

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Mahamat-Saleh Haroun (1961-)

LIFE

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. He was evacuated to France during the 1980s civil war, at the age of 17, after sustaining a bullet injury while sitting in his parents' living room. He has been living in France since, returning occasionally to Chad to make films.

ACHIEVEMENT

Mahamat-Saleh Haroun has produced several documentaries and short films. He has produced eight feature films, including *Bye 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.



Mahamat-Saleh Haroun on the set of *Daratt*, 2006

FILMOGRAPHY

Bye Bye Africa (1999)
Abouna/Our Father (2002)
Daratt/Dry Season (2006)
Sex, Okra and Salted Butter (2008)
A Screaming Man (2010)
Grigris (2013)
A season in France (2017)
Lingui, Sacred Bonds (2021)

THEMES

War Mahamat-Saleh Haroun himself was evacuated to France for medical treatment at the age of 17 because of bullet wounds sustained during the civil war in Chad. War, whether in Chad or elsewhere, and the physical and moral effects of war haunt the Mahamat-Saleh's films. The filmmaker shows how war impedes a country's development, not only by destroying its infrastructure, but also by sapping its human resources.

Bye Bye Africa Chad has been continually at war for over 45 years. Haroun takes his camera through the streets of the Chadian capital, deploring what he sees through the lens of his camera. N'Djamena presents the face of a decaying city in which a population desensitized by war tries to get by as best it can. While the little people of Chad barely survive in times of war, this is not the case for the war's decision-makers, those who make the rain and the sunshine, and who can put an end to the suffering of the Chadian people at any time. These decision-makers prefer the sound of the shelling to never stop because war has become a business for them, a cash cow whose breasts they suck greedily, the only difference being that what these breasts produce is Chadian oil, which, it is said, funds the war or at least feeds the major decision-makers in this war that is slaughtering the little people.

Daratt 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 a dreadful concept than a personified signifier.

A Screaming Man For the employees of Mrs. Wang's hotel, the scarcity of customers, a consequence of the insecurity brought by the war, is a source of anxiety. Obeying the law of the market, Mrs. Wang chooses to reduce her staff to keep her business going. The first to be affected are the oldest employees, including the pool attendant, the gatekeeper and the cook. In time, however, the progress of rebel troops in the city of N'Djamena, which had already seriously undermined the hotel's viability, causes the employees to flee, jeopardizing Mrs. Wang's business. By causing Mrs. Wang to close her business, the war has thrown entire families out into the street, leaving them at the mercy of a precarious existence. War is always a spoilation of a country's human resources. When young people are not mowed down by lethal weapons on the battlefield, they return broken and living a life on borrowed time. Such is the case of Abdel, the young man who was once so vigorous, and full of projects to accomplish with his girlfriend, but who does not survive his war wounds, and dies before seeing his son being born.

A Season in France Abbas, a French teacher in Bangui, in the Central African Republic, is trying to save his family from war by leaving his country, which is plunged in a civil war. As they flee, Abbas' wife is killed by a militia bullet. The mother's sudden and premature death destabilizes Abbas' family. The children sink into melancholy. Yacine, Abbas' son, loses the smile so often seen in children his age. And Asma, the daughter, although usually in good spirits, misses her mother and talks often about her,

especially the lullabies she used to sing her and the stories she used to tell her. As for Abbas, his nights are haunted by memories of his family's escape into the forest, the militia hunt and the death of his wife. He hallucinates, thinks he sees his wife, and speaks into the void. The most destructive effect of the war is to have turned this family, who thought they had found refuge in France, stateless and homeless. Abbas' efforts to obtain refugee status from the National Asylum Court having failed, Abbas and his children are living like fugitives, hiding from the police and continually changing residences at the whim of friends' kindness. Abbas finds this situation unbearable and dishonorable. He decides to return with his children to the hell of Central Africa.

Cinema Mahamat-Saleh Haroun's first film is about the difficulties of film production in Chad and Africa in general. The film's main character, a filmmaker who bears Haroun's name, laments the ageing of equipment, the lack of funding, and the absence of enthusiasm on the part of governments to support African cinema. Nevertheless, the film ends on a note of hope for the future of cinema in Africa.

Bye Bye Africa Mahamat-Saleh deplors the disappearance of movie theaters in Chad, not simply as the disappearance of architectural and commercial structures, but rather as the disappearance of a way of life. Movie theaters in Africa are places around which a whole social, cultural and economic dynamic revolves. In an interview, the filmmaker recalls life around the cinemas of his childhood. He talks about the posers who come to show off their finery, the romantic encounters and bonds forged there; he recalls the night markets and street-food that attract movie-goers and onlookers alike. Cinema, both the infrastructure and the art form, must be revived if this social organization is to be preserved. Haroun explains *Bye Bye Africa* as a leap of faith, a plunge into the uncertain world of African cinema, a decision to do something to revive cinema, rather than ranting and raving about the difficult conditions of film production and the almost programmed death of Chadian cinema.

Betrayal Mahamat-Saleh Haroun deals with the theme of betrayal on several levels. On the level of interpersonal relations, betrayal destroys the trust that forms in love relationships, but also in family relationships. The filmmaker takes his critique of betrayal a step further by showing how a state that neglects its people, a rogue state that allows a privileged minority to monopolize the country's resources at the expense of the majority, also commits an act of high betrayal.

Bye Bye Africa The character Haroun had a love affair with Isabelle, a young Chadian woman who had played the character of an AIDS victim in one of his films. From this affair, it seems, a child was born while Haroun was in exile in France. Rejected by her family and by an intolerant Chadian society which, associating her with the AIDS victim she played in the film, made her an untouchable, Isabelle waited for Haroun to come and marry her and take her to France with him. Meanwhile, Haroun married another woman in France, had two children and divorced his wife. When Haroun returned to Chad for his mother's funeral, he sought out Isabelle, more to continue the adventure with her than for a serious relationship. When she told him she loved him and had waited for him all this time, Haroun scoffed at Isabelle, and even called her a girl of loose morals. Isabelle felt triply betrayed. First of all, Isabelle was betrayed by her family, the very unit that should be her first place of refuge in any circumstance. Her family, afraid of being stigmatized as having produced a promiscuous member (as AIDS was still very much associated with sexual promiscuity), rejected her. Secondly, Isabelle has been betrayed by the Chadian people, for whose AIDS awareness she has put herself in front of the cameras in the role of an AIDS sufferer. This betrayal is also that of cinema towards Isabelle, which has thrown her image to the intolerant Chadian people, leaving her to struggle alone. Thirdly, in the end, Isabelle is betrayed by the man she loves, and who she believes also loves her. With no one left to turn to, Isabelle takes her own life.

A Screaming Man The day Adam learns that his son has replaced him as the head pool attendant, he feels betrayed by him as much as by his boss. Adam has always been Abdel's loving father and indulgent boss. He has always been concerned about his son's future and has made him a very good swimmer and pool attendant. Today, as he broils in the sun in the khaki uniform and ridiculous cap he now has to wear, he, who used to love working around the pool in his very relaxed white shorts and t-shirt, watches from afar as his son, Abdel, laughs and splashes around in the pool with the hotel guests and teaches them to swim. The worst humiliation of all is to see the service motorcycle he used to take so much pleasure in riding on the capital's roads, and which had become something of a mark of recognition, snatched from him and handed over to Abdel. And all this humiliation is caused by Mrs. Wang, who now sees him as

disposable goods. He therefore decides to take his revenge, and in turn betray Abdel, who stabbed him so deeply in the back. The neighborhood leader has been harassing him for a long time, asking him to pay his contribution to the war effort against the rebels. The leader had suggested that giving his son to the army would be a good contribution, saying that he had done it himself to his own son. And so, Adam betrays Abdel and calls in the soldiers, who then come looking for Abdel one day to forcibly enlist him. Thus, Adam betrays the son who *betrayed him*.

Grigris Mimi and Grigris are two characters betrayed by society, who decide to take their revenge on this cruel society. Born of a Chadian mother and a French father, Mimi never knew her father, who abandoned her mother before she was born. Mimi clearly grew up in a society in which her integration as the mixed-race daughter of an absent father was not easy. Although beautiful and charming, Mimi is the 'other' in Chadian society, the one whose difference is constantly pointed out. Moreover, her childhood with a single mother ill-prepared her for a fulfilling life; so, Mimi turns to prostitution to earn her daily bread. The men Mimi consoles in her arms at night, like Moussa, become monsters by day, avoiding her, judging her, insulting her and beating her. Moussa forbids Grigris to associate with Mimi because, he says, she is a "whore". Grigris also feels this betrayal from those who claim to be his friends by night but reject him by day. Moussa, who draws people into his bar thanks to Grigris' performances, has no regard for Grigris when he comes to ask him for a job. He calls Grigris a failure, a dead leg, and when he agrees to give Grigris a job, he does not hesitate to get rid of him on the slightest pretext. Under these conditions, Grigris feels that Moussa is not worthy of his loyalty. When the opportunity arises for Grigris to betray Moussa, he does so by misappropriating Moussa's gasoline shipment for his own use.

