

SMOOTHING OUT THE ROUGH EDGES: POSTCOLONIAL SPACES AND  
POSTCOLONIAL SUBJECTIVITIES IN *LE PETIT PRINCE DE BELLEVILLE* AND  
*THE CELESTIAL JUKEBOX*

By

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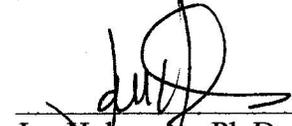
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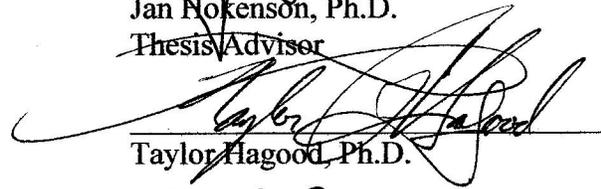
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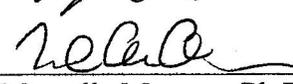
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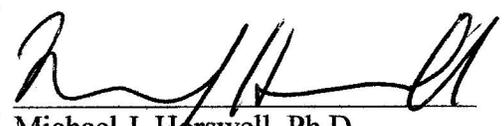
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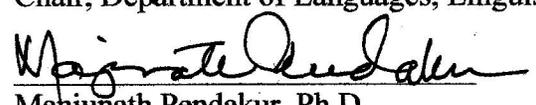
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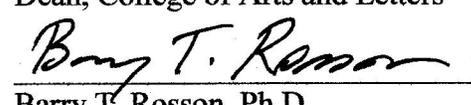
  
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## ABSTRACT

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Both Calixthe Beyala's *Le petit prince de Belleville*, published in France in 1992, and Cynthia Shearer's *The Celestial Jukebox*, published in the United States in 2005, explore similar questions regarding the place of immigrants in increasingly multicultural societies. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of "smoothness" and "striation" illuminates the settings of these two texts, helping demonstrate that the Parisian neighborhood of Belleville presents a striated space dominated by State constraints, from which the residents yearn to break free, and the fictional town of Madagascar, Mississippi consists of relatively smooth space that allows for local improvisation and engenders insecurity. The stories of Loukoum and Boubacar illustrate how these two characters negotiate their respective spaces, with Loukoum creating a position thoroughly between striated majority French culture and the smoothness of his diasporic sphere and Boubacar functioning as a rhizomatic nomad, embarking on an autonomous journey of discovery.

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## Introduction

Although separated by more than a decade and set in different countries, Calixthe Beyala's *Le petit prince de Belleville*, published in France in 1992, and Cynthia Shearer's *The Celestial Jukebox*, published in the United States in 2005, essentially explore the same questions regarding the place of immigrants in increasingly multicultural societies. How do immigrants, often arriving from vastly different cultures, insert themselves into Western, industrialized societies? What challenges do they pose to official ideologies of immigrant integration? What adjustments might host societies need to make to respond to more diverse populations? This thesis will examine the texts' literary treatment of these questions by first examining the representations of Belleville and Madagascar, the settings of the texts, as multicultural, immigrant spaces, and how the two young male African protagonists, Loukoum and Boubacar, act as immigrant protagonists in such radically different, but perhaps ultimately similar places.

*Le petit prince de Belleville* recounts the story of a 10-year-old boy, Mamadou Traoré, who prefers his nickname, Loukoum. Although born in Mali, in western Africa, he was brought to France as an infant and only knows the country of his birth through the stories told by his family and neighbors. Living in a polygamous Muslim family in Belleville, a Parisian neighborhood populated with immigrants from all over the world, and attending a French primary school, Loukoum serves as an example of "double exile,"

a common situation for the children of immigrants, straddling two cultures without completely belonging to either (Toman 259).<sup>1</sup>

The text primarily consists of Loukoum's first-person narrative addressed to "vous," presumably a French adult who is unfamiliar with either the Malian community or French majority culture at large. Written in an oral or spoken style, Loukoum's narration recounts his thoughts and experiences as well as the conversations of adults he overhears during the course of several months, revealing his life at school and in his neighborhood. As the title of the text indicates, Loukoum's story mirrors that of St. Exupéry's *Le Petit prince* in that a young boy digests and analyzes his environment, particularly pointing out the paradoxical behavior of adults. In the tradition of other naïve narrators in French literature, such as Voltaire's *Candide* or Montesquieu's *Usbek and Rica*, Loukoum speaks from a position exterior to the majority culture, and is thus able to question profoundly the customs of French society.

In between Loukoum's narrative are sections told in the voice of his father, Abdou Traoré, addressing "tu," presumably a French man. In these shorter, dreamlike passages, Loukoum's father meditates on the loss he feels living as an African man in a western society. In contrast to Loukoum's adventuresome explorations of the world around him, Abdou's narrative reveals his increasing angst and sense of marginalization both within French society and within his home, as the traditional gender roles of his home society are destabilized in his host country.

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<sup>1</sup> See Jacquemart pp.17-20 regarding the changing demographics of Belleville, specifically during the nineteenth century. See also Fayt pp. 175-181 and Simon pp. 101-114 regarding immigration influxes into Belleville during the twentieth century and Belleville as a model of social integration

Whereas her first two novels, *C'est le soleil qui m'a brûlée* and *Tu t'appelleras Tanga*, were set completely in Africa, and her third novel *Seul le diable le savait* takes place in both Africa and France, *Le petit prince de Belleville* is Beyala's first novel to be completely set in Paris. Unlike previous French-language texts in which the voice of the foreign Other was used to either provoke French readers into questioning their own society, as in Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*, or to present a more primitive "opposite" to French society, such as the depiction of the Saracens in *La Chanson de Roland*, the first-person voice of the foreign Other in *Le petit prince de Belleville* serves to express an immigrant's desire to live in France while preserving traditions from his family's culture of origin. In focusing on immigrant spaces and immigrant voices in contemporary Paris, this novel participates in a larger literary conversation regarding the transformation of western, industrialized societies in a postcolonial world, and thus engages in national discussions taking place in France today, contesting received notions of "the immigrant population" and proposing a new social model.

Calixthe Beyala has blazed a singular path in francophone African literature. Born in 1961 in Douala, Cameroon, she migrated to France as a young woman, and has since become the most famous and perhaps the most controversial, African-born female novelist in France (Volet 2). A prolific writer, she has published sixteen novels since 1987, two feminist essays, *Lettre d'une Africaine à ses soeurs occidentales* and *Lettre d'une Afro-française à ses compatriotes*, an erotic short story entitled "La sonnette," and she has contributed poetic verse commentary to a book of photographs. She has been awarded numerous literary prizes in France, including the Grand Prix du roman de l'Académie Française for her novel *Les honneurs perdus*.

Beyala's work has come under fire for its provocative subject matter and has been the object of two charges of plagiarism. As described by Nicki Hitchcott in her analysis of Beyala's exceptional position in the French literary scene, "Calixthe Beyala: Prizes, Plagiarism, and 'Authenticity,'" Beyala was convicted in 1996 for having partially plagiarized *Burt*, a novel by the American writer, Howard Buten, in *Le petit prince de Belleville*. Similar indictments regarding her novel *Les honneurs perdus*, however, have not been pursued by Ben Okri, author of *The Famished Road* (Hitchcott "Prizes" 103). In response to these charges, Beyala has underscored the importance of intertextuality in African storytelling traditions and also leveled her own claims of racism and misogyny against French and African critics (Hitchcott "Prizes" 104). Despite her controversial status, Beyala remains a formidable literary force who has abandoned what critics have called "the mainstream African novel" to experiment with new forms and themes (Cazenave "Writing" 153). Working in what Hitchcott deems the "constantly shifting border space between Africa and France," Beyala's works present a "mosaic" of African and French voices, challenging the expectations of both African and French readers (Hitchcott "Women" 129, 145).

Within the context of francophone African novels, critics such as Hitchcott, as well as Stephanie Newell, Laïla Ibnlfassi, Mildred Mortimer, and Odile Cazenave, have positioned Beyala as a "third generation" writer. In contrast to writers of earlier generations, Newell explains that these contemporary writers eschew a Fanonian sense of deprivation of subjectivity to "recognize[e] otherness in a manner that avoids crisis and alienation" (209). Although literary theorists use slightly different models of periodization of francophone African literature, the "first generation" is generally

considered to encompass the earliest texts from the 1920s to the 1960s, in which assimilationist principles and French metropolitan culture were valorized. Later “first-generation” texts, such as works by Mongo Beti and Ousmane Sembène, however, were also heavily influenced by the works of the Négritude poets, and although marked by continued conformity to French formal models, the subject matter turned away from the colonizer, to provide nostalgic and often idealized representations of Africa and a rebuttal of colonialist principles (Ibnlfassi 2). “Second-generation” texts, published from the 1960s to the 1980s, and including the works of Yambo Ouloguem, Valentin Mudimbe, Sony Labou Tansi, and Werewere Liking, are characterized by a move away from such idealism to depict the “malaise of African consciences” in the postcolonial period (Cazenave “Rebellious” 5). Following independence, a new African political elite replaced the colonizer as the object of criticism in literature, and writers often used fiction to express disillusionment with state corruption and mismanagement. Furthermore, European literary models were challenged through experimentation with form and language, often infusing French prose with African oral narrative structures and vocabulary (Mortimer 106). “Third-generation” writers, emerging in the 1980s, have shifted the focus yet again. In the last few decades, francophone African writers, often working across African and French fictional spaces, have moved away from a *littérature engagée* and a focus on “-isms,” such as Marxism or feminism, in order to place a greater emphasis on individualism, previously marginalized female characters, and issues of physical and cultural displacement through migration (Newell 192 ; Cazenave “Afrique” 11).

Literary theorist Bennetta Jules-Rosette has developed her own designation for literature produced by contemporary African writers living in Paris—Parisianism. Forming a specific group within the third generation, in her view these writers question the more traditional narrative of African belonging, turn away from pure orality, undermine African cultural specificity, and reconfigure point of view and characterization in their texts. Most importantly, she points out, these writers turn on French society an African gaze (*un regard africain*), which has transformed the French literary landscape (Jules-Rosette 179). Jules-Rosette emphasizes that Paris-based writers like Beyala, as well as Yodi Karone and Simon Njami, juxtapose discourses of exile and marginality with expressions of desire to belong in French society (Jules-Rosette 179). The ever-widening corpus of texts published by writers of immigrant origin has been viewed by many historians and critics of French literature as a revitalizing force in the French literary scene, with some going so far as to label these texts “the most vibrant area of French literature today” (Ireland “Introduction” 2). Within this scene, Beyala has become one of the most notable writers, providing French readers with a new perspective on French society.

Just as *Le petit prince de Belleville* breaks away from traditional literary treatments of Parisian space, *The Celestial Jukebox* offers American readers a radically unconventional perspective on the Mississippi Delta region of the United States, a region described by historian James C. Cobb as the “most Southern place on Earth.”<sup>2</sup> Throughout most of the twentieth-century, literature of the U.S. South has been dominated by Southern

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<sup>2</sup> See Cobb, *The Most Southern Place on Earth: the Mississippi Delta and the Roots of Regional Identity*; For additional conventional treatments of the U.S. South and the Mississippi Delta, see Cash, *The Mind of the South*, Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* and *The Burden of Southern History*, and Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity*.

Agrarianism and subsequent Agrarian-inflected movements. The Agrarian manifesto, a collection of essays entitled *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition*, was published in 1930 by twelve white Vanderbilt-educated writers, including John Crowe Ransom and Robert Warren Penn, as a response to contemporary detractors of the region (Bryant 2). The essays valorized their conceptualization of an antebellum white aristocratic South, depicting it as having been a harmonious agrarian society with strong religious values, distinct from other regions of the United States. Such a society, several contributors argued, was necessary for the production of great art (Bryant 45). A younger proponent of the movement, literary historian Richard M. Weaver, furthered the earlier generation's cause, proposing the U.S. South as the last bastion of Western Christian civilization and positing the region as the source of cultural salvation for the United States as a whole, with its sense of place, family, and religion as its pillars (Kreyling 23). However, southern historians and writers have since struggled to reconcile this idealized vision of the South with the region's very real legacy of slavery and rebellion.

Through the mid to late twentieth century, Louis D. Rubin, Jr., the person whom Michael Kreyling rightly describes as the “primary architect and developer of Southern literary studies in the twentieth-century” (48), endeavored to temper the conservative agenda of the Agrarians by more objectively acknowledging the impact of history on literature (33). Nevertheless, he maintained that their work was an attempt to protect the South from the dehumanizing possibilities of industrialism (Bryant 47). As noted by Matthew Guinn, Rubin and the “Rubin generation” of scholars continued to privilege the distinctiveness of the South by promoting a critical lens that focused on the use of “southern” motifs of history, place, and community, which, he argues, neglected to

account for external influences and trends in southern texts as well as works that did not fit pre-established expectations (x).

