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Screening race, streaming Frenchness: Women of colour on French Netflix

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ABSTRACT

This article builds on the emerging scholarship on Netflix productions and French series to analyse questions of racial visibility and feminine representation in two series: *Dix pour cent/Call My Agent!* (France Télévisions/Netflix, 2015–2020) and *Plan cœur/The Hook-Up Plan* (Netflix, 2018–2022). The first section focuses on *Dix pour cent's* Sofia Leprince, a mixed-race receptionist and aspiring actress, and the ways in which she serves to highlight the lack of Black actors in French cinema. The second section analyses *Plan cœur*'s Charlotte Ben Smires, a young woman at a career crossroads who offers a paradoxical perspective on the place of Maghrebi descendants in – and their relationship with – France. Overall, the authors examine how *Dix pour cent* and *Plan cœur*, two series featuring strong women of colour, navigate racial visibility in universalist French contexts. These series speak back to a striking historical absence of actors of colour – especially women – from French television screens, yet they are nonetheless circumscribed in persistent norms of republican universalism and thus racial colour-blindness. This article examines this paradox to determine whether these successful contemporary series can truly offer 'narrative renewal' within the confines of republican representation norms.

KEYWORDS

Netflix; race/ethnicity; film industry; diversity; universalism; identity

In the prologue to *Noire n'est pas mon métier* ('Black Is Not My Job'), a collection of testimonies by 16 Black or mixed-race women who work in the French cultural industry and shed light on their respective experiences, struggles, visibility and absence, French actress Aïssa Maïga remarks that:

> More than three hundred French films are made each year. It is hard to keep up with the number of film and theatre festivals in France. [. . .] On television, there has been an unprecedented production of series. Yet, there persists a resounding void when it comes to the representation of France's social, demographic and ethnic realities. What do filmmakers make of this absence? Are they aware of it? Do they feel in sync with the society in which they live? (Maïga 2018, 9–10)[1]

Maïga's puzzlement over the lack of visibility for many talented women of African descent on the French artistic scene and the singular forms of violence that these women experience (i.e. mysogynoir, Islamophobia) is further exacerbated by the ongoing nature

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of the issue. As early as 2000, 'Calixthe Beyala and Luc Saint-Eloy were calling out [filmmakers] from the Césars stage' (Maïga 2018, 10).[2] The Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel (The Higher Audiovisual Council), tasked with reporting on diversity in French society with a focus on television, confirms that on French screens, '16% of people are perceived as "non-white" in 2019' (Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel 2020, 5), with a slightly higher percentage for French productions (11). It bears noting that the indexation of characters, such as their origin, sex, class, age, disability, etc., is based on 'the perception that most viewers would have of them' (8). CSA also notes the worrying underrepresentation of women, at 38%, whereas 'they make up 52% of the French population' (5); it remarks, however, that the percentage of women within this group perceived as 'non-white' has increased to 39% (18).[3] While CSA is committed to supporting greater and more positive diversity, it provides no explanation for the figures.

Racial visibility and representation of women – in a Republic with a colourblind ethos, which has removed 'race' from its constitution in 2018, arguing 'there is no such thing as race' (France 24 2018) – is nevertheless the focus of significant discourse in France.[4] In addition to the *Noire n'est pas mon métier* collective, it is for instance central to Mame-Fatou Niang's study, *Identités françaises: banlieues, féminités et universalisme*, in which she interviews key cultural actors within French society, such as critically acclaimed filmmaker Alice Diop, who explains that: 'Except for Christiane Taubira, I don't feel like I exist in the media of our national community. There is almost no representation of Black women. It's as if we were completely invisible' (Niang 2019, 276).[5] In her study of French cinematic discrimination, Gaëlle Planchenault quotes French-Caribbean actress Marie-Philomène Nga, when she argues that the parts that Black actresses are generally offered would make people believe that 'the Black woman only wears boubous and sandals [. . .], doesn't speak proper French or with a strong accent' (Aga 2018, 75 quoted in Planchenault 2020, 198).

Despite this persistent history, France has nonetheless seen a recent proliferation of important contributions contesting the limitations of French cinema for people of colour and Black actresses in particular, such as Niang's own documentary, *Mariannes Noires* ('Black Mariannes', 2017), Amandine Gay's *Ouvrir la voix/Speak Up: Make Your Way* (2017) or Rhokaya Diallo's televised *Où sont les noirs?* ('Where Are Black People?', 2020) and *La Parisienne démystifiée* ('The Demystified Parisian Woman', 2021). Furthermore, in January 2022, France 2 broadcast *Noirs en France* ('Black in France'), a primetime documentary co-directed by Aurelia Perreau and Alain Mabanckou, followed by a debate intended to shed light on different experiences of racism. While documentaries remain the most frequent genre to represent these subversive stories, fictional accounts (such as in Diop's 2022 *Saint Omer* or Ladj Ly's 2023 *Bâtiment 5*/*Les Indésirables*) are likewise significant. These accounts can build on the existing material to offer more accurate and less stereotypical representations of minoritised characters.

Alongside these changes and in the global age of streaming, the investment of US-based production and the arrival of streaming platform Netflix in France since 2015 indicate shifting production practices that are generating the potential for more diverse casts and storylines, in part because the platform is informed by US identity politics, promotes values of inclusion and diversity and encourages greater representation thanks to its 'Fund for Creative Equity'. Filmmakers and showrunners interested in collaborating

with Netflix must share these values. While France has a long history of collaboration between national television channels and film production companies, international streaming services, and especially Netflix, have increasingly disrupted the traditional filmmaking ecosystem in the late 2010s and early 2020s, injecting new and significant sources of US-based funding into the French screen system. Netflix pivoted from a national US DVD rental service to a digital streaming platform in 2007, offering access to a library of existing content. In 2013 Netflix began producing original content, as well as streaming internationally (see Jenner 2018; Lobato 2019). Then in 2015, the world's largest streaming company, now a major production player in addition to a viewing platform, commissioned its first series outside the US, beginning with what it saw as a comparably healthy industry in which to invest: France.

For its first foray into original French content, Netflix started with what it considered to be a low-risk venture: *Marseille* (2016–2018), a series featuring an established white French star (Gérard Depardieu) and a widely appealing genre (the political thriller, in the vein of Netflix's then very successful *House of Cards* [2013–2018]). However, 2016's *Marseille* was a flop, both in France and abroad, with international ratings being the benchmark for continuation or cancellation on the platform. In response to the failure of *Marseille*, when Netflix commissioned its second French Original Series, the selection was as different as possible from the staid *Marseille*. *Plan cœur/The Hook-Up Plan* (Netflix, 2018–2022) 'borrows almost everything from the Anglo-American romcom genre' and includes a little-known and diverse millennial cast living in Paris (Delacotte 2018). Netflix deliberately obscures its viewing data, but the multiple renewals of *Plan cœur* and the multi-year investment in promotion of the series on and beyond the platform, indicates it was far more successful than *Marseille*. Netflix had originally planned a two-season series in 2018 and 2019. However, the series's popularity led to a surprise third season in 2022, which followed a special Covid 'confinement' episode, 'Plan Lockdown', released as a separate entry on Netflix in August 2020.

