

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
Martial Frindéthié, *PhD*

Med Hondo (1936-2019)



LIFE

Auteur Med Hondo, whose real name was Mohamed Abid, was born on May 4, 1935, in Ain Beni Mathar, Morocco. Hondo was born of Mauritanian and Senegalese parents. His mother was from a Mauritanian slave caste (the Haratin ethnic group). After some culinary studies in Morocco, Med Hondo went to France in 1956, where he did several jobs, cook, dockworker, and farmhand, before getting into theater and cinema. Med Hondo died in Paris on March 2, 2019.

ACHIEVEMENT

Hondo studied theater in Marseilles and later went to Paris, where he appeared in several classic plays by Molière, Racine and Shakespeare. In 1966, with a few friends from Africa and the Caribbeans, Hondo founded the Griot-Shango theatrical group to feature works from African and Caribbean playwrights. Hondo has produced several documentaries and five features, including *Oh, Sun* (1969), *West Indies* (1979), *Sarraounia* (1986), *Black Light* (1994), and *Fatima, the Algerian Woman of Dakar* (2004). Hondo did the French voice on screen of actors like Sidney Poitier, Eddy Murphy, Danny Glover, Muhammad Ali and Morgan Freeman.

FILMOGRAPHY

Oh, Sun (1969)
West Indies (1979)
Sarraounia (1986)
Black Light (1994)
Fatima, the Algerian Woman of Dakar (2004)

THEMES

SOCIETY

Religion

(Oh, Sun) From the outset, *Oh, Sun* criticizes the collusion of the army and religion, and the deleterious effects of these two colonial institutions. Religion causes the African to deny himself, to spit from his body and soul all vestiges of his Africanness, henceforth perceived as primitive and evil, to accept Western values presented as superior. As for the colonial army, made up of African recruits and led by white officers, it inculcates in Africans an instinct for self-destruction that makes them turn against their own selves, fighting anyone in their tribes who does not adhere to the ideals of the colonizing powers.

(Oh, Sun) Med Hondo intertwines the themes of religion and the military to underscore their joint role in upholding Western supremacy. The film opens with a Catholic priest blessing native Africans, having first coerced them into confessing the "sin" of speaking their mother tongues. To demonstrate their new faith in Christianity, these individuals—described as "children inhabited by the spirit of the devil"—spit on the ground and recite their newly assigned Christian names from the Bible. This act symbolizes their rejection of their so-called "lives of darkness" in favor of a "life of light." Donning crosses, the new converts embark on a mission to evangelize the countryside. However, in a striking transformation, they soon invert their crosses, turning them into swords as they are conscripted into the colonial military. Now soldiers themselves, they respond to the commands of a white officer, wielding violence in service of imperial power. Through this progression, Africans are first subtly coaxed into the church and then forcibly drafted into the army—both institutions operating in tandem as part of a seamless program designed to serve the colonial administration. In Hondo's critique, the army emerges as the natural extension of the church, both instruments integral to the civilizing mission of imperialist Europe.

(West Indies) Med Hondo deliberately positions the white priest and the black nun as accomplices to Death, portraying them as secular enforcers of his agenda under the guise of salvation. When Mr. Justin ascends to Parliament through rigged elections, the priest is overtaken with enthusiasm, celebrating the occasion by orchestrating West Indian children to sing a hymn honoring the birth of the infant Jesus. In the priest's narrative, Mr. Justin is framed as a messianic figure, destined to lead the West Indies out of obscurity and destitution. This portrayal proves so convincing that a young West Indian girl, upon seeing Mr. Justin on the balcony, mistakes him for Jesus—a savior who will grant true freedom to the people of the West Indies. Yet, the irony is profound: Mr. Justin delivers nothing but empty promises, deepened poverty, and continued subjugation under France's regime of dependency. Religion and colonial education are exposed as tools of spiritual and intellectual violence, conditioning the West Indian to believe their salvation lies solely in Paris or anything linked to Paris. This belief ensures their submission to French domination. Monsieur Justin, alongside other assimilated West Indians who pride themselves on their connection to Paris—whether through residency or Parisian attire—is revealed to be nothing more than an instrument of colonial power, aiding in the subjugation of the colonized peoples.

(Sarraounia) The kingdom of Lugu, ruled by Queen Sarraounia, has long been targeted by the Muslims of the Sokoto Caliphate, who aim to convert its people, whom they deem impious. However, the formidable army of Sarraounia consistently repels these assaults. Yet, Sarraounia's adversaries extend beyond the Muslims. The French colonial army also sets its sights on her kingdom, seeking to "pacify" it and liberate it from what it sees as the "obscurantism" of animism. For the Muslims, this presents an opportunity to rid themselves of Sarraounia, whose mysticism, they claim, has often defeated and humiliated them. Thus, some Muslims choose to collaborate with the French army, while others resign themselves to leaving Sarraounia to face her fate at the hands of the French and the will of Allah. However, the alliance between the Muslims and the French proves fragile. Captain Paul spares no one, including the Muslims, in his unrelenting pursuit of conquest. His campaign advances against Muslim kingdoms as well, leading some frustrated Muslim leaders to set aside their spiritual differences with Sarraounia. They unite with her to stand against the French invasion, intensifying the challenges faced by Paul's army.

(Sarraounia) Sarraounia, the queen of the Lugu kingdom, is an animist queen. Her kingdom has resisted several Muslim attacks, and her defeated enemies are convinced that the strength of Sarraounia's army

comes from the queen's mystical powers. To her enemies, Sarraounia is a powerful and malevolent witch. As rumors of her powers spread, the scouts and porters who are supposed to guide Captain Paul's army to Sarraounia's kingdom refuse to cooperate. Even Captain Paul's black soldiers hesitate to confront Sarraounia's army. Paul tries to convince them through force—whipping them publicly—or by making them believe in the myth of the White man's semi-divinity. One of Paul's White officers jeopardizes the myth of the White man's divinity when, wanting to prove Sarraounia's impotence, he seizes and wears one of the queen's masks, only to be mysteriously struck down, crying and writhing in pain. While the army's doctor tends to the unfortunate man, Paul becomes angry and reprimands him for his lack of self-control, which discredits the White man in front of the black soldiers and undermines France's colonizing mission.

Gender (*Sarraounia*) Sarraounia stands as both a queen and a warrior in a world governed by patriarchal norms. Through her story, Med Hondo spotlights the critical role of women—not just in the social fabric of precolonial Africa but also in the fight against colonial oppression. Sarraounia confronts her lover, Baka, who resents the praise sung about her by the *griot* (praise singer and historian) of the kingdom, longing instead to be the focal point. Though she acknowledges Baka's skills as a warrior, she firmly asserts her status as queen and demands his respect. This decisive act symbolizes her rejection of patriarchal dominance and the submission of women to men. In her army, women are just as integral as men, defying traditional gender roles. Even the women captured by the colonial forces refuse to bow to their oppressors and secretly plot to aid Sarraounia's cause. Their opportunity arises when a storm devastates the French camp—a disaster attributed to Sarraounia's supernatural powers by the black soldiers. Amid the chaos, the captives escape and join Sarraounia's resistance, bolstering her forces as Captain Paul's campaign falters. As a female leader, Sarraounia becomes the unifying force rallying Africans against colonization.