Contemporary critics, such as Kreyling and Guinn, as well as Barbara Ladd, Jon Smith, and Deborah Cohn, advocate a new approach to analyzing southern literature in order to recognize and appreciate discontinuity with the Agrarian tradition, present in both contemporary and canonical texts. In their recent collection of essays that position the study of the South in a hemispheric context, *Look Away! The U.S. South in New World Studies*, Smith and Cohn seek to “refute for good the fetishization of community, hierarchy, [and] place” central to the Agrarian movement to open the critical gaze to “the kind of border-crossing, interracial hybridity that white southern nativism has sought to repress” (13). Guinn contends that the most innovative southern writers today share an “inimical approach to the cultural mythology established by southern authors of the 1920s through the 1950s” and groups contemporary texts into two approaches: (1) a revival of American naturalism, with a focus on the experience of poor southerners, and (2) “mythoclasm,” which he defines as a more aggressive break from the past, whereby authors use postmodern techniques to “undermine, attack, and parody traditional themes, motifs, and cultural fixtures of southern writing” (xii).

Challenging the myth of the South as an isolated region dominated by a black-white racial dynamic, Shearer’s third-person narrative weaves together the stories of a variety of “natives” of the Delta region and nearby Memphis, including black, white, and Chinese American residents, as well as “newcomer” immigrants, who include Mauritanian refugees and Honduran migrant workers, in a nearly-utopian vision of cultural hybridity. Although recounted in the third person, the text is focalized through a

variety of characters, specifically highlighting the viewpoint of white farmers and city dwellers, a Chinese American grocer, and several Mauritanian characters. As Barbara Ladd has noted, *The Celestial Jukebox* depicts the region as a “transnational center” and a “multinational crossroads,” demonstrating that a multicultural South has existed for some time, and exploring the current transformations taking place as new migrants settle in the fictional small town of Madagascar (48). Furthermore, this text moves beyond recent efforts to reclaim the voice of African Americans and women in Southern literature by including other minorities as important players in the historical and contemporary U.S. South. Moreover, instead of avoiding the role of racism in the social fabric of the South, Shearer confronts it directly in this text and affirms the importance of a new type of family within Southern culture—this time a communal family bound by respect for diligence and compassion instead of a patriarchal, nuclear family.

Although born in Massachusetts in 1955, Shearer has spent most of her life in the U.S. South, spending her childhood in Georgia, and her adult life in Mississippi and Texas. Formerly the curator of Rowan Oak, the home of William Faulkner, Shearer left this position to devote herself to writing and published her first book, *The Wonder Book of the Air*, in 1996. This novel, which traces the story of a southern family over three generations, won the 1996 prize for fiction from the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters (“Interview”). Given the recent publication of *The Celestial Jukebox*, Shearer’s second novel, little scholarly writing has yet appeared. Thus far, literary theorists Kathryn McKee and Annette Trefzer have mentioned the text as part of their preface to a special issue of *American Literature*, dedicated to trends within U.S. South scholarship in 2006. Within this preface, the authors argue that Southern studies are “situated at a

moment of significant transition between paradigms,” where the U.S. South is being configured in a “larger transnational framework” and laud *The Celestial Jukebox* for its focus on these emergent themes (677, 678).

In focusing on migrant characters and the spaces they inhabit, both *Le petit prince de Belleville* and *The Celestial Jukebox* examine issues of contemporary postcolonial migration and the cultural negotiation such shifts in population generate. Since the publication of their two-volume series *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, consisting of *Anti-Oedipus*, published in 1972, and *A Thousand Plateaus*, published in 1980, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s theoretical framework, most notably their concept of “deterritorialization,” has become highly influential in the growing field of postcolonial studies, and particularly in Francophone Studies. Concerning contemporary North African Francophone literature, literary theorist John D. Erickson asserts that Deleuze and Guattari’s “questioning of absolute systems that lay claim to universality” works particularly well with both postmodern and postcolonial modes of thought and offers a “mode of differentiation in regard to nationalist/fundamentalist/nativist social and religious strictures, on the one hand, and the global politics of western culture on the other” (74, 67). In a similar vein, literary theorist Christopher L. Miller describes the prominence of these philosophers’ concepts in the study of Francophone African literature, explaining that the “nomad thought” they describe provides a model of postidentarianism, wherein one can “conceive of individuality free from the confines of Identity” (173). Furthermore, with a specific focus on gender issues, literary theorist Valérie Orlando contends that Francophone women authors of the Caribbean and Africa, including Beyala, are building “nomadic novels” and “deterritorializing to build new

social projects,” in which female characters can “take flight and step out of sociocultural boundaries” (“Singularly” 35, “Suffocated” 3). Deleuze and Guattari’s focus on “exteriority” has proved especially fruitful in interpreting texts that thoroughly challenge social, political, and literary conventions.

As researchers in the fields of American Studies and Southern Studies have increasingly framed their analyses of American spaces in transnational contexts in the last few decades, postcolonial theory has also become an important tool for the study of the United States, which theorists Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt describe as “the world’s first postcolonial *and* neocolonial country.” Although the United States defined itself as the first anti-colonial nation-state, Singh and Schmidt explain that it “simultaneously incorporated many of the defining features of European colonial networks” (5). Noting that scholars of the U.S. South have long positioned the region as a site that has been occupied by an imperialistic North, New Southernists such as Jon Smith and Deborah Cohn similarly argue for an expanded perspective in the construction of Southern identity, proposing that the U.S. South be viewed in a hemispheric context, with “the experience of defeat, occupation, and reconstruction—particularly [...] the African American experience of defeat under slavery” as something the South shares with every other part of the Americas (2). In contrast to Francophone spaces of North and Sub-Saharan Africa, Deleuze and Guattari’s theoretical work has been less prominent thus far in the postcolonial analyses of the United States or the U.S. South. Édouard Glissant, one of the most influential theorists of the Francophone Caribbean and exponents of Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts, notably applied their framework in his 1996 study of William Faulkner, *Faulkner, Mississippi*. With his emphasis on Mississippi’s cultural connection

to the colonial plantation system that stretched from “northeastern Brazil to the Caribbean to the southern United States” (10), on the “wandering people” who inhabit his works (99), and on the fragmentation of his prose (163), Glissant contends that Faulkner “writes in rhizomes” (177). More recently, in *A Web of Words: The Great Dialogue of Southern Literature*, Richard Gray has called for a study of the relations between individual texts, “southern or otherwise,” as a network of rhizomes, whose stems shoot out across boundaries (71). Similarly, theorists Nahem Yousaf and Sharon Monteith advocate the use of Deleuze and Guattari’s model in studies of contemporary immigrant fiction in the U.S. South, arguing that “Southern fiction’s human geography is stretching to encompass ethnic groups whose presence broadens our understanding of the region” and, in this “rhizomorphic South,” one can “read the region” and explore Southern places “from extrinsic vantage points” (215). Indeed, Shearer’s text, which features the perspectives of multiple immigrant characters, provides just such an innovative “reading” of the Mississippi Delta.

Utilizing Deleuze and Guattari’s theoretical framework that opposes “smoothness” and “the rhizome” with “striation” and “arborescence,” Chapter One will contrast the fictive spaces of Belleville and Madagascar as sites of human interaction with the State. Whereas Belleville is depicted as a predominantly striated space in which the African diasporic sphere struggles against State forces of homogenization, Madagascar is presented as an oasis of smooth space, in which the residents of various origins collaborate to create one common community to fit their needs. Chapter Two will examine the stories of Loukoum and Boubacar in greater detail, exploring how these two young characters negotiate their respective spaces and develop distinctive subjectivities

with relation to both the majority cultures of their host societies as well as their diasporic communities. Although Loukoum and Boubacar have migrated to Western societies because of circumstances beyond their control, both protagonists succeed in making conscious decisions regarding their future life path. Loukoum creates a position exactly between striated majority French culture and the smoothness of his diasporic sphere, and Boubacar embarks on an autonomous journey of discovery.

## Chapter 1

### On Cities, Forests, and Plains

The urban neighborhood of Belleville, the setting for *Le petit prince de Belleville*, and the small fictional town of Madagascar, the setting for *The Celestial Jukebox*, are radically different in many ways, yet both spaces function as sites of resistance to the conventional role of the State. Utilizing Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of "smooth" and "striated" spaces, this chapter will examine the distinct role of the State in each text as well as how each space functions as a site of negotiation of competing forces of cultural homogenization and heterogenization. Whereas the depiction of Belleville presents a confining space dominated by State constraints, from which the residents yearn to break free, the town of Madagascar consists of relatively unrestricted space that simultaneously allows for local improvisation and engenders insecurity.

Although Deleuze and Guattari's theoretical model has not yet been applied to these texts, several critics have begun examining various aspects of space in *Le petit prince de Belleville* and *The Celestial Jukebox*. Utilizing Gaston Bachelard's definition of home as the site of intimacy and refuge, Ayo Abiéto Coly argues that Beyala's early novels present the African continent as a "collapsing home" (34). Although European spaces in her later novels seem to offer a space of refuge, Coly contends that the restrictiveness and marginalization of immigrant space marks Belleville as "symbolic of the shattered dreams of these immigrants" (39). Alain-Philippe Durand also examines Belleville as

“un espace migratoire” and similarly underscores the spatial constraints placed on the immigrant residents vis-à-vis the exterior space of “la culture locale,” asserting that the characters must continually question their identity by negotiating this space (53). In addition to exploring the disruption of gender roles in the “micro-spatial” setting of the Traoré’s apartment, Pius Adesanmi argues that the “macro-spatial praxis” of Loukoum demonstrates the reterritorialization of a Western space and the creation of an ethnospace wherein the norms vary from the dominant host society (“Anti-manichean” 76, 78). However, Adesanmi also insists that Loukoum is “permanently entrapped” in a cycle of deracination and alienation in Belleville (“Redefining” 968).

Thus far, *The Celestial Jukebox* has primarily been noted for breaking with traditions of southern literature. Arguing that Southern studies are “situation at a moment of significant transition between paradigms,” Kathryn McKee and Annette Trefzer position this text as part of a new wave of writing that configures the U.S. South in a “larger transnational framework” that eschews hyperregionalism (677, 678). Reviewer Charlotte Pence also notes the significance of the space of the Celestial Grocery as the centerpiece of the “web of story threads” as well as a town center, which functions as the “townspeople’s makeshift public square” (243).

In the second volume of their series, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari explore the history of human society as a struggle between State apparatuses as forces of homogenization versus “nomadic war machines” that serve as resistance. Framing their text with a vegetal analogy, Deleuze and Guattari advocate rhizomatic thought and organization over arborescent forms. Noting that the figure of “the tree” has dominated Western thought, they describe arborescence as hierarchical, with a focus on lineage and

binary logic (18). The rhizome, on the other hand, is analogous to a full understanding of multiplicity, with connections available at any point and no beginning or end, operating via variation, expansion, conquest, capture, and offshoots (21). Privileging the preservation of multiplicity and heterogeneity, the authors valorize nomadic modes of life and the vast spaces they inhabit, the *nomos*, which they term a “smooth space,” over the regulated and limited space of the city, the *polis*, or “striated space” (Deleuze and Guattari 474, 481). In their model, striated space is marked by regularity, constancy, measurement, and fixed form. Conversely, Deleuze and Guattari describe smooth space as that which is amorphous, infinite, and open. Offering a variety of analogies, they compare striated space to woven fabrics and baskets that are composed of intertwined vertical and horizontal elements, assembled in a regular pattern. By contrast, felt is deemed “smooth” in that it consists of an “entanglement of fibers” and an “aggregate of intrication,” producing a continuous variation that is potentially infinite (475). In another instance, they evoke the high seas as the archetypal smooth space of immeasurable extent, the ultimate example of a space that has become thoroughly striated by a grid of lines of latitude and longitude, a process they argue, only achievable by States (479).

Promoting the nomadic lifestyle, Deleuze and Guattari describe the “law of the *nomos*” as a “continuous variation of free action,” which is carried out by rhizomatic bands or groups. The State, in contrast, functions to perpetuate arborescent organs of power, which lends it the possibility of undertaking large-scale public works, but also engenders “machinic enslavement” in modern industrialized societies (359, 491). Beyond physical space and work, they argue, the modern State further striates mental space, defining itself as “the rational and reasonable organization” of a community (375).

