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Cruel Paris: Transnational Feminist Approaches to *Banlieue* Cinema

A Dissertation Presented

By **Joy Carolann Schaefer**

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The Graduate School

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Dissertation Abstract

Cruel Paris: Transnational Feminist Approaches to *Banlieue* Cinema

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This dissertation explores films that represent the Parisian *banlieue* (suburban ‘ghettos’) as a transnational space in two distinct periods: the early 1960s, when U.S. popular culture and French colonialism in North Africa acutely affected the *banlieue*; and the post-9/11 period, in which Islamophobic discourses and policies proliferated in the West, rendering the *banlieue* an increasingly stigmatized space. “Cruel Paris” investigates how films invoke intertexts and re-inscribe genres to narrate the *banlieue* as a site of transnational negotiation, telling local stories that impel the spectator to envision France as a (post)colonial, transcultural community. Far from a utopian representation, this depiction critiques the exclusionary ideology of French Republican universalism—the imperative to value the citizen’s ‘abstract’ individualism and national identity over religious, ethnic, and gender identities in the public sphere. I argue that films of both time periods reveal the *banlieue* as a carceral space that contains and controls bodies that have been socially constructed as non-universal, i.e. marked as non-white, non-Catholic, or otherwise inadequate for universalization.

While scholars have used postcolonial theories to illustrate how *banlieue* films reflect the multi-ethnic reality of contemporary France, this lens does not necessarily include the analytical category of gender. In contrast, “Cruel Paris” employs transnational feminist theories to examine *interrelations* among (anti)racist, (anti)colonial, and (anti)feminist representations in an extended study of *banlieue* films. Precisely because of

its postcolonial theoretical inheritance, transnational feminism warns against using ‘women’s rights’ discourses for racist ends; it maintains that sexism is prevalent in all cultures, yet manifests in different ways; and it acknowledges that the meanings and experiences of intersectional identities and oppressions shift according to context. I closely analyze key films—*The Wasteland* (1960), *Octobre à Paris* (1962), *L’Esquive* (2004), *Caché* (2005), and *Skirt Day* (2009)—to uncover the structural racism, Islamophobia, and sexism that the spatial marginalization of the Parisian *banlieue* reifies. In representing the *banlieue* as causally linked to the interlocking histories of French settler colonialism in Algeria and U.S. cultural imperialism, these films expose integration as a cruel promise by demonstrating that *assimilation* is necessary—yet often impossible—for the mobility of non-universal French citizens.

I dedicate this dissertation to
my cousin, Eve Elaine Paetschow
who told me that I *must* finish
because I have the privilege
and opportunity
to do so

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Chapter One

Introduction

I. Spatial & Social Mobility in *Banlieue* Cinema

[A]ll border-crossing activities are necessarily fraught with issues of power. (Higbee and Lim 18)

On January 7, 2015, two young French-Algerians killed twelve workers and journalists in the office of the popular weekly satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, located in the 11th arrondissement of central Paris. The slogan and hashtag “*Je suis Charlie*” (I am *Charlie* [*Hebdo*]¹) was immediately taken up by the international online community, including left-leaning people—those with whom I am most concerned here—to show solidarity with the victims of the attack and to promote the value of freedom of speech.² Mainstream French and Western media represented the *Charlie Hebdo* journalists as martyrs, having died for the cause of freedom of speech. However, as French materialist feminist Christine Delphy writes,

most of the mainstream media failed to mention that Islam is the religion or the culture of the most underprivileged and loathed people in France, regularly denounced by not-at-all subversive dailies and weeklies, and that it does not take much anti-conformism and even less courage to draw cartoons packed with racist jokes that Muslims—and Arab-looking people more generally—must suffer in silence every day of their lives. (*Separate* xiii)

Two weeks after the attack, the French government laid out a plan for public schools, all of

¹ All translations from the French are my own unless otherwise indicated.

² In France, the value of freedom of speech is not as sacred as it is in the U.S.; the Gayssot law makes it illegal to deny the existence of the Holocaust and, as we will hear the students repeat under the threat of a gun in *La Journée de la jupe* (*Skirt Day*, Jean-Paul Lilienfeld, France, 2009), “In France, racial slurs are punishable by law.”

which are *laïques* (secular) in France, including teaching more courses on French Republican values in the hopes of reducing future terrorist attacks. These values include abstract individualism and universalism—valuing one’s French national identity over one’s religion, ethnicity, race, and gender in the public sphere. On November 13, 2015, a series of coordinated terrorist attacks occurred throughout Paris, ending in the deaths of 130 people. ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, a.k.a ISIL, Daesh) claimed responsibility for the November attacks as retaliation for French airstrikes in Iraq and Syria.

These attacks, along with the refugee crisis, instigated a Europe-wide discussion about tightening national borders, which threatened the freedom of movement within Europe that the Schengen Agreement and its associated visas secured (Mack 10). On Nov. 20, 2015, France’s Fifth Republic (1958-present) declared a national state of emergency, a colonial-era law³ that has since been extended six times—it is now the longest uninterrupted state of emergency since the Algerian War of Independence from French colonial rule (1954-1962). French President Emmanuel Macron (elected 2017) has extended the order once and promised to lift it by the end of 2017, suggesting it be replaced by a controversial permanent counterterrorism law. A state of emergency allows for police raids, the closure of mosques, and house arrests without warrants. Many citizens under house arrest lose jobs and educational opportunities. The majority of individuals who bear the brunt of these state-sanctioned violences are French-Muslims of North African descent (Kassem).⁴

The *Charlie Hebdo* and November 2015 attacks propelled the racist-Islamophobic

³ The law was passed on April 3, 1955. A state of emergency has been declared seven times before the 2015 declaration, six in colonial contexts and one in the context of the Parisian *banlieue*, which I will discuss in Chapter Two. Out of the 3600 police raids since 2015, many of which were conducted by the narcotics unit, only six potential terrorists were discovered, and only one was convicted (Kassem).

⁴ French-Muslims are thus doubly victimized: first by the state, which targets them in their security measures against terrorism, and then by the killers themselves, who do not spare French-Muslims (Kassem).

tendency for Western nations to conflate ‘Muslims’ with ‘Arabs’ with ‘terrorists’. These confluences often mimicked reactionary post-9-11 rhetoric⁵ and policies. They also underlined the importance of studying how Paris’ (post)colonial situation has evolved so that we might attempt to dismantle discriminations based on race, ethnicity, gender, language, national origin, and religion in the present. The ideology of French Republican universalism helps to buttress these discriminations because it prescribes that individuals embody an ‘abstract, universal’ citizen—an objective that is difficult or impossible for many people. The spatial marginalization of the *banlieue* (suburbs or the ‘ghetto’) reifies these pertinent issues of structural racism and classism, which are bound to issues of sexuality and gender. The *banlieue* films that I have gathered in this dissertation play on the tensions between universalism and cultural pluralism. They help us understand specific ways in which universalism and its subsequent assimilation model fail to include racialized and other non-normative subjects within the category of ‘French’. In fact, the policies that these ideologies produce often work to actively exclude them. I thus follow historian Joan Scott in insisting that democracy, in the present context, “requires that we recognize and negotiate differences” (*Politics* 8).

In *Reframing Difference: Beur and Banlieue Filmmaking*, Carrie Tarr defines *banlieue* filmmaking as “the work of directors aiming to represent life in the *banlieue*” (3). More specifically, *banlieue* films highlight the marginalization of this peripheral space and its inhabitants.⁶ Although some might argue that the segregation inherent to the *banlieues* concerns mostly socio-economic class (e.g. Mauger) in contradistinction to the segregation by

⁵ For an analysis and critique of this post-9-11 rhetoric, see Grewal, as well as Said’s pre-9-11 analysis of the media’s construction of the Muslim as threat, *Covering Islam*.

⁶ See e.g. Cadé, “Cinéma”; Jouss; Videau; Bloom; Tarr, *Reframing Difference*; Higbee, “Re-Presenting.”

race/ethnicity in the U.S.,⁷ I focus on the Parisian *banlieues* in particular because a disproportionate percentage of Arab, Black, and other racialized subjects who live in the big city regions of France inhabit *banlieues*.⁸ Under the category of ‘racialized subjects’, I include French postcolonial subjects and Muslim people of all national ‘origins’, since dominant French society (and Western society more broadly) has racialized them via colonial discourses, the media, and political discourses. Reflecting these intersecting categories of oppression, *banlieue* films tend to take on themes related to delinquency, poverty, discrimination, sexism, racism and, increasingly, xenophobia and Islamophobia.

More precisely, racialized subjects in France tend to live in *grands ensembles* or *cités*, “social (subsidized) housing estates that are home to a large cross-section of middle- and lower-income French and immigrant populations” (Geesey 162). HLMs—large buildings comprised of low-rent apartments⁹—comprise *cités*, but they can also be readily found in the *banlieue* outside of *cités*. The border that separates central Paris from the *banlieue* is the *Boulevard Périphérique*: a dual ring highway that surrounds Paris’ twenty *arrondissements* (administrative neighborhoods). Mireille Rosello writes, “‘*Banlieues*’ now evokes one single type of urban landscape: dilapidated areas of social housing populated by a fantasized majority of ‘foreigners’ and especially of ‘*Arabes*’” (“North African” 240). In *Sexagon: Muslims, France, and the Sexualization of National Culture*, Mehammed Amadeus Mack writes that the *banlieues* have

⁷ This is not to say that class does not play a large factor in the racial segregation of U.S. or French cities; I am arguing here that it not the only factor, nor is it always the most important.

⁸ Because the French Republic views itself as a ‘raceless’ nation due to the ideology of abstract Republican universalism, it is illegal to maintain statistics on race or ethnicity, so scholars do not have hard data on this. However, various scholars across the disciplines, including historians and sociologists, have pointed out that a disproportionate percentage of Arab, Black, and other racialized subjects who live in the big city regions of France inhabit the disadvantaged *banlieues* (e.g. Tarr, Hargreaves, Kassem).

⁹ *Habitations à loyer modéré*. In the U.S. context, HLMs are often called ‘the projects’; in the British context, ‘estates’.

come to be viewed as an impenetrable space, which further adds to their mystery, marginality, and perceived threat. The prevalent conflation of Islam with radical *Islamism* and terrorism,¹⁰ along with the current political climate surrounding ‘immigrants’¹¹ and refugees in France, makes this space-focused topic pressing. Sociologist Nacira Guénif-Souilamas writes that, especially since 9-11, the word ‘Arabs’ in France, “long synonymous with ‘savages of the *banlieues*’, entered into the semantic nebula of Islamist terrorism” and French Muslims were homogenized into a single group to circumscribe the perimeter of the war on terror (“*Française*” 126).

Tarr’s *Reframing Difference* brings together her pioneering essays on *banlieue* cinema written over a ten-year period and charts the development of *banlieue* and *beur* (the *verlan* back-slang term for *Arabe*; second-generation Arab-Maghrebi-French people) cinemas from the 1980s through the early 2000s. She contextualizes her book within France’s ongoing debates about the assimilation of post-colonial subjects and the “heterogeneous, multicultural nature” of contemporary France (1). While “a number of concessions¹² were made in relation to universalist principles [...] the question of religious and ethnic difference continues to provoke divisive public debates” (2). Tarr cites the headscarf debates that began in 1989 as an ongoing public polemic. She assesses the ways in which filmmaking in France might contribute to these debates by foregrounding the voices and subjectivities of ethnic minorities, thereby “reframing the way in which difference is conceptualized” (1-2). Her study reveals that representation of ethnicity is

¹⁰ Speaking of the French context, Hargreaves states, “The confusion between Islam and extremism became all the easier when, in the 1980s, ‘Islamism’ (which could readily be misread for ‘Islam’) gained widespread currency as a synonym for fundamentalism” (*Multi-Ethnic* 108).

¹¹ For why I sometimes place ‘immigrant’ in scare quotes, see page 40.

¹² Tarr cites the establishment of PACS (*Pacte Civil de Solidarité*, civil unions), which legalized same-sex domestic relationships in 1999, as a major concession.

an effect of authorship, e.g. whether the film is directed by a white-French or Arab-French person. Tarr claims that “films by and about the *beurs* offer a touchstone for measuring the extent to which universalist Republican assumptions about Frenchness can be challenged and particular forms of multiculturalism envisioned and valued” (3). She concludes that Maghrebi-French filmmakers desire to maintain their transcultural alliances and identities via acculturation and integration rather than through the French Republic’s prescription of assimilation, and that their films thus portray France as a “plural, multi-ethnic society” (213).

French Republican universalism claims to seek the cultural homogenization of French citizens in order to offer all equal rights in a stable Republic, yet policies and discourses that stem from this ideology often mandate the erasure of specific differences that the Republic perceives as inimical to universalism itself. Tarr uses postcolonial theories to argue that certain *banlieue*, and especially *beur*-authored, films begin to deconstruct universalism’s mandates by reflecting the culturally plural reality of France. Drawing on Tarr’s scholarship, I explore how select *banlieue* films negotiate, assess, or critique universalism in their narration of the *banlieue* as a transnational space. That is, they narrate culturally plural (global) elements within the nation, the city, the ‘ghetto’, and the ‘ghettoized’ public school (the local). I highlight cinematic representations of the transcultural experiences and identities of *banlieusards* (inhabitants of the *banlieue*),¹³ as well as the effects of transnational processes, such as colonialism and globalization, on both *banlieusards* and their spaces. The authors of “Transnationalism and Immigrant Assimilation in France” explain why the transnational framework is a significant intervention in debates about universalism and assimilation: “One of the implicit and basic

¹³ While *banlieusards* denotes a group of inhabitants of the *banlieue* that contains at least one man/boy, *banlieusardes* denotes a group of female inhabitants of the *banlieue*.

requirements of the assimilation model is that immigrants should not maintain strong relationship with their origin country. This belief is still widespread in France [...] Integration and transnational practices are thus widely seen as contradictory in French society” (Beauchemin et. al. 1). Transnational narration offers an alternative to nationalistic universalism by representing the intermingling of U.S., Maghrebi, and French cultures, as well as hybrid cultures that stem from this blending.

Inspired by Benedict Anderson’s idea that nations narrate themselves as secure, culturally coherent geo-political spaces through the production and consumption of media, I examine how *banlieue* films work to reshape the nation’s image of itself as an imagined transnational community. I guide the spectator through a close reading of these films, which allows us to recognize and negotiate ethnic, religious, and gender differences rather than insisting upon universalism as a clear and practical pathway to equal opportunity in France. To begin this project, I translate two important questions¹⁴ that film scholar Susan Hayward asks in her book *French National Cinema* into a transnational framework: to what extent and how does *banlieue* cinema reflect the transnational texture of French society? And, how do these key *banlieue* films reify or work to dismantle myths related to nation, universalism, integration, colonial relations, multiculturalism, transcultural experiences/identities, and transnational processes?

French national films allow citizens to imagine themselves as members of a “coherent, organic community, rooted in the geographical space, with well-established indigenous traditions” (Higson, “Limiting” 16). Conversely, *banlieue* films narrate France as a transnational space by representing a culturally plural Paris that counters dominant universal and national

¹⁴ Hayward’s original questions are: “to what extent and how does cinema reflect the texture of society on national level?”; and, “what myths does the national cinema [composed of both marginal and mainstream films] put in place and what are the consequences?” (15).

norms. These films allow the audience to envision France as an imagined transnational community—a space in which multiple cultures co-exist, even if conflict is involved. The films portray deep and continuing influences of both U.S. and Maghrebi cultures on French youth in the *banlieue*.

Decentering *banlieue* films of the 1980s and 1990s, I have chosen a handful of primary films as case studies because they represent the local spaces of the Parisian *banlieue* as sites of transnational negotiation in two distinct and important periods: the early 1960s and the 2000s. I focus on these time periods to underline the (neo)colonial and transnational continuity of the *banlieue* from the postwar period to the present. This method of comparing time periods also allows an examination of how the *banlieue* as transnational space has transformed over forty years. The first period is significant because the *banlieue* was acutely affected by the following in the early 1960s: the Algerian War of Independence; massive urban planning projects, which the government mandated via discourses of hygiene and safety (Silverstein, *Algeria* 92); and postwar U.S. cultural influence, which was institutionalized via “the economic leverage of the Marshall Plan and the cultural imperialism of Hollywood”¹⁵ (Kinder 36). The 2000s is an equally significant period because the decade saw the following: the attacks of September 11, 2001, which (we might argue) led to the French government passing the ban on the Islamic headscarf in public schools in 2004; the *banlieue* riots of October and November 2005; and the increasing presence of a media that consistently links the *banlieue* to ‘Islamist extremism’ and the ‘dangers

¹⁵ The Marshall Plan (1948-1952) was officially known as the European Recovery Program, during which the U.S. economically helped European nations after the destruction of WWII to prevent the spread of Soviet Communism. While Kinder is referring here to how the postwar national film movements of Spain, Italy, and Germany *viewed* the U.S. “as a hegemony,” I find this a useful way to view the U.S. postwar cultural imperialism of France as well. Moreover, due to the Vichy regime, France was also a “former Fascist nation,” although Kinder does not name it as such. The full quotation: “Within all three postwar national film movements of former Fascist nations—Italian neorealism, the New German Cinema, and the New Spanish Cinema—the United States would be figured as a hegemony that was able to replace, perpetuate, or co-opt fascism—primarily through the economic leverage of the Marshall Plan and the cultural imperialism of Hollywood” (36).

of multiculturalism’.

In *The Politics of the Veil*, Scott explains that French society often views U.S. multiculturalism as *communautarisme* (ethnic factionalism or separatism), which means valuing an individual citizen’s group identity above their national identity, and which directly counters the tenants of universalism (11). French Republican universalism is meant to defend the idea of the oneness and the sameness of all individuals, leaving little to no room for the recognition of group differences. Thus, universalism “is achieved [...] by making one’s social, religious, ethnic, and other origins irrelevant in the public sphere; it is as an abstract individual that one becomes a French citizen” (11).¹⁶ While in the U.S. there exists a legitimacy and political influence of hyphenated identities (e.g. African-American, Jewish-American, Italian-American), in France one is expected to assimilate to a singular culture with a shared language, history, and political ideology, thus becoming fully ‘French’—and nothing else. Differences cannot be formally or legally recognized, and no official statistics are kept on the ethnicities or religions of the French population (Scott, *Politics* 80).¹⁷ Because of this, conservative and liberal French people alike are proud to think of their nation as ‘colorblind’, yet colorblindness means not acknowledging race, which usually translates into the refusal to acknowledge *racism* (Chapman and Frader; Bleich; Schneider 88).¹⁸

Universalism becomes illogical in practice because some bodies easily fit into the mold

¹⁶ Chapman and Frader explain, “The founding myth of the Republic as ‘one and indivisible’ emphasized the unitary, universalist, and inclusive nature of the Republic as a polity based on individual rights, with little if any room for the recognition of group differences” (1).

¹⁷ “If differences are not documented, they do not exist from a legal point of view, and so they do not have to be tolerated, let alone celebrated” (Scott, *Politics* 80).

¹⁸ See also Hargreaves (*Multi-Ethnic*); El-Tayeb maintains that “Political racelessness creates a form of racialization that can be defined as specifically European both in its enforced silence and in its explicit categorization as not European of all those who violate Europe’s implicit, but normative whiteness, allowing to forever consider the ‘race question’ as externally (and by implication temporarily) imposed. The result is an image of a self-contained and homogeneous Europe in which racialized minorities remain outsiders permanently” (xxvii).

of the abstract universal French citizen, while others do not. It is the marked body, usually the body of a non-white ‘immigrant’, that is visible as non-universal, non-Catholic, non-‘French’. That is, these bodies are readable or “legible” (Grosz 207) as particular rather than universal. The bodily markers that French Republican universalism cannot wish away—such as skin color, non-European accents, the performative aspects of gender (e.g. a secular skirt) and the signs of religion (e.g. an Islamic headscarf)—make the promises of this ideology unrealistic. As Patrick Simon and Sylvia Zappi point out, “if the universal tends toward neutrality, it embodies [...] historical figures that represent the dominant group” (qtd. in Bancel and Blanchard 36). Because of this, universalism often becomes the institutional backer of racism, sexism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, and intersectional oppressions. Marked bodies disproportionately inhabit, and are associated with, the marginalized spaces of the *banlieue* and REP (Priority Education Network¹⁹)—a public school that the French state has deemed in need of special attention and funding because it is located within a ‘*quartier sensible*’ (‘sensitive neighborhood’), also euphemized as ‘difficult neighborhood’—a space that the government views as prone to violence and delinquency (read: ‘ghetto’).

Another way to understand French Republican universalism is by comparing it to the ideologies embedded within the American Dream, an “inherited fantasy” that cruelly promises²⁰ social mobility with the end goal of greater economic capital, property ownership, and a dependable life (Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* 31). The American Dream’s only demand is that the citizen ‘work hard’ within a capitalist system that claims to accept, and even celebrate,

¹⁹ *Réseau d’éducation prioritaire*. The former assignation for ‘difficult schools’ that received special funding from the government was ZEP (Priority Education Zone), created in 1990. Since the school system reforms of May 2015, these schools are now referred to as REP and divided into REP and REP+: difficult and extremely difficult.

²⁰ See Berlant and Prosser 183. The term ‘cruel promise’ is also inspired by the feminist affect theories of Ahmed; see e.g. *The Promise of Happiness*.

hyphenated identities. What I call the ‘Parisian Dream’ is similar to the American Dream in that they share optimistic narratives that are unrealistic and ultimately harmful to the dreamer.

However, the French version differs from the U.S. version in the following ways: it falsely promises social and *spatial* mobility that grant access to the *cultural* capital of central Paris, as well as to a sense of bohemian freedom that comes with it (in contradistinction to the security that the American Dream promises). Further, its only demand is that people in the Paris region become ‘universal’ French citizens by valuing and displaying their national identity while *suppressing* their other identities. In this way, universalism assumes that every person is capable of fully assimilating.

Despite these presumptions, the bodies, voices, names, and résumés of some remain marked. While *laïcité* (French secularism) was meant to be the agent of assimilation, attendance at certain schools often impedes students’ potential for upward mobility because their alumnus status exposes their social origins (Scott, *Politics* 99). In France, one is expected to include the name of their high school on their résumé, which inevitably signals to potential employers the neighborhood from which they come, and many employers discriminate against *banlieusards* because of this. While some *banlieusards* have a degree of choice (e.g. some Muslim girls/women are able to choose to perform normative French femininity), many others are *unable* to assimilate since the ‘universal’ abstract French citizen is not actually so²¹: he tends to embody an able-bodied, straight, white, middle- to upper-class man of Catholic background who speaks standard French with an accent from any Western European nation.²²

²¹ See also Ahmed, *Cultural Politics* 132-33. Describing universalism in the U.S. context, Shohat and Stam state, “the constitution ‘veiled’ White patriarchal domination in falsely universalist language, normalizing the power of White male institutions and identities” (*Unthinking* 22).

²² While there are certainly white people who live in the *banlieue*, one has a much greater chance of ending up there if one is *not* a non-Jewish white person of Western European origin.

Because race and socio-economic class are mutually imbricated with gender, it is necessary to take gender expression into account in assessing representations of *banlieusards*. The ideology of universalism puts various *banlieusards* at risk for discrimination, both on individual and structural levels, including girls and women (of any color or creed) who are viewed as rebelling against dominant, normative forms of French hetero-femininity. The risk of discrimination increases exponentially if that girl/woman is of color and/or wears an Islamic headscarf. Mack proposes the concept of virilism to discuss the cultural construction of the “virile immigrant,” whether a boy/man or a girl/woman. Virilism is different from masculinity because it necessarily includes elements of vigor, combativeness, and ambition (70). In addition, it comprises

a mixture of toughness, hardness, unruliness, assertiveness, and sometimes aggression which is projected onto male and female immigrants and their offspring [...] Virilism not only animates the ‘difficult’ Arab, black, and Muslim boys featured in sensationalized newscasts, it also defines their neighborhoods in the suburbs or banlieues, their religion of Islam, and the notion of immigration itself. (Mack 1)

Virilism often includes the characteristic of aggressive sexuality—the term’s connotation in the French language (1). This gender expression is much less Franco-French than it is transcultural: it is inflected by characteristics of urban U.S. American-of-color and French-of-color masculinities. This said, we must remember that virilism *as a social construction* is largely a product of Franco-French culture. Drawing on Mack, I explore the ways in which *banlieue* films narrate transnational relationships and cultures via their focus on racialized bodies, as well as bodies that are marked as non-universal via their transcultural gender expression.

Underlining the importance of close reading practices in film studies, I do close scene

analyses of select *banlieue* films, paying careful attention to their intertexts.²³ I thus aim to lend concreteness to the abstract notion of the transnational, allowing the reader/spectator to appreciate the details of these intricately crafted films as cultural texts that reflect their historical contexts. The chapters are ordered in such a way that the reader moves from the widest spatial scope to the narrowest. I first illustrate the dichotomy of central Paris and its *banlieue* in Michael Haneke's *Caché* (France/Italy/Austria/Germany 2005). I then move to the 'ghetto' of the *banlieue* 'zone'—a 400-hectare area located just outside central Paris' ramparts—in Marcel Carné's *Terrain vague* (*The Wasteland*, France/Italy, 1960). Finally, I examine the 'ghettoized' *banlieue* public school in Jean-Paul Lilienfeld's *La Journée de la jupe* (*Skirt Day*, France, 2009). I contextualize these films with comparative analyses of other key *banlieue* films, such as Jacques Panijel's documentary *Octobre à Paris* (1961-62); Mattieu Kassovitz's famous *La Haine* (*The Hate*, France, 1995); and Abdellatif Kechiche's *L'Esquive* (*Games of Love and Chance*, France, 2004), also set in a *banlieue* school.

Didier Lapeyronnie describes the *banlieue* as “a colonial theater” where inhabitants experience life as “the colonized” (214). Relatedly, Jean-Louis Pan Ké Shon maintains that the particularly ethnic segregation of the *banlieue* “expresses the failure of a deep-seated French republican imaginary ideal based on the three principles of liberty, equality and fraternity” (1603). We can see these descriptions come to life in *Caché*, which is why I begin with an analysis of it. The film formally embeds its two main characters within their respective living spaces: Georges Laurent (Daniel Auteuil), a white-French bourgeois talk show host, lives in central Paris, while Majid (Maurice Bénichou), an Arab-French man, is relegated to a *banlieue*

²³ As Tarr explains, “In order to evaluate French cinema as the site of competing discourses about what it means to be French, it is necessary to bring an intertextual analysis to bear on both mainstream French cinema [...] and cinemas of the periphery” (“French Cinema” 59).

HLM. The film reveals that these spaces are extremely different in regards to symbolic and economic capital, visually implying that class, race, and space are intricately connected in post-colonial Paris. Violent, childlike drawings and surveillance tapes of Georges' home begin to haunt him, provoking repressed memories to return in the form of flashbacks and nightmares. Eventually, a tape of Majid's neighborhood lures Georges to his HLM, where we are compelled to unlock the mystery of Majid's misery. It stems, in part, from the October '61 Massacre—when state forces murdered hundreds of nonviolently protesting Algerians in Paris. I connect *Caché* to the documentary *Octobre à Paris*, a film that narrates the massacre in an extremely different way, but which is just as striking as *Caché* in its representation of the *banlieue* as a (neo)colonial space that confines and controls non-universal inhabitants.

After illustrating the (neo)colonial continuity of Paris' topography across forty years, I focus on the period that *Octobre à Paris* represents: the early 1960s. I explore Carné's critically discarded social realist/Western film, *Terrain vague*, the first feature-length, fiction film to take as its central concern the social problem of delinquency in the Parisian *banlieue*. More specifically, it is set in the *zone*, the very space that would soon be paved over to build the *périphérique*. Adapted from a pulp fiction novel—a hardboiled slum narrative set in the 'inner city' of New York (Hal Ellson's *Tomboy*)—*Terrain vague* transculturally translates this U.S. 'ghetto' into that of France: the *banlieue*. A teenage girl, Dan (Danièle Gaubert), leads a *banlieue* gang (comprised mostly of boys) until the more experienced Marcel (Constantin Andrieu) escapes from a youth detention center, using stories of 'real crime' to gain control of the gang. He devises a plan to steal money from the cash register at an Esso gas station with the help of Lucky (Maurice Caffarelli), who works there—and who is interested romantically in Dan. Lucky bails on the plan and, while searching for him, the gang also stalks the implicitly queer, racially

coded, and unassuming Babar (Jean-Louis Bras), who broke one of his vows to the gang when he told Dan about the Esso plan. The film ends with Babar committing suicide due to the gang's harassment of him and because he finds his best friend Dan kissing Lucky. Despite the film's romantic 'happy ending'—Dan and Lucky escape the *banlieue* together—we are left wondering if their escape is worth the loss of Babar's life.