Exile/migration Until very recently, before the intensification of the economic insecurity in Africa due to unbridled globalization repatriating Africa's resources to the West on an unprecedented scale, just before the inter- and intra-state wars generated by this race for African resources, exile was a male affair. Although the situation has changed since then, and many African girls and young women go into exile with men, very few African films deal with female exile. Haroun follows this trend by showing the dilemma of the exiled male.

Bye Bye Africa Although this deals with the melancholy of the (male) African exile in Europe, his alienation from his native land, and the African community he tries to recreate around the sound of drums and in solidarity associations, when it comes to women, the film only suggests the malaise experienced at home due to the man's prolonged absence. Men who go into exile almost never return for good. And the women left behind suffer the anguish of this absence. Thus, Haroun's mother dies without realizing her 10-year-old wish to see her son again and to know her grandchildren, Haroun accepts that when one chooses exile, one must accept the fact that the people one loves will die far away. Thus, for 10 long years, Isabelle waits for Haroun to return, only to see him dash her hopes of one day seeing her by his side as his wife. Thus, Haroun's grandmother sees her grandson return to Europe with her blessings, wishing only that she would die before he does because, she says, it is a tragedy when the youngest die before their elders. The exile is often an alienated person, who, like a summer visitor, only casts a non-tourist eye at his native land, where the woman waiting for him languishes.

A Season in France Carole, Abbas' girlfriend, is of Polish origin. Although her integration into French social fabric was difficult at first, she is now French and lives a life without the turmoil experienced by Abbas and Etienne. Haroun's film does not focus on the condition of the integrated immigrant, but rather on that of the immigrant who, while waiting for his status to be regularized, lives in fear of deportation. Exile has depersonalized this immigrant, turning him into a shell devoid of honor, freedom and hope. Indeed, for Etienne, a philosophy lecturer who had to flee his country because of the insecurity brought on by war, to be forced to live in a wooden shack, on a public plot of land, and to bathe every day at the public baths before going to his job as a security guard, is quite humiliating. It is similarly demeaning for Abbas, a French teacher in Bangui, to flee his large home and end up sleeping in borrowed apartments with his two children and selling vegetables at the market. If Etienne and Abbas, the faces of the illegal immigrant, are in this disgraceful situation, it is because they cannot, or at least not yet, aspire like any other free person living on French soil to a job in line with their training and to housing in line with the status such employment would confer on them. Etienne and Abbas are not free to move around in France. They are on probation, and this probation, which limits their choices and aspirations, also renders them impotent, incapable of desiring and loving. It is this depersonalization of the illegal immigrant, his

reduction to the status of a thing, that drives Etienne to suicide. As for Abbas, he chooses to return to the Central African Republic, where he will rediscover his personality and perhaps even die, but die as a man rather than exist as a thing in France.

Discrimination The mindset of Africans on the issue of difference has evolved immensely since the release of Mahamat-Saleh's first film, *Bye Bye Africa*, when he addressed his compatriots' intolerance regarding AIDS or since the release of *Grigris*, which addressed the question of physical disability. The filmmaker's work has been instrumental in that change as his films bear witness to the panic that gripped Africans, and Chadians in general, in the face of otherness, and as the films call for more sensitivity towards difference.

Bye Bye Africa Indeed, in this film, a young actress named Isabelle, who plays the fictional role of an AIDS victim, is ostracized by her family and community, unable to separate her from the character she plays in a film. One of the issues raised by Isabelle's tragedy is society's intolerance towards AIDS victims. In its early days, this disease was considered an abomination, and those who fell victim to it were rejected by both their families and society. In the USA, for example, many professional basketball players refused to play on the same court as Magic Johnson when he announced that he was infected with the disease. This state of affairs persisted for decades, until heightened awareness made the world's populations more educated and empathetic to the plight of AIDS victims and less afraid of the disease. Clearly, 25 years after *Bye Bye Africa*, the mentality of Chadians on the subject has changed, and AIDS sufferers are no longer stigmatized to the point of contemplating suicide.

Grigris Grigris and Mimi seem to have found each other because they are both outsiders, invisible in Chadian society, visible only in the dark of night when they are selling their bodies, Mimi by prostituting herself, and Grigris by dancing. Their stars shine in the night sky of N'Djamena, in the subdued, smoky atmosphere of the nightclubs, and die as soon as the sun rises. Grigris is the darling of N'Djamena's night owls, who vibrate to the rhythm of his frenzied movements. But when the day comes, Grigris is confronted with his social inadequacy. The paralysis of Grigris' left leg makes it difficult for him to navigate the rocky, uneven pathways of N'Djamena, and pushing his mother's cart becomes an arduous chore. Once the day has come and the music has died down, those who adored Grigris just a few hours earlier now view him as a nuisance. Moussa tells Grigris, who asks him for work to pay his father-in-law's hospital bill, that he cannot hire a man with a dead leg. Mimi, too, who attracts men at night like light attracts fireflies, is deserted by them at daybreak. She becomes the shame they do not want to associate with. Ayoub scoffs at her when she shows up at his studio for photos to be sent to a modeling contest. Ayoub does not believe Mimi's story and watches her leave, dubious. A prostitute, for sure, he thinks, but certainly not a model. Thus, when Mimi's eyes meet Grigris' in broad daylight, and she senses his admiration, Mimi clings to him and he to her, like a lifeline; two outcasts who decide to make their journey together in order to beat the hostile world of N'Djamena.

Love Mahamat-Saleh Haroun is a filmmaker in a country that is witnessing the dying of cinema, the first love that he discovered in his teenage years. Thus, one of his strongest commitments is to save this artform that he sees as carrier of a whole cultural organization. Besides expressing love for cinema, Mahamat-Saleh's films deal with romantic love, paternal and filial love, and love for each other, formed through a shared experience of suffering.

Bye Bye Africa The film's main character, Haroun, who plays a filmmaker, says that *Bye Bye Africa* is a film he wants to make as a tribute to his mother, to show his love for her. Haroun's love for his mother is such that, when he learns she has died, he remarks that he is now alone, although he still has his father, grandmother and children of his own. Although Haroun's has great affection and consideration for his mother, he is still incapable of viewing Isabelle as another woman/mother who also deserves consideration and love. Here, Haroun lacks the African wisdom that calls for treating any woman as one would one's own mother, as he dismisses Isabelle's love for him and instead, sees her, the mother of his child, as the mere locus of sexual pleasure. For Isabelle, love is worth waiting ten years, if need be, for the return of the man she loves. So, she waits for Haroun. And when Haroun briefly returns to Chad on the occasion of his mother's funeral, and rejects her, Isabelle also tells herself that, just as one must know how to wait for love, one must be able to die for love, or lack of love.

Daratt 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?

A Screaming Man The filmmaker addresses the question of love in his film on several levels. First, there is paternal love. Adam's love for his son Abdel. As a conscientious father, Adam teaches his son the nuts and bolts of his profession as a lifeguard, so that one day, Abdel will be independent and take charge of his own life. Once a swimming champion, Adam is now a lifeguard at a hotel in the Chadian capital. Having taken Abdel under his wing, the father makes the son a good lifeguard to the point where Abdel is now able to challenge and beat him at swimming. When Abdel falls in love with Djénéba and the girl is expecting his child, Abdel's love for his developing family is so strong that he does not hesitate to accept his father's job from his employer, reducing his father to a mere gatekeeper. The romantic relationship between Abdel and Djénéba is only suggested in the film. However, romantic love is very explicitly expressed between Adam and his wife in a scene where they feed each other and eat a juicy watermelon from each other's mouths. Cooking is also treated as a gesture of love. Adam's wife cooks and feeds her family with love, and she is sad when her food is eaten in silence and melancholy. For the hotel cook, too, a dish only succeeds if one puts attention - love, he says - into its preparation. His kitchen is his love. And so, he falls seriously ill when Mrs. Wang dismisses him from his job.