In his analysis of Deleuze and Guattari's theoretical model, political theorist Simon Tormey argues that the function of the State is seen to "axiomatis[e] social life, making it conform to a certain principle or 'truth,' whether that be of the market, of theocratic belief, of an ideology." In this way, he explains, the State "represents that which is dominant" wherein "the multiple is captured, annexed, trapped in a space or territory over which it has, despite the contractarian rhetoric of contemporary liberal states, minimal control" (Tormey 50). Nomadic thought thus operates as a "war machine," by rejecting the all-encompassing totality of Statist striated thought (Deleuze and Guattari 379).

In the opening chapter of *Le petit prince de Belleville*, the Traoré's environment is depicted as a predominantly striated space, which is segmented, measured, and heavily regulated. The space of Belleville is divided along ethnic lines, with indigenous French people and other immigrant groups occupying separate sections of the neighborhood. In introducing the space, Loukoum explains that Belleville is populated with lots of African 'tribes' whose members are thoroughly committed to taking care of each other: "si vous connaissez le coin, vous savez que c'est toujours plein de tribus qui viennent d'Afrique et qui vivent en tas sans négliger personne. Solidarité oblige" (8). Loukoum's family maintains its social ties almost exclusively within the African community, labeled *la tribu nègre* by Loukoum, and only occasionally leaves Belleville for shopping trips to the downtown of Paris. Identifying themselves as a 'tribe,' the African community positions itself as a rhizomatic band in the text, separating itself from the State.

The African community's space is centered at the local café run by Monsieur Guillaume, which also serves as headquarters for a prostitution ring run by Monsieur Kaba. The café's clientele is almost exclusively black and Monsieur Guillaume

explicitly notes his reliance on the black residents of the neighborhood when responding to an inquiry into his state of affairs: “depuis qu’il y a la crise dans ce pays, ça marche pas du tout. Mon chiffre d’affaires a baissé de moitié. Les nègres ne sortent plus, alors...” (14). The few white patrons present in the café occupy the periphery of white French society, further underscoring the marginalization of the community’s space in relation to majority French culture. Monsieur Laforêt, one of the regulars, is an unemployed and embittered Frenchman who claims to have once had a great life before he was fired and his family left him. He explains to Monsieur Guillaume that the blame for his problems lies beyond himself or his wife: “c’est pas Caroline qui m’a lâché, c’est la société” (35). Esther, a white woman working as a prostitute for Monsieur Kaba, is declared to belong to one of France’s oldest aristocratic families. Monsieur Kaba explains to the group that she has “les nerfs un peu à vif” since her fiancé was killed in a car accident, suggesting how she may have come to her current station (19). Monsieur Guillaume empathizes with her loss and offers her a place in their community: “je vous plains bien de c’qui est de votre fiancé. Vous trouverez ici une famille et vous pouvez compter sur tout le monde” (19). His gesture underscores the sense of solidarity maintained by the clan, characterizing the space of the café and its environs as a haven for the disadvantaged, regardless of ethnic origin.

Although he is young boy, Loukoum fully grasps the divided structure of the neighborhood. As he visits his white schoolmate Lolita in the more gentrified area of Belleville, he recounts that her mother asks if he lives nearby. Loukoum replies by linking his ethnicity with his residence: “non, un peu plus bas, j’ai répondu. Je suis malien” (160). Loukoum expands his analysis to French society at large while reflecting

upon the discussions he overhears regarding anti-immigrant rhetoric. Presenting a more reasoned approach to the issue than the adults around him, he surmises that right-wing politicians in France are simply poorly informed about African immigrants since “la division sociale veut que chacun reste bien chez lui dans son arrondissement” (26). Throughout the text, Loukoum’s seemingly simplistic responses to situations serve to counter the reactionary tendencies of the adults and will provide the basis for his eventual resolution.

As described by Patrick Simon in his study of the history and structure of the Belleville neighborhood, “The Mosaic Pattern: Cohabitation between Ethnic Groups in Belleville, Paris,” this working-class neighborhood has accommodated waves of migrant groups throughout the twentieth century, with each group forming microenvironments in the neighborhood, typically centered around cultural associations, community services, or economic niches (101). The group-based structure of the neighborhood enables residents to more easily preserve traditions from their countries of origin side-by-side with other groups. In stark contrast to the French ideological model for social integration, which is based on individual affirmation of Republican values (110), Simon argues that the Belleville model has potential for becoming a national model of regulating cultural differences by offering each person “a place” in an increasingly multicultural France:

The Belleville model can thus be seen as a successful system of regulation of differences: these differences are asserted within separate and structured ‘communities’ and expressed in ‘community areas,’ which are interlinked without competing one against another. (113)

Despite Simon’s optimistic analysis, Beyala’s characters display great ambivalence regarding any sense of place in France.

In his study of humans and their relation to their environments, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, geographer Yi-Fu Tuan distinguishes between “space” and “place,” arguing that, whereas space indicates freedom, place is marked by security and the feeling that a space has become thoroughly familiar (3, 73). For the Belleville residents depicted in Beyala’s text, however, the adult characters lack this sense of security outside their circle of fellow African and feel threatened by other ethnic groups and the heavy State presence in their environment. Within the first few chapters, we see that the characters view the education system, the police, and social workers as cumbersome interferences in their lives. Abdou, Loukoum’s father, is especially pained to see his son slipping away from his own guidance into the French system: “ainsi, les autres peu à peu viennent nous déranger. Prêter mon fils à d’autres compétences que les miennes—aux hommes et aux femmes que je ne connais pas, mais qui, me dit-on, sont certifiés pour la pédagogie. Ainsi l’enfant s’échappe de moi” (7). Abdou is further bewildered by the striated framework of French education, which insists on measuring progress in numbers: “étrange civilization qui juge l’enfant selon des critères et des notes où son intelligence est chiffré” (7). Claiming descent from the nomadic Tuaregs, a Berber people who once controlled the southern perimeter of trans-Saharan trade and made their capital at Timbuktu, Abdou hails from a quintessentially smooth space in which relatively autonomous bands have negotiated vast desert terrain (Beyala 77; Minahan 51). Employing nomadic thought, Abdou struggles throughout the narrative against the State education system’s pedagogical subject matter and methods while attempting to impart his own knowledge and values to Loukoum.

Although the community has no intention of returning to make a life in Africa, they have little confidence that a stable place exists for them in France. The café owner, Monsieur Guillaume, has adopted Alexis, the son of one of the black prostitutes whose father is assumed to be white. Although born and raised completely in France with no knowledge of his mother or her country of origin, Loukoum illustrates that the African community in Belleville does not consider France to be his true home: “mon papa lui fait sa religion, car même s’il devait rester en France jusqu’à ce que mort s’ensuive, il faudrait lui rappeler qu’il a un pays quelque part, même s’il ne figure nulle part du point de vue originaire” (39). Only able to offer an abstract “quelque part,” the community nevertheless feels that instructing Alexis in African and Muslim traditions will assist him in dealing with future feelings of displacement.

The local police and, to a lesser extent, other ethnic groups are equally viewed as forces intent on threatening the well-being of the African community. Monsieur Ndongola, described by Loukoum as “très gentil et beau,” is nevertheless regularly harassed by the police due to his political activity and ability to draw crowds for public protest (98). Loukoum respects his strength when faced with the police: “j’aime bien Monsieur Ndongala, parce qu’il se laisse pas faire. Quand il sollicite un attroupement et que la police vient, il s’arrête pas de parler” (99). Beyond his financial problems at the café, Monsieur Guillaume also considers the local police presence to be a menace to his business, especially given that his café serves as the base for an illicit prostitution ring: “en plus, il y a de la flicaille partout, ça n’arrange pas les choses” (14). As for Monsieur Kaba, the local pimp, he is concerned about growing competition in the Parisian

prostitution business: “la concurrence arabe se fait drôlement sentir. Alors, si les Roumains s’y mettent aussi, nous sommes cuits” (18).

Far-right extremists comprise yet another battle front for the entire group. In listing his business problems, Monsieur Kaba explains that anti-immigrant groups present the most formidable threat: “les fachos [...] nous cassent les pieds. Ils veulent nous chasser d’ici, alors” (15). Loukoum’s mother, M’am, attempts to reassure Monsieur Kaba that they cannot succeed because “nous sommes ici chez nous.” Monsieur Kaba, however, remains unconvinced, responding, “que Dieu t’écoute ma chérie” (15). Overhearing this conversation, Loukoum remains concerned and later asks his father whether “les fachos” are after them. After reflecting a moment while chewing on a cola nut, Abdou describes his contempt for the anti-immigrant platform of the Front National political party, led by Jean-Marie Le Pen: “z’a du culot ce Le Pen, de vouloir nous faire croire que si c’est raté en France, c’est à cause de nous.” Emphasizing his former role as a soldier in the French Army’s Algerian campaign, an experience that he feels should gain him respect within mainstream French culture, he exclaims, “moi j’suis un ancien combattant. Ce Le Pen n’était pas né quand j’ défendais la France” (23). Loukoum, however, trusts the police to protect everyone from harm: “mais y a la police, papa. C’est plus fort que n’importe qui. Ils vont le mettre en prison” (24). Convinced that the justice system favors the wealthy, Abdou does not share Loukoum’s optimism: “les flics travaillent pour ceux qui paient. On s’dépatouille pour arriver à trouver de quoi payer nos impôts pour que ces gros lards se prélassent à l’Hôtel de Ville” (24). Abdou’s sentiment is representative of the larger community’s view of the State system as stacked against them.

Abdou's intercalated narrative reveals him to be the most distressed character in the text, feeling utterly lost in exile and longing for a connection to the nurturing feeling of his home country. His entry into France marks his objectification by the State, which he conflates with his narratee: "à la police des frontières, tu as immatriculé mon corps et tu l'as enrobé de mépris, de haine. Dans tes yeux grands ouverts, j'étais déjà suspecté de viol ou de meurtre" (37). Although he and his French correspondent live in the same space, Abdou considers himself to occupy a parallel existence: "nous vivons à double monde, je le sais, tu le sais, comme on le dirait d'un double sens ou d'une double vie. Nous marchons en parallèle, acrobates sur la corde raide qui nous sépare, entre deux abîmes de réalités adverses" (37). Unlike his narratee, Abdou considers it impossible to establish a sense of place in France, an environment in which he feels that his entire being is negated, exclaiming, "c'est vrai que je n'existe pas. Je suis une transparence" (117).

The threat of police action materializes on several occasions in the text. First, Loukoum is harassed while walking through Lolita's section of Belleville. He holds a drawing in his hand meant for Lolita, but the officers take it from him and begin mocking him. Although Loukoum is tempted to flee as they confront him, he decides to stay put, certain that "dès qu'on se met à courir, on est coupable sans procès" (94). Secondly, the café is raided as police look for Monsieur Laforêt, wanted for identity theft, and the entire group is sent to the local police station for detention (112). Loukoum hides under a table during the raid and takes in the scene around him before the police notice him and shoo him away. Monsieur Kaba, once described as "le plus grand maquereau des Noirs de Belleville" is thoroughly reduced in stature in Loukoum's eyes once facing the police:

“le pauvre Monsieur Kaba se fait tout petit et tremble comme une feuille” (15, 111). The group is eventually freed once Mathilda, the white wife of Loukoum’s uncle Kouam, negotiates with the policeman in charge of the raid, who happens to be her former husband. Subsequent conversations reveal that Mathilda was coerced into sexual acts in exchange for their release (113).

Further on, police action has a more severe effect on Loukoum’s family as his father is arrested and charged with fraudulently claiming benefit payments for improperly registered children (246). With French law forbidding polygamous marriages, only M’am, Abdou’s first wife, has been able to establish residency in France. Thus, Soumana, Abdou’s second wife, provided hospital officials with M’am’s papers when giving birth to their three children, officially listing M’am as their mother (32). Abdou is highly distressed by the situation, but considers the French state at fault for not adjusting their laws to respect other ways of life: “je n’ai rien fait de mal car ta législation n’a pas intégré mes coutumes” (246). Despite the tribe’s conviction that the State has no proof of wrongdoing, Loukoum’s uncle Kouam reiterates the tribe’s belief that the legal system works against them, fearing that racism will result in a miscarriage of justice: “c’est une histoire de nègre alors, on peut pas prévoir, ça intéresse pas beaucoup de Blancs. S’il y avait la peine de mort, ils l’auraient exécuté et voilà” (247).

In addition to the regulatory pressures exerted from State agencies, the space is further striated as attempts to leave the urban boundaries of Paris for the relatively open and smooth space of the countryside are thwarted. After his biological mother, Aminata, comes back into Loukoum’s life, she convinces Abdou that she should take him to a farm for a vacation. As his uncle Kouam tries to drive the two out of the city, traffic jams and

his ignorance of the street layout prevent them from leaving the city. At one point, the trio barely miss crashing into a commercial truck, whose driver begins cursing and screaming: “on n’est pas à Ouagadougou ici!” (223). Convincing themselves that they really did not want to leave Paris anyway, the group quickly abandons its plan to go to the countryside and instead Loukoum spends a few weeks at Aminata’s apartment in Montmartre (224).