Continuing with the themes of youth and delinquency, I return to the decade that *Caché* represents (the 2000s), focusing on the specific location and topic with which I end the *Caché* chapter: the public school and *laïcité*—a particularly French version of secularism that stems from French Republican universalism. In *La Journée de la jupe*, Anxiety-ridden Sonia Bergerac (Isabelle Adjani) teaches middle school students canonical French literature in a *banlieue* REP school. During an unsuccessful class rehearsal of a Molière play—which echoes Krimo's (Osman Elkharraz) performance of Marivaux's classic play in Tunisian-French Kechiche's *L'Esquive*—Bergerac finds a gun in a student's possession. Retrieving the gun, Bergerac holds her students hostage to teach them the value of *laïcité*. The discourse of '*laïcité*' was instrumentalized to ban “conspicuous” religious symbols from public schools in France in 2004. I thus conclude the dissertation with a brief analysis of Faiza Ambah's medium-length film *Mariam* (France/Saudia Arabia/U.S./United Arab Emirates, 2015), which tells the story of a teenage Muslim-French girl's struggle during the passing of this law.

This dissertation employs transnational feminist theories to analyze this generically diverse set of *banlieue* films. This is the most productive theoretical framework with which to analyze the *banlieue* as a marginalized (post)colonial space because transnational feminism necessarily includes analytical category of gender in addition to socio-economic class, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, and post-colonial status. Many post-colonial, anti-racist, and

critical transnational film theories fail to sufficiently address the analytical category of gender, while many feminist theories do not adequately account for cultural difference.²⁴ While several article-length pieces have examined *banlieue* films through what we might call a transnational feminist lens,²⁵ none have used the terms ‘transnational feminism’ or ‘transnational feminist’ in their studies on *banlieue* cinema. In contrast, this dissertation both theoretically acknowledges transnational feminism as a significant interdisciplinary field and brings its specific import to bear on an extended study of *banlieue* cinema across disparate time periods.

Transnational feminists are careful to acknowledge how the meanings and experiences of intersectional identities/oppressions change in different historical, geographical, and cultural contexts. Precisely because of its post-colonial theoretical inheritance—which understands that (neo)colonial discourses and policies so often take the form of “white men saving brown women from brown men” (Spivak 296)—transnational feminism warns against using ‘women’s rights’ discourses for racist ends. Politicians, public figures, and the media have increasingly used this dangerous strategy in the past few decades, especially since 9/11. Further, transnational feminists urge us to recognize that sexism is prevalent in all cultures, yet manifests in different ways. This claim is important for anti-racist feminism because it reminds us not to demonize other cultures for sexist practices while we have our own in ‘the West’ and in the Global North that we can work to fix locally. It also reminds us to reflect upon how Western nations create and maintain war in nations of the ‘East’ and Global South, which devastates women and people of color. Our attempt to ‘save’ other cultures may be no more than a neocolonialist project (Mohanty; Abu-

²⁴ I will discuss this point further in section II.H., “Transnational Theories.” For an exploration of the lack of intersectional practices/demands in *banlieue* anti-racist and feminist activist groups, see Gullberg.

²⁵ See e.g. Gott; Sellier, “Don’t Touch”; and Tarr, “Looking at Muslims.” For an explicit use of transnational feminism in an analysis of two non-Parisian films that center on Maghrebi-French characters, see Meeran. For an explicit use of transnational feminism in a comparative analysis a French film and an Algerian film, see and Scott and Van de Peer.

Lughod).

Thus, while Tarr's *Reframing Difference* uses post-colonial and feminist lenses to analyze *banlieue* films' representations of ethnic minorities and women,²⁶ I use transnational feminism to more thoroughly examine how anti-/racist and feminist/sexist discourses and representations are *interrelated*. That is, I examine the social categories/oppressions of racialized religion and gender, but I also consider how these categories are mobilized separately to pit one against the other. French film scholar Geneviève Sellier, for example, shows how *La Journée de la jupe* puts "feminism at the service of Islamophobia" by foregrounding the issue of 'women's rights' around questions of perceived Muslim cultural difference ("Don't Touch"). Similarly, I explore how *banlieue* films engage with the discourses and policies that utilize 'women's equality' to scapegoat minority cultures within France. I also ask: how do these discourses and policies affect racialized girls/women differently than they affect racialized boys/men?

While much of Tarr's filmic archive comprises *beur* films, my close readings tend to focus on white-male-authored *banlieue* films, with the exception of (Arab-Tunisian-French) Kechiche's *L'Esquive* and (Saudi Arabian) Ambah's *Mariam*. I then foreground the voices and

²⁶ Chapter Five and the Conclusion of *Reframing Difference* are especially illuminating in regards to Tarr's take on the interrelation of ethnic minority and gender issues. In Chapter Five, "*Beur Women in the Banlieue*," Tarr explains: "As well as negotiating a place for themselves within a fundamentally male-dominated French cinema industry, films which centre on realistic representations of young French women of Maghrebi descent need to situate themselves in relation to Republican discourses on assimilation as the route to integration, and to orientalist discourses, islamophobia and anti-Arab racism, the product of centuries of French colonialism" (87). In her Conclusion, Tarr writes that "there is only a limited critique of the effects on the second and third generations of the Arabo-Berber-Islamic sex/gender system. Arranged marriages are condemned in *Cheb* [Rachid Bouchareb, France/Algeria, 1991] and *Douce France* [Malik Chibane, France, 1995] but otherwise the male-authored *beur* films do not address the question of patriarchal violence against women. This is in part because the construction of masculinity in these films is geared towards challenging negative associations of *beur* youths with sexuality, violence and criminality. *Beur* films [...] represent their protagonists, however sympathetic, as lacking in agency, their minor acts of delinquency the inevitable consequence of an impossible socio-economic situation" (212). Tarr also footnotes Guénif-Souilamas (*Des "beurettes"*), who we could view as a transnational feminist scholar (22, 97). In a later article, "Looking at Muslims," Tarr analyzes a handful of post-2005 French films that represent Muslims and she critiques Islamophobia against both boys/men and girls/women in French Republican discourse and policy; in addition, she footnotes Guénif-Souilamas and Macé (517).

subjectivities of ethnic/religious minority characters and female characters *within* mostly white-male-authored *banlieue* films: *Caché*, *Terrain vague*, and *La Journée de la jupe*. I purposely use the simplest definition of the ‘*banlieue* film’ (Tarr, *Reframing* 3) to widen the analytical scope because these films—even if they do not adhere to many of the *banlieue* film genre characteristics that some scholars have outlined—contribute to the overall representation of life in the *banlieue*. Moreover, my three primary films have been criticized for (respectively): their inability to allow the post-colonial subject to speak (*Caché*); consistently critically derided (*Terrain vague*); and read through an unforgiving “paranoid” critical lens (*La Journée*). Employing a transnational feminist lens, I take another look at these *banlieue* films to explore how they use the intertextuality of other filmic and literary genres to articulate the tensions between pluralism and universalism. I examine how they narrate the *banlieue* as a transnational enclave in different ways, and for different ends, according to their filmic genres, intertextual elements, and historical contexts.

The specific field of *banlieue* cinema studies falls within a broader interdisciplinary field of *beur* and *banlieue* studies.²⁷ Regarding the ‘*banlieue* film’, Higbee states, “Critics [initially] debated the significance of a ‘new’ category of film that, for the first time since the Western, was primarily defined by its geographical location” (“Re-Presenting” 39). The characters in these films often take up marginal spaces within the already peripheral space of the *banlieue*. For example, in *Terrain vague*, the gang members lay claim to an abandoned factory; in Algerian-French Mehdi Charef’s momentous *beur* film, *Le Thé au harem d’Archimède* (*Tea in the Harem*, France, 1985), the adolescents often meet in the basement; and in *La Haine* we see the main characters attend barbecues on the roof of their HLM—and police officers subsequently kick

²⁷ See Sayad; Wacquant; Hargreaves, *Multi-Ethnic France*; Kleppinger; and Mack 14.

them off. Further, *banlieue* films (and especially *beur-banlieue* films) contain “interethnic alliances” between white-French and Arab-French *banlieue* youth “combined with a realist aesthetic that employed the alienating architecture of the housing estates to reflect the exclusion felt by the film’s youthful protagonists” (Higbee, “Re-presenting” 39). We find these alliances in films such as *Le Thé au harem*,²⁸ *La Haine*, *L’Esquive*, and even (as I will argue) in the early *banlieue* film *Terrain vague*. *La Haine* even showcases a central *black-blanc-beur* (Black-white-Arab) set of characters. In addition, *banlieue* films—both white-French-directed and Arab-French-directed—tend to portray women doing domestic labor (we will see this as early as 1960 in *Terrain vague*). Finally, *banlieue* films have “mythologized the *banlieue* as a cold, inhuman place—the antithesis to the charming *centre ville*,” illustrating how difficult it can be to grow up there (Blatt 520).

I show how the space-focused genre of *banlieue* cinema overlaps with other genres to explore the generic hybridity and diversity of *banlieue* films. Following an early genre theorist, Andrew Tudor, I define ‘genre film’ as a film that contains “a set of conventions” (4) that depend upon specific interrelations among common plot structures, themes, actions, settings, characters, clothing, actors, archetypes, iconography, and *mise-en-scène*. Tudor adds, “A genre film depends on a combination of novelty and familiarity. The conventions of the genre are known and recognized by the audience, and such recognition is in itself a pleasure” (22-3). Genre films draw on traditions to feed audience expectations, but they often also deviate from those traditions. These “generic alterations and violations” (Grant 142) are often intended to surprise or shock the

²⁸ Higbee states that the most prominent example of the intersection of *beur* and *banlieue* filmmaking in the 1980s was Charef’s *Le Thé au harem d’Archimède*; “Much of the strength of the intersection between Maghrebi-French and *banlieue* filmmaking in France at key moments since the early 1980s has come from the fact that these films function as a form of implicit or explicit social criticism of mainstream French society’s prejudices towards (and apparent indifference to) the plight of the *banlieue*” (“Re-Presenting” 39, 40)

spectator. Because certain genre films historically contain dominant ideologies, they can also work against audience expectations to produce “subversive” messages within what Barbara Klinger terms “the progressive genre”: a film that exposes classical (mainstream Hollywood) formal and narrative elements as a product of dominant capitalist, sexist, and racist ideologies.²⁹

I look critically at genre to analyze the complexities of *banlieue* films’ political effects, showing how the films reinscribe genres and instrumentalize intertexts to articulate their narratives. For example, *Caché* is both a psychological thriller and an art house film, for which formal elements hold the highest value. Genre plays an extremely important role in this film because, as I will argue, *Caché* inspires spectators to find out more about (post)colonial Paris due to the intricate binding of its formal elements (as art house film) to its plot (as mystery and thriller). Conversely, while *La Journée de la jupe* views like a straightforward Hollywood-style hostage thriller, it *exploits* this genre to show that it realizes itself to be a film. Using distancing techniques via numerous allusions to its French and U.S. intertexts, *La Journée* forces the viewer to recognize the film as a cultural construction that does critical work in addition to entertaining us.

Edward Buscombe writes, “Constant exposure to a previous succession of films has led the audience to recognize certain formal elements as charged with an *accretion of meaning*” (22, my emphasis). We often refer to these formal elements as iconography. For example, the presence of knives and blood in *Caché* remind us of previous thriller and horror films, which

²⁹ Klinger writes, “The progressive generic text is [...] antirealist, as it rattles the perfect illusionism transmitted by a major sector of classic cinema” (97). Important for the progressive genre are the following characteristics: a pessimistic world view; “the demolition of values positively propounded in dominant cinema’s characterization of the role and nature of social institutions” (e.g. the law, the family); a narrative structure that exposes, rather than suppresses, ideological contradictions and tensions; a refusal of closure; stylistic self-consciousness and formal excess; and an excessive foregrounding of gendered and racial stereotypes in order to acknowledge the danger of them (99-103).

have historically been charged with mainstream ideologies. Barbara Creed and others have shown how classical and mainstream horror genre films are infused with misogynistic and racist beliefs. In this way, *Caché* turns traditional horror/thriller ideology on its head by exposing its anti-colonial and anti-racist stance. The horror genre icon of blood in the childlike drawings that Georges receives becomes actualized only when the post-colonial subject turns the knife on himself, leaving the white-French citizen (and the spectator) to reflect on his errors. Similarly, the presence of a gun in *Terrain vague*, *La Haine* and *La Journée de la jupe* alerts us to the genres of film noir and Western films, wherein the gun symbolizes masculine power, control, and violence. The gun thus reminds us of familiar U.S.-produced films that have come before these key *banlieue* films. The use of this icon in *La Journée*—along with various references to U.S. culture, including hostage films—urges us to think critically about the effect of U.S. cultural influence on the *banlieue*. Moreover, we are surprised that a woman middle school teacher—a figure we often view as maternal—wields the gun for the majority of the film. By forcing us to ask why a person who is expected to act in *caring* ways would use a gun against her students (her ‘children’), the film compels us to assess the role of an important social institution in France: the public/secular school.

In representing the Parisian *banlieue* as a space of exclusion that is causally linked to the interlocking histories of the *banlieue*’s working-class roots, French settler colonialism in Algeria, and U.S. economic and cultural imperialism, *banlieue* films allow the spectator to envision France as a transcultural community that offers an alternative to the exclusionary ideology of French Republican universalism. Far from a utopian representation, the *banlieue* films in my archive represent structural racism, Islamophobia, sexism, and daily oppressions that the spatial marginalization of the (neo)colonial *banlieue* reifies. They emphasize the tendency for

‘universal’ bodies to move freely across borders, such as the *périphérique*. I connect these films to their cinematic and literary intertexts to reveal the *banlieue* as a carceral space that controls bodies that have been socially constructed as non-universal or inadequate for universalization. In the films of both time periods, *banlieusards* are contained in this marginal space, harmed when they cross into the ‘refined’ spaces of central Paris, or coerced into performing universal ‘Frenchness’—which they may or may not be capable of attaining.

II. From Universalism to Transnational Feminism

A. Overview

In general, the Fifth Republic of France struggles with accepting identity politics *à l'américain* due to the Jacobin ideas promoted since the Revolution of 1789: a desire for neutral, universal, individual citizens instead of group-identified people who could possibly break the continuity of the Republic and therefore rupture its stability.³⁰ French scholars and politicians alike have long claimed that France is the perfect example of the assimilation paradigm, able to transform immigrants of all backgrounds into French citizens, and the Jacobin-Republican assimilation model continues to maintain legitimacy in general (Simon and Amiraux).

Nevertheless, this model has been challenged in numerous ways throughout modern French history. Although the *loi Chapelier* (Chapelier law) made *associations* (interest groups³¹) illegal in 1790, since 1901 the French government has required them to register for official recognition and, once registered, they can enjoy certain rights and significant subsidies from the government. Identity-centered groups and discourses proliferated *dans le sillage de May '68*—in the aftermath of May '68. The events of May and June 1968, which were influenced by the decolonial movement in France and Algeria (Ross, *May '68*), began to rattle the notion of the abstract, universal citizen. While Kristin Ross claims that May '68 was an anti-identity movement that was only later remembered as distinct groups that fought for their own unique vindications (*May '68*), the movement nonetheless led to an increased discussion of identity politics in academic, political, and popular discourses. Especially since the 1980s, interest groups in France have accepted identity politics as a perfectly legitimate form of fighting for

³⁰ Mazur states, “In the name of Jacobinism, the centralized state apparatus has taken a pivotal role in guiding democratic change and minimizing the role of organized interests in that change” (84).

³¹ Delphy comments on the large number of *associations* and political groups in France (*Separate* 20).

vindications. Despite these historical shifts, there remains a deep-rooted fear of U.S.-style multiculturalism in France.

In this section, I offer brief histories of the origins of universalism and its institutionalization, as well as an account of the increased entry of identity politics into French political life. I do so because this dissertation argues that select *banlieue* films illustrate the *banlieue* as a space that tends to enclose and control bodies that are marked as non-universal. To attempt to influence the sexist and racist policies that cause these tendencies, we must first understand why this control of non-universal people occurs, and thus why dominant discourses and policies still uphold universalism—along with its more famous counterpart, *égalité* (equality)—as the most significant French national values. Within the following subsections, I recount some of the discriminations that various social classes of people (e.g. women, ethnic minorities, Muslims) have faced due to universalism and its influential contemporary counterpart, *laïcité*. I also offer brief summaries of literature that has critiqued the harmful symbolic and material effects of these ideologies. I conclude this section by proposing that transnational feminism is the most inclusive and productive critical lens with which to understand and tackle these problems.

B. Notes on Vocabulary

Some French people use the term *français de souche* to demarcate ‘purely French’ people. This term translates into ‘of French stock’, ‘of French extraction’ or, as Delphy puts it: “Franco-French” (*Separate*). While Delphy probably uses this term ironically, Mack points out that it has increasingly been used by xenophobic authors, in parallel with the rise of the extreme right nationalist party, the *Front National* (FN, National Front), to posit an essential, pure Frenchness.

The term is used “to mark an often tenuous difference between people descended from one of the ‘original’ French peoples within the borders of the hexagon (French territories in continental Europe) and people who arrived in France via one of the more ‘recent’ waves of immigration (which since the 1960s have been majority Muslim)” (9). Despite the FN’s discourse, as Gérard Noiriel illustrates in *Le creuset français*,³² the ‘original’ French peoples descended from a multitude of origins—including Gallic, Germanic, Roman, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Armenian, Polish, Jewish (Sephardic and Ashkenazi) and Lebanese—due to wars, annexations, occupations, intermarriage, and immigration (each of these, in turn, are composite identities stemming from various ethnic mixtures). Adding (post)colonial immigration to this mix has created what can now be called a “multiethnic France” (Hargreaves, *Multi-Ethnic*).³³

For these reasons, and even though ‘*blanc*’ is rarely used in the French context, I use the term ‘white-French’ to demarcate a French person who is not a visible racial or ethnic minority, and whose other origins are unknown. This choice of terminology falls in line with the goals of Richard Dyer in his book *White*. He states, “As long as race is something only applied to non-white peoples, as long as white people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm” (1). In naming a director or character as ‘white-French’, I attempt to de-universalize whiteness and unravel the conflation between ‘French’ and ‘white’. I also retain the term ‘Franco-French’ for particular cases; for example, because Isabelle Adjani is of Berber (and not Arab) origin, I describe her character in *La Journée de la jupe* as ‘Franco-French-passing’ rather than white-passing. I also use the term ‘Franco-French’ to denote the (oftentimes enforced) *cultural* belonging that the ethnicity-based term ‘white-French’ may not denote.

³² *The French Melting Pot*

³³ See also Tarr 213; Mack 9.

Film scholars have argued over the best way to categorize films made by second or third generation Maghrebi-French filmmakers, which are often (but not always) *banlieue* films. One of the two most common terms is ‘*beur* cinema’, a label coined in 1985 that denotes the ethnicity of the filmmaker.³⁴ Tarr claims that the use of this term “challenged the (continuing) dominant French misnaming of second- (and now third-) generation Maghrebis as ‘Arabs’ and ‘immigrants’” (*Reframing* 48-9). Some film scholars are attentive to the fact that *beur* has since become a problematic term. While Maghrebi-French people invented the word via the linguistic mechanisms of colloquial *verlan* back-slang, which inverts syllables, it has since become a racist slur in certain contexts (subsequently producing the double-inverted word, *rebeu*). Its lack of geographic specificity adds to its gradual decrease in use among educated Maghrebi-Arab-French people.³⁵ The term “*banlieue* cinema” largely replaced the *beur* label in the 1990s, allowing both white-French-authored and *beur*-authored representations of the *banlieue* to be grouped together. Rather than the ethnic background of the filmmaker, this label simply denotes the setting of the films.³⁶

Scholars in other fields have also discussed these vocabulary issues. In *Des “beurettes” aux descendantes d’immigrants nord-africains*,³⁷ Guénif-Souilamas explains the ways in which the term ‘Maghrebi’ has been used since the 1980s as a screen term that covers over racial self-

³⁴ The term “*cinéma beur*” was coined in a special issue of *Cinématographe* in July 1985 (Tarr, *Reframing* 2; Naficy 96). “*Beur*” authorship can also come in the form of novels, etc., such as Mehdi Charef’s *Le Thé au harem d’Archimède*, which was a book before it was made into a film; see Kleppinger.

³⁵ See Hargreaves, “From ‘Ghettos’” 30; Naficy 96; Gross, McMurray, and Swedenburg 13; and Wagner.

³⁶ See Cadé, “Cinéma”; Jous; Videau; Tarr, *Reframing* 49; Higbee, “Re-Presenting.” Other terms used for films made by Maghrebi-Arab-French people include “postcolonial,” “diasporic,” “transnational,” and “accented” cinema (Naficy; Shohat and Stam, “Introduction”). Hargreaves states that the *beur* label does not do Maghrebi-French cinema justice; he examines Maghrebi-French cinema in the context of the ethnicity of its filmmakers, while also arguing that “diegetically and intertextually (i.e., in its allusions to and borrowings from other films) this body of work extends far beyond ethnic markers of this kind” (“From ‘Ghettos’” 25-26, 30).

³⁷ *Beurettes: The Female Descendants of North African Immigrants*

naming. She argues that the terms *beur*, *rebeu*, and *arabe* have potential to produce solidarity, while the term ‘Maghrebi’ is connected to a dominant, centralized French Republican colorblindness that avoids statements of ethnic pride. Following Guénif-Souilamas, Mack states, “Opting for [...] Arab-French allows one to mirror the frequency of French North Africans referring to themselves as Arab [...]. The epistemic violence involved in not using the term Arab appeared to me greater than that involved in using it” (8). I follow this line of thinking to a degree, while (as Mack does) also referring to specific nations from which one immigrates or descends, e.g. Tunisian-French or Algerian-French—terms which signify that one should not presume that the person is Arab since they could be Berber.³⁸ In addition, I continue to use the terms ‘Maghrebi’ or ‘Maghrebi-French’ (French of North African descent) to demarcate Berbers who populate or originate from the former French colonies of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, and who do not identify as Arab. I also use these terms to refer to a group of North African people (or French-North Africans) when the individuals within that group originate from various North African nations and/or are of an unknown ethnic origin (i.e. they could be Berber or Arab or both).

In *Multi-Ethnic France: Immigration, Politics, Culture and Society*, historian Alec G. Hargreaves defines and differentiates numerous terms that have been deployed (or ignored) in French public policy since the 1980s. While colorblindness generally continues to reign and the term ‘immigration’ remains a screen concept for issues such as ‘race relations’ and ‘multiculturalism’, several steps have rendered these issues more explicit, leading to practical anti-discrimination and pro-integration policies. Hargreaves writes, “Decolonization and the

³⁸ This important differentiation between the terms ‘Arab’ and ‘Kabyle/Berber’ seems to be absent in Mack’s work. For accounts of these cultural and ethnic differences, as well as how French society has constructed the Berber people as compared to Arab people, see Silverstein, “Realizing Myth”; and Scott, *Politics* 48.

near-revolution³⁹ of May 1968 had led many of the left to adopt a favorable attitude towards cultural pluralism” (182). For example, François Mitterrand explicitly endorsed the principle of “*le droit à la différence*” (the right to difference or diversity) during his campaign for the 1981 presidential elections (qtd. in Hargreaves, *Multi-Ethnic* 182). Mitterrand’s administration took new measures to improve the housing, employment, and educational prospects of minority groups, in addition to allowing (and substantially funding) *associations* started by and for ‘foreigners’ (to do so before this, foreigners needed prior approval from the Ministry of the Interior). This political climate and openness to the idea of cultural pluralism led to a discourse of ‘insertion’ (similar in meaning to ‘integration’), but the rise of the FN in the early 1980s caused the left to decrease their use of this discourse (Hargreaves, *Multi-Ethnic* 182-3).

Due to the massive media coverage of the 1989 headscarf affair,⁴⁰ ‘integration’ became an official public policy term, though in practice it had already structured the policies of parties of the left and right for several years. However, the ‘integration’ discourse backfired. Hargreaves states that “the extreme right was only too glad to acknowledge cultural differences—and to infer from them the right of one ethnocultural group to exclude another” (184). He concludes that, despite the ambiguity of ‘integration’, the mere use of the term proved that some levels of French society acknowledged and accepted the permanent settlement of ethnic minorities in the *métropole* (the parent state of a colony; in this case, the territory within France’s hexagonal borders). Similarly, its widespread use in the late 1980s and 1990s worked to clearly differentiate the established political parties from the relatively new FN, which was founded in 1972 (*Multi-Ethnic* 183-184).

³⁹ This is perhaps a generous way to view May ‘68. It was a cultural repositioning and a social upheaval, but protestors were never close to taking down any of the major institutions of the French Republic.

⁴⁰ On the 1989 ‘headscarf affair’, see also Guénif-Souilamas, “*Française*” 113-4.

In his updated 2007 introduction, Hargreaves writes that another shift has occurred, marking a clear difference from vocabulary use in the 1990s: “New buzz words such as ‘diversity’, ‘visible minorities’ and ‘equal opportunities’ have now made it possible to speak in a politically correct fashion (by French standards) about issues such as multiculturalism, ethnic minorities and anti-discrimination without directly using those words” (*Multi-Ethnic* 2). He also returns to the term ‘integration’, which has increasingly been used to describe “the incorporation within French society of people originating outside of it” (9). It has thus served as the French equivalent of British and U.S. American term ‘race relations’; yet, while ‘race relations’ implies the acknowledgment of perpetually different yet co-existing groups, the discourse of ‘integration’ tends to assume that differences should be *reduced*—and that this is a desirable goal (9, 36).⁴¹ Hargreaves defines ‘assimilation’, by contrast, as “the wholesale *elimination* of differences through the generalization of pre-existing national norms” (36, emphasis added). ‘Assimilation’ therefore places the duty of transformation onto the ‘immigrant’ to reshape him or herself in the image of those accepted by the ‘host’ society; this is in opposition to the ‘equal opportunity’ model, which means that the *government* must find the necessary mechanisms to make sure that difference does not present an obstacle to the individual’s advancement.⁴²

Hargreaves also usefully differentiates between the terms ‘assimilation’ and ‘acculturation’: ‘acculturation’ refers to “the acquisition of pre-existing cultural norms dominant in a particular society,” while assimilation “tends to imply not only acculturation but also the complete abandonment of minority cultural norms” (*Multi-Ethnic* 37). Hargreaves uses the term

⁴¹ See also Weil and Crowley, 113-20.

⁴² Hargreaves explains that functionalist views of integration differ from these normative views by focusing on the specific social, economic, and political participation by ethnic and religious minorities without assuming that assimilation is a worthwhile goal. ‘Assimilation’ has often been conflated with ‘integration’ (e.g. in Beaud and Noiriel), and officials such as Jean-Claude Barreau have explicitly championed this conflation (Hargreaves 36).

‘assimilation’ only when others refer to it, opting instead to use ‘acculturation’ since it is “perfectly possible for people to be simultaneously competent in more than one culture.” This description fits what I refer to throughout the dissertation as ‘transcultural’. However, I maintain the term ‘assimilation’ to refer to the current model. I do so to underline the fact that the French government and dominant French society demands the elimination of cultural differences from its ethnic and religious minorities. That is, French Republican universalism requires assimilation—not merely a *reduction* of difference, but an absence of it. Through my analyses of key *banlieue* films, I aim to expose particular ways in which universalism, with its supposed desire for egalitarianism, inevitably translates into a mandate for assimilation.

C. Philosophical & Political Roots of Universalism

Originally meant to do away with social and political privilege of the feudal system, the concept of individualism—an important component of universalism—has shifted throughout French history. The concept is ambiguous because the individual is at once an “abstract prototype for the human,” a definition offered by Enlightenment philosophers and revolutionaries in France, and a “unique being, a distinct person,” a definition offered by Denis Diderot and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In the first definition, the commonality of man was conceived by “abstracting individuals from the differentiating social statuses attributed to birth, family, wealth, occupation, property ownership, and religion [and] treating them as disembodied, apart from the distinguishing physical characteristics of physiognomy, skin color, and sex” (Scott, *Only Paradoxes* 5). Yet, this belief in a human sameness also worked to exclude people who did not have the qualities of the ‘abstract’ individual, inevitably imagined as a white, middle-to-upper

class man.⁴³ While Condorcet argued that women (in addition to Protestants and Jews) should have full rights in the public sphere because “it is not nature but rather education and social conditions that cause [differences between men and women]” (“On the Admission” 121)⁴⁴—the popular belief, and the one that ultimately succeeded,⁴⁵ was that maleness signified individuality and objectivity, while femaleness signified essence and subjectivity.