Dix pour cent/Call My Agent! (France Télévisions/Netflix, 2015–2020), on the other hand, is not a Netflix Original Series, beginning its first season on France Télévisions. However, Netflix added the series to the platform in 2016, its second year, at which point it gained unprecedented popularity. It is important to note, however, that it is presented as a Netflix Original and perceived as such by most international viewers. As with *Plan cœur*, viewing data for *Dix pour cent* is not available, but critical acclaim and public anticipation surrounding each of the series's four seasons attest to its success. Indeed, in a range of international spin-offs, the French original *Dix pour cent* has since been emulated in the UK as *Ten Percent* (2022), India as *Call My Agent: Bollywood* (2021), Turkey as *Call My Manager* (2020) and South Korea as *Behind Every Star* (2022), with Czech, Filipino, Indonesian, Italian, Polish, Malaysian and Spanish-language versions in production at the time of writing.

Since the success of early French series such as *Plan cœur* and *Dix pour cent* on Netflix, many of the most prominent Netflix France Original Series since released on the platform feature Black stars and other actors of colour. The most famous example is the Omar Sy vehicle *Lupin* (Netflix, 2020–), while others include *En Place*/*Represent* (Netflix, 2023–), *Le Monde de demain*/*Reign Supreme* (Arte/Netflix, 2022–) and *Drôle*/*Standing Up* (Netflix, 2022), also executive-produced by *Dix pour cent* showrunner Fanny Herrero. Indeed, as Netflix France has grown, alongside other Netflix ventures in countries as varied as

Germany, South Korea and Senegal, tensions have emerged between local and international interests. In France, these tensions take the form of differences in cultural values between the French model of universalism, which obscures racial difference in the name of republican unity, and US multiculturalism, in which the naming and promotion of diversity is considered politically appropriate. As Katixa Agirre writes, 'Netflix does not hide its desire to see its brand linked to the concept of diversity and inclusion' (2021, 106). Indeed, in 2021 Netflix released the report of a study of on- and off-screen diversity in a wide range of its US original series and films (Smith et al. 2021). In response to the report's findings, Netflix pledged $100 million in funding to increase the diversity of its productions (Jackson 2021). Netflix's approach to diversity reflected in this study, based in US identity politics and the astute 'branding strategy' Agirre identifies (2021, 106), has accompanied the marked increase in diversity on French screens noted above. But it has also brought with it oscillations between 'erasure and racialisation of ethnic voices' (Planchenault 2020, 198): a confusion about how to represent racial difference, and especially women of colour, in series set in a universalist French culture but funded by a multiculturalist (at least in name) US company.

Given their diverse feminine casts and joint popular success, *Dix pour cent* and *Plan cœur* are two emblematic case studies for analysing Netflix France's complex and at times paradoxical representations of gender and race.[6] This article builds on Loïc Bourdeau's article 'Unapologetically Visible? Representing and Reassessing Contemporary French Womanhood in *Dix pour cent*' – an analysis of the representation of lesbianism and ageing – in which he argues that the series 'allows for a reassessment of women's status both in the workplace (i.e. the office of the agency) and in French society' and 'gives necessary time and attention to "imperfect" models' (Bourdeau 2022, 292). In his conclusion, Bourdeau remarks that the series 'struggled, however, to really test France's universalist ideals' and points to Sofia Leprince (*Dix pour cent*'s mixed-race receptionist) and the series's struggle with representing Blackness in productive ways (305). This article thus asks how *Dix pour cent* and *Plan cœur*, two series featuring assertive and transgressive women of colour who decline racial clichés and condemn racist treatment, render racial difference visible in contemporary French environments. Overall, we ask whether these successful series can really represent, to quote Maïga, 'a chance of narrative renewal' (2018, 11).

Black actress plays aspiring Black actress in *Dix pour cent*: Sofia Leprince

Dix pour cent is a France Télévisions production about French film talent agents, created by showrunners Fanny Herrero and Dominique Besnehard (a talent agent himself), which quickly became a major Netflix hit after it was added to the catalogue in 2016. Comprising four seasons released between 2015 and 2020, the series follows four main agents from the fictional agency ASK, both in professional and personal contexts. Each episode includes one or two guest appearances by major (French) actors, from Isabelle Huppert and Nathalie Baye to Jean Dujardin and Juliette Binoche. In the series's early days, Herrero noted that she was committed to 'producing a diverse show' with strong women characters (Bourdeau 2022, 292). Despite some problematic representations of lesbianism, *Dix pour cent* was indeed able 'to give more visibility to women, to their desires, sexuality and subjectivity' while tackling

'underrepresented issues, such as salary inequalities, racial discrimination in the industry, homosexuality, single-parent families and non-normative sexuality' (292).[7] Of interest to this analysis is Sofia Leprince (Stéfi Celma), a mixed-race receptionist and aspiring actress, through whose character the series addresses racial difference in the French context. Apart from Hicham Janowski (Assaad Bouab), who joins the cast in S02, Sofia is the only non-white recurring character. In fact, she appears in every single episode and season.

Behind her desk in the agency lobby, Sofia is the first point of contact for arriving characters and she witnesses or participates in many storylines. Indeed, the desk quickly comes to represent a site of opportunity as well as a hurdle to overcome. In S01, E01, a tracking shot establishes the primary set by following star agent Andréa Martel (Camille Cottin) around the office as she chats with colleagues and gives orders to her assistant. As the camera pans across the premises, Sofia is almost always visible. A number of shots are composed so that she is in the background, behind her desk, yet always in the middle of two more important characters, be it a talent or a talent agent (see Figure 1). In a sense, we argue that this is representative of the way *Dix pour cent* treats not only the character of Sofia but the theme of racial diversity: it is a site to make new stories and new voices audible, but, as we discuss later on, it also struggles to overcome traditional tropes.

One of the first storylines in the series involves Andréa's search for a new assistant, after she bullies her current assistant until she resigns. Andréa first turns to Sofia, offering her a better-paying job. Yet, the following exchange ensues:

Andréa: How am I going to work without an assistant? [*To Sofia*] You interested in a promotion?

Figure 1. Sofia (Stéfi Celma) is flanked by Andréa (Camille Cottin), left, and her assistant Camille (Fanny Sidney) (*Dix pour cent*, S01, E01).

