"Present Absentees, Weak-Kneed Nobodies"[1]

Exile, Airport, and Non-Citizenship in Abdourahman Waberi's *Transit*

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Borders are no longer sites to be crossed but lines that separate.
Achille Mbembe, Necropolitics

Structures kill and maim, not individuals or collectives.
Donald Black, The Geometry of Terrorism

France is not Fanon's Other; he is *France's* Other.
Lewis R. Gordon, Fanon and the Crisis of European Man

The settler-native relationship is a mass relationship.
Frantz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth

In Abdourahman Waberi's *Transit* (2012), L'Aéroport de Roissy-Charles de Gaulle is an international transitory zone separate from, yet part of, France's territorialized border. As a heterotopic space,[2] Roissy underscores the imperial epoch of *Fortress Europe*. Its stringent immigration policies and mobility control[3] overwrite the air-

1 Harbi's comment about his exilic presence at the Roissy airport in France (Waberi 134).

2 In "Of Other Spaces," Foucault states a "heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public space" (25). I argue the airport is not a public place but a heterotopic space.

3 I borrow this term from Robert Pallitto and Josiah Heyman: their article argues that mobility control underscores how the extensity of checkpoints are, not only an effect of post-9/11 securitization but challenges to our theorizations about citizenship and identity (316).

port[4] to underscore the "official assimilationism accompanying the French idea of citizenship"[5] (Sekyi-Otu, *Left* 58). Complicit of France's colonial legacy, Roissy is the modern, globalized site of the French empire. It marks itself as a "confessional" complex that monitors and differentiates the movements and identities of bodies in a post-9/11 milieu (Salter 49). Reinforced by America's War on Terror, the Paris aéroport is a panopticon that militates technologies of surveillance over citizens and non-citizens[6] alike (Foucault, *Discipline* 195; *Left* 58). As an autonomous state apparatus, the airport legitimates the national citizen, enacting a permanent partiality towards the Other. Thus, by carefully mapping, surveilling, and inspecting the non-status, the airport naturalizes its imperial vocabulary of territorial control to expel the refugee—whom Ato Sekyi-Otu quips as the "catastrophic return of the repressed" (*Left* 58).

Transit fictionalizes the effects of transnational migration and globalization on the East African migrant from the coast. By questioning how racial-colonial-capital inequalities reproduce hierarchical power through a geographically defined site, the novel challenges any obscuring of the connection between racism and capitalism. Given the mobility of global accumulation has produced the underdevelopment

4 I want readers to integrally note the airport as a port, like a seaport, or an inland port, etc. While not all ports are surveilled, the airport is regulated border. As a transportation site of people, goods, and services that has, overtime, turned into a securitized zone of the nation-state, where territoriality is key in instituting its national sovereignty, the modern airport inscribes the limits of travel for the non-status claimant.

5 I agree with Ato Sekyi-Otu's analysis of the 2005 Paris Riots, where he critiques a visiting French scholar to Canada who applauded Canada's stance against Islamic Sharia courts and other faith-based cases as a welcoming retribution. This scholar rebuked Canada's tradition of multiculturalism as inherently unsustainable. In this chapter, Sekyi-Otu addresses the scholar's remarks by analyzing the young history of Canada's multicultural policies, while admonishing France's *mission civilisantrice*. In short, Sekyi-Otu argues the scholar's argument is couched in assimilationist rhetoric that has governed the French polity since colonization.

6 As terms used in Citizenship Studies, I interchange asylum seeker, refugee, and non-status to describe the migratory status of claimants in a host country. In the field, the terms alien and non-citizen are used interchangeably, often denoting the legal precarity of entrants. In the past, terms like foreigner and stranger often evoked an exilic existence in travel narratives, where some were privileged or carried forms of social status (émigré as Edward Said and stranger/expatriate as per James Baldwin), and others were forced or differentiated. Engin Isin uses the terms foreigner, stranger, and outsider to inculcate how dominant forms of citizenship in the Roman and Greek metropolis were formed. As well, the term non-status has recently been theorized in Indigenous Studies, where borders, through European map-making, have shifted to exclude and/or impose on Indigenous communities the loss of their territorial sovereignty. I do differentiate between the non-status and the immigrant, for the latter usually denotes the acceptance into a country and the waiting process for citizenship of that country. But I use both terms to discuss the issues that plague the refugee at the airport and the immigrant in France. .

of the global South, mass migration not only augments the airport as a space of modernity, but replicates the colonial relations between the colonizer and the colonized (Davidson 5). Ato Quayson would agree the airport mimics forms of "colonial space-making" as the (im)migrant (unwillingly or willingly) consents to "forms of subversive complicity" as would the colonized in the context of imperial-colonial dominance (16; 17). Thus, colonial power is evident, not only through territorial control, but in relations of the "cultural and symbolic … [and the] political and spatial" (16). As a result, "the postcolonial nation-state, the ex-colonial metropolitan centres and predatory multinational corporations are all taken to be inheritors and beneficiaries of colonial space-making in the modern world" (17). In the context of migration and diaspora, Waberi articulates the failures of Djibouti's anti-colonial struggle, instantiating the metropolitan as a hyper-colonized space where racial difference, particularly France's vehemence towards the post-colonized migrant, is a division waged both materially and ideologically.

As such, the novel ties two formerly colonized subjects to Roissy to politicize a terrorizing post-civil war nation caught in the never-ending conflicts of the Greater Horn region. Migrating from Djibouti to the French metropolis, Harbi and Bashir are the globalized littoral subjects from the Indian Ocean. As *apatrides*, they centralize the "very real histories" of colonization, decolonization, and global capitalism (Treacy 64). Their transit, their mobility, does not erase Djibouti's postcolonial crises, but stresses it as "consequence of the colonial legacy" (64). In fact, Harbi's acknowledgement of Bashir, (while they are on French soil), heightens the dawning possibility of a post-dictatorial Africa (64). Given a "new and inventive language of resistance," Waberi delegitimizes France's *mission civilisantrice* via the non-status refugee (Treacy 64, 65; Sekyi-Otu, *Dialectics* 119; *Left* 58; Fanon, *Wretched* 147). By centering the migrant—who is between detention, deportation, and death—, the novel decenters the annihilating power of France's sovereignty. For if the 'act' of constituting oneself as a citizen is akin to the act of liberating oneself from the colonizer, Harbi's acceptance of Bashir—his fight for another's freedom—subverts their subalterned predicament. Roissy is a post-imperial setting complicated in *Transit* to question the legacies of French coloniality against the existence and survival of its *former* East African colony.

In the displaced refugee-emplaced citizen dyad, the novel synoptically creates a tension between the airport and citizenship to inscribe the migrant as the only recourse against Europe's absolute subjection of the Other. Rather than reiterate the perils of transnational migration, *Transit* reflexively integrates a critical, collective consciousness to challenge normative frameworks of national citizenship. The novel connects, through a mistaken identity, Bashir, a young, foul-mouthed ex-sol-

dier, and Harbi,[7] a placid, anti-regime intellect, to arrive at Roissy's *zone d'attente* (holding area, cell, detention center). While in a state of liminality, their internalized monologues augur the tropes of migrant surveillance and the (im)mobilities of exile from a war-torn country (Treacy 73). Roissy arguably shapes their non-status identification, yet Harbi and Bashir "seize the silences, the refusals, and [their] flight as something active" (Moulier-Boutang 227). They counter the airport as an authorial site that territorializes citizenship, and in that "moment" that they assert themselves, regardless of "status and substance, [they] constitute themselves as citizens—or better still, as those to whom the right to have rights is due" (Isin 276, qtd. in Nyers 161–62). Insisting non-citizens are political actors rather than threatening *immigrés* when they assert, realize, or "act" on their rights, Engin Isin adds "becoming political is that moment when one constitutes oneself as being capable of judgment about just or unjust, takes responsibility for that judgment, and associates oneself with or against others in fulfilling that responsibility" (276). Peter Nyers also states, "to self-identify as a non-status person is to engage in an act of citizenship" (163). To be clear, Harbi or Bashir do not protest nor are forcibly abused at Roissy, but the fear of deportation is always imminent for the migrant. The very idea of deportation engenders Harbi's acceptance of Bashir as his son. Essentially, it validates the "principle of equality" often undone by the laws of "pure citizenship" (native born) versus "borrowed citizenship (one that, less secure from the start, is now not safe from forfeiture)" (Mbembe, *Necro* 3). If Harbi's act is a counter-discourse that critiques the link between imperial violence and modern democracies today, then in that "moment" where "freedom becomes responsibility and obligation becomes a right," Harbi and Bashir become agentic mediators (*Necro* 23; Isin 276; 275; Salter 49). As a non-citizen, Harbi's concealment of Bashir's false identity becomes "the only courageous act" against his homeland's terrifying present and the host-nation's colonial stance (Waberi 141).

Full of tensions, the novel interrogates the ways in which African geographies of war and uneven development manifest the displacement of the African subject. Since Waberi challenges all forms of borders—the colonizer versus the colonized, the global North versus the global South, the developed world versus the under-developed, etc.—Achille Mbembe and Frantz Fanon's theories of the border and colo-

7 Harbi in *Transit* might be an invocation of Mahmoud Harbi, an Issa-Somali who advocated against French rule, forming the Union of Republicans (UR). As a resistance party, they withdrew their support from Somali and Arab communities (in Djibouti) to gain independence from France and unify instead with Somalia. Winning their first election over territory in 1958, UR divested the support of France, conditioning national politics in the parliament towards a Pan-Somali movement. Yet in the second referendum in 1959, the Afar, for fear of the alliance of the Issa-Somalis with Somalia, joined forces with the colonial government and eventually cemented the path towards French control. Despite another uprising for independence in 1966, France held power in Djibouti till its independence in 1977.

nial space helps translate the racist/fascist phantasmagoria of *Fortress Europe*. In this paper, I center the airport as a global, transnational space, where its technologies of control complicate any easy readings of colonial mimicry. I explore how Harbi and Bashir's restorative act(s) of citizenship illuminate the airport as an apparatus of territorial power almost analogous to a 'carceral archipelago.' At the heart of my argument is the plight of the East African subject caught in the racial-colonial-capital modes of global circulation that wields a "planetary renewal of colonial relations" to continuously immobilize coastal East African nations (Mbembe, *Out* 4). For these reasons, this paper is divided into two sections: a theoretical inquiry of the post-colony through various concepts—citizenship, airport, and the (im)migrant as enemy—and a textual analysis of *Transit*.