Although the characters never manage to travel beyond the confines of Paris, their longing for other lives and smoother spaces is revealed in their fantasies. Soumana becomes increasingly disenchanted with her life with Abdou as he seeks out other women. Imagining what her life could be if she were to leave Abdou, she explains that she would become a film star: “j’irai à Cannes. Y a les producteurs là-bas [...] A Cannes, il y a les mers, les lords anglais qui se promènent sur la plage, il y a les bateaux, les oiseaux ” (97). In focusing on the open spaces of the beach and the sea as well as birds and boats, which follow nomadic trajectories in the air and over the water, Soumana fantasizes about breaking free from her current situation of striation. Likewise, Aminata, Loukoum’s biological mother, shares her own dreams of getting away: “quand j’aurai assez d’argent, on s’en ira loin d’ici tous les deux. On ira au Canada [...] C’est le plus grand espace du monde où il n’y a pas le moindre maquereau à part quelques Indiens” (229). Explaining to Loukoum that she had once before attempted to make her way there, she explains that fear stood in her way: “je démarre ici au petit jour, sans respirer pour pas perdre courage. Mais plus j’y pensais, plus j’avais le trac, et à moins de cinquante kilomètres, je me suis dégonflée et j’ai fait demi-tour” (229). In this passage, Aminata seeks the open spaces of one of the largest and least populated countries of the

world, a landscape of tundra occupied, as she mentions, by nomadic Native Americans, a smooth space analogous to the open desert of her home country.

The one refuge of smoother space available to the Traoré family and the African community consists of their infrequent trips to various parks in Paris. Loukoum's first trip to a park comes about as Esther offers to take him swimming. Following his trip to the indoor pool, the pair meets up with Loukoum's father at the Parc Buttes-Chaumont. As soon as he enters the park, Loukoum is amazed by what he sees: "ça m'a frappé que c'était pas pareil qu'ailleurs. Tout était bien vert [...] Comme si la terre donnait mieux qu'ailleurs" (65). Loukoum becomes entranced with the trees, flowers, and birds. Even the sun appears different to him: "même le soleil, vous ne me croirez pas, mais on dirait que c'est là son berceau" (65). Significantly, the conclusion of Loukoum's narrative is dedicated to a description of *la tribu nègre* celebrating Bastille Day at the Bois de Boulogne, one of the largest green spaces in Paris (261). Although they celebrate the French national holiday apart from the majority population, "entre Noirs," the final note of the text underscores the community's intention both to remain in France and to seek out smoother spaces to accommodate their nomadic thought and rhizomatic organization.

In contrast to the striated space of Belleville, the physical landscape of Shearer's Madagascar and its isolation from State authorities render it a predominantly smooth space. As he is driven from the Memphis airport to Madagascar, where he will meet his uncles who have settled there, Boubacar takes in the landscape passing by: "America was a flat, wet desert, infinite fields, the black water of a long lake curving like a scythe around a band of trees. There were few human beings in sight, just a farmer on the tractor in the long field" (24). An incredibly small town, Madagascar consists of only a

little grocery, an old juke joint, and a cluster of trailers behind an abandoned gas station (385). Upon arriving, Boubacar takes note of his uncles' accommodation, a set of tightly-packed trailers whose close configuration contrasts sharply with the vast space of the surrounding terrain: "behind a small abandoned gas station was a tired constellation of trailers, cramped in a parquet pattern too close together beside the field that seemed to go on forever" (26).

Unlike the segregated space of Belleville, in which each ethnic group isolates itself in its own microenvironment, the residents of Madagascar fully intertwine their lives, whatever their individual countries of origin. In place of primordial kinship, the inhabitants elect to develop a multiethnic community of survivors, based on a shared appreciation of hard work and kindness. The "natives" of the town include a white farmer named Dean Fondren, a black farmer named Aubrey Ellerbee, a Chinese American grocer named Angus Chien, and an elderly woman from a prominent plantation family who has returned to Madagascar after some time in a mental institution, Bebe Marie Abide. Having lived in the town most or all their lives, the natives reside in relatively stable homes, with Dean and Aubrey owning their own land and farmhouses (14), Angus living in a small apartment behind the retail space of his small grocery (31), and Bebe living in a boathouse she has inherited from her family (41). In contrast, the "newcomers" to Madagascar live much more precarious lives. The Mauritians, including Boubacar and his uncles, who presumably also came to the U.S. as political refugees, live in Airstream trailers near the grocery (34). The trailer park also serves as the headquarters for the local "gangbangers," a gang of ruffians involved in drugs, prostitution, and guns (34). The Honduran migrant workers, most of whom are illegal

aliens, are the least settled group in the town and “liv[e] anywhere they could fall at night,” including in vans parked in an open field (39, 102). Similar to the Malian characters in *Le petit Prince de Belleville*, the Mauritians hail from the desert steppes of western Africa, traversed by pastoral nomads. The Hondurans, although from a different environment and heritage, have taken up nomadic ways in the United States, journeying to wherever they can find work and depending on a wheeled vehicle to provide ambulatory shelter.

In accordance with Deleuze and Guattari’s assertion that smooth and striated spaces “in fact only exist in mixture,” historians of the region have simultaneously emphasized both the hierarchical nature of race and class relations in the Mississippi Delta region, from the antebellum period and beyond, and the long-standing capacity for social fluidity.<sup>3</sup> In this way, this space is strikingly comparable to the quintessentially smooth desert spaces of West Africa, and indeed, the slaveholding and segregationist practices that have taken place in both the U.S. South and Mauritania are evoked in several instances within the text. This internal striation, however, is continually downplayed in the narrative to instead privilege the negotiability of social relations in Madagascar, with the text situating Bebe, the remaining symbol of the once dominant white planter class, as socially equal to other members of the community, and, on several occasions, dependent on their goodwill for her survival.

The trajectories of the native and newcomer characters intersect at the Celestial Grocery, a country store owned by Angus, which the omniscient narrator describes as

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<sup>3</sup> See Cash pp. 22, 35, 88 regarding the fluctuating rigidity of class structures amongst white Southerners; See Woodward pp. 11, 101, 104 regarding the variability of racially-based social hierarchies in the history of the U.S. South; See Cobb, *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity*, pp. 5, 50, 70 regarding his assertion of the centrality of racial and class hierarchy in Southern regional identity.

“the unacknowledged heart of the little dying town” (32). Echoing the smoothness of landscape in which it is located, the name of the store itself incorporates the “horizonless milieu” of the infinite sky in the daily lives of the townspeople (Deleuze and Guattari 379). In contrast to the local café of Belleville, which serves to isolate the African community from majority culture in Paris, the Celestial Grocery functions as a neutral site for all residents of the town. Although a long-time resident of Madagascar, Angus, also a refugee, was born in China and came to the United States as a young child (95). As a member of the Delta Chinese community, Angus belongs to one of the oldest immigrant groups in the region. With the help of American missionaries, he is described as having come as a small child with his family to Madagascar as a refugee of the Nanking massacre of 1938. Upon arrival, the Chiens joined the ranks of earlier waves of Chinese immigrants by becoming merchants in the grocery business<sup>4</sup>. Described as the “last of a constellation of Chinese-run country stores that used to exist in almost every river town between Memphis and New Orleans,” the Celestial Grocery’s existence manifests the region’s historical ethnic diversity (Shearer 31).

Within its confines, Angus retains many physical reminders of his Chinese heritage, which intimate his own hybrid identity within the community of Madagascar. Items such as a red lacquer abacus next to the cash register (102) and the bamboo printed shower curtain that separates his living space from the store (197) exist side by side with the “wedding and birth announcements, obits, and local engagements” and other

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<sup>4</sup> See Thornell p. 63. The first Chinese grocery in the region opened in the black neighborhood of Rosedale, Mississippi in 1874, with other migrants soon following to open stores in black areas throughout the Delta; See Riemers p. 103. The earliest Chinese migrants to Mississippi arrived in the 1870, recruited to replace slave labor on plantations. However, most quickly abandoned the plantations and took advantage of their position of outsiders in the black-white dynamics of the Reconstruction era to act as merchants to the black community.

clippings of local events taped to the store walls, which document the “whole history of Madagascar” (38). The altered Coca-Cola sign above the store, which Angus had painted over by hand, literally fuses an iconic corporate logo from the industrial U.S. South with the ancient Chinese character for “long life,” physically reproducing in layers of paint the layers of cultural heritage borne by this Chinese American man (287). Here, Angus literally re-inscribes the “sign” to create a new emblem that is neither American nor Chinese, but rather a new amalgam of the two.

The history of cultural diversity in the region is regularly noted by Boubacar. Having been raised in West Africa, he recognizes the remnants of African culture in the culture of the American South. Upon arriving in Madagascar, he sees Bebe’s boathouse, whose entrance is lined with stovepipe animal figures and an oyster-shell path and lawn is filled with lights, disks made of pie pans, and shards of colored glass. Seeing the upended bottles hanging on the branches of a tree, Boubacar recognizes that this is the house of the local shaman or, as he describes her, *la sorcière*, following the Senegalese tradition of hanging bottles to detain malevolent spirits before they can make their way to the house (28). Further on, he notes the physical connection Americans have to Africa as he sees a gospel band unloading their equipment from their car: “because each was dressed the same way, he could see more clearly the differences in their faces. He could see the whole continent of Africa there, Kenya to Morocco (294).

The space of the store primarily absorbs cultural difference from the African refugee characters, a relatively small migrant group, but is more significantly altered by the more numerous Honduran newcomers. Soon after his arrival, Boubacar begins integrating into the life of the small town by accepting a job as a stock boy in the store,

taking lessons from Angus on American marketing techniques when business is slow (48, 108). Taking an interest in the lone female amongst the Honduran workers, Angus also offers employment to Consuela, who becomes a cook in the store (93). Consuela's entrance into the sphere of the store radically changes the social dynamic of the space, which now becomes one more equally shared by the traditional farmer community and the many Hispanic migrants in the town. Within a short time, Hispanic construction workers join the ranks of Angus's regular customers, rejuvenating his customer base:

Angus saw groups of workers he'd never seen before, all Hispanic. During the noon hour, the place was full for the first time in years. *Mamacita, Mamacita*, they called her. Every table was ringed with white-shirted backs bent over plates of Consuela's food. It was, for an hour or so every day, the way it once was before everybody local lit out for the factories in Memphis (124).

This scene reflects the economic and social revitalization currently taking place in small towns across the U.S. as Hispanic migrants fill the void left by traditional inhabitants who, like Angus's son Jimmy, have relocated to urban areas (33).

Over the course of the narrative, the clientele of the Celestial Grocery evolves to reflect the demographic changes in the town. Likewise, cultural negotiation takes place at the level of material goods offered at the store. Understanding the buying practices of Hispanic customers much better than Angus, Consuela takes it upon herself to order new types of merchandise for the store without consulting him. When the products arrive, Angus discovers boxes full of candles, incense, oil, fetishes made of animal parts, small booklets with magical recipes—items Angus terms “hoodoo goods” (122). Angus's first reaction is a sense of cultural unity with these shamanistic objects. Feeling “carried back to some other time,” the items recall the ancient religious practices of all humans from

the time “before there were Latinos, before there were Chinese, when there was only one pack of common ancestors” (123). Upon receiving the three-hundred dollar bill for the unapproved items, however, Angus becomes infuriated and, despite being smitten with his new cook, plans to fire Consuela. Later that day, however, Angus rethinks his plan as “he noticed that a van load of Mexicans who were working on the Dixie Barrel construction all came in to eat, and most of them bought something from the hoodoo section before they left” (123). Instead of firing her as planned, he comes to recognize how meaningful the items are for the new Hispanic residents of the town and how important this new business was for his store. Despite his own first inclinations, Angus adjusts his store’s merchandise to accommodate and appeal to the town’s new cultural mix and thus sustains the cultural heterogeneity of the town.

