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African Women's Voices: Reclaiming Identity through Literature and Film

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Migration, particularly in the African context, has often been narrated through frameworks that marginalize the voices of women and children. The concept of *migritude* has significantly contributed to how the works of African migration writers are read. Jacques Chevrier, who is credited with coining the term, was already using it by 2002 (Chevrier, *Anthologie* 324–25). In *Littératures francophones d'Afrique noire*, he calls it a "neologism" for a new era in which the Africa these writers describe "has little to do with the concerns of their elders" (Chevrier, *Littératures* 160; my translation). The writers he names include women (Beyala, Bessora, Diome), but his account is organized around identity, hybridity and the shared precarity of Africa and Europe (Chevrier, *Littératures* 165, 171–72), not around gender. Shailja Patel later gave the word a different life in her performance and book *Migritude* (2010), where it means a "migrant attitude," the voice of migrants speaking for themselves (Patel 142). Yet the Francophone African works most often read through migritude tend to show the migrant either as someone seeking better prospects or as a victim of displacement. In Sembène Ousmane's *Le Docker noir* (1956) and *Ô pays, mon beau peuple !* (1957), the displacement and return that matter belong to African men. Alain Mabanckou's *Bleu-Blanc-Rouge* (1998), *Verre cassé* (2005), and *Black Bazar* (2009) also follow male migrants through racialized France and give little room to the gendered side of displacement. Women and children are mostly pushed to the edges of these stories. This is where *femigritude* enters. I developed the term in my dissertation at the University of Alabama. Femigritude names writing by women about the challenges women face before, during and after migration, including their relationships to the children they carry, leave behind or lose. It lets us examine the gender of migration through women's experiences in works produced by women.

Burkina Faso, like many other African nations, has a long and complex history of migration shaped by regional dynamics, economic instability, environmental challenges and colonial legacies. Brigitte Bertoncello argues that Burkinabè migration has been, above all, a migration of proximity, launched by French colonization and directed primarily toward Côte d'Ivoire. French colonial authorities conceived Upper Volta as a reservoir of labor for the Ivorian colony, which set off a first migratory movement. After independence, a "spontaneous" international migration developed on a massive scale toward Côte

d'Ivoire, as well as toward other countries. Côte d'Ivoire remained the main destination. According to the permanent secretary of the CSBE, nearly three million Burkinabè were living there in 2007, within an estimated four million Burkinabè abroad. Over time, destinations diversified toward other African countries, the Arab world, Europe and the United States. Some Burkinabè in Côte d'Ivoire became planters and transporters in the coffee and cocoa trade. The political crisis that followed the December 1999 coup in Côte d'Ivoire, and intensified in 2002, then forced a massive return, which the national press estimated at about 400,000 people by the end of 2003 (Bertoncello 561–63, 572–73, 576).

However, following the political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire that intensified in 2002, many Burkinabè were forced to return or redirect their migration routes to other regions of the world. As Bertoncello notes, these returnees were often referred to as "les rapatriés" (561). The Burkinabè state was compelled to facilitate their return through "l'opération Bayiri," an initiative to transport returnees from Abidjan back to Burkina Faso: "La prise en charge de ces migrants par l'État burkinabè s'est traduite par l'opération Bayiri […] consistant à acheminer par car depuis Abidjan les populations projetant un retour au pays" (561). Burkina Faso ranks among the world's poorest countries, with a GDP per capita of approximately 250 USD, about one-third of Côte d'Ivoire's (Bertoncello 563). Today, Burkina Faso is not only a country of origin but also a transit destination for migrants traveling toward North Africa and Europe. As climate change, armed conflict, and terrorism continue to destabilize sub-Saharan Africa, and Burkina as a country, migration has become an unavoidable reality for many Burkinabè, who continue to move, whether as refugees, students, or workers, to Côte d'Ivoire, Europe, and across North Africa, with women being a crucial part of these movements.