Communitarianism (*Black Light*) Since the Sarkozy era, France has been embroiled in a contentious debate over communitarianism, blaming immigrant enclaves for societal ills and the erosion of traditional French values. The black immigrants, relentlessly pursued by the French police, live in a state of constant fear. To evade capture, they establish an underground support network within the precarious quarters of French cities. This hidden existence isolates them from social protection benefits, deepening their poverty and marginalization. During his investigation into the circumstances surrounding his friend Gérard's death, Yves is taken aback by the parallel world inhabited by undocumented black immigrants in Paris. To outwit the authorities, they adopt cryptic nicknames, like "Handyman," and rely on a network of vigilant sentinels for protection. Their communication is distinct, characterized by hushed whispers—such as the embassy guard who answers Yves' call in a voice filled with apprehension—and a creolized version of French infused with their native tongues. Yves gains further insight into their lives when he is invited to tea at the home of Fofana, one of the immigrants. There, he observes how their family dynamics are deeply rooted in ancestral traditions. The roles and spatial arrangements within Fofana's household mirror those of the Malian family Yves encounters later in his investigation. This continuity underscores the enduring influence of cultural heritage, even in the face of displacement. Fofana's family, like many others, operates within a patriarchal framework, reflecting the societal structures of their homeland.

Culture (*Black Light*) Yves' journey in Mali is marked by unforeseen interruptions that challenge his quest to locate and speak with the witness to the incident that led to his friend's death. Throughout his adventure, Yves is repeatedly forced to relinquish his Western expectations of punctuality and embrace the patience characteristic of African culture. Upon arriving at Babemba's family home, Yves consults with Babemba, who provides him with another clue for his investigation. Eager to press forward immediately, Yves is gently persuaded by the family patriarch to stay the night and rest before continuing his journey. The next morning, his plans are further derailed when the cab bound for Timbuktu breaks down, leaving Yves with no choice but to wander the town, hoping the repair—which hinges on a missing mechanic and an elusive driver—will not stretch on for days. His frustration mounts as the ferryman, expected to transport him across the river, decides he is not in the mood to work. Yves resorts to bribing him, another instance of adjusting to the apparent lack of urgency he observes in Mali. This unhurried approach to time and priorities even extends to France, where Fofana—before providing the information Yves seeks—invites him to his home for coffee and a family gathering, emphasizing the cultural emphasis on connection over haste.

TECHNOLOGY (*Pharmacopeia*)

Med Hondo showcases the richness of African pharmacopeia, a centuries-old tradition that still thrives in vibrant open markets across the continent today. The keepers of these traditional pharmacies are often referred to as sorcerers and are feared in their communities.

(*Sarraounia*) The secrets of African pharmacopoeia are passed down through great masters to initiates, granting these masters the revered status of "sorcerers." Sarraounia learns the healing properties of traditional herbs, roots, and barks from her mentor, Dawa. Alongside this, Dawa teaches her the art of crafting deadly poisons for her warriors' arrows and preparing antidotes to counteract the toxins used by her enemies. These teachings transform Sarraounia's soldiers into a formidable force, capable of repelling repeated assaults by Muslim adversaries against the Lugu kingdom. Her enemies attribute the strength of her army to the malevolent powers of the animist gods she worships. This perception cements Sarraounia's reputation as the "witch queen," a fearsome title that spreads beyond her immediate foes. When her legend reaches the French colonial army, it strikes terror into the hearts of its black soldiers, who refuse to confront her in battle. Captain Paul resolves to whipping and threatening his recalcitrant soldiers with death to make them advance into Sarraounia's territory.

JUSTICE Med Hondo critiques colonization as a process of mutual savagery that dehumanizes both the colonizer and the colonized, drawing on the insights of Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon. He extends his critique to systemic police brutality in France, exposing the structural violence and racial profiling endured by African and Arab communities.

Violence

(*Sarraounia*) The black soldiers serving France are transformed into instruments of destruction, unleashing terror on the African tribes targeted by France's colonial campaigns. Their military operations leave villages in ruins—homes and granaries burned, livestock seized, women abducted and raped, children and men slaughtered. Resistance fighters, when captured, face unspeakable cruelty: buried upright to their necks, they become targets in macabre games where soldiers slice their throats while riding their horses. The white officers who command these atrocities embody an even deeper savagery. They revel in the violence, demanding severed hands as proof of cartridges used, reducing human lives to mere accounting. Captain Paul exemplifies this descent into barbarity, executing a soldier at point-blank range for failing to justify his use of ammunition. As the campaign progresses, the relentless brutality begins to unravel Paul's sanity. He becomes unhinged, turning against his own officers and headquarters, whose concerns about his sadistic methods grow. Colonization, in its essence, dehumanizes everyone it touches—Paul, as a symbol of France, and the soldiers under his command, all consumed by the savage logic of conquest and domination.

(*Black light*) Both French citizens and black immigrants in France are subjected to police brutality, enduring relentless harassment and violence. Black immigrants are rounded up and deported in ways that blatantly violate human dignity. Yves's friend Gérard becomes a victim of this systemic abuse when he is summarily murdered by the police, who later attempt to cover up the crime. Yves himself meets a similar fate—murdered by the police for pursuing the truth about Gérard's death. Even Inspector Londrin, who uncovers corruption within the police force, is killed by his colleagues for exposing their wrongdoing. For the French Minister of the Interior, these atrocities are dismissed as mere collateral damage, justified under the doctrine of "raison d'État." This attitude represents a grave infringement of the individual freedoms supposedly guaranteed by the French constitution. The Malian government, too, betrays its people, wielding the power of the state to oppress them. Babemba, despite his willingness to provide Yves with testimony, is paralyzed by fear of reprisals from his own government, which collaborates with France to suppress any actions that might embarrass the French authorities. Fofana had warned Yves about the risks of involving Babemba, cautioning him against drawing the ire of the Malian authorities. Yves finds himself under surveillance by the Malian government, which dispatches soldiers to pursue him. Tragically, the witness who aids Yves by revealing the truth about the police misconduct is hunted down and killed by Malian soldiers in a brutal raid on his campsite, using guns and flamethrowers to silence him.

Injustice (*Black Light*) At Roissy airport, the stark disparity in treatment between black travelers and their white counterparts is unmistakable. Black travelers are subjected to aggressive searches, with police officers pointing weapons at them and ordering them to drop their luggage and stand with their arms raised, awaiting further instructions. Meanwhile, white travelers are greeted with politeness, processed calmly, and allowed to proceed without incident. This difference in treatment reflects the prejudiced mindset of the French authorities, who perceive Blacks and Arabs as threats—potential terrorists—and justify police brutality against them. Med Hondo captures this injustice in *Black Light*, portraying the arrest and subsequent incarceration of black travelers in requisitioned hotels, followed by their forced deportation to Africa. The imagery evokes the historical trauma of the transatlantic slave trade, with the key difference being the reversed direction of the journey—back to Africa.