Acts of Citizenship

Harbi's "courageous act" is a very complex act of citizenship (Waberi 141). As a political act, it is not neutral, nor linear or simple, but spiral and circuitous in its transgressive power. That is, the novel arrives at this "act" through the subject's dialectical struggle against globalization. As a migrant narrative, *Transit* infers the precarity of the African immigrant navigating the brutal realities of alienation and displacement in a foreign land. Although the subjects are conditioned by the loss of home, Harbi's decision, and Bashir's willingness to go along with it, involves change. It signifies action, not only in the taking back of power (i.e., speaking back to the empire), but in the totality of the 'act,' the refugee's praxis signifies their heterogeneous narratives, not their migration or citizenship status. In so doing, Waberi circumvents the flow of migration to disrupt the France-Djibouti corridor. However, Roissy's immigration policies can curtail Harbi and Bashir's 'moment of entry' into metropolitan France. In fact, the aéroport strategically regulates a myriad of surveillance assemblages to make "resistance such a challenge" (Salter 63). Salter asks: "what are the politics of resistance at the airport, beyond the romanticism of the global nomad or the protest of specific policies?" (63). Notwithstanding Salter's critique, I argue Harbi's act, his *resistance*, already counters Roissy in his refusal to 'compromise' at the colony (*Wretched* 62). Harbi's act and Bashir's determination transform the embassy and the airport into contested spaces where the refugee can counter, negotiate, and redefine relations of power.

Is Harbi's "courageous act" a decolonial act? I ask this possibility because Harbi constitutes himself and Bashir as 'citizens,' and by this virtue, absolves Bashir as the

product of post-independence failure.[8] By countering Djibouti's failed decolonial struggle, Harbi's 'immediate' act, then at the colony, and now at the white man's border, at the settler's place, is *his fight for recognition*. According to Jean Khalfa, any act of liberation is an "antagonistic process of recognition," and as consciousness gains recognition of itself in opposition with the another, it becomes an "Other (*autrui*) and not simply the other" (45, emphasis original). Noting Fanon's discourse of de- colonization, does Harbi's act challenge the hierarchies of power at Roissy? Perhaps not fully, but it does confront—quietly—the lure of France for Djiboutis. To some extent, Harbi's act propels him to shape his reality and counter the colonizer, so one truly "*exists*" (Khalfa 45, emphasis original). However, a true act of liberation, Foucault would argue, is only possible when the "*practice of freedom*" is "grounded on and arises out of the self-formative ethos of a people" (*Ethics* 2, emphasis original). That is, freedom is only possible when the collective action of the people wields a process of becoming (Serequerberhan 68; 89). Harbi and Bashir's acts of courage do not propel the young nation towards decolonization, but they do confront Djibouti's colonial heritage. By countering France's dominance over the postcolonized, Waberi illuminates the underbelly of Djibouti's underdevelopment and political corruption is a result of its "neocolonial independence [which is] a *de facto* extension of [French] colonialism" (89).

Harbi and Bashir's presence at Roissy not only conjures France's colonial past, but its racial present. Achille Mbembe argues the politics of racism in the metropolis "is the driver of necropolitical principle" (*Necro* 38). If so, then Europe's crisis against the immigrant Other is based on racial difference—what Fanon called "negrophobia" (*Necro* 38; *Wretched* 183). Harbi and Bashir's difference then, their "fact of blackness," leaves them doubly alienated, subjected, and viewed through a process of "projective non-seeing" (*Black Skins* 109; Gordon 24). According to Lewis Gordon, "projective non-seeing" proffers a racist ontology that is wholistically conditioned by historical consciousness and (colonial/white) identity— "*In Europe, the black man is the symbol of Evil*" (24; *Black Skins* 189, emphasis original). Gordon writes, if "perception is a function of an historical condition," then the dominant gaze sees the black for his "blackness," or his "darkness," thus conditioning his struggle for ontology (24). Therefore, a difference exists between the black non-citizen from the "dominated, stigmatized, oppressed, marginalized, and disenfranchised" non-citizen as per Isin (276). By their existential inferiority—race and the persistence of (colonial) racism—the African, worse than the brown or Arab immigrant from a former French colony, is considered a "plague" (*Discipline* 195). According to Foucault, if "measures are to be taken when the plague appeared in a town," then like the brown

8 Although Bashir is considered a symbol of postcolonial failure, Fanon would have called him an "honest intellectual" whom might have led to a "healthier outlook for the nation" (*Wretched* 177).

or Arab immigrant, the black endures symbolic violence at the metropolis (195). As a result, the formerly colonized black can *never* be French, nor can the formerly colonized Arab *ever* be French. To put it another way, the non-status at the airport can *never* or *ever* have rights. As such, Isin observes that while there are "always spaces for becoming political [by] … transversing strategies and technologies of citizenship inventively and imaginatively," they cannot be interpreted as "continuous or 'revolutionary'" (279). Rather, citizenship is acquired when "time and again groups establish their rights … as direct inheritors of historical forms of citizenship" (279). As airports exercise greater surveillant practices, Roissy becomes the border of racial tension and the "dividing line" regulated by "the language of pure force" (*Wretched* 38; 38). The non-status/immigrant, then, is considered, like the colonized native, an "absolute evil," a *negation* and an "enemy of values" (41). Consequently, Harbi and Bashir's acts counter the neocolonial subterfuge of France's anti-immigration policies but also call into question the formation of the Other as enemy (Isin 275; *Necro* 48). The "desire of the enemy," Mbembe argues, goes beyond the social desire to differentiate the citizen from the Other, but becomes the ontological crisis of the (French) citizen (48).

Earlier, I argued Harbi's "courageous act" is a political act, but Isin would add any "act of citizenship" grounds the non-status to be "implicated in the strategies and technologies of citizenship as otherness" (275). Constituted as outsiders, aliens, and strangers, the non-status must contest those who have inculcated their political belonging, agency, and community (282; 275).[9] Though citizenship has always succumbed to a "logics of exclusion and enclosure," Isin reminds us that dominant groups were hardly "revolutionary in the sense of being spontaneous, radical, and rapid overthrows," and since the "moments of being political were polyvalent, multiple, minor … ," it signifies no act of citizenship is too small (282). This means Harbi's act is not nominal nor can be considered void of mobilization, because its effect was self-affirming to him and life-affirming to Bashir. In other words, if 'becoming political' are those moments where the status quo is "reversed, transvalued and redefined," then we can say Harbi's acceptance of Bashir (when questioned by an immigration official) is the very act of being political—his immediate act of speaking up

9 In in his final chapter, Isin emphasizes that groups that politically conscripted their rights not only became "direct inheritors of historical forms of citizenship," but their ascendency naturally eroded and thwarted the autonomy of other groups in the civitas (279). However, their mobilization was circumstantial because they self-prescribed to gain political participation (280). In other words, those who gained access befitted themselves not only as those "capable of being political," but also endowed themselves "with the capacity to be governed by and govern other citizens" (280). Isin establishes the dominant groups were not revolutionary nor radical in their ascendency, but they "certainly wished to present it that way" (280). Therefore, we must critique the "grand narratives" of historical citizenship as it is no longer the "game of the dominant few" (281–282).

(276). As a non-citizen, Harbi performs a subversive act that embodies or "provokes acts of speaking against injustice and vocalizing grievances as equal beings" (277). Isin adds that "when the natural order of domination is interrupted by … those who have no part," and as they confront and defy dominant discourses, then these forms of mobilizing, assembling, or becoming an ally with others, automates change (277). It is in these activistic reversals that the vision for citizenship is enacted to counter whose who are privileged and accustomed to benefits.

Since citizenship naturally produces modes of Othering, it is contradictory in its social and semantic formations. Acts of non-citizenship politicize the non-status to contest formal citizenship. Nyers argues that "claim making" and "right taking" by non-citizens legitimize these groups "*without* any mobilization" from other established organizations (160; 161). Adumbrated by their precarity, these "moments" catapult non-citizens to publicly frame their "rights, membership, freedom and equality" in social spaces where they were historically excluded, and still are in our contemporary world (161). Nyers asks, "what kinds of acts of citizenship would allow for no one to be illegal?" (162). By publicly engaging their "political act" to constitute their citizenship, not by moral plea, nor by defying conceptual and legal ramifications of citizenship do these persons or groups claim 'non-status,' but by *action*, they take to task institutions of power (162). Nyers establishes that the non-status centralize these contradictions—between law and necessity, between reason and reality—to acquire freedom. It follows that Nyers connects agency to "voice," arguing that "to act is to put something into motion, to create something new" (163). According to Isin, to act then is to verily subvert historical citizenship, and whether it is "authored or anonymous, intended or accidental, individual or collective," the non-status refugee has challenged their social, political, and legal realities (qtd. in Nyers 163). That "moment" of the act, transcendental yet veritable in destabilizing the status quo, produces these "actors/subjects," and as Isin reminds us, "acts produce actors that do not exist before acts" (qtd. in Nyers 163).