The smooth space of the town is further accentuated by its isolation from State agencies. Over the years, Dean, Angus, and Aubrey have formed a protective alliance, looking out for one another, in so far as “Madagascar had never been big enough to hire a policeman” (102). Like *la tribu nègre* of Belleville, the residents of Madagascar develop a shadow economy to meet their own needs, but run a much lower risk of being caught by a government official. Both Angus and Aubrey participate in hiring workers illegally: Angus exchanges food for work with regard to Boubacar, and Aubrey displaces responsibility for his workers’ status on his labor recruiter (35). When Angus informs Aubrey that a government official from Memphis had been driving around town asking questions about the migrant workers, Aubrey asks Angus to keep his name out of it, adding, “I don’t know nothing about ’em, except that they show up in the mornings and they leave in the evenings. If they ain’t legal, it ain’t my doings” (35, 48). However, the

vulnerability of their situation is underscored by Angus's regular fear of robbery and Dean's evocation of modern-day slavery in their midst: "he'd heard rumors of work camps so far back from the river that nobody knew what went on there, and nobody had the nerve to ask" (34, 102). More visible to the townspeople are the exploitative practices employed by Tomás Tulia, the local leader over human trafficking rings supplying cheap laborers from Latin America, and his cohorts. After arriving to work at the Celestial Grocery with a black eye, Consuela explains to Angus that her purpose in coming to Madagascar was to find her missing niece, who had been forced into prostitution by the coyotes who smuggled her into the United States (133). Hector, another family member who had tried to intervene on the young woman's behalf, goes missing for weeks. Although Consuela feels confident that "everybody" knows about the mistreatment endured by migrant workers, State agencies appear only to fish Hector's body from the Mississippi River, beaten beyond recognition (134, 235). Although the natives of Madagascar enjoy the freedom of meeting their labor needs on more flexible terms, similar to the nomadic "continuous variation of free action" evoked by Deleuze and Guattari, their situation highlights the security issues that can afflict a rhizomatic structure.

In the stead of State agencies, the Madagascar natives improve living and working conditions for the newcomers by improvising and providing them with a sense of place in the community. Aubrey and Dean repeatedly note that the African and Hispanic migrants are hard-working, exclaiming, "they are good people" (278). Feeling a sense of solidarity with anyone who tries to make a better life, Angus attempts to coax Aubrey into caring more about his workers' conditions: "look, I didn't ask to come here, and your people

sure as hell didn't ask to come here, but nevertheless we all here now" (136). Angus, Aubrey, and Dean eventually come together to convert the abandoned church the workers had been living in into a more functional bunkhouse with electricity and running water (210). Resurrecting a tradition declared nearly lost in the modern world by Tuan, the natives and newcomers of Madagascar unite around building activity to create a place for the Honduran workers by joining together to install bunkbeds and new plumbing, converting the empty structure into a livable space and thereby incorporating the migrants more deeply into the community (278, Tuan 116).

The image of a harmonious, multicultural Madagascar culminates in the bunkhouse dedication scene at the Celestial Grocery. Symbolically similar to the African community's celebration of Bastille Day in *Le petit prince de Belleville*, the residents of Madagascar commemorate the bunkhouse on the Fourth of July, with the ceremony offering a model of American-ness in microcosm, in which people of all backgrounds create community through a shared belief in hard work and mutual compassion. Striving to include everyone, Angus invites the local natives, including his regular customers, some of his suppliers and other local businesspeople, and members of the local churches, as well as the newcomers, including the African and Hispanic residents in the area. As the crowd assembles, Angus, the host for the evening, is asked to say a few words to mark the occasion, and produces an encomium for the American dream of a multicultural society:

We made a little place where them that needs a leg up in this world can get their feet on the ground. If you like most of us, you come to America because your burden at home was too heavy ... Don't matter where you come from, or how long you aimin' to be here. If you can speak kindness,

then you can go anywhere you want in this country. Can't nobody stop you. (342)

As this quite moving discourse affirms, for Angus especially, America has been and continues to be a haven for the oppressed and the industrious. After having witnessed the tortures of genocide in his native China, one of his earliest memories of the United States was of receiving a hot tamale as a gesture of kindness from a stranger in Vicksburg (136). Noting that “if you agree to be lonely [...] you can vanish into America, you can get sufficiently away from whatever drove you from home,” Angus discerns that a spirit of survival in the newcomers around him, and he feels that it is his duty to return the favor to others escaping from hardships in their home countries (94).

The community's choice to collaborate and construct a “home” for the Honduran workers provides an interesting twist on the “sense of place” promoted by the Southern Agrarians. As Martyn Bone argues in *The Postsouthern Sense of Place in Contemporary Fiction*, the twelve authors of *I'll Take My Stand*, who published their collection of essays in 1930 as a manifesto against what were seen to be pernicious capitalist and industrialist forces that may destroy the region's distinctive social geography, presented southern space as “a rural, self-sufficient, and nigh-on precapitalist locus” that “operate[s] largely outside the cash nexus, and absent large-scale land speculation” (4). Although now integrating newcomers from Africa and Latin America, who participate in global networks of migration and labor, the multiethnic residents of Madagascar also privilege self-sufficiency and complete the bunkhouse renovation without cash, depending instead on donated labor and building supplies obtained through unofficial channels (275). In this way, the space of Madagascar contrasts sharply with Shearer's

depiction of Memphis as a space dominated by commercial interests and inhabited by trend-conscious consumers. Whether the space can continue to eschew a “Postsouthern” sense of place, heralded by Bone as a site “dominated by multinational corporations” (251), is left unclear as fleeting mentions of real estate ventures, pursued by a Memphis-based company, Futuristics, threaten to disrupt the fabric of the region and corporate-run casinos lure local farmers into wagering their property (Shearer 31, 71, 388).

Like the African community in Belleville, the multiethnic community of Madagascar bands together to offer a sense of place and solidarity for its members in the face of adversity. Whether in a primarily striated or smooth space, each group operates as a rhizomatic band either to contest rigid boundaries erected by the State apparatus or to survive and persevere in an open space. In his study of numerous novels that feature Belleville as their setting, including Beyala’s works, literary theorist Eric Prieto proposes a new genre, “the Belleville novel,” that, in his view, corresponds to Fredric Jameson’s definition of a national allegory. Prieto argues that texts set in Belleville present a depiction of the neighborhood as an exemplary model and a “microcosmic representation of the French nation that can serve simultaneously as a tool for critiquing the present state of French society and for making recommendations about how to proceed in the future” (32). Although *Le petit prince de Belleville* certainly offers a critique of French society from the perspective of African immigrants, emphasizing their daily struggles to create a life for themselves in what they perceive to be a hostile environment, only Loukoum is able to discern a possible path toward creating a place for himself in France, as we shall see in greater detail in the following chapter. In contrast to Prieto’s rosy assertion, the majority of the characters in this “Belleville novel” struggle to establish a satisfactory

arrangement with their host society, installing themselves in the final scene on their picnic blanket as a group apart in the Bois de Boulogne, resolute to stay, but facing the solitude borne by all nomadic peoples.

Conversely, Shearer's *The Celestial Jukebox* illustrates the successful preservation of multiplicity and the possibilities for improvisation in a smooth space. However, the text also highlights the fragility of smooth space, whose inhabitants remain vulnerable to physical threat from both within and without. Although Deleuze and Guattari acknowledge that the "law of the nomos" regulates activity with a "rigor and cruelty all its own," this point is regularly overshadowed in their work to privilege the benefits they see smooth space offering to counter homogenizing Statist practices (491). Shearer's text provides a less idealistic view of such a space, balancing the potential for both harmony and exploitation. In this way, the narrative of *The Celestial Jukebox* supports Tormey's critique that Deleuze and Guattari's model offers little that is germane to modern and/or postmodern lives. As he explains, "the continual references to nomadic and barbarian hordes [...] may have a certain rhetorical appeal, but historically such forms of collectivity are hardly noted for tolerance, openness and inclusivity of the kind that we associate with a progressive politics." Continuing, he notes that "if there are no rules or procedures for governing relations between individuals then it is not difficult to imagine that outcomes and decisions will become distorted in favour of the strong [...] leaving minorities powerless" (Tormey 57). Indeed, anxiety and State intervention have the final word in Shearer's text regarding the contemporary space of Madagascar, as Angus's dream of mutual benevolence is interrupted by the events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. Although the situation of the Hispanic laborers remains relatively stable, allowing

them to continue creating a sense of place in Madagascar, the Mauritanian newcomers, as practicing Muslims, are suddenly targeted as a potential source of harm. Some local residents begin eyeing Boubacar with fear and Boubacar's uncles suddenly disappear, presumably taken in for questioning by government authorities (412). The abrupt ending of the text, which highlights the unraveling unity in the community, echoes Deleuze and Guattari's warning to "never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us" (500). Shearer similarly suggests that we have yet to find the solution for peaceful co-existence.

## Chapter 2

### On Artisans and Voyagers

As young immigrants, Loukoum and Boubacar, the male protagonists of *Le petit prince de Belleville* and *The Celestial Jukebox*, inhabit multiple cultural spheres. As naïve observers, they are also situated to question profoundly the ideological messages they receive both within their diasporic communities and the majority cultures of their host societies. This chapter will examine how each character, despite his young age and relative lack of control over life circumstances, actively positions himself in relation to his diasporic sphere as well as his host society. Reflecting quite exactly his situation between his African community and French majority culture, Loukoum essentially accepts the arborescent social structure of his host society, but resists its universalist tradition of nationhood, and he insists on a greater measure of multiplicity by maintaining many aspects of his ethnic community's culture. As an itinerant artisan, described by Deleuze and Guattari as functioning in "holey space," Loukoum finds a way to connect to the striated space of majority culture without discarding the smoothness he values. On the other hand, Boubacar moves continually amongst smooth spaces and acts most closely as the rhizomatic nomad privileged by Deleuze and Guattari, in relation both to his diasporic community and his host society. He rejects forces of arborescence from both cultural spheres and takes steps to maximize autonomy and destratification. Though his choices place him on a course of precariousness and solitude, Boubacar trusts

in his ability to consistently rebound from ruptures and overcome obstructions, in order, in theoretical terms, to activate new rhizomatic offshoots and form beneficial alliances.

Although most criticism of *Le petit prince de Belleville* has thus far centered on its depiction of the disruption of gender roles in an immigrant space, some readers have noted the character of Loukoum, and they disagree over whether he succeeds in establishing a place for himself in his host society. Often noting the intertextual link to St Exupéry's *Le Petit prince*, critics have remarked on Loukoum's similar ability to function as a naïve observer pointing out the paradoxical nature of adult behavior and teaching lessons on intolerance.<sup>5</sup> As Odile Cazenave observes, his young age offers a greater possibility for relatively free play with a subversion of social codes in the text ("Afrique" 52). Other critics have labeled Loukoum a "modern griot," arguing that, compared to Abdou's longing for the past, his narrative incorporates African traditions of oral history with a focus firmly on his present situation and future possibilities.<sup>6</sup> Several critics claim that Loukoum's attempt at intercultural dialogue and integration into French space fails<sup>7</sup> however, the majority of readers emphasize Loukoum's capacity for transformation and his ability to connect to the "outside world," in sharp contrast to his father's increasing marginalization and desire to escape.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Toman p. 258 and Cazenave, *Rebellious Women: The New Generation of Female African Novelists*, p. 204.

<sup>6</sup> See Cazenave, *Rebellious Women: The New Generation of Female African Novelists*, p. 203 and "Calixthe Beyala: l'exemple d'une écriture décentrée dans le roman africain au féminin," p. 126 regarding Loukoum's focus on the present and future.

<sup>7</sup> See Adesanmi, "Redefining Paris: Trans-Modernity and Francophone African Migrant Fiction," p. 969; Borogomano, "Linguistic and Cultural Heterogeneity and the Novel in Francophone Africa," p. 133; and Kom, "Pays, exil, et précarité: chez Mongo Beti, Calixthe Beyala et Daniel Biyaoula," p. 51.

<sup>8</sup> See Cazenave, "Writing New Identities: The African Diaspora in Paris," p. 159 and *Afrique sur Seine: A New Generation of African Writers in Paris*, p. 102-04; Hitchcott, *Calixthe Beyala: Performances of Migration*, p. 74; Volet, "Calixthe Beyala, or the Literary Success of a Cameroonian Woman Living in Paris," p. 312 regarding Loukoum's ability to create a home for himself in France.

Little criticism has yet appeared on *The Celestial Jukebox*, however, reviewers of the book agree that Boubacar is one of the strongest and most memorable characters of the text. Similar to Loukoum, Boubacar's youth and inexperience with American culture place him in a position to question the rationality of the behavior he observes. As several reviewers note, Boubacar functions throughout as a cultural critic, with his "naïveté prompt[ing] readers to re-examine the widespread commercialism of the United States" (Pence 242, Davis 1).