Sofia: No. I mean, that's very nice of you but I don't want to work here. I mean, not as an agent. I'm just working part-time because I'm an actress. I've mentioned it but you probably forgot. Speaking of which, I'm in a play right now.[8]

Andréa quickly ignores her, concerned about her own predicament. In the first few minutes of the episode, Sofia nevertheless appears as a strong-willed and dedicated young woman who is ready to use her liminal position in the agency to her advantage. She makes an interesting distinction here between the work she does (to pay her bills) and who she is: 'I'm an actress.' From this early moment on, Sofia consistently defines herself in terms of her career aspirations, and is given the screen time to criticise others when they define her primarily based on her race. As a supporting character, Sofia's visibility becomes a mechanism for portraying the kind of discriminatory experiences exposed by the contributors to Maïga's collection. Yet for *Madmoizelle.com*, Celma explains of her character:

> It makes me happy that Sofia's progression in 'Dix pour cent' is due to her talent and not the colour of her skin . . . I find the series's choices [regarding the representation of diversity] for Sofia but also for Andréa brilliant. We are shown as real people, not as stereotypes! (Haegel 2020)[9]

As such, like Andréa – and Arlette, ASK's oldest agent and a strong-minded, childfree and sexually active woman – Sofia is somewhat transgressive because she is strong-willed, determined and not limited to essentialised gendered expectations, but more so because she encourages a conversation about Blackness in France.[10] In the same interview, showrunner Herrero addresses criticisms the series has received for a lack of diversity or willingness to explore racism in the film industry, with these themes being largely limited to Sofia's character. She acknowledges these shortcomings and notes: 'It is through feminism, in particular, that I have become attuned to intersectionality and that I have become more cognisant of topics such as racism [. . .] Diversity is much more present in the show I'm currently working on!' (Haegel 2020; Herrero is referring here to the 2022 limited series she produced, *Drôle*, about Black, Maghrebi, Asian and white stand-up comedians in Paris).[11]

In S01, E02, Sofia decides to take matters into her own hands and slips her resume and headshot into one of Gabriel's envelopes to a casting director. In the following episode, when Gabriel finds out because Sofia receives an audition for the part, the two argue loudly in the lobby:

Sofia: You don't know if I can act? Then come and see my show. No one offers me auditions, okay? Well, now I've landed one, so get off my case!

Gabriel: No, you didn't 'land one', you stole one.

Sofia: Did you say 'stole'? Are you accusing me?

Gabriel: Yes, 'stole'.

Sofia: No, I added myself to the pile, that's all. I added myself. Does [the casting director] want to see me or not?

Gabriel: That's not the question!

Sofia: So, she's interested, right? What difference does it make to you if I audition or not? You didn't mind using me for your lies with Cécile de France. [. . .] But now you suddenly have principles?

Gabriel: My lies? Now, calm down! Calm down, okay?

Sofia: Suddenly you have scruples? It's always the same story with you.

Gabriel: [*picks up phone*]: Hello, Laura?

Sofia: Gabriel, we're having a conversation. Once in a blue moon, I invite someone to see my show. No one comes. I've asked Barneville, Andréa, even the old lady with her mutt! None of you give a damn!

Gabriel: Enough already! I'll come see your show, okay? (S01, E03)[12]

This scene is key in that it allows Sofia to highlight the doors that have been closed to her as an actor, and the need to take matters into her own hands, as she has no connections with the industry (unlike other actors, such as Laura Smet mentioned below). It also shows her to be as strategic as her superiors, as someone who can play the game as well as the series's agent stars. Indeed, *Dix pour cent* owes much of its comedic appeal to its lying, manipulative, ruthless agents. Sofia, having been recently used by Gabriel to cover one of his mistakes (in order to placate Gabriel's client Cécile de France, mentioned above), is quick to call him out on his so-called 'professional ethics'. The cinematography of the scene also reflects Sofia's resistance to Gabriel: at first, the camera is positioned across the front desk at shoulder level, with Gabriel standing over Sofia. Yet, as soon as he enunciates the word 'stole', she stands up and reverses the dynamic (see Figure 2).

Indeed, the reference to theft, a clear trigger word for Sofia, is historically loaded. In 'La représentation des Noirs dans le cinéma d'animation américain: entre pseudosciences et

Figure 2. Sofia physically dominates Gabriel (Grégory Montel) (*Dix pour cent*, S01, E03).

circulations intermédiatiques transnationales (1907–1946)', Pierre Cras explores the connection between racist scientific discourse and racial stereotyping, along with the process of Othering in US animation.[13] Citing Donald Bogle, he shows how Black characters had exaggerated physical traits and were portrayed as 'untrustworthy, mentally deranged, lazy' and who 'only knew how to eat watermelons, steal chicken, play dice and massacre the English' (Cras 2021).[14] These attributes have long influenced filmmakers and industry stakeholders, and the racist legacy of these tropes is yet to be fully undone.[15] Niang confirms that 'Black individuals rarely play lead roles or are often shown in the same manner: *banlieusard* or idle troublemaker' (Niang 2019, 215).[16] Sofia carries with her a historical weight and refuses to dismiss Gabriel's theft comment and thus to be associated with these racist tropes. She has stolen nothing; she did not remove another profile from the envelope, and she has been chosen to audition based on her profile alone. What lies behind their exchange, too, is the question of merit, as though acting was detached from other social realities, hierarchies and injustices. By pointing out that no one has come to see her show despite her numerous invitations, she also underlines the role that chance plays in being discovered as a new talent – and the role that racism can also play in not being discovered.

It is striking that this episode's two guest stars are Nathalie Baye and Laura Smet, real-life mother and daughter. One could argue that Laura Smet – daughter of Baye and French music icon Johnny Hallyday – has no more merit than Sofia; Laura was born into the industry. Moreover, towards the beginning of the episode, Baye gives Sofia some acting tips in an almost maternal manner, which further highlights the fraught nature of merit: Laura has had constant access to her mother's years of experience; Sofia rehearses alone at work. Overall, throughout the above exchange, Sofia makes a point of rectifying Gabriel's claims, because words matter. Even after he picks up the phone, she refuses to be silenced and convinces him to come and see her show after all. Celma's height and natural hairstyle further draw attention to Sofia's sense of empowerment, self-assurance and determination. As a woman of colour, she also stands out at the end of the episode when Gabriel watches her moving performance (in a mediocre play with a mediocre white cast). Dressed in white, stage lights showering her, she demonstrates strong singing and acting skills that move Gabriel to tears.

