pistol, demanding justice for himself and the whole family.

NASSARA Nassara is a complex character. Tough at times, he can also be affectionate and tender. By combining these opposite characteristics, Nassara makes Atim a good baker. But Nassara remains an isolated and emotionally vulnerable character, who seeks to fill the void of filial love and paternal responsibility through his relationship with Atim.

Complex Nassara tells Atim that he has done a lot of bad things in his life, and also that he is not always able to control his anger. He proves this when he attacks the salesman of a rival bakery and when he breaks Atim's phone because the boy was telephoning during working hours. On the other hand, Nassara displays extraordinary patience with Atim, who at the beginning of the film is clearly hostile to him despite Nassara's efforts to win him over. Certainly, with Nassara, Haroun did not intend to create a character cast in a single mold, either a saint or the devil, but rather a man with contradictions, as most men are.

Firm Nassara's firmness emerges when he acts as Atim's master and surrogate father. Nassara has promised Atim to train him to be an excellent baker. This demands the apprentice's undivided attention and investment of love in the work since, says Nassara, baking bread is an act of love. When Atim spends his time on the phone rather than concentrating on the task at hand, Nassara snatches the device from the boy and smashes it on the floor. Similarly, when Atim carelessly forgets to put the essential element, yeast, in the dough and ruins the bread, Nassara gets angry and asks the local beggars, to whom Nassara distributes bread every day, to pelt Atim with the spoiled bread.

Lonely Nassara is a lonely man. Married to Aïcha, who is much younger than he, we barely see them converse. Nassara's only interaction with his wife is to give her orders. Nassara spends most of his time between the mosque and the bakery. So, when Atim comes into his life, Nassara insists on adopting the boy, making him his apprentice and introducing him to the mosque-goers as his son. Atim, despite his rebellious and fierce attitude, spices up Nassara's lonely days, allowing him to express his emotions.

ATIM Atim is a reserved and defiant boy. He keeps himself emotionally and physically at a distance from his interlocutors, so as not to reveal his intentions or be softened up and abandon his mission. In the end, however, Atim rejects the assignment his grandfather has given him.

Reserved Atim is a taciturn boy, who speaks very little and hardly ever laughs or smiles. As if opening up to others would betray the reason for his presence in N'Djamena, Atim stays in his corner, brooding over his revenge mission. With time, however, Aïcha, Nassara's young wife, for whom he seems to have a crush, manages to wring a few words and smiles out of him. But with Nassara, Atim almost always remains silent and distant.

Defiant Atim is a boy who resists all authority. In the truck that takes him to N'Djamena for his punitive mission, Atim stares down a soldier, who points a pistol at the boy and orders him to look away (Atim kills the soldier on their second encounter). In N'Djamena, Atim opposes Nassara's instructions, refuses to go to the mosque and tries to sabotage Nassara's work. In the end, it is his grandfather's desire for revenge that the boy rebels against, when he refuses to carry out the sentence against Nassara, chooses to let him live, and goes his own way.

THEMES

War Chad is a country scarred by war. The Chadian people have lived with armed belligerence in one form or another for over 45 years, and war is part of the landscape. In his films, Haroun depicts this reality in subtle ways, through the deafening sounds of military helicopters and machine guns, and through the hunting and harassment of the population by soldiers whose boots are all one hears, or who are only vaguely identifiable by their uniforms. War is a source of grief, destruction, impoverishment, mistrust and melancholy for the people. Young Atim, an orphan of the civil war, is filled with resentment. He has lost the smile that usually lights up the faces of boys his age. He always has a frown, showing the resentment his vengeful grandfather has been feeding him for 17 years. Atim is only waiting for the moment when he can make Nassara, his father's murderer, pay for depriving him of his father's presence. Until that day comes, his life is on hold. And yet, Nassara himself was not spared by the war. He was nearly decapitated in his sleep, and lost his larynx as a result, being able to speak only with an amplifier. As he tells Atim, he came back from the war angry and violent. Here, the filmmaker seems to be saying that in a war, especially one between sons and daughters of the same country, there are never winners, only victims. And it is to avoid indexing one side as the victimizer and another as the victim that the filmmaker represents war only in terms of the sounds of boots, helicopters and machine guns, making war more of a dreadful concept than a personified signifier.