Grigris *Grigris* tackles the theme of love from several angles. Grigris has an obvious love for his parents, his mother and his stepfather, Ayoub. When Ayoub falls ill and the hospital demands 700,000 francs (approximately \$1400) for his treatment, Grigris tries to raise the money by any means necessary. Grigris asks for a loan from Aladji, a local shopkeeper, who reminds him that Ayoub is only his mother's husband, not his father, before reluctantly lending him 20,000 francs. For Grigris, Ayoub is his father and deserves his filial love. A friendship also develops between Grigris and Mimi, the young nightclub prostitute, which soon blossoms into a romantic relationship. Grigris and Mimi go through difficult times, which only their love can withstand. Beaten by the henchmen of Moussa, the gasoline smuggler, for cheating Moussa, Grigris finds refuge with Mimi, who is also beaten by Moussa for taking Grigris into her home. The two young people know that their love (that of a prostitute and a disabled man) is not only ill-judged in N'Djamena, but also threatened by those who feel outraged by the "anomaly" it represents. To live out their romance, Grigris and Mimi decide to go into exile, covering their tracks behind them. In the village where they take refuge, Grigris and Mimi are quickly caught by one of Moussa's henchmen, who has been tracking them since they left N'Djamena, and who threatens to kill them. But it is another act of love, the solidarity of the village women, who have made Mimi their sister, that saves them. Called to the rescue by Mimi, the women, her sisters, come running and beat their tormentor to death.

Family Family is the first bastion of solidarity and union in Mahamat-Saleh's films, and the figure of the mother is the central pillar of this bastion. In his first film, *Bye Bye Africa*, the filmmaker shows how the passing of the mother heralds the disintegration of the family, and with it the drying up of the source of individual strength and collective union.

Bye Bye Africa In Paris, where he receives a phone call announcing the death of his mother, Haroun laments the loss of his mother as the beginning of his total isolation from his Chadian family unit. Whether

in a matriarchal or patriarchal society, in Africa, the pillar of the family is the mother. As the father is often an itinerant, either by force of circumstance (the breadwinner outside of the home) or by his own volition, it is around the mother that family life is structured, and it is she who spends the most time with the children during their formative years. Psychoanalytical studies, such as those led by Jacques Lacan, demonstrate the innate attachment of children and adults to the mother, explaining that everything we do, from childhood to adulthood, is aimed at regaining the place of perfect communicability with the mother (= the womb). It is through the mother that the link to the family is facilitated. So, all too often, the disappearance of the mother heralds the dislocation of the family unit and its eventual dissolution, as well as the disappearance of the ancestral culture (albeit patriarchal) that the mother is naturally responsible for passing on. It is clear, then, that Haroun's mother is the cement that holds him to the family, and that with her disappearance, this bond is eroded, setting him adrift like a rudderless ship, far from the unit that, in his exile, still gave him a sense of belonging. Haroun has promised to make a film in memory of his mother, entitled *Bye Bye Africa*.

Power Cinema confers extraordinary power on the filmmaker insofar as the camera gives the latter the power to manipulate reality and change people's lives and perceptions. This change of perception also occurs when the cameraman directs his/her lens towards denouncing abuses of power, whether in family relationships, in gender relations, or in the state's relationship with the people.

Bye Bye Africa Garba tells his friend Haroun to always be aware of his responsibility as a filmmaker. Indeed, it seems that the camera confers a certain mythical power on whoever holds it, and it is this power that Garba asks Haroun to use wisely. In fact, the camera lens has an interesting name in French; it is called "objectif", thus suggesting that whatever a camera captures can only be impartial, detached of any subjective input. And yet we know how much elements of perspectives, of the filmmaker's point of view, and of editorial decisions can make a camera subjective, that is, give the filmmaker considerable power in changing reality. In fact, Haroun was so powerful as to have tragically altered Isabelle's life following the film in which he cast her as an AIDS sufferer. If it is true that Isabelle's tragedy is due in part to her believable performance, to the ethos that she projected, it is even more true that it is the angle from which the filmmaker captured this ethos, and the latter's editorial decisions, that made Isabelle such an excellent embodiment of an AIDS sufferer, to the point of causing her stigmatization by the Chadian society. From this point of view, the filmmaker has the power to capture the souls of those he films, and to transform them at will. Thus, it is no mere coincidence that Haroun is attacked and has his camera snatched from him by a man he is trying to film in a N'Djamena street.

A Screaming Man The Chadian government is facing a fierce armed rebel movement. The Chadian army needs financial resources and vigorous young men to wage its battle against the rebels. Chadians are called upon to contribute to the war effort, either financially or in manpower. So, through the neighborhood leaders, the people are pressured to contribute to the war efforts by giving money. The district leader pursues Adam to pay off his share. This practice is akin to racketeering. Adam has not yet been able to make any contribution. The neighborhood leader tells Adam that he has given his own son to the Chadian army, and that Adam could do the same. The idea of handing his son over to the army is repugnant to Adam. This 'kidnapping' is only possible because the Chadian government is abusing its power over the population. This abuse goes even further when Chadian army soldiers organize raids into neighborhoods to forcibly enroll young Chadians. This activity is not governed by any legislation, as an official conscription act would also put the children of the ruling elite in the crosshairs. Rather, this is a customer-driven practice, and the customer in this case is the poor. The government and the army are not the only ones to abuse their power. Mrs. Wang is the kind of employer who hires and fires at will, with no regard for the rights of her workers - rights which, incidentally, don't seem to be codified in any official document.

Lingui In gender relations, the Chadian man is a very powerful man. Society gives him virtual immunity for his crimes against women. Fifteen years earlier. Amina's studies were interrupted by a man she loved, and whom she believed also loved her. Pregnant with her daughter, Maria, Amina was expelled from high school, and the man who got her pregnant refused to take responsibility, leaving her to face the intolerance of society. Today, her daughter, Maria, pregnant as a result of rape by Brahim, a man who could be her grandfather, has been expelled from school. The mother swears she will not let her daughter suffer the fate that befell her. It is in Amina's determination to save her daughter from a subaltern future

that the power of women comes to the fore. Indeed, in defiance of men's prohibitions against abortion, women mobilize around Maria in secret. Money is needed for Maria's illegal abortion. Amina's tea-stove business barely raises a fraction of the funds she needs. But then Amina's sister, Fanta, arrives and offers to sell her jewelry for the cause. Fanta needs her sister, too. She wants to protect her daughter from the excision the girl's father is pressing for. While looking for an abortion provider for her daughter, Amina meets a woman with a reputation for performing fake excisions. Called in to help, the woman performs a fake excision on Amina's niece, saving the little girl from genital mutilation. A nurse performs a clandestine abortion on Maria and issues the girl with a certificate of miscarriage, thus allowing her to return to school. Amina avenges her daughter by violently beating Brahim with a club. By mobilizing their strengths, unsuspected by men, the women get themselves the justice that the patriarchal system denies them.

Sexuality Chad is a predominantly Muslim country. As a result, the question of sexuality is mainly governed by religion. Sex is linked to marriage. In *Bye Bye Africa*, Mahamat-Saleh challenges this paradigm by introducing sexual relations under the register of pure libidinal satisfaction, with no amorous attachment and no commitment to marriage.

Bye Bye Africa Isabelle tells Haroun she loves him. Haroun asks her to stop being sentimental and to come to bed and make love instead. For Isabelle, who claims to have waited 10 years for Haroun, she wants to have sex only with the man she loves. Isabelle loved Haroun when she was a mere 17-year-old, had a child with him, and now longs only for him. Haroun does not believe that Isabelle has known no other man. He even refuses to believe that Isabelle's 10-year-old son, to whom she gave his name, is his. If Haroun has sought out Isabelle and found her in N'Djamena after 10 years, it is less because he loves her than because, as he tells us, he spent pleasurable sexual moments with her years earlier, which he hopes to relive. And although his insensitive words hurt Isabelle, up to the eve of his trip, Haroun still hopes to experience moments of sexual pleasure with Isabelle. Haroun goes to Isabelle's house and finds her dead in her bed. Isabelle could not bear Haroun's rejection, which came on top of her ostracization by the Chadian society, which treated her as untouchable for a role she had played in a film. Shocked, Haroun confides to his friend Garba that he cannot understand how Isabelle could have taken their relationship so seriously as to take her own life. Haroun repeats in amazement to his friend Garba, "It was only an adventure. It was only an adventure". For Isabelle, it was more than just about sex. It was love.

Fiction vs reality Is cinema a reflection of reality, or does it create new, consumable realities for the public? This chicken-and-egg question has become inescapable since cinema has taken on objectives beyond the simple medium of documentary filmmaking. Mahamat deals with this question in a purely Chadian context, where the moving image is still a rather young technology, mistrusted by some audiences.