Loukoum's and Boubacar's trajectories illustrate the multiple possibilities young immigrants discover to negotiate a place for themselves in a new society. Concerning such negotiation, in his sociological studies Pierre Bourdieu grounds human behavior and decision-making firmly in socio-historical contexts, maintaining that individual and collective practices are the result of a negotiation between "habitus" and specific social situations or "fields" ("Outline" 76). Underscoring the doxic relationship between individuals and the collective practices they acquire during childhood and adolescence, he describes habitus as "history turned into nature," and defines it as a system of durable, transposable dispositions wherein individual and group actions are circumscribed within a range of possibilities (Bourdieu "Outline" 78). Furthermore, Bourdieu contends that individuals or "agents" seek to manipulate multiple forms of capital in the fields in which they act ("Forms" 241). Beyond the material wealth that constitutes economic capital, he argues that other convertible forms of capital exist, including (1) cultural capital, which are skills and dispositions that may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications, (2) social capital, which consists of social connections, and (3) symbolic capital, or prestige ("Forms" 243, "Language" 230). Bourdieu argues that the

accumulation and conversion of these different forms of capital forms the basis of strategies pursued by individuals, although generally on an unconscious level, to gain and/or maintain desired positions in social space (“Forms” 253). As sociologist John B. Thompson underscores in his analysis of Bourdieu’s work, the individuals who participate in these struggles “must believe in the game they are playing, and in the value of what is at stake in the struggles they are waging” (14). In short, Bourdieu’s assessment of human behavior is premised upon an intractable pull of historic forces to regulate behavior, on one hand, and “a fundamental accord or complicity” from agents on the other to accept the structures of a given society as valid (Thompson 14). It is precisely this tacit approval of the force of historical roots and hierarchical social structures against which Deleuze and Guattari argue.

As a model of exteriority, the rhizomatic nomad lauded by Deleuze and Guattari rejects the rules of the game posited by Bourdieu in order to relate to others by a series of strategic alliances, while questioning not only the sovereignty of the State, but also any form of hierarchy that develops within the rhizomatic band itself (358). They describe the rhizomatic nomad as the “Deterritorialized par excellence,” an autonomous subject who rejects arborescent thought or State apparatuses of physical or mental capture, which are continually foiled via “lines of flight” (380, 9). Unlike the migrant, who goes from one point to another, to then reterritorialize the destination, the nomad’s life is characterized by the trajectory itself, with points serving as relays that are subordinated to the line (380). Contesting filiation and rootedness, the nomad is inclined to reject genealogical ties and pre-established systems of religion and civilization, to instead

emphasize variation and expansion (16, 383). In Deleuze and Guattari's view, this modus operandi is the optimal means of privileging multiplicity and freedom of thought.

In contrast to the autonomous nomadic subject, Deleuze and Guattari consider the consenting subject of the State, in this case one who is *subject* to a sovereign power of central authority, to be literally trapped in a delusion by unquestionably accepting the State's self-presentation as the rational method of organizing community, as an "*imperium* of truth" that aspires to universality (375, 379). This Hegelian subject functions as "the principle that converts being into being-for-us" and, as a consequence, limits thought by subordinating it to a hegemonic "model of the True, the Just, the Right" (377, 379). In their view, this habitus-molded "agent" in fact disavows agency. In accepting the State and its structures as a model of reason, Deleuze and Guattari argue that this subject falls prey to the phantasm of presuming that "the more you obey, the more you will be master, for you will only be obeying pure reason, in other words yourself..." (376). They explicitly reproach sociologists such as Bourdieu for their sanctioning of State apparatuses, asserting that they are the descendents of "public professors" such as Kant and Hegel. In criticizing "bad usages," they note that these public intellectuals only further consecrate the function of hierarchical social structures and the "thought image" of the State-form (376). In contrast, Deleuze and Guattari uphold "private thinkers," such as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, whose "outside thought" or "counterthought" destroys images (376).

In both his diasporic sphere and interaction with French majority culture, Loukoum is exhorted to conform to each side's norms. Abdou, Loukoum's anguished father, laments in his discourse that his son has not become the extension of him as he had wanted. In

contrast, he explains to his narratee that Loukoum has moved beyond his paternal reach into the world of their host society: “il a repoussé ses frontières. Il a installé son monde dans ton monde à toi l’ami, là où je ne peux pas pénétrer” (231). He further notes that his son has developed a Parisian vocabulary and French manners with which he cannot connect. In his perspective, Loukoum moves between two ‘universes’ naturally and looks down upon his African heritage (214). However, Loukoum’s own narrative proves that Abdou’s assumptions are largely mistaken in that his integration into French majority culture is fraught with difficulty precisely because he treasures his diasporic community and their culture and seeks to maintain many of their practices. In this way, Loukoum lives in “double exile” in that he inhabits two cultural spheres, yet does not completely belong to either (Toman 259). Whereas the Traoré family and their African community feel trapped within the striation of Paris, Loukoum, a second-generation immigrant, endeavors to find a middle ground between the smoothness of his community’s culture and the striation of the larger society in which he is living in order to develop a life for himself and, if possible, assist his “tribu nègre.” Unlike his diasporic community, Loukoum allies himself with the State and privileges the concept of citizenship. Planning to live his entire life in France, Loukoum also insists on preserving the culture heritage transmitted to him by the tribe, thereby rejecting the long-established universalist model of French citizenship.

In contrast to his father’s cynicism, Loukoum views the State as an essentially just institution and seeks to work through its channels and the social structures in place in French society to resolve problems. While watching the evening news with his father, Abdou rails at the injustices he perceives around him, such as the scapegoating of

immigrants for economic crises and the corruption he sees as rife within the circles of government officials and the police (23). Loukoum explains to his narratee that he dislikes watching the news because of the constant flow of distressing stories and acknowledges that justice is not meted out in an equitable manner, commenting to his reader: “et vous savez ce qu’ils vont faire à ce député qui a volé plein d’argent? Rien du tout!” (23). His father’s assessment of the danger posed by Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the right-wing Front National political party, leads Loukoum to ponder how the State could take the lead to remedy the situation, and he composes a letter to President François Mitterrand in his head. First signaling his unwavering support for the president, Loukoum then presumes that Mitterrand has both the will and the power to block Le Pen’s anti-immigrant campaign: “M. Le Pen, notre Ennemi mortel, prétend qu’il va nous chasser tous d’ici. Mais je sais que vous, le connaisseur de l’invisible tout comme du visible, à vous seul les attributs les plus beaux, vous ne le laisserez pas mener à bien son ignoble projet” (25). Loukoum considers President Mitterrand, as head of State, to be practically omnipotent and incapable of tolerating the unjust persecution of minority groups.

Despite the confidence he expresses in the State-form, Loukoum recognizes that the State needs a plan to better understand the needs of its African citizens. Contravening a longstanding tradition of ignoring ethnicity in census-taking, he proposes that just such a study be undertaken: “je vous propose donc d’organiser une commission qui aurait pour but de recenser les nègres en détresse, surtout ceux parqués dans les chambres de bonne sans ascenseur, et qui ne peuvent signaler leur présence que par la bamboula” (26). In this imagined letter, Loukoum notes that many Africans in France are living in a position

of subalternity, and thus are unable to indicate their needs with a voice that can be recognized in the public discourse. In his view, it is incumbent upon the State to consider alternative ways both to survey the needs of its people and to provide information that could counter the claims of extremist political organizations. His proposal of an ethnically-sensitive census contests a long tradition of upholding the French citizen as a singular, universalist subject. As explained by Gérard Noiriel in his study of immigration in France, *The French Melting Pot: Immigration, Citizenship, and National Identity*, “groups defined according to criteria of ‘ethnic’ or national origin have never been tolerated in France” (259). In contrast to the “‘ethnic’ modes of classification” adopted by American census officials as early as the eighteenth century, a relatively homogenous “civil status” has been maintained in France, with language, religion, or ‘race’ discounted as criteria for categorizing the population (Noiriel 9). In her study of the figure of the foreigner in French thought, theorist Julia Kristeva underscores the role of the 1789 *Déclaration des Droits de l’Homme* in establishing the legal basis for everyone’s equality firmly within the scope of the nation and citizenship, thus explicitly excluding foreigners (149). However, this view is increasingly coming under attack in contemporary France in the wake of postcolonial migration patterns.

In her analysis of this current rupture, “The Crisis of French Universalism,” literary theorist Naomi Schor asserts that the tradition of universalism reaches back to the medieval period and defines modern French universalism as the convergence of three separate streams: the religious, the linguistic, and the ethical. “To this day,” she continues, “French national identity remains bound up—at least in official discourse, but also in ongoing intellectual debates—with universal human rights, of which France

considers itself the inalienable trustee. French, accordingly, is the idiom of universality” (47). For immigrants, Schor explains that becoming “French” is seen to demand a level of assimilation that requires the “renunciation of public cultural particularism” (50). However, as theorist Alec Hargreaves argues, the French theory of assimilation contains two primary weaknesses. First of all, the state has not supplied the sufficient material resources that would be required to provide greater equality, and secondly, the theory was founded on a “crude hierarchical model” that presumes that indigenous cultures are not worth preserving (Hargreaves 17). Loukoum’s suggestion, aimed directly at the head of State, directly attacks the theory of assimilation and calls for greater recognition of multiplicity in French society.

Although he is confident in his ideas to remedy the situation of his fellow Africans, Loukoum regrets that he does not have the language skills necessary to actually write the letter he has envisioned in his head: “comme vous le savez déjà, je peux pas l’écrire tout seul vu que le français a la fâcheuse manie d’avoir des mots à rallonges” (26). Loukoum thus demonstrates his knowledge that the usage of standard French is a powerful form of “cultural capital.” As explained by Bourdieu in *Language and Symbolic Power*, official languages, sanctioned by the State and regulated by grammarians and teachers, become the “theoretical norm against which all linguistic practices are objectively measured” (45). Loukoum recognizes that speakers lacking the ability to conform to this norm “are de facto excluded from the social domains in which this competence is required, or are condemned to silence” (“Language” 55). Loukoum clearly wants to find a voice in public discourse, and in this way, accepts, at least to some degree, the rules of the ‘game’ posited by Bourdieu.

Alongside his faith in State structures, Loukoum values the concept of citizenship and employs the term ‘citoyen’ throughout the text to stand for honorable behavior. While visiting his friend who lives above the local café, Alex, Loukoum is introduced to Timothée, the troubled son of a local prostitute. Alex warns Loukoum that Timothée is known for biting others, then leaves to go downstairs (40). Loukoum explains to his reader that Timothée suddenly bursts around the room: “il se met à courir autour de la table comme un Indien. Il s’arrête. Il se flanque derrière la porte. Il repart sans rien dire” (40). After pulling out an assortment of clothes from the closet and stomping on them, the boy suddenly calms down and sits on the floor with his arms crossed. Approving this gesture of calm, Loukoum remarks that “il se tient comme un honnête citoyen” and encourages him to continue: “c’est bien Timothée, je lui dis. T’es assis comme un enfant bien élevé” (41). In this passage, Loukoum privileges the citizen as “honnête” and “bien élevé.” Demonstrating his internalization of western colonial discourse, Loukoum also codes the Other as “un Indien,” marked by haphazard running around. Once Timothée calms down from his agitated state, he tells himself “tranquille” (42). Considering himself a role model of propriety in relation to Timothée, Loukoum further links good speech with good behavior and corrects the boy on both counts: “d’abord, on dit tranquille et pas tranquille. Ensuite, tu dois pas t’asseoir par terre avec tes habits du dimanche, je lui dis” (42). Here, Loukoum fashions himself as a model of citizenship and underscores his acceptance of an embodied form of cultural practices, encouraging constraint in movement and diction following dominant norms.

Loukoum further contemplates examples of poor citizenship amongst white French people as he wanders through Belleville and encounters a group of homeless people who

spend their day in a plaza, smoking and drinking red wine. Allying himself with his French reader, he remarks that they are “plus sales que vous et moi” (184). Loukoum laments that they “ne veulent pas se soumettre à la société” and summarily judges that they are mistaken if they believe that “ils sont encore de ce monde” (184). Loukoum clearly privileges some level of “submission” to the state and society at large, which, in his view, requires cleanliness and gainful employment. Lacking this, he decides that one is no longer even “of this world.” Noting the unkemptness of one of the women’s hair, Loukoum proposes that the proper remedy would be to “raser tout ça” in order to simply start over afresh to come into line with collective practices of majority culture (184).