Change Atim's father was murdered by ex-rebel Nassara during the Chadian civil war of 1980, even before Atim was born. Atim's hatred of Nassara was therefore nurtured by his grandfather, who never forgave Nassara for his son's death. So, for 17 years, the grandfather preciously kept his son's pistol in a white handkerchief, patiently waiting to pass it on to his grandson for revenge against Nassara. And when the Truth and Justice Commission announced a general amnesty for all those who had committed war crimes, the inconsolable grandfather sent his grandson on a mission of vengeance, driven by all the hatred that the old man had cultivated within him. But Atim never succeeded in translating his hatred for Nassara into the ultimate act of vengeance his grandfather had been waiting for. On the contrary, Atim's arrival at Nassara's house in Ndjamenana was the occasion for a transfiguration of the boy, for his learning of love and compassion. This seemingly inflexible boy, at first fierce and distant, learned to laugh with Moussa, the first friend he made in Ndjamenana, and to smile and express compassion with Aïcha, Nassara's young wife. Under the tutelage of a demanding but caring master in the person of Nassara, Atim learned to knead dough with love into nourishing bread. Atim marveled at his own success and acquired the tools to keep hope alive in the future. When the time came to execute Nassara, Atim deceived his grandfather and let live the man who killed his father, but who taught him a trade with love and gave him tools for life. In so doing, Atim shed the rags of hatred with which his grandfather had clothed him. Atim abandoned the past of resentment represented by his grandfather to give way to a future of peace and love. Atim is the new Chadian, who turns his back to violence and looks to the future with optimism.

Revenge The desire for revenge is a natural feeling for most people who have had a loved one unjustly taken away from them, and are consequently placed in a state of moral and material depression.

For 17 years, Atim's grandfather cherished the dream of one day punishing Nassara, his son's murderer. For 17 years, the grandfather also nourished his grandson, Atim, deprived of his father by Nassara's criminal act, with this feeling of revenge. For both grandfather and grandson, a wrong done to them must be righted by revenge, by turning the tables in their favor, in other words, by executing Nassara. In this Chadian war, which has been going on for over 45 years, and in which most of the 16 million Chadians have lost at least one person, unless the feeling of revenge and acts of revenge are stopped in their tracks, they will depopulate Chad both materially and morally. To stop the cycle of vendettas and give Chadians a promising future, the Justice and Truth Commission decreed a general amnesty and erased the crimes of all Chadians committed during the long years of war. Erasing crimes does not erase resentments, however. Victims will continue to believe that their wounds are more open, their pain more throbbing than those of others, unless they learn to know other people and other people's suffering. This is where *Daratt* intervenes as a call for reconciliation. By getting closer to Nassara, by living and working with him, by witnessing the torments that populate Nassara's life, Atim understands that Nassara is less a monster than a man who has also suffered and is still suffering from war, and that in these circumstances it is better to forgive and move on than to be handicapped by the desire for revenge.

Forgiveness/negotiation Forgiveness cannot be decreed or legislated. The decision of the Justice and Truth Commission, which theoretically erased the Chadians' war crimes, may be commendable, but it cannot in itself cleanse hearts of hatred and revenge. Yet this is exactly what is needed for Chad to emerge from its downward spiral of violence, hearts are to be cleansed of all resentment. For this to happen, Chad's people must learn to get to know each other, to talk to each other beyond their 256 ethnic barriers, because all too often in Africa, armed conflicts are based on ethnic loyalties. Haroun dramatizes the need for reconciliation and forgiveness in the relationship between the young, vengeful Atim and Nassara, the murderer of Atim's father. This is not a successful relationship at the first encounter. In many ways, the process is frustratingly patient. In N'Djamena, Atim is on a mission to kill Nassara. To do this, he must overcome his own hesitation, the tremors in his hand every time he grabs his handgun. In the meantime, Nassara hires him as a baker's apprentice and begins to knead him into a man himself. But things are not easy, as Atim has every intention of sabotaging the bread baking process, of wasting flour, of ruining Nassara's finances, of testing his kindness. Nassara sets him straight with harsh words and blows. But Nassara also gives Atim a kind of fatherly love, congratulating him when his work is well done, calling him his son and asking to adopt him. Atim, so taciturn, softens. He sees in Nassara a man like any other, a father even. Atim forgives Nassara for the murder of his father, unburdens himself of his resentment, and looks optimistically to the future.

Redemption The fratricidal war pitting Chadians against each other has stained many hands. Nassara is a man whose hands are stained with blood for his war crimes, and who is trying to wash them clean with prayer, flour and charity. Having delicately sealed away his past and his arsenal of war, Nassara wants to build another life for himself, far from the scene of his crimes. Nassara is now a caring husband to his young wife, Aïcha, who is expecting a child. A devout Muslim, Nassara goes to the mosque five times a day to ask for Allah's mercy. To force his Creator's hand a little, so that He may wash away his sins and grant him paradise, Nassara pays his *zakat* (the obligatory alms imposed by the Qur'an), which is supposed to purify his soul and his possessions: Nassara distributes bread to the needy. And far beyond this, Nassara teaches the needy boy he assumes Atim is to earn his own bread by acquiring professional and moral skills: Nassara becomes Atim's surrogate father and teacher, taking him under his roof and wing. Having repented through prayer and paid his *zakat*, Nassara hopes that Allah will forgive him his past sins.