Bye Bye Africa One question raised by Isabelle's tragedy is how difficult it is for the public to distinguish between reality and the fiction served up by the moving image. The Chadian public confuses Isabelle with the AIDS character she plays on TV, attaching to her the stigma often associated with AIDS sufferers. Although in an interview about *Bye Bye Africa* Haroun explains it as a Chadian tragedy, this phenomenon, known as "type casting" in the jargon of the seventh art, is neither typically African, nor even less typically Chadian. In the world of cinema, some actors become so associated with the roles they play that it is sometimes impossible for them to lead a normal life, or even to find work. It is simply tragic that, in Isabelle's case, the type of casting she is subjected to is fueled by one of the greatest intolerances of all - that related to AIDS sufferers, whose social stigmas and stereotypes of impurity are transferred to her. The transfer of stigmas is so psychologically violent for Isabelle that it drives her to suicide. Elsewhere, in the world of cinema, actors have come to tragic ends similar to Isabelle's, either because the stigma attached to them by certain films prevents them from functioning freely in the real world, or because they themselves cannot find in the real world the characters they play in the movies, and with whom they fall in love. Isabelle's tragedy is far from being a purely Chadian issue.

Superstition The question of the soul's destiny remains at the heart of major human concerns. Mahamat-Saleh Haroun explores the question of the camera's capture of the individual's image against the backdrop of an African cultural belief, that of the takeover of the soul by the moving image.

Bye Bye Africa While filming street scenes in N'Djamena, Haroun is violently attacked by a man who snatches his camera and hurts him in the face. The man reproaches Haroun for stealing his soul by filming him. After many heated negotiations, Garba finally convinces the protester to return Haroun's camera. Garba then explains to Haroun that he has stayed too long in Europe to understand that in Chad, people are wary of the camera, because for them, an image captured by the camera is tantamount to seizing the soul of the person filmed or photographed. Indeed, in war-ravaged Chad, where the population seeks an increasingly elusive paradise through prayer, the soul is one's most important asset, the last thing one would want to lose. Haroun's camera is a danger to the soul, a potential prison for the soul. In fact, this camera has already claimed a victim in the person of Isabelle. This is why Haroun is causing such a stir and clamor among the locals. As he approaches, the market women, who cover their faces with their veils, wagging their fingers, or hurling invectives at him, tell him to stop filming them. But this man goes further. He calls Haroun a soul-stealer, beats him up, and snatches his camera, which Haroun only recovers thanks to the mediation of his friend Garba, who apologizes to the angry crowd on Haroun's behalf.

Change Mahamat-Saleh Haroun's films signal optimistic changes in the Chadian society. The filmmaker sees a revival of Chadian way of life, improvement of gender relations, and empowerment of the female gender, to be brought about by a revival of cinema. For that to happen, however, a bigger change must take place; that of the Chadian turning their backs on their protracted fratricidal war through bold acts of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Bye Bye Africa Haroun's wish is to reverse the downwards trend of Chadian cinema caused by the protracted Chadian war, aging equipment, lack of funding, and the demotivation of the players in the film industry. Garba, Haroun's projectionist friend, who instilled in him a love of cinema, no longer believes in the return of the golden age of Chadian cinema. Waiting to strike luck with the American visa lottery, Garba has turned instead to growing tomatoes. Haroun's father tells Haroun that filmmaking is useless, and that he should have turned to a useful career like medicine, and that maybe he could have saved his mother. Haroun does not despair and is convinced that change will come. In his crusade for the rebirth of Chadian cinema, Haroun has a few allies, like the owner of cinema *L'étoile*, who is raising funds to restore her shell-battered theater, a few unrepentant cinephiles, and some projectionists still clinging to their old equipment. Haroun's greatest ally, however, is his nephew Ali, a twelve-year-old boy fascinated by the camera, who builds his own toy camera and tries several times to steal his uncle's real camera. Tired of being pestered by his nephew, Haroun takes the child to a movie set to give him a sense of what it is to be a filmmaker. And when Haroun realizes that his nephew is a true cinema buff, he offers him his camera before returning to France. Garba, who obtained the American visa he had been seeking, decides not to immigrate to the United States, but instead to open a movie theater in his neighborhood. The change in Chadian cinema, the filmmaker suggests, will come from the partnership between young Ali and Garba. The former will make films that the latter will show in his theater.

Daratt 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.

A Screaming Man Mrs. Wang, who took over a privatized state-owned hotel, is profit-oriented. This requires her to adapt her hotel to the demands of the international market and cut her ties with traditional inefficient management. So, Mrs. Wang observes her employees to see which of them can fit into the transnational vision she has decided for her hotel. What Mrs. Wang sees is Adam and his son Abdel, who represent, respectively, the indolence of the past with compartmentalized management, and the dynamism of the future with its open, circular approach. Abdel is all the more representative of change as his relationship with Djénéba defies religious and societal paradigms. Djénéba, from Mali, and Abdel, from Chad, both come from societies that uphold religious principles, where premarital sex is unthinkable, let alone the conception of a child before marriage. Abdel and Djénéba's relationship symbolizes their respective societies' adjustments to the changes brought about by the modern world.

Lingui "I don't care about Islam. This is about my body." Maria's sentence marks the beginning of a change. Amina has lived her life surrendering her body and soul to the control of patriarchy. A failed woman, according to patriarchy's rules, for getting pregnant when she was not married, it is patriarchy that proposes to save her by regulating her spiritual and sexual lives. When it is not the Imam who dictates to Amina the verses to read and the moral conduct to follow, it is Brahim who proposes himself to her as her savior through marriage. Amina's daughter does not intend to submit to patriarchy as Amina does. She intends to take possession of her body and mind and mold them to her own liking. This decision, which initially frightens her mother, eventually wins her approval. Maria changes the course of history. From now on, the history of Chad will not be written by men alone. Women like her will make their contribution. This is undeniable as Maria returns to school to continue her studies. But the change also took place in the mother, in Amina, who armed with a club, smashes the table of patriarchal laws by clubbing Brahim.

Lingui "I will not let you suffer my fate." This is what Amina says to her daughter Maria when Maria tells her that she is pregnant. Indeed, suspecting that her daughter is hiding something from her, Amina goes to her school. There, the headmistress tells her that Maria has been struck off the school roster because she is pregnant. Amina's own life flashes before her eyes, and she fears that her daughter is repeating her mistakes. So, what is Amina's fate? And what is she trying to save her daughter from? The fate of not having been able to continue her education, and of remaining a victim of patriarchal subjugation. In fact, fifteen years ago, when she was pregnant with Maria, Amina was expelled from her school, which was anxious to maintain its image as an honorable institution. Her studies interrupted, Amina now works recycling the iron contained in old tires into tea stoves. The work is hard and pays very little. Amina's financial precariousness puts her at the mercy of men, especially the Imam and Brahim, the former who impresses upon her an ethic of life, the latter who claims to be able to save her from the bigotry of the community by marrying her. Amina knows that unless her daughter resumes her studies, she is condemned to a life of subordination. Therefore, the mother fights to get her daughter back into school. Defying the sacrosanct religious laws, Amina does what a few days before she thought was a taboo idea: she pays for her daughter's abortion and proudly watches her child put back on her school uniform to give herself the chance of a better life.

Revenge The filmmaker sees the Chadians' desire for revenge as one of the major factors prolonging war in his country. He suggests that by getting closer to each other, by living and working with each other, and by witnessing the torments that populate each other's lives, Chadians will come to understand that they are all less of monsters than people who have also suffered and are 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.

Daratt The desire for revenge is a natural feeling for most people who have had a loved one unjustly taken away from them, and who 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.

Forgiveness/negotiation Mahamat-Saleh Haroun showcases useful acts of forgiveness and reconciliation, essentials in the pursuit of peace. Forgiveness demands that the victim and his/her victimizer talk, collaborate, work in proximity, and learn of each other's anguish. Sometimes, and against all odds, it demands that they weave family ties.

Daratt 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.

Metaphors of blindness and aphasia Mahamat-Saleh Haroun is a master of cinematic metaphors. He offers two such examples in his film *Daratt*. The first concerns the blindness of the avenging soul. The second metaphor concerns the aphasia of the conciliatory soul. These two metaphors are the symptoms of the Chadian people.

Daratt 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.

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 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.

Tradition vs Modernity Chad, like most developing countries, is witnessing a difficult entering in the era of globalization. As a result, traditional society is undergoing inescapable changes. In *A Screaming Man*, the filmmaker shows how the notion of elders' rights, so prized in the traditional context, proves to be a handicap in the transnational free-market context.