POLITICS

Rebellion (*West Indies*) In the film, a young West Indian, exasperated by the injustices inflicted by the French government, issues a passionate call for revolt. However, his compatriots respond with hesitation and reluctance, prompting the young man to angrily brand them as cowards. In response, an elder—someone who has lived the brutal history of the West Indies as a fugitive slave—steps forward to reprimand him. The elder urges the young man to reject the lies propagated by the colonizer's books, which falsely depict the West Indians as passive recipients of freedom graciously granted by slave owners. The elder's rebuke is powerfully visualized through a ballet of enslaved individuals, who, to the resonant sounds of horns and drums, rise up armed with spears, machetes, and torches, launching a defiant attack on their oppressors. As the scene unfolds, the elder's voice rings out, declaring with forceful clarity that freedom was won not through any magnanimous French law, but through relentless struggle, bloodshed, and the instillation of fear in the hearts of the colonizers. By the film's conclusion, the West Indians once again take to the streets to overthrow the false savior, Mr. Justin, and burn his effigy. The musical ballet accompanying this powerful scene restores and celebrates the oral history of the West Indies, paying homage to the heroes of the past—figures like Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who led Haiti to become the first independent black state in the West Indies. Through this cinematic portrayal, *West Indies* becomes a profound tribute to the oral tradition, reaffirming its role in preserving the history and heroism of the West Indian people.

Leadership

(*Sarraounia*) Tiémogo, a black *tirailleur*, slit the throat of a soldier he accused of stealing his Fulani captive and sleeping with her. Tiémogo's victim has lost a lot of blood, but the doctor says he can save him. Tiémogo only wants one thing: to finish off his victim. The captain tries to calm him down and tells the lieutenant that Tiémogo is a brave soldier, loyal to France. The captain says he will make Tiémogo chief of one of the conquered villages, so that he can watch over France's interests. Perhaps Tiémogo will be a good administrator for France. For Africa, however, Tiémogo will be a disaster. He is the archetype of African leadership promoted by France. He is obtuse, violent and intolerant. This kind of ignorant handpicked leadership has contributed and continues to contribute to the ongoing disorganization of Africa. The paradigm of arming and maintaining in power puppets in the service of France is still very much alive, especially in West Africa.

(*West Indies*) The West Indians aspiring to assimilation stand proudly on the deck, mingling with the whites. Adorned in pristine white suits and hats, they have eagerly embraced the allure of a better life in Paris. Casting aside their traditional attire, they don dandy uniforms with pride, singing and dancing in celebration. Their joy is tinged with mockery as they ridicule their compatriots below deck, who resist the call to join them in what they perceive as paradise on earth. These assimilated individuals have long harbored dreams of passing into Parisian society, yearning for acceptance and belonging. In pursuit of this aspiration, they willingly align themselves with Death's agenda, echoing his dehumanizing portrayal of their people as animals. They endorse his program to erase their cultural identity, including his draconian birth control measures. Their complicity extends to electoral fraud, as they stuff ballot boxes with illegal votes to secure the victory of Mr. Justin, Death's candidate, thereby sabotaging their compatriots' efforts toward independence.

(*Oh, Sun*) Med Hondo highlights colonization's lasting impact in instilling an "abandonment neurosis" among the African elites, causing them to betray the ideal of independence by seeking approval by the West. Black immigrant workers in France endure appalling living conditions, with 80 individuals crammed into a dilapidated space containing only seven rooms and a single toilet. They are subjected to insults by the French, who deny them job opportunities. During a meeting, some workers propose reaching out to their consular authorities in France to address their struggles. However, others argue that African ambassadors are more invested in France's interests than in advocating for their own citizens, making such efforts seem futile. This suspicion appears well-founded, as Africans scrape by in France while one of their heads of state indulges in excess. Seated in a luxurious Parisian villa, he feasts on lavish meals and expensive wine before retreating to a French prostitute awaiting him in bed. For a few hours of pleasure, the head of state casually signs a check for 50,000 francs—an amount equal to 1,300 times the monthly salary of a black worker. When questioned at a press conference about the state of France-Africa relations, the leader smugly declares, "All is well!"

Globalization (*Black Light*) The globalization program, heralded in the early 1990s as a means to expand trade, transport, and population mobility, offers little tangible benefit to Africa—a fact many observers readily acknowledge. Instead, Africa is relegated to the role of a beast of burden, tirelessly driving the machinery that sustains the West's prosperity. Whenever African nations seek even a semblance of reciprocity in their dealings with Western powers, they are often met with dismissal, or worse, reminded of their subordinate status as second-class participants in a global order built on their labor but denying them its rewards. This stark imbalance lies at the heart of Med Hondo's exploration of globalization in *Black Light*. Continuing a critique he began in earlier works, Hondo exposes the inherent duplicity of the North-South relationship—a one-sided exchange in which Africa continually provides resources, labor, and cultural contributions, yet receives little in return besides humiliation. Through his nuanced storytelling, Hondo lays bare the injustices of this global dynamic, urging a reevaluation of the exploitative systems that perpetuate Africa's marginalization.

Repression

(*Black Light*) Med Hondo critiques how governments exploit national crises to implement repressive measures, presenting lies under the guise of *raison d'état* to justify the erosion of individual freedoms. In this film, authority is consistently abused by those who wield it. Police officers, emboldened by a nationwide campaign against terrorism, act with reckless zeal. With fingers nervously hovering over their triggers, they fire upon a vehicle without caution, killing one of its occupants. Their actions are subsequently shielded by a corrupt judge, who assigns the investigation to a retiring commissioner, anticipating a lackluster effort that will ultimately justify the officers' actions as self-defense. Yves Guyot, a friend of the victim, is determined to uncover the truth the authorities wish to bury. His pursuit for justice places him in the crosshairs of a police commissioner, who relentlessly hunts him down, intimidates him, and eventually orchestrates his murder. For the Minister of the Interior, these events are justified under the doctrine of "raison d'État." The narrative frames these tragedies as collateral damage in the supposed fight against terrorism and immigration. According to the minister's ideology, maintaining the "purity" of France involves the eradication of the African and Arab presence, whether peaceful or not. Exploiting his authority, the minister deploys a death squad with the sole purpose of silencing inconvenient witnesses, ensuring that the truth remains buried, and that the systemic injustices continue unchecked.