The Airport and Non-Citizenship

Modern airports totalize their institutional power, thus conditioning the *desire* for citizenship. The geometries of security and policing legitimize the French airport as an exemplary, sovereign world beyond "the limits of the political," thus, fraternizing its codified language of enmity, racism, and death against the Other *(Necro* 70). It is an *excess of power* that "continuously refers and appeals to the exception, emergency, and a fictionalized notion of the enemy" (70). As a port of entry that accepts, confines, or denies entrance to the traveler/migrant/claimant, the airport inscribes the judicial power of the nation over the Other. For instance, the border officer—mercifully or mercilessly—substantiates entry through its legal statures,

yet can also discriminately impose "the laws of autochthony and common origin" over the new claimant (*Necro* 3). For these reasons, the airport is a contentious, intersecting space that marries the governmentalities of the state with the contemporary realities of its site as a national border of citizenship. While it is a global port of transnationalism and a *de facto* international zone of travel, it is also a real, physical space that maps itself into a modern, federalized security system (especially after 9/11). As an active geographic site of differentiation, it implicates the (im)migrant subject. Robert Davidson calls airports "spaces of immigration" because they wield their totalising power over the "global migration regime" (3; Salter 50).[10] As such, the airport grounds its carceral logics of discipline and punishment to produce a "strict spatial partitioning" that encloses some, while opening others to feelings of joy, adventure, and homecoming (*Discipline* 195; Lisle 3). Foucault presents the basic formula of an enclosure: it is a "segmented, immobile, frozen space," where the gaze is "everywhere" and "functions ceaselessly" (*Discipline* 195). Surveillance is not only centralized and operates through a "permanent registration" where individuals are "observed at every point," but the subjects are ordered and regimented, for "visibility is a trap" (195; 197; 200). Given the hidden, disciplinary practices of the prison, Foucault argues its major effect on the subject is "to induce in the inmate [insert *deportee*] a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (201, emphasis added). While the panopticon conditions, "automatizes and disindividualizes power," Salter would argue the airport disperses power by surveilling "dangerous objects, not dangerous individuals" (202; 51). Airport surveillances are decentralized as they calculate risk based on "frequency and impact," and requiring a "balance between mobility and security," there is usually an "incompleteness" of control that leads to its "unreliability"—an issue starkly

10 Harbi and Bashir, as visible bodies occupying the airport, presuppose the dialogue between space, place, and citizenship, in what Robert Davidson calls the "spaces of immigration" (3). As interdictive spaces, Davidson would argue the airport is conditioned by pre-emptive and post-emptive practices of border control, regulation, and management (5). If interdiction is the "act of prohibiting, intercepting … [and] deflecting unauthorized movement," then the state exercises absolute control despite the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees which mandates signatory nations to grant asylum (Nyers 5). Certainly, in the novel's prologue, Harbi and Bashir narrate the deportation of African refugees by articulating a set of interdictive practices in which state authority displaces refugees, and how, ultimately, these exercises of power psychically affect them. Interdictive methods, some anticipatory and others insidiously legitimized, raise questions about how much a state aggressively creates "migration zones where the rights of asylum seekers are lessened or eliminated" (Davidson 5). Roissy, as a fixed and recognized border, serves as an example of France's "national environment" (5). Thus, the airport maps out "a state's outright excision of its own national space" (6). Davidson notes how state authority "perforates itself by selectively leaving areas of its space exposed to international jurisdiction," and ultimately, it only functions to detain and deport refugee claimants (6).

clear between the rhetoric of unacceptability (of terrorism) and its "unavoidable" reality (51). In other words, this "disconnect" between control and risk does and can lead to a rhetoric of the claimant as dangerous (51). Quoting Bigo, Salter writes "mobility control has shifted 'from the control of and hunt for individual criminals… to the surveillance of so-called risk groups, defined by using criminology and statistics'" (qtd. in Salter 51).

For these reasons and more, the airport is a heterotopic, deviant space. It is a "curious property" because it can "suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect" (Foucault, *Other Spaces* 24). As it doubly "trac[es] the power relations that are continually forged and broken between subjects, objects, spaces, and meanings," Debbie Lisle claims power is produced at the airport (4). She asks, "what is *political* about the airport?" suggesting airports are spaces where "new forms of mediated power" emerge (3). In other words, the airport's interdictive practices emerge and re-emerge "in spaces that exceed the modern distinction of here/there, inside/outside, citizen/alien" (Davidson 5; Lisle 4). Marc Auge also theorized the airport is a "supermodern" site;[11] it is a 'non-place' that inscribes a trinary process of alterity, precarity and temporality (qtd. in Lisle 6; Auge 25). It represents "an overload of signs" and through a "combination of excessive meaning and compressed space," its overfamiliarity encourages our passivity (6). For this reason, it cannot sustain a dialectics of meaning for the traveler visiting, the citizen, or the non-citizen, due to its "hypersignification" (7). According to Lisle, airports are "sites of destabilization, ambiguity, and constant movement," for "just as people never stay at airports, neither does power" (4). Not a public place, nor a space of centralized power, but as a "negative space of banality," Lisle argues Auge's theorization evacuates power, overlooking moments where "significations and spaces coalesce to form an oppressive hegemonic formation" (7).

For the refugee, citizenship begins at the airport. Therefore, it is a scary border because it can consent the terrorizing of the (im)migrant Other. In the epilogue, Harbi explains migrants are "terrified by the administrative mess inherent in the European, my brothers discovering some legal refinement their colonial education had never touched on" (Waberi 134). Earlier, I called the airport a 'carceral archipelago,' in part due to the post-9/11 rhetoric that demands an accommodationist language of policy and strategy in their naming of the Other. In another, the border is a critical geography that imposes the imperial-sovereign rights of the West to be circumspect of the migrant from politically charged countries. Since Somalia is a geographical substrate of the troubling Greater Horn, Djibouti's proximity to it inheres the accretions of the region's regimes of political corruption and Islamic fundamentalism.

11 Noting its various spatial configurations, the airport is not a "place of memory" (anthropological), but a "frequented place," "a geometric space," and "an existential space" where "the scene of an experience of relations with the world" are observed (Auge 25).

Despite arriving from one of France's strongholds, the Djibouti (im)migrant is examined through a quasi-military "sovereign right to kill," where the airport invariably acts as a heterochrony[12] to carry out "a set of obscure policies and practices" for the "containment of deviant, mobile subjects" (*Other Spaces* 23; *Necro* 70; Salter 49; 52). To examine this another way, given the excesses of globalization have broadened and diversified our migratory pathways, the "new swarming" from populations of the south—"the planet's centers of poverty"—to the metropolitan have passed from the "*human condition*" to the "*terrestrial condition*" (*Necro* 13; 12; 13, emphasis original). In the novel, the deportation of other Africans from Roissy signifies the (im)migrant is not only conceived as a terrorist but also as the bestial Other. The vague, indifferent notion of the Other is further produced by the "security assemblage{s]" that regulate the border (Salter 50). Mbembe concedes that borders are now a detonating zone of biopower in our late modernity, not between the citizen and the terrorist, but between the citizen and the non-citizen seen as a terrorist because of their claimant status (*Necro* 71). For "in the calculus of biopower," the airport divides people "into those who must live and those who must die" (71). While Foucault nor Mbembe directly critique the airport, Mbembe asserts the border is determined by a nocturnal politics that delimits democratic ideals in lieu of the militarization of the nation-state. In other words, the airport functions as a critical site of hegemony that expedites, through design and function, the "constitutive elements of state power" (Salter 53; *Necro* 71).

Harbi and Bashir's observations of Roissy are never neutral nor objective, and their narratives are compartmentalized into two worlds of the citizen and the non-citizen. Reading Fanon's concept of space in the colony, I suggest the modern airport is a colonial zone/space of control and coercion. As the colony spatially separated the colonized from the colonizer, the airport, in its transplantation of power in our contemporary world, adheres to a form of colonial division (*Wretched* 36). Divided into compartments, the colonial system is a world cut into two, as a "dividing line" is between the "established order" and the Other, in order to create in the "exploited person," an "atmosphere of submission" (38). The colonial border, therefore, is lineated through "frequent and direct action" by an intermediary, who "does not lighten the oppression" (38). By following the "principle of reciprocal exclusivity," this dividing line is a chasm, "two zones" that are not complementary to each other, nor in service towards one goal, but diametrically and ontologically

12 I want to add that the airport is an empty space of architectural and technological wonder until a mobile population flows into discrete and separated zones of entry and exit according to time and destination: "the heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time" (Salter 53; *Other Spaces* 26). Therefore, the competing relations of power, consumption, and competition make visible or invisible the plethora of bodies present: staff, travelers, and the law (53).

opposed (38). One zone is superior to the other, the settler's town (read: the citizen) is "brightly lit … well-fed, … an easy-going town; its belly is always full of good things" (39). The other zone is "hungry," "a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute" (39). The division between the colonial and native zones is demarcated by its panopticon design: "they have surrounded the native city; they have laid siege to it. Every exit … opens up on enemy territory" (Fanon, *Dying* 50). If the vocabulary of colonial division—i.e., the history of imperial subjugation—inhabits modern institutions of power (the nation-state, the carceral state, the global economy), then the colony is the genesis of the "sovereign right to kill" (*Necro* 78). Mbembe warns: the sovereign right to kill "is not subject to any rule in the colonies," and because of this, it reserves the right to "kill at any time or in any manner" (*Necro* 78).

The airport is border policing par excellence. In *Fortress Europe*, the border is akin to the guillotine in the desire to exterminate the immigrant Other. Fortified by the state's anticipatory and expansive methods of exclusion against potential refugees, a separation wall keeps the "swarming" of migrants from these nations at death's door—i.e., *the border* (*Necro* 13).[13] *Transit* avows the border emerges and remerges to strangle the migrant. It signifies the total negation of the subject, as Roissy coalesces France's imperial past and neocolonial present into a new proverbial anxiety—the extraction of the immigrant Other. Corbin Treacy prescribes Roissy as "a site of paradox"—a "gateway," a transnational space created by the global flow of capital, labour, and communication that legislates the territorialization of the nation-state while legitimizing a homogenized, deterritorialized place for those with "the right passports from the right countries" (63; 64). A "*gate*" that arrests and punishes those outside the purview of the national citizen exposes its own arbitrary power in defining (and redefining) the non-citizen (64, emphasis original; Isin 276). Treacy explains it well: "the immigrant's very presence is a challenge both to the relics of *la veille Europe inquiéte* ("old and worried Europe") and the newly designed structures of control and surveillance (*Zones d'attentes*, *Centres de retention administrative*, *Centres de detention administrative*, "les lois et les policies")" (73, emphasis original). By suppressing, containing, and regulating "the incoming wave of immigrants from the former colonies," Treacy contemplates "if its capacity for bureaucratic triage is pushed to a breaking point, it may have to rethink the (il)logic of attempting to determine one group of people as "regularized" 'normalized' and another as "cladestins" 'illegal' (especially when these arriving migrants come from the former colonies)" (74). Neither French citizens nor Djibouti residents, Harbi and Bashir are transit subjects. Racialized and marginalized, they are "border-artists … hoarder[s] of hyphen" (Kumar 34). Governed by their temporality, they are spatialized subjects. As they occupy

13 In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault numerates these "physical," punitive penalties: "imprisonment, confinement, forced labour, penal servitude, prohibition from entering certain areas, deportation"—which have occupied so important a place in modern penal systems.

real, physical borders such as the airport, they become mediators caught between a struggling Djibouti and a racially charged France. By this extension, Harbi and Bashir's exilic, yet "arrested nomadism" derides France's protection of its territory while it historically annexed other territories in the global South (Treacy 64).