As Monique Ilboudo notes in *Droit de cité : Être femme au Burkina Faso* (2009), women make up 52% of Burkina Faso's population (12). This demographic fact only makes sense for migration when compared to the nation's larger displacement statistics. According to government data reported by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Burkina Faso's internally displaced population approached two million by early 2023, ranking among the world's fastest-growing displacement crises ("From Survival to Resilience"). Because women constitute roughly half of Burkina Faso's population and a substantial proportion of those affected by displacement and migration, women's mobility should not be treated as an exception. Migration is a normal part of many women's lived experiences and is deeply shaped by gender. Women are not at the periphery of this migration crisis; they are at its center. However, male experience has always been at the center of the literary and academic frameworks used to understand African migration. Femigritude can only exist as a critical notion and a creative practice if there is a gender gap between the reality of who migrates and the narratives created about migration.

This study focuses on the creative works of three Burkinabè women who engage deeply with the politics of migration, gender, and belonging, the filmmakers and writers Apolline Traoré, Monique Ilboudo, and Roukiata Ouédraogo: Traoré's *Sira* (2023) follows a displaced Fulani community seeking refuge from violence while attempting to establish itself within a host community. The proposed marriage between Sira (Nafissatou Cissé), the chief's daughter, and Jean Sidi (Abdramane Barry), a Christian man from the host community, becomes a symbolic gesture of unity, suggesting the possibility of coexistence and mutual protection across religious, cultural, and communal boundaries. However, the community is attacked, all the men are

killed, and Sira is abducted, raped, and abandoned in the desert. Monique Ilboudo's *Le Mal de peau* (1992) anticipates the rise of insurgency in Burkina Faso through the experiences of Sibila and her daughter, Cathy. After being raped by a colonial administrator, Sibila flees her village, giving birth to Cathy and other children in the city. Years later, Cathy receives a scholarship to study in France, where she encounters her rapist father. She plans to return with him to Burkina Faso to meet her mother, but their journey ends in tragedy when the plane is hijacked by terrorists and explodes. In *Du miel sous les galettes* (2020), Roukiata Ouédraogo depicts the daily struggles of Madame Sankaké, whose husband is wrongfully imprisoned. Left to provide for her children, she survives by making and selling *galettes* until she eventually secures her husband's release.

Building on migritude as theorized by Chevrier and Patel, this study introduces the concept of femigritude, a gendered analytical framework for examining African women's migration narratives as sites of gendered political agency, where survival itself becomes a form of consciousness and creative resistance. The full theoretical genealogy and justification of this term is developed in the section that follows. In addition to femigritude, my analysis draws on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of assemblage to analyze the complex and heterogeneous identities of migrant African women. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari define assemblages as dynamic configurations of material, social, cultural, and political components that combine to create subjectivity and meaning (101). I utilize Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of territorialization, deterritorialization, reterritorialization, and multiplicity to examine how women's identities are continually shaped and reshaped through the intersecting forces of gender, race, class, colonial histories, and migration trajectories. Within the context of migration, deterritorialization signifies the disruption or displacement from one's homeland, while reterritorialization refers to the processes through which identity, belonging, and community are reconstituted within new social and geographical contexts.

The rhizomatic structure of assemblages further challenges hierarchical and linear understandings of identity and migration by allowing for multiple points of connection, rupture, entry, and exit. As Deleuze and Guattari develop, the rhizome offers a radical alternative to the tree, a dominant Western model that privileges origins, hierarchy, unity, and linear forms of knowledge, identity, and belonging. While the tree grows from a single root and extends upward in a fixed hierarchy, the rhizome has no beginning or end, it spreads horizontally, connects any point to any other point, and can be entered or exited from multiple directions simultaneously (Deleuze and Guattari 21). A rhizomatic identity is therefore one that cannot be traced back to a single origin, reduced to a single narrative, or contained within a single territory. It is always multiple, always in motion, always constituted through connection rather than essence. Applied to the migrant women at the center of this study, rhizomatic identity formation is portrayed when Sibila, Madame Sankaké, and Sira construct selfhood not through linear development or stable belonging but through the layering of survival, maternal labor, memory, and collective solidarity. Their identities are not rooted in one place, one language, or one experience; they grow through connection, through their children, and through their resistance. Femigritude and assemblage theory show how Burkinabè women authors and filmmakers represent female migrant identities beyond victimhood, revealing agency, resilience, and collective empowerment.