(*Black Light*) Med Hondo critiques France's self-proclaimed role as a champion of democracy and human rights. He exposes the government's collusion with the police and press to justify discriminatory treatment of marginalized communities. In *Black Light*, the views of the French people and their government seem to coincide: the black migrant is no longer welcome, as he was in the 1940s in the French trenches against the Nazi regime. France no longer needs the black man to fight its war and run its factories. And Hondo shows how the muscles of the state are now put to work to keep black people out of the so-called land of human rights where they have come to seek an elusive paradise. The end justifying the means, the methods used to dislodge migrants are proving to be undemocratic. Migrants are thus hunted down, arrested, herded like animals and deported, in defiance of all the democratic principles on which France prides itself. But it is not just black migrants who are subject to France's anti-democratic abuses. Native Frenchmen, like

Gérard and his friend Yves, are executed in defiance of democracy. And it is the French Minister of the Interior who, on behalf of the government, justifies this anomaly worthy of totalitarian regimes.

RELATIONSHIPS

Racism

(*Oh, Sun*) Jean approaches the door of a French couple, seeking help, though the nature of his need remains a mystery. Inside, the husband and wife sit slumped in front of separate television sets, completely absorbed in their respective programs. They neither notice Jean's presence nor hear his knock. Suddenly, as though propelled by an unseen force, they rise to their feet and erupt into a furious argument, hurling accusations at each other about recklessly squandering the family's money. This heated exchange continues until a Catholic mass broadcast on television soothes them, diffusing the tension. Calmly, they settle back into their chairs, drifting into a state of lethargy, oblivious to the fact that Jean has quietly withdrawn from their doorstep. The encounter serves as a poignant illustration of Jean's invisibility to the couple, lost in their domestic struggle for recognition. As Frantz Fanon explains in his analysis of colonial dynamics, the black individual is often invisible to the white person in such contexts. To the white man, the black man is seen only for his labor, stripped of individuality and recognition. As the man with the pipe chillingly declares in the film, "all black people are the same." This dismissal denies Jean—and others like him—their humanity, underscoring the systemic erasure born of a colonial worldview.

(*Oh, Sun*) In another scene of *Oh, Sun*, the tropical markets expert, tasked with recruiting black workers for France, inadvertently reveals the dehumanizing perspective of the colonial system. In a slip of the tongue, he remarks that "transporting the equipment" costs France very little, before hastily correcting himself to say, "transporting black workers." This moment starkly illustrates how Africans are perceived—not as human beings with emotions and individuality, but as mere objects or tools, valued only for their utility. This mindset is echoed by a Frenchman, who, frustrated by the growing presence of Africans in France, questions why tasks performed by black workers couldn't simply be handled by machines. In this view, there is no human connection between the black worker and the French citizen. The black man is reduced to the status of an object, a tool whose presence is seen as an affront to the aesthetic of the French landscape—a blemish that must be erased from sight.

(*Oh, Sun*) Early theories of white supremacy compared black people with apes. Med Hondo reveals how this fabricated narrative that likened blacks to beasts fueled curiosity and desire among white women. In this scene of *Oh, Sun*, two white women mock the physical appearances of blacks. They flatten their noses, puff their lips, emit guttural, incomprehensible sounds and laugh. And then one of them, out of curiosity she says, announces that she would like to sleep with a black man. She makes a pass at Jean, and soon Jean and the young white woman are walking down the streets, pressed up against each other, stopping from time to time to exchange kisses. The scene arouses curiosity and disgust in the people who are watching them. It even evokes a certain repulsion in passers-by, which the film translates into animal sounds, bleating, roaring, neighing, cackling and braying. Love between a white woman and a black man registers in the French imaginary as an interdicted act, the mating of two incompatible species, one human and the other animal. This representation is born of the colonial encounter and its racist apriorism.

(*West Indies*) The French government entices the West Indians with promises of France as an earthly paradise, a land of opportunity and prosperity. Arriving in France, however, the reality is far from this ideal. Among the newcomers are assimilated individuals of mixed race, who take pride in their perceived sophistication and elegance, and descendants of nationalist slaves, reluctant to leave their homeland but now finding themselves in France out of necessity. For these immigrants, Paris proves to be anything but the promised haven. They face pervasive racism and hostility, struggling to adapt in a society unwelcoming to their presence. To endure, they form tight-knit communities and preserve their West Indian customs. However, their cultural resilience is viewed through a distorted and dehumanizing lens by the French, including the government, embodied by the figure of Death in the narrative. West Indians are reduced to degrading stereotypes, accused of swarming like bees, mating and multiplying like flies, and bellowing like cattle rather than speaking as humans. Their expressions of culture, including their cuisine, are condemned as foreign and offensive, painted as an intrusion upon what the French deem the "civilized" world. This

gross mischaracterization underscores the discrimination they endure, exposing the gap between the idyllic vision sold to them and the harsh reality of their lived experience.

(*Sarraounia*) After a successful campaign of raids on targeted villages, French army soldiers claim their spoils of war - captive women to be used as sex slaves. Captain Paul claims his own captive, a black woman, whom he uses for his pleasure but refuses to acknowledge as worthy of sharing his bed. After each encounter, she is cast aside, left to sleep on the floor beside him. In their spare time, the French officers tell each other stories about the bestiality of blacks and the sexual impetuosity of black women. One of them tells his peers that he witnessed a scene in which a black woman, positioned on a table, was taken from behind by a horse. The army doctor, who has yet to have an affair with black women, is titillated by these fables; he dreams of discovering the mystery spoken of by his compatriots, and observes a black woman from afar, who understands his interest in her. But when she offers herself to him, he replies that he "can't". His racial superiority forbids it.

(*Oh, Sun*) "Forgive me, Father, for speaking Bambara, Fulani, Lingala." These are the confessions offered by Africans to the Catholic priest, who absolves them of their "sins" and baptizes them, symbolically delivering them from the supposed dominion of the devil. In this process, the Catholic Church shames them for speaking their native languages and honoring the gods of their ancestral cultures. In place of their languages, deities, and traditions, the Church imposes the French language and names such as Jean, Paul, Auguste, and Martin. Through this assimilation, the colonial Church plays a pivotal role in erasing the Africans' cultural identity and dismantling the foundation of their "sense of self." Following the Church comes the army, arming Africans and drilling them to march to a rhythmic beat, all under the command of white officers. These soldiers are instructed to risk their lives to defend Western interests and culture. Having been stripped of their heritage, African migrants in France are trained in rudimentary manual labor to serve members of the "superior" culture. They are taught to wield a saw and a broom. When Jean's aspirations to become an accountant are shattered by repeated rejections from employers, an African street sweeper hands him a broom—a bitter gesture, forcing him to confront the harsh reality of his presumed subordinate status.