Rousseau’s concepts of regeneration and *volonté générale* (general will) were taken up by the revolutionaries, and especially by the Jacobin State, which desired to create new, virtuous citizens. They wanted a *tabula rasa* in order to indoctrinate citizens through the use of cards and new days of the week (including the *decani* calendar) so that their new Republic would be coherent and stable. Rousseau’s concept of the *volonté générale* is particularly important for understanding the ongoing French distrust of multiculturalism. *Volonté générale* developed a wariness of the interest group, placing the will of the people before the wishes of any minority groups. This then led to the Jacobin Republic’s promotion of the ‘abstract’ individual, the universal citizen. We can see an example of this process of universalization in the Count de Clermont Tonnerre’s comment on the Jews at the end of the French Revolution: “We must refuse everything to the Jews as a nation and accord everything to Jews as individuals” (88). As Historian Lynn Hunt points out, here Clermont Tonnerre makes clear his view that citizens are only such as (abstract) individuals, and “not as members of different social or ethnic groups”

⁴³ See Bancel and Blanchard; Simon and Zappi.

⁴⁴ The full quotation here reveals that Condorcet, like his contemporary Olympe de Gouges, understands the social construction of gender already in 1790: “It is said that women, though better than men in that they are gentler, more sensitive, and less subject to the vices that follow from egotism and hard hearts, do not really possess a sense of justice; that they obey their feelings rather than their consciences. This observation is truer but it proves nothing. It is not nature but rather education and social conditions that cause this difference” (121). Condorcet also advocated the abolition of the slave trade and the practice of slavery itself.

⁴⁵ Hunt asserts that Condorcet’s “newspaper article [...] caused a sensation and stimulated those of like mind to publish articles of their own. But the campaign was relatively short-lived and ultimately unsuccessful; the prejudice against granting political rights to women would prove the most difficult to uproot” (119).

(*French Revolution* 86).

While the Revolution of 1789 technically marked the end of the *Ancien Régime*,⁴⁶ in many ways, the inequality inherent to the former period continued. The *Ancien Régime* was characterized by the absolute monarchy—much of the power in the hands of one man and the rest of the power in the hands of the nobility and the church. The Revolution of 1789 destroyed this placement of power. However, in effect, it merely took this power and placed it into the hands of white, bourgeois, land-owning men. Abbé Sieyès, a deputy to the National Assembly, played an important role in the Revolution because his ideas influenced many of its key players. While he had previously argued for the elimination of the privileges of the nobility and the clergy, Sieyès proposed the concepts of “passive citizens” versus “active citizens” in July 1789.⁴⁷ He held that active citizens should have “political rights”: they should be able participate fully in the public sphere, including voting and running for political office, while reaping the benefits of the protection of the state (again, these citizens were white, land-owning, bourgeois men⁴⁸); he maintained that passive citizens, in contrast, should have only “natural and civil rights”—they should *not* be able to vote or run for office and should only reap the benefits of the state’s protections (“Preliminary” 81). Passive citizens included children, women, foreigners, the poor, servants, and people who did not own property. While some women had influential power in the *salons* of the *Ancien Régime*, Sieyès’ passive-active division took this power away. And, although feminists such as Olympe de Gouges broke boundaries by setting up women’s clubs and writing “The Declaration of the Rights of Women” in 1791, de Gouges was murdered by

⁴⁶ The French political and social system from the fifteenth century until the Revolution of 1789.

⁴⁷ See Sieyès; and Hunt, *French Revolution* 19.

⁴⁸ Hunt writes, “Although the status of Protestants, Jews, and free blacks would soon elicit passionate debates, the deputies agreed with little opposition to exclude servants, the propertyless [sic], and the poor from voting and the less than prosperous from holding office” (*French Revolution* 80).

guillotine in 1793 and all women's clubs became illegal that same year. Sieyès thus rejected the power that was held by the First and Second Estates (the nobility and the church, respectively) only to give it to the Third Estate. While Sieyès theoretically deemed the Third Estate “everyone else,” his “everyone else” did not include women, nor did it always include Jewish people.⁴⁹

Sieyès famously said “*Je cherche une épée*” (I’m looking for a sword) when he desired a proper leader for the First Republic of France. The sword he found was Napoléon Bonaparte, who performed a *coup d’état* in 1799 when he decided that he would be Emperor. Five years later, he produced the Civil Code of 1804, in which he continued to give more power to this same group of “active citizens,” while taking away even more power from the “passive citizens.” These binaries remain embedded in the ideologies and policies of the Fifth Republic. Through an analysis of select *banlieue* films, we can see how the question of the ‘passive citizen’ versus the ‘active citizen’ renders even more powerful the dichotomy between the ‘non-universal’ citizen versus the ‘universal’ citizen.

D. *Laïcité*

Institutionalized with the beginning of the French public school system in the 1880s, *laïcité* was and remains crucial to the contemporary configuration of French Republican universalism. The ban on the Islamic headscarf in public schools, along with the subsequent ban of the *niqab* (a cloth that covers the head and hair as well as the face) in 2011, has opened new questions concerning this tension between *laïcité* and group identity—in this case, the French-Muslim community. The key components of the contemporary formulation of French Republican universalism are *laïcité* and individualism, which guarantee all individuals equal protection by

⁴⁹ The National Assembly did not grant full political rights to Jews until September 1791.

the state against the claims of religions and the demands of identity or interest groups (Scott, *Politics* 12). Today, members of various government parties instrumentalize the discourse of ‘*laïcité*’ to condemn immigration and cultural difference. While the primary (stated) goal of *laïcité* was, and remains, to neutralize the political influence of the Catholic Church (and, some might argue, other major monotheisms), *laïcité* works against the ‘threats of multiculturalism’ in its contemporary configurations—cultural pluralism, transcultural experiences, and transcultural identities. In *The Politics of the Veil*, Scott concludes that outlawing the headscarf in public schools was an “attempt to enact a particular version of reality, one which insisted on assimilation as the only way for Muslims to become French” (8).

While U.S. secularism and French *laïcité* both mean to protect politics from religious influence, there are important differences between them. In the U.S., where religious minorities instated the separation of church and state to evade the oppression they had lived through in Europe, secularism was meant to protect religions from federal and state government interference. Further, the Constitution was also designed to keep the influences of religion—and especially the dominant religion—out of state affairs. In the U.S. context, secularism protects the government from religion *and* the individual’s right *to* religion—even in the public sphere. Conversely, in France, separation of church and state “was intended to secure the allegiance of individuals to the republic and so break the political power of the Catholic church. There the state claimed the undivided loyalty of citizens to the nation [in the public sphere], and that meant relegating to a private sphere the claims of religious communities” (Scott, *Politics* 91). In France, the government protects individual citizens from the influences of religion, which stems from the Jacobin goal of creating universal, abstract citizens; conversely, the U.S. version of secularism is much more reciprocal in that, at least theoretically, the government is meant to protect religions

from state influence and the state from religious influence (Scott, *Politics* 91-92). After briefly discussing the role that the public/secular school plays in *Caché* at the end of Chapter Two, I explore the concept of *laïcité* in Chapters Four and Five through analyses of films set in public/secular schools, *La Journée de la jupe*, *L'Esquive*, and *Mariam*. We will see the headscarf ban—which was again catapulted into public awareness with the infamous *burqini* (burqa bikini) ban of 2016 in the South of France—explored in two key *banlieue* and *école laïque* films: while *La Journée de la jupe* only alludes to it, *Mariam* explicitly narrates it.

E. Gender-Based Critiques of Universalism

With universalism as the law of land, it was—and oftentimes remains—difficult for the unique needs and desires of interest groups to be recognized. Before the immigration of (post)colonial subjects to the *métropole* became an issue in France, gender was a key category around which debates about universalism would gravitate. For example, it was hard for women to fight for women's suffrage because 'women', as a political category, did not exist in the collective imaginary of the French Republic; instead, the Republic promoted the abstract, and thus 'non-sexed,' citizen. Yet, as Beauvoir points out in *The Second Sex*, the male sex often stands in for the neutral sex when, in fact, the male body is only as 'neutral' as the female body: "Woman has ovaries and a uterus; such are the particular conditions that lock her in her subjectivity; some even say she thinks with her hormones. Man vainly forgets that his anatomy also includes hormones and testicles" (5).⁵⁰ Inspired by Beauvoir's philosophy, the *Mouvement pour la Libération des Femmes* (MLF, Women's Liberation Movement) of the 1970s, the '*corps à soi*'

⁵⁰ *La Journée de la jupe* illustrates that men, too, exhibit hormonally-inflected thinking when adult male characters act at least as 'emotionally' as adult female characters.

(‘our body, our choice’) militant feminists of second wave feminism, desired abortion rights and, in 1971, the “*Manifeste des 343 salopes*” (Manifesto of 343 Bitches) was signed by many celebrities, intellectuals, and activists who stated that they had had an illegal abortion and that the act should be legal. The MLF succeeded with the passing of the *loi Veil* (Veil law, named after French politician and philosopher Simone Veil)⁵¹ in 1975, definitively confirmed in 1979, making it legal for women to choose to abort fetuses inside their bodies.

The tension between feminists and the state decreased as many radical feminists steadily transformed into reformist feminists. To receive government subsidies to start and maintain an *association*, radical feminists—who had previously rejected the institutional sphere *dans le sillage de mai 68*—set their loftier goals aside beginning in the late 1970s to achieve more practical goals.⁵² Beginning to accept dialogue with institutions of the Fifth Republic, they became reformist feminists, often the proponents of “state feminism” (Mazur and McBride).⁵³ Thus, the feminist movement in France became progressively institutionalized, adopting the rules of formal organizations and more ‘moderate’ causes (Bereni, “Du MLF” 110, 116).⁵⁴ The latest issue at the heart of state feminism has been the 2004 *parité* law. This law makes it necessary in certain types of elections to have gender parity among candidates for public

⁵¹ The Veil law was legalized in the name of *class* equality rather than gender equality: the argument that ultimately achieved abortion rights was that wealthy women could get abortions even if they were illegal, while working-class women could not afford them (Bereni, “Gender Issues”).

⁵² See also Duchon 105-6.

⁵³ “State feminism [...] introduces a gendered view of state action to empirical and comparative analysis. It is based on the expectation that democratic governments, to be successful, can and should promote women’s status and rights in relation to men’s, however those rights are defined in specific cultural contexts, and should work to undermine the gender-based hierarchies that contribute to enduring sex-based inequities. In other words, the concept is based on the premise that democracies can and should be feminist” (Mazur and McBride 244).

⁵⁴ Many *associations féministes* exist in France today, including the *Centre audiovisuel Simone de Beauvoir*, the *Centre des Ressources Hubertine Auclert*, and the *Centre de Recherches Lesbiennes*. In these cases, the tension between the state and the interest groups is quite low, if not nonexistent, since the two have found a way to compromise and work together.

positions; the ballot must read: man, woman, man, woman. The road toward parity was long and difficult. One argument for the law proposed that women are found among all minority groups and are therefore able to achieve abstract, universal citizenship. This argument used the rhetoric of universalism to succeed: women are a ‘universal’ part of humanity. The equal participation of women in politics, therefore, could not possibly lead to a slippery slope of vindications (e.g. ten percent of the candidates on the ballot must be Black). Yet, once again theory does not translate into practice: most political parties opt to pay a fine rather than have gender parity in their elections.⁵⁵

F. Post-Colonial & Anti-Racist Critiques of Universalism

France’s colonial project included bringing universalism to the colonies, which inevitably affected the ideology of universalism within the *métropole*. Michel Wieviorka reminds us that France was a colonial power before it was a Republic and that France constitutes (along with the United Kingdom) a particular case because a large part of its recent immigrants come from its former colonies, and especially North Africa; it is therefore necessary to consider the ways in which the colonial past continues to influence the present (117, 119). Nicolas Bancel and Pascal Blanchard agree, maintaining that we must view the construction of a “colonial nationalism” as constitutive of the genealogy of Republicanism both in the colonies and in the *métropole*, and that this process continues to profoundly affect French politics and ideologies in the present. To beat their great rival, the British Empire, the most influential ideologues of the Third Republic⁵⁶ wielded discourses that focused on the “glory of France,” thus garnering political and popular

⁵⁵ See Bereni, “Du MLF.”

⁵⁶ These ideologues included Jules Ferry, Léon Gambetta, Jean Jaurès, and Ernest Renan.

support of the colonial project—what Bancel and Blanchard deem a “colonial consensus” (40-41). The fusion of nationalism and colonialism was so strong that, until 1920, one was considered unpatriotic if they did not agree with the idea of ‘*la plus grande France*’—and the French colonization of Algeria in particular (Bancel and Blanchard 41).

The *Code de l’indigénat* (indigenous code), passed in 1887, was the most explicit and litigious construction of the colonized-as-other. Going back to Sieyès’ ideas rooted during the Revolution of 1789, these laws meant to render the colonized subjects of French Algeria “passive citizens”—mere nationals instead of actual citizens who could neither vote nor have a say in their government. This law made it acceptable for the French government in Algeria, and then in other colonies, to legally and physically dominate the colonized. Further, although the French colonial government extended “French Union citizenship” to Muslim Algerians between the years 1944 and 1947, they did not offer “the vast majority of these new citizens the political rights that, since the French Revolution, were associated with this status,” leaving the meaning of this political category ambiguous (Shepard 45).

While the *Code de l’indigénat* officially ended in the 1940s, much of the structural racism that it legitimized remained. With the goal of acknowledging and decreasing racism, the *association* S.O.S. Racism was created in the 1980s. Out of this group came what the media called *La Marche des Beurs* (The Arab Protest) in 1983. The 1990s also saw the beginning of the *sans papiers* (undocumented immigrants)⁵⁷ movement, with a larger number of West African immigrants playing a prominent role. Demonstrations linked to this movement triggered national conversations about borders, citizenship, hospitality and asylum under a center-right presidency.

⁵⁷ The literal translation of *sans papiers* is ‘without papers’. For cinematic representations *sans papiers*, see Tarr, “Transnational Identities.”

In the aftermath of the *banlieue* riots that occurred in the 2000s, organizations such as *Conseil Représentatif des Associations Noires* (CRAN, Representative Council of Black Associations) advocated for increased minority visibility in the media and the workplace and made some gains (Mack 10).

Despite these gains, the writers of the collected essays in *La fracture coloniale: la société française au prisme de l'héritage colonial*⁵⁸ maintain that there remains a refusal in France to integrate the colonial past with its present legal, institutional, and cultural practices. They call for scholars to examine the historical present with *la longue durée* (the long duration of history) in mind so that we may understand ongoing discriminations against immigrants from the ex-Empire and their descendants. The editors of the volume ask, “How have phenomena created by colonialism transformed?” (Bancel et al. 12). Achille Mbembe’s chapter in this collection explicitly rubs the term ‘postcolonial’ up against ‘globalization’, implying that the use of unspecific terms such as ‘globalization’—and perhaps ‘transnationalism’—risk aiding the project of forgetting colonial history and denying the current neo-colonial situation:

Why, in this century that is said to comprise the unification of the world under the globalization of financial markets, of cultural flows and mixing of populations, does France refuse to think in a critical manner about postcolonialism: the history of its presence in the world and the history of the presence of the world within France’s own breast before, during, and after the colonial Empire?
(12)

Mbembe is perplexed that, given the present widespread knowledge of globalization, the French government continuously fails to realize that postcolonial elements—e.g. people who used to be, or whose parents used to be, under French colonial rule *outside of the métropole*—exist within

⁵⁸ *The Colonial Fracture: French Society at the Prism of Colonial Heritage*

France's hexagonal borders.

Moreover, the French rarely discern between those who were born in the hexagon and those who were not: a person is often deemed an 'immigrant' if they are of a certain religion (read: Islam and, to some extent, Judaism); if they are not white; if they speak a language that is not Western European; or if they speak with a non-Western-European accent. Thus, Algerian people who were born in the hexagon and are descendants of postcolonial subjects are usually called 'immigrants' even though their parents were born in 'France'. Until the Evian Accords of 1962, Algeria comprised three full administrative *départements* of France. From the institutional French point of view, Algeria *was* France, both legally and discursively (Stora, "Algerian War" 103-4). Thus, an Algerian who went to France to live before the Evian Accords did not 'immigrate'—s/he simply moved from '*la plus grande France*' to hexagonal France, which is why I place 'immigration' and 'immigrant' in quotation marks in these cases.⁵⁹ Even more shockingly, their children who are born on French soil are not considered French. Due to the Pasqua laws of 1993, named after Minister of the Interior Charles Pasqua, these children must decide between Algerian and French citizenship and, if they decide on the latter, they must apply for it. Furthermore, immigrants from European countries such as Spain and Italy are *not* usually referred to as 'immigrants'. The term is thus overdetermined in France: the 'immigrant' label in itself holds racial, and thus usually racist, connotations. I deem the reactions to the *Charlie Hebdo* and November 2015 terrorist attacks racist-Islamophobic because, while *laïcité* is meant to protect the individual from the influence of *religion*, much of the general French population

⁵⁹ Paradoxically, however, only about ten percent of the Algerian population of French colonial Algeria had civil rights; dominant French society did not *view* them as French, due in part to the *loi de l'indigénat*, which described them as passive citizens; see Shepard on this history, especially Ch. 1. Hargreaves writes that the use of the word 'immigration' encompasses "what in many respects were post-migratory processes was symptomatic of the difficulties experienced by the French in coming to terms—both literally and ontologically—with the settlement of immigrant minorities, especially those originating in former colonies in Africa and elsewhere" (*Multi-Ethnic* 1-2).

conflates ‘Arab’ with ‘Muslim’ with ‘immigrant’—and, formerly, ‘immigrant worker’ (Scott, *Politics* 17, 26, 44, 46; Schneider 2014, 88, 90; Davidson 10-11).⁶⁰ Fatima El-Tayeb asserts,

Post-World War II labor migration was conceived as a temporary presence, the idea being that migrants would return when their labor was not needed anymore. After the West European ‘guest worker’ programs were stopped in the early 1970s, it soon became clear that there would be no massive movement of return, but this realization did not produce a change in policies, instead it led to a creation of a hierarchical system of rights directly tied to (remote) national origin. (21)

El-Tayeb also shows how these confluences between ‘immigrant’ and ‘Muslim’ stem from a long history of the racialization of religion in Europe. She reminds us that many Europeans “conveniently seem to forget the continent’s long history of anti-Semitism” (xxvii) in an effort to maintain this narrative of an anti-racist Europe.⁶¹ In *Orientalism*, Edward Said describes how the European Orientalist view of Islam characterizes this culture as “the very epitome of an outsider”; created in the Middle Ages, legal and cultural discourses sustained and enhanced this evaluation of Islam over centuries (70). While Orientalists viewed Muslims as the outsider, they simultaneously viewed European Jewish peoples as belonging to an internal other, an ‘outside’ nation *within* Europe.⁶² The deep currents of anti-Semitism in France took new forms from the 1880s on as Eastern European immigration accelerated, bringing into France

⁶⁰ As Delphy states, the “term ‘immigrants and their descendants’ doesn’t apply to [white-passing people], even if they, too, are descended from immigrants; [this term] is a euphemism for blacks and Arabs”; “I was stupefied to hear of people being addressed as ‘second-generation immigrants’, as if the quality of being an immigrant could be inherited” (*Separate* 27, 30). For a comparison between ‘labour immigration’ and ‘settler’ or ‘family immigration,’ see also Sayad, Ch. 3.

⁶¹ On the racialization of Jewish people in France, see also Scott, *Politics* 75-79; and Davidson 5.

⁶² In response to critics of *Orientalism*, Said wrote “Orientalism Reconsidered,” highlighting the “conjuncture” between Islamophobia and anti-Semitism: “hostility to Islam in the modern Christian West has historically gone hand in hand with, has stemmed from the same source [...] as anti-Semitism”; Said implies that if we look through the lens of Orientalism as critique, which focuses (in part) on the cultural construction of Islam, we will inevitably understand better the “cultural mechanisms of anti-Semitism” because they are similar to those of Islamophobia (9).

groups of Jewish peoples with different cultural and religious practices and lower socio-economic backgrounds; French Jews struggled to differentiate themselves from immigrant Jews, but “anti-Semites tarred them all with the same brush”; further, the “notion of an enemy within, the Jew as a representative of a foreign nation, was never far off” (Scott, *Politics* 76-77). The Dreyfus Affair (1894-1906) is the most famous of many anti-Semitic incidents. It was a nation-wide fight over a baseless charge of treason brought against a Jewish army captain at the end of the nineteenth century. As novelist Émile Zola demonstrated in his famous newspaper article “*J’accuse*,” the accusation had more to do with the re-activation of French anti-Semitism than with any action or omission Captain Dreyfus may have undertaken. This nation-wide affair reified of the long-present anti-Semitism throughout the French nation, and the nation became split between two camps: the *Dreyfusards*, who saw the anti-Semitic nature of the charge against Dreyfus (the most famous of whom was Zola), and the *anti-Dreyfusards*. France’s *anti-Dreyfusard* inheritance helped to make the Vichy regime of World War II possible, and laws passed under the Vichy regime often described Jewishness as a “race” (Scott, *Politics* 77).

While both Jewish peoples and Muslims have been racialized throughout French history, by the twentieth century “Muslims were the only ones whom most French scholars and policy makers argued were unable to free themselves from their faith’s domination of their very bodies. This held true across different political regimes, ranging from the leftist Popular Front to Pétain’s Vichy regime to postwar Gaullist administrations and into the Mitterrand years” (Davidson 5).⁶³ After September 11, 2001, research was undertaken by institutions within the European Union (EU), notably the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC), which

⁶³ On the connections and differentiations between the French government’s treatment of Jewish peoples and Muslims, see also Shepard, Ch. 9, especially 242-247.

mobilized fifteen EU nations and organized the largest project of “vigilance” on Islamophobia ever realized; multiple reports were published throughout the 2000s but, even while the EU participates in the institutional legitimation of the concept of Islamophobia, it fails to propose a clear definition of it (Hajjat and Mohammed 83). This dissertation uses ‘Islamophobia’ in its contemporary, most politically salient usage: discrimination against (actual and perceived) Muslims, which results in a structural Islamophobia that operates through institutions. This discrimination stems from ignorance of Islam (as culture and religion) and Muslim peoples, the conflation of Islam with terrorism, racist attitudes toward non-white peoples of all kinds, as well as a proliferation of negative portrayals of Muslims in the news, literature, television shows, and film.

In the European context, this fear also comes from the “myth of the Islamification of Europe, which was invented and propagated by numerous European and American intellectuals” (Hajjat and Mohammed 15). In his introduction to the 1997 edition of *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, Said recounts many of the real “provocations and troubling incidents by Muslims and [...] Islamic countries” during the 1980s and 1990s, readily admitting that there has been “a resurgence of emotion throughout the Islamic world, and there have been a great many incidents of terrorism, organized or not, against Western and Israeli targets” (xii; xv). Said is concerned, however, that the homogenizing label “Islam” is most often wielded as an attack, which in turn provokes more hostility between Muslim and ‘Western’ spokespersons, when in fact “‘Islam’ defines a relatively small proportion of what actually takes place in the Islamic world, which numbers [more than] a billion people, and includes dozens of countries, societies, traditions, languages” (xvi).⁶⁴ Here, Said alerts us to

⁶⁴ Said continues: “It is simply false to try to trace all this back to something called ‘Islam’, no matter how vociferously polemical Orientalists—mainly active in the United States, Britain, and Israel [and I would add

the various cultural differences among societies that share Islam as a common denominator; he explains that Islam, as opposed to common perception, does not affect every element of these society's cultures.

Drawing on postcolonial scholars such as Said, sociologists Abdellali Hajjat and Marwan Mohammed focus their study of Islamophobia on the French context. In their book *Islamophobie: Comment les élites françaises fabriquent le 'problème musulman'*,⁶⁵ they offer an overview of the changes that the word 'Islamophobia' has gone through since the early 1900s, and especially since the late 1970s (71-92). The word has been wielded for very different purposes according to cultural, political, and geographical contexts. In 1978, the Tunisian historian Hichem Djaït discusses both Islamophobia and Arabophobia to describe what he calls "Islamophobic Orientalism," in line with Said's writing published that same year (60-64). Until the late 1970s, most critiques of Islamophobia were part of a larger anti-Orientalist view, which analyzed and critiqued how European colonizers viewed the colonized. From the 1980s onward, 'Islamophobia' shifted to a more "political usage" by designating fear of, hostility toward, and discrimination against Muslims living on European territory; in *Islamophobia*, Chris Allen describes a specific "anti-Muslim racism" that developed in the British context in the early 1980s: "the advent of this 'new' racism can be explained by the conjunction of two phenomena: the construction of a 'Muslim identity' ('British Muslims') among immigrant communities and the movement from a 'biological' racism to a 'cultural' racism" (Hajjat and Mohammed 80).

France]—insisted that Islam regulates Islamic societies from top to bottom, that *dar al-Islam* is a single, coherent entity, that church and state are really one in Islam, and so forth. My contention in this book is that most of this is unacceptable generalization of the most irresponsible sort, and could never be used for any other religious, cultural, or demographic group on earth. What we expect from the serious study of Western societies, with its complex theories, enormously variegated analyses of social structures, histories, cultural formations, and sophisticated languages of investigation, we should also expect from the study and discussion of Islamic societies in the West" (xvi). Transnational feminists, as I discuss below, do much to answer his call.

⁶⁵ *Islamophobia: How French Elites Construct the 'Muslim Problem'*. See also Bozzo.

Similarly, in “Is There a Neo-Racism?” Balibar states that current racism in France centers around the issue of ‘immigration’ and fits into a framework of ‘racism without races’, the dominant theme of which “is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences” (84). Balibar maintains that this neo-racism stresses not biological difference, but the perceived harmfulness of abolishing borders and the incompatibility of lifestyles and cultural traditions—ideas which remain alive and well in the FN’s discourse.

Naomi Davidson’s *Only Muslim: Embodying Islam in 20th Century France* shows how French colonial discourse and state-sponsored buildings cemented the physicality of the Muslim as a foreign body that was beyond the ability to assimilate. She shows how social programs that were developed during the building of the Paris Mosque began to construct Islam as a basis for treating of North Africans differently; under the auspices of religious differences and echoing the civilizing mission, these social assistance programs ‘protected’ Arab immigrants by segregating them from the rest of French society (Ch. 3). Her book shows how and why it is more useful to think of the category of ‘Muslim’ as one of racial difference rather than (or, in addition to) religious particularity (11). Muslims in France are viewed as saturated with ‘Muslimness’ while, today, Catholics and Jews escape religious saturation—what Davidson describes as “irrational personhood [...] inscribed in their very bodies” (3). Davidson argues:

[T]he French state treated immigrants from North Africa ‘only as Muslims’ [because] French Islam saturated them with an embodied religious identity that functioned as a racialized identity. The inscription of Islam on the very bodies of colonial (and later, postcolonial) immigrants emerged from the French belief that Islam was a rigid and totalizing system filled with corporeal rituals that needed to be performed in certain kinds of aesthetic spaces. Because this vision of Islam held that Muslims could only ever and always be Muslim, *‘Muslim’ was as essential an eternal a marker of difference as gender or skin color in France.* (Davidson 2, my emphasis)

Further, Davidson explains that the orientalist, *hispano-mauresque* (Mudexar) architecture of the Paris Mosque (inaugurated in 1926) exemplified how the French defined the specific tradition of Islam that was acceptable: *Islam français* (French Islam), which stemmed directly from *Moroccan* Islam.

Davidson explains that France held Morocco up as an autonomous state, one that had evaded the Ottoman Empire, and thus had created a ‘pure’ Islam (8). The complete reorganization of Algerian religion and space, along with much of the culture’s destruction, allowed the French colonialists to easily look down upon a particular facet of Algerian culture: Algerian Islam (9). The Paris Mosque thus “provided the means for the proponents of *Islam français* to instantiate their ideas about the innate physicality of Islam in a site in the middle of Paris” (7). “The choice to define *Islam français* as ‘Moroccan’ signaled an acknowledgment of Morocco’s power and prestige, an utter disregard for Algeria”—an “erasure” of Algerian forms of Islam (9, 10). Davidson argues that, paradoxically, French officials and writers constructed the category of “Muslim” as synonymous with “Algerian,” which “effectively transformed a religious identity into a racialized one” (Davidson 7-10).⁶⁶ While contemporary French Islamophobic discourses and policies do not tend to differentiate Algerian and Moroccan Islam, the history of the racialization of Algerian-Muslims and the erasure of Algerian Islam is important to our study: Algerian heritage is central to characters in *Caché* and *La Journée de la jupe*, and Algerian identity is central the protestors of *Octobre à Paris*.