Sofia's attention to words makes room for important conversations to take place. Once Gabriel has signed her up as one of his talents, he faces a number of rejections because: 'She's too Black'; 'She has the right personality but she's too … Too white?'; 'she's too Black to play the cop but not Black enough to play the dealer!' (S01, E04).[17] Considering the relative lack of Black or mixed-race guest stars throughout the series, and the fact that he seems to have no talents of colour, Gabriel now faces a form of awakening. Though 'she's got talent', she does not fit the industry's expectations. On a somewhat more positive note, the talent–agent relationship offers Sofia some rest from direct rejection as Gabriel shields her and reassures her that he receives 'Only good feedback. Everyone thinks [she's] great' (S01, E04).[18] Zélie Asava's *Mixed Race Cinemas: Multiracial Dynamics in America and France* remarks that a number of recent films that centre racial difference, 'deal with experience of intolerance […] and explore discourses of racial mixing across multiple boundaries, providing representations that aim to undermine stereotypes. In different ways, they also highlight the perceived threat of mixed subjects to Western ideologies' (Asava 2017, 3). *Dix pour cent* likewise seeks to break down the stereotypes and

to relate to minoritised viewers. Celma recounts: 'Many mixed-race women told me they loved this scene [Gabriel on the phone with casting directors], because it echoed what they've experienced, and what I've experienced' (Haegel 2020).

However, Gabriel is not immune to typecasting. In S01, E06, he is excited about an opportunity for Sofia to have a role in one of Luc Besson's productions. In a rap style, he describes the part as a 'supporting role with a mega payout [. . .] A sex-bomb with the pin pulled. Half-Yamakasi, half-escort-girl. A real ball-breaker, but a sexy girl. And who dances . . . hip hop! [. . .] That's you, right?'[19] Unwilling to let this major opportunity go, she lies to him about her dancing abilities and later tries to learn routines with online videos. The wide shot of Sofia practising alone at night in the empty office to a YouTube video resonates once more with the earlier question of merit and support. She eventually fails the audition and accidentally throws a stool at the casting director's assistant. Following the debacle, Gabriel asks for an explanation: 'What the hell did you do? Constance is asking "Who is that lunatic you sent me?"'[20] She finally admits to not knowing how to dance hip hop. In his office, Gabriel is once again standing behind his desk, scolding Sofia, who refuses to look down and finally retorts:

Sofia: But you came to me and offered me a hip-hop role! You think because I'm Black, I can dance hip hop?

Gabriel: I'm sorry? That has nothing to do with it. And it doesn't explain why you knocked out her assistant! There are rules in this business. This agency has a reputation. So do I! You can't behave like a savage!

Sofia: 'A savage'?

Gabriel: Yeah, a savage!

Sofia: Are you calling me a savage, Gabriel? So I'm either a slave, a hip-hop dancer, or a savage? That's it? What's next, an ad for Banania? You're as stuck in those clichés as everyone else! You know what? Take me off your books. (S01, E06)[21]

During the scene, the hierarchy is once again reversed as Sofia starts yelling and stands up while Gabriel sits down and remains silent (see Figure 3). The exchange is a powerful interaction that brings forth the systemic and lingering nature of racist stereotypes and practices, as epitomised by the reference to the smiling Black man from the colonial-era 'Y a bon' Banania commercial. If 'the slogan [. . .] translates [the Black man's] struggle with the subtlety and complexity of the French language', Sofia's powerful retort sends Gabriel a clear signal that, on the one hand, he is complicit in reproducing racist prejudice, and on the other, that she will not stay still and silent, like a poster (Niang 2019, 221).[22]

This is perhaps where the limitations of *Dix pour cent* become clearer insofar as Sofia's narrative development hinges at all times on her skin colour. Celma celebrates the fact that her character's talent is the sole reason for her progression, yet most (if not all) her work scenes include an element that ties in racial considerations. Her first role as an extra, in S01, E04, is that of a slave in a period drama. Gabriel is concerned, but Sofia is simply thrilled to finally be in a film. Later, in the fourth season, she has been nominated for the César for Most Promising Actress for a highly sexualised role, which she loses. As Haegel notes, 'the only actress of colour runs away from the award ceremony . . . when she does not get the award [. . .] before two white men greet another white man while receiving

Figure 3. Sofia uses language to put Gabriel in his place (*Dix pour cent*, S01, E06).

their awards' (Haegel 2020). Throughout the series, Sofia is indeed empowered and displays clear artistic skills, but she is nevertheless defined – even if in subtle ways – by her racial identity. In S02, E03, she meets offbeat French singer Julien Doré, with whom she connects and whose muse she becomes. Doré wants her as the lead in his debut musical feature (for which she later receives the above nomination). The short excerpt we see shows Sofia, as Artémis – goddess of wild animals, nature, chastity and childbirth – being seduced by Doré in a botanical *mise en scène* before they engage in loud (off-screen) intercourse. The film, titled *L'Océan jouit* ('The Ocean Comes'), reinscribes Sofia into a sexual narrative connected to nature. One could argue that Doré's persona in real life and in the series is very much connected with nature, romance and desire, but the *Océan jouit* role gives Sofia little room to be anything other than another (hyper)sexualised woman of colour (cf. Tarr 2002, 29).[23] As Niang deplores of Céline Sciamma's 2014 *Bande de filles*/*Girlhood*, one 'cannot ignore that the spirit of rebellion, insolence, violence or sexuality [. . .] can be interpreted as excessive [. . .] when applied to minoritized subjects' (Niang 2019, 228–229).[24] On a final note, the romance storyline between Sofia and Gabriel, which emerges shortly after he signs her up (though they do not kiss until the last episode of S01), re-sexualises her and complicates once more the way the other characters perceive Sofia's acting successes. Though the relationship allows for dramatic plot developments, the dynamic denies Sofia space to progress on her own and only creates added stereotypes about the actress who sleeps with her agent to succeed (as pointed out by a critical and nasty casting director in S02).

Overall, *Dix pour cent* deploys an effective process of *mise en abyme*, whereby an emerging actress of colour plays an aspiring actress of colour who brings to our attention the struggles she experiences in the film industry. Though she has her own personality, interests, goals and pleasures, Sofia becomes the voice of French actors of colour who have little visibility or who are frequently typecast. This creates a paradox in which Sofia's

role both calls attention to racialised typecasting, and ultimately perpetuates it. Despite Celma's positive perception of her character, *Dix pour cent* does not entirely shrug off the patterns that Maïga critiques, in which Black actors' 'presence in French films [and series] is still too often due to the unavoidable or anecdotal need to have a Black character' (Maïga 2018, 8).[25]

Coding racial and gender identity in *Plan cœur*: Charlotte Ben Smires

Plan cœur (2018–2022) tells the story of 29-year-old Elsa (Zita Hanrot), who is still pining for her ex-boyfriend Maxime (Guillaume Labbé) two years after their break-up. Her best friends Charlotte (Sabrina Ouazani) and Emilie (Joséphine Draï) are desperate to help her move on. They conspire (although it is mainly Charlotte's idea at first) to set her up with a sex worker, 'Jules Dupont' (whose real name is Julio Saldenha, played by Marc Ruchmann), who agrees to play a Prince Charming figure to help Elsa forget Maxime, without her knowing the casual liaison was transactional. The series then follows a classic romantic comedy formula, as Jules/Julio and Elsa develop a genuine connection despite the false pretences which become increasingly difficult for him and Elsa's best friends to conceal. Comedy ensues over three seasons that evoke traditions of French farce within the genre context of the Anglo rom-com, even once Elsa discovers Julio's true identity and the two fall in love in earnest.