(*Oh, Sun*) Two white women returning from a visit to a friend's house are stunned to realize that their friend's husband has black origins. Sitting on their couch, they are lost in contemplation for a few minutes before one of them asks the other if she has ever slept with a black man. The question comes as a surprise to the other, who finds it preposterous. The two women go on to make fun of black people's flat noses, thick lips and accent. Then they whisper and laugh about the alleged anatomical virtues of blacks and their prowess in bed. Suddenly serious, one of them announces that she would like to sleep with a black man out of curiosity. The next day, the woman targets Jean while he is desperately looking for a job in France. Pleased with the young woman's interest in him, Jean spends the night in her bed. The next day, it becomes clear that this "love affair" is nothing more than a passing fancy, and that there will be no follow-up. The woman expected more from a black man, given the reputation attributed to blacks. Jean will return to the streets, trying to conquer the "French dream" in a different way.

(*Oh, Sun*) Hondo tackles the issue of colorism, a phenomenon rooted in colonial hierarchies that elevated lighter skin complexions as superior, as a persisting damaging legacy within black communities. The scene unfolds with two black Caribbean men arguing on a French street. One, asserting his light-skinned privilege, tells the other to return to his homeland, claiming that his lighter complexion makes him more deserving of a place in France. As the self-assured light-skinned man turns away, he accidentally collides with a white man, causing him to drop his groceries. The white man, visibly irritated, reprimands him, lumping all black people together as troublemakers and demanding they return to Africa. This harsh encounter shatters the light-skinned man's illusion of social elevation tied to his complexion, exposing the futility of his aspirations in a society that views all black individuals through the same discriminatory lens.

(*Black Light*) France's initial embrace of African immigration during the inter-war years has long since given way to hostility, particularly toward black migrants. In *Black Light*, this shift is starkly depicted under the guise of combating terrorism. Black immigrants are relentlessly pursued by the police, operating under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior, which requisitions hotels and planes to facilitate their removal. Forced into hiding, black migrants live in deplorable underground conditions, cut off from mainstream society. They

create improvised markets and meeting places, forming isolated communities that lack the resources necessary for the well-being of women and children. This marginalization exacerbates their poverty, swelling the ranks of the destitute within French society. When apprehended in the sweeping operations conducted by the authorities, black migrants are treated like wild animals—caged and ultimately deported to their countries of origin. Yves witnesses this harsh reality firsthand when he encounters Babemba, a man whose life in Mali is marked by shattered dreams, deep shame, and lingering trauma.

Colonization

In pre-colonial Africa, ethnic and ideological differences fueled inter-tribal conflicts. In their quest for African lands and for domination, European colonizers exacerbated and exploited these divisions. This colonial "divide and conquer" strategy also worked when the colonial powers deliberately deployed black soldiers to regions inhabited by rival tribes, intensifying cultural animosities inter-tribal prejudice, and thus, sustaining colonial power in Africa.

(West Indies) Brainstorming on what needs to be done to solve the issue of unemployment in the West Indies and the need for manpower in France, the social worker suggests "exporting" en masse, then she corrects herself and says "emigration" of the populations. This Freudian slip of the tongue reveals what the colonized person represents in the imperial imagination: when he is not an animal, he is simply an object for Europe to dispose of according to its desires. And like any object in one's possession, imperial France believes it can modify the colonized at will. Is the birth rate in the French West Indies too high according to the French government? If so, Death suggests "cementing" women's wombs and "cutting off the fecundating faucet" of men, just as one would wall up or fill in a doorway or a window or eliminate a useless pipe in a house undergoing renovation. Here, the West Indian is nothing more than an object over which the master has the right of transformation.

(West Indies) The film begins with Death unveiling his "plan" for the peoples of the French West Indies, dismissively referring to them as "microscopic, little islands" inhabited by "insignificant little peoples." Death envisions the complete erasure of their cultural identities, merging them into the broader French community. Their lands are destined to be transformed into agricultural and tourist hubs, while the men are reduced to a labor force serving France's needs. This program, unfolding in the 20th century when France's industrialization demands cheap labor for its factories, is presented as the natural progression of initiatives rooted in the 16th century. Through the voices of characters, including the King of France, the film recounts these earlier programs with disturbing pride: the establishment of sugarcane plantations on the islands; the extermination of the local Arawak population; the failed attempt to import European workers, whose susceptibility to tropical diseases rendered them ineffective; and the subsequent "ingenious" decision to rely on African slaves, facilitated by the transatlantic slave trade. As France advanced through the 19th century, the agenda shifted, requiring West Indians to sever their ties to African heritage and migrate to France to fuel its industrial machinery. This is where Death and his accomplices step in, executing a calculated plan to strip the West Indians of both cultural identity and autonomy.

(Sarraounia) During Captain Paul's colonial conquest, women particularly are treated as mere objects of exchange in this context, subjected to abduction, sale, and violation at the whim of the victors. Soldiers in the French army, both black and white, claim the women from conquered villages as spoils of war, equating them to livestock or material goods to be used and traded at will. Dehumanized and commodified, these individuals are reduced to war trophies, devalued as if they were merchandise. After each raid, Coulibaly, the black assistant to Captain Paul, distributes women to the soldiers alongside cattle and grain. Tiémogo, a soldier who mourns the loss of his captive "wife", is reassured by Paul, who promises to buy him another woman. The treatment of conquered men and women as animals and objects reflects the inhumanity of their oppressors—the auxiliaries of the colonial army and the French architects of the colonial conquest. These perpetrators have cast aside their humanity, descending into monstrosity and embracing savagery as a mode of domination.

(Sarraounia) "France is our mother, she's the one who feeds us, with her potatoes and her macaroni. When war comes, we are her proud soldiers ... always courageous." This is the song that punctuates the march of the African tirailleurs on military campaign for France. If the last sentence of this song is indisputable, the first sentence, on the other hand, is totally false. Yes, France has always been able to count on the courage

of its African infantrymen in times of war. 140,000 African soldiers enlisted in the French forces during the First World War, and 400,000 Africans during the Second World War were enlisted on France's behalf. On top of this, Africans were forced to supply not only the French army, but also the French population with grain, oil, rubber, nuts and more. The Africans' war efforts for France put Africa on the knife's edge of famine and sparked revolts in Africa, which France put down in bloodshed. No, France does not feed Africa. Rather, Africa has always been France's granary. And it is the result of this fact that today leaves Africa poor. It is highly duplicitous for the French colonial army to have its African soldiers sing this song.

(Sarraounia) Captain Paul's soldiers, predominantly from Sudan, lament their separation from their distant homeland and families as they advance toward West African kingdoms. This deliberate separation is part of the colonial army's calculated strategy. French war engineers seek to strip colonial soldiers of empathy for their victims by deploying them to unfamiliar regions inhabited by people with whom they share no cultural or ethnic ties. Combined with the frustration of being far from their families, this alienation fosters mercilessness among the soldiers, reinforcing France's doctrine of "divide and conquer." The Paul Voulet-Julien Chanoine expedition, remembered as one of France's most disgraceful undertakings due to its acts of rape, massacres, and depravity, exemplifies this strategy. Yet it is far from an isolated incident—it is a direct reflection of France's broader approach to colonial conquest.