⁶⁶ “The equation of ‘Muslim’ with ‘Algerian’ in metropolitan France accomplished important political work: by identifying Algerians solely as Muslim, the French state at once denied them a potential political identity [with which to create an *association*] that threatened its authority (Algerian) while at the same time making it impossible for them to lay claim to a different one (French), because of their innate ‘religious’ identity” (Davidson 10-11).

G. Intersections & Instrumentalizations: Gender, Race, Religion, Sexuality

Delphy is one of the rare French feminists of her generation to come out against the anti-headscarf law. In *Separate and Dominate: Feminism and Racism after the War on Terror*, she argues that the most oppressed “*autres*” (others)—those who do not fit into the mold of the French universal citizen—are women, queer people,⁶⁷ Arab people, Black people, and Muslims. Her book thus works to dismantle the following interconnected issues: discrimination against queer people, misogyny, Islamophobia, and racism in the French postcolonial context. She explains that, due to French republican universalism’s refusal to acknowledge difference, there is an unspoken racial caste system in France.⁶⁸ After 9-11 and Bush’s call for a ‘war on terror’, Delphy formed an International Coalition Against War to protest the war in Afghanistan “in order to counter the disinformation to which we in France had fallen victim. In the first decade of the 2000s, American imperialism turned on the Middle East [...] and an increasingly negative image of Arabs and Muslims was propagated [...]. In France, this reactivated the racism that had justified the colonization of North Africans and their children” (*Separate* 31). This describes a particular configuration of transnationalism in the 2000s that continues today. That is, the combination of U.S. imperialism and French colonial discourse resulted in an even more dangerously racist French national discourse.

El-Tayeb’s *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe*, takes a wider, comparative approach. This book examines both mainstream racist discourses and subversive cultural productions by minorities in various ghettoized urban spaces of Western Europe to

⁶⁷ The translator of Delphy’s book often uses the term “queer” (*Separate*), while Delphy’s original French-language text uses the words “*homo*,” “*homosexuel*,” and “*homosexuelle*” (*Classer, dominer*).

⁶⁸ Similarly, Chapman and Frader state that “the effort to disqualify religion, race, and ethnicity as a basis for claiming legal rights in France during the revolutionary and Napoleonic eras hardly eliminated the actual social practice of seeing the peoples of France and the wider world as divided into just these kinds of categories” (2).

explore how they construct the ‘second-generation migrant’ male Muslim as “embodying essentialist positions on gender, sexuality, national and ethnic identity, as presenting a threat both to minority women and to enlightened European masculinity” (xliv). Mack draws on El-Tayeb to challenge the common view that Muslims have ‘unmodern’ attitudes about sexuality and gender and, conversely, that mainstream white-French people necessarily have modern views on these issues. He explains that “sexual modernity” is an umbrella term that includes “everything from the promotion of sexual diversity and gender equality, to a zero-tolerance policy regarding ‘excessive’ virilities (*banlieue* machos) and ‘self-censoring’ femininities (veiled women)” (29).

These two figures are among the four ethnicized and sexualized figures of Arab people in France that Guénif-Souilamas examines in “*La française voilée, la beurette, le garçon arabe et le musulman laïc: Les figures assignées du racisme vertueux.*”⁶⁹ She explains that dominant French culture constructs the “*fille voilée*” (veiled girl) as a contrasting figure to the “*beurette*” (Westernized and ‘liberated’ Arab girl); and the macho “*garçon arabe*” (Arab boy) as a contrasting figure to the “*musulman laïc*” (secular Muslim). She compares the two threatening “negative figures”: the violent and uncivilizable Arab boy who is driven by his instincts and deviant hypersexuality, versus the veiled girl, “who is supposed to embody the incapacity to emancipate herself from patriarchal traditions” and who “evades all possibilities of eroticization that the Western culture prescribes her”: “These two figures are constructed as threatening because of their ‘inability’ to integrate and this is viewed as a sign of their belonging to another world: Arab and/or Muslim” (“*Française*” 110-111).

While mainstream and political discourses continue to construct the Brown and/or

⁶⁹ “The veiled French girl/woman, the *beurette* [‘liberated’ Arab girl/woman], the Arab boy and the secular Muslim: Figures created by virtuous racism”

Muslim man as ‘savage’ because of how he treats ‘his’ women, white-French men have a history of sexism against white-French women in *la long durée* and through the present day. This is one reason why it is of the utmost importance that we remember not to pit cultural pluralism against feminism. As Leti Volpp puts it,

To posit feminism and multiculturalism [or, pluralism] as oppositional is to assume that minority women are victims of their cultures [...] and has certain consequences: It obscures the influences that in fact shape cultural practices, hides the forces besides culture that affect women’s lives, elides the way women exercise agency within patriarchy, and masks the level of violence within the US. (1181)

We can extend this final statement to France and to the West and Global North in general.⁷⁰

Working toward similar goals, Farris deploys the term “femonationalism” to describe nationalistic discourses that utilize ‘women’s equality’ for racist ends. Farris defines femonationalism as

the contemporary mobilization of feminist ideas by nationalist parties and neoliberal governments under the banner of the war against the perceived patriarchy of Islam in particular, and of migrants from the Global South in general. [...] The mobilization, or rather instrumentalization, of the notion of women’s equality both by nationalist and xenophobic parties and by neoliberal governments constitutes one of the most important characteristics of the current political conjuncture, particularly in Europe. (“Femonationalism” 185)

As an example of femonationalism, Farris cites FN leader Marine Le Pen’s pronouncements in defense of “white” French women and homosexuals from the dangers they encounter in the *banlieues* (“Femonationalism” 185).⁷¹ Theoretically anticipating Farris’ work on

⁷⁰ Volpp’s statement echoes the points that Chandra Talpade Mohanty puts forth in “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” which was first published in 1984.

⁷¹ See also Farris, *In the Name*. Likewise, Butler states that “a certain conception of freedom is invoked precisely as

femonationalism, Inderpal Grewal and Karen Caplan call for feminists to closely examine the relationship between feminism and nationalism so that we may “understand the ways that contemporary racisms, nationalisms, and gendered oppressions have been produced together, not separately” (“Postcolonial Studies,” point 10).

Scott’s term “sexularism” (sexual secularism)—indicating the increasing prevalence of a French Republican sexual nationalism—also becomes useful here (“Sexularism”). Mack explains that a consequence of sexularism is the prioritization of individualist sexual liberation over ethnic or religious attachments, and Muslims that fall in line with this narrative might model a successful assimilation into French society (81). Similar to the concept of ‘sexual nationalism’, Jasbir Puar offers the term “homonationalism” (which inspired Farris’ concept of femonationalism). Puar explains that homonationalism is “a national, patriotic homosexuality that emerges from American exceptionalism and imperialism, rejecting and demonizing Muslim ‘sexual-racial others’ as a way of asserting its superiority” (*Terrorist 2*).⁷² A prime example of homonationalism is the policy that allows ‘out’ gay men and lesbians access to the U.S. military. Queer of color theorists might critique this ‘liberal gain’ on the grounds that it ultimately gives gay and lesbian people the state-sanctioned right to murder, for example, Iraqi people—including queer people and women. Homonationalism is “an analytic category deployed to understand and historicize how and why a nation’s status as ‘gay-friendly’ has become desirable in the first place” (Puar, “Rethinking” 336). This category urges us to remember that, especially in today’s

a rationale and instrument for certain practices of coercion, and this places those of us who have conventionally understood ourselves as advocating a progressive sexual politics in a rather serious bind” (“Sexual Politics” 3). More generally, the FN capitalizes on the fact that Marine Le Pen is a woman; the party has gained more women supporters since she has become its frontwoman—in 2010, the women who voted for the FN tripled; the paradox of a woman leading a traditionalist, familial party then makes the fascist policies that the party promotes more “acceptable” (Moser).

⁷² See also Mack 21.

political climate, we must closely examine discourses that appear pro-gay, pro-lesbian,⁷³ and pro-women's rights to make sure that these seemingly inclusive rhetorics are not being wielded for racist purposes.

Focusing on the French *banlieues* from the early 1980s through the present, Mack states that France has increasingly defined itself via values such as openness to gay and lesbian identities, gay marriage, secular feminism, and metrosexuality (the feminized or androgynous masculinity that is associated with 'culturally refined' urban spaces). These values have then been upheld in opposition to immigrant and working-class machismo, homophobia, and sexism. In this way, the ability of Arab and Muslim minorities in France to assimilate—their “new form of citizenship test”—has shifted from concerns about linguistic or civic barriers to concerns about perceived intolerant, conservative cultural attitudes that Muslims have about gender and sexuality—what has become a “sexual civilizing mission” (2, 17). He argues that this cultural xenophobia, what he calls the “sexualization of immigration,”⁷⁴ ignores the ways in which African and Arab minorities in France have deviated from normative French understandings of both queer and hetero sexualities (11). It also ignores Franco-French culture's tendency to fetishize and Orientalize the figures of the Arab macho and the veiled Muslim woman via sports, music, film, and pornography (2). Put simply: queer Arab-French people also exist, which undermines France's attempt at the “nationalization of sexual liberty” (11): “The integration [assimilation] of immigrants and their descendants within the national fabric increasingly has been defined in terms of a set of ‘appropriate’ attitudes toward gender and sexuality that have

⁷³ I do not include pro-bisexual, pro-intersexual, or pro-trans discourses here because they are rarely instrumentalized in the same way as pro-gay and pro-lesbian rights discourses, although the latter is increasingly used.

⁷⁴ “An important motivation for the ‘sexualization of ethnicity’ is that it allowed anti-immigrant and antiminority forces to keep the threat of Arab, African, and Islamic difference persistent, even though today the differences between the descendants of immigrants and French citizens of ‘European’ origin at the level of linguistic competence and civic integration are negligible” (Mack 11).

been proclaimed to be long-standing French values, but which in reality have been embraced only recently” (3). For example, gay marriage was not legal in France until 2012 and women continue to see their gender unequally represented in the French government.

French Arabs and Muslims are widely believed to be collectively opposed to gay marriage and women’s equality, and these views are perceived as more dangerous than the highly visible Catholic opposition to both gay rights and women’s rights during the *Manif pour tous* (protest for all) demonstrations (Mack 11), which were composed of mostly white, middle- to upper-class Christians that were not quick to distance themselves from the neo-Nazis that marched at the protest (Moser). In sum, Mack argues that, while the differences and rights of white-French lesbians and gay men are becoming increasingly institutionalized, this acceptance is often used to ostracize the Arab-French person who may also be queer and/or feminist, but who is perceived as necessarily homophobic and sexist. He offers virilism (defined above) as a concept around which French people’s frustration with these issues gravitates (1). While the media constructs the ‘butch’ clothing of certain girls/women in the *banlieue* as gender-effacing—similar to the threatening gender-neutralizing effects of the headscarf—Mack argues that baggy athletic wear has become “a marker of urban belonging” rather than a sign of masculinity or gang affiliation (37). We will see girls expressing virile gender qualities, including wearing U.S. athletic brands, in *La Journée de la jupe* and *Mariam*, and we will see a postwar expression of a threatening, androgynous, working-class white *banlieusarde* in *Terrain vague*. Because ‘virilism’ accounts for the transcultural elements of this ‘abnormal’ gender, both as expression and as social construct, it is a useful concept for transnational feminism.

H. Transnational Theories

Micol Seigel explains that “Transnational history treats the nation as one among a range of social phenomena to be studied, rather than the frame of the study itself” (63). A prevalent concept in both feminist theory since the 1990s and in film theory since the early 2000s,⁷⁵ ‘transnational theory’ indicates a theory that is “attentive to uneven and dissimilar circuits of culture and capital” for which ‘the nation’ is no longer an adequate frame of reference (Grewal and Kaplan, “Postcolonial Studies,” point 3). ‘Transnational’ refers to border-crossings and relations between people, culture, and capital that transcend the scope of the ‘international’. To differentiate between ‘international’ and ‘transnational’, it is productive to think about ‘transnational’ as placing an emphasis on temporality: while ‘international relations’ between (for example) the U.S., France, and Algeria might take into account the contemporary relationships among these three nations, the ‘transnational’ framework not only considers histories of war, colonialism, and imperialism among these nations—as well as ongoing power asymmetries that stem from these histories—but also makes these a primary focus.

Within questions of transnationality, many film scholars continue to comment on the need for the national as an indispensable framework for understanding the production, consumption and representation of specific national and cultural identities (e.g. Higson; Bergfelder; Christie). Scholars tend to define ‘transnational cinema’ as a body of work that is financed, produced, distributed, and/or exhibited internationally. As a critical concept, transnationalism recognizes “the decline of national sovereignty as a regulatory force in global existence” (Ezra and Rowden 1). Most importantly for this dissertation, the ‘transnational’ as a

⁷⁵ ‘Transnational’ has also been used as a concept in Anthropology since the 1980s and in Economics since the 1960s.

critical category allows for discussions of diaspora, immigration, border-crossing, (im)mobility, and “hybrid imagined communities” (Naficy) within film—global elements within local spaces.⁷⁶ Moreover, the descriptive term ‘transnational’ expands the scope of ‘postcolonial’ to include the flows and relations of people, ideas, and products that transcend the (post)colonial relations of a particular set of nations.

In the context of this dissertation, ‘transnational’ (as descriptive term) most often refers to the presence of the U.S. culture industry in French suburban neighborhoods populated with post-colonial subjects of North African heritage. In her introduction to a special issue of *Modern & Contemporary France*, “French Cinema: ‘Transnational’ Cinema?” Tarr reflects on the ways in which French cinema in particular can be conceptualized as transnational:

In French film studies, concerns about the impact of globalisation and the erosion or blurring of the ‘national’ identity of French cinema have been channeled into two different but complementary directions: on the one hand, the effects of and resistances to American expansionism and the hegemony of Hollywood [...]; and on the other hand, the decentring and destabilisation of the ‘national’ posed from within, either at a local level, or by ethnic minority and émigré filmmakers in France. (“Introduction” 4)

These two “complementary directions” are what most concern me in regards to *banlieue* filmmaking and representation.

In their already canonical⁷⁷ introduction to the inaugural issue of *Transnational Cinemas*, “Concepts of Transnational Cinema: Towards a Critical Transnationalism in Film Studies,” Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim usefully map out the pitfalls and productive uses of the term

⁷⁶ See also Higbee, “Beyond the (Trans)national.”

⁷⁷ I label Higbee and Lim’s relatively recent piece as “canonical” because it was uncritically cited several times at Transnational Cinema special interest group panels and events at the Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS) annual conference, held in Montreal, March 2015. In addition, as of 20 May 2017, it had been cited in 174 academic articles (Google Scholar).

‘transnational’ in film studies while questioning why this term has become increasingly prevalent. Citing theorists such as Etienne Balibar (*We, the People*), Stuart Hall, and Arjun Appadurai, they maintain that one reason is surely

the wider dissatisfaction expressed by scholars working across the humanities (in particular sociology, postcolonial theory and cultural studies) with the paradigm of the national as a means of understanding production, consumption and representation of cultural identity (both individual and collective) in an increasingly interconnected, multicultural and polycentric world. (8)

Higbee and Lim recap earlier film studies scholarship that attempted to conceive of the ‘transnational’ as a framework for film studies without explicitly invoking the term. In 1993, for example, Marsha Kinder called for film scholars to “read national cinema against the local/global interface” (7). In *Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, Hamid Naficy offered terms such as “interstitial” and “accented” to account for hybrid postcolonial identities and films.

In the 2000s, Andrew Higson, Tim Bergfelder, and Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden “interrogated the limitations of the national in favour of the transnational in film studies” (Higbee and Lim 8). Higbee and Lim draw on and specify the work of these scholars in order to prescribe a “critical transnationalism,” which “does not ghettoize transnational film-making in interstitial and marginal spaces but rather interrogates how these film-making activities negotiate with the national on all levels [...] from the multiculturalism of difference to how it reconfigures the nation’s image of itself” (18). In this dissertation, I examine how *banlieue* films reshape the nation’s image of itself as imagined community. Higbee and Lim further maintain that critical transnationalism refuses to negate the national for the trans-, and vice versa, and it “understands the potential for local, regional and diasporic film cultures to affect, subvert and transform national and transnational cinemas” (18).

Within transnational film studies, there is an apparent lack of engagement with feminist pioneers of critical transnational theories. Higbee and Lim echo Grewal and Kaplan's transnational feminist project when the former maintain that a "critical transnationalism" in film studies should attend to questions of (post)coloniality, power dynamics, and neocolonialist practices. Moreover, their discourse reflects Grewal and Kaplan's theories when they state that a critical transnationalism in film studies "scrutinizes the tensions and dialogic relationship between national and transnational, rather than simply negating one in favour of the other" (18). While Higbee and Lim call for the conceptual term to be "engaged in a dialogue with scholarship in other disciplines that also have an investment in the transnational and the postcolonial" (18), and cite texts to exemplify this interdisciplinary practice,⁷⁸ they fail to cite the pioneering work of many transnational feminist theorists and activists. I would like to underline the importance of Higbee and Lim's call for interdisciplinarity by explicitly engaging transnational feminist scholarship within transnational film studies. Moreover, I want to stress the importance of perspectives that focus on gender in transnational approaches.

If the aim of transnational feminist theories and critical transnational film theories is to signal "attention to uneven and dissimilar circuits of culture and capital" (Grewal and Kaplan, "Postcolonial Studies," point 3), we must consistently remember the importance of gender as a useful category of analysis and as a mechanism of oppression.⁷⁹ In their introduction to *Transnational Feminism in Film and Media*, editors Katarzyna Marciniak, Anik Imre, and Áine O'Healy state that "Feminism, in our understanding, is not a decorative addition or an optional

⁷⁸ They cite as examples Paul Gilroy's 1993 book *The Black Atlantic: modernity and double consciousness* and Aihwa Ong's 1999 book, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logic of Transnationality*, the latter of which certainly overlaps with transnational feminist theoretical frameworks.

⁷⁹ See Scott, "Gender."

perspective that can be applied to studies of transnational media but an acknowledgement that *transnational processes are inherently gendered, sexualized, and racialized*. The borders they erase and erect affect different groups differently” (4, my emphasis). The editors and writers of the compiled essays in *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy* would certainly agree, as they describe cases of global migrations of women from the Global South to the North, showing how women are systematically offered jobs with horrible working conditions and sometimes held by their employers in debt bondage (Ehrenreich and Hochschild). In *In the Name of Women’s Rights*, Farris draws on *Global Woman* to explore how neoliberal policies channel Muslim and non-Western migrant women into the domestic and caregiving industries (which segregate them) while simultaneously claiming to promote their liberation.

Offering a transparent account of their theoretical genealogy, Grewal and Kaplan explain that

the relationship between postcolonial and transnational studies is one of *a specific feminist trajectory* that has always focused on the inequalities generated by capitalist patriarchies in various eras of globalization. The theories and methodologies of the so-called ‘post-colonial’ critics have enabled us to study transnationality. [...] Emphasis on the history of modern imperialism has helped feminists look at race, sexuality, and class not only as bounded categories but as concepts that ‘travel’—that is, circulate and work in different and linked ways in different places and times. (“Postcolonial Studies,” point 9, my emphasis)

Here, Grewal and Kaplan give credit to the postcolonial thinkers that have come before them, while many transnational film scholars seem not to be engaging with transnational feminist theorists. I call for a more thorough-going acknowledgement of transnational feminist theories within film studies and encourage film scholars who want to contribute to “critical transnationalism” to commit to interdisciplinarity, dialogue, and engagement with feminist

theorists who have produced critical transnational theories before them and who are working alongside them in time—if not (disciplinary) space.

Moreover, acknowledging this feminist genealogy of transnational theory reminds us to continue to make use of specific terms such as ‘imperial’, ‘colonial’, ‘postcolonial’, and ‘neocolonial’ because these terms lend concrete meanings to issues, spaces, and bodies that fall within the broader ‘transnational’ framework. By bringing the insights of this genealogy of transnational feminism to my study of *banlieue* films, I aim to contribute to the project of reconsidering the relations between coloniality, postcolonialism, neocolonialism, and transnationalism, which are often considered successive and progressive historical formations rather than overlapping frameworks.

I therefore retain the term ‘(post)colonial’ to indicate a situation that transcends the colonial period and that reaches into the ‘postcolonial’ period, e.g. I refer to the Parisian *banlieue* as a (post)colonial space in Chapter Two because May 1962 marked the official end of colonialism in Algeria, and the films I analyze are on either side of this marker: I read a film made in 2005 (*Caché*) through a film made in late 1961 and early 1962 (*Octobre à Paris*). The terms ‘(post)colonial’ and ‘postcolonial’ also remain useful as descriptors of ‘immigrants’ because they denote an inherent power asymmetry that people of color who do *not* stem from former colonies may not come up against.⁸⁰ I use the term ‘neocolonial’ to describe practices that *re-colonize* postcolonial ‘immigrants’ and spaces, e.g. parts of the Parisian *banlieue*. My project is dedicated to showing how, where, and when the scars and wounds caused by the power differentials inherited from colonialism and imperialism remain.

In this brief genealogy of the term ‘transnational’ in feminist and film studies, we must

⁸⁰ See e.g. Scott, *Politics*, especially the “Racism” chapter.

also acknowledge the numerous women of color feminists who theoretically anticipated transnational feminism. This dissertation brings concepts and methodologies from the largely Anglo field of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies to bear on the historical and geographical context of the French *banlieue* and its representations. These include Kimberlé Crenshaw's concept of "intersectionality"—the idea that social/political identities are not natural and simple, but shift depending on context and include overlapping social constructions of race, gender, and class ("Demarginalizing"; "Mapping the Margins"). In writing about specific intersections of race, gender, class, language, and sexuality, U.S. scholars such as Audre Lorde, Angela Davis, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Cherríe Moraga theorized notions of intersectionality before Crenshaw would coin the term in 1989.⁸¹

Additionally, scholars such as Margot Badran and Fatema Mernissi, the founder of Islamic feminism, have been focusing on women, gender, and feminisms in Muslim societies for decades; their work helps to undergird the idea that feminist ideas do not need to scapegoat racialized men in order to flourish. Mernissi began writing about women's roles in Islamic societies in the mid-1970s with her book *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Muslim Society*, and continued to publish on these issues through 2009. Today there is an active transnational network of Muslim feminists, many of them young people who refer to themselves as 'Muslimistas' or 'Mipsters' (Muslim hipsters), thus deconstructing the assumption that modernity and Islam cannot go hand-in-hand.

Following transnational and women of color feminists, this dissertation analyzes intersectional experiences, identities, and oppressions as represented in *banlieue* films. That said, many of the transnational feminist scholars I draw upon in this dissertation do not necessarily

⁸¹ See e.g. Anzaldúa; Lorde; Davis; Moraga and Anzaldúa.

describe themselves as ‘transnational feminist’ even though their goals and critical lenses are similar to those of scholars and activists who describe themselves as such. This discrepancy may be due to their nationality and/or their disciplinary paths. For example, Delphy (who cites Mohanty) and Guénif-Souilamas are sociologists working in the French context. By employing theories from various disciplines (produced in various nations) under the broader goals of transnational feminism, I will be able to tackle my research questions from a multitude of inter/disciplinary and trans/cultural perspectives. With this method, I also hope to shed light on potential transnational and interdisciplinary alliances—theoretical, cinematic, and activist.

III. Chapter Overview

Chapter Two, “The Spatial-Affective Economy of (Post)colonial Paris: Reading Haneke’s *Caché* (2005) through *Octobre à Paris* (1962),” argues that France’s colonial history—particularly its colonial history in Algeria—drives racial dynamics in contemporary postcolonial Paris. *Caché* quietly yet shockingly unmasks the October 1961 massacre, when police officers injured and murdered hundreds of nonviolently protesting Algerian-French ‘immigrant workers’ who had come from the Parisian *banlieue* to peacefully protest in central Paris. Algerian-French Majid’s parents were working for the bourgeois protagonist Georges Laurent’s parents when they were killed in this massacre. Decades later, Majid kills himself in front of Georges in the former’s drab *banlieue* HLM apartment. While several scholars argue that the film denies the postcolonial subject agency and fails to do justice to the victims of the October Massacre,⁸² I argue that these scholars overestimate the value of Georges’ subjectivity while underestimating Majid and his son’s (Walid Afkir) subversive power within the constraints of Paris’ unjust spatial economy.

To illustrate the historical continuity of this economy, I read *Caché* against *Octobre à Paris*, the documentary about the massacre that was censored for decades. Drawing on Sara Ahmed’s concept of “affective economy”—the circulation of emotions among bodies, signs, and objects (*Cultural Politics* 45)—I show how *Caché* and *Octobre* link the affective economy between the ‘universal French’ body and the racially marked body to Paris’ spatial economy: the ‘good’ space of central Paris vs. the ‘bad’ Parisian *banlieue*. Further, the film’s ‘art house’ generic characteristics ensure we lack catharsis and closure, while its thriller genre elements confront us with surveillance, blood, and flashbacks—and the cause of these remain ambiguous to the viewer. *Caché*’s combination of generic tropes leaves spectators with a mysteriousness

⁸² See e.g. Gilroy, “Shooting Crabs”; Khanna, “Rue des Iris”; Celik; Crowley; and Kovačević.

that, along with Majid and his son's powerful dialogue, compels us to find out more about Majid's *banlieue* misery and its connection to October 1961. Thus, instead of guiding us to focus on the massacre, the film urges us to remember the historical injustice in a way that connects it to the contemporary situation of Algerian-French people in France, which so often comprises various effects of structural racism in the *banlieue*.

I focus this first main chapter less on the transnational aspects of *Caché* to firmly establish the colonial and neo-colonial elements embedded within the definition of 'transnational' with which I am working (I will then discuss specific transnational elements that *Caché* narrates in the dissertation's Conclusion). I do so because it is important to continue to use the term 'postcolonial' within the transnational paradigm for the following reasons: to give credit to the important field of postcolonial studies, which has influenced transnational feminist/film studies; to continue to take into account contemporary postcolonial theories that help us to better understand colonial histories and their influences on the present; and, most importantly, to retain the specific meaning of 'postcolonial' *within* the transnational framework. That is, in this chapter I look at the *banlieue* mainly as a neo-colonial (rather than transnational) space that controls post-colonial bodies. I do so to underline the importance of colonialism and anti-colonial theories to the projects of critical transnational film and feminist studies. At the same time, today's most prominent transnational feminist scholar, Sara Ahmed, lends this chapter its primary theoretical framework.

Chapter Three, "American Pulp in the *Banlieue*: Scavenging Marcel Carné's *Terrain vague* (1960)," shows how *Terrain vague* narrates the Parisian *banlieue* as a transnational enclave as early as 1960. The film does so by including the colonial issue of 'immigration' in a French delinquency story that "culturally reinscribes" (Kinder) U.S. texts, genres, and American

gender expressions. *Terrain vague* adapts two characters from Hal Ellson's 1950 pulp fiction novel, *Tomboy*. The Irish-American gang member, Tomboy, transforms into Dan—the virile gang leader. Employing Mack's concept of virilism outside of its original context (he describes the term as a transcultural 'immigrant' gender expression), I apply it to white-French, androgynous Dan's U.S.-influenced gender expression in 1960, which allows us to read her as a prefiguration of *banlieue* film tropes to come. The liberty taken in the film's adaptation of this literary character permits its narrative to then subjugate Dan at end of the film: she escapes the *banlieue* only after she is ousted from her leadership position, tries on a dress to please her male lover, and leaves hand-in-hand with him—all of which renders her a non-threatening 'universal' French girl. Dan's Irish-American sidekick, Mick, is adapted into (or coded as) a second-generation immigrant, Babar, whose queer and racialized body is ultimately contained in the marginal space of the *banlieue*. Babar's suicide seals this fate, presaging Majid's suicide in *Caché*. Conversely, the film allows the girl delinquent to escape her life of sexual harassment and poverty in the *banlieue*—but only after she follows the script of heteronormative femininity. I argue that we must reconsider Carné's historically misplaced and critically disparaged film because it presages a dynamic that will become intensified in the later period: as the *banlieue* becomes increasingly racialized in the 1980s, it becomes more troublingly associated with the U.S. ghetto and aberrant virility.

