are perceived as completely lost, in limbo—and therefore easy targets for the Salafists who use the Internet and satellite television to prey on them.

In one of the best segments of the film the celebrated Algerian writer Kamal Daoud asserts that only schools, books, and other positive cultural activities can push back against these strong Islamist forces. He adds that the concept of paradise itself has done much damage to society because it removes any incentive to produce something in this life. As the film as a whole shows, in presenting their particularly alluring promise of the afterlife, Salafists not only undermine our efforts in the present, but undervalue human existence itself. Those who fall victim to this ideology celebrate death and are willing to kill others in order to hasten their enjoyment of the glories that await them.

Merzak Allouache's aim is to unveil this sham. In depicting his native Algerian society, he manages to deconstruct the Wahhabist discourse while also presenting Algerians who have been working hard to counter radical Islamist forces, even sacrificing themselves in order to preserve the best aspects of their country: a modern, democratic, Mediterranean nation that is, above all, open to the promise of a better future. Homage to some of the most heroic opponents appears via archival footage, such as Tahar Djaout and Matoub Lounès, who were both assassinated during the "Black Decade," and Hocine Ait Ahmed, a symbol of opposition to French colonialism and then to the postindependance state.

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doi:10.1017/asr.2017.59

DOCUMENTARIES

Hubert Sauper, director. *We Come as Friends.* 2014. 110 minutes. English, Arab, Chinese and others, with English subtitles. Austria-France-Sudan. Adelante Films/KGP. No price reported.

We Come as Friends is a documentary film directed by the Austrian-born filmmaker Hubert Sauper, supported by ARTE Cinema and Eurimages. Sauper, the director of the acclaimed movie *Darwin's Nightmare* (2005), which presented the invasion of a fish species around Lake Victoria in Tanzania as a metaphor for globalization and economic exploitation of the ecosystem, is dealing in this case with the consequences of neocolonialism, racism, and capitalism in Sudan after the civil war and during the early days of the new Republic of South Sudan, which became an independent state in 2011.

The film begins with a voiceover that describes the arrival of an alien's aircraft in Africa. We are told that this Martian has only one eye (called "videocamera"), and we suddenly understand that this "alien" is in fact the filmmaker himself documenting his trips to Sudan between 2010 and 2012.

The aircraft is actually a "tin-can" airplane named Sputnik, built and piloted by him. He encounters all the different realities that coexist in Africa: war, children trained to become Christian soldiers, a Chinese oil refinery next to a mosque, South Sudanese centers of political and economic power, United Nations personnel and international peacekeeping forces, American Christian missionaries (most of whom seem to do anything but good) declaring Sudan "the new Texas." This film compares present and past, natural beauty and human interference, locals and strangers, the Western myth of progress and the worst consequences of postcolonialism.

By presenting himself as a stranger (or an alien), assuming a particular voice and recognizing its subjective point of view, Sauper creates a form of estrangement in response to this great complexity. This persona allows him to showcase local ironies, such as a United Nations ambassador trying to make a serious speech in front of a public that does not understand English. At other times Sauper attempts to establish a closer relationship with his interlocutors, letting people express themselves. For example, at one point he meets a Sudanese villager who is trying to understand the contract in which he sold his six hundred hectares of family land for the paltry sum of twenty-five dollars. In moments like this, individuals often express their confusion and show skepticism toward the future.

At no point, however, does Sauper try to demonstrate any particular point of view or to judge. On the contrary, in all these contexts he assumes a posture in which all kind of a priori ideas appear alien and strange. In this sense the documentary follows the trend in contemporary cinema in which, as Guy Gauthier suggests in *Le documentarie est un autre cinema* (Armand Colin, 2008), nonfiction films are moving away from the fallacy that "seeing" is equivalent to "believing." By means of a subjective first-person enunciation, this nonfiction film confronts reality in order to problematize it and signal its inherent complexity. As Sauper explained in an interview in *Filmmcomment*,

> so what do you describe out of this immense possibility? Out of a million people, what do you see? This is the biggest question in making movies. Nothing is sufficient. There is always 99 per cent of the picture missing. But I think the most important function of these kinds of films is to [create a] snowball. (http://www.filmcomment.com/blog/interview-hubert-sauper-we-come-as-friends/)

With its self-reflexive form, *We Come as Friends* does not attempt to answer any questions about Africa, human rights, or the human condition. On the contrary, it holds a mirror up to life. If, as Sauper suggests, "life itself is a huge compromise," we may reformulate this claim, adding that cinema, nowadays, plays a major role in this ethical commitment.

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doi:10.1017/asr.2017.60