APPEARANCE

Everyone, at some point, values perception over reality. In his films, Med Hondo exposes this overreliance on appearance, inviting viewers to look beyond the surface and question the authenticity of people's crafted narratives and gestures.

Deception

In his films, Med Hondo exposes the selfishness and duplicity inherent in France's rapport with Africa and the French Caribbean. The so-called civilizing mission of France, which claimed to uplift Africa, conceals France's true motives of exploitation and dominance. Hondo highlights France's oppressive history disguised as generosity. The filmmaker also critiques how France's initial acceptance of African immigration, marked by cooperation during wartime and post-war reconstruction, has evolved into systemic hostility, with black migrants facing harassment and being scapegoated for societal issues.

(West Indies) Death's program operates through a grand deception, convincing the West Indians that every action undertaken in their name serves their own welfare, while the true beneficiary of this scheme remains France. Mr. Justin becomes the first victim of this elaborate trap. Elevated to parliament through manipulated elections, he dons French attire and naively believes he has been embraced by France. In reality, he is nothing more than a tool for the continued alienation and subjugation of his people. Death harbors a deep disdain for Mr. Justin, recoiling at the mere thought of shaking his hand. Yet, Mr. Justin embodies his savior role so convincingly that a young girl mistakes him for Jesus. This "Jesus," however, reveals himself to be corrupt and corrosive, ultimately betraying the very people he claims to protect. In a powerful act of symbolic resistance, the people of the West Indies reject their false savior by burning his effigy, illustrating their collective desire to break free from the cycle of deception and exploitation.

(Black Light) In *Black Light*, Med Hondo explores the theme of deceptive appearances, illustrating how they serve as tools of manipulation and oppression. Ghislaine's husband, Guy, presents himself as an upright, faultless man, yet conceals a criminal past unknown to his wife or employers. This hidden truth makes him susceptible to blackmail by corrupt police officers, who exploit his vulnerability for their gain. While these officers outwardly appear to protect the public, their true nature emerges when their interests are at stake—they abandon ethics, distort the law, and target the innocent, all under the guise of honorable duty. Hondo underscores that such corrupt practices are not isolated to a few rogue officers but are symptomatic of deeper systemic rot, reaching the upper echelons of government. The Minister of the Interior exemplifies this duplicity. Portraying himself on television as the guardian of public safety, he orchestrates actions that inflict suffering, violating the democratic principles he purports to uphold. To assuage the population's fears of terrorism, he authorizes methods indistinguishable from terrorism itself—targeting and deporting

innocent individuals to create the illusion of security. Hondo lays bare the tragic reality that such state-driven actions rely entirely on perception and facade. As long as the spectacle of arrests and deportations calms public anxieties, the cost in human dignity and democracy is ignored. The film poignantly critiques the hollowness of such appearances, urging viewers to see beyond the surface.

(Black Light): Med Hondo critiques corruption in the press, its collusion with the power to mislead the public, leaving it uninformed. Judge Berthier summons Commissioner Londrin to his chambers with a clear agenda. He entrusts Londrin, a seasoned police officer nearing retirement, with the investigation into the police misconduct case. However, Berthier's intentions are far from impartial—he aims to protect the two murder suspects by ensuring that Londrin conducts a shallow investigation that concludes the officers acted in self-defense. The judge goes so far as to explicitly promise financial compensation to Londrin as an incentive to comply, exemplifying the code of silence and the systemic corruption that rewards complicity. Yet Londrin refuses to be part of this scheme. Instead, he commits to a genuine pursuit of justice, carrying out an investigation that adheres to rigorous standards of truth and accountability. As his investigation unfolds, Londrin uncovers not only the guilt of the implicated officers but also the extent of corruption permeating the judicial system, media, and government, all of which are working to shield the perpetrators. Londrin directly confronts a journalist who has published misleading articles dictated by the police. He expresses deep disappointment in the journalist for allowing himself to be manipulated and, in turn, deceiving the public. Londrin's dedication to exposing the truth, however, makes him a target. In a sweeping police operation designed to suppress inconvenient revelations, Londrin and the witnesses he interviewed, including the journalist, are systematically eliminated—brutally silencing those who challenge the corrupt apparatus.

CHARACTERS

Oh, Sun / Soleil ô (1967)

JEAN Jean is the representative figure of the French colonized. He bears all the symptoms of the black brainwashed in the French educational system, often converted to Christianity, and rendered alienated by his propensity to copy France. At the end, however, disillusionment too often awaits him.

Naïve Like any colonized African who has been educated by imperial France, Jean learned in his schoolbooks the phrase known to all African schoolchildren: "Our ancestors the Gauls". Persuaded by this assertion, Jean arrives in France, years later, with an accounting diploma in his pocket, convinced that France is his country, and that he will certainly find work there and be accepted by his French "compatriots" as one of them. Jean's naïveté leads to disillusionment.

Selfless In France, Jean does not think only of himself. He puts himself at the service of all the black workers of his town who are discriminated against by the French system. He organizes them into support groups to demand their human rights, work and better living conditions. This is no easy task, as the African authorities in France to whom these support groups turn remain deaf to the demands of the black immigrants.

Disillusioned In France, Jean realizes that the French are not ready to welcome him as one of their own. On the contrary, they see him as an animal, a tool to be used by France, and at best, a foreign nuisance. He is denied work, decent housing and even human dignity. Jean would like to leave France, to regain his humanity. But he realizes that he is trapped, that he no longer has a personality of his own, having been stripped of his African culture and rejected by France.

Revolutionary Jean's disillusionment leads him to embrace a violent decolonization like that of past international revolutionaries. The film ends with Jean trapped in the European forest, screaming his anger. In his anguish, Jean has visions of African and American revolutionaries burning in the fire kindled by the West. Jean seems to be calling for revolution. Jean joins Frantz Fanon, who in *The Wretched of the Earth*, called for armed and violent decolonization.

THE AFRICAN LEADER The representative figure of the African ruling class is a French bourgeois wannabe. Alienated from his people, he is so fixated on France that he fails in his mission to protect his countrymen. Instead, he becomes an accomplice of the French in their oppression of blacks.

Alienated The African ruling class is represented in the film by the character playing the role of an African head of state, who at the beginning of the film converts to Christianity and takes the name of Auguste. This head of state wants only one thing: to resemble the master of yesteryear. He buys himself a big villa in France, stuffs himself with French delicacies and has white women served to him in bed, for whom he pays a lot of money. He is a man materially and morally alienated from Africa.

Negligent-complicit The African workers in France are living in deplorable conditions. They are organizing to request the intervention of their representative consulates with the French authorities. But the African envoys are more concerned with pleasing France than fighting for the rights of their citizens. Officially, say the African diplomats in France, there is nothing to report; everything is going well. African statesmen have abandoned their citizens to the whims of racist France.