In Chapter Four, "*Laïcité* as Cruel Optimism in *La Journée de la jupe* (2009)," I show how the hostage thriller *La Journée de la jupe* narrates the *banlieue* public school as a site of transnational negotiation by illustrating the profound and continuing influences of U.S. culture on transcultural, postcolonial French youth. In "Feminism at the Service of Islamophobia," Geneviève Sellier raises important points regarding what *La Journée* does wrong when we look

at it through an anti-racist lens. I aim to repair Sellier’s “paranoid reading” by following Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s method of “reparative reading” (*Touching Feeling*). Sedgwick explains that, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the paranoid (or politically suspicious) method was the only legitimate way to read a text in humanities fields, and she suggests that reparative readings can be done so that we can extract nourishment from the products of a dominant culture that was never meant to sustain marginalized people. While Sellier underlines *La Journée*’s profound nationalist undercurrent, I explore the film’s intertexts to reveal how it also productively portrays the current ideological tensions between universalist nationalism and cultural pluralism.

To make this shift toward reparation, I claim that Bergerac—who holds her students hostage to teach them the value of *laïcité*—is plagued by what Lauren Berlant calls “cruel optimism”: a condition wherein the subject maintains a strong and positive emotional attachment to an object that ultimately does the subject harm. Bergerac’s problematic object is *laïcité* because she believes that it leads to equal opportunity for all. While we read Bergerac as white and of ‘French origin’ throughout most of the film, we finally learn that she speaks Arabic and had an Islamic upbringing. Thus, while she had successfully assimilated due to her white skin and certain choices she has made, many of her students cannot assimilate. I examine *La Journée* through predecessors to which it alludes—U.S. and French intertexts—to argue that the film is doing transnational feminist work by impelling us to think critically about precisely which bodies are *unable* to assimilate in contemporary France under the false promises that *laïcité* makes.

Drawing on Tarr’s recent work in *Screening Integration*, I also utilize *La Journée* as an exemplary film to explore the utility of discussing the *école laïque* film (a film set in, or that contains integral scenes in, public/secular schools) as a genre of its own, and one that is closely

aligned to *beur* and *banlieue* film genres, because these films reveal the public school as an ideologically charged space meant to assimilate students of diverse backgrounds into universal French citizens. By concentrating on a microcosm of the postcolonial French nation, the *école laïque* film genre underlines the theme of (im)mobility and the institutional suppression of minority cultures in France. I continue discussing this genre in the Conclusion (Chapter Five) via an analysis of Ambah's film *Mariam*, an *école laïque* film that narrates the *banlieue* as a site of transnational negotiation in its exploration of a virile teenage Muslim-French girl's personal moral struggle with the ban on headscarves in French public schools.

Chapter Two

The Spatial-Affective Economy of (Post)colonial Paris:

Reading Haneke's *Caché* (2005) through *Octobre à Paris* (1962)¹

I. Covering October 17, 1961

Many Algerian-French people are aware of the inter-generational continuities of police violence directed against them.² During a community meeting in Aubervilliers in 2002, a young Algerian-French woman who was born in Villiers-le-Bel and who holds a Ph.D. in international law said, “There is a long history of police violence directed at Algerians. My grandfather was tortured in Algeria. All our grandfathers were tortured in Algeria. It is what we all share. . . . [In France] we have a government that funds police to repress us. [...] Young people face very aggressive police” (qtd. in Schneider 209). Michael Haneke’s art house/psychological thriller *Caché* (France/Austria/Germany/Italy 2005) briefly illustrates this when, after Majid’s son (Walid Afkir) opens the door to his apartment, a police officer aggressively pushes him aside.

Caché won three awards at Cannes in 2005, just a few months after the French National Assembly passed the controversial law that called for teaching the “positive aspects” of colonialism in high schools (the law was repealed in 2006). It opened in Paris on October 5, a few weeks before the 2005 riots in the Parisian *banlieue* began. These riots—during which French President Nicolas Sarkozy called the rioters “*racailles*” (thugs)—occurred between October 27 and November 16 and were a reaction to the deaths of two Maghrebi-French teenagers due to police neglect in a case of racial profiling (Schneider 180-82). Nilgun Bayraktar

¹ A version of this chapter was previously published as an article in *Studies in European Cinema*; see Schaefer.

² In *May '68*, Ross illustrates the material continuities of policing and torture strategies/personnel between colonial Algeria and post-decolonization Paris.

points out that the state responses to these riots repeat the responses to protesting immigrant populations during the Algerian War of Independence from French colonial rule (1954-62): in each case, the French government imposed a curfew based on a colonial era law, the “state of emergency.”³ Bayraktar thus highlights “the enduring logic of colonial rule within postcolonial metropolitan France” (56-57).

This chapter reads *Caché* through the lens of the long-suppressed documentary *Octobre à Paris* (1962) to further expose the profound correlations between Paris’ colonial past and its neocolonial present. Together, the films show that white-French bodies are able to move freely across borders, while racialized bodies are associated with the periphery, becoming contained within the *banlieue* or feared and harmed when they cross the border that divides it from central Paris. *Octobre à Paris* demonstrates an early outcome of rebelling against this Paris/*banlieue* divide: it confronts the spectator with the injured and dead bodies of peacefully protesting Algerians who had dared to leave the *banlieue* and cross into central Paris in October 1961. Drawing on “politically engaged” affect theories (Gregg and Seigworth 7), I explore how social emotions circulate within (neo)colonial processes, the affective imbalances congealing to reinforce literal spaces of social marginalization. Employing Marx’s idea in *Capital* that the movement of commodities and money creates surplus value, Sara Ahmed puts forth her definition of “affective economy,” in which emotions work as a form of capital. She claims that affect does not reside positively in the sign or commodity, but is produced as an *effect* of its circulation among signs, objects, capital, and people (*Cultural Politics* 45, my emphasis). That is, emotion is not produced by the individual body alone, but via its interactions with other

³ The colonial era law was passed on April 3, 1955. The latest state of emergency was declared on Nov. 20, 2015, in response to the terrorist attacks of Nov. 13, 2015. It has been extended five times since this declaration and is slated to end on July 15, 2017. A declared state of emergency also allows for house arrests, police raids, and the closure of mosques without warrants (Kassem).

people, objects, and words. *Caché* and *Octobre à Paris* bring attention to the systematic dumping of negative social emotions, such as fear and hatred, onto bodies that have been socially constructed as aggressive—and thus kept at a distance—since the colonial era.

The discursive justification for colonization was *la mission civilisatrice* (the civilizing mission), which included bringing French Republican, universalist values to Algeria. Yet, while the notion of a mission implies the possibility of assimilation, much of French colonial discourse simultaneously devalued Algerian lives: “The colonial adventure was legitimized by racist depictions of Arabs [...] which inevitably called into question the very possibility of a civilizing project” (Scott, *Politics* 46). In the case of contemporary postcolonial France, the individual racist person does not hate the Arab because of an instinct to fear difference; rather, the racist’s fear has been constructed by racist (neo)colonial discourses that have *already* produced the figure of the threatening, aggressive, and hyper-sexual “*garçon arabe*” (Arab boy) (Guénif-Souilamas, “*Française*” 110-11). These discourses continue to affect contemporary discourses: politicians, intellectuals, and media reify this stereotypical figure, associate him with the culturally ‘inferior’ *banlieue*, and blame him for any violence that occurs there—rather than accounting for the violence that structural racism produces.

Using Ahmed’s concept of affective economies and reading the film through *Octobre à Paris*, I show how *Caché* represents what I call the unjust ‘spatial-affective economy’ of (post)colonial Paris. By reading these films—both of which focus on colonial state violence and its forgetting—through the lens of emotion, I attempt to make more memorable and accessible the following: the long histories of unjust spatial economies that the *banlieue* inherits from colonialism; and the ways in which colonial and universalist discourses continue to reify structural racism, material injustices, and spatial exclusion. This unjust spatial economy relies on

the failures of memory that *Caché* uncovers. The film reminds us that it is easy to forget the Algerian-French person (and the horrors of colonialism) when he lives outside of the culturally important space that is central Paris, thereby assuring that the bourgeois white-French person will rarely, if ever, be confronted with him.⁴

Haneke's film quietly exposes a national secret that has been largely repressed in French collective memory: the October Massacre that took place in Paris during the Algerian War of Independence.⁵ Declared a 'war' by the French government only in 1999, the Algerian War was previously euphemized as 'the events in Algeria' and 'the operation for the maintenance of order' because, the logic went, France could not be at war with itself (Algeria was an administrative 'region' of France, not a mere colony). October 17, 1961 was one day among the many months long 'Battle of Paris' (Einaudi), which pitted the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) against Paris police forces. Between thirty and forty thousand Algerians, many of whom lived in *bidonvilles* (shantytowns)⁶ on the outskirts of Paris, protested because the French government had "strongly advised Muslim Algerian workers [to] abstain from walking about [...] in the streets of Paris and [its] suburbs [after] 8:30 pm"; moreover, "Algerian cafés" were advised to close at 7:00 pm (Ross, *May '68* 54; House and MacMaster Ch. 3). Maurice Papon, the Prefect of Police, put this curfew in place strictly for 'French Muslims from Algeria' after the

⁴ This idea connects to the scene in which Georges and Anne discuss their situation with the daily news on in the background, the television situated at the very center of the filmic frame and in between the two characters. The couple discusses their current experience of trauma while numerous horrifying, violent situations are recounted on the television screen—which they fail to notice. Rothberg insists that the "film thus implies [...] that the condition of possibility for certain histories of imperial violence lies in a structural nonseeing on the part of bourgeois, metropolitan subjects" (284). It is only the threat of violence—the drawings and tapes—that finally compels Georges to see Majid and his *banlieue* HLM.

⁵ Other repressed historical moments in French history include the nation's complicity with Nazism. See e.g. Paxton, Rousso, and Rothberg.

⁶ A *bidonville* is an assembly of poorly-made buildings (shacks) that make for extremely poor living conditions; they are most often found in 'Third World' countries.

FLN committed a series of acts of war against the Paris police forces, defined by the French state as acts of ‘terrorism’. The curfew was meant to weaken the influence of the FLN over the 150,000 Algerians in the Paris region at the time. Informed in advance of the FLN-organized demonstration, the government called for one of the first news blackouts in French history, and all members of the Paris police force armed themselves with *matraques* and *bidules*, long clubs that could break a person’s skull open (Ross, *May ’68* 42). Some had firearms. By the end of the October Massacre, police officers had beaten, maimed, and murdered hundreds of Algerians in the streets of Paris. The officers had pushed or thrown some of the victims into the Seine, where many drowned.

While the demonstrators had been unarmed and peaceful, police opened fire almost immediately. A trade union witness noted the following: Papon “said that if we felt that we were in danger we should not hesitate but fire first; ‘I give you my word, you will be covered.’ Moreover, he said, ‘when you notify headquarters that a North African has been shot, the boss called to the scene has what is needed to make sure the North African has a weapon on him since, at the present time, there is no room for mistakes’” (qtd. in House and Macmaster 105⁷). Papon also told them: “For one blow, give them back ten”; and “Even if the Algerians are not armed, you should think of them always as armed” (Ross, *May ’68* 43). The last quotation emphasizes not only the French *fear* of the Algerian other, but also the fact that the reason for this fear has been invented. In *Caché*, Georges Laurent’s lies about Majid are reminiscent of Papon’s legitimization of police lies and state violence. Both narratives construct the figure of the terrifying Algerian (Bayraktar 72).

⁷ Archives SGP-FO, Conseil syndical agardiens, 3 Oct. 1961, 12-13. On witnesses to police killings and the planting of weapons, see Einaudi 304-6.

Caché's main character, white-French Georges (Daniel Auteuil⁸), is a literary talk show host who remembers repressed events from his childhood only when violent, childlike drawings and surveillance tapes of his home are sent to him. One tape reveals a barely legible street sign and an apartment number in the eastern Parisian *banlieue* of Romainville. Correctly assuming that Majid (Maurice Bénichou)—whom he knew as a boy—lives there, Georges goes there to blame him for the drawings and tapes. Majid denies having sent them. A tape is then sent to Georges' workplace: on this tape, we see a repeat of Georges aggressively threatening Majid in his *banlieue* apartment; after he leaves, Majid cries. Majid again denies knowing anything about the tape. When Georges's son Pierrot (Lester Makedonsky) goes missing, Georges blames Majid and the police take both Majid and his son in for questioning. Meanwhile, Georges hides the truth from his wife, Anne (Juliette Binoche), who works as an editor at a publishing house, until he quickly and quietly explains to her (as if in parentheses) the childhood occurrences that may have provoked these events: Majid's Algerian parents were working for the bourgeois protagonist Georges' parents when, he assumes, police officers killed them in the October Massacre. Georges' parents had planned to adopt Majid until Georges told lies about him. First, he said that Majid coughed up blood; then, Georges convinced him to kill a cockerel and told his parents that Majid did so to scare him. Georges' parents consequently send Majid to an orphanage, a heartbreaking event that the spectator witnesses in the film's penultimate scene. Toward the end of the film, Majid kills himself in front of Georges in his *banlieue* apartment, and Majid's son confronts Georges about it.

Caché is a particularly useful film with which to illustrate Paris' spatial-affective economy because it personifies colonialism and structural racism (the political) in its main

⁸ White-French Auteuil was born in Algiers, 'French Algeria', in 1950.

characters (the personal). Michael Rothberg argues that, “Through association with the events of October 17, [Majid's] expulsion [from the Laurent's home] and the adult Georges's unwillingness to take responsibility for it also appear to function as an allegory for the larger unwillingness of the French to face the crimes of the Algerian War era” (283). Continuing this allegorical reading of the film, the child Georges (colonial France) does not want to share anything with Majid (French-Algerians' *métropole*-born offspring) lest he subsume Georges' role in the family (the *métropole*). Thus, Georges first discursively constructs him as terrifying (he “coughs up blood”) and then renders him actually terrifying by telling him to kill the cockerel. That is, *it is only because of Georges that Majid becomes terrifying*.⁹ It is only because of colonial discourses and their contemporary counterparts that racialized postcolonial subjects have become and remain terrifying. *Caché* underlines the structural effects of the dumping of social emotions onto racialized bodies by visually embedding its two main characters firmly within their respective living spaces (central Paris vs. *banlieue*), which are extremely different in terms of symbolic and economic capital. As such, the film critiques the power differentials inherent to Paris' contemporary neocolonial situation.

Even while *Caché*'s dialogue explicitly mentions the October 17, 1961 Massacre, many scholars question the political power of Haneke's film. Some scholars argue that *Caché* fails to do justice to the victims and survivors of the Octobre Massacre (Gilroy, “Shooting Crabs”; Khanna, “From Rue Morgue”; Celik).¹⁰ In “When Remembering is Forgetting,” Patrick Crowley is particularly concerned with the relationship between October 17, 1961 and how its “aesthetic

⁹ Discussing the broader postcolonial context, Delphy states that this “paranoid perspective” is “the same reasoning that lies behind the launching of so-called ‘pre-emptive’ wars—so much in fashion today—attacking in the name of preventing an imaginary danger” (*Separate* 102).

¹⁰ For a nuanced take on these debates, See also Kovačević, especially 373.

appropriation” in the film both “preserves and changes [the event]” (268). He enters into discussion with Paul Gilroy, who claims that “The dead deserve better than that passing acknowledgment,” that “overly casual citation of the 1961 anti-Arab pogrom” (“Shooting Crabs” 233). Crowley complicates this claim, citing Haneke’s assertion that October 17 functions as a mere “framework” for *Caché*’s narrative as inspiration for his argument (qtd. in Crowley 267). Crowley states, “Even as the film evokes the events of October 17, it contributes to their ‘forgetting’ by folding the events into a signifying structure that is built upon, and entombs, those same events” (269). However pessimistic this may seem, he concludes ambivalently: “Haneke folds the events of October 17, 1961 into the shadows of the mind, the darkness of the farm building, and the cinema to keep them from fading within the light of history and the overexposure of culture” (277). Here, I am most concerned with these “shadows of the mind.” I contend that, instead of guiding us to focus on October 17, the film urges us to remember the historical injustice in a way that connects it to the contemporary situation of Algerian-French people in France, which so often comprises various effects of structural racism, including racial segregation in the *banlieue*, mass unemployment, high male imprisonment, racial profiling, and police brutality. *Caché*—perhaps despite its auteur’s intentions—inspires certain spectators to *find out more* about (post)colonial Paris’ spatial-affective economy due to the intricate binding of its formal elements (as art house film) to its plot (as mystery and psychological thriller). It is more politically useful to leave us with a compulsion to search for answers than to offer us a thorough explanation of the events within the film’s narrative.

Some of the answers that *Caché* urges us to search for can be found in *Octobre à Paris*, in which state forces harm and kill Algerians when they leave their *banlieue bidonvilles* to cross into central Paris and make their voices heard. The abuse that these protestors endured reveals

the continuities between Paris' 1961 spatial economy and the same topography that confines Majid to the *banlieue* in 2005. Crowley mentions that Haneke folds the colonial-era massacre into the darkness of the Laurent's farm building, but I am more concerned with how the film folds the massacre into the somberness of Majid's *banlieue* HLM, a building that inherits the history of *bidonvilles* as colonial spaces. With Majid there, it is easy for Georges and the French government to forget him, along with the massacre and colonialism more generally. As such, *Caché* ultimately blames Majid's death on the *banlieue* and the government officials that created and maintain it as a space of exclusion.

II. Media Memories & Manipulation

The truth was not immediately known; they did everything to hide it. (Le Comité Maurice Audin and *Verité-Liberté*)

Analyzing an encounter between a white child and a Black man in Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, Ahmed states that the child's fear of the man (Fanon himself) does not originate in the child; rather, "the production of the black man as the object of fear opens up past histories of association: Negro, animal, bad, mean, ugly" (Ahmed, *Cultural Politics* 63, 66; Fanon 111-14). Similarly, Georges' childhood construction of Majid as blood-coughing and blood-thirsty allows his parents to associate Majid with the figure of the "Arab boy." Deconstructing neocolonial racist stereotypes, Nacira Guénif-Souilamas describes four ethnicized and sexualized figures of Arabic people in France, including the "Arab boy." He is viewed as "imprisoned by his bestial and obscurantist origins. He is un-civilizable and incapable of controlling his urges, a 'violent heterosexual', a rapist, the exemplary cause of the veiling of women, and the archetype of the thief" ("*Française*" 110-111). Guénif-Souilamas explains how colonialism deeply affected the genealogy of this figure. Writers during the colonial period narrated him as a youthful, exotic, and welcoming sexual object. She writes, "The Arab boy comes [...] from a buried memory, that of the colony and of the Orient where Western men went south of the Mediterranean to encounter youth" ("*Française*" 118). While writers such as Gérard de Nerval, Gustave Flaubert, Jean Genet, and André Gide valorized this figure, "today's Arab boy is not of the same nature; he is the exact inverse. He is no longer associated with *jouissance*, but with the horror of 'violent,' 'savage,' and 'barbarous' actions, which can only be committed by young uncivilized and uncivilizable men" of the *banlieue*. She explains that the media "chants the theme of an interior, undesirable alterity" in its treatment of violence that occurs in the *banlieue*: the media

tend to attribute the “urban violence” of autumn 2005—and continue to attribute “*tournantes*” (gang rape)—*only* to the sons of Arab and Black “indigenous” people; thus, there has been a reversal of the desirable figure of the Arab boy of the colonies to the detestable Arab of the *banlieue* (“*Française*” 118-9). His proximity and supposed claim to hexagonal ‘high’ and ‘universal’ culture renders him threatening. He is no longer viewed as the colonized (the exotic sexual object); in the dominant French view, he has become the colonizer (the threatening sexual subject) in his insistence on remaining in the *métropole*, even after his presence as manual laborer is no longer desired.

Guénif-Souilamas explains this “genealogical rupture”—the reversal of this figure—by analyzing a scene in Louis-Ferdinand Céline’s 1932 novel, *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (Voyage to the End of Night). In the novel’s fictional, poor Paris suburb that “prefigures the leprous *banlieues*,” the Arab character can feel only disgust at his familiarity with an “inverted sexuality that the *métropole* reproaches.” Young Arab men today tend to inherit this Franco-French homophobia and continue to affirm this disgust. Thus, the desirable, hyper-sexualized figure of the Arab boy in the colony who submits to a sexuality that has “always been part of the world that surrounds him” has been reversed. However, he is no less sexualized: he becomes the detestable “violent heterosexual” of the *banlieue* (“*Française*” 119).

Continuing her analysis of Fanon’s text, Ahmed warns that “The black man [or “Arab boy”] becomes even more threatening if he passes by: his proximity is imagined then as the possibility of future injury. As such, the economy of fear works to contain the bodies of others, *a containment whose ‘success’ relies on its failure, as it must keep open the very grounds of fear*” (*Cultural Politics* 67, their emphasis). For Georges to remain ‘justified’ in his fear, the racially marked subject must pass by the white subject, just as the Black-French bicyclist does in the

middle of *Caché*, just as Majid's son does at the end of *Caché*, and just as the French-Algerian does by living in the *métropole*. He threatens 'their' spaces by simply being in them. Yet, we must remember that the object of fear is *produced through* processes that consistently imbue him with aggressive traits. The racialized person is not inherently threatening but is "mediated through the memory traces" (Ahmed 62). In the French (post)colonial case, he is mediated through the memories of colonial discourses and ongoing media representations. Georges' story about Majid in childhood works as a metaphor for the dominant Orientalizing narrative about Arabs. In the context of Georges' adulthood, bloody drawings—which remind him of his *own* construction of Majid during childhood—continue to mediate his would-have-been brother.

To highlight the process of social construction, *Caché* makes its spectator aware of its own construction as cultural product. Although we never find out who sent the tapes that "terrorize" Georges and Anne, T. Jefferson Kline proposes various possible answers, the most convincing diegetic answer being Georges himself. However, Kline concludes that "*we cannot know for sure*": "the 'terrorist' images are absolutely indistinguishable from the 'image maker's' presentation of the real time of *Caché*. The first 'terrorist video', especially, carries imbedded in it the film's credits, legitimizing it as deriving directly from the film's image maker (i.e. Haneke himself)" (559-560, "Intertextual" their emphasis). *Caché*'s interrogation of the media apparatus¹¹ therefore leaves us "anxious about our ability to distinguish between (the film's) reality and the images that are represented as 'produced by terrorists'" (Kline, "Intertextual" 560). Through this interrogation, the film implies that the exclusion of media information leads to the exclusion, overrepresentation, or manipulated representation of people and spaces. One of Georges' tasks as talk show host is to edit the show's footage. Using editing equipment, he and a

¹¹ Thank you to Robert Harvey for this wording.

colleague decide what dialogue to cut from the taped show. As we watch a scene from his talk show—not realizing, at first, that Georges is also watching it—he tells his colleague to “stop there” and “go further” as we view their screen (as our screen) pause, fast forward and rewind, much like Georges controls the tapes that are sent to the Laurent household. We witness Georges’ ability to manipulate visual and audio reality via editing. This scene works to remind us of an authority’s ability to edit information for the audience. Kline posits that *Caché* is “a critique of the way images are produced [...] and or repressed” and that it underlines the fact that “whoever controls the media, controls the situation” (*Unraveling* 177, 169).

Octobre à Paris—while it may not explicitly interrogate the visual media apparatus as *Caché* does—implicitly does so by utilizing photographs to continue its narrative at moments when filming was difficult or impossible due to the media blackout and lack of technology. Screened in France on October 9, 1962, it was the first feature-length, non-pornographic film to be seized by the police (Le Comité Maurice Audin [9]). As such, the censored documentary interrogates authoritative control of the media by simply existing in certain spaces and times. Its underground production took place between October 1961 and March 1962 by a team of French filmmakers including Jacques Panijel. It was spearheaded by *Verité-Liberté: cahiers d'information sur la guerre d'Algérie*,¹² a monthly newspaper that published banned documents concerning the Algerian War of Independence, and the Comité Maurice Audin,¹³ named after a young French mathematician who was arrested by *parachutistes* (an elite section of the French

¹² *Verité-Liberté: Informative Notebooks on the Algerian War* was published from May 1960 to August 1962. It comprised texts that were censored or susceptible to becoming so, and described itself as “a complete dossier of information that the authorities and press wanted to hide or did not dare to say” (Comité Maurice Audin).

¹³ The Comité Maurice Audin was founded in November 1957; members included Madeleine Rébérioux, Pierre-Vidal Naquet, and Laurent Schwartz. Its principle publications included “L’affaire Audin” (1958); “Nous accusons...” (1958); “La vérité sur les camps de regroupement...” (1959); “Un homme a disparu” (1960); “Sans commentaire (le Colonel Argoud au Procès des Barricades)...” (1961); and “La Raison d’Etat (le dossier officiel de la répression)...” (1962).

army) during the Battle of Algiers and consequently tortured and killed for siding with Algeria's independence movement (Comité Maurice Audin and *Verité-Liberté*). Founding member of the Comité Audin, biologist and CNRS Director of Research, and co-writer and co-director with Jean-Paul Sassy of *La Peau et les os* (*Skin and Bones*, Prix Jean Vigo 1961), Panijel was inspired to document the state violence. Pointing to the spatial component of his shock, he recounts, "Crossing the Champs-Élysées, I discovered the horror: hundreds of Algerians sitting on the ground between two rows of cops in uniform" (223). Four teams of technicians, twenty-three people altogether, volunteered their labor for two to three days per week over five months. The filming was extremely difficult due to material constraints and it "would not have been possible without the FLN in France and the feelings of confidence and friendship that the organization had for their French comrades who made the film" (Le Comité Maurice Audin and *Verité-Liberté*).

Octobre à Paris was officially banned in France until 1973, but French Communist Party cells, unionists, *ciné-clubs*, and independent Leftist journals systematically organized underground circuits to screen it (Cadé 49), and it screened publicly at the Venice Film Festival on October 3, 1962. It was generally praised by both Italian and French critics, with Georges Sadoul claiming in *Les Lettres Françaises* (September 19, 1962) that "the five acts of this historical tragedy are deeply moving examples of *cinéma vérité*... This 'damned' film is a grand film" (qtd. in Le Comité Maurice Audin [11]). A hunger strike by filmmaker René Vautier worked to officially liberate *Octobre*,¹⁴ but Panijel himself then insisted it be accompanied by an introduction or epilogue explaining that the police massacre was a *crime d'état* (government

¹⁴ In a letter addressed to Louis Malle dated June 25, 1971, Vautier implores, "*Nous obtiendrons le visa de censure. Encore faudra-t-il ensuite sortir le film! Voulez-vous nous aider?*" (We will obtain the [film's] visa. We then need to screen the film! Do you want to help us?)

crime). Today, the French government still does not recognize the massacre as such. On October 17, 2001, a documentary about the massacre, *Une journée portée disparue (Drowning by Bullets*, Philip Brooks and Alan Hayling, 1992), aired on the Franco-German channel Arte; Haneke saw it.¹⁵ After Panijel's death, and six years after the semi-documentary *Nuit noire* (Alain Tasma and Patrick Rotman, 2005)¹⁶ aired on Canal+, *Octobre* was released in cinemas on October 19, 2011, on the same day as *Ici on noie les Algériens* (Yasmina Adi),¹⁷ which includes archival images and contemporary interviews with people who lived through the massacre.

Octobre à Paris comprises interviews, testimonies, photographs and re-enactments of the demonstration's planning, the massacre, and its aftermath. Algerian women and men, the latter dressed in suits, ties, and overcoats—the same Sunday best clothing they wore during the protest¹⁸—recount how they have been treated in Paris since the beginning of the Algerian War of Independence. Police officers and *harkis*¹⁹ arrested them and took them to the basement of the police station on the rue de la Goutte d'Or neighborhood in Paris where they tortured them—including tying them in painful positions, beating them, and violating them with bottles—to get information about the FLN. As her children surround her in their small *bidonville* room, one woman says, “They hit me everywhere.” Midway through the film, we transition to re-enactments of the protest of October 17 and its planning. Leaders pat down each protester to

¹⁵ When asked about the massacre by Austrian Film Commission interviewer Karin Schiefer, Haneke stated, “It’s only an element which supplies a framework. During preparation before shooting *Caché* I learned about this massacre in a documentary on Arte [...] and it wasn’t mentioned for four decades. I made use of this incident because it fits in a horrible way. You could find a similar story in any country, even though it took place at a different time. There’s always a collective guilt which can be connected to a personal story, and that’s how I want this film to be understood” (qtd. in Crowley 267). Also see Crowley on *Une journée portée disparue* (268-71).