A crucial question here is, how do Burkinabè women writers and filmmakers

reconfigure migration narratives to produce female-centered political agency? To answer this question, I conduct a comparative close reading and analysis of these three works: *Le Mal de peau*, *Du miel sous les galettes*, and *Sira* through the combined theoretical framework of femigritude and assemblage theory. This transmedial analysis emphasizes how migration becomes a site of intergenerational memory, embodied suffering, and collective resistance, rather than merely a process of displacement. The choice of these three works is not based only on the fact that all three authors are from Burkina Faso but also that they are connected by a shared focus: each work presents the woman's body as a key site where migration, violence, and recovery take place. They explore forms of displacement rooted in Burkina Faso's history, including colonial labor systems, insecurity in the Sahel region, and jihadist violence. At the same time, they move beyond earlier migration narratives by portraying women not simply as victims but as active agents who respond to and reshape their circumstances. The choice of two written texts and one film is important because femigritude is not tied to a single form such as literature or film only, but instead, it is a way of telling stories about women's experiences by women themselves. Studying these works together shows that what connects them is not their form, but rather their shared commitment to portraying women's struggles, resilience, and resistance. *Sira* deals with displacement caused by jihadist violence, *Du miel sous les galettes* focuses on economic survival in difficult conditions, and *Le Mal de peau* looks at the lasting effects of colonial sexual violence. Together, these works create what I call a femigritude archive, showing how Burkinabè women have experienced and responded to different forms of movement.

Theoretical Framework: From Negritude to Migritude to Femigritude

The conceptual genealogy of femigritude begins with *Négritude*, the literary and political movement developed in Paris in the 1930s by Black Francophone intellectuals. The concept later evolved into migritude, a term credited to Jacques Chevrier, who was already using it by 2002 and developed it in his essay "Afrique(s)-sur-Seine : autour de la notion de 'migritude'" (2004) and in *Littératures francophones d'Afrique noire* (2006). Chevrier uses migritude to describe a generation of African diasporic writers whose works are shaped by migration, exile, and cultural hybridity rather than by Négritude's emphasis on racial affirmation. The concept was expanded by Shailja Patel in her performance-text *Migritude* (2010), which transformed migritude from a literary category into a political and artistic practice. Drawing on her family's migration history between India and Kenya, Patel presents migritude as a refusal of migrant silence and an assertion of agency. Together, Chevrier and Patel reposition identity through mobility, displacement, and transnational belonging, and they laid the theoretical foundations for the concept of femigritude, even though when put together, their frameworks reveal a shared limitation. While Patel's *Migritude* focuses on the placement and re-placement of migrant women and diasporic communities in the discourse of international concern, neither she nor Chevrier developed a framework adequate to the specifically gendered, embodied, and intergenerational dimensions of African women's migration experiences, particularly in sub-Saharan contexts shaped by insurgent violence, colonial patriarchy, and structural economic precarity, rather than by the European metropole that anchors both their frameworks. Chevrier's account, although it names women writers, is not organized around gender, and Patel's theoretical horizon is the Indian Ocean diaspora rather than sub-Saharan Africa.

The Burkinabè women at the center of my analysis, Monique Ilboudo, Roukiata Ouédraogo, and Apolline Traoré, have each experienced displacement and transnational mobility across distinct geographical and professional contexts. Ouédraogo currently lives and works in France, while Ilboudo pursued her studies in France and later served as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Nordic and Baltic countries. Traoré, meanwhile, studied at Emerson College School of the Arts in Boston. Their diverse trajectories illuminate the varied geographies through which Burkinabè women negotiate migration, belonging, and identity. It is precisely this dimension that femigritude seeks to foreground. Rather than rejecting migritude, femigritude extends it through a gendered lens. It retains migritude's emphasis on migrant agency, political consciousness, and the refusal of silence, while addressing dimensions that Chevrier's and Patel's frameworks leave comparatively undertheorized, particularly the ways women's bodies, maternal labor, intergenerational memory, and relational networks become central terrains through which migration is experienced, narrated, negotiated, and survived.