Although Loukoum indicates his allegiance to State apparatuses, he nevertheless defends his right to also value and maintain collective practices from his African community. When his primary school teacher, Mademoiselle Garnier, notices that he is having trouble reading through a copy of St. Exupéry’s *Le Petit prince*, she reproaches Loukoum for previously having told her that he could read. Insisting that he is indeed capable of reading and writing, Loukoum makes his way to the blackboard to write a verse of the Koran in Arabic, then retorts: “vous voyez bien [...] que c’est vous qui comprenez rien” (10). Intent on transmitting the cultural capital recognized by white French culture, Mademoiselle Garnier rejects the type of literacy practiced by Loukoum, explaining, as reported in Loukoum’s “spoken” style, that “un garçon qui sait pas lire autre chose que le Coran, c’est honteux et au contraire au mode de vie français” (11). Accepting her model, his classmates begin to laugh at him. Reflecting on their behavior, Loukoum demonstrates his determination to make his own judgments and critiques their behavior: “comme si c’est pas malheureux, ça, d’être intolérant” (11). In this way,

Loukoum produces a “rhizome stem” in that he extricates himself from the linguistic “tracing” offered by the teacher (Deleuze and Guattari 15). Instead of operating as an “object of reproduction,” in this case, Loukoum elects variation and rejects the linguistic hierarchy offered by a State functionary (Deleuze and Guattari 21).

In several instances, Loukoum further declares to his French narratee the importance of the traditions he has learned from his African community and his interest in sustaining them. In recounting the debate that takes place at the neighborhood café amongst members of his ‘tribe’ regarding the use of fetishes and their place in Islam, Loukoum explains: “Dès la prime enfance, j’avais appris beaucoup de choses dans cette tribu, toutes sortes de précieuses traditions qui se transmettent de génération en génération depuis nos ancêtres le Touaregs” (77). When Soumana, one of his mothers, falls gravely ill, the entire tribe gathers together for a healing ceremony. Loukoum takes this occasion to carefully explain the significance accorded to each object and rite in the ceremony to his reader, including the folklore surrounding the symbolic meaning of the cola nut for his community. Recognizing that their customs must appear strange to a French person, Loukoum directly questions his narratee: “Je me demande bien ce que vous allez penser de tout ça” (191). Acknowledging the “otherness” attributed to his diasporic sphere by majority culture, Loukoum nevertheless expects his narratee to take an interest in his community’s rituals and underscores the equalizing dialogic nature of their exchange.

Whereas Loukoum presents a surprising degree of confidence around white French adults, feelings of inadequacy and awkwardness dominate his initial interactions with his classmates, who, beyond good citizens, often exist as princes and princesses in his mind. When his teacher, Mademoiselle Garnier, decides to pair up immigrant students with

French students for help with their studies, Loukoum is partnered with Pierre Pelletier, a student he comes to greatly admire (53). Loukoum suddenly feels foolish in clothes that he has already outgrown, as he notes that Pierre is dressed in luxurious clothes “qu’on ne trouve pas boulevard de Belleville” (54). With his curly reddish-blond hair and milky-white skin, Loukoum describes Pierre as having “un visage de petit Français de l’époque des princes” (54). From that day, Pierre begins giving Loukoum individual lessons in reading and writing as well as general knowledge regarding geography and history. Although he finds the lessons difficult, Loukoum tries to retain as much as possible. Over time, Loukoum begins to make progress in spelling and cheerfully reports that Mademoiselle Garnier notices his progress (73). However, the issue of language re-emerges as Pierre continually pushes Loukoum to adjust even his speech to standard French. Insisting that Loukoum’s grammatical shortcuts are “du petit nègre,” Pierre ensures him that he would feel more comfortable if he were to make a greater effort to speak properly (241). Loukoum’s reaction is one of frustration: “Maintenant, chaque fois que j’ parle à ma manière, Pierre Pelletier me corrige, pour que je devienne un gentleman, qu’il dit. Après, j’ai l’impression que ma tête est vide, que j’connais plus rien” (215). Throughout his narrative, Loukoum maintains an ambivalent relationship with standard French. Although he recognizes a certain value in the capacity to speak and write according to majority norms, and strives to improve his skills in the classroom, he nevertheless maintains a degree of resistance, for which the greatest evidence is the fact that his entire narrative is written in his “decentered” idiolect (Rosello 166).

The other classmate to whom Loukoum becomes attached is a girl named Lolita. Like Pierre, he explains that Lolita is “habillée comme une princesse” (73). Seeing her in

the recess courtyard, Loukoum yearns to talk to her, but his sense of awkwardness gets the best of him and he hesitates, claiming “j’suis pas vraiment chez moi ici” (73). Feeling incapable of approaching her directly, Loukoum improvises and creates an alternative method to connect to Lolita. Recycling the leather straps of an old pair of his father’s sandals, Loukoum trims, polishes, tints, then reweaves the straps to create a bracelet for Lolita (73). Although he has not mastered the cultural capital necessary to interact with his classmates on their terms, Loukoum takes a different route by performing striation through the act of weaving. Lolita instantly adores the bracelet and shows it off in the courtyard, then suggests to Loukoum that he offer one to Pierre in order to thank him for his help with his class work (74). Loukoum’s bracelets quickly become a hit with the whole class and Pierre advises Loukoum to create a business, selling the bracelets for a few francs a piece.

Encouraged by this new entrée into majority culture, Loukoum begins working very hard in all domains: “j’apprenais à lire et à écrire. Je m’appliquais à l’ouvrage, vu que Pierre Pelletier cessait pas de me dire qu’il fallait si je voulais être malin” (75). His relationship with Lolita also blossoms into a schoolyard romance. With the success of his bracelet business and his new, deeper connections to majority French society, Loukoum adopts the position of an “itinerant artisan.” As described by Deleuze and Guattari, the itinerant artisan conforms to neither the “Work-model,” in which labor is appropriated by the State apparatus, nor to the “continuous variation of free action,” emblematic of the rhizome. Instead, this individual occupies a “nonsymmetrical relation” to both nomadic and sedentary peoples. The space created as the artisan follows a “flow of matter” is neither smooth nor striated, but “holey space” (Deleuze and Guattari 490,

413). Evoking the language of metallurgy, with metalworking smiths serving as the model artisan in their illustration, Deleuze and Guattari emphasize the thoroughly ambiguous nature of itinerant artisans: “they are in themselves double: a hybrid, an alloy, a twin formation” (415). Loukoum’s bracelet-making business becomes the key to his family’s survival when his father is arrested and imprisoned for violating French laws regarding family welfare benefits. When offered the proceeds from his sales, M’am accepts only on the condition that she participate in the business as a partner. She quickly discovers new ways to expand the business by finding numerous sources for their materials, expanding the offerings to include other types of jewelry, as well as hiring a white Frenchman to become their merchant and enlarge their customer base, reasoning that “c’est plus facile à un Blanc d’ouvrir sa porte à un autre Blanc” (248). After his release from prison, Abdou also takes up the bracelet business instead of trying to return to his job with the sanitation department (254). By means of the jewelry business, Loukoum leads his family into a position that is “less a matter submitted to laws than a materiality possessing a *nomos*” (Deleuze and Guattari 408). Although “trapped” in striation, Loukoum’s improvisation provides a semblance of smooth space by which his parents’ anxieties are mitigated.

Conversely, his connection to Lolita is disrupted once the school housekeeper catches the two students just as Lolita gives Loukoum a kiss (201). Their parents are subsequently called into the school for a meeting with the administration. Lolita’s mother elects to withdraw her from the school and enroll her in a boarding school (236). Despite this setback, Loukoum decides that he will find a path to happiness in France: “je me contenterai de mon sort entre mes parents, les nègres de Belleville et l’école”

(256). However, if he can be reunited with Lolita, he will be “aux anges” (256).

Loukoum finally receives a letter from her in which she proclaims her undying love for him. His ecstatic response to her letter foreshadows a bicultural future for Loukoum:

“oui, on se mariera! On aura des mômes!” (259). Whereas the text begins with Abdou’s anguished narrative, the last words belong to Loukoum and his optimistic outlook for his family, tribe, and his future with Lolita.

Just as Loukoum’s father feels that he is losing his son to majority French culture, the Wastrel, a father figure in Boubacar’s life, strives to retain the adolescent boy in a West African and Muslim mold while living in the United States. Whereas Loukoum develops the subjectivity of an itinerant artisan to act as a bridge between the smooth and striated space he simultaneously inhabits, Boubacar follows an almost purely rhizomatic path in the smooth space of the Mississippi Delta, resisting striation from both State apparatuses and from within his diasporic sphere. Arriving alone in the United States as a teenager, he leaves behind his mother and grandmother and only vague memories of his father, who had been killed in mysterious circumstances. Despite his limited knowledge of the local language and culture, Boubacar takes steps within the first few days of his arrival to make advantageous alliances with residents in and around the small town of Madagascar. In the process, he develops a passion for American music, particularly the regional music of the U.S. South, and embraces the promise of the melting pot he perceives to be at work around him. Although he briefly considers the idea of functioning as a migrant and reterritorializing the space of Madagascar as a new ‘home,’ Boubacar’s trajectory is dominated by lines of flight and changes in direction, whereby he maximizes his

autonomy and rejects the few forces of normalization he encounters in the smooth space of the Mississippi Delta to pursue a potentially infinite journey of discovery.

Within hours of landing in the United States, Boubacar encounters his first incitement to consider Madagascar as only one stop along a much more extensive path. Upon arriving at the Memphis airport, Boubacar encounters an American soldier—in a meeting presumably arranged by the Quaker missionaries who had sent Boubacar to the United States as a refugee—who drives him south to Madagascar to his uncles' home. Speaking in a fast-paced English Boubacar can not yet understand, the soldier begins telling him about the region's troubled past (23). When Boubacar indicates to him that his dream is to become wealthy in America, the soldier quickly offers him advice to take advantage of his time in Mississippi to learn the region's music, but to then move on for other opportunities: "Delta is a good place to learn music, but ain't no money there. You want money, they ain't got it in Mississippi" (24). As the soldier drops Boubacar off in front of the Celestial Grocery, next to his uncles' trailers, he offers him a gift of twenty dollars and encourages him to use it to play the jukebox located inside the store, the tool that will become one of his gateways to a new journey (28).

After recovering from his long trip, Boubacar enters the Celestial Grocery and is instantly enraptured by the old jukebox, which was "the most beautiful thing he had seen in all his fifteen years" (45). Frozen in time like an "ant in the amber glass at Pompeii," (33) the jukebox had been delivered to the Celestial Grocery in 1939, but had not been updated since 1968, the year the lease record company in Memphis was looted during the riots that followed the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Seeing Boubacar's ignorance of how to operate the machine, Angus, the store owner, helps him pick out the

right coins. Boubacar then selects a song at random and instantly is overcome by the music emanating from the old Rock-ola (46). During the same meeting, Angus hires Boubacar to work as a stock boy in the store in exchange for food and the promise of being able to listen to the jukebox as much as he likes (48). In this way, Boubacar allies himself with Angus, to mutual benefit, and finds an opportunity to educate himself on the country, soul, rockabilly, and blues created by “the Americans’ ancestors” (108).

Walking back from the store, Boubacar passes by the Blackjack Zion Rescue Mission pawn shop and becomes spellbound once again. Peering through the window filled with a variety of lamps, costume items, and musical instruments, his eyes are drawn to a silver steel guitar hanging on the wall, which now displaces the Rock-ola jukebox in his mind as the most beautiful thing he had yet seen in America. Pushing his forehead against the glass to inspect it, Boubacar has a mystical reaction to the instrument: “the silver guitar mesmerized him, filling him with something that felt like prayers, like possibility” (51). Soon after, Boubacar notices the guitar leaning against the trash dumpster behind the grocery after it had been abandoned by Angus, who had purchased it as a gift (207). Boubacar is unable to reach it before it is hauled away by the garbage man, and he panics. Like a traveler in the desert seeking a vision of a life-sustaining oasis, Boubacar now feels adrift “without the mirage of the National guitar to guide him” and will wander in search of it (211). At this point, Boubacar begins a trajectory led by the guitar, which will draw him to a variety of relays, which in turn, will open up new trajectories themselves, launching him into a rhizomatic network of variation and expansion.

As he continues his journey in the smooth space of the Mississippi Delta, Boubacar faces forces of normalization both within his diasporic sphere and from State apparatuses.

The Wastrel, a man Boubacar vaguely remembers having met in his childhood, re-enters his life shortly after his arrival in Madagascar. A Sufi master from the family that had once owned Boubacar's family, the Wastrel functions as a link both to his parents and to the West African culture he recently left behind. In an attempt to replicate the social stratification extant in Mauritania, the Wastrel assumes a certain level of authority over Boubacar and announces that he is taking charge of Boubacar's spiritual and cultural education as well as his future. Once he takes note of Boubacar's fascination with American music, he declares that it is a soulless commodity packaged solely for profit by Jewish businesses, then decrees, "you will stay away from the American music [...] You will pick up your father's songs and carry them. This will be your work." (117). Despite the Wastrel's imperious presence, Boubacar consciously elects to preserve his rhizomatic ways and decides to continue on his own path clandestinely. Boubacar, however, delights in the fact that the music he listens to on the jukebox, written and performed by influential southern musicians from the mid-twentieth century, represents an assemblage of multiplicity, with historical networks of European and African musical traditions working off one another. Although he outwardly obeys the Wastrel, he decides to hide his job at the grocery and his desire to acquire the steel guitar and continue learning the traditions of American music (117).