¹⁶ For more on *Nuit noire*, see Kline, “Intertextual” 552-54.

¹⁷ For more on *Ici on noie les Algériens*, see Rice 99-100.

¹⁸ See Ross, *May '68* 43. *Le Nouvel Observateur* reporter Veran states that the peaceful protestors were dressed as if ‘going to a wedding’.

¹⁹ Algerian-born soldiers who fought for the French side during the war

check for weapons as they prepare to enter the march toward Paris' center. When the police brutality begins, the film offers us photographs (and a few extremely short live recordings) of the actual demonstration and massacre. Because of the government-imposed news blackout, the quickness of photographs was necessary. The movie camera often moves over these still images, attempting to animate them.

The film returns to testimonials, this time regarding October 17 specifically: echoing *la Rafle du Vel d'Hiv*,²⁰ police officers locked the victims up in overcrowded and unhygienic stadiums on the *périphérique* border, such as the *Palais des Sports* and the *Parc des Expositions*—"veritable concentration camps" (Le Comité Maurice Audin and *Verité-Liberté*)—and threw their injured and maimed bodies into the Seine, among other means of containment, abuse, torture, and (attempted) murder. In its epilogue, the film documents the Charonne Massacre of February 8, 1962, when Parisian trade unionists demonstrated at the Charonne metro station against fascism and the OAS (*Organisation Armée Secrète*, French colonialist paramilitaries in Algeria) attacks against Algerians. A police rampage crushed nine people, the youngest of whom was sixteen. Charonne often acts as a 'screen memory' that covers over October 17 since white-French people were killed at Charonne (Rothberg 359). As Kristin Ross writes, "Charonne registered in French public memory, and the police massacre of October 17, 1961, did not" (*May '68* 47). Today, one can still see the discrepancies in commemoration. The Charonne Massacre has been rendered visible in the following ways: there is a well-lit commemoration plaque inside the metro station [Figure 1]; thanks to Paris Mayor Bertrand Delanoë, since February 8, 2007 small signs read '*Place du 8 février 1962*' under the large

²⁰ French police forces arrested Jewish people in the summer of 1942, most notoriously in the *Vel d'Hiv* roundup, named after the stadium in which the detainees were held: the *Vélodrome d'Hiver*, or Winter Stadium. See Rouso 61; Conan and Rouso Ch. 1.

Charonne signs on the metro platform, and multiple signs outside of the station read, '*Place du 8 février 1962, Date de la manifestation contre la guerre d'Algérie ou neuf manifestants trouvèrent la mort au métro Charonne*'²¹ [Figures 2-3]. In 2001, Delanoë also placed a plaque on the wall of the quay beside the Pont Saint Michel, where police officers beat and drowned many of the October Massacre victims. However, it is not on the main part of the bridge itself; one must turn the corner to search for this nearly hidden commemoration²² [Figure 4].

²¹ "Date of the protest against the Algerian War where nine protestors died in the Charonne metro station"

²² For more on the politics of this plaque's placement, see Cole, especially 132-134.

III. The Parisian Dream

(Post)colonial France's unjust spatial-affective economy has been in place since the French began colonizing Algeria in 1830, and especially since the civilian administration began separating indigenous Arab from white French neighborhoods in Algiers. The colonial history of Algeria is especially important in the context of (post)colonial Paris because of its unique relationship to France: after 1870, the nation introduced a French civilian administration to govern the territory, thereby bringing settler colonialism to Algeria. White-French colonists (called *pieds-noirs*²³ when they returned to France after 1962) lived and worked in 'French Algeria', a space that was both legally and discursively viewed as *la plus grande France* (greater France), a French region complete with three of its own administrative *départements*.²⁴

A border that divides culturally celebrated spaces from marginalized spaces is the *périphérique* ring highway that splits central Paris from its outskirts. Guy Austin states, "[Majid's] suffering remains as invisible to Georges as it is to French society at large, for Majid [...] is hidden at the margins, in a council block. Majid's dingy flat in the *banlieue* reminds us that this suburban zone has been memorably described [by Didier Lapeyronnie] as 'a colonial space' where the inhabitants experience life as 'the colonized'. The trauma continues for Majid [...] in the pseudo-colonial universe of the *banlieue*" (534). While 2016 saw the beginning of the *Métropole du Grand Paris*, an urban development plan that promises to integrate the Paris suburbs with its center via a new metropolitan governance, redesigning of the *périphérique*, and massive public transportation extensions and projects, the *Parisien/banlieusard* split may remain because it is also a psychological one (Tribillon). *Caché* critiques the Paris/suburbs spatial-

²³ The literal translation of *pieds-noirs* is black feet.

²⁴ These administrative units are similar to 'counties' in the U.S.

affective economy by presenting the spectator with visual-affective reasons to denounce Majid's expulsion to the *banlieue*. *Caché* critiques a spatial-affective economy in which the *banlieue* kills Majid—the *banlieue* as causally linked to colonialism, racism-fueled state violence, bourgeois complicity, and the privilege of being able to forget. When we compare the structural and verbal violence done to Majid and his consequent suicide to the violence recounted by survivors of the October Massacre in *Octobre à Paris*, a pattern becomes clear: the postcolonial subject's body is contained in socio-economically marginalized spaces and is disciplined and punished when it crosses into bourgeois, culturally 'refined' spaces.²⁵

Octobre à Paris begins with iconic images of the good life that Paris uniquely promises. After a brief voice-over introduction against a black background, we see an image we all know: a wide, sunlit Seine with a barge floating along it, accompanied by soft, uplifting music. We cut to a mechanic who recounts the stories he had heard in Algeria before coming to Paris: "France is the land of liberty. Go there: you will certainly enjoy yourself and, besides, no one will do you harm; the French are nice, they are not the same as the ones here." We cut to a man who says, "I have plenty of friends who, when they arrive, they tell me they are living *la belle vie* [the good life] in the cinema, in cars, with girls—taking long walks with them." We cut to a street scene that presents us with the center of Paris: we are at Saint Michel—a key place on the night of October 17—in front of a cinema that advertises *Ben Hur* (William Wyler, 1959), an image that reminds us of the rich cinema culture of Paris and the influx of U.S. culture into postwar France [Figures 5-6]. *Octobre à Paris* then cuts back to the Seine and the soft music. Suddenly, intense music takes over; the film shuts down this idealistic narrative of (post)colonial

²⁵ Despite this trend, we must keep in mind that racial profiling and police brutality are prevalent both in and outside the *banlieue*.

Algerian ‘immigration’ and we are introduced to broken promises and the reality of the Algerian situation in France. We see a reenactment of women screaming near the Seine. A man looks at the camera and says, “The police threw me in the Seine.” Two other men recount that they were beaten and tortured by *harkis* and they reveal their scars to the camera [Figures 7-8].

The film title emerges over an image: lying on the cobblestones near the river, there is a street sign that reads “2nd arrondissement: Boulevard Poissonnière” next to a pile of shoes [Figure 9]. This haunting image harkens back to images of the Holocaust, thus performing an act of what Rothberg calls “multidirectional memory.” Remembering multidirectionally involves the practice of taking into account the injustices suffered not only by people of the ‘West’ and the Global North (e.g. the attempted ‘extermination’ of Jewish peoples during World War II), but also of people in the ‘East’ and the Global South (e.g. formerly colonized peoples) and visible minorities within the Global North. In other words, to remember multidirectionally is to attempt to de-hierarchize historical traumas, oppressions, and injustices. Rothberg illustrates the various ways in which *Caché* offers a multidirectional approach to historical memory and contemporary human rights issues by linking events in the present day (e.g. the U.S.-led war in Iraq) to those in the past (e.g. the October Massacre) (Ch. 9), but he is especially concerned with the ways in which cultural texts point simultaneously to the Holocaust and (de)colonization. For Rothberg, these texts are indicative of the period between 1945 and 1962, a period that “contains both the rise of consciousness of the Holocaust as an unprecedented form of modern genocide and the coming to national consciousness and political independence of many of the subjects of European colonialism” (4, 7). Rothberg maintains that, while assertions of the Holocaust’s uniqueness were useful during the direct postwar period due to a broad public silence surrounding it, continuing to separate it from other forms of extreme violence and genocide

promotes a morally, intellectually and politically dangerous “hierarchy of suffering” (9). He explains that remembering multidirectionally can deepen our understanding of the specificities inherent to, and points of contact among, historically traumatic events, and also has the potential to create productive, intercultural dialogues within the public sphere, including “new forms of solidarity and new visions of justice” (5). He places multidirectional memory in opposition to the competitive memory paradigm, which assumes limited space in the public sphere for discussions of, and monuments dedicated to, traumatic historical events (e.g. the Holocaust memorial in Washington, D.C. is a screen memory for the U.S.’s involvement in the African slave trade). *Octobre à Paris* remembers multidirectionally because it points simultaneously to the Holocaust and to (de)colonization/immigration.

Following Rothberg, who draws on theorists such as Aimé Césaire and Hannah Arendt, I contend that the attempted annihilation of the Jewish people and other ‘internally’ stigmatized groups in France during WWII was an ideological extension of European colonial imperialism of ‘external’ groups. *Octobre à Paris* simultaneously points to elements of ‘internal’ and ‘external’ oppressions and racisms—anti-Semitism and anti-Arab racism. The film’s title shot offers us a vision at once historical, in its pointing to the Holocaust, and contemporary, in its uncovering of a similarly unjust event in the October Massacre. The title shot proves that horrifying violence against humans can also occur in the very center of Paris, sixteen years after the end of WWII—which is perhaps of little surprise since the Prefect of Police, Papon, was also a WWII war criminal. In fact, Rothberg explains that the October Massacre definitively entered public memory during Papon’s 1997-1998 trial for his role in the deportation of Jews to Nazi camps

during World War II (257).²⁶

The beginning of *Octobre à Paris* is particularly striking when we compare it to *Caché*. In the documentary, men recount the promises that the myth of the Parisian Dream gives to Algerian ‘immigrants’, but it quickly shuts down this optimistic narrative by showing us the following: when the non-universal bodies of the *bidonvilles* and the *banlieue* crossed into central Paris in 1961, state forces attacked them. Given this history, which the French government repressed until the late 1990s and continues to render unimportant, it is perhaps not surprising that Majid remains stuck in the *banlieue*.

²⁶ Left intellectuals such as Pierre Vidal-Naquet understood and made public this connection before Rothberg, although they were rarely heard by other sectors of society.

IV. Fast Cars, Stuck Bodies

Affect is what *sticks*, or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values, and objects. (Ahmed, *Promise* 230, my emphasis)

At the first sign of violence, Georges' parents reject their adopted child, perhaps because his action conjures up the figure of the "Arab boy," which is deeply rooted in the French imaginary [Figures 10-11]. As a child, Georges' positive identity was already purchased at the price of dumping negative affects onto the racialized other. As an adult, he sustains this unjust affective economy: rather than deal with his emotions of guilt, shame, anxiety, and fear, he aggressively dumps them onto Majid and his son by expressing them as anger: he yells at them and accuses them of creating and sending the tapes and drawings and taking his son, even after they insist they did not. Georges also yells at his wife, Anne. Conversely, Majid seems to do everything in his power as an adult to distance himself from the stereotype of the "Arab boy": his visibly calm demeanor and thoughtful, well-reasoned speech proves that he is much more 'civilized' than Georges. Whereas dominant French society has constructed 'immigrants' such as Majid as assertive, aggressive, and unruly (Mack 1), it is *Caché*'s white-French character who often displays elements of toxic masculinity. The film represents Majid and his son as secular—we never see any signs of religion—and as expressing normative French gender characteristics: their masculinity is not virile and, thus, not threatening; this disavowal of the stereotype of the violent and deviant "Arab boy" reveals that, even when one fits into dominant cultural norms, skin color and racism remain. *Caché* therefore illustrates that the universalist model of assimilation merely works to uphold racist discourses and policies.

Caché superimposes its characters' affective economy over the spatial economy of Paris' center and suburbs, allowing us to see how social affect helps to create and maintain

marginalized spaces, which then work to contain marginalized subjects and associate them with ‘bad’ spaces. Ahmed maintains that, in “affective economies, emotions *do things*, and they align individuals with communities—or bodily space with social space—through the very intensity of their attachments” (“Affective” 119, their emphasis). The film exquisitely links the affective economy between the would-be brothers to the unjust spatial economy of postcolonial Paris by embedding the two men within their respective living spaces. As Bayraktar states, “we do not see the adult Majid outside the claustrophobic space of the housing projects, which suggests that he has spent his life in such marginalized places” (62). The film lets us know that it is precisely this imbalanced affective economy that leads directly to the unjust spatial economy that the film represents via the stark differences between the spaces to which Georges and his family have access, and those in which the racialized Majid is contained. *Caché* represents the racially marked bodies of Majid and his son—as well as the racialized and classed spaces of the Parisian *banlieue*—as affective dumping sites.

When discussing ‘refined’ spaces, we should keep in mind that taste is arbitrary and socially constructed; cultures hierarchize objects and spaces by suturing affective meaning to them. Ahmed usefully summarizes this idea, from Pierre Bourdieu’s *Distinction*: “taste is a very specific bodily orientation that is shaped by ‘what’ is already decided to be good or a higher good” (*Promise* 33). Georges gets continuous affirmation of his positive identity from the objects that surround him in the spaces he inhabits, both at home and at work; his body orients itself upright, as if proud, over his clear kitchen table and in front of his shelves of books as warm colors surround him [Figure 12]. Conversely, we see Majid’s negative affective relationship to his surroundings when his chest slumps as he sits in his gray apartment [Figure 13]. Majid’s bodily orientations throughout *Caché* repeat those of the October Massacre victims, which

Octobre à Paris illustrates in photographs. As we will see, bodies injured by state-inflicted violence sit, slumped over themselves. Ahmed further maintains that objects have the potential to embody good feeling and “the good life” (*Promise* 33). She states that “happiness is promised through proximity to certain objects” (*Promise* 29). Similarly, Lauren Berlant thinks of an object as a “cluster of promises” (“Cruel Optimism” 33). Majid is relegated to a space that lacks “happy objects”—those things that establish and continuously reaffirm one’s spot within the good life.

If the French national ideal, as Ross argues in *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*, is bourgeois contentment comprising both a private, safe domestic space (complete with shiny, new appliances) and access to the various capitals of the city, oftentimes via the individualized freedom of a car, then *Caché* shows us that Majid has only part of the first of these. In fact, Majid seems unable to leave his apartment, depressed, *stuck*. Instead of crossing the *périphérique* border, as many of the peaceful protestors in *Octobre à Paris* do, Majid remains and dies in the *banlieue*. This stasis exemplifies Majid’s lack of social and literal mobility, and the spaces to which he is confined. Commenting on women who are stuck in domestic spaces, Ahmed explains that “fear works to align bodily and social space: it works to enable some bodies to inhabit and move in public space through restricting the mobility of other bodies to spaces that are enclosed or contained” (*Cultural Politics* 70). While Majid is stuck, Georges moves through public space in his car—driving freely throughout the center of Paris, the *banlieue*, and provincial France—as well as walking about in his bourgeois homes.

Octobre à Paris allows us to see the protestors (in a recreation of the events) as mobile before they cross the *périphérique* border, as they line up for the march toward the city center. Once they arrive, their bodies visually anticipate the stasis of Majid’s body, forever in the *banlieue*: the protestors are caught in the still images of photographs. The stasis of the

photographs signal a different meaning than the stasis of the camera in *Caché*. While *Octobre*'s filmmakers were forced to animate photographs via the movie camera's pans across, and close-ups on, the activists captured in them, Haneke has the privilege of letting his camera stay still over live action footage for moments on end. The photographs alert us to the state violence toward, and neglect of, the Algerian-French body, while Haneke's camera holds longer those shots that focus on the exterior signs of the 'good life' in France. *Caché* is a film that stays with certain spectators for hours or days after viewing precisely because the enduring still shots get stuck in our minds, and their juxtaposition with quick shots—of bloody drawings and bloody memories—make the latter even more shockingly violent and memorable. In *Octobre*, the demonstrators who remain alive after the massacre regain their ability to move; they show us their scars, the bodily marks of trauma with which they will forever be stuck.

Caché famously begins with a mid-angle long shot of the vibrant exterior of the Laurent's apartment on rue des Iris in the 14th arrondissement of Paris [Figure 14]. Two shots that we will see later are equally important: the penultimate shot of Georges' large, charming childhood home in the countryside [Figure 15]; and the shot of Majid's HLM in Romainville, as seen from Georges' perspective across the street (Bayraktar 58, 62) [Figure 16]. These three shots set up the emotional topography of the film: they are the focal points of the film's spatial-affective economy, as these recurring shots show the glaring differences in symbolic, cultural, and economic capital between the two men and their families. While Georges' Paris apartment is coded as protected and private (Ezra and Sillars 216), both of his homes are also classically charming: the roofs grow moss, appearing organic and vibrant. In contrast, we see only the bottom six or seven floors of Majid's apartment building. We can see that his building is less individualized and secure, and more functional, than Georges'. Most importantly, the shots of

Georges' homes are held for minutes, and we see them more than once throughout the film, and at different times of day. We even see Georges' childhood home in both 1961 and 2005—the home that *could have been* shared with Majid [Figure 17]. In contrast, the shots of Majid's apartment are held only for seconds, making it appear ephemeral and insignificant in comparison to Georges' well-rooted homes—an ephemerality that presages Majid's death in the film.

The visual transiency of Majid's HLM—that the shots of it are held only for seconds—also connects to the interlocking history of colonialism, *bidonvilles* and *banlieues*. *Octobre à Paris* carefully documents the poor living conditions of the Algerian population in France at the time via multiple panning shots across the tops of *bidonvilles* that surround Paris. A woman looks into the camera and recounts that, after her husband came to study in France, she and her children followed to be with him. We sense her feeling of shock when she says, “We came without knowing there were *bidonvilles* in Paris.” Claude Bartolone²⁷ explains the genealogy of *bidonvilles* in the French context:

The term '*bidonville*' was born in North Africa during the interwar period of demographic explosion, rural exodus, uncontrolled urban sprawl, and social injustice. The term was exported to the *métropole* during the Algerian War of Independence. [...] The seriousness of the 'events' in Algeria led the [French] government to intensify its war against Algerian nationalism. In the summer of 1956, [the French government] created the *Société nationale de construction pour les travailleurs algériens* [SONACOTRAL, National Construction Society for Algerian Workers], which [...] was above all a tool of the Minister of the Interior to regulate *Français musulmans d'Algérie* [French Muslims from Algeria].

(1, 6)

Relatedly, in *Algeria in France*, anthropologist Paul Silverstein shows how the colonial

²⁷ Claude Bartolone is President of the French National Assembly (2012-present). As a Socialist Party candidate, he has been elected to the National Assembly, representing the Seine-Saint-Denis department since 1981. He was Minister for the City (1998-2002) and President of the Seine-Saint-Denis General Council (2008-2012).

mechanisms of controlling or destroying certain villages in North Africa were then transformed into parallel processes within the *métropole* (85). 42,000 people lived in a series of *bidonvilles* in a 400-hectare area known as the *zone* located just outside Paris' ramparts, which lasted until the early 1960s (this is the specific *banlieue* space that *Terrain vague* represents). Large numbers of 'guest workers' (or 'immigrant workers') and their families settled in *bidonvilles*, which had developed after World War II on abandoned sites around French cities. In the 60s and 70s, urban planners leveled these shantytowns and their residents were relocated to more permanent structures in the *banlieue*: HLMs.

The *péripherique* ring highway that surrounds Paris' central twenty *arrondissements* (administrative neighborhoods) was also built at this time (from 1958-1973) to replace *la zone*. While the *péripherique* was built on the site of the former Thiers Wall *fortification* to increase traffic flow, Silverstein calls it a "de facto *cordon sanitaire*"²⁸ because it separates "the bourgeois city from the proletarian suburbs" (89). The various borders that have separated the *banlieue* from the city center echo the spatial boundaries of the colonies (French vs. indigenous neighborhoods), and especially the spatial segregation of Algiers, most memorably represented in Gillo Pontecorvo and Saadi Yacef's *La Battaglia di Algeri* (*The Battle of Algiers*, Italy/Algeria, 1967).

Many of the October '61 demonstrators came from the *bidonvilles* of Gennevilliers and Nanterre, the latter, one of the largest *bidonvilles* in France.²⁹ *Octobre* recreates their gathering for the demonstration. At the end of a panning shot over the Nanterre *bidonville*, the camera pans further left and up to call attention to an early HLM, foreshadowing the larger transformations to

²⁸ Literal translation: a barrier implemented to stop disease from spreading.

²⁹ For a discussion of women's lives in *bidonvilles* and their transition to HLMs, see Rosello, "North African Women."

come [Figures 18-19]. Silverstein explains,

The history of replacement of the *bidonville* with more permanent structures parallels the increasing intervention of the French state in the provision of public housing and the control of urban development since the late nineteenth century. The ideology behind this concern for urban renewal incorporated socialist discourses of land management and hygiene, in addition to state security. (92)

By the beginning of the Algerian War (1954), the housing crisis had exacerbated, leaving the *bidonvilles* as Paris' primary housing option for the marginal classes. After 1958, "the state invested primarily in major public housing complexes (*grands ensembles*), incorporating large apartment buildings, schools, recreational facilities, and commercial centers," with a minimum of 500 residences per site, the most populated reaching 25,000 people (Silverstein 94). This description of *banlieue* housing complexes is eerily reminiscent of what sociologist Erving Goffman, in his 1961 study of mental hospitals, calls a "total institution":

[A] place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life. Prisons serve as a clear example, providing we appreciate that what is prison-like about prisons is found in institutions whose members have broken no laws. (xiii)

While Majid does not live in a *grand ensemble*, he does live in an HLM, which U.S. viewers might describe as part of 'the projects'. Majid's *banlieue* apartment is in the commune of Romainville, which, like most suburban Parisian areas, began to grow in the 1830s as a bourgeois space but, during WWI, became a place where factory workers settled (Silverstein 89). While this commune has multiple bus services, it does not have a train station and—most importantly for connection to the cultural and economic capital of the city center—it is not connected to the Paris metro. The extension of line 11 was asked for in vain from the early 1900s

until the mid-2010s.³⁰ Didier Lapeyronnie explains, “Like the ‘colonized’, the inhabitants of ‘*quartiers sensibles*’ feel they have no political existence, as if they are not considered citizens” (214).

Caché makes clear the distinctions between the exteriors of the two men’s homes, as well as the stark differences between the interiors of their current homes (Austin, “Drawing Trauma” 534; Bayraktar 63). On the Laurent dinner table, made of clear glass, sits a bottle of wine and a large, clear salad bowl that displays its healthy, green contents. The chairs are made of wood. The wall behind the dinner table is seemingly made entirely of books, which act as cultural capital and, as scholars have pointed out (Ezra and Sillars 216), mimic the fake books that line Georges’ television set, symbolizing that the signs of ‘high’ culture are often just for appearances. The Laurent’s home seems *made* of books, while Majid’s home appears to be made of discolored wallpaper and stacks of undifferentiated, stuck-together objects. The film presents the hallway leading up to Majid’s apartment as so dark and empty of charm that it becomes frightening and stifling, reminding us of a hallway in a ‘total institution’ [Figure 20]. Majid’s small table is squeezed between a door and the kitchen sink, surrounded by two metallic and blue plastic chairs [Figure 21].

The socio-economic differences between the spaces that Georges and Majid inhabit are further exposed when Georges enters a convenience store across the street from Majid’s apartment. Georges buys an espresso from a machine then stands at the *snack-bar* gulping it while gazing anxiously at the apartment building he’s about to enter across the street. Dirtied plastic cups and plastic water bottles outline Georges’ shoulders, which are sheathed in a tailored

³⁰ The extension of this line, a 64 million Euro project, is finally in planning stages, ‘including an initial phase from Mairie des Lilas to the Rosny-Bois-Perrier RER E station (phase 1) and then from Rosny-Bois-Perrier to Noisy-Champs (phase 2)’. See http://www.ratp.fr/en/ratp/r_122731/line-11-first-investment-in-the-eastern-extension/. Trams to this area will also be extended (T1) and created (T Zen3).

suit jacket. A poster behind him advertises: “Yes to low prices” [Figure 22]. The juxtaposition of Georges’ bourgeois, cosmopolitan look and the *banlieue* convenience store is striking, especially when we compare this space to Saveurs et Co., the café in which we see Anne and Pierre (Daniel Duval): they talk (and she cries) among porcelain cups and saucers in the center of Paris [Figure 23]. Furthermore, when Georges returns to the convenience store after confronting Majid, he pauses briefly as he enters, allowing us to notice a map of France, with the central twenty arrondissements of Paris highlighted in yellow in the center of the filmic frame, again underlining the spatial economy of the film, the differences between the two characters’ access to these spaces, and what they contain in terms of capital and possibilities [Figure 24].

V. Agency: Majid and the Spectator

Through its revelation of Paris' spatial-affective economy, *Caché* reveals that state violence and the unwillingness to acknowledge it are inherently linked to colonialism and neocolonial racism—and that all of this directly leads to Majid's living, suffering, and dying in the *banlieue*. The violence that this economy does to postcolonial bodies becomes most explicit when Majid kills himself in front of Georges. Importantly, this suicide-witnessing scene occurs in his *banlieue* apartment, thus implicating the unjust spatial economy in his death. Haneke's film critiques this spatial injustice by visually and causally linking the *banlieue* as a space of exclusion to unjust events and their repression in collective memory.

Formally, the scene presents us with Majid's drab apartment with a still shot, and then suddenly splatters the dull composition with a thick, diagonal line of his bright red blood. Because Majid kills himself in much the same way Georges had told him to kill a cockerel during their childhood—with a blade to the throat—we can view the suicide scene as a re-enactment of this previous event. Through visually connecting Majid's *banlieue*-induced suicide to the killing of the cockerel, which Georges represses, the scene causally links the *banlieue* (as hidden/repressed space) to the repression of the crimes of the Algerian War era. In mimicking the killing of the cockerel, Majid's suicide seems to say more than "I wanted you to be present," which he tells Georges upon his entry into Majid's apartment; it also seems to say, 'Here is another act of violence that you coerced me into committing' and 'This is what I am to you, to France: an animal'. Equally significant, the suicide also re-enacts the state-sanctioned murders of nonviolent Algerian demonstrators that we only hear about in Georges' brief account of the Massacre, as I discuss below.

The suicide-witnessing scene is the most viscerally direct call to remembrance of the

October Massacre and it is the most shocking scene of the film. Guy Austin states that the scene is “the most traumatizing for the viewer, and deliberately so” (“Drawing Trauma” 534). It creates nausea, confusion, and readiness to completely break identification with Georges and, in turn, to identify with Majid. Crowley suggests:

The shock of Majid’s death is at once a signature piece of Haneke’s aesthetic interest in violence and also offers an experience that [...] returns both Georges and the viewer to the responsibility of the *gaze/regard*. Where Georges has little difficulty in referring to the murder of two hundred Algerians by French police, [...] Majid’s death implicates Georges. Here Georges is directly confronted with the blood and death of the referent. (274)

The spectator is also confronted, and thus implicated, in Majid’s death.

Due, in part, to Majid’s suicide, some scholars have argued that *Caché* does not allow the Arab character to speak for or define himself. Ranjanna Khanna states, “Majid’s and his son’s own roles are entirely defined once again by the strength of the inhuman anxiety of Georges and the French spectators” (“From Rue” 243). Ipek Celik claims that Majid’s story is “incommunicable” (76), while Gilroy takes issue with the postcolonial subject’s ability to self-destruct (“Shooting Crabs” 234). Crowley confirms Gilroy’s implication that Georges is the film’s subject and that Majid’s character lacks psychological depth (274). Despite these arguments, I claim that Georges does not wholly define Majid’s role, as Majid ultimately has subversive agency in the narrative. Majid’s suicide is the effect of his “political depression,” an acknowledgement of negative emotions that stem from power asymmetries (Muñoz 687). By repetitively implanting Majid within his unhappy apartment, the film displays his depression as caused by the unjust spatial-affective economy of postcolonial Paris, an economy that includes colonial histories of racialized violence and ongoing structural racism.