The prefix fem- is not decorative, as it signals that women experience migration through their bodies and lived realities. In the selected cultural productions by Burkinabè women, migration is neither abstract nor simply nomadic. Rather, it is embodied through rape, as in the case of Sira in Traoré's film *Sira*; selling galettes to survive by Madame Sankaké in Ouédraogo's *Du miel sous les galettes*; raising children without their fathers, as in the case of Sibila in Ilboudo's *Le Mal de peau*; and leading a displaced community across the desert. The ending -itude links the word to both Négritude and migritude. Femigritude is built on migritude, with fem- added to it, and it stands as the third term in a critical progression, from racial affirmation (Négritude), to diasporic decentering (migritude), to gendered, embodied resistance. Femigritude functions as a critical lens that attends to how African women's bodies, memories, and narrative practices become living archives of migration, trauma, care, and resistance, and how Burkinabè women writers and filmmakers theorize survival from within those archives rather than waiting for external frameworks to name their experience.

The concept of deterritorialization, drawn from Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, provides the structural vocabulary for tracking how these processes unfold across the three texts examined here. For Deleuze and Guattari, deterritorialization names the unmooring of subjects from established systems of identity, territory, and social belonging. In the transmedial analysis of this study, the deterritorializations are the violent breaks that begin each story: the rape and exile of Sibila in *Le Mal de peau*, the loss of economic security of Madame Sankaké's husband and the resulting imprisonment in *Du miel sous les galettes*, and the slaughter of Sira's community and body in *Sira*. Reterritorialization, correspondingly, names the reconstitution of identity and community in new contexts, not a return to what was lost, but the creation of something new out of displacement. The rhizomatic structure of assemblages, which resists hierarchical and linear narratives by allowing for multiple points of entry and exit, gives formal expression to what femigritude names politically: the nonlinear, multiply rooted, and collectively sustained forms of identity that Burkinabè women forge under conditions of extreme precarity. Read through this framework, identity emerges not as fixed or singular, but rather as an ongoing process shaped by displacement, relationship, and collective reconstitution. It is through this tripartite lens of femigritude, assemblage, and deterritorialization or reterritorialization that the following

readings of Ilboudo, Ouédraogo, and Traoré proceed.

Femigritude and Assemblage in Monique Ilboudo's *Le Mal de peau*

In *Le Mal de peau*, Monique Ilboudo links the story of Sibila and her daughter Cathy to create a collection of colonial cruelty, gendered silence, and maternal resilience. When a young village girl named Sibila is raped by "Monsieur le Commandant," as the villagers usually refer to the colonial administrator, she becomes pregnant and is forced into exile. This moment of sexual violence is not only personal trauma but also a structural mechanism of colonial power that uproots her identity and social belonging. Deterritorialization begins with this violent act, which drives Sibila into exile, uproots her from her community, and silences her out of fear. She knows she will be blamed for being raped and that no one will believe her words against the colonial administrator, so she chooses to flee. Ilboudo renders this structural impossibility with spare precision. Before Sibila takes a single step toward fleeing to the city, the novel names the logic that makes flight her only option: "Comment pourrait-elle rester, maintenant qu'elle était 'une jarre fêlée'?" (49). The "cracked jar" is not merely a figure of shame, it encodes the colonial economy of purity in which the raped woman, not her rapist, bears permanent contamination and condemnation. To denounce the commandant would be to shatter herself further: "Personne ne la croirait, et quand bien même on la croyait, devant qui irait-on se plaindre? Quel recours a-t-on contre le représentant du pouvoir blanc, 'le chef des chefs'?" (50). Therefore, under a colonial order where all other options have been eliminated, silence is an act of rational self-preservation rather than weakness. As Ilboudo writes: "trois mois après cette tragique soirée, Sibila était partie de nuit, n'emportant pour tout bagage qu'un pagne et une calebasse. Son état n'était connu que de sa mère, qui passait ses nuits à pleurer et ses journées à questionner sa fille sur l'auteur de ce malheur" (50). The night departure, the pagne and calabash, these two objects are all that survive the colonial rupture. Her mother's tearful silence and her relentless questioning together reveal the impossible position Sibila occupies: she is both known and unprotectable, seen and undefended. Deterritorialization here is not metaphorical but material, a young woman reduced to two objects, fleeing under cover of darkness from a violence that the community's moral economy would make her responsible for.