A Screaming Man Age is prized in tradition as the source of wisdom. Adam is an ex-swimming champion. He is full of wisdom and trains his son, Abdel, to become a good pool attendant at the hotel where he works as the head pool attendant. Adam is respected in his community, and most people call him by no other name than 'Champ'. However, for Mrs. Wang, his profit-driven boss, Adam's age is a handicap. She calls him to her office and complains to him that she always sees him sitting on the lounging chairs. Mrs. Wang believe that at 55, Adam's age is showing in his performance, and that he is no longer suitable (that is, profitable). She does not understand that Adam has been building skills into and passing effective knowledge to his son, Abdel, and that everything Abdel knows and continues to learn he owes to his father. The terrorist threats in the region have dramatically reduced business at the hotel. Mrs. Wang is trying to reduce cost to keep up. Her targets are the older workers. She has no use for traditional considerations of the wisdom of the elderly. In the modern capitalist world in which she is attempting to carve out a place in the sun, what counts for Mrs. Wang is the bottom line. So, she fires the gatekeeper and gives his job to Adam, replacing Adam with his more vigorous twenty-year-old Abdel. She also fires the old cook, who Adam thinks is an excellent cook, under the pretext that he drinks too much, and replaces him with a younger person.

Selfishness The law of the free market is not the law of compassion. It is the law of making profit by all legal, and often illegal, means. It is the law of selfishness. Mahamat-Saleh Haroun illustrates this in his film *A Screaming Man*.

A Screaming Man Mrs. Wang's employees left without saying goodbye, as the atrocities of war closed in on their homes. Mrs. Wang considers this an act of betrayal and selfishness. Should Mrs. Wang complain? She who has not hesitated to get rid of Adam and the cook, without any qualms about the thirty years of service they have devoted to the hotel she acquired? Is she not paying the price for her own betrayal and selfishness towards them? When Mrs. Wang offers Abdel his father's job and demotes him to gatekeeper, Abdel accepts the position without hesitation, and defends himself to his father that he too has obligations. Abdel is dating Djénéba, a young Malian woman who is expecting his child. His responsibility to Djénéba and her unborn child takes precedence over his loyalty to his father. Abdel may be selfish, but when faced with the choice of remaining loyal to his father and refusing the post presented to him by Mrs. Wang, or accepting his father's job and putting himself in a position to take responsibility for Djénéba and their child, the choice is clear. He chooses that which is good for him. He performs an act that some would interpret as selfish. In his quest for revenge, Adam performs the same act of selfishness to regain his position. With Abdel gone, Mrs. Wang has no choice but to recall Adam, the selfish father who listened to the advice of the local leader and handed his son over to the government army.

Memory The present of a country at war is always painful for those who live it. In these conditions, memory is often seen as a palliative for the pain of the present, a shelter from reality. However, Mahamat-Saleh Haroun also shows that the shelter provided by memory is no more than a makeshift solution, often torn away by the whirlwind of present reality.

A Screaming Man Memory often soothes the pain of the present. Adam is a former swimming champion, who has seen his glory years go by. Today, he works as a pool attendant in Mrs. Wang's hotel.

His former fans have dispersed, and he is no longer as adulated as he once was. Life is hard and job security barely guaranteed. However, Adam finds comfort in recalling his glorious past and reminding people of it whenever possible. To his son, who challenges him to an underwater breath-holding competition, which Adam loses, Adam recalls that he was the African swimming champion. His neighbors, to whom he has spoken about his past, call him 'Champ'. Adam wants to make himself believe that his Spring is still alive. However, when he loses his job as pool attendant, and is humiliated to be a mere gatekeeper, Adam no longer responds to his nickname. The moniker no longer gives him solace. He has sunk so low that the sedative of his memories remains ineffective. For Abdel, too, forcibly enrolled in the army and engaged in a merciless war against the rebels, memories of times spent with his girlfriend, Djénéba, are a palliative against the harshness of war and despair. Thus, Abdel sends an audio message to Djénéba from the front, recalling the romantic moments of their meeting and his hope of seeing her again. Memory thus becomes a temporary bandage on the open wound of the present.

Survival When a continent fails to meet the basic needs of its people, when living in a country becomes a daily obstacle course, the people's lives are reduced to surviving. African governments have failed. They have betrayed their people. Mahamat-Saleh Haroun shows how his compatriots avoid drowning in the immensity of the deprivation in which they find themselves.

A Screaming Man War brings to the fore an instinct in mankind that modern society likes to think is primal, and that we believe has been tamed by intelligence, namely the survival instinct. Faced with the terror and sense of insecurity that war brings, people's survival instincts are triggered, and they lose all sense of rationality and civility, as they jostle and trample each other to stay out of danger. The scarcity of jobs prompted by the war sparks a feeling of insecurity among the hotel workers struggling to keep their positions. When Mrs. Wang offers Abdel his father's job, Abdel rationalizes his acceptance with the fact that he has a pregnant girlfriend and soon a child to raise, a future family to care for. Who cares about the relationship forged with his father over the years? Who cares about the education and training he received from his father? Loyalty to his father is only an obstacle to his own survival, and his survival and longevity depend on his son. To refuse the job Mrs. Wang offers him is to accept his finitude. Better, he thinks, to undermine his father's wellbeing than his own. Thus, feeling betrayed by his son, Adam's instinct for self-preservation overrides his fatherly love. For his own survival, in order to regain his position as pool attendant, Adam hands his son over to the army, who conscript him by force.

Grigris How to survive in a society where the state is dysfunctional seems to be one of the questions at the heart of the film. All the survival strategies in *Grigris* seem to be summed up in a single concept: "la débrouillardise" in French or 'hustling', the ability of the individuals to use their means of persuasion or deception to make the most of the situations they find themselves in. This formula for resourcefulness has developed informal entrepreneurship in Africa to a level never seen before in the world. Grigris' parents, Mimi, Moussa, and Grigris himself are all players in an informal sector that is poorly regulated and often escapes government control. The crab basket of the informal sector includes those who toil within the law. These are the less fortunate, those who assume that people are generally honest, and that by playing the game of trade and exchange honestly, they will one day make a profit. Alongside these honest people, who wonder why fate always deals them a bad hand, there are those, like Moussa and Aladji, who deal from the bottom of the deck, cheat fate, and rarely lose. They always have money at their disposal, but are reluctant to share. Their relationships with others are always tainted by selfishness and a will to power. Moussa says Grigris is his friend, but this is a lie. Moussa loves Grigris only insofar as his dance performances fill his bar. The same goes for Mimi, who only interests Moussa to the extent that she brings consumers to his bar. The struggle for survival in N'Djamena is a rat race, where the most honest get eaten up by the crooked.

Religion Chad is a predominantly Muslim country. The interference of religion in people's lives is a social nuisance. Religion is used to rationalize gender inequity but also to justify war. Mahamat-Saleh Haroun denounces the acts of hypocrisy and, paradoxically, of violation of religious principles that sustain the political and social postures of the religious bigot.

Grigris Grigris would like to sleep in after an eventful night at the nightclub. But his mother disagrees, waking him up for morning prayers at the call of the muezzin. Grigris' stepfather, who is more liberal, asks his mother to let Grigris rest. The nightclub Grigris frequents is the locus of religious transgression. At night, young people indulge in alcohol, dancing and lewdness. Mimi sells her body to the highest bidder.

And when the day comes, they all dress up as pious Muslims. Moussa and Aladji are the most illustrative examples of this transgression of religion. Aladji, by name, is a man who made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and who came back holy and respectable, a wise man for his community. A fabric seller by day, Aladji turns into a vile dealer in stolen fuel by night. As for Moussa, a violent criminal and a gasoline trafficker by night, by day he appears dressed in all-white at the imam's side, absorbed in piety, asking Allah's justice against Grigris, who has stolen the object of his illegal trade. Haroun insists that the duplicity of the film's characters with regard to religion is not merely anecdotal; it characterizes the majority of Chadians.

A Season in France At the Parisian cemetery where the burial of his friend Etienne, affectionately known to his children as "Tonton Etienne", is taking place, Abbas says a prayer for his companion's soul. Abbas' prayer, recited in Arabic, seems to surprise his girlfriend, Carole, who apparently discovers for the first time that Abbas is a Muslim. Etienne, by his name, is obviously a Christian. Thus, the friendship between Etienne and Abbas, which began in the Central African Republic, continued on the road to escape the war-torn country, and carries on in France, is that of a Muslim and a Christian. And yet, the origins of the civil war that caused both Etienne and Abbas to share the same fate of exile and statelessness is indeed a religious chasm pitting Muslims against Christians. The long civil war in the Central African Republic began when, between 2004 and 2008, rebel groups from the Muslim north took up arms against their government, using the marginalization of Muslim populations as a pretext. Since then, the Central African Republic has known no peace, sinking into a succession of civil wars, each with a more far-fetched pretext than the last. Indeed, all too often in Africa, religion is used as a pretext for politicians to take up arms in their quest for power. Here, the filmmaker shows that the religious pretext is a farce, and that in the end, it is all about the quest for power, in which people, be they Muslims or Christians or whatever religion they belong to, become the butt of the joke at a very high cost.