The Immigrant as Enemy

The postcolony weighs heavily in *Transit*. With the protagonists trapped in France yet psychically bound to Djibouti, the novel's setting is a colonial aperture that hinders their mobility. Not only does it challenge France's denial of its colonial past, it underscores its continuity. In *Out of the Dark Night*, Mbembe asks: "why does France stubbornly refuse to critically think about the *postcolony* [?]" (90, emphasis original). As such, *Transit* ignites a rethinking of France and its former colonies. Precisely, France's inability to think about the postcolony is a result of its republican model (*Out* 90). In its assent, it has underwritten out those difference from the white, French citizen, and "its originary capacity for brutality, discrimination, and exclusion" now makes France *exit* from an affective vocabulary of humanity towards those they consider the Other (*Out* 90; 91; *Necro* 9). In much the same way the American republic constitutionally relegated the Other—the enslaved, the Indigenous—outside of its logics for liberty, the French republic adheres to its repressive colonial-assimilationist model. In its reluctance to extend representation to its formerly colonized subjects, the border is instituted to hold them out as the enemy (*Out* 90; *Necro* 48). In other words, in the somatics of migration, the airport legitimatizes national identity and discourse, what Davidson describes as the "shifting coordinates of the 'national'" (3). Mbembe explains its social effect in France: "the figure of the 'Muslim' or the 'immigrant' that dominates public discourse is never the figure of a full-fledged 'moral subject,' but is based on devaluating categories that treat 'Muslims' and 'immigrants' like 'an indistinct mass'" (*Out* 104). "This way of dividing people," explains Mbembe, is a result of the French civic model, where the "racial question" and the "question of Islam" are already codified in its national rhetoric (104). Newcomers, therefore, are duty-bound to "integrate into an identity that already exists and that is offered to them like a gift, in return for which they must show recognition—'respect for our own foreignness'" (104).[14] Mbembe notes how calling into question France's "ethnic and racializing foundations" inheres the difficulty of a modern nation-state to move beyond its inaugural elucidations of a French citizen (104).

Precisely, Mbembe argues France has advanced its resistance to the (historical) veracity of colonial violence on autochthonous societies, thus reproducing its current mobilization against the non-Western Other (112). By placing this crisis as

14 Mbembe quotes Julia Kristeva (*Strangers* 154).

a "disease," a matrix of separation and extermination to rid of the Other through forms of disappearance, expulsion, and differentiation, Mbembe situates the *desire* for the border as part of the anxiety of the loss of fantasy in dominating the Other, the *master-desire* (*Out* 131; 132; *Necro* 43, emphasis added). In *Necropolitics*, Mbembe describes the *master-desire* or simply "*desire* (master or otherwise)" as the master-slave relation that is brought into a multiplicity of differences from one object to the other—from the colonized/enslaved to the immigrant/refugee (43). For instance, Mbembe relates that "Negro" and "Jew" were oft the favoured names in the past, and today, they are known by other names: "*Islam, the Muslim, the Arab, the foreigner, the immigrant, the refugee, the intruder, to mention only a few*" (*Necro* 43, emphasis added). As a result, the citizen's desire is to "protect itself from external danger … to conquer this terrifying object," despite the "object" never actually existing (43). These intensely driven fantasies, what Mbembe collectively signals as "the desire for an enemy, the desire for apartheid (for separation and enclaving), [and] the fantasy of extermination" are all states of abstraction that translate fantasies of separation into realistic action (43). A border wall can be sufficient "enough to express such [a] desire": "a separation wall is supposed to resolve a problem of excess of presence, the very presence that some see as the origin of situations of unbearable suffering" (43). Therefore, the need to expel the enemy, *a.k.a.* the immigrant, helps to regain *this* loss (of domination). By grounding the difference between the citizen and the migrant, mass fantasies reduce the immigrant to a *thing* and thereby gain absolute control. Mbembe explains the extensity of this psychoanalytical crisis: "To regain the feeling of existing henceforth depends on breaking with that excess presence, whose absence (or … disappearance pure and simple) will by no means be felt as a loss" (43). The *loss* here simultaneously reveals the irrational dependence on the prejudice or the object of that prejudice. It also reveals the fear of their internalized hatred towards a pro-immigration nation-state. In practice, this schema not only weakens the immigrant in their quest for citizenship but reinforces the meta-discourse about the Other as a beast, as an animal, and as a spectacle.

As Mbembe observes, French patriotism ignites the desire for borders. In turn, it actualizes neorevisionist policies that severely regulate ports of entry—air, land, and sea—through pre-emptive and post-emptive interdiction practices (*Out* 131; Davidson 5–6). By standardizing "pure" (native-born) citizenship through a normative, absolutist inversion of law and equality, for instance, the building of "security barriers"—checkpoints, enclosures, watchtowers, trenches, and other random and permanent structures—imposes "a regime of separation" while waging a "proximate intimacy" with the Other (*Out* 131; *Necro* 44). As an elementary system, the border is the most "primitive form of keeping at bay enemies, intruders, and strangers—all those who are not one of us" (45; 3). Thus, the desire for apartheid through the border systematizes the repressed discourse of the Other through social language and political practice. In other words, it revives the "French disease of colonization," bent on evok-

ing the "very identity of France" to stand for the salvation of *Fortress Europe* (*Out* 131). Contemptuously, this disease "arises out of the confrontation between two antagonistic desires: "the *desire*—supported by a nebulous neorevisionist movement—for borders and for the control of identities, and … the desire for symbolic recognition and expansion of a *citizenship in abeyance*, [that is] defended … by minorities and those who support them" (131–2, emphasis original). At the metropolitan center, the dispossession the immigrant feels is a process mired by the "severe policing of identities" and the extensity of interdictive practices on all French border sites (133).

The desire for the border, and its function for dominative mass fantasies, requires an understanding of the enemy as one who exists concretely, not conceptually—essentially as "the other that I am" (*Necro* 48-49). This drive or need, Mbembe details, is no longer a "social need" but a projection of militarized, fascist, racist, and nationalist forces of enmity, what he calls "the society of enmity" (42). Mbembe admonishes an adherence to concepts over the reality of racial fantasy, arguing, psychoanalytically, this reality derives from the "discrimination between friend and enemy" (48–49). He stresses the distinction: "the concept of the enemy is to be understood in its concrete and existential meaning, and not at all as a metaphor or as an empty and lifeless abstraction" (49). In other words, the desire for an enemy is always present and serves as a vector for the racial intolerance of the Other. The enemy is not a rival nor a competitor, but one who endures the "supreme antagonism" of the dominant citizen—especially those who ascribe to the nostalgic fantasies of racial domination (49). By exteriorizing these fantasies, "in both body and flesh, the enemy is that individual whose physical death is warranted by his existential denial of our own well-being" (49). For immigrants, the many gradations of intolerance rise from the facile certainties of racial hierarchy. While visible and non-visible minorities, at times, are both referred through this simple schema of racial fantasy, the enemy, often, is identified with "accuracy" (49). For as intolerance thrives in secrecy, suspicion, and conspiracy, the "desire to destroy" is usually activated when an arena of nationalist hostility is present (49). Mbembe reminds us that the enemy *at once* has a face and does not have a face: "A disconcerting figure of ubiquity, the enemy is henceforth more dangerous by being everywhere: without face, name, or place. If the enemy has a face, it is only a *veiled face, the simulacrum of a face*" (49). Whether under the "aegis of the state" or through a singular deployment of physical extremity, the "hatred of the enemy" requires a need to "neutralize" at best, and at worst, to define them as a "permanent threat" (50). In other words, the immigrant Other is akin to a terrorist because our contemporary world is now a battlefield of the enemies of the state: "We have, it is true, always lived in a world deeply marked by diverse forms of terror … of squandering human life" (34). The immigrant Other is the new terrorist, and is, not only a threatening outsider, but a *thing* to be eradicated. Mbembe implores: "[c]an the Other, in light of all that is happening, still be regarded as my fellow creature?" (3).

Transit: The Novel

Transit is a series of monologues by Bashir Assoweh (a protagonist and an antagonist who knowingly calls himself Bashir Binladen), Mahmoud Harbi, and his deceased family: his father, Awaleh, his French wife, Alice, and his son, Abdo-Julien. The narratives vary from detailing a desert landscape replete with the contrive climate of a civil war, to the departed souls signifying the affairs of the spirit/body difference through a simulacrum of issues: French colonial policies, the history of Djibouti, and the political corruption of a small, arid nation on the Gulf of Aden. Perhaps motivated by the legal case, *Amuur v. France*,[15] or the eighteen-year stay at the Charles de Gaulle airport by Iranian immigrant, Merhan Karimi Nasseri (who died recently), [16] *Transit* might be an intertextual nod to their lives[17]. Either way, the

15 *Amuur vs. France:* The legal case relates the story of four Somali nationals from Damascus on March 9, 1992. They were refused entry to France on the basis that their passports were falsified and were subsequently detained at Hotel Arcade. Adjacent to the Roissy airport, the Ministry of Interior rented a section of the hotel as a "waiting area" for the airport and the four claimants were detained there (Davidson 10; *Amuur v. France*). On March 25, the men were denied refugee status because they did not have temporary residence permits, and thus do not qualify for protection from the state. Despite applying for release of confinement from Hotel Arcade on March 26, the men were deported back to Syria three days later. The case was brought before the European Court of Human Rights, which ruled for "the contention that people in international zones had not technically entered the country and thus could not fall under Article 1 of the European Convention of Human Rights had no merit in respect to "jurisdiction" is defined [Mole 35]" (Davidson 10). According to the Court, an expulsion under Article 3 from the state is valid only when the state acts [35]. The Amuur case focused on the men's detention at Hotel Arcade, and as an "appended *de facto* to the international zone," the state's ruling was unlawful due to its rendering of the hotel in providing a transit zone for claimants and visitors.

