

not want anything “foreign” to appear in her film. This is therefore one of many deliberate attempts to obliterate parts of Algeria’s rich and complex history.

Allouache highlights other major issues as well concerning Algerian society. One of the rooftops is being used by a group of young religious fanatics to jumpstart the specter of Islamic fundamentalism while hiding suspicious business activities. On another rooftop a pseudo-imam who turns out to be a charlatan takes advantage of credulous people who consult him about all sorts of problems, such as a woman troubled by marital and sexual issues.

Another story concerns the iniquity and cruelty that are prevalent in Algerian society. An old landlord is trying to evict a poor old woman from her makeshift shack on a rooftop, where she has been giving shelter to her niece and the niece’s teenage son. From the dialogue we learn that the niece had been raped by Islamic terrorists during Algeria’s Black Decade of the 1990s, an experience that led to mental instability, her expulsion from her own family, her husband’s suicide, and her illegitimate son’s consequent drug abuse. Moreover, in each of the stories the female lead musician stands on a rooftop in a cold night, frozen and helpless while witnessing the tragic end of another woman on the adjacent rooftop. Sexism and violence against women clearly constitute another major concern in this film. In sum, *The Rooftops* serves as a mirror for all Algerians who need to pause and ponder what has become of their country.

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Wanuri Kahiu, director. *Pumzi*. 2010. 22 minutes. English. Kenya. *Africa First: Volume One*. Africa First. \$14.98.

Pumzi, directed by Wanuri Kahiu, premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2010 as part of the New African Cinema program, and later earned the award for Best Short at the Cannes Film Festival and the Special Jury Prize at the Zanzibar International Film Festival. Described as Kenya’s first science fiction film, *Pumzi* tells the tale of Asha (Kudzani Moswela) who lives in an authoritarian society thirty-five years after World War III, also known as the “water wars.” As evidenced by the name of the war and the scenes in which guards distribute water to individual citizens or show Asha collecting and purifying her own urine as a method of recycling water, water is now an exceedingly rare resource. Earth no longer retains sufficient environmental stability to sustain human life due to the combined effects of climate change, capitalist exploitation, and global warfare.

The postwar society exists in a massive aboveground shelter where Asha works as the curator of the Virtual Natural Museum, dedicated to the preservation of life and culture. Awakened from a dream—an automated voice jostles her from sleep commanding her to take her “dream suppressants”—Asha finds a small white box labeled with latitudinal and longitudinal readings. The box contains a soil sample, and a test of the soil reveals the rare presence of water. Asha’s discovery sets off a string of events whereby she questions the authority of the ruling matriarchal Council over the fecundity of the natural world. Her adamant questioning leads to the potential destruction of the museum and her placement into forced labor producing electricity for the shelter. Once she recognizes the impending destruction of the museum, she manages to hide the seed with the collusion of a female museum worker. With seed and a small amount of water she escapes from the shelter, and after traveling an unknown distance she collapses in a vast desert wasteland. With her remaining energy, she plants and waters the seed, and although she dies in the desert, a tree manages to grow. As the film ends, the camera pulls outward revealing the tree’s growth as well as a nearby jungle and the sound of a thunderstorm. *Pumzi*, in this way, reflects Kodwo Eshun’s vision of Afrofuturism as “the exposure and reframing of futurisms . . . to forecast and fix African dystopia” (“Further Considerations of Afrofuturism,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3 [2] [2003]:293).

Wanuri Kahiu denounces the presumed “foreignness” of science fiction in Africa. In a 2014 TEDx talk entitled “No More Labels” (<http://tedxtalks.ted.com>) Kahiu celebrated the importance of nature in African storytelling: “We have always been telling stories. Even as oral storytellers, we have used nature in our stories. We have talked about animals. We have talked about organic sciences in our stories.” She commented that while she appreciates the concept of “Afrofuturism” as a shorthand for various works that make use of science fiction, speculative fiction, African myths, and folklore, she finds that specificity of the term assumes “an Afro-something” audience. Although Kahiu tentatively casts aside the “Afrofuturist” label, she grants that she would welcome the term from the perspective of “eco-awareness.” In this sense Afrofuturism engages ecological poignancy as a form of activism. The film’s tagline—“The outside is dead”—not only suggests the future of the natural world, but also imagines the inevitability of dystopia if humanity continues to participate in unthinking materialist consumption and continued exploitation of the environment. Aboubakar Sanogo goes as far as labeling *Pumzi*’s world as “postnature,” a suggestive term about the relationship between humanity and the environment (“Certain Tendencies in Contemporary Auteurist Film Practice in Africa,” *Cinema Journal* 54 [2] [2015]:14). Environmentalism and Afrofuturism, then, coexist to produce an indictment of unrestrained materialist consumption and its physical effects upon the natural world.

Environmental concerns intersect in the film with a number of other pertinent issues such as matriarchy/patriarchy, authoritarianism, technology and communication, classism, and poverty. Due to its short length, a number

of these ideas, such as the rationale for the necessity for an authoritarian government, remain undeveloped. Placing *Pumzi* in conversation with, for example, Jean-Pierre Bekolo's *Les Saignantes* (2005)—a futuristic film in which two female protagonists confront governmental power—might provide a productive counterpoint considering Kahi and Bekolo's vision of African futures. Generic form aside, *Pumzi* emerges from the history of African cinema as it calls for audience participation and conversation, not only among Africans and Kenyans but transnationally, for a concerted response to the threats to the planet. *Pumzi*'s success as activist cinema, then, depends upon its addressing global viewers to imagine their desired futures. The overriding sense of danger within *Pumzi*, the expectation of an imminent cataclysmic destruction of the environment, invokes contemporary practices of unregulated and untamed materialist consumption and asks viewers to wonder how their actions frame the world for future generations. Through *Pumzi*, Kahi proposes the imaginative potential of Afrofuturism as an ecocentric activist project.

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Andrew Dosunmu, director. *Restless City*. 2011. 80 minutes. English and French. United States. African-American Film Festival Releasing Movement. \$8.59.

We are in the middle of a global refugee crisis on scale not seen since World War II. Record numbers of people desperate to flee political and economic instability are leaving their countries of origin, by any means necessary. They risk deportation and even death, but there are those who successfully make it to Europe and the U.S. to begin a new life with their hopes and dreams. In his first feature-length film, the New York-based Nigerian director Andrew Dosunmu focuses on just such an immigrant. The protagonist of *Restless City* is Djibril, a twenty-one-year-old Senegalese man living in Harlem. He wants to make it as a musician, but when the film opens we find him peddling bootleg CDs on the street for Bekay, another West African who is the head of several illicit operations, including prostitution and loan sharking. It becomes clear how out of reach Djibril's big dreams are as we watch him negotiate the city on his moped, working as a messenger. He and his friends live jammed together in their apartment and are under constant pressure to find work. They are relative newcomers, and they have no safety net. Everyone in their community is in an equally precarious position. This, of course, makes them easy targets for exploitation by people like Bekay, who has found his success through brutality and economic oppression.

It is in Bekay's brothel that Djibril meets and falls in love with Trini, a prostitute. Her origins and backstory remain mysterious throughout the film,