Lingui Men claim to derive their authority from the Qur'an, that is, from God. So, for example, an unmarried woman who is not under a man's protection, who escapes, so to speak, man's authority, is an anomaly to be rectified. This anomaly is even more serious when, as in Amina's case, her celibacy is coupled with the status of a single mother: Amina is rejected by her bigot father, who also orders the other members of the family to avoid her, unless they, too, wish to incur God's wrath. She is singled out by society as the bad weed in God's beautiful garden. So, the Imam and Brahim take it upon themselves to save her from hell, the Imam by spying on her gestures and movements to make them conform to the edicts of the Qur'an, and Brahim by offering to marry her and be a father to her daughter. But Amina is no dupe. She knows that all these maneuvers have only one aim: to put women under men's control. Amina plays the game of the pious woman, less out of conviction than for her own survival, to escape condemnation from the Imam, who is the community's fundamental censor. As for marrying Brahim, it is out of the question for her to be wed to a man who does not love her, and for whom she feels no love.

Poverty Although rich in geological resources such as oil and uranium, and other precious metals, Chad is a poverty-stricken country. Chad's lack is showcased in its capital, N'Djamena. Mahamat-Saleh Haroun shows how the lack of basic infrastructures in his country constitutes a trap for its vulnerable populations.

Grigris "Why do you do this job (prostitution)?" This is the question Grigris asks Mimi, as he sits on her sofa the first time they meet. "Mimi has to eat," she replies. "I do not do it out of pleasure." To eat, Mimi sells her body to men. It is at this price that she can dodge poverty, whose signs are utterly conspicuous in the city of N'Djamena, the Chadian capital. The dirt streets of N'Djamena, which Grigris and his mother laboriously walk along, pushing and pulling their laundry cart, are cracked, transformed into open gutters into which the city's sewage and refuse flow. N'Djamena is a poor city with a poor population. While Grigris' mother, her back bent over in the river, tirelessly washes the neighborhood's laundry for a few coins, Grigris' stepfather toils away on his old Singer, foot-powered machine in the workshop that doubles as a photo studio. The work barely pays for the day's food. And when Ayoub falls ill, the family feels anguish for never being able to raise the funds needed for his treatment. To help his parents, Grigris returns to the bar to put to work his body already scarred by his disability. Just as Grigris sells his body, Mimi also sells her body by sleeping with men for whom she feels no affection. The only ones who seem to do well in this country are members of the government and those who, like Moussa the smuggler and Aladji the trader and occasional smuggler, have learned to cheat. Grigris tries his hand at their game by stealing Moussa's shipment of gasoline, but he is quickly caught, beaten, and run out of town.

Oil (curse of) Africa is continent rich in raw materials. However, it has become a cliché to say that Africa is a victim of its wealth. In *Grigris*, Mahamat-Saleh Haroun shows how one of his country's great riches, oil in particular, only benefits the rich and enables the exploitation of most Chadians.

Grigris Moussa could have been a smuggler of cigarettes, drugs or anything else. Mahamat-Saleh wanted him to be an oil smuggler. This is no casual choice. With this choice, the filmmaker intends to raise the question of the paradox of oil, or the curse of oil in Chad. Chad is a major oil producer. However, due to a phenomenon of illegal draining, this important resource finds its way onto regional and international markets without its revenues positively changing the living conditions of the population. For many observers, oil is the manna that finances armed conflicts in Chad. The Chadian government, on the other hand, claims that Chadian oil educates and heals Chadians. And yet, Chad's youth, as shown in *Grigris'* character and Moussa's employees, are not educated, and the population, as in Ayoub's case, can only look after itself at the price of insurmountable financial sacrifices. In fact, Chadian oil is traded and sold under the radar, enriching the most crooked and criminal of the likes of Moussa and Aladji. Chadian oil is like the oil of many African countries. It is a curse that, unlike the oil of the Gulf States, which lifts everybody up, impoverishes the poorest and enriches the most corrupt members of society.

Bonds/Solidarity Chadian society seems to be based on secret bonds; bonds woven by men to guarantee their authority through the subjugation of women. It would not be an exaggeration to assume that more than one man keeps other men's turpitudes secret, that men cover up and protect each other in a homosocial logic. To survive the blatant injustice of men, it is necessary for women, too, to form a support group, backing each other up and guarding their secrets.

A Screaming Man Abdel accepts the position of pool attendant from Mrs. Wang, the hotel owner, while his father Adam is demoted to gatekeeper. Abdel apologizes to his father for taking the job away from him, and explains to his father that he has responsibilities, too. The responsibilities Abdel refers to, as becomes clear when he is forcibly conscripted, concern his girlfriend, Djénéba, who is expecting his child. When Djénéba doesn't hear from Abdel, she goes to his parents' house. There, she tells Abdel's mother that she is pregnant with Abdel's child. Without questioning the veracity of Djénéba's claims, the mother welcomes Djénéba as her daughter. The mother calls Djénéba "my daughter" and immediately invites her to move into Abdel's room. Whether Djénéba is telling the truth or not, Abdel's mother seems to have no doubts about her sincerity and sees a girl in distress, in need of a helping hand in this war-torn country, a war that makes women and children its first victims. The mother takes it upon herself to protect a young woman, in an act of solidarity and bonding between women. This sisterhood, this feminine bond, is a strength, a survival tool, which, as the filmmaker explains, enables women to survive in a male-dominated world that is not very attentive to women's needs. This theme of solidarity and love between women is so dear to Haroun that the filmmaker devotes an entire film to it, namely, *Lingui* (2021).

Grigris While all the men are out in the fields, and the village in which *Grigris* and Mimi found shelter from Moussa's men is animated only by its women and children, one of Moussa's men manages to track down the fugitives and catch *Grigris*. Mimi then calls the village women, who, armed with clubs, come to *Grigris'* rescue and order Moussa's right-hand man to free him. And when Moussa's hitman refuses to listen, the women, who days before had adopted Mimi as their sister, beat the man to death, put his body in his car and set it ablaze. Then, joining hands, the women swear together that what has just happened will remain their secret until death. Here, Haroun emphasizes the importance of the *lingui*, the secret that unites women in certain parts of Chad, and which they guard for generations without a single whisper, no matter what happens, like a badge of membership of their group. Thus, the murder of Moussa's henchman will remain a secret that none of the men in the village will learn, except *Grigris*, who benefitted from the women's act, and who has no vested interest in the secret being revealed. Haroun insists that in a male-dominated Chadian society women's *lingui* allows them to even the odds.

Lingui Amina smokes cigarettes and jiggles to the sound of wild music. Now her daughter knows it. But this secret will never leave the confines of their home, will never reach the Imam. Fanta, Amina's sister, refuses to allow her little girl, Maïmouna, to be excised. Her sister Amina finds her a woman who has the secret of faking excision, of making a girl look like she has been excised, even though she retains her full anatomy. Neither the girl's father nor anyone other than Fanta and Amina will know. Maria undergoes an

abortion in a clandestine clinic. Officially, Maria has had a miscarriage, has violated no laws, and can return to school. Maria's true story is known only to her mother, her Aunt Fanta and the abortion provider. To avenge her daughter, Maria violently beats Brahim. If he survives his injuries, Brahim, Maria's rapist, will be too ashamed to go public. He will certainly lie that he was attacked by strangers, by men. The women's secrets, their "lingui", will remain what unites them most, the bond that glues their sisterhood.

Friendship In the context of war, friendship, Mahamat-Saleh teaches us, is one of the alliances that enable people to overcome the difficulties of life. Chad has been at war for almost fifty years, and *Grigris*, shot against the backdrop of war, shows that the challenges facing Chadians are enormous, and that friendship, alliances are among the necessary antidotes to the dilemma brought about by interminable conflicts.

Grigris Grigris, with his physical handicap and limited education, will need the friendship of others more than any other Chadian. The viewer is therefore somewhat relieved when, at the beginning of the film, Moussa, the local wise man, warns those who want to take advantage of Grigris that the young dancer is his friend and that they had better treat him well. However, the viewer is quickly disillusioned when he or she realizes that, in fact, it is Moussa who, instead of protecting Grigris, is exploiting the young disabled man, even threatening to kill him, when he no longer needs him. Moussa, Grigris' pompously self-proclaimed friend, paradoxically becomes the one against whom Grigris must protect himself. For this, Grigris can count on the support of Mimi, also a victim of Moussa's, exploited, scorned and beaten up by Moussa. Grigris and Mimi's friendship, forged through misfortune and the fact that they are both outcasts, enables them to overcome the challenges in their path, and teaches us one thing in particular: true friendship is forged through shared experience, where the subject has every reason to question the other in these terms: "You too?"