Though the titular 'plan cœur' or 'hook-up plan' is the narrative driver of the series, *Plan cœur*'s primary focus is on the friendship between its three main women, who are each French and of a different racial background. Elsa is mixed-race (her father is Black and her mother played by an actress, Stéphanie Murat, with some Algerian heritage), Emilie is white and Charlotte is Maghrebi.[26] In a genre and gender subversion of *La Haine/Hate* (Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995), they are a *Black blanc beur* trio (Harrod 2024). A wordplay on the *bleu blanc rouge* of the French flag, the *Black blanc beur* motif was popularised in the 1980s and 1990s, originally in connection with the racial diversity of the French national football team of Zinédine Zidane's era. The term then entered the general cultural consciousness and was crystallised in the masculine trio of the 1995 *banlieue* film. *La Haine*'s main characters are the Arab Saïd of North African background (Saïd Taghmaoui), the Black Hubert of sub-Saharan African background (Hubert Koundé) and the white Vinz of Russian Jewish background (Vincent Cassel), who were all born in France and raised in the Parisian *banlieue*. Nathalie Etoke describes the *Black blanc beur* motif as an antidote to the unpopular notion of multiculturalism in France: a neutralising means to express 'the desire and urgency to invent a new discourse of citizenship that will solve the current social and identity crisis' (Etoke 2009, 159).[27]

Plan cœur's trio have been best friends since childhood. They never discuss their racial identities amongst themselves, and Elsa and Charlotte are never posited as being from – or feeling that they belong – anywhere other than France. In this way, the series could be seen as constructing quite a radical example of the kind of unmarked identity that Richard Dyer argues has traditionally been available only to white groups (2017). Indeed, *Plan cœur* quite literally replicates the *La Haine*-style *Black blanc beur* character makeup, but in a feminised and far less racialised context (see Figure 4). At a shot level, it is worth noting that the trio's belonging in Paris is also never questioned. As Figure 4 shows, they are

Figure 4. *Plan cœur* situates its multiracial protagonists against the iconic Parisian landmark of the Basilique du Sacré-Coeur (S01, E01).

positioned at the forefront while the iconic Basilique du Sacré-Coeur shines in the background. Unlike in *La Haine*, Paris is not a destination to be visited, but home.

The critical reception of the series in France, while quick to criticise its formulaic Anglo-style genre elements, is unsurprisingly universalist in its discussion of the characters. *Le Monde*'s Martine Delahaye calls the central trio 'three beautiful young women "BFF" (*best friends forever*)' without mentioning their racial or ethnic identities (2018).[28] The only time any of the women mentions another's race is when Charlotte teases Emilie, who is pregnant and in a long-term relationship with Charlotte's brother Antoine (Syrus Shahidi), suggesting that Emilie has chosen the Maghrebi Antoine as her partner to enrage her white parents, who support Marine Le Pen's extreme-right Rassemblement National party. However, this conversation posits Antoine, not Charlotte, as the vector of racial difference, and Emilie's racist parents as the object of critique. In fact, it is the white Julio who is most connected to a foreign identity (Portuguese) and who feels the need to repress this identity in order to craft a Franco-French persona that is palatable to his French clientele. (When he first introduces himself to Elsa as Jules Dupont, she immediately asks whether it is a pseudonym). Indeed, the only reference the trio make to their own diversity is in metaphor: one of their group traditions is to order a large half-and-half pizza, one half with toppings and one without. Emilie eats two of the slices with toppings, Charlotte eats two of the slices without and mixed-race Elsa eats one slice of each. On more than one occasion (such as during the Covid lockdown special episode), the three are filmed eating their slices in separate places, united visually and emotionally by a swipe frame technique. In this way, they symbolise the mixity of their friendship, their unity and their equal *piece of the pie*.

The remainder of this article focuses not on the main character of Elsa, whose racial identity is never mentioned, but on her best friend Charlotte. Charlotte is played by the most prominent actor in the series, Sabrina Ouazani, who rose to visibility in France in

a range of Maghrebi-led films in the 2000s, including Abdellatif Kechiche's *L'Esquive/Games of Love and Chance* (2004), Asghar Farhadi's *Le Passé/The Past* (2013) and Kechiche's *La Graine et le mulet/The Secret of the Grain* (2007). Charlotte's character appears to be written both to respond to Ouazani's filmography and depart from it. In her 2015 book *Muslim Women in French Cinema*, Leslie Kealhofer-Kemp writes of early twenty-first-century screen representations of Maghrebi women in France, including those featuring Ouazani: 'to what extent do [these] films offer new perspectives on the place of Maghrebi migrants and their descendants in France and their relationship with their culture of origin?' (2015, 8). Charlotte is perhaps the most extreme example of such 'new perspectives' to be found on contemporary French screens.

Firstly, at no point is it suggested that Charlotte and her brother Antoine are from a Muslim family. Their family name, Ben Smires, suggests they are more likely of Jewish background, which, if keeping with the *La Haine* parallel, would result in an unusual blending of the Saïd and Vinz archetypes. Along with films such as Karin Albou's *La Petite Jérusalem/Little Jerusalem* (2005), it would also constitute one of very few representations of Maghrebi-Jewish families on French screens. Either way, neither Charlotte nor her brother Antoine refers to or enacts any religious practices or identities on screen. Secular, sexual and fiercely independent, Charlotte is the opposite of the screen stereotype of the young Maghrebi woman in France, who Tarr describes as 'the young veiled Arab female, presumed to incarnate a submissive, alienated femininity, attributed to her inability to free herself from patriarchal traditions' (Tarr 2011, 129). Like the women in Kealhofer-Kemp's case studies (such as Zouina in Yamina Benguigui's *Inch'Allah Dimanche/Sunday God Willing* (2001)), Charlotte 'challenge[s] common perceptions of [Maghrebi] migrant women as silent and passive' (Kealhofer-Kemp 2015, 11). She aligns more with the characters Mehammed Amadeus Mack describes, who 'challenge common perceptions that [Arabs] maintain unmodern attitudes about sexuality' (Mack 2017, 1).[29] She has no connection to the *banlieue*, living in the *chambre de bonne* above her brother and Emilie's 9th-*arrondissement* apartment. She also subverts the stereotype Sylvie Durmelat and Vinay Swamy have described in French cinema of the 2000s, whereby 'descendants of Maghrebi immigrants, after three or four generations in some cases, are still being set apart from mainstream French society, as opposed to offspring of European migrants, who often become "invisible"' (2011, 4–5). In *Plan cœur*, Charlotte sees herself and is seen by the series in universalist terms; it appears she has attained the desired 'invisibility' of a European.