16 Merhan's death was announced on November 12, 2022. He died of a heart attack.

17 In their writing of Merhan Karimi Nasseri, Soguk and Whitehall centralized the airport as a "transit area," a metaphor for "the transversal condition of our being and becoming" (8; Soguk and Whitehall 678). Nasseri's exilic story, as told to four different newspapers, was detained for eleven years at Roissy Airport, from 1988 to 1999, because he could not provide a passport upon entry to United Kingdom, nor to France. According to Nasseri, his one-way ticket to London was upended by the passport being stolen at a Paris train station, yet Paris airport authority released him to travel to England. Upon arrival at Heathrow, British immigration officials rejected his entry and deported him back to Charles de Gaulle airport and he has remained here for eleven years (Daley). *New York Times*'s Suzanne Daley called Nasseri's story one of the most "bizarre stories in immigration history," while citing Merha's adaptation to the airport now makes it difficult to leave after his papers were finally processed (Daley). According to Soguk and Whitehall, Nasseri's (whom they refer to by his first name, Merhan) detention was due to the bureaucratic mistakes of passport and immigration officials. Forced to live, sleep, and eat at the airport, Nasseri survived on the kindness of airport workers and strangers.

novel's setting complicates *Transit*: it centralizes the French airport as an interstitial space of non-/citizenship, while scrutinizing the regional conflicts of the Horn of Africa. Roissy is the novel's physical setting, not Djibouti. Yet Djibouti is the novel's center, the space in which the characters reflect on their exilic existence, not France. In so doing, the novel prefigures the modern, global port—*the airport*—as the hyper-surveilled, securitized, and enforced border while the local port—*the coast*—is the novel's dialectical struggle of war and strife.

The novel concentrates on the Djibouti civil war (1991–1994) to show the country's rapacious colonial history is still, and always will be, its present. Indeed, the culmination of a one-party rule since 1977 produced a disastrous war between the Issa-led government and the Afar militia group FRUD.[18] Exacerbated by the 1991 fallouts of dictator Siad Barre in Somalia and Mengistu Haile Mariam in Ethiopia, the secession of Eritrea and Somaliland, and the continuing skirmishes between the two tribes, the civil war not only underscored severe ideological differences, but the nation's arrested development. Notwithstanding the legacy of French imperialism and its continuation of power in Djibouti ten to twenty years after the independence of many African nations, Hassan Gouled Aptidon's government became the final blow of the colonially sanctioned Issa-Somali dominance. Historically, the fallout between the colonial administration (French Somaliland) and the Afar over territory in 1882 (which solidified moving its colonial headquarters from the port of Obock on the Red Sea (Afar territory) to Djibouti City (closer to the Issa-Somalis) eventually led to no conceivable exit from Issa rule. Furthered by Djibouti's referendum to remain under French rule in 1966 and now with a weakened Horn region, the Afar insurgency was the degeneration of ethnic restructuring, colonial authority, and the assertion of territorial legitimacy and sovereignty. Needless to write, the civil war was a bitter reminder of the severity of inter-clan warfare and political corruption, but also the overt violence caused by decades of imperial-capital legacy. As Bashir states, "City says war no good, no good…But I don't agree. I say war too too good for sure," the novel institutes the enculturation of colonial genocide in Africa (Waberi 25).

The aftermaths of a civil strife is interweaved through the everyday, social spaces of Djibouti City as a capital. The "City," as Bashir unwittingly calls it, is a representational zone that incubates the ever-present French military base, an inter-dependent nation-state, an autarchic and dictatorial one-party ascendency, and a civil population teeming under the surface, almost vertiginous to the slightest political unrest. In Bashir's account, the city maps the intensely spatial corridors of a militarized state, often citing the technologies of war and the horrifying crimes committed by crooked generals and violent warlords. Certainly, Bashir's narrative navigates the aggressive modes of control over civilians—murder, hunger, destitution,

18 FRUD is an abbreviation of *Front pour le Restauration de l'Unité et la Démocratie.*

and rape—but it also mocks the idiocy of politicians so much that the translators of the novel, David Ball and Nicole Ball, consider his satiric chronicle "upbeat" and "funny" (xiii). Bashir's impressions of a war-torn society, replete with vernacular, broken French, much like Ken Saro-Wiwa's "incorrect, broken English" in *Sozaboy*, write the translators, is a "spoken" rather than a "written" language (xii). Though, unlike *Sozaboy*, Bashir's narrative is a "faux-naif," a technique in satire used to "deflate political pretense" (xiii). Nonetheless inspired by Saro-Wiwa's first-person narrative of (civil) war, *Transit* both illuminates and complicates Bashir as an ex-soldier, whose wit, charm, and ignorance is juxtaposed by Harbi's intellectual transfiguration of French colonialism and East Africa's postcolonial malaise.

As a political asylum seeker to France, Harbi represents the old world mired by imperial-colonial hegemony yet teeming at the birthing promise of liberation: "In 1977, Djibouti was stepping down from the high solitude of being the last colonial stronghold. My country was brought into the world in its flag (blue, green, white, and red star), and I was in my prime, hardly thirty" (Waberi 7). Harbi's monologues offer a somber acknowledgment of Djibouti as a neocolonial potentate. His Western education and returnee status (a '*been-to*' educated in France) makes him, according to Fanon, a native intellectual (*Wretched* 209). The educated native, trapped between two worlds, defends their national culture, and "takes up arms to defend [the] nation's legitimacy," for "the native intellectual who decides to give battle to colonial lies fights on the field of the whole continent" (211). For Fanon, political power is substantive when coupled with a call-for-arms on the battlefields of liberatory justice that profoundly corrects the condemnation of colonial rule (211). Harbi's exhaustion with East Africa is obvious, and while his determinate experience counters Bashir's, it is the young ex-soldier who sublimates the failures of the region's ideological and cultural decolonization. Bashir chronicles the psycho-existential woes of the continent's many crises—civil discontent, famine, poverty, Western aid, and foreign military bases—to starkly remind us of the situated lives of Djiboutis. For it is Bashir who aptly chides, "there was war back home, the war kind of over now cause the Big Foreigner they say, better stop that war right away or no foreign aid" (Waberi 10). In so doing, his vivid animation about corruption disrupts Harbi's nationalist stance, despite the absence of Harbi's monologues from the novel's body.

Bashir's imperative liberty to spin off, without any categorical structure, the empire's never-ending presence makes the reader aware of the extensive chasm—physically and psychically—between the two characters. At the holding cell, the lack of interaction between the two represents the chasm present in the postcolony—liberatory praxis versus its subsequent fall—to come full circle. By writing monologues, Waberi builds on this structural disunity/unity between the reader and the speaking subjects. For example, Waberi complicates the role of the "*modern griot*," varying between Awaleh (pre-modern ancestor), Abdo-Julien (New Age), Alice (foreigner), Bashir (post-modern), and Harbi (modern). Indeed, *Transit* can be situated as

Waberi's "griotic project"(Bouchard 50).[19] The "*modern griot*," the storyteller (the oral traditionalist Awaleh), is no longer a "premodern ancestor," but "the harbinger of a new culture of knowledge and action yet to be planted and harvested" (*Dialectical* 204). In *Transit*, the reality of a post-war society obliterates any reconciliation to a national identity and as such, the modern/national subject (Harbi) is questionable. Without disqualifying the national subject, Waberi invites the hybridized, cosmopolitan griot (Abdo-Julien) equally as he invites the foul-mouthed ignoramus—the fool (Bashir)—who speaks of irreconcilable truth, intimating a bitter, yet honest account of the colonial condition in present-day East Africa! Given Bashir's extraordinary virtue lies in his ability to speak the truth of his condition, is he the preferred griot rather than Harbi, Abdo-Julien, Alice, Awaleh? Sekyi-Otu explains: "like the Gramscian archetype, the modern griot is for Fanon the 'incarnated voice' of popular national requirements than the civil servant of the ruling class" (204). This assertion argues the griot shepherds the nation in a way "radically free from the ancestral complicity of the [premodern] griot's craft and epic knowledge in 'systems of 'power and domination'" (204). One clue to help us is the veritable containment of Harbi's narratives in the prologue and epilogue: powerful yet still contained. While Harbi admonishes Djibouti's bouts of violent unrest, and is compellingly Fanonian in necessitating Africa's future, he is the past. To put this another way, while Harbi recognizes justice and truth as politico-ethical imperatives, he must impart to the new subject: Bashir. Either way, Waberi evokes three deceased tritagonists—Alice, Abdo-Julien, and Awaleh—to lay out the historical context of the region's shifts and changes. Their monologues, written in a stream-of-consciousness mode, provide an excess of real and metaphysical borders. Written almost as spectral appendages between the human and non-human worlds, their stories connect the existential realities of a war-torn society. Perhaps or not, Waberi complicates Jacques Derrida's spectral of the ghost in the postcolonial world. Rather than adhering to 'living with the ghosts' as per Derrida, their phantom presence mark their deaths as part of Africa's legacy of violence—as victims of war and crime (Alice and Abdo-Julien), and of assassination (Awaleh). Since their ghostly existence cannot be analyzed as empty abstractions, their presence indicts Djibouti's perpetual calamities. As