That Majid is politically depressed yet emotionally intelligent shows the complexity of the character. In stark contrast to Georges' emotional immaturity, the film gives Majid a knowledgeable voice—and his knowledge concerns the two men's affective economy. When Georges first visits him, Majid asks Georges, "Why do you talk as if we're strangers?" The word 'strangers' is a powerful indicator of Majid's rhetorical agency here, since it shows that he is calling for recognition of their previous bond as brothers—and, allegorically, France and Algeria's previous legal and discursive relationship as the same nation.³¹ He then admits to not immediately recognizing Georges the first time he happened upon his TV show. At that point in time, Georges had become a stranger to him; Majid's admission again emphasizes their long forgotten and repressed fraternal relationship. As Rothberg writes, the film centers on the theme of "the return of the colonial repressed" (281). While tapes and drawings alert Georges to his repressed memories, Georges' television show allow Majid to re-encounter the past. Majid says to Georges with confidence that, when he finally realized it was Georges on the television, he "felt an unpleasant sensation, and [he] didn't know why." Here, Majid speaks explicitly about the negative affective state he experienced when he encountered Georges on the screen after many years. He then points out that Georges would never lay a hand on him because he is "too cultivated for that." Majid wields the word *cultivé* (cultivated) in such a way that it allows the spectator to realize that Majid has analyzed their fraternal affective economy—one that symbolizes a larger colonizer/colonized affective economy—and *knows something about it* that

³¹ See also Kovačević 368. For a discussion of *Caché*'s connections to Albert Camus' *The Stranger*, see Kline, "Intertextual": In Camus' (who was a *pied-noir*) famous absurdist novel, Meursault (egged on by Raymond, who is unabashedly racist) kills an Arab because of "some vague cultural duty to his fellow Europeans" (555). Kline states, "And so it is that pursuing Arabs and killing them by sword and by water belongs to a long and 'noble' tradition of French culture—a history which subtly infiltrates Camus's absurdist novel, *The Stranger*, a work generally considered to be quite devoid of any concern with Franco-Arab relations. I would like to suggest that in this respect, *The Stranger* and, by extension, *The Song of Roland* constitute powerful sources for *Caché*" (556).

Georges may not; namely, that Georges' cultivated-ness comes at the price of making the racially marked other appear aggressive and violent. Following Teresa Brennan, Adrián Pérez Melgosa states that “identity is an illusion purchased at the price of dumping negative affects on the other” and that “[certain] ethnicities become affective focalizers, the receptacles of negative social affects” (182). Majid seems to have the knowledge that the white, bourgeois Parisian male has purchased his positive identity—as unaggressive, unemotional, nonviolent—at the price of dumping negative affects onto the “Arab boy,” who Georges accuses of “terrorizing” him and his family.

After Georges has yelled at and left Majid, we see on the tape that Majid remains on his chair. His emotion does not turn itself outward in anger or aggression toward another; rather, his reaction to the injustice of his situation turns itself inward, in lonely and frustrated sobs. Even before he begins to cry, his body turns in on itself, echoing the bodily orientation of a standing yet slumped 42-year-old Abdelkader Bennehar in a photograph taken by Elie Kagan,³² represented in *Octobre à Paris*: Bennehar cries as he bleeds from the head, most certainly from a *bidule* clubbing [Figures 25-26]. The subsequent image of Majid dying on the floor reiterates another photograph of Bennehar in *Octobre*, in which he lies on the ground with his arms spread out in a ‘T’, blood pooled under his head [Figures 27-28]. The difference between the bodily orientation of the martyr in Kagan’s photograph and that of the fictional Majid is that the latter’s right arm again slumps over his body, while the former’s continues the struggle by lifting upward. Bennehar died within the next twenty-four hours in a Nanterre hospital and was buried in a communal Muslim grave in Thiais Cemetery (Einaudi and Kagan 30).

³² Kagan’s photographs were first published on October 27, 1961 in *Témoignage Chrétien* and are reprinted in Einaudi and Kagan.

Georges does not call for help and claims Majid ‘died immediately’—even though his breathing is audible during the suicide scene. Celik claims that Georges’ inability to “acknowledge his guilt and act on it” provides an inconsistency that undermines the film’s “progressive agenda” (78). Similarly, Gilroy concludes, “We leave the theatre jolted but with no clear sense of how to act more justly or ethically. Instead, Haneke invites his audience to become resigned to its shame, discomfort and melancholia” (“Shooting Crabs” 235). Conversely, I suggest that the film’s art-house open ending and lack of catharsis work to implicate certain spectators in Majid’s death. Further, the combination of the shocking image of Majid dying on the floor and Georges’ brief and quiet explanation of the October 17 massacre, both within the framework of a mystery-thriller—a genre that means to manipulate and heighten our emotions—impels us to find out more. The film’s mysteriousness and ambiguity urges active spectator and, potentially, activist involvement. As Alison Rice points out, scholarly studies on October 17, 1961 are increasing thanks to fiction films such as *Caché* (98, 101). Equally important, these studies lead educators to inform students and publics about these, and similarly unjust, events.

VI. Conclusion: The *École Laïque* as Prison?

Fear works to expand the mobility of some bodies and contain others precisely insofar as it does not reside positively in any one body. (Ahmed, *Cultural Politics* 79)

While Majid does not cross the *périphérique* border to protest, as did the October 17 demonstrators, his son does. Majid's blood is not shed in vain: it is only because of this death that Majid's son finally confronts Georges at work. The film's formal elements inform us that Georges—the film's personification of white, colonial France—at least *hears* and *digests the words* of Majid's son, the *métropole*-born, second-generation Algerian-French youth. Following Christine Delphy, I propose that we utilize the concept of 'caste' to explain the social location of someone like Majid's son. Delphy maintains that 'caste' is a useful concept to denote

the specific place of racial oppression within the class system: for which the concept of racism is insufficient. Indeed, while the concept of racism lays emphasis on process, 'caste' instead stresses the results of this process, in terms of the social structure. It struck me that the situation of the descendants of these [(post)colonial] immigrants has not followed the same processes as other immigrant groups' descendants, and that they have 'inherited' their parents' social inferiority (107).³³

Here, Delphy describes what we might call colonialism-inflected structural racism, from which Majid's son suffers. Georges sees him as the threatening "Arab boy" too, even though he was born in France and thus constructed by Franco-French culture.

When Majid's son follows Georges into his place of work, Georges insists that they move the discussion to the men's restroom. Georges not only feels compelled to hide his conversation with Majid's son from his co-workers, but he also feels the need to take him to the place where

³³ In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir also speaks of gender inequality as a "caste" system ("Introduction").

one flushes bodily waste, a transitory space, where anything that is done or said is supposed to be immediately forgotten. The scene makes one think of Ross' comment that "the repressive system of French censorship of information regarding Algerian affairs was justified on grounds of national security, and because one should 'wash one's dirty laundry within the family'" (*Fast Cars* 125). Georges hears and talks to his would-have-been nephew only within the space of the men's room, just as he hears and talks to Majid only within the space of his sad Romainville apartment. Even after Majid is gone, Georges continues to dump his negative affects onto Majid's son: his anxiety and fear turns into more yelling and accusations. This reminds us of Georges' aggressive emotional outbursts in Majid's apartment, thereby associating the *banlieue* with the restroom. In postcolonial logic, these spaces are where one disposes of what or who is no longer wanted.

During their conversation, Majid's son speaks and reacts sternly, intelligently, calmly, and with heart—echoing the emotional-intellectual comportment of his father. Majid's son thus refuses to accept Georges' negative emotions, and he will not allow Georges the positive identity he so desperately wishes to maintain. Majid's son tells Georges that one learns "hatred, not politeness" in an orphanage, yet his father managed to teach him to be polite. He presents Georges with a rationalized correlation between Majid's expulsion from the family and his containment in the *banlieue* when he says, "You deprived my father of a good education." He tells Georges that a man's life is on his hands. Directly after this encounter, Georges goes home to take a *cachet* (pill) and sleep in the darkness—and it is only then that he completely remembers Majid's expulsion and finally admits to himself his own guilt by remembering Majid *as a scared child*: we see him run away from the orphanage personnel in desperation, perhaps from Georges' childhood point of view in the shed, where the cockerel was killed. The film

alerts us to the fact that this is Georges' memory because the soundtrack of the penultimate scene, which includes birds chirping loudly, begins while Georges is lying in bed: there is audio continuity between the two scenes.³⁴ When they come to take Majid away, we see the Laurent's provincial home, which—with its greenery and shuttered windows—visually reiterates Georges' home in Paris [Figures 14-15]. The similarities between the two homes further link Majid's first unjust expulsion to his second: from the Laurent's home to the orphanage, and then from the city center to the *banlieue*, where he is ultimately contained.

In the restroom scene, Majid's son is able to dump Georges' negative emotions back onto him; this may explain why Georges becomes “exhausted” and goes home to rest. While we last see Georges as he crawls under covers in a darkened room, we last see Majid's son in the light: he mirrors the strength of peaceful rebellion as represented in *Octobre à Paris*, as when we see some of the 1961 protestors in still images with their hands up, presaging the Black Lives Matter movement's slogan, “hands up—don't shoot” [Figures 29-30]. Majid's son stands tall in a public space fraught with political symbolism, the *école laïque*, as he talks calmly to Pierrot outside of the latter's middle school in the center of Paris [Figure 31]. *Caché* is haunted by the false promises of the *école laïque* because of the mysterious final shot, which repeats a previous shot in the film; the *école laïque* is therefore an important part of the film's affective topography. Even though the boys talk to each other in front of the school, only Pierrot is allowed inside of it—while Majid's son is probably forced to attend a REP, a ‘difficult school’ on the other side of the *périphérique* border. While Bayraktar maintains that “Majid's unnamed son seems to possess a social mobility denied to his father” (64), spatial mobility does not necessarily equate social mobility. Attendance at REPs often impedes students' potential for upward mobility because

³⁴ On the repetition of the sparrows' chirping, see Ezra and Sillars 240-41.

their alumnus status reveals they have come from an ‘inferior’ neighborhood. Scott explains:

Paradoxically, as schools became an increasingly important avenue of upward mobility, attendance at some of them [...] did not fulfill their promise, and this only increased the resentment of students for whom school attendance was a prerequisite for a job. During the riots in the fall of 2005, many students from the *banlieues* complained that their school attendance had not only been useless but harmful, because through it they were identified as coming from inferior places and so assumed to be ill-prepared for any job. Schools were not a means of integration but a way of reproducing, indeed guaranteeing, existing social hierarchies. (*Politics* 110)

While we do not know if the orphaned Majid went to a REP, we can assume that his son does. Maybe this, after all, is the meaning of the film’s mysterious final scene: even though Majid’s son and Pierrot most certainly do not attend the same public school, they *should* be able to do so, and might have done so had Majid gotten a ‘good education’—in a ‘good space’. Majid’s son’s body is marked by its skin color and gender, but to add to this, his résumé is marked by its ‘bad’ location, since one is expected to include secondary schools on the résumé in France. His body—now contained in the marginalized space of the REP—is, in the future, more likely to be racially profiled, unjustly imprisoned, and harmed by police forces in the marginalized space of the *banlieue*. In Chapters Four and Five, I will illustrate how Jean-Paul Lilienfeld’s *La Journée de la jupe* (*Skirt Day*, France, 2009) and Faiza Ambah’s *Mariam* (France/Saudia Arabia/U.S./United Arab Emirates, 2015) more explicitly address the theme of the secular/public school as social container, as opposed to its presumed role as social mobilizer.

Chapter Three

American Pulp in the *Banlieue*:

Scavenging Marcel Carné's *Terrain vague* (1960)

I. Transcultural Reinscription

They ate hamburgers, drank coffee and kept talking. It was mostly of Times Square, the penny arcade, the movies. They forgot where they were and what they really belonged to, that dark, bleak world outside, a world of crowded tenements and dirty cheerless streets where drunks brawled in bars and lay in hallways, a world of bickering harassed women who carried the fear of poverty always with them, an area, which in spite of its desolation, knew the threatening pressure and growing pains of another on its border where a darker people lived and brawled yearning to break down the walls of its ghetto. (Ellson 192)

In the previous chapter, I analyzed two films to illustrate how a spatial-affective economy inherited from colonialism continues to reify an internal neocolonial space. The bourgeois dweller of the charming French countryside and city center dumps his fear and insecurity onto the racial other, creating the opportunity for that other to be expelled from the refined spaces of France and pushed into the marginalized spaces of 'the projects'. Michael Haneke's *Caché* delineates the dichotomy of central Paris and its *banlieue* by showing us the stark discrepancies between how the lower-class, racially marked Majid lives, and how the white, bourgeois Georges Laurent lives, while visually implying that socio-economic class, race, and space are intricately connected. These connections are inherited from colonial relationships, discourses, and policies. Georges' fear of the ethnic other ultimately pushes him aside. The final scene of Majid's son and Georges' son talking outside of the latter's school underlines *Caché*'s concern with youth and the role that the *école laïque* plays in perpetuating structural racism.

Nearly fifty years before the release of *Caché*, and only a year before the October 1961 Massacre that *Octobre à Paris* would illustrate, Marcel Carné's *Terrain vague* (*The Wasteland*, France/Italy, 1960)¹ centered on the burgeoning social ills of the Parisian *banlieue*, including juvenile delinquency, parental neglect, sexual harassment, poverty, and *ennui*. Adapted from Hal Ellson's U.S. pulp fiction novel *Tomboy* (1950), which is set in the inner city of New York, *Terrain vague* culturally translates the most-feared outcomes of U.S. multiculturalism—the 'ghetto' and 'race wars'—into the space of the Parisian *banlieue*. *Terrain vague* critiques the social issues that the segregation inherent to the *banlieue* reifies. It does so by transculturally reinscribing the U.S. novel and the Western film genre—the only film genre, other than the *banlieue* film, that is defined foremost by its geographical location (Higbee, "Re-Presenting" 39)—into the *banlieue* and the remnants of poetic realism.

In *Blood Cinema: The Reconstruction of National Identity in Spain*, Marsha Kinder defines "transcultural reinscription" as the following: when a film produced in one nation instrumentalizes a style or genre of another nation to subvert its original intention and effect. For example, Kinder argues that Juan Antonio Bardem's *Muerte de un ciclista* (*Death of a Cyclist*, Spain/Italy, 1955) culturally adapts and juxtaposes elements of Italian neorealism and Hollywood melodrama to highlight the differing ideologies of these styles; e.g. neorealism's long shots reveal respect for the community to help rebuild a war-torn Italy, while Hollywood's close-ups fetishize individual stars to make money. Kinder argues that *Muerte* thereby invents a new language for Spanish cinema (and nation) after the Spanish Civil War (Ch. 2). As we will see, *Terrain vague*'s transcultural reinscription is much more politically ambiguous than *Muerte*'s.

Terrain vague's transcultural reinscription makes legible the presence of a U.S.-style

¹ For a genealogy of the term '*terrain vague*' in relation to the *banlieue* and cultural representations of it, see Nitsch.

ghetto within France, which threatens French universalist identity. While Carné claimed in an interview that the only aspects he used from the novel were its three main characters and the “climate” and “atmosphere” of their surroundings,² his film adapts a pulp novel that represents the violent outcomes of multiculturalism on inner-city youth, including inter-ethnic gang fighting. As such, *Terrain vague* implicitly warns France against the danger of U.S. multiculturalism already in 1960. Today, many French people today are vehemently against communities separated (or segregated) by ethnicity. They tend to view multiculturalism as a poor model for a peaceful society comprised of fully assimilated, ‘universal’ citizens. They assume that cultural, ethnic, or religious groups cannot become part of universal, homogenous French culture if each group lives in its own neighborhood. Further, they assume that these segregated communities inevitably lead to violence and riots, thus threatening the stability of the Republic.

Terrain vague does not represent gangs that are created largely based on ethnicity as Ellison’s *Tomboy* does. However, in choosing to adapt a social realist novel that represents U.S. ‘race wars’ into a melodramatic Western film, Carné and Rey make apparent the French fear of U.S. multiculturalism via a popular film genre. The transcultural reinscription of the Western frontier to the Parisian *banlieue* illustrates the *banlieue* as a colonial space even at this relatively early moment in *banlieue* cinema history. This colonization is visible in the new HLMs (built by city planners who are disconnected from community needs); through a brief but significant scene with an Arab customer; through Babar’s coding as a colonial subject; and through Dan’s U.S.-inflected delinquent virility. At the same time, the film is a cultural working-through of repressed issues stemming from WWII.

² “[F]rom the book [we] only kept the three protagonists and the climate of the gang. The atmosphere and the characters interested me more than the plot” (Carné, “Avec ‘Terrain vague’”).

Carné's *Terrain vague* is the first feature-length fiction film that takes as its central focus the social problems that 'delinquent' youth experience as an effect of living in the Parisian *banlieue*,³ making it a thematic predecessor to Matthieu Kassovitz's *La Haine* (*The Hate*, France, 1995)—the most famous film illustrating the spatial segregation inherent to the French *banlieue* and its effects on young people. Kassovitz made his film in response to the violent images of riots and violence in the *banlieues* that were over-represented in French media in the early 1990s (Vincendeau, *La Haine* 24-25). To counter these one-sided representations, Kassovitz' film purposely inverts stereotypical representations of people of color. For example, Hubert (Hubert Koundé), the Black boxer, is the most rational, quiet, and non-violent character of the *beur-black-blanc* trio, which also includes Vinz (Vincent Cassel) and Saïd (Saïd Taghmaoui), both of whom revel in a masculinity they have learned, largely, from U.S. film culture (Vincendeau, "Designs"). This cultural transfer is made explicit when Vinz imitates Robert de Niro's character from *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, U.S., 1976) while looking in the mirror, thereby making his performance self-conscious. Petterson states that Kassovitz seeks to highlight the artifice of masculinity as performance, revealing "tough-guy masculinity to be an unstable performance" (40; 42).

Presaging *La Haine*'s striking black-and-white mise-en-scene, *Terrain vague* exposes the *banlieue*'s newly constructed HLMs, which become central to the film's setting. Like *La Haine*'s three protagonists, Carné's film visually embeds its heroes—teenagers of working-class

³ Out of the twenty-two French delinquency films that Tsikounas and Lepajolec consider, five were produced before the release of *Terrain vague*, although none of these take as their central focus delinquency as an effect of the Parisian *banlieue*: *Chiens perdus sans collier* (*Lost Dogs without Collars*, Jean Delannoy, France/Italy, 1955); *Sois belle et tais-toi* (*Be Beautiful and Shut Up*, Marc Allégret, France, 1958); *Jeux dangereux* (*Dangerous Games*, Pierre Chenal, France/Italy, 1958); *Rue des Prairies* (Denys de la Patellière, France/Italy, 1959); and *Les 400 coups*. In addition, Robert Hossein's *Pardonnez nos offenses* (*Forgive Us Our Sins*, France, 1956) centers on a delinquent gang that smuggles whisky and cigarettes on the docks of a large river port.

parents—within these spaces. Yet, *Terrain vague* has been systematically excluded from film canons due to the socially conservative, homophobic rhetoric of *Cahiers du cinéma* critic François Truffaut, which reigned in French film culture at the time of its release.⁴ Along with sheer praise for his poetic realist masterpieces, *Le Quai des Brumes* (France, 1938) and *Les Enfants du Paradis* (Children of Paradise, France, 1945), Carné’s obituary in *Independent* thirty-six years after its release echoes the initial negative reviews of *Terrain vague*: “Of Carné’s postwar output [...] it would be difficult to offer much of a defence, whether of the dated, backward-looking romanticism of *Juliette ou la Clé des songes* (1951) or his doomed endeavour to keep abreast of the times with two grotesquely implausible studies of disaffected youth, *Terrain vague* (1960) and *Les Jeunes Loups* (1968)” (Adair and Goodridge).

Given the wealth of cultural work that *Terrain vague* does, as well as its thematic and stylistic connections to post-1980 *banlieue* films, it seems odd that it has not been canonized in French, Anglo, or international contexts. I argue that we should reconsider this critically derided film in the current moment because it gives us a sense of a future ‘problem’ to come—one that Carné and co-screenwriter Henri-François Rey were not yet capable of portraying. are not yet capable of portraying. *Terrain vague* presages a dynamic that will become intensified beginning in the 1980s: as the *banlieue* becomes increasingly racialized, it becomes more troublingly

⁴ While many *Cahiers du cinéma* writers treated Carné rather fairly (Turk 391), Truffaut attacked his postwar films, which adversely affected his career (Driskell 131). In “A Certain Tendency of French Cinema,” Truffaut denounced the “impurities” of the “formulaic anticlerical, antimilitarist, and antibourgeois tendencies” of the tradition of quality cinema (including Carné’s films), while also railing against its depictions of blasphemy, violence, death, and homosexuality (Lowenstein 30; Truffaut 46-8, 51, 57). This is significant because Carné himself was gay: “though not ‘out’ in the modern sense, or in the sense [Jean] Cocteau and [Jean] Genet were—this fact was known” and “held against him” (Vincendeau, “Paradise Regained” 3). Ironically, after denouncing Carné as a mere craftsman of outdated studio films, Truffaut sent Carné a Carcassonne postcard (sent from Paris) dated December 4, 1960, heralding *Terrain vague* and thanking him for making it because the film reminded him of his own adolescence. Three days later, Truffaut sent Carné a follow-up letter telling him he’s “thought and re-thought” about the film (Personal correspondence, *Fonds Marcel Carné et Roland Lesaffre*, Cinémathèque Française Archives, Paris). For more on the *Cahiers* discourse and its effects, see Graham; and Vincendeau, “Introduction.” For an exciting feminist take on the New Wave movement in general, see Sellier, *Masculine Singular*.

associated with the U.S. ghetto and transcultural virilism. Within this argument, I contend that *Terrain vague*'s coding of race (via Babar) and its representation of aberrant *banlieusarde* virilism (via Dan) are prefigurations of post-1980 *banlieue* cinema tropes. As Mack explains, media and political discourses in the 1980s began to link the *banlieue* to virilism, a racialized and threatening gender expression that includes vigor, assertiveness, combativeness, and ambition (70). Further, this "virilization of the Arab other naturally requires a feminization, and in some cases an androgenization, of the host country: France" (Mack 1). In *Terrain vague*, Dan's U.S.-inflected urban virilism is associated with the *banlieue* and then contrasted with the figure into which she transforms: a housewife associated with the feminine provinces—those parts of France that have not yet been overtaken by the imperialism of the 'other' cultures (in this case, U.S. and Maghrebi cultures).

In *Terrain vague*'s first sequence, seventeen-year-old Marcel (Constantin Andrieu) is sentenced to time in a *centre d'éducation surveillée* (counseling within a structured educational institution) until his eighteenth birthday. After Marcel's long, weary walk up her HLM stairs, the narrative transitions to a *banlieue* gang, with Danièle, "Dan" (Danièle Gaubert), as its surprising, confident, and somewhat androgynous leader (there is only one other girl in the gang).⁵ In the abandoned factory that they have claimed as their own, Dan inducts Babar (Jean-Louis Bras) into the gang by having him verbalize commitments, choose someone with whom to become 'blood brothers' (he chooses her), and, while blindfolded, step from a doorway twelve meters above the ground (it is actually, as he will discover, less than three meters high). Babar becomes part of the gang and holds a special place in Dan's heart because he "never tries anything [sexual] with

⁵ For a 1980s version of a female and *racialized* (Arab) gang leader, see white-French director Jean-Claude Brisseau's *De bruit et de fureur* (Of Sound and Fury, France, 1987). For a contemporary representation of a Black *banlieue* 'girl gang', see white-French director Céline Sciamma's *Bande des filles* (Girlhood, France, 2014).

[her],” while Lucky (Maurice Caffarelli) vies for her attention forcefully—at one point grabbing her breasts while lying on top of her during a brawl—and otherwise. The gang members are generally bored, broke, and neglected by their parents. They find solace in each other, entertain themselves at a carnival, and fulfill a plan to steal merchandise from a Prisunic store while Le Râleur (Dominique Dieudonné) pretends to have seizure; they are caught doing so but still escape with the goods. Babar and Dan sell the stolen merchandise to Big Chief (played by Roland Lesaffre, Carné’s long-time romantic partner), who owns an American surplus store and acts as a paternal figure to Dan and, by extension, Babar and Lucky.

Dan holds an authority over the members that no one else comes close to achieving, except for Marcel, who escapes from the correctional facility to be found by the gang members on the couch in their abandoned factory midway through the film. Power quickly shifts to Marcel as he woos the gang members with his charismatic personality and adventurous, crime-ridden stories. Dan calls him a “liar” to his face and quits the gang. Marcel concocts a “*vrai coup*” (real blow)—a plan to steal the money from the cash register at an Esso gas station with the help of Lucky, who works there. Because of his stories and this plan, the gang members idolize Marcel as an authentic, more adult version of a criminal. Dan visits Marcel alone to try to convince him not to do the Esso job. Lucky decides he will not fulfill the plan, gives his cash register to his boss and quits. Because Lucky is now jobless, his father (Pierre Collet) kicks him out of the house, so Lucky finds solace in the backroom of Big Chief’s store. When Lucky doesn’t show up for the *coup*, Marcel becomes angry and runs off to ask for money—and steal a gun—from a German man, Hans (Alfonso Mathis). Meanwhile, Le Râleur takes over gang leadership and blames the failed Esso job on Lucky and, by association, Dan (“*parce que madame l’aime*”—because Dan loves him).

While searching for Lucky, the gang also stalks the treasonous Babar, who broke one of his vows to the gang when he told Dan, who was no longer a member, about the Esso plan. Babar arrives home to find his dog Monsieur murdered, his body left outside his apartment door. Upon finding Monsieur, Babar runs to look for Dan at Big Chief's store, but finds her kissing Lucky in bed and runs back to the abandoned warehouse to step out of the doorway that is twelve meters above ground. Dan runs up to the doorway and looks down upon Babar's dead body, which we see in a counter-shot. During this cross-cutting sequence, Lucky finally decides to fight Le Râleur in front of Big Chief's store and wins the fight even after Le Râleur pulls out a knife. Dan returns to tell everyone that Babar is dead. As a few of the gang members look down in shame, Dan looks at Lucky and says, "*Emmène-moi*" (Take me away), presaging Jewish-French singer-songwriter Jean-Jacques Goldman's 1984 *banlieue* anthem, "*Envole-moi*" (Fly me away [from here]).⁶ The gang disperses as Lucky and Dan walk down the road and away from the camera together, arm in arm, Big Chief looking on.

This chapter shows how *Terrain vague* narrates the *banlieue* as a transnational space in its adaptation of a U.S. juvenile delinquency novel and a U.S. film genre, the Western. The film's transcultural reinscription of these texts advances its representation of the *banlieue* as a hindrance to French universalism—and well before this marginalized space will become associated with Muslims or people of color. In the next section, "Genres in the Ghetto," I illustrate how *Terrain vague* both aesthetically and thematically presages Kassovitz' critically acclaimed and most-viewed *banlieue* film, *La Haine*, by briefly exploring the meanings behind the transcultural spatial and temporal reinscription of U.S. popular texts into these poetic realist *banlieue* films (this method of intertextual exploration will continue in Chapter Four). In "Babar

⁶ Dan's command also presages Hubert's similar pronouncement in *La Haine*.

as Queer Colonial Subject,” I show how the film only *implicitly* acknowledges the negative effects of the French colonization of North Africa, thus going along the grain of French Republican universalism and its claim of a colorblind France. The omission of explicit reference to these issues within a popular melodrama makes sense, especially since *Terrain vague* was produced before the events of May and June 1968. Along with Algerian Independence movement that influenced these events (Ross, *May '68*), May '68 led to a broadened acceptance of identity politics discourse in France in the 1980s, the decade in which filmmakers begin to address these problems more explicitly.

Finally, in “Dan: From Virile *Banlieusarde* to Maternal Savior,” I discuss the figure of the liberated postwar woman and its characterization in *Terrain vague*, which reveals a cultural fear of, and resistance to, women’s changing roles in postwar France. These roles were heavily influenced by American culture and consumerism. Mack’s concept of virilism becomes significant here, even out of its original historical context (he defines virilism as a specifically ‘immigrant’ gender expression). Mack maintains that *banlieusarde* girls/women can have “virile linguistic and sartorial qualities” while also maintaining investments in heteronormative relationships and gendered performances, as embodied in such figures as the female gang member (7). Although Dan is white-French, I contend that she represents an early, postwar version of the virile *banlieusarde* figure, and well before second- or third-generation ‘immigrant’ youth will reproduce elements of virilism. *Terrain vague*’s representation of a virile girl who leads a *banlieue* gang reveals that dominant French culture has viewed the *banlieue* as a threatening space not only due to the ‘immigrants’ that inhabit it, but also because this mysterious space has the power to transform a beautiful blonde girl into a virile delinquent. Dan’s virilism evokes the dangers of the U.S. ghetto already in 1960, associating the *banlieue*

with this threatening space. Moreover, instead of placing U.S. gang virility onto the body of an ‘immigrant’, the film uses the novel to displace it onto a delinquent girl, thus revealing a deep cultural concern about the loss of a normative, maternal French femininity after WWII. Dan’s transformation thus reminds us of Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan’s description of the “homogenizing project of nationalism,” which “draws upon female bodies as the symbol of the nation to generate discourses of rape, motherhood, sexual purity, and heteronormativity” (“Postcolonial Studies,” point 6).