Selfish The African statesmen work to fulfill their own pleasures. They buy luxurious villas in France, dine on caviar and wine, and spend vast sums on pleasure girls. Meanwhile, the African workers for whom they are responsible sleep and work in inhuman conditions, unmoved. It is as if the African workers in France have neither a state nor representatives, their rulers having abandoned them.

THE FRENCH Uninformed about the contribution made by the black workforce to France's development, the French judge blacks based on the erroneous image given to them by colonization. The French behave like ungrateful supremacists towards the black community.

Supremacist Most French people in the film are portrayed as believing in the superiority of their race. The tropical market expert calls for white immigrants rather than blacks to be brought to France. The concierges hate having blacks in their buildings. One man suggests replacing the blacks with machines, and another Frenchman, shocked by Jean's relationship with a white woman, suggests that the blacks be herded into camps "as was done with the Amerindians ... and the blacks in America."

Ingrate The African workers brought to France by the French government to work in the factories and sweep the streets of the French are, according to the tropical markets' expert, good business for France. With them, France makes big profits with minimal investment. However, the French see them as nuisances and treat them with contempt.

Ignorant If the French are so hostile and contemptuous towards black people, this is because they are ill-informed. Like the two young white women gossiping about the supposed sexual attributes of blacks, most French people know black people only through the stereotypes fed to them by colonial "experts" like the film's racist expert, who objectifies blacks and prefers European workers to them. This lack of information has led some French people to suggest that blacks should be herded into camps.

WEST INDIES: The Fugitive Slaves / Les nègres marrons de la liberté (1979)

DEATH Death is a ruthless character, who has devised for the people of the French West Indies a program of cultural annihilation. The black Antilleans are for him insignificant people with a worthless culture, who can better serve humanity by being a cheap labor force for the superior French people.

Ruthless Death is an unscrupulous character. Right from the start, he sets out his agenda for the French Caribbean: wipe the people off the world map and turn them into cheap labor imported into France to make the French happy. And if the people resist, clinging to their culture and land, like an octopus clinging to an object with all its tentacles, then those tentacles must be severed, he suggests.

Racist Death's view of the blacks of the West Indies is one of disdain. He calls them insignificant little people. He compares them to flies that multiply uncontrollably, and he demands that women's wombs be cemented shut and men's reproductive organs mutilated. Death finds that the black people's food stinks all

over Paris. And if it were up to him, he would avoid shaking hands with Mr. Justin, his secular wingman in the West Indies.

Greedy Death wants the black people of the West Indies to serve France as cheap labor, and he wants them all in that role. He finds that West Indian emigration to France is not happening fast enough, and this exasperates him. When he learns that 200 out of the 15,000 West Indians who emigrate to France every week return disillusioned, Death gets angry and orders that the causes and means of avoiding these 200 returns, which he considers inadmissible, be found. Death, a synecdoche of France, benefits from the trade in cheap labor from the islands. This new-found slavery, the film tells us, just like the old one, continues to enrich French ports and cities.

MR. JUSTIN Mr. Justin is a traitor to his people. For his own interests, he associates with Death and undermines the independence of his people. He is an alienated individual, fascinated by the culture of the French oppressor.

Traitor It took Death's promise of a parliamentary post and a chair at his table for Mr. Justin to agree to betray his people and undermine the independence of the Caribbean. As such, Mr. Justin is a traitor to his own people and to the ideal of Caribbean autonomy.

Selfish Everything Mr. Justin does, he does for himself, not for his people. This is the great contradiction in his character. As a parliamentarian, he is expected to represent the interests of the West Indies to the French government. Yet he is doing the exact opposite. He pledges his allegiance to France, and defends the interests of France before his people, in the hope of being personally rewarded with a comfortable political and social life.

Alienated Mr. Justin is the prototype of the alienated black man. With his sights set on France, he shuns his own people and culture in favor of French civilization and culture, which he considers superlative. To be accepted by Death, he welcomes the denigration of his own people. He proposes that the West Indians be lured to France as cheap labor with the promise of redheaded women with rolled-up skirts. He projects his own fantasies onto his people.

THE PRIEST The priest is a corrupt character as well as a corruptor of souls. In his practice, he distorts the Catholic gospel in favor of the French colonial policy. Under his guidance, the West Indians children learn to associate Mr. Justin with Jesus.

Corrupt The priest is a corrupt character, who spends more time with Death promoting his program to annihilate the West Indians than at the altar of his church consoling the subjugated people. Instead of a mission to save souls, the priest prefers a lifestyle of pleasure, feasting and drinking alongside Death. He has betrayed his evangelical vocation.

Corruptor The priest is a brainwasher. The catechism he teaches West Indian children is not for the worship of God but for the idolatry of Mr. Justin, the Caribbean representative of French subjugation policy. He presents Mr. Justin as Jesus to the West Indian children to better prepare them to accept the slavery that Mr. Justin promotes on behalf of France.

MR. DE LA PIERRE Like the fundamental leader of West Indian independence, Mr. De la Pierre has no faith in the declarations of the French government or the role of the Catholic Church in his country. He is a rebel who gives his life fighting for the ideal of West Indian self-determination.

Rebellious Mr. De la Pierre refuses to submit to the program of subjugation of his island to France. He asks his compatriots not to vote for a Caribbean attached to France as a French department. For him, freedom presupposes total independence and self-determination. But Mr. De la Pierre is not just a rebel against French institutional government. He also rejects French Catholicism and clings to the pagan rites of his ancestors, the worship of a stone on which he burns candles.

Skeptical Mr. De la Pierre never believed that the elections organized by the French authorities nor the French government's promise of better life in Paris for the West would change the lives of his compatriots for the better. He tries to dissuade those who are scurrying up the deck to vote, and after the vote, he urges

his people not to emigrate to France but to stay and fight for full independence at home. His warnings are ignored.

Inflexible Mr. De la Pierre is the leader of the West Indian revolt. He is, in a way, what the literature of negritude represents as the “fundamental negro”, that is, a negro who remains rooted in and faithful to his black culture, and who leads the fight for freedom to the end of his strength. Mr. De la Pierre remains inflexible in his ambitions, and he dies defending them.

SARRAOUNIA (1986)

SARRAOUNIA Sarraounia's legacy is one of resilience, courage, and inclusiveness. She stands as a symbol of strength, fiercely defending her kingdom's sovereignty and cultural heritage. Her ability to inspire unity among diverse groups and her unwavering commitment to freedom highlight her exceptional leadership in the face of adversity.

Independent Sarraounia's commitment to independence is unwavering. When her lover, Baka, displays a desire to dominate her, she decisively dismisses him. Sarraounia vows to protect her autonomy and pledges to her people that she will fight against the French colonizing mission until her final breath.

Determined Sarraounia's determination fuels her relentless struggle for freedom. She refuses to surrender, continuously harassing the invaders in pursuit of ultimate victory. Even when Captain Paul believes he has triumphed over her army, Sarraounia retreats to the savannah and mountains, leveraging her intimate knowledge of the terrain. From these vantage points, she torments the enemy, driving Paul to madness and ultimately causing him to turn against his own soldiers, leading to his downfall.