19 Writing on Sembene Ousmane's oeuvre, Bouchard claims the iconoclastic filmmaker and writer engages with the griot as a "self-reflexive commentary on his own role as an artist in contemporary society" (50). While Waberi's work also engages with, quite consistently, the griot, the griot's power is questioned. That is, African literature has long centralized the power of the singular, powerful griot, who is political. Rather, Waberi diversifies this role to imply its former fixation on a singular character can no longer explain our contemporary world. In *Transit*, there are multiple griots, multiple roles, multiple goals. While Bouchard argues that Sembene advanced the "new griot" as a political one more acutely through film and word, Waberi's "new griot" is the unenlightened and the uneducated, but still has the capacity to fight for autonomy by questioning the uneven relations of power.

an ephemeral being, Abdo-Julien's magic lies in his evocation of the dialectical as critical engagement ("every man bears witness for humanity") while his mother criticizes colonial partition ("who cut up the land of the Son of Samaale") (Waberi 38; 49).[20]

The novel begins with Bashir's declarative, "I'm in Paris, *warya*—pretty good, huh?" (Waberi 3; emphasis original).[21] Compulsively, yet comically, Bashir admits, "Ok, it's not really Paris yet but Roissy. That the name of the airoport. This airoport got two names, Roissy and Charles de Gaulle" (3). Bashir's initial outburst outlines the spatial difference between the border and the city—the airport as an international zone of transit, and Paris, as the imperial capital of French power and contemporary reverence. Juxtaposing Roissy against Djibouti's Ambouli, with its one name, Bashir offers a spatial description of the airport as "tinier" (3). Arriving on a Boeing 747, Bashir speaks like a bandit who is "discovering travel," falsely claiming he was "scotched-taped-in the last row … where the cops tie the deportees up tight when the plane goes back to Africa" (3). Aware of his precarity, the narrative echoes Bashir's antics: "Act dumb to the cops … Main thing, don't show you speak French. Don't mess things up, so shut your trap" (4). As Treacy quips Bashir "is the exemplary par excellence of the newly globalized subject," he is also a keen observer (66). He concedes an African migrant is observed differently: "OK I don't say anything cause Roissy's danger, *they might say Africans, pains in the ass*" (Waberi 4; emphasis added). Despite France's anti-immigration policies— "Roissy's danger"—Bashir is happy to be there. His hackneyed, riddled vocabulary, full of ironies and macabre humor, presents *Transit* as a novel that refuses to be easily defined, assimilated, and receded into the background. Bashir's pace is quick, taciturn, and only comprehensible as a spoken language. Through his gusto, vulgar speech, Bashir is intent on making history, and this "act of self-fashioning," his street credo, challenges the European gaze (Treacy 68).

Starkly different is Harbi's narrative. It begins with his itinerary, and with contempt for Air France, France's contemporary sins are heightened. Despite Harbi's previous travels to Roissy, it is now different: it is a "new type of border—one that is mobile, portable or omnipresent," where the migrant is regulated by "an exercise of disciplinary power" (*Discipline* 198). At Roissy, Harbi observes "the boarding time for the Africans being deported 'of their own free will.' A dozen or so scheduled to be transported the usual way; three male individuals will be locked up in the cramped

20 Sab and Samaale are the founding lineages of the Somali culture. As such, there are several major tribes, clans, sub-clans, and families that make the extensive and complex genealogy of the Somali people. Waberi's mention of the "Samaale" is because the Djibouti people are descendants of the *Dir*, which makes them the cousins of the descendants of the *Ishaq* (Northern Somalia), whom both are from the Irir, then from the Samaale.

21 Warya means guy or man in Somali.

space of the restrooms, piled in and immediately incarcerated quick as two whiffs of a cigarette" (Waberi 5; *Necro* 101). Escorted by PAF agents (*Police de l'Air et des Frontieres*), the (African) refugee undergoes a processional removal: "each time, the unfortunate deportee tries squealing like a tortured whale just to stir the consciousness of the ordinary passenger, usually a tourist" (Waberi 6). The deportee's "extreme state of agitation" is juxtaposed by the impotence of any sympathetic passenger and an irate pilot malformed by the exasperating cry of the African (6). The intensity of his accursed fate, this Congolese shopkeeper, Harbi observes, defines him as the "savage of the colonial world"—the visible link between modernity and terror often found "in the political practises of the ancien régime" (*Necro* 72). A spectacle, the deportee exists between the state and the people and is condemned through various interdictive tactics at the border. Resisting arduously, the "troublemaker" is taken off the plane and returned to the holding cell, "the retention center in the waiting zone of the airport" (Waberi 6). Like the mark of the beast, the detention of the African deportee continues to incarcerate him. Harbi describes this deportee's fate as "luckier than the ones who die of dehydration in the Arizona desert or freeze to death inside the carriage of some cargo plane" (6). As Mbembe exclaims, "Where are the most deadly migrant routes? It is Europe! Who claims the largest number of skeletons and the largest marine cemetery in this century? Again, it is Europe!," the border is the ultimate confrontation that provokes fear and enforces death, not the (im)migrant (*Necro* 101).

Interestingly, Bashir's praise of Roissy airport, with him being "in front of the paradise of Whites" is countered by Harbi's memory and present disgust: "lost in the bowels of Roissy airport" (Waberi 9; 6). Bashir's utterances, hardly reflective and mostly projecting, are clear: "I'm talking all alone to buck myself up, I look overhere or overthere and I can't see nothing…gotta keep cool, act like professional military. I stare everywhere and name everything I see in the rush and crush of voices an lives" (9). Young, immature, and exhibiting a false consciousness, Bashir's rapaciousness weaves an intricate web of survival and subsistence. His adaptive skills serve him well at Roissy, as following Moussa, his inconspicuous expert guide, allows him to navigate the "poured-concrete labyrinth of late-'60s brutalism" many must cross before entering the French territory (Treacy 64). Bashir always stirs trouble, always the antithesis: His mischievous slights such as introducing himself as 'Bashir Binladen' is a heightened exemplar of inversion. Treacy argues that Bashir "authors a double counter-narrative" where his infamous nickname undermines Western hegemony in an increasingly securitized post-9/11 site such as the airport (68). Equally bright yet duplicitous, Bashir never utters his nickname to the French officials. Amusing teaser, he knows his reader is the West: "Calling yourself Binladen, the most *wanted* man on the planet, the biggest rich-killer. His big head with fine-fine beard, most expensive in the world. Worth five million dollar" (Waberi 23, emphasis original). Admonishing himself on the one hand, "it's too-too much, right?" yet a few minutes

later declaring, "I am mini-Binladen, like Madonna dolls, Michael Jackson dolls," Bashir is the apt consumer of Western capitalism, and his contradictory impulses counter his adherence to Islamic fundamentalism (23). Bashir's comparison to Bin Laden offers the reader a set of competing signs, where his symbiotic relationship to the world's notorious killer becomes a national symbol of identity and pride. Like Bin Laden, he is "wicked and pitiless. I suicided men, enemy Wadags and other men not enemies. I trashed houses, I drilled girls, I pirated shopkeepers. I pooped in the mosque, but don't shout that from rooftops cause I was pickled. I done it all" (23).[22] Yet unlike Bin Laden, his warrior ethos is not funded by "rich fat-cat Saudis," whom along with Bin Laden's family abandoned him, "afraid to catch big American revenge" (23). Bashir's bombastic exhibition of Osama Bin Laden's notoriety is to satirically tease out an irreconcilability between his childish venality and the acerbic reality of 9/11 for the global community. Indeed, Bashir mocks America's ignorance of Bin Laden's backstory: it's not "Gaudy Arabia," because "before he got rich an smart he was living out in the sticks in Yemen" (37). Similarly, Abdo-Julien's warning also activates the haunting danger of the "inevitable victory of the Great Bearded One," with school posters commemorating "Long Live Osama," as well as protests, and the "aggressive sympathy in strategic points in the capital," the Greater Horn is broadcasted as a supposed hiding spot—"have located him in the nakedness of nearby Somalia"—much to the chagrin of the unbelieving peasant (108).

As French speaking subjects, Harbi and Bashir are distinctly the Other, or as Mbembe informs us, part of the "indistinct mass" at Roissy's *zone d'attente* (to paraphrase Fanon, the relationship between the settler and the native is always a 'mass relationship') (*Out* 104; *Wretched* 53). The novel's inception implies a treacherous history of anti-immigration in France, and as Harbi and Bashir become indelibly linked, the desire to acquire citizenship in a post-Cold War era trigger "the residual nerves" of a post-September 11 context in Western Europe (Roman 73). In her article, Leslie Roman reflects on the facile discussions of global citizenship, insisting the dominant rhetoric of the "official we" is based on the interests of the "original citizens" of the West (73). With 9/11 as the "defining catastrophe" of the US and other terrorist attacks in Europe have stirred anxieties and insecurities, Harbi's advocacy for the (im)migrant Other is a juxtaposition (74). By defending the immigrant, not only is Harbi disturbed that the airport is a special zone that excises the influx of the Other, for the nation-state's capacity for "refoulement," risk of return for the refugee is always greater, but the disavowal of the immigrant's history:: "I have an old debt to settle with France; people think migrants arrive naked in a new land at the end of their odyssey; yet migrants are loaded with their personal stories and heavier still with what is called collective history" (Roman 5; Waberi 6). Part of this "collective history" is Harbi's portraiture as a living vestige of post-independent East Africa.

22 Wadags means male religious leaders.

As Waberi connects Djibouti's colonial legacy to the migrant's plight, Harbi's "final" exilic journey has shattered him, and all memories of Djibouti devastate him. In a flashback to his childhood, he recalls passing a military patrol and asking, "Who are those people? (Waberi 7). His aunt replies, "'the French, our colonizers,'" and as he questions their validity, he is silenced, "because they're stronger than we are" (7).