Disability Mahamat-Saleh Haroun deals with the condition of the disabled in Africa in general, and in Chad in particular, raising awareness on the difficulties they face in a society that is not particularly tolerant. At times, however, the filmmaker's outrage seems excessive, given the laid-back posture of the disabled themselves.

Grigris If Grigris speaks little and barely correct French, this is because the character, both in real life and in the fictional role he plays, has spent very few years, if any, in the formal school system. Grigris speaks the kind of French common in French-speaking Africa, spontaneously forged in the public square as the lingua franca of the unschooled populace. In Africa, the physically and mentally challenged are often seen as non-schoolable, because the schools lack the infrastructure to accommodate them. And if the disabled do persist in going to school, the ridicule of their peers and their difficulties in navigating a hostile landscape and architecture quickly discourage them from attending, relegating them to the status of socially non-insertable, and throwing them into poverty. In Africa, the disabled all too often find themselves begging at crossroads and in front of mosques. Grigris, for his part, has decided to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. But watching Grigris push his mother's laundry cart through the alleyways, already a trap for the non-disabled, is an arduous task for both him and the viewer. It is also difficult to watch Grigris being called a dead leg or half a man when he goes to ask Moussa for a job. Through Grigris, Haroun denounces the failure of African states to integrate the disabled into the social fabric, thus wasting - as Grigris' talent proves - a valuable part of their human resources.

In an interview at the Cannes Film Festival, Souleymane D  m   (who plays the character of Grigris) casually confides that his own disability is the result of an injection to his sciatic nerve as a child. Sitting next to D  m  , filmmaker Haroun adds, with marked anger, that it was the work of an incompetent nurse that crippled D  m   for life. Clearly, while D  m   speaks without recrimination, it is those who look on from the outside who, more royalist than the king, want to take offense at his fate. D  m  , like Grigris, the character he plays in the film, does not question his handicap; he does not make a fuss about it. Having accepted his difference from an early age, just as one accepts being born here rather than there, of such and such parents rather than others, Grigris seems to live his life, like any other Chadian, naturally able to do certain things and unable to do others, as is the case for all humans. It is Moussa who calls Grigris a "dead leg" and asks him if he can swim or how he intends to drive a car. For Grigris, these questions don't arise in terms of his disability; they simply arise as they might for any other person, whether disabled or not. He is a man in Chadian society as it presents itself to him and to everyone else. The answer to

how to navigate this society is within him. The question of his ability to navigate it lies elsewhere, within the presumptuous, "superior beings", who arrogate to themselves the right to pity him or to make his existence their struggle. This question is not part of his preoccupation.

Trade/commerce Trade could be one of the first social experiences of man, and the one that will outlive all other human experiences. This is why war has never stopped trade. In N'Djamena, despite the sounds of shelling, far from suggesting that the trade that takes place there is necessarily fair, Mahamat-Saleh Haroun shows that everyone always has something to give to and receive from the other.

Grigris In this market of give and take, the object of exchange is not always common and ordinary. It is sometimes quite unusual. There are the legal, street-side businesses of Ayoub, the tailor and photographer, his wife, the laundrywoman, and Aladji, the textile merchant. But it also happens that Aladji falls into the camp of underground trade, whose players include Moussa, Grigris, Mimi and the Chadian government. Moussa smuggles equally in gasoline and human bodies. When Haroun's camera pans over the black, tight muscles, glistening with gasoline residue, of Moussa's smugglers, swimming in the dark waters of the river, pulling gasoline cans moored to their bodies, what the filmmaker intends to show is, beyond the oil trade, the more shameful trade in flesh, which enriches speculators like Moussa and shady government officials. The oil trade is not just an exchange of barrels and petrodollars. Below the surface, however, there is a whole flesh-and-blood trade in which people sell their muscles at vile prices to keep this oil flowing, which in Chad does not feed the populace. But the people, betrayed by their oil, have to eat. And to eat, like Mimi, this populace sells its flesh in Moussa's bars. To eat, Mimi offers her beautiful body to those who, for one reason or another, can only pay for love with cold cash. And Grigris offers his body to the mesmerized gaze of the onlookers, a black body with tight muscles upon which yellow flames roll. Such is the trade that takes place in N'Djamena under the thunder of the bombs.

Patriarchy Chad is a highly patriarchal society. This is due firstly to its religion (95% Muslim), which confers a predominant place upon men, and secondly to its African culture, which considers women to be naturally inferior. Mahamat-Saleh burlesques the cultural and religious intolerance against women by pointing the finger at the irrationality of the cultural and religious police in Chad.

Lingui In this community, whose life is governed by Islam, men are considered saints, taking on the role of regulating women's lives. As a result, the community's Imam follows Amina's every move, not failing to call her out when he considers she has departed from the holy scriptures. Has she missed the morning prayer, been absent from the mosque for more than a day, has the Imam noticed anything unusual in Amina's dress or gait, that the Imam would call out to the young woman to admonish her. In fact, all the community's women must submit to the Imam's authority. One day, when he visits Amina to inquire about what he suspects to be a change in her attitude, the Imam finds her unveiled and wearing a little dress revealing her knees. He looks away from her, and when she offers him her hand in greeting, he takes offense and accuses Amina of trying to lead him down the devil's path. However, after observing Maria, Amina's teenage daughter, long enough to realize that she is now a woman, the Imam urges her to start attending mosque, that place where, to mark their superiority, men make women pray outside, in bad weather, while they reserve for themselves places inside the mosque, protected from wind, rain and sandstorms. Amina's neighbor, Brahim, who says he wants to marry her, offers to be a protector for Amina and her daughter, Maria. What kind of protectors are these patriarchs who, praying to God, take shelter in the mosque, leaving women to the mercy of nature's whims?

Appearance The Chadian society is a society of duplicity. Both victims and victimizers wear masks of falsehood. However, the filmmaker seems to absolve certain forms of duplicity, notably those of the victims who mislead for the sole purpose of surviving the injustice of their tormentor.

Lingui Indeed, Brahim, who makes the rounds of the neighborhood with his rifle on his shoulder, pretending to watch over Amina's sleep, is nothing but a great hypocrite. It is Brahim, the man who proposes to be a husband to Amina and a father to Maria, who has raped and impregnated young Maria. Brahim's declarations of good faith are nothing more than the bluster of a pedophile rapist. Brahim would never have been punished for his crimes if Amina had not taken it upon herself to punish him by beating him with a club. And Amina's punishment of Brahim is all the more poetic in that he receives it as he leaves the mosque, where he has gone for the first prayer of the day. Are some hypocrisies more forgivable than others? Perhaps, one might say, duplicity is forgivable when it serves to right a wrong;

that Amina who, in violation of the shibboleth of patriarchal good morals, smokes on the sly to relieve herself of patriarchal frustrations is redeemable; that the excisor who performs a false excision on Amina's niece to save the child from brutal genital mutilation is redeemable. Perhaps one could say that Amina and all the doctors and nurses who, in violation of the law and putting their reputations and jobs on the line, abort Maria's fetus so that the teenager does not have to live with the trauma of raising a child born out of rape, are forgivable. Perhaps one could say that the masks of appearance do not hide only villains.

Anxiety Mahamat-Saleh stands a generalized African wisdom on its head, that of the superiority of men over women. Men's language towards women betrays a certain anguish about their own existence. Men speak of women as an invisibility, one that paradoxically haunts them; a specter that threatens their own materiality.

Lingui The men, especially Brahim and the Imam, keep telling Amina that the Muslim community is a brotherhood. Although she surreptitiously corrects Brahim, asserting instead that they are all a community of "siblings-in-Islam", Brahim fails to perceive the distinction and, like the Imam, continues to ramble on about the maleness of the Muslim community. Women are negated and relegated into men's subconscious, pushed to the furthest reaches of men's intimate recesses, where women are both the object of men's desires and their fears. For the Imam, shaking hands with a woman is a dangerous act that could close the doors of paradise to him. And yet, the Imam is obsessed with women's presence in the mosque - even though they are not allowed to pray inside the mosque. Of course, if questioned about their true intentions, the Imam and Brahim, like most men in this community, would say without flinching that all their efforts are aimed at saving women from hell. In truth, one could easily see in this their fascination for women, for the invisibility that is the condition of their materiality, of their existence.

Abortion The filmmaker explains in an interview that he wanted to deal with the theme of abortion because it is a recurring topic in the intellectual marketplace of ideas, but above all because it is a subject that in Chad symbolizes the hypocrisy that governs the country. Abortion is everywhere in Chad, he explains. Not a day goes by when one does not find a human fetus discarded in a dump or toilet. And yet, it seems as if the strict legal and Muslim authorities on the subject have succeeded in stopping the practice.