Tolerant Sarraounia's leadership is defined by her commitment to tolerance and unity. As neighboring tribes rally to her cause, she envisions a society where individuals coexist as equals, respecting one another's beliefs and traditions. Despite the animosity of the Muslim kings toward her, they unanimously acknowledge that Sarraounia has never imposed her animist beliefs on anyone. Her inclusive approach solidifies her reputation as a just and visionary leader.

CAPTAIN PAUL Paul is consumed by violence, intolerance, and paranoia, which define his colonizing mission. Over time, the brutality he unleashes on others appears to turn inward, leaving him convinced that everyone around him is conspiring against him. This descent into mistrust becomes the driving force behind his actions.

Violent Paul enforces brutal rules within his army. He publicly whips soldiers for insubordination, shoots one at close range for wasting ammunition, and allows the slaughter of men, women, and children in conquered villages. He burns what remains of these communities and takes disturbing pleasure in watching his soldiers play gruesome games, such as testing their skill by beheading captives.

Intolerant Paul refuses to accept Sarraounia's animist beliefs or the Islam of the Muslim tribes. For him, there is no middle ground—one must embrace Christianity or face destruction. His campaign is marked by a blind and inflexible crusade against any faith or culture that deviates from his rigid Christian ideals.

Paranoid Paul trusts no one—neither the English, the animists of Sarraounia's kingdom, the Muslims of Sokoto, nor even his own officers. Convinced that everyone is plotting against him to either kill him or steal his glory, Paul becomes unpredictable and erratic. His paranoia silences his white officers, who no longer dare to express their opinions in his presence, fearing his wrath.

THE BLACK SOLDIERS The black soldiers are depicted as individuals struggling with a deep-seated abandonment neurosis, which fuels their fascination with the French ideal. This condition drives them to despise their own race for insignificant reasons. However, their disillusionment grows as they come to realize that the very violence they once supported is gradually turning against them, breaking the hold of their internalized conflict.

Violent Captain Paul is a man consumed by violence, instilling his barbaric tendencies into his soldiers. Under his influence, the black soldiers mirror his brutality, burning black villages, killing black populations, and abducting and assaulting black women. They fail to recognize that the cruelty they inflict on others is also being directed at them. This realization only dawns on them when Paul makes them experience the violence in a direct and tangible way.

Indecisive The black soldiers of the French army are portrayed as deeply indecisive, struggling to make choices that align with their well-being. Torn between their allegiance to France—instilled in them through the colonizing mission—and their attachment to their families and native lands, they find themselves caught in a painful conflict. By the time they achieve true awareness and rise in rebellion against Paul, the damage they have inflicted upon Africa is both irreparable and indefensible. Their journey reflects the tragic consequences of their internal struggle.

Abandonment neurotic The African soldiers hesitated for so long before rebelling because they feared being abandoned by France, which had been presented to them as the ultimate ideal to strive toward. It took a shocking turn of events to break them out of their condition as abandonment neurotics. This wake-up call came in the form of Paul's sudden shift—no longer targeting only enemy tribes but also ruthlessly eliminating weakened soldiers from his own ranks. The soldiers realized that at any moment, they could become one of his victims, forcing them to confront the brutal reality of their situation.

***Lumière noire/Black Light* (1994)**

YVES Yves is a persevering, sociable character who never hesitates to use bribery to achieve his goals. While his affability opens doors, his tendency to always corrupt his way out of difficulty nearly leads him to be arrested in Mali.

Persevering Yves is a resourceful character. He sees that the murder of his friend Gérard by two policemen is misrepresented in the press as a case of self-defense. So he decides to conduct his own investigation to confound the journalists, public opinion and the examining magistrate, whom he had thought to be honest. To do this, he evades the surveillance of the French police, who are tailing him, and travels to Mali, a journey fraught with culture shocks and pitfalls, where he succeeds in recording the testimony of the only eyewitness to the incident.

Sociable Yves is an affable character whose friendly nature gives him access to informants who are reluctant to talk. His sociability gives him access to the clandestine milieu of African immigrants in France and enables him to talk to Fofana, who invites him to his home for tea before giving him information on how to find the witness to his friend's death. In Mali, Yves quickly befriends a cab driver, who is willing to accompany him on the most dangerous adventures of his African trip.

Corruptor Yves is a character who uses corruption on his way to his objectives. When he wants information on the hotel where the Malian immigrants were staying before their deportation, he slips a few banknotes to the uncooperative concierge. In Mali, he bribes a ferryman reluctant to work and gets priority passage on the ferry. At Bamako airport, he tries to bribe a customs officer to smuggle an audio cassette that is banned in the country. This time, however, he comes up against an honest official who threatens to have him arrested.

JUDGE BERTHIER Berthier is an unconscientious and corrupt judge. He does his work without much conviction, and he expects his collaborators to show the same lack of professionalism.

Unconscientious Judge Berthier cares little that a man lost his life under the bullets of rogue police officers. What matters to him is that the boat not rock. So, he insists on hiding the investigation under the fallacious conclusion of self-defense, rejecting Yves' pleas that he is not only a witness, but also one of the victims of the police blunder. Berthier is guilty of dereliction of duty.

Corrupt When Guy is killed, Berthier entrusts the investigation to Londrin. He tells Londrin to carry out as has been done in previous investigations, without too much eagerness. He even suggests to Londrin the expected conclusion of the investigation. When he sees that Londrin is determined to conduct the investigation according to the standards of justice, Berthier summons him and promises him a golden

retirement with a handsome pension. However, Londrin refuses to get involved in corruption, and for that, he is eliminated.

LONDRIN Londrin is a veteran police officer with a strict respect for police morality. He has an investigation to conduct, and he carries it out with the naïveté that his superiors will support him.

Honest A few months away from retirement, Londrin could have twiddled his thumbs and enjoyed his pension. In fact, Judge Berthier had guaranteed him a handsome pension if he colluded with the police. Londrin refuses to compromise his integrity and diligently carries out his investigation. What he discovers in the corrupt police world costs him his life.

Determined Judge Berthier entrusts Londrin with an investigation, assuming that Londrin will conduct it superficially and close the case prematurely. Ignoring the judge's expectations, Londrin perseveres with his investigation. Londrin's determination uncovers evidence of police corruption as he goes along. Despite warnings from some witnesses that persistence could cost him his life, Londrin continues his investigation. In the end, he is murdered by his colleagues.

Naïve Londrin was naïve to believe that the conclusions of his investigation would be accepted by his colleagues and superiors. He was swimming against the tide not only of his immediate superiors, but also of the upper echelons of the French society, such as the Minister of the Interior, who did not want to cause a public stir about the inefficiency and systematic violence of the French security forces. Londrin, this honest cop, was a real obstacle to the corrupted pool of public forces. Londrin was therefore liquidated.