As a French colony, Djibouti is at Roissy's door. By withstanding colonial domination, *Transit* augments the devastating effects of civil war in post-colonial societies are rooted in a myriad of differing cleavages. This complexity—the duality between internal and external factors—has sequestered Africa into a media-informed frenzy of political corruption and economic subsistence. The result is the mass exodus of its inhabitants: "that shrinking land of ours is crisscrossed with people in perpetual motion," says Harbi, sympathetic of the African's plight (6). Forcibly removed from the colony to the mothercolony, the (im)migrant displays the psychic wounds of a brutal, violent (recent) past that suspends any reconciliation towards nationhood. For instance, Harbi is troubled by the extensity of African migration, like the African football players who shamelessly seek refuge elsewhere after an event. Ashamed to receive political asylum in France, his *return*, produces his *death desire*: "I've accepted the idea that I am going to die like everyone else and I'm not about to change my mind" (7). By reconciling his "morbid, incongruous ideas," "snickering little voice," and "dislocated body," Harbi contends this process produces the new immigrant: "In short, get used to my new identity" (7). Like the colonized, the immigrant is "absolutely fixed in this space," separated from others and "compelled to renounce the 'self'" (*Dialectical* 83). In Harbi's case, migration to the metropolis is a process of re-colonization helped by OFPRA,[23] "the open sesame for any aspiring candidate for exile" (Waberi 7). Harbi's exile offers the airport as a conflicting context, thereby enforcing the dismemberment of belonging and memory: "it's like the silence of the desert here; the hours go by in neutral. Nothing to do except think, rehash the past, obsess over it endlessly" (7). Equally, Bashir's new awareness of the airport is edged as a space of difference, further tabling his prideful assertions: "I'm not afraid of nothing, not even foreigners (oh no! am I off my rocker or what? the foreigners, that's us now, the natives here, its them)" (9).

Signifying Djibouti's independence, Bashir's birthdate is a post-colonial crisis: "I was born yesterday. …I mean I was not born too long ago, even for this little chick of a country…we're the same age" (9). Correspondingly, in 1977, Harbi was thirty—"I was young, handsome, and strong"—an eager nationalist, a cosmopolitan *évolué*, and faithfully, the son of Africa's future (7). If Bashir is a symbol of the new regime, a "neocolonized subject," then Harbi's return from France at the exact moment of flag independence enacts a conditional *ethos* of liberation in Djibouti (Treacy 66). Waberi's hesitance—his crisis of difference—is because Djibouti's path to national

23 OFPRA : Office de Protection des Refugies et Apatrides. See Waberi, page 7.

consciousness exacerbates the limits of liberatory struggle. A late bloomer, "colonialism's exit," so to speak, in Djibouti never fully matriculated with the rest of Africa's national fervour (66). In other words, the birthing of a 'true' national consciousness in Djibouti has been a contrived process. The armed struggle by FLCS against French targets,[24] the impossibility of a successful third referendum, and French colonial power at its tethering ends by the 70s has led to the young nation's somewhat piecemeal process—rather than a complete revolutionary overthrow—further securing France's imperial power forever. France never left and given the proximate hotbeds of the Middle East and Greater Horn region, the two permanent bases—the French Foreign Legion and US's Camp Lemonnier—and at least eight other military bases and several operative agencies, adumbrates Djibouti's compliance (and its continual allegiance) with the "official machinations" of the global North (66). So much so, Waberi situates this existential reality in Bashir's prologue to show France's imperial stronghold. The reader is made aware of the colonizer's grasp, as Bashir notices a soldier's return from Djibouti when picking up his baggage at Roissy: "My bag blocked between two boxes of French military, label it says: 'AD 188,' I know what that is, it Air Detachment 188, navigation base right next to airoport in Ambouli as a matter of fact" (Waberi 3–4). This 'matter of fact' is a presage to the novel's crisis with Roissy, enacting a spatial dynamic between France's imperiality and Djibouti's postcoloniality. Although not mentioned in the novel, the US base is also situated near Ambouli, heightening its spatial proximity as the product of post-independence failure—one demonstrative of Djibouti's gradual indeterminacy.[25]

Transit avers the Djibouti civil war has revitalized the devastating effects of colonial partition and oppression by the ascendant ethnic group. Notwithstanding the political legitimacy of the Afars versus the Issa-Somalis, Waberi mocks Djibouti's post-conflict reconstruction by detailing its crises at Roissy. By inversing the dynamics of French oppression through Bashir's volcanic outbursts, the narrative is quick, fast, and gives the reader no pause, no moment for reflective truth. Mocking Africa's failed leadership, Bashir references his president's popularity versus Binladen's: "our new president, old camel pee compared to that" (23). Bashir's indictment of Djibouti's leaders as neocolonialists, and by extension, African political leaders with their minted resumes of *coup d'etats*, assassinations, and corruption, is fateful: "they say president he don't give a damn about anything, homeland, fatherland, population. He too-too old. He left for vacation in Parisian hospital after rest in private villa-chateau" (40). The president, like other leaders, Bashir explains, "rest in Paris, Switzerland, Washimton" while "we famished an languished on bald mountain there" (40). Bashir is remarkably aware of the extensity of political greed that fuels economic subsistence and food security: "Restoration is very

24 FLCS is an abbreviation of Front for the Liberation of the Somali Coast.

25 See my paragraph earlier on Djibouti's political history of French rule.

correct word too, they even say in real French from France. Politicians, they never stop eating, stuffing their face, gobbling, suffocating on the leftovers" (10). Presidents, wounded rebels, to the drafting of soldiers, the Djibouti war has exacerbated corruption in the region: "Me I say all that business shady-shady" (41). However, the permanent hostility between the Walals and the Wadags is complexly intermeshed with family and network relations from both groups: "half the government Wadags" (30). Interclan, intercommunity, and interethnic fighting and feuding, argues Bashir, is further splintered by political cleavages: "Wadags or not Wadags, not the problem. It's all politics" (31). The challenge for post-war peace requires an active conscription against the colonial legacies of divide-and-rule embedded in modern African institutions. Violent clan conflicts "cannot simply be wished away," and since they operate in a "defensive manner," Hussein M. Adam (speaking of the Somali civil war) argues, to harness the affected parties towards reconciliation requires a "consciousness of shared oppression," which is different from "forms of 'false consciousness' artificially manufactured by a cynical elite" (189). Bashir, though, refutes interclan conflict as the impetus for political fractions, he argues, "Wadags, tribes an all that, not a problem. Problem is dirty tricks, corruption an politics. You know, Restoration" (Waberi 31).

Mocking the president's willingness to abide by the "Big Foreigners," Bashir does a translation play on the name Moi (former Kenyan president Daniel Arap Moi) to "moi": "I'd call myself *Moi* like the president of that Kenyan-there. *Moi*, its best president name I know. *Moi*, its simple—beautiful too, right? Ok, close parenthesis" (10, emphasis original). Given the president, who "said ok before anybody else," signed peace with FRUD 1,[26] and after two years, its now FRUD 4 ("Frud 1, Frud 2, Frud 3, Frud 4, all the same and one"), Bashir cements 'restoration' as another term for political opacity (11). Bashir notes the diversity of national and international players: the soldiers, political wheeler-dealers, and international interferers as "real foreigners," the "*Gallos*—you know, Whites. Poles, Lebanese, or Albanese, Czechoslowhatians an all that," are not only "mercenaries," but are "*top military secret*" (25, emphasis original). The plethora of actors in the civil war from Europe, Asia, Africa—the war-lovers like Eritreans, Ethiopians ("from Mengistu's army"), and Somalis ("plenty cousins")—challenge the West of their ill-informed understanding of international politics and networks (25). Indeed, both Abdo-Julien and Bashir cite Djibouti's authoritarian regimes and its coterie of corrupt politicians to morally question a colonial-induced civil war. Democracy, for Bashir, is "that hot air of politicians who take bread from whoever giving it" (11). From Siyad Barre ("real blood thirsty one, that guy. Holy Shit! … He gobbled little kids not to die old-old"), to Haile Selassie ("bigger kid-eater than Siyad Barre with his wife-there, Queen Menem. She liked flesh

26 FRUD: In English, Front of the Restoration of Unity, and Democracy. In French, *Front pour le Restauration de l'Unité et la Democratie*.

and fresh blood of children too-too much"), to the "Morning Hyena, the Ministry of Police," to Mohammed Farah Aidid ("the Somalian general who screwed the American soldiers. Aïdid, champion in battle, Platini of war"), to the "asshole general" who hid in the French base (because he "screwed up his military coup"), to the Djibouti president who had to come out of hiding from Camp Sheikh-Osman military camp, Bashir notes the virility of the Wadag rebels and the Walals government against military power did not lessen their mobilization efforts (25; 13; 24). While the bombing of DRT (Djibouti Radio Television) and other notable institutions signaled the battle against Djibouti's colonial legacy, the French base was not bombed, nor "did they shell the police base of the asshole general" (12). Defeating the "asshole general," who does not deserve a "capital G," Bashir informs of the president and his entourage, "Morning Hyena, Stuffed Hyena, Pushy Hyena, Toothless Lion, etc. all there. Still shaking with fear," announced on TV the general's withdrawal (13;12). With the help of the French, the "asshole general" received a "fair trial," and the president is happy as a "clam," as the general with his lieutenants were sentenced to "terriblific Gabode prison" (12–13). Bashir adds: "The motherfucka now with the little Ethiopian thieves he used to bust himself, I say little cause the big ones they still out there, making restoration with the president's wife" (13).