Charlotte begins her journey as the series's woman-child and a liminal citizen, unwilling to commit to a career, a partner or even an address. She is proud to reject the conventions of monogamy and treats work like a game with a series of humorous gig economy roles. She delivers the most comedic subplots and slapstick scenes in the series. In this way, more than referencing any previous Maghrebi woman character in France, she most clearly recalls the American character of Tuca, the noncommittal toucan played by Tiffany Haddish in Lisa Hanawalt's bird dramedy *Tuca and Bertie* (2019–2022). *Tuca and Bertie* is also a Netflix Original Series and a key example of the platform's library of Anglo-American feminist content targeting a mostly millennial/Gen-Z woman audience. *Tuca and Bertie* also echoes *Plan cœur*'s approach to multicultural universalism. Though *Tuca and Bertie* is American, its setting is the abstracted location of 'Birdtown'. All its main characters are played by people of colour (the African American Haddish as Tuca, the

Asian American Ally Wong as Bertie and the Asian American Steven Yeun as Bertie's partner Speckle), but their portrayal as birds distances the characters from distinct, lived racial identities.

Charlotte's professional and personal flightiness is heightened by comparison with the other members of her friendship group: Emilie and Antoine have been in a relationship since high school, the former now a respected architect who cannot stop herself from working late in her pregnancy, and the latter a nurse, whose noble career becomes the object of admiration during the film's Covid-focused third season. Elsa and Maxime, though they haven't been together for two years, were in a long-term relationship and both work as bureaucrats at the Paris Hôtel de Ville. Matt, the third man in the series's male trio, is single but a successful businessman who is frequently seen travelling around Europe for work. By contrast, Charlotte is presented as a stunted, immature member of the group and the source of many of the series's jokes. When she begins secretly sleeping with Matt, she is horrified at his attempts to convince her to date him. Her only long-term convictions and connections appear to be her friendships with Emilie and Elsa and her sibling relationship with Antoine.

However, Charlotte's character undergoes the most significant evolution of any character (except perhaps Julio, who abandons his lucrative career and French pseudonym, despite the financial and social loss to himself and his struggling mother, to be with Elsa). Midway through S01, Charlotte has the idea to start an Uber-style ride-sharing app operated for and by women, 'Pinkars'. Her journey to small business ownership and full-time work capitalises on her gender identity (her understanding of women's safety needs and her conventionally feminine appearance and persona) but remains a pipe dream until Matt pressures her to create a business plan, at one point tricking her into attending a bank meeting to request a loan. The contrast between them is visually mapped during a business conversation scene, in which Charlotte is filmed in sneakers and bare legs, phone in hand and seated cross-legged on a conference table, a visual anomaly in the professional office environment, while Matt incarnates the stereotypical office worker, sitting in an office chair in front of his laptop. Later, the even more capitalistic and enterprising Maxime will negotiate her a lucrative buyout. The entire storyline is posited as a maturation arc for her character.

But it is when Charlotte strikes up a forbidden relationship with Maxime that her character growth really begins. Maxime is an aspiring politician and a long-time misogynist. In the special pandemic episode released in August 2020, Charlotte begins to use Pinkars to drive health workers to and from work for free. This is the moment when Charlotte's racial identity is mentioned for the first time. In a bid to help Charlotte's business, as well as to capitalise on his 'woke' connections, Maxime, the Communications Director at the Mairie de Paris, sees an opportunity for media attention. He makes a phone call in which he pitches the story of 'A young woman with an immigrant background who offers transportation to caregivers'. Charlotte then briefly falls into the role of arm candy for Maxime as he prepares an old-fashioned and misguided run for mayor of the 9th *arrondissement*. It eventually becomes clear that Maxime sees something in Charlotte that she does not see in herself (and that no one else in the series has seen in her so far): a symbol of racial diversity in the French context, something that he can capitalise on for his political benefit. In an uncomfortable scene in which Maxime gives his first speech to a small crowd of constituents, standing against a tricolour tinsel

backdrop and paraphrasing Charles de Gaulle, Maxime's perception of Charlotte's identity is made crystal clear. She is a diversity token *and* a model of 'assimilation' (a concept dear to the Rassemblement National):

Maxime, *from podium*: We are here to inaugurate a place, yes, but mostly to launch a movement of hope for the residents of the 9th district. And, if there's one person here who embodies this modernity . . . it's Charlotte Ben Smires.

[. . .]

Maxime: Charlotte Ben Smires. A woman bred from immigration.

Charlotte: That was a very long time ago . . .

[. . .]

Maxime: [. . .] she became, out of love, and out of passion for me, our movement's first private donor. [. . .] A woman with whom I've formed the greatest team, and soon the greatest of families. *Inch'Allah*! (S03, E03)[30]

Of course, the campaign and the relationship are both doomed to fail. When Maxime sends Charlotte for breast augmentation surgery to better incarnate a trophy wife, the doctor discovers a lump in her breast. She breaks up with him to focus on the support of her friends as she undergoes treatment. However, Charlotte's maturation is not yet complete. Soon after, she launches her own campaign for mayor of the 9th (against Maxime, among others), her speech focusing entirely on *co-citoyenneté/co-citizenship* in the district but not at all on her own racialised identity. The scarf she wears wrapped around her head is not a religious or ethnic signifier, but a fashion choice to conceal her scalp, bare from chemotherapy.

We then flash forward two years, to a scene in which she wears a very different kind of *écharpe*. The penultimate scene of the series takes place at the Montmartre carousel (famous for its role in the telescope scene of Jean-Pierre Jeunet's 2001 *Le Fabuleux destin d'Amélie Poulain*/*Amélie*) – also referenced in S01, E01 – where Elsa and Emilie are seated. The camera is positioned from below, looking up at the balcony over the carousel. Charlotte appears at the ledge, looking down on Elsa and Emilie, her head once again scarf-free and crowned in regenerated curls, a tricolour sash draped around her chest. The triumphant image playfully evokes *Marianne*, the emblem of the French Republic (see Figure 5).

Charlotte, *looking down from balustrade*: Hello, my little constituents.

Emilie, *looking up*: No. We're in the 18th district.

Charlotte: Practically in the 9th. Besides, in two years, I'm taking over Paris as mayor.

Elsa, *looking up*: Your sash is beautiful, Chacha.

Emilie: You didn't have to.