Love Atim omits, perhaps deliberately, to put into the bread dough one of the, if not the, most important element in baking: yeast. This causes the bread to shrivel and never rise. Atim bakes this batch of bread with resentment. But Nassara had told him that bread had to be baked with love to be good to eat. The leaven that makes bread rise is the love of bread. Just as bread needs love in terms of yeast in order to grow, so a child needs yeast in terms of care, attention and discipline in order to become a well-rounded human being. Atim receives this yeast from Nassara, who patiently teaches him to arrive at work on time, to give his full attention to preparing, weighing and baking the dough, rather than being distracted. Atim also receives this leavening from Nassara's young wife, Aïcha, who elicits laughter, smiles and gestures of compassion from him, awakens his senses to a man's desires, and at the same time teaches him self-control and restraint, as her feelings for Atim change from those of the lover, whom

he would have liked to possess, to those of the mother, who consoles and protects him. Nassara certainly killed Atim's father. However, he becomes Atim's father, offering the child the love of the father he never knew, and making him an accomplished baker when he takes him into his home. What Haroun suggests through the bonds forged between Atim and his father's executioner is love and forgiveness between Chadians, for what sense of understanding does it take for a man to learn about life from his father's murderer, and what temerity does it take for a man to dare to invite into his home a person whom he knows to be blaming him for something venal?

Metaphor of Blindness Atim's grandfather sends his grandson on a mission of vengeance. Atim's father was killed by a man named Nassara, who has become a baker in the town of N'Djamena. Nassara could die a happy death if Atim does not kill him first, because like all war criminals in Chad, Nassara has just been granted amnesty by the country's Truth and Justice Commission. The grandfather will only be satisfied if Nassara dies by his grandson's vengeful hand. But Atim's mission turns out to be less a punitive expedition than a journey of initiation, one that takes him away from his grandfather's blindness to the changing world around him. And it is not by coincidence that the filmmaker wanted Atim's grandfather to be blind, for in truth, hatred and resentment conceptually blind those they affect. The metaphor of physical blindness, we should make clear, is merely a pointer to the vindictive grandfather's moral blindness. It is in no way a stigmatization of the visually impaired. Revenge is a dish best served cold, as the saying goes. However, when that dish has cooled for 17 long years, is it still edible? Would it not be better to stop brooding over revenge and jump on the bandwagon of reconciliation? This is what young Atim does when he lets his father's murderer live and moves on with his life.

Reconciliation (unheard) Resentment, as just stated, blinds one, metaphorically speaking, to the changing realities. But it also metaphorically makes one deaf to calls for forgiveness and reconciliation. A heart hardened by the desire for revenge, like that of Atim's grandfather or of all those protesting against the Truth and Justice Commission's amnesty decision, cannot perceive Nassara's cry for forgiveness and reconciliation across the Chadian desert. Nassara's voice, though amplified by his electrolarynx, is barely audible to those whose hearts are calcified by resentment. But what does Nassara say that deserves to be heard? Nassara empathizes when he says, "Come by tomorrow if you want a job." Nassara invites Atim to join him at the table and says, "Aïcha, bring a cup for Atim." Nassara builds familial connections by saying, "I want to adopt you ... Do you want to be my son? ... This is my son Atim." Atim does not hear this voice of a man who pleads for forgiveness, reconciliation and redemption, this voice of a man who distributes bread that he bakes with love to the poor children of N'Djamena. Atim even mocks it. Who cares? Nassara has patience mixed with firmness, a quality known of good teachers. With time, Nassara makes his voice heard by Atim, who becomes a good baker, lovingly baking bread to distribute to the poor children of N'Djamena. Just because Atim finally hears Nassara's voice is no reason to wallow in blissful optimism about the end of shooting in Chad. Very often, the most strident and loudest voices are unfortunately not those advocating reconciliation, but those screaming for revenge and more blood, prolonging a culture of war.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Daratt* is a film about civil war. Yet the war is only suggested by a few indirect images? What are some of them? Are they effective?
2. Much of the film takes place during the preparation of the dough, the baking of the bread, and the distribution of the bread. Explain the symbol of bread-making in the film.
3. What does bread symbolize in your own culture?
4. The film dwells on long scenes of hesitation on the part of Atim, who is unable to discharge his pistol at Nassara. What do these hesitations symbolize for you?
5. Why does the filmmaker choose to make Nassara a mute (or someone who has lost his voice box) and the grandfather a blind man? What do the handicaps of these two characters represent in the film?
6. Why does the filmmaker abruptly interrupt the budding romance between Atim and Aïcha?
7. Atim's journey from his village to N'Djamena is a journey of initiation. Explain this statement.