From "restoration" to Roissy, Harbi and Bashir are the visible reminders of postcolonial failure: the inability of African presidents to enact peace in war-torn East Africa. Bashir laments, "politicians useless losers who don't know how to do anything," while informing the reader of the political charades underway: "the three chiefs, they gonna hug the president," get official positions, attend events, declare "Peace day," while the soldiers are "out there on the mountain facing enemy" (46; 45). Citing the number of civilian deaths to the government's bureaucratic abuse ("[they] put 27 percent of pay direct into its pocket to support the war"), the viciousness of national conflicts, replete with guerilla militia tactics, attacks from criminal groups, and unresolved regional tensions, signals Djibouti as a frontier that is ungovernable in part due to the legacies of Islamization and European imperialism, and the other, East Africa's continuing violence (57). Indeed, the connection between war and colonialism is evident in Bashir's mercilessness as a soldier: "So, kill, destroy the other side, eat enemies' hearts, ok. By who? Why? That none of my business. I get my orders, chief say kill that fat rebel sonofabitch, I kill without fear or fault cause you gotta obey chief" (24). Bashir is the equivalent of the Askari for the colonizer. His recruitment, mistreatment, and disregard as a soldier, from drafting to demobilization—"On the front, lot of us didn't have no uniform. Draftees cruited quick-quick like me" because "war into overtime…president brought in a lot-lot draftees to replace the dead"—cements his despair: "Draftees, they like that old camel the family gonna kill to eat him cause he's too-too old" (24; 80). Bashir's monologues, now grotesque and disturbing, illustrate the cruelty of warfare on women and girls: "we drilled the girls" (12); "We killed Wadags, screwed their daughters (11); "all the girls,

they're for us, they gotta show their ass, that simple" (50); and "they say: I wanna stay with soldiers, there's army food" (50). Seen as traitors, the Wadags "would knock them off quick-quick…You traitors, you cooked for soldiers, you screwed all the time. Bitches, I'm gonna fuck up your life: here: take that in the ass and bang!" (50–51). Bashir recalls his post-traumatic disorder, the damage of seeing the atrocities and realities of war: "after that you go crazy," he cries, and as a result, he would go on killing women, children, elders, and animals without mercy (51).

By evocating all spatial and temporal borders Harbi and Bashir occupy, Waberi utilizes the incorporeal to question how the infrastructures of Western hegemonies—colonialism, the border, migration—have eroded African systems of survival. These spectral figures are, according to Treacy, "potential figures of hope and stability" (69). They represent the collective identities of a vibrant, thriving postcolonial Africa: tolerance (Alice), cooperation (Abdo-Julien) and tradition (Awaleh). Yet, they are all dead! In so being, they are a reminder of the failures of postcolonial Africa. For one, as these dead subjects are borderless figures, Harbi and Bashir are stateless figures. Hence, Waberi deliberately placates the psychoexistential realities of the living to accentuate their internal worlds. Through Abdo-Julien, Alice and Awaleh's narratives, Waberi complicates the connection between the living and the dead, the refugee and the citizen, and between the traditionalist and the modernist. For instance, Awaleh is a "transmitter of tradition," espousing how African philosophies of communitarianism subvert the legacy of European colonialism (xiii). Waberi recognizes Awaleh's counter-narrative—i.e., via tradition and Indigeneity—as a great critique of migratory exile. Equally, the novel utilizes Harbi's deceased wife, Alice, a French woman, as a traditional modernist, a contrast to her husband's modernist leanings. Her monologues, caught between lamentations of Djibouti's potentiality, her marriage, and her birthright crisis, underscores her crises with France's continual disavowal of Africa—"nothing here to worry about as far as our interests are concerned, the same old stories of bloodshed, poisoned wells, kidnapped fiancées, raids on ze-bus, and vendettas between rival clans"—versus her *jus soli* citizenship, which solidifies Harbi's eventual asylum to France (48).

It is Abdo-Julien's monologues that counter Bashir's rough language of war, death, and migration. Correcting how others see refugees as homogenous victims, Abdo-Julien informs us that "real creators are stateless wanders, like the nomads of the desert—and they have only one function," they are "guides" (Waberi 43–44). The beloved son of Harbi and Alice, is hybrid in name, race, and religion. Knowledgeable, interesting, avant-garde—the opposite of Bashir's brutish personality—, Abdo-Julien is the consummate young man. Almost with as many monologues as Bashir, his monologues are full of ancient knowledge and tidbits of European, African, and other mythologies. He is the cosmopolitan *émigré*, yet by his death, his space on earth has been succumbed by the un-educated, ex-soldier—his twin, Bashir. As such, the narrative embodies a multiplicity of modes, codes, and

voices that struggle with the postcolonial nation in the advent of transmigration. Abdo-Julien, dead by the hand of the postcolony, is very much the spirit guide of Djibouti. Though it is in Alice's penultimate monologue that we discover his worth or his mother's worry. Informing Awaleh her son's "just as old as Independence," Awaleh also recalls his birth on "the night of Miraj" (119). Translating Abdo-Julien's destiny in the footsteps of Islam's prophet, Waberi enacts a world of tolerance and forbearance, marrying secular, religious, and national sentiments. Abdo-Julien himself states: "I'm the product of love without borders; I'm a hyphen between two worlds" (35). Signaling his cosmic fate, Waberi is implying Africa is not ready for those like Abdo-Julien. Not ready for the native is still under control, as per Fanon.

Bashir's mobility as a migrant is differentiated because of his orphan status: "in city-there, I got no more house, see no more family. The others they went home" (102). Hurt and resting at the embassy, "I'm dead, I'm almost dead," Bashir has no "demobilization money," and if he leaves the embassy, he must face "Operation Dead Town" (127). In Bashir's last monologue, the reader finds out his last trick—his ticket out of Djibouti (102). Recalling the flurry of arguments, the "gentleman was saying: he cant escape in that crazy city with those drugged policemen and all … France has to protect him and his son, an there he pointed to me with his intellectual finger, clean an all," while demanding an investigation into his wife's death, securing a flight, and a "permit for urgent repatriation" (127; 128). Perhaps Bashir's presence cemented an opportune plot for Harbi, but the novel complicates this simple gesture of convenience. Earlier Bashir noted his "last card": "an me, I didn't play my last card. Not so dumb, Binladen, right?" permits the reader to understand Bashir's adaptiveness is not necessarily consciousness of self, but the self-certainty of his sly resistance—a commitment to surviving. (102). In the prologue, Bashir observes Harbi as "the intellectual genleman who lost his French wife and his rich-son," signifying Bashir's awareness of Harbi's political history (15). While Harbi is torn and distraught by his nation's and his family's predicament: "we describe ourselves as present absentees, weak-kneed nobodies who have a lot to say about their previous life, but the traffic jam of words in our throats makes us more silent than a regiment of Buddhist monks," Bashir tries to survive (Waberi 134). Indeed, driven by necessity from a war-ravaged, devastated nation, the young ex-soldier's identity formation at an international airport requires a radical process that requires greater awareness. As such, it is difficult, at the novel's end that we are not informed of Bashir's final thoughts as his narrative abruptly ends.

The transnational migration of Africans to Europe—the novel's anxiogenic pulse—is a recalcitrant encounter with the process of othering. While Harbi's act of citizenship is "a radically democratic act," he is still a "deterritorialized, disconnected, and newly rootless figure" (*Dialectic* 205; Treacy 69). As such, the airport's hegemonic supremacy lies in its anticipatory power to delineate the right(s) of the non-status, which are often refutable and revocable in the metropolis (*Wretched* 53;

Gordon 57). Isin confirms that, for the immigrant Other to represent themselves, the right to becoming political occupies a space (Isin 276; 277). At Roissy, Harbi's struggle with Djibouti's future reaches a decisive climax. The epilogue begins like this: "Today, exile is making eyes at everybody: individuals young and old, entire families, and whole regions have thrown themselves on the roads with their pockets full of hope and fear spurring on" (Waberi 133). His subaltern voice emerges, critical of migration: "We've left our stories, our books of magic, and our ancestors behind. The danger awaiting us is this: if you live in the present, you're likely to be buried with the present" (135). Certainly, in the epilogue, from the mass exodus of displaced Africans, the emptiness of exilic life, and the paralysis felt in the body in the metropolis, provokes Harbi to say, "deaf-mutes now, we drag around our diminished silhouettes in silence, so lost in solitude that we cannot talk any more and no longer know how" (134). In contrast, Bashir is crude and clear: "the whole world saying: Somalians, Africans, all a bunch of savages make civil war all the time" (81). Both Bashir and Harbi reach a climatic agreement: Harbi sighs, "no one running after us and no sign of hospitality in sight," while Bashir's fervently states, "us, we don't got comfort, villa, car, pay vacation like French, English, an even Norwegians who're nice cause they give NGO money an keep their trap shut" (135; 81).

By constituting themselves as citizens before leaving the airport, Harbi's material condition in Djibouti, his flight to France, his temporary detention, and his exit interview at the holding area are forces which disrupt dominant discourses of citizenship. Indeed, Harbi concealing Bashir's (true) identity activates the space for the non-citizen Other. For in the face of deportation, Harbi sets into motion, without any political mobilization, Bashir's redemption. In other words, in order to cross the frontier, Harbi must resuscitate the dialectic—the uncovering of a new self through the painful process of reconstruction. In this unfolding, and critical of the absolute power of the global North, Harbi seeks no recognition from France—from Roissy—by refusing an idealized, romanticized acceptance of the metropolitan space: "Roissy-Charles de Gaulle Airport. Five am. Silky milky gray. Silence in the departure hall that has seen so many departments and returns, so many separations and reunions, so many absences and presences. Cargoes of exiles, theaters of cruelty and bitterness…And there are a few of us, hunching into the bottom of our seats to get away from the viscous flow of the waves of travellers" (140). Harbi's final act, from the self to collective consciousness, is to save Bashir: "The only courageous act I ever did was to save a poor devil pushed around by the herd of animals who killed my family and the whole country, too. Luckily for him, he was light enough to pass for my previous only child" (141).

Transit offers a restless concourse of experiences of its five characters, exploring how belonging is a process of agentic power that pushes the (im)migrant to act, and in turn, how that act exposes the arbitrariness of hegemonic power. By upholding the *sui generis* of the immigrant's past life in *Transit*, Waberi confronts the bor-

der as a place where the contours of a hyper-surveilled, crisis-prone geopolitics of enmity, war, and anti-terrorism creates new forms of segregation in our contemporary world. As such, I have argued that Roissy is a silent character that enacts the sovereign power of France, while the novel uncovers France's patterns of colonial domination that have necrotized Djibouti—beyond the economic and the political—into a carceral continuum. Indeed, the novel's overarching structure is realized at the end when Bashir reveals his existential mobility is made possible by Harbi's transcendental political act. In Roissy's confessional complex, Harbi also realizes his exilic reality is provisional to the material reality of his Otherness. But the novel is hopeful: it offers the individual's act of courage as transformative, while solidifying that migration is, and was always, a way of life: Abdo-Julien says, "all blood is mixed and all identities are nomadic" (26).

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