Charlotte: Yes, I did have to. It's like a second skin. And, on my land . . . (S03, E06)[31]

Over *Plan cœur*'s three seasons, Charlotte grows from marginal social participant to capitalist to democrat, a self-made woman who builds her livelihood, identity,

Figure 5. Sabrina Ouazani as Charlotte resembles *Marianne*, the Republican emblem (*Plan cœur*, S03, E06).

independence and sense of belonging through two forms of participation in French society: civic action and commercial enterprise. Her business success relies on her gender identity, but Maxime's tokenisation of her race fails. Her political success is made possible by her Frenchness, her disinterest in racialising herself and her refusal to be racialised by others. *Plan cœur* ultimately depicts Charlotte as a Republican ideal according to contemporary visions of Frenchness. This ideal includes women of colour; however, it advocates a secular, unmarked identity which does not ask its audience to consider the potential for a Frenchness that might be hybrid in linguistic, national, religious or other terms. The Muslim migrant woman trope that Maxime tries to project onto Charlotte is revealed to be a hollow cliché, not a viable French identity. The notion that she might be Muslim, or an Arabic speaker, or identify as a migrant woman ('femme issue de l'immigration') is not only untrue in Charlotte's case, but used as a tired stereotype that can be exploited by white people for sympathy, rather than reflective of how a 'real French woman' might be.

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For Régis Dubois, the French cinema industry fails its actors (and French people) of colour. Despite many efforts from the government in favour of minorities and their visibility in the media, change and concrete actions have yet to be fully implemented and seen (Dubois 2016, 99). Charlotte's civilising arc from unemployed squatter to start-up owner to *tricolore*-wearing mayor of the 9th *arrondissement* in *Plan cœur*, and Sofia's evolution from secretary to star via a series of racialised tropes in *Dix pour cent*, offer us deeply complex visions of contemporary Frenchness. Sofia and Charlotte are both French women of colour rendered in universalist terms, such as comedian Aïssatou in *Drôle* (2022), police officer Sofia in *Lupin* (2020–), internet addict Manon in *Détox/Off the Hook* (2022) and other French women of colour in

Netflix France series. Of these texts, we ask ourselves conflicting questions. Are we witnessing a radical evolution in the possibilities for inclusion and being on French screens, or is this a form of tokenisation of race that, in the end, fails French people of colour and undermines the very real struggles they face to be accepted as citizens?

As Mame-Fatou Niang writes, 'the Republican ideal requires adherence to a model whose foundations prevent fringes of the population from expressing singular characteristics' (2019, 12).[32] These series do not include, for example, practising Muslims or Jews, traditional dress or languages other than French. On the one hand, this might exclude cultural diversity from modern visions of Frenchness, asking women of colour to abandon their heritage (be it religion, cultural practice, accent, language, cuisine or dress) in order to belong in France. On the other hand, it might allow women of colour to be seen separately from their identity unmarked and unracialised, a normalisation that has only been allowed of white characters in the past. Overall, we argue that these series can do both. On the one hand, they can open up new and necessary understandings of Frenchness that depart from the exotic othering of the past. On the other, they can reproduce exclusionary ideas of what it means to be French in a France that is devoted to the colour-blindness of universalism.

Notes

1. 'Plus de trois cents films français sont produits chaque année. L'on ne compte plus les festivals de cinéma et de théâtre en France. Les Molière récompensent chaque année des dizaines de pièces. À la télévision, il n'y a jamais eu une telle production de séries. Et pourtant, il subsiste un vide retentissant en termes de représentation de la réalité sociale, démographique, ethnique française. Comment les réalisateurs et réalisatrices observent-ils ce vide ? En ont-ils conscience ? Se sentent-ils en phase avec la société dans laquelle ils vivent ?'
2. 'en 2000, déjà, Calixthe Beyala et Luc Saint-Eloy les interpellaient depuis la scène des César.'
3. '16 % des personnes sont perçues comme non-blanches en 2019'; 'la perception qu'en aurait la plupart des téléspectateurs'; 'elles représentent 52 % de la population.'
4. The question of 'ethnic data' is likewise at the heart of many discussions. Officially, since 1978, 'it is forbidden to collect or handle personal data that show, directly or indirectly, someone's racial or ethnic origins, political, philosophical or religious opinions or union affiliations, or that relate to their health or sexual health' (Art. 8, Loi n°78–79). See https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/article_lc/LEGIARTI000037822923
5. 'À part Christiane Taubira, je n'ai pas l'impression que j'existe médiatiquement dans la communauté nationale. Il n'y a à peu près aucune représentation des femmes noires. C'est comme si nous étions complètement invisibles.'
6. For the purpose of this analysis, we will only be quoting official English subtitles from each series provided by Netflix.
7. Bourdeau remarks that Andréa demonstrates many of the historically negative character traits employed by filmmakers to depict lesbian characters. She is 'ruthless, antisocial and lacks maternal instincts'. The producers also created an incongruous heterosexual storyline – a very common cinematic trope – that disappointed many viewers (2022, 296). Nevertheless, she 'marks an important turn for television' insofar as 'she comes to represent womanhood detached from essentialised preconceptions' (298).
8. Andréa: Comment je vais faire sans assistante ? Ça vous intéresse une promotion ?
   Sofia: Non. Je veux dire, c'est très gentil, mais je veux pas travailler ici. Je veux pas être agent. Je travaille ici à mi-temps, parce que je suis comédienne. Je vous l'ai déjà dit, mais vous avez dû zapper. D'ailleurs, j'en profite, parce que je suis en spectacle en ce moment.

