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**Poetics of “Homecoming” in Contemporary Francophone Afrodiasporic Return Narratives**

Return narratives form a subgenre of travel writing that has been relatively popular in the field of Afrodiasporic literatures. Return narratives portray exilic Africans’ journeys to places that used to be their home. Because of the traveller’s personal history and ties to the destination, the journeys represented in narratives of return tend to be emotionally charged. Spatio-temporal distance to one’s “home” may end up generating feelings of nostalgia and nourishing romanticized ideas about the place left behind – Aimé Césaire’s classic *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* (1939) is a case in point.

Contemporary Afrodiasporic return narratives have adopted somewhat gloomier tones, informed as they are by the perpetual crises of postcolonial nation-states and the problematisation of taken-for-granted understandings of the notions of home and belonging (Cousins & Dodgson-Katiyo 2016, 3; Ravi 2014, 297). Drawing on a set of travelogues [Nimrod’s *L’Or des rivières* (2010), Michèle Rakotoson’s *Juillet au pays: Chroniques d'un retour à Madagascar* (2007), Alain Mabanckou’s *Lumières de Pointe-Noire* (2013)] and novels [Kidi Bebey’s *Mon royaume pour une guitare* (2016), Véronique Tadjo’s *Loin de mon père* (2010), and Fatou Diome’s *Le ventre de l’Atlantique* (2003)], this paper maps out some characteristic features of contemporary Francophone Afrodiasporic return narratives and their representations of the so-called homecoming. While set in different geopolitical and cultural contexts, certain key themes recur throughout the text corpus: the returns are marked by the feelings of loss, guilt, nostalgia, and unbelonging. My reading pays specific attention to how these feelings are articulated through different tropes of mobility.

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