In Ilboudo's narrative, femigritude emerges in the lived, gendered experience of marginalization and migration combined with the determination to regain control and sustain life under harsh circumstances. Cathy's birth and Sibila's choice to raise her other children without their fathers in what Homi Bhabha termed "the third space" (Bhabha 37) exemplify this process, showing how maternal labor becomes a form of political resistance that preserves memory and reconstructs identity across generations. Sibila's story suggests that African women like her reassemble themselves across unfamiliar spaces by fusing silence, exile, and resilience into a rhizomatic identity that persists through their children, as seen in Cathy. This maternal resilience refuses linear victimhood narratives and instead highlights the multifaceted nature of motherhood, care, memory, and resistance. The novel functions as an assemblage in which colonial cruelty, gendered silence, and maternal resilience interlock. Deterritorialization begins with Sibila's rape and exile, while reterritorialization occurs through her decision to raise her children alone, reconstructing her social reality and creating a new form of belonging.

Ilboudo renders this reterritorialization not as triumph but as hard-won, quotidian fact. In the city, Sibila builds a livelihood and

a social presence from nothing: "Sibila était devenue une femme de caractère, réussissant dans le commerce du dolo, et menant avec courage une vie de femme 'libre'" (114). The word "libre" carries full theoretical weight here, signifying not freedom from constraint, but freedom from the colonial-patriarchal economy that would have defined her permanently as shamed and unworthy. Her cabaret, her clients, her refusal to marry on anyone else's terms: these constitute the material substance of reterritorialization, the creation of something new out of what displacement had unmade. Multiplicity emerges through her fragmented motherhood and hybrid identity, resisting singular narratives and embracing the rhizomatic nature of selfhood. Even in her naïve state, Sibila understands the social consequences of her pregnancy and begins a journey characterized by motherhood, survival, resilience, and silence. She never marries but raises several children from different fathers on her own terms, defying social pressure on single mothers and embodying a fragmented and fierce maternal dignity and identity.

Cathy's experiences of racial rejection and belonging further illustrate how femigritude operates across bodies and borders, as a living archive of trauma and resilience. As a white child born to a Black mother, Cathy is alienated in Africa and subsequently racialized and rejected in France for not being "fully" French. Ilboudo is precise about what this double exile feels like from the inside: at school in Burkina Faso, "le mot 'blanche' la glaçait autant que celui de 'bâtarde' qui était leur refrain favori" (60). Neither term is incidental; "blanche" marks the colonial wound Cathy carries on her skin, "bâtarde" marks her illegitimacy within a patriarchal social order that cannot account for her. In France, this rejection merely takes another form: she is deemed not French enough. Her identity thus emerges through successive processes of deterritorialization, each rupture adding another layer to what Ilboudo constructs as a profoundly rhizomatic selfhood, rooted nowhere yet connected everywhere to the histories, relations, and forces that have shaped her. Despite this, Cathy's identity is built on layers of rejection and belonging, revealing the cross-generational impact of resistance, hybridity, and trauma. In this way, Ilboudo's work not only portrays migration as movement across space but also as an ongoing process of gendered reconstitution, where intergenerational strength and historical violence become entangled in a dynamic mother-daughter assemblage.

Femigritude and Assemblage in Roukiata Ouédraogo's *Du miel sous les galettes*

Roukiata Ouédraogo's *Du miel sous les galettes* constructs a dual narrative that alternates between the perspective of Madame Sankaké, frequently referred to as Maman, and her daughter Yasmina, who is living in France. The story's structure parallels Ouédraogo's use of multiple viewpoints, linking the mother's suffering in Burkina Faso with the daughter's reflections on exile, memory, and resistance. The daughter's voice, chosen to be La marraine de la Journée internationale de la Francophonie (27), connects past and present, acting as both witness and interpreter. The movement of the story creates a rhizomatic network of memory, trauma, and intergenerational care. Femigritude is revealed in the maternal labor and economic agency that sustain Maman's survival, evident when her husband is unjustly imprisoned in the village of Fada N'Gourma, leaving her to fend for her children and take on the role of the family's provider. She starts selling galettes to feed her family, not merely as a means of survival, but also as a form of resistance against patriarchal domination. Although many African households have women running small businesses, they are rarely