9. 'Ça me fait plaisir que ce soit le talent de Sofia qui caractérise sa progression dans "Dix pour cent", et non sa couleur de peau.' 'Je trouve que les choix de la série, concernant Sofia mais aussi Andréa, sont brillants. Nous sommes montrées comme de vraies personnes, pas comme des stéréotypes !'
10. She prioritises her career (and is not afraid to lie to succeed); she never speaks of family life; and her conversations with friends are not (limited to) romantic matters.
11. 'C'est par le féminisme, notamment, que je me suis sensibilisée aux questions d'intersectionnalité et que ma conscience s'est éveillée à des sujets comme celui du racisme. [. . .] dans la série sur laquelle je travaille actuellement, la diversité est un sujet beaucoup plus présent !'
12. Sofia: Vous savez pas comment je joue ? Ben vous venez voir mon spectacle ! Personne me propose des castings. Pour une fois que j'en décroche un, c'est bon, vous me lâchez !
    Gabriel: Pardon, vous l'avez pas décroché, vous l'avez volé.
    Sofia: Vous avez dit 'volé' là ?
    Gabriel: Oui, je l'ai dit.
    Sofia: Non, je me suis rajoutée, c'est tout. Elle veut me voir ou pas ?
    Gabriel: Oui, mais c'est pas la question.
    Sofia: C'est bien que ma gueule lui a plu. Qu'est-ce que ça peut vous foutre que j'aille à ce truc ? Après pour m'utiliser pour couvrir vos petits mensonges à Cécile de France, ça ne vous gêne pas. [. . .] D'un coup, vous avez des scrupules !
    Gabriel: Allô, Laura ?
    Sofia: Gabriel, on est en train de parler. Une fois tous les cinq ans, je vous demande de venir voir mon spectacle. Y'a personne qui vient ! J'ai demandé à Barneville, à Andréa, même la vieille avec son 'iench'. Personne ne vient.
    Gabriel: C'est bon, stop ! Je viens le voir votre spectacle ! OK ?
13. Cras, by way of Bogle, speaks of the figure of the *coon*, which is historically a comic male figure. However, the exaggerated traits applied equally to women, and were 'the product of an intermedial circulation born indirectly out of pseudoscience' [*le produit d'une circulation intermédiatique héritière indirecte des pseudosciences*] (2021). In another example, Cras further speaks of caricatures, informed by pseudoscientific discourse, which showed individuals with 'huge lips, a miniscule forehead, flat and large extremities, dark skin, and wearing bones in their hair. It is also impossible to distinguish men from women other than by their clothes' [*lèvres immenses, un front minuscule, des extrémités plates et larges, une peau foncée et se parant d'os dans les cheveux. Il est aussi impossible de distinguer les hommes des femmes autrement que par leurs vêtements*].
14. 'indignes de confiance, mentalement dérangés, fainéants'; 'ne savaient que manger des pastèques, voler des poulets, jouer au dés ou massacrer l'Anglais.'
15. 'Mamadou, homme de 25–30, agressif, comique sachant danser et faire des blagues de type Afrique centrale-Afrique du sud, surtout un noir (cf. Omar Sy, avoir habité en cité est un plus'; 'Rachid, accent arabe, type maghrébin, fin voleur qui doit savoir courir très vite.'
16. 'le Noir est souvent absent des premiers rôles ou régulièrement présenté dans les mêmes registres : banlieusard ou voyou désœuvré.'
17. 'Elle a la personnalité qu'il faut, mais . . . elle est comment dire . . . Trop blanche ?'; 'Elle peut pas être trop noire pour jouer la flic et pas assez noire pour jouer la dealeuse.'
18. 'J'ai que des compliments sur vous. Ils vous trouvent formidable.'
19. 'une espèce de second rôle méga payant [. . .] une espèce de bombe dégoupillée, moitié yamakasi, moitié escort girl, super casse-cou et sexy girl. Et qui danse le hip-hop. [. . .] C'est tout toi, non ?'
20. 'Qu'est-ce que t'as foutu ? Constance me demande : "Qui est cette folle que tu m'as envoyée ?"'
21. Sofia: Mais tu viens vers moi et tu me dis : 'Hip-hop, rôle pour toi.' Parce que je suis Noire, je sais danser le hip-hop ? C'est ça que tu veux dire ?
    Gabriel: Pardon ? Excuse-moi, mais ça n'a rien à voir. Et ça explique pas pourquoi tu es allée assommer son assistant. Y a des règles dans ce métier. L'agence a une réputation, moi aussi. On se comporte pas comme une sauvage.

Sofia: Comme une sauvage, tu dis, Gabriel ? C'est simple avec toi, c'est soit esclave, soit danseuse de hip-hop, soit sauvage, c'est ça ? C'est quoi mon prochain rôle, c'est une pub Banania ? T'es encore plus plein de clichés que les autres. Encore plus dégueulasse que ceux qui essayent d'en sortir. Tu sais quoi ? Tu m'enlèves de ton fichier.

22. 'le slogan [...] traduit ses difficultés face à la subtilité et la complexité de la langue française'. A brief comment about language: throughout the series, Sofia is the only one who exhibits, as early as the first episode, speech mannerism reminiscent of *banlieue* speech. During a brief meeting with Gabriel, she uses verlan, a typical *banlieue*-associated slang, and is less formal. This is less evident in the rest of the season(s), yet striking in the way the scene quickly introduces her as the aspiring actress of colour from the *banlieue*.
23. In her study of two '*banlieue*' films, *Samia* (Philippe Faucon, 2000) and *La Squale/The Squale* (Fabrice Genestal, 2000), which both 'received positive critical reviews' and 'generated controversy' because of the negative representations of *banlieue* life and immigrant subjects, Tarr investigates 'relations of power' (2002, 28) and the ways in which the directors failed to deliver on their critique of 'the pressures of an impossible socio-economic situation' (30). While they depict strong women characters, 'they identify the oppressive immigrant *banlieue* family and the patriarchal violence of young men of immigrant origin as the chief obstacle that stand in their way' (29–30).
24. 'ne peut ignorer que l'esprit frondeur, l'insolence, la violence ou la sexualité [. . .] peuvent être interprétés comme excessifs [. . .] lorsqu'ils sont accolés à des sujets minorés.'
25. 'présence dans les films français est encore trop souvent due à la nécessité incontournable ou anecdotique d'avoir un personnage noir.'
26. Bernard Murat, Stéphanie's father, was born in Oran.
27. 'la volonté et l'urgence d'inventer un discours citoyen nouveau qui résoudra la crise socio-identitaire actuelle.'
28. 'trois belles jeunes femmes "BFF" (*best friends forever*).'
29. It is important to distinguish that Mack writes about people of Maghrebi descent (which describes Charlotte) but also mostly about Muslim people of this heritage (which Charlotte is not). The fact that Charlotte does not identify with a Muslim background becomes more significant in a moment described later.
30. Maxime: Nous sommes ici, oui, pour inaugurer un lieu, mais surtout pour lancer un mouvement espoir pour les habitants du 9e. Et, s'il y a une petite personne ici qui incarne . . . le mieux cette modernité, c'est Charlotte Ben Smires.
    [. . .]
    Maxime: Charlotte Ben Smires, femme issue de l'immigration.
    Charlotte: C'était il y a très longtemps.
    Maxime: [. . .] elle est devenue, par amour, et par passion pour moi, la première contributrice privée de notre mouvement. [. . .] Une femme avec qui, nous formons la plus belle des équipes. Et bientôt, la plus belle des familles, *inch Allah*.
31. Charlotte: Salut, mes petites administrées.
    Emilie: Mais non ! Oh ! On est dans le 18e, là.
    Charlotte: Oui, enfin limite 9e. Et dans deux ans, je prends la mairie de Paris.
    Elsa: C'est magnifique, ton écharpe.
    Emilie: C'était pas obligé.
    Charlotte: Si, c'était obligé. C'est comme une second peau. Et puis, sur mes terres . . .
32. 'l'idéal républicain commande l'adhésion à un modèle dont de nombreux piliers excluent l'expression de caractéristiques propres à des franges de la population.'

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