Partially to placate the Wastrel and partially for his own benefit, Boubacar agrees to participate in regular lessons in West African music, in which the Wastrel plays cassettes of musicians from home and teaches him techniques of the Wolof drum (151). Although he welcomes training in West African music, Boubacar continues to object to the Wastrel's rigid attitude toward American culture (151). Most of all, he comes to resent

the Wastrel's stories regarding his family's past and a "world that only existed in the memories of others" (153). Feeling weighed down by the Wastrel's presence, Boubacar yearns to be free of the striating long-term memory imposed upon him (Deleuze and Guattari 16) and seeks "to extricate himself from the whole history, to take only their songs and leave the rest" (Shearer 154). Boubacar decides to resist the filiation and rootedness of an arborescent family tree and its pre-established channels of transmission and concludes that "he wanted to become an American," an identity he views as corresponding to openness and the amalgamation of many cultures (Deleuze and Guattari 25, 154).

In his short time in his host society, Boubacar comes to see American culture to be the result of the success of the melting pot theory and a centuries-long process of cultural hybridity. Noticing the segregation of cemeteries in the nearby town of Clarksdale, with "English," Jewish, and Muslim names on the headstones in different graveyards, Boubacar contemplates the similarity of the names Ibrahim and Abraham, found on the Jewish and Muslim headstones, respectively. He muses that there had been a "great quarrel once in the same family," but after many centuries, "some of each had come here, and had begun to become alike again, listening to each other's music, and eating each other's falafel" (250). To Boubacar, America seems to be a place where old disputes and hierarchies can be forgotten and everyone can partake in the best of each culture. Furthermore, it holds the promise of infinitely smooth space in which he can reject forces of habitus in order to adopt, jettison, or fuse cultural practices as he sees fit.

In addition to his choice to challenge the striation pushed upon him by the Wastrel, Boubacar also resists the striating effects of one of the few State apparatuses he

encounters—American high school. He feels immediately out of place as he steps onto the school bus to dozens of stares. When he arrives at school, he notices the constant whispering about him in the hallways, and a misguided attempt to win their favor by playing African music for them on a portable stereo only exacerbates his discomfort (147). Time spent in classes is equally painful and dispiriting. Like Loukoum’s dispute with Mademoiselle Garnier regarding the meaning of literacy, a geography test becomes a site of cultural conflict when he is unable to label a map with the words “Cape Verde,” and instead he draws in the margins of the exam the lineage of the Cape Verde drummers he had learned from his lessons with the Wastrel, a response that earns him a failing grade (156). Given his limited skills in English and their lack of facilities for immigrant students, the school administration places Boubacar in a classroom with younger, learning-disabled children. Instead of receiving instruction, however, Boubacar becomes an informal instructor for the class. Once he discovers musical instruments in the closet, he teaches “the retarded children to play them, rather than hurt each other, when their real teacher was outside smoking cigarettes” (156). To his consternation, the striated structure of the school demands a particular set of skills, or cultural capital, that Boubacar lacks. Furthermore, he sees little value in gaining this form of capital or the promise of a diploma. Thus, Boubacar’s reaction is a line of flight. He decides to quit school and devote his time to pursuing what really matters to him—finding the silver steel guitar and deepening his knowledge of American music (157).

In his newly-found free time, Boubacar returns to his nomadic path, wandering the streets of Clarksdale, the nearby town in which the high school is situated. Passing by the window of a pawn shop, he again notices the object of his greatest desire—the National

Steel guitar he had been feverishly seeking (252). As he admires the guitar, but feels defeated by the accompanying price tag labeled one hundred and fifty dollars, Boubacar draws the attention of Cornelius, a traveling bluesman, with whom he forms another brief, yet consequential, alliance. After explaining his desire to purchase the guitar, Cornelius introduces him to Sarah, the manager of the local juke joint in which he performs, and he helps Boubacar obtain a temporary job in the kitchen of the club. Seeing how strongly Boubacar desires to obtain the guitar and learn to play it, Cornelius exhorts him to firmly pursue his own path no matter the obstacles: “when the old people tell you you can’t do it, it’s just God telling you you got to” (255). Cornelius drops Boubacar off in Madagascar following his performance that night and offers him advice on places and people around the country that could assist him in his musical career, urging him to “be what you want to be in your heart” (260). With regard to the steel guitar, he explains to Boubacar that there is only one place for him to really learn the instrument and he encourages him to go to some local churches: “them preachers play the hell out them lap steels [...] You got to go to church with ‘em to play like that. You won’t learn to play like that in no school” (256). Before taking his leave, Cornelius echoes more forcefully the message given to Boubacar on his first day in the United States, compelling Boubacar to swear that he will let no one stand between him and his music and will “get the hell out of Mississippi” at the first available opportunity (260). The following day, Boubacar arrives to work at the Cloud Nine Club to find that Cornelius has bought the steel guitar for him from the pawn shop before leaving town, thereby, opening the possibility of a new offshoot for pursuit and conquest (262).

Having listened to the local gospel shows on the radio for some time, Boubacar finally takes Cornelius's advice and, in bold defiance of the Wastrel's dictates, works up the courage to join a service taking place at the True Light Temple of the Beautiful Name in Madagascar, taking along the new guitar with which he had been experimenting in secrecy (293). There, Boubacar revels in the physical and cultural melting pot he finds. From the rhythm of the Reverend's voice, whose kinesthetic cadence reminded him of Muslim calls to prayer in Mauritania, to the congregants' trancelike state, which resembled Sufis dancing in the desert of his homeland, the entire scene represented for Boubacar the triumph of hybridity and the interconnectedness of all cultures (292, 297). Called out for recognition by the Reverend, Boubacar rises to greet the congregation. The Reverend notices the guitar in his hand and urges Boubacar to join the musicians up front. Seeing his reticence, the Reverend exhorts him to submit to the instrument: "sometimes you have to just trust the guitar. Something brung you over here tonight. Now play that thang" (299). Despite his nerves, Boubacar joins in and follows the Reverend's lead, quickly fitting in with the other musicians, who ask him to come back the following Sunday (299).

Eventually, the rhizomatic path Boubacar had been pursuing is directly revealed to the Wastrel at the bunkhouse dedication, organized by Angus to commemorate the construction of new housing for the Honduran workers (343). After Angus's speech, the Reverend Dearborn immediately calls upon Boubacar to join his band up front to perform for the crowd. Despite his fear of disapproval from the Wastrel's watchful eyes, he nevertheless joins the band and pulls out his steel guitar. Following a few chords, Boubacar observes the Wastrel stand and leave the celebration. Although he is saddened

by this gesture, Boubacar comes to realize that the Wastrel is simply “afraid of Americans” and acts out of fear (343). To Boubacar’s surprise, however, the Wastrel quickly returns to the celebration with his Wolof drum in his arms. Eliciting an “Amen” from the Reverend, the Wastrel joins the ensemble and, following “a few tentative pats,” falls in with the group and “they were back inside the big door to music” (343). In this moment, Boubacar finally establishes a non-hierarchical connection with the Wastrel and they find a way to meet on common ground, based on a shared appreciation for musicianship.

A few months later, Boubacar arrives for work at the Cloud Nine Club to see a group clustered around the television watching images of plumes of smoke and repeated images of the World Trade Center towers collapsing. In an instant, the alliances he had created in Mississippi become increasingly unstable as Sarah, his employer, looks at him “as if he were a stranger” (412). Although the “nomadic war machine” described by Deleuze and Guattari does not particularly have war as its direct object, with physical warfare functioning as a Derridean “supplement” of the war machine in situations of collision with States, Boubacar, the rhizomatic nomad, is here conflated with a warmonger (416). Urging him to leave, Sarah explains to him that it’s “going to be a rough ride before this is all over. You need to go get with your own people” (412). Suddenly, a shadow falls across the promise of the melting pot he so valued as the people he had come to know question his motives and State apparatuses begin attempting to neutralize any elements presumed to be connected to the nomadic war machine. Boubacar’s uncles and the Wastrel do not return from work following the events of September, 11, 2001. After several days of waiting, Boubacar receives a call from a Mauritanian woman living

elsewhere in the United States, informing him that Mauritanian men were being taken in by the government for questioning (413). Dean and Angus agree to drive Boubacar to Memphis to help him contact an immigration attorney. However, upon arrival Boubacar decides to evade yet another State apparatus and walks away from the pair as they are away getting coffee (415). Choosing to abandon the broken-down alliances he had formed, he strikes out to activate a new line of flight and follows Cornelius's advice, purchasing a bus ticket for upstate New York in the hope of tracking down the contacts he had been offered (Deleuze and Guattari 9).

Throughout these texts, both Loukoum and Boubacar privilege multiplicity and both function as "private thinkers," with Boubacar striving for and achieving a greater degree of exteriority (Deleuze and Guattari 376). Although he is occasionally frustrated with the strained points of connection between his nomadic diasporic sphere and striated majority culture, which lead to simple misunderstandings as well as greater injustices, Loukoum resolves to continue contemplating the world around him and to rise above these problems. As he explains to his fellow students on a field trip to the zoo, the animal he would choose to be would be the eagle: "je survolerais tout avec philosophie" (106). By maintaining openness toward both cultural spheres and seeking out strategies to link the two, Loukoum finds contentedness in connecting the rhizome to the root-tree (Deleuze and Guattari 14). Boubacar, on the other hand, faces a potentially more treacherous road ahead as he presses for an even greater measure of "free action" and commits himself to a life of "the intermezzo" (Deleuze and Guattari 491, 380). While waiting for the bus lines to resume, following the September 11 attacks, Boubacar makes his way to Beale Street with his steel guitar to perform on the street for money and "even

as he feared them, the boy played for them” (419). Although Boubacar elects a path filled with uncertainty, he is confident that this course can offer him the greatest rewards.

## Conclusion

In contrast to Deleuze and Guattari's rather abstract study of power relations and autonomy in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, the fictional narratives of *Le petit prince de Belleville* and *The Celestial Jukebox* provide a more concrete look at both the fundamental need for greater multiplicity and, perhaps more importantly, the many pitfalls of "the law of the nomos" (500). Although mainstream academic studies have been increasingly touting the dynamics of Belleville as a model for French social integration in a postcolonial era, the voices of the many African immigrants present in *Le petit prince de Belleville* succeed in qualifying this optimistic claim to demonstrate a greater diversity of perspectives from within the neighborhood. Although geographer Thierry Fayt offers up Belleville as a symbol of the harmony of a pluralistic society, a comparison of Abdou's and Loukoum's narrative, ironically, more clearly validates his fleeting observation that "seul les enfants [du quartier] paraissent réellement communiquer" (180). Loukoum's relatively hopeful outlook on his future, however, opens up the possibility that a greater accord for intercultural tolerance may be established in the next generation.

The multiethnic characters of *The Celestial Jukebox*, on the other hand, illustrate the potential for collaborative unity in a transnational space, but, also its fragility. The majority of the text succeeds in rendering a Mississippian space in which the "diversified poetics" that Édouard Glissant recognized as developing in the work of Faulkner might

finally “be united in networks and rhizomes” (Glissant 163). Indeed, Shearer’s text reworks Richard M. Weaver’s proclamation that the South has been the embodiment of the best of western Christian culture, and offers a portrait of the region as a multicultural haven for all peoples seeking a better life (Kreyling 23). However, the vulnerability of this delicately balanced system becomes apparent once confronted with a larger geopolitical conflict.

Despite these somewhat auspicious visions for the future of the inhabitants of these two spaces, these texts also clearly delineate some very difficult problems. Although Deleuze and Guattari temper their advocacy for their model of the rhizome by reminding us to “never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us,” these narratives fully demonstrate the precariousness of just such spaces (491). Indeed, the Malian and Mauritanian communities present in these two texts were compelled to leave the quintessentially smooth space of their west African homelands, due to economic hardship and/or political persecution, and forced to find refuge in the Western world. Notwithstanding their troubles and feelings of alienation, the Traoré family will remain in a striated France because fewer opportunities exist for them in Mali. Although Loukoum seems set to push for greater tolerance within contemporary French society in order to maintain some of the smoothness of his tribe, he recognizes that a measure of compromise is required. Conversely, Boubacar, ultimately forced to leave yet another smooth space, elects to travel a potentially much more dangerous road as he continues to follow the law of the nomos. Since he considers no other path adequate, he will have to face the most uncertain of futures.

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