responsible for maintaining the home, a duty traditionally reserved for men. Madame Sankaké's entrepreneurial labor is not simply economic survival, it is a political act performed against a community that has already condemned her. As the daughter narrates: "Pour assurer notre quotidien, elle préparait des galettes qu'elle vendait devant notre porte, au bord de la route, le matin... D'un coup, ma mère était passée du statut de femme importante dans le quartier à celui de paria infréquentable" (30). Maman's daily appearance at the roadside with her galettes is therefore an act of refusal. She shows up precisely where the authorities have decided she is invisible; she shows survival as public resistance, labor as political presence.

Reterritorialization takes place as Maman regains her social role by means of labor and perseverance, transforming her personal struggle into a collective act of resistance. The alternating perspectives link memory and exile, showing how the mother and daughter share a rhizomatic identity built through shared resistance and intergenerational care. This transnational structure shows how femigritude extends beyond local spaces, connecting multiple sites, memories and identities. In Roukiata Ouédraogo's *Du miel sous les galettes*, Madame Sankaké's quest for justice takes her from her home to her parents' village, where, with her father's help, she seeks M. Zoungrana to secure her husband's release. Her journey is one of purposeful mobility and steadfast determination, not exile. Her efforts are recognized even by the prisoners themselves, who tell her husband how fortunate he is to have such a strong wife. Her husband, M. Sankaké, tells her: "Tu es une femme remarquable, Djelila, et j'ai vraiment beaucoup de chance de t'avoir. Combien de femmes pourraient tenir plus de quatre mois comme ça?" (63). These recognitions reinforce the idea that motherhood becomes an assemblage, a dynamic space where memory, care, trauma, and survival converge to challenge representations of African women as helpless or silent victims. In line with the concept of femigritude, Ouédraogo's multi-layered narrative emphasizes women's ability to piece together broken lives through love, hard work, and memory while critiquing patriarchal and state violence. The rhizomatic network of memory that connects mother and daughter across continents operates not through language but through the body. When the daughter, now in France, sees pancakes on a table, Ouédraogo writes: "Mon regard s'arrête un moment sur les pancakes, ils ont la taille et l'aspect des galettes que ma mère faisait quand j'étais enfant... Je replonge à Fada N'Gourma. Les galettes de maman" (70). The galette is not merely food, it is a mnemonic portal, a material thread connecting diaspora to homeland, daughter to mother, exile to origin. This involuntary return enacts what Deleuze and Guattari describe as the rhizome's capacity to connect any point to any other point, refusing linear or hierarchical structures of memory and belonging.

Femigritude and Assemblage in Apolline Traoré's *Sira*

Apolline Traoré's film *Sira* broadens the definition of femigritude by addressing gendered violence in the context of political and religious extremism, while Monique Ilboudo and Roukiata Ouédraogo use prose to examine maternal resilience and memory across generations. In *Sira*, femigritude emerges as a form of survival and resistance under extreme conditions, demonstrating how women's bodies become battlegrounds of political conflict and, simultaneously, sites of liberation. The film depicts migration as a kind of internal exile shaped by suffering, survival, and religious agency, as well as a forced separation from community, security, and selfhood. *Sira* (Apolline Traoré, 2023) provides a compelling narrative of how African women dwell in and withstand these