Lingui This film puts this discussion back on the agenda, highlighting the prevalence of abortion and the risks taken by young girls to have an abortion in precarious conditions in back alleys. This is a way of reminding the government and Muslim authorities of their responsibilities, especially when pregnancies are caused by rape. Haroun claims that, following his film, a women's group was formed, calling on the government to legalize abortion. As for the excision of young girls, this is forbidden by Chadian law, but continues to be carried out under the radar of the authorities. Here, too, the film is an appeal to the government to be vigilant and sincere, so that the law supposed to protect young girls is enforced.

Injustice/justice Mahamat-Saleh Haroun denounces injustice and discrimination against women. The filmmaker particularly criticizes Chadian cultural and religious prejudice against single women or single mothers that marginalizes them as damaged goods. From this perspective, only the benevolence of just men can salvage women from their state of sinners.

Lingui Brahim tells Amina that the community considers her to be a woman of loose morals. To save her from her bad reputation, he says, he proposes to marry her. When she becomes pregnant as a result of rape, Maria is frightened by the prospect of becoming a single mother, and of being stigmatized by the community in the same way as her mother. In this patriarchal community, it is the men who decree the laws of femininity. Paradoxically, they are also the ones who violate these laws by which they judge women. Amina was abandoned by the man she loved, who gave her a child before fleeing. Maria became pregnant by the man she considered a father. For Amina, if men have stacked the cards so much as to never render justice to women, then women must take justice into their own hands, both morally and physically. Morally, women must subvert the law of patriarchy by rebelling against religion and the legal system through abortion. Physically, it means beating patriarchy to a pulp. Brahim, if he ever regains his mental faculties after Amina's blows to his head, will take time to reflect on the male hypocrisy that has made him the undisputed master and the woman his slave.

Quest Against the backdrop of the African politicians' quests for power, which sends armed groups in murderous operations against the African populations, Mahamat-Saleh features the victimized populations' pursuit of safety, happiness, and freedom outside their torn countries. In an increasingly solipsistic world that raises national administrative as well as physical barriers to protect itself from "outside invaders", this quest for freedom is too often doomed to failure.

A Season in France *A Season in France* is also a film about quest. The event that drove Abbas and his family, as well as Etienne, into exile was the quest for power by Central African politicians, who, using false pretexts, armed opposing factions and turned the country into a trap closing in on the civilian population. In exile, Etienne and Abbas and Abbas' children have their own quest: looking for the security they cannot find in their own country. This security becomes elusive in France. Their various efforts to obtain refugee status meet with refusal from the French administration. After several unsuccessful attempts to gain legal acceptance on French soil, Etienne, Abbas and the children are ordered to leave France. Etienne commits suicide, while Abbas returns to the Central African Republic to continue his quest for dignity and security, and to enable his children to fulfill their dream of recovering the big home and less stressful life they used to have in the Central African Republic. Abbas' departure is devastating for his girlfriend, Carole, who had hoped to marry him, and who in this quest had helped him, accompanying him to the National Asylum Court, giving him hope and compassion, sheltering him clandestinely at a huge risk to herself. The same goes for Etienne's girlfriend, Martine, who had also hoped to have a more fulfilling relationship with Etienne, and who sees her hopes dashed by his suicide.

CHARACTERS

OPEN

1. HAROUN (*Bye Bye Africa*) Haroun is an optimistic figure for the future of cinema culture in Chad. However, he remains alienated from the Chad he left 10 years ago for France. Haroun's selfishness blinds him to Isabelle's love for him.
2. GARBA (*Bye Bye Africa*) The optimism of Garba, a former projectionist, has been eroded by Chad's long war. This loyal childhood friend of Haroun, who serves as his cultural guide, says he no longer believes in the future of cinema in Chad. However, Garba's decision to stay in Chad and open a cinema to show Chadian films, just when he has been granted the American visa of his dreams, shows his strong commitment to Chadian culture.
3. ALI (*Bye Bye Africa*) Ali is an ingenious and determined boy. He has built himself a toy camera in the likeness of his uncle Haroun's, but it is his uncle's professional camera that really fascinates him. He uses all kinds of subterfuge to get his hands on the camera, which his uncle ends up giving him.
4. NASSARA (*Daratt*) 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.
5. ATIM (*Daratt*) 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.
6. CAROLE (*A Season in France*) Carole is a supportive friend to Abbas. She stands by his sides in his most trying moments. She tries to instill in him a faith in the future. Abbas unfortunately does not follow Carole's last advice to fight his deportation at the Administrative Court, and he runs out of time.
7. AMINA (*Lingui*) Amina is an independent, strong and determined woman. She has always struggled alone to care for her family, remaining, however, within the strict laws of patriarchy and Islam. However, when her daughter becomes pregnant as a result of rape, she breaks free from patriarchy and religion for good, having her daughter terminate the pregnancy and crippling the man who raped her daughter.

8. MARIA (*Lingui*) Maria is a stubborn, determined girl who sees herself in a future that is different from the life her mother lives. Pregnant, she has no intention of keeping the child that will surely put an end to her studies. She makes her mother understand her desire to break the cycle of poverty in which they both find themselves, and her mother agrees to help her.

CLOSED

1. THE GRAND-FATHER (*Daratt*) 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.
2. BRAHIM (*Lingui*) Brahim is the epitome of selfishness, condescension and hypocrisy in patriarchal society. He makes the laws, but breaks them to his own benefit. He addresses women like a master addresses his slave. He thinks only of satisfying his desires, and the rest is irrelevant.

AGREEABLE

1. ABDEL (*A Screaming Man*) Abdel is a respectful young man, proud of his parents. He loves his job as an assistant pool attendant and has a more open approach to the hotel's guests, which is why he is offered his father's job. Abdel is proud of his father and mother.
2. GRIGRIS (*Grigris*) Grigris is a young man grateful for the fatherly love of his mother's husband Ayoub. Determined to help Ayoub meet his medical expenses, Grigris performs fearless; bolds acts that earn him the wrath of the neighborhood kingpin.
3. MIMI (*Grigris*) Mimi is an isolated, melancholic girl. She hides her distress in alcohol and the hazy atmosphere of N'Djamena's nightclubs. In Grigris, she finds a companion of misfortune with whom she can share her sorrows, and who pulls her out of her solitude.
4. AYOUB (*Grigris*) Ayoub is an honest worker and a good father and guide to his stepson, Grigris. Ayoub teaches Grigris two honest trades and promises to leave him his sewing and photography workshops, so that the young man can start life on the right foot.
5. THE CHILDREN (YACINE AND ASMA) (*A Season in France*) From the death of their mother in the Central African Republic to their living as undocumented immigrants in France, Abbas's children, Yacine and Asma, have experienced a lifestyle unlike that of most children their age. This has made them mature quickly and be on their toes. Nevertheless, they remain children, who are imaginative and easily seduced by the fantastic.

DISAGREEABLE

1. MRS. WANG (*A Screaming Man*) Mrs. Wang is the epitome of the pragmatic capitalist mentality. She follows the logic of profit and hires and fires according to that logic. However, she is hypocritical when she expects her employees to have a sentimental attachment to the insensitive employer that she is.
2. MOUSSA (*Grigris*) Moussa is a hypocritical, violent and intolerant character. His only friends are those he can take advantage of. He is tactless in his dealings with others, and his language is often hurtful. He is willing to kill for money.
3. ALADJI (*Grigris*) Aladji is a dishonest and avaricious man. He doesn't like to part with his money, and if he happens to lend it to someone, he is quick to get it back one way or another. Underneath his honest merchant exterior, he is steeped in the murky waters of corruption in N'Djamena.

Emotional

1. ISABELLE (*Bye Bye Africa*) Isabelle is an isolated, melancholic girl. For 10 years, she has lived as an outcast in her community. She could have been happy if, in the end, Haroun, with whom she hoped to live, had accepted her. But Haroun rejected her, further adding to her grief.
2. ADAM (*A Screaming Man*) Adam is a man proud of his past as a champion, of his son, whom he has trained in swimming, and of his work. However, when Adam feels that his son has betrayed

him by agreeing to take his place, Adam becomes a vengeful man. He hands his son over to the army, then feels remorse for what he has done.

3. ABBAS (*A Season in France*) An excellent father to his children, Asma and Yacine, Abbas is an emotional man. He cries his sorrows in secret so as not to alarm his children. The memory of his wife killed by Central African rebels haunts him, and he blames himself for not having been able to protect her.
4. ETIENNE (*A Season in France*) Etienne is a caring individual, concerned about his friend Abbas' and Abbas' children's wellbeing. However, Etienne himself is harboring his own difficulties, which he hides from the people around him out of pride. Etienne's demons get the better of him, and he kills himself.