splits, reflecting a shift from territorial migration to psychological and physical displacement. The film begins with a long, somber movement through the desert when armed violence forces a Fulani community to leave their settlement in search of safety. Under the direction of Tidiane (Seydou Diallo), their chief and Sira's father, the community stops for a break and plans to continue the journey the next day. There is joy amid uncertainty as they anticipate Sira's marriage to Jean Sidi (Abdramane Barry), a man who is neither Fulani nor Muslim. Sira's parents support this union despite their different religious faith, demonstrating a progressive view of cultural boundaries. By morning, however, this expectation is shattered as religious extremists attack the community and kill all the men in a brutal display of ethnic and gendered violence. Sira witnesses the execution of several members of her community, including her father, and when Aissatou (Nathalie Vairac), Sira's mother, tries to resist, she is knocked out. Sira herself yells, sobs, and throws insults at the group's leader, Yéré (Lazare Minoungou), and she is taken captive. In the middle of the desert, Sira is dragged out of the van and brutally raped by Yéré, the extremist leader, who then leaves her for dead. Yéré, speaking in Fulfuldé, declares that Sira is unworthy of dying by his sword, a dehumanizing act cloaked in patriarchal, religiously coded rhetoric. This moment is a case of violent deterritorialization, as the Fulani community is forcibly displaced and its social order collapses, turning Sira's body into a battleground of political violence, with the broader forces of displacement, conflict, and insecurity becoming inscribed upon the female body.

Yet Sira refuses to remain a victim. She struggles to survive by finding refuge in a cave, and she eventually locates the camp where the extremists and their captives live. In a shocking revelation, she later discovers she is carrying the child of the extremist leader, but her story does not end there. Sira's survival turns into a defiant act as she not only withstands abuse but also deliberately uses her suffering as a weapon to free herself and other abducted girls she finds in the camp. Her refusal to die and her decision to free other captives transforms her trauma into collective resistance. In this way, Traoré creates a visual assemblage of resistance: broken communities, broken bodies, and land that has been damaged, but also networks of memory, solidarity, and rebellion that reconstruct the self. Deleuze and Guattari's idea of assemblage is echoed in the film, which reterritorializes identity through actions of survival, care, and revolt while deterritorializing well-known representations of victimhood. The rhizomatic identity in *Sira* is expressed through collective solidarity among women and the emergence of a new political agency, linking individual suffering to communal liberation.

By portraying the bravery and vulnerability of African women navigating migration in hostile regions, Traoré's *Sira* exemplifies femigritude. The film could be said to be a rhizomatic story about a woman who becomes both a witness and a warrior, reclaiming not just her voice but also her right to change the world around her while holding on to the legacy of the legendary princess Yennenga (Scott 23). In *Sira*, Sira's mother assumes responsibility for leading the remaining community members to safety during a time of communal trauma after the terrorist gang murders her husband and kidnaps her daughter. After successfully reaching the village where Sira's wedding had been scheduled to take place, Aissatou is seen silently gesturing to explain the situation to the men who come out to welcome them, a duty that tradition would have assigned to her husband. These men then inform Jean Sidi of the devastating news. This portrayal of maternal leadership reinforces how women enact agency in crisis, transforming their trauma into purposeful mobility and collective care. Combining the

treatment of African women's experiences in Ilboudo, Ouédraogo, and Traoré produces a transmedial articulation of femigritude. Across these works, women's identities are braided together with herstories, violence, care, and resistance rather than being fixed or essentialized. In all three works, motherhood emerges as a central form of agency and political resistance, creating an assemblage of memory, trauma, survival, and collective solidarity.

Conclusion

This analysis of Monique Ilboudo, Roukiata Ouédraogo, and Apolline Traoré has shown that Burkinabè women authors and filmmakers oppose simple narratives of migration by concentrating on women's voices, bodies, and lived experiences. Applying the theoretical frameworks of Deleuze and Guattari's assemblage and femigritude, migration is conceptualized not merely as displacement but also as a process of survival, agency, and reterritorialization. These frameworks reflect how women's migration experiences are influenced by gendered violence, colonial legacies, and sociopolitical upheavals, and how women react by transforming their suffering into collective strength. In the three works, femigritude appears as a lived, gendered response to marginalization, one that refuses victimhood and asserts the capacity for self-making under extreme conditions. Ilboudo, Ouédraogo, and Traoré together show that femigritude is not an isolated or unusual phenomenon but a structural condition of African women's creative strategies, shaped by the aftermath of colonialism, patriarchal violence and state failure. Their work demands that migration studies, postcolonial theory, and African literary scholarship extend their frameworks to encompass the gendered, embodied, intergenerational archive that women have always been building, in fiction, in film, in the act of selling galettes, in the decision to survive. Femigritude names that archive and insists on its theoretical authority.

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