II. Genres in the ‘Ghetto’

Communities, societies, nations, and even entire continents exist not autonomously but in a densely woven web of connectedness, within a complex and multivalent relationality. (Shohat and Stam, “Introduction” 1)

In their introduction to *French Films: Texts and Contexts*, Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau describe a trend in French filmmaking: “From *Le Crime* [*de Monsieur Lange*, Jean Renoir, 1935] to *La Haine*, one can measure the sea-change in French society [...] in relationship to American popular culture: the idyllic vision of Arizona in *Lange*, drawn from the Western, has become the hell of the US ghetto in *La Haine*” (5). Yet, there are more points of contact here than one might have thought. Already in 1960, Carné’s *Terrain vague* illustrates “the hell of the US ghetto” while simultaneously borrowing from the Western genre and its optimistic outlook, thereby revealing a deeply ambivalent view of the influx of U.S. culture and products in the postwar period. Carné and Rey adapted *Terrain vague* from a book whose cover declares itself “A Shocking Novel of Teen-Age Gang Life in the Slums of Manhattan” (Bantam Books, 1951). Well before Jean-François Richet’s *Ma 6-t va crack-er* (France, 1997) would represent gang life in the Parisian *banlieue*, *Terrain vague* translated the New York inner city gang life to the outskirts of Paris, in the zone between St. Ouen and Porte de Clignancourte, revealing the Parisian equivalent of the ‘ghetto’: newly built HLMs amid a wasteland of rubble and rocks; Carné’s mise-en-scene carefully embeds the delinquent figures within their surroundings [Figures 32-35].⁷ There appears to be little infrastructure at this point in time: we mainly see HLMs that have no sidewalks or pavement leading up to them, abandoned factories, and a small

⁷ Driskell claims that *Terrain vague* portrays the *banlieue* ambivalently: while it is generally “shown in a negative light,” the film represents the abandoned factory as a “utopian space” (147).

street with Big Chief's surplus store—reminiscent of a ghost town in a Western. Ellson's novel similarly describes the New York 'inner city' as follows: "There was no one on the darkened street, and only a big garage, a parking lot, a junkyard, an empty gutted building with a broken window and a trucking depot" (Ellson 183).

Terrain vague, as frequently happens with films, articulates itself as a "hybrid genre" film (Staiger). In terms of generic mixing within the delinquent film genre in France, one often finds allusions to the classical American police thriller, the Western, and contemporary American cinema (Tsikounas and Lepajolec 7). In addition to its *banlieue* setting, *Terrain vague* contains elements of the Western (e.g. music; the Big Chief character; themes of death and fighting), melodrama (music; a couple-based 'happy ending'); thriller (music; themes of death and fighting); film noir (lighting and shadows); social realism/social problem (it is genuinely concerned with the 'delinquents' that it represents); poetic realism (its *mise-en-scène* is often stylized and emotion-oriented); and psychological realism. Carné had already represented the Parisian *banlieue* as a working-class space in his classic poetic realist films *Hôtel du Nord* (1938), co-scripted by Carné, Henri Jeanson and Jean Aurenche, and *Le Jour se lève*, co-scripted by Jacques Prévert.⁸ Keith Reader suggests that "The *banlieue* as '*univers de relégation et d'exclusion*' has an unbroken history going back more than 150 years, figuring in the literature of our decade via the work of Eugène Dabit (on whose eponymous novel Carné's 1938 *Hôtel du Nord* is based)" (398). *Terrain vague* differs from these early Carné *banlieue*/poetic realist films in various ways: it is concerned specifically with delinquents, it represents non-normative gender expressions to prescribe a 'correct femininity', and it codes a main character as non-white.

⁸ Some have questioned if these Carné films are, in fact, set in the Parisian *banlieue*; for a discussion of this, see Reader. Vincendeau points out that another early example of *banlieue* cinema is Carné's fourteen-minute film *Nogent, Eldorado du dimanche* (France, 1929), which portrays the suburbs as idyllic (*La Haine* 20).

Perhaps most importantly, *Terrain vague*'s displacement of Western genre conventions from the American frontier to the Parisian zone underlines the colonial aspects of the zone's transformations. In the early 1840s, workers built a ring of forts around central Paris, later destroyed after World War I. No one was allowed to build on the 250-meter stretch of land that surrounded these fortifications. This land was called "the *zone non aedificandi* or 'non-building zone'" abbreviated to '*la zone*'—precisely where *Terrain vague* is set:

The Zone became an area of ill repute under the Second Empire, teeming with shantytowns whose inhabitants were often manual workers driven there by rising rents [...]. The term 'zonard' came into use in about 1970, well after the Zone itself had disappeared, to refer to marginal *banlieusard* youth, forerunners of the characters portrayed in *La Haine*. (Reader 389)

As explored in Chapter Two, anthropologist Paul Silverstein shows how colonial mechanisms invented to destroy or control North African villages were transformed into parallel processes in the zone and greater *banlieue* (*Algeria* 85). Tens of thousands of colonial 'immigrant workers' lived in *bidonvilles* in the zone until the early 1960s. Urban planners leveled the shantytowns and relocated the residents to HLMs. While I certainly do not want to argue that shantytowns are a better living option than 'the projects', I do hope to point out both the powerlessness of the 'immigrant workers' (and working-class white-French people) during these drastic changes, as well as the colonial history that directly affected these transformations.⁹

Myriam Tsikounas and Sébastien Lepajolec take these major *banlieue* transformations into account in their article, "*La jeunesse irrégulière sur grand écran: un demi-siècle d'images*."¹⁰ Their study is largely quantitative, examining twenty-two "delinquent films" from

⁹ Moreover, as we saw in *Octobre à Paris*, the pre-HLM *bidonvilles* were surprising to the families of 'immigrant' workers who did not expect to be living in such conditions when they arrived in France.

¹⁰ "Abnormal youth on the big screen: a half-century of images"

1955 to 2002 to indicate trends in the representation of family dynamics, drug and alcohol use, and the space of the *banlieue* in delinquent films.¹¹ They also define three main periods of delinquent films. Films of the first period, before the beginning of the Fifth Republic (1958), tended to portray adolescents living mostly in the northern and eastern neighborhoods of central Paris (mainly Montmartre, Belleville, and Ménilmontant) (58). The second period, in which we find *Terrain vague*, covers films produced from the end of the fifties to the mid-sixties, coinciding with the building of the first HLMs described above. The third period of delinquent films, those produced in the eighties and nineties (including *La Haine*), represent coming of age stories of children of North African ‘immigrants’, “living in considerably worn down HLMs and in the context of an economic and social crisis” (9). From the sixties on, the setting of delinquent films reflected the massive urbanization that affected the Parisian *banlieue*. With the edification of *grands ensembles*, the representation of the homes’ interiors changed: we go from Antoine Doinel’s cramped Montmartre apartment in Truffaut’s *Les 400 coups* (he sleeps in a hallway) to more spacious and well-furnished homes of modern comfort in the *banlieue*. Thus, the films begin to displace their critique. They move from representing the homes’ interiors to critiquing common spaces: deteriorating mailboxes, elevators that are always out of order, and buildings that are worn away by time (Tsikounas and Lepajolec 58).

Terrain vague was produced in Tsikounas and Lepajolec’s second period. As such, the film does not represent communal areas worn away by time but, rather, contrasts the newness of

¹¹ They find that, since the 1980s, films tend to conflate the issue of juvenile delinquency with the space of the *banlieue*, “as if difficult youth no longer resided in Paris *intra muros*.” Moreover, from the 1990s on, delinquents no longer necessarily reside in the Parisian region, but are represented in the north, south, east, and center of France: “juvenile delinquency henceforth touches the entirety of the hexagone” (58). A relatively well-known *banlieue* delinquency film set in Marseille for example, is Philippe Faucon’s *Samia* (2000), which is based on Soraya Nini’s book *Ils disent que je suis une beurette* (*They Call Me a Beurette*, 1993) and co-written by Nina Faucon. Another *banlieue* film set in Marseille that focuses less on delinquency than on racism and Islamophobia is Karim Dridi’s *beur* film *Bye Bye* (France/Belgium/Switzerland, 1995).

the HLMs in the *banlieue* to the sordidness of abandoned factory in which the gang members meet. The film emphasizes the *banlieue*'s ghetto-like elements, thereby warning France against the dangers of this relatively new space that prevents teenagers from growing into productive citizens—and thirty-five years before *La Haine* will do so. *Terrain vague* is one of the first *banlieue* fiction films to allude to the issue of race, which makes it a thematic predecessor to *La Haine*,¹² but it is also a stylistic predecessor, as it melds poetic realist tendencies with U.S. filmic genres.

Vincendeau writes that Carné is the “master” of poetic realism, “a stylised and highly symbolic representation of the everyday. [...] Dramatic, haunting music and high-contrast lighting enhance this highly aestheticised and controlled universe. Poetry arises from the tragedy of banal lives, embedded in the decor and objects of the quotidian” (“Paradise Regained” 1). While Vincendeau refers here to Carné’s pre-war output, in many ways *Terrain vague* continues his poetic realist style. Drawing on scholars such as Dudley Andrew, David Petterson clarifies the definition: “In poetic realism, style is the emotional conduit for the characters and their problems, and the carefully constructed images suggest a tragic melancholy that transcends the films’ immediate social context” (35). He argues that U.S. popular culture (e.g. the films of Spike Lee and Martin Scorsese) and poetic realist films (e.g. Carné’s *Le jour se lève*) have *equally* influenced the politically meaningful mise-en-scène of *La Haine*:

Poetic realism [...] emerged from the popular imaginary of early twentieth century working-class France, and [it] represented modes of evoking the despair, defiance, and beauty of working-class spaces and people. The complex Franco-American sampling at work in *La haine* suggests that American rap, hip-hop, and cinema now play an analogous role in fashioning the emotions and feelings

¹² While Tarr critiques Kassovitz’ use of Black U.S. culture (*Reframing Difference* 63), Vincendeau retorts, “*La Haine*’s ‘exploitation’ of commodified forms of black American culture is ‘political’ precisely in showing the extent to which American culture has penetrated French youth culture” (*La Haine* 72).

of life in the banlieues. (45)¹³

Like *La Haine*, *Terrain vague* displays poetic realist tendencies by evoking working-class despair, defiance, and beauty. While Dan is the film's most defiant working-class character, as we will see, the factory setting is perhaps the most beautiful working-class element of the film, especially when we contrast it to the starkness and inhumanity of the new HLMs and barren spaces of the zone. As Driskell asserts,

Carné draws expertly upon his realist style to capture the harshness of the environment, depicting the area as a vast wasteland [...], with rubble and wrecked buildings surrounding the newly constructed blocks of flats. [...] This is enhanced by the film's noir quality: at the beginning, as the gang approach their den, they move through ruined building and in and out of large, looming shadows. (147)

As in Carné's prewar poetic realist classics, these stylistic choices contain affective significance. For example, it is revealing that Babar kills himself in the shadowy darkness of the ruined factory, a symbol of the working-class roots of many Parisian *banlieues*, and the space in which he was inducted into the gang. The film's noir quality is especially apparent as Babar is inducted into the gang: his innocent face, lit from below by candles, appears in stark contrast to the gang members (including Dan) who have been waiting for him, and whose bodies overlap to form a dark threat on the left side of the frame [Figure 36]. This visual threat foreshadows the violent effects that the gang will have on Babar, and which will lead to his despair and consequent suicide. *Terrain vague* thus illustrates that the following histories are intertwined and affect one another: the white working class history of the *banlieue*, as signified by the abandoned factory,

¹³ Petterson also writes, "My contention here has been that poetic realism is an important element in the cultural sampling and layering at work in *La haine*. The poetic realist moment in French film history offers a model for understanding *La haine*'s politics of style, by which I mean its particular mode of engaging with social problems through affect, pathos, and a figural rather than documentary realism" (45). See also Orlando.

and the colonial history of North Africa and the effects it was having on the marginal space of the *banlieue* at the time of the film's production, as symbolized by Babar and the Arab customer (which I explain below).

Terrain vague makes use of poetic realist tendencies while simultaneously reinscribing generic elements of the Western. It even explicitly mentions the Western genre: when the gang members are discussing how to quell their boredom, one of them suggests they go see a Western film in the cinema (they have no money to do so). Yet, Big Chief is the film's most explicit symbol of the influence of the U.S. on French youth in the postwar period even in ways that exceed the Western genre: he sells American surplus goods and, as the script informs us, the kids call him Big Chief "because he sells, more than anything else, blue-jeans of this brand" (Carné and Rey 67). Originally a product of Nîmes, France, denim became famous with the invention of blue jeans in the U.S. and, as reviewers noted, many of the teenagers in *Terrain vague* wear blue-jeans. (Similarly, Lucky's nickname stems from his tendency to smoke Lucky brand cigarettes, another U.S. import.)

Western genre films are typically set west of the Mississippi and take place from just after the Civil War (1820) until World War I (1910) (Friedman 252). A typical Western juxtaposes the 'civilized' and entrepreneurial American cowboy hero with the 'primitive Indian' or 'noble savage', who remains connected to nature. The white hero is often "endowed with an infallible moral sense" (Pye 243-4). Not only does Big Chief's name sound as if it comes straight out of a Western, but he wears a vest that recalls a Western hero's clothing [Figure 37]. In these ways, his character combines elements of both the cowboy (his leather vest) and the 'Injun' (his name), which work to deconstruct the 'bad/good' binary into which these characters usually fit. Further, he consistently proves his "moral sense" via his interactions with Dan, Lucky, and the

Arab customer. Further, the street on which his store is located evokes Western iconography via its architecture and feeling of desolation [Figure 38]. That the final fight of the film—the big stand-off between protagonist Lucky and antagonist Le Râleur—occurs directly outside of Big Chief’s store further codes this space as generically Western.

Christopher Sharrett explains that the Western “has long been regarded as the most endemically American genre [...] because of its tendency, in its classical phase at least, to tell a deeply conservative utopian story about the civilizing process” (27). In *Terrain vague*, the ‘Western frontier’ is transculturally reinscribed to periphery of Paris, which—while white working class people had lived there for centuries and ‘immigrant’ workers had lived there for decades—had only been recently ‘settled’ by modern city planners and their HLMs beginning in 1960. By invoking the Western genre with these various generic conventions, characters, and icons, Carné’s film illustrates the similarities between the two colonial spaces.

While *Terrain vague*’s melding of filmic styles and cultural influences foreshadows what will come in *La Haine*, it is also reminiscent of *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange* (1935), directed by Carné’s rival Jean Renoir and written by Carné’s long-time collaborator Jacques Prévert. *Le Crime* infuses the Western genre intertext of *Arizona Jim*—a popular story that the film’s working-class hero, Amadée Lange’s (René Lefèvre), creates—into a film that mixes the following genres: poetic realism, melodrama, comedy and Western. *Arizona Jim* inverts the normative Western narrative: the white man helps the Native American characters and other people of color rather than destroying or mocking them, rendering it a subversive transcultural reinscription.¹⁴ Christopher Faulkner explains that the model for *Arizona Jim* was William S.

¹⁴ Faulkner writes, “Arizona Jim spends half his time rescuing ‘Negroes’ [...] from the slave-drivers or from a lynching [...] because these fictions are a reminder that French workers suffer from an internal colonialism that is homologous with France’s external colonialism in North and sub-Saharan Africa. This is a discursive reach that is by no means extravagant, inasmuch as the homology is drawn in other films of the period like *Pépé le Moko* ([Julien

Hart, known as the extremely popular “Rio-Jim” in France through dozens of film released from 1914-1925: “As American society has been synonymous with a popular democracy, so has American culture been synonymous with popular experience, and the Western with social optimism” (36). While *Terrain vague* is not as radical as *Le Crime*,¹⁵ as we will see, it does meld the genres of poetic realism and Western to prescribe societal changes from an optimistic, “relatively reassuring” perspective: “*Terrain vague* opens with Marcel telling the judge that he doesn’t want to be an OS [*ouvrier spécialisé*; unskilled factory worker] like his father, but closes on Lucky, trading in delinquency for a job in Tours” (Tsikounas and Lepajolec 63). At the end of the film, the more experienced, older white man—who is given the name of a Native American leader—helps the delinquents escape the *banlieue* to find a better life elsewhere. The image of “riders on the horizon line” are typical of the Western genre (Friedman 266), and *Terrain vague* nods to this characteristic when Big Chief watches Dan and Lucky walk off into the horizon.

Duvivier] 1936)—the Casbah as Montmartre—and *Princesse Tam Tam* ([Edmund T. Gréville] 1935)” (36).

¹⁵ Faulkner reminds us of *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange*’s unrivaled political radicalism: the film “extends no hand to the clergy, takes a position for women and against colonialism and racism, embraces popular culture, has an idea of the nation (or community) that would suit no political party of the time and proposes its own solution to the abuses of capital” (27).

III. Babar as Queer Colonial Subject

The back of the René Chateau DVD cover of *Terrain vague* reads: “Paris 1960. There are not yet ethnic gangs, but the same generational problems already existed.”¹⁶ However, when we view Carné’s film through the lens of its intertext, Ellson’s pulp fiction novel *Tomboy*, racial issues related to colonialism also become visible. Unlike *La Haine*, which narrates structural and daily racism via its dialogue and plot, *Terrain vague* merely codes one of its main characters as Arab-French. This section shows how reading the film via its U.S. and French intertexts allows us to view Babar as a racialized colonial subject. In *Child of Paradise: Marcel Carné and the Golden Age of French Cinema*, Edward Baron Turk analyzes Carné’s films through “psychosexual” and biographical lenses. Taking into account Carné’s own homosexuality, Turk explains the ways in which androgyny and sexual ambivalence appear in all of his films.¹⁷ I argue that *Terrain vague* connotes Babar’s race and queerness rather than denoting these aspects of his character because the film was produced before the events of May and June 1968, which eventually produced an increasingly legitimate (if controversial) rhetoric of identity politics in academic, political, and popular discourses beginning in the 1980s (for example, it was in the 1980s that second-generation ‘immigrants’ formed political associations such as S.O.S. Racism). This historical shift helps to explain why the film does not explicitly grapple with the issues of homosexuality, race, and colonialism—with the exception of a short scene that highlights the exploitative labor of Arab-French ‘immigrant workers’ in colonial Paris. Unlike *Caché*, which narrates a moment in French-Algerian colonial history via its dialogue, *Terrain vague* can only hint at these histories.

¹⁶ The back cover continues: “For this *ARTE* journalist in 2006: ‘More powerful than *La Haine* or *Ma 6-T va crack-er*, *Terrain vague* plunges us into the hell of adolescent gangs at the foot of *cités*. Its director Marcel Carné, hero of poetic realism with *Les Enfants du Paradis* and *Quai des brumes*, hits us where it hurts 46 years ahead of time.’”

¹⁷ See also Vincendeau, “Paradise Regained” 5.

Ellson's novel makes racial tensions explicit via the ethnic separation of the gangs and through dialogue. The gangs are comprised mainly by ethnicity and race: The Roaches—the Black gang; the Puerto Rican Flyers; and the Harps—the white gang, comprised mostly of adolescents of Irish heritage, save for one “Spanish,” or Latino, member—Angel (Ellson 149). For example, when one Harp member suggests they team up with the Puerto Rican Flyers against the Roaches, Jiggs states: “Hell, you can't trust spiks [sic]. A treaty's no good with them. They'd break it in a minute and sell us down the river” (Ellson 136). Lucky says that the Puerto Rican Flyers are a brother club of the Roaches, and Jiggs retorts, “What we need is more guys, white guys like ourselves.” He says this in front of Angel, “the only Spanish boy in the Harps” (Ellson 136). After Lucky refers to “‘them coloreds [sic],’” Tomboy states, “‘The spiks [sic] are just as bad as them,’ [...] *echoing the words of her father*. ‘They're getting in everywhere. They're all over the map. I hate them. They work for nothing or they're all on relief’” (Ellson 137, emphasis added). Here, Ellson indicates that racism is learned and, thus, socially constructed. In his 1950 introduction to *Tomboy*, Dr. Fredric Wertham writes that, in most literature on the theme of juvenile delinquency, race prejudice is “usually misrepresented as a psychological flaw independent of its social roots [... Yet,] Hal Ellson sees the interaction between [the individual and the social] and conveys to the reader the idea that one cannot be understood without the other” (123).¹⁸

Highlighting Tomboy's feeling of the encroachment of the racial other upon 'her' space, she often hears a woman who lives downstairs speaking or singing in Spanish, “her voice very loud” (Ellson 134):

¹⁸ Wertham also states that Tomboy and the other delinquents in Ellson's novel are “first of all victims,” and that their parents and other adults should take responsibility to change the social realm of adolescents instead of making it “possible for them to get bullets for their guns” and showing them “movies that teach them how to treat women [poorly]” (124).

A door creaked open on a darker landing below and a *strange foreign odor* floated upward through the stairwell, an odor of burning candles and incense, and a sibilant Spanish voice intoning as if in prayer filled the hall with *something strange*. Countering this, a vague murmuring started up, faded, swelled again into a flow of unintelligible speech; two voices were entwined and the blurred stream of words made a new and unknown language. [...T]he excited voice of the woman praying in Spanish was edging to a scream. (Ellson 154, my emphases)

This passage heightens our awareness of Tomboy's perception of her Latino neighbors: their "strange" language mixes with their "foreign" religious customs to create sounds and smells that instill fear in Tomboy—because she does not understand them. Yet, Tomboy feels no less happy or safe in her own apartment due to her father's neglect and alcoholism (153). Ellson's writing thus merges the fear of the mysterious and loud Hispanic other with the fear of a patriarch's loss of control via alcohol abuse. The novel also describes the effects of internalized racism. When the Harps are complaining about their parents' apathy and ignorance, Angel states: "And my old lady don't even know what it's all about. [...] Aah, spiks [sic] are dumb. Talk American, I say to her, and all the time it's Spanish. 'Cause we used to live downtown she thinks we live in heaven instead of a lousy rattrap" (Ellson 193).

Terrain vague does not go this far into illustrating or critiquing the psychology of racism, nor does not portray gangs based on ethnicity as Ellson's novel does. Yet, in choosing to adapt a novel that represents inter-ethnic gang fighting in the U.S., Carné and Rey make apparent the French fear of U.S. multiculturalism. While Angel is the single gang member of color in the Harps, the white Irish-American sidekick character Mick becomes Babar [Figure 39]. Babar lives below Dan's apartment in the same HLM. While his parents are perhaps the most economically well-off couple we see in the film (and the most emotionally stable—although this is surely because they barely speak to one another), and we read them as white and bourgeois, Babar is

coded as ‘immigrant’ of color in other ways throughout the film.

Most prominently, the name Babar is of Pakistani (Urdu) origin, but it also has roots in North Africa. Carné’s character may take his name from Cécile and Jean de Brunhoff’s serialized children’s story, *Histoire de Babar, le petit éléphant* (Babar, the Little Elephant). From 1931 to 1941, Jean published seven Babar books, and his son Laurent published seven more before Carné began shooting *Terrain vague*. The initial plot of the story is as follows: the young elephant Babar escapes the violence of a hunter, but his mother is killed. Babar’s escape takes him away from the jungle and into a big city, where he meets the Old Lady, who adorns him in Western clothing and hires him a tutor. When he returns with the help of his cousins Celeste and Arthur, he is able to bring the ‘positive aspects’ of civilization to the other elephants. The elephant king dies from eating a poisonous mushroom, and the community appoints Babar as the new king due to his travels and knowledge. He marries Celeste and they teach their children valuable lessons.

As Herbert R. Kohl and others have argued, we could read the Babar stories as a justification for colonialism. In the case of Carné’s Babar, his ‘queer’ characteristics—his effeminacy, gentleness, and platonic love for Dan—render him ‘civilized’ in comparison to the virile boys in the gang. He even proves his instinctive attachment to girlhood by choosing to exchange blood with Dan rather than with a boy. Unlike many of the white-French boys in *Terrain vague* who prefigure Vinz’s aggressive masculinity in *La Haine*, the queer and racialized character Babar is stoic, studious (we see him, and no other male characters, carrying books to school), almost feminine in his look and mannerisms, and he asks nothing sexually of Dan. When Babar says to Dan, “I don’t understand why you put up with me,” Dan replies, “Because you never tried anything with me.”

Terrain vague offers the queer effeminacy of Babar as a contrast to the masculine wildness of the gang—an internal threat to the safety of the French nation. We might therefore be inclined to read this loose character adaptation as an early iteration of homonationalism: using the discourse of gay rights to scapegoat ‘savage’ others—the virile boys in the *zone* gang. However, the film codes Babar as a queer *racialized* character, complicating our view of its narrative. In contrast to Babar the elephant’s experience, the gang does not allow Babar the boy to bring the ‘positive aspects’ of (queer) civilization to them; instead, they dismiss him because he tells Dan (who is no longer in the gang) about the Esso job, which further associates Babar with her—a girl. Because of this, they stalk him, kill his dog, and call him a ‘rat’, creating conditions in which the queer racialized character feels compelled to self-destruct.

The scene in which we are first introduced to Big Chief is especially illuminating in regards to Babar’s coding as a marginal figure. When Dan and Babar enter the store, we find Big Chief selling a fur-lined jacket (*une canadienne*) to an Arab customer—perhaps one of the protesters we will see in *Octobre à Paris* in another year’s time.¹⁹ As the Arab man is trying on the jacket, Big Chief asks him, “You work in the neighborhood?” He responds, “Yes...for two years now.” As the customer counts his money, Big Chief notices the Arab’s hands; the script reads, “They are eaten away by acid. [...] Big Chief asks, ‘Chemical products?’ The Arab nods his head. Big Chief takes his money and then gives some back to the Arab, saying ‘It’s on sale.’ The Arab, touched, says, ‘Merci’” (Carné and Rey 68-69; the dialogue in the finished film is the same) [Figure 40]. This encounter reveals Big Chief’s sympathy for marginalized people²⁰ in

¹⁹ Vincendeau points out that Carné had already represented multicultural elements in *L’Air de Paris* (1954): “the grocers next door are Italian (partly a legacy of the Italian co-production); a young black man frequents the gym; Dédé initially lives in an Arab hotel” (“Paradise Regained” 4). For an excellent analysis of the homosexual undertones present in *L’Air de Paris*, see Dyer (“No Place”).

²⁰ Driskell briefly analyzes this scene in terms of socio-economic class but fails to bring up race, colonialism, or immigration (148).

recognizing the effects of the racialized colonial subject's work in the outskirts of Paris—most often described at this time as 'temporary labor' because, many French people hoped, colonial workers would eventually go back 'home'. His burns are the effects of working in a chemical factory, a job that would probably have been refused by many white working-class people of the time. The exploitation of the bodies of 'immigrant workers' like him is critiqued in Chris Marker and Pierre Lhomme's *Le Joli mai* (*The Beautiful Month of May*, France, 1962): over images of (presumably) a North African worker who jackhammers concrete and returns the gaze of the camera, the voiceover says: "We tend to forget that the lowest proletariat in a colonizing nation always has a sub-proletariat from the colonized nation, and that this reality survives after colonization."²¹

Babar and Dan wait in the background during Big Chief's encounter with the Arab customer. When he leaves, Big Chief asks Dan, "'He's a new gang member?'" Babar looks at all the blue jeans hanging up around him. Big Chief perceives Babar's look" of wonder and then reminisces with Dan about when she was in Babar's place—Dan tried to steal a pair of jeans (Carné and Rey 69-70). Big Chief's encounter with the Arab man followed by Big Chief's first encounter with Babar works to code the latter as a marginalized figure, and the formal elements of the scene highlight this: the Arab worker is in the foreground of the frame, and to the right (of Big Chief), while Babar is in background—but also to the right (of Dan) [Figure 41].

This scene occurs within a sequence that works to promote "multidirectional memory"—an ethics of remembering different historical moments of oppression simultaneously, and of acknowledging the injustices suffered not only by people of the West (e.g. during WWII), but also of people in the "East" (e.g. colonized peoples) (Rothberg). Just before the scene inside Big

²¹ See also Jørholt 53.

Chief's store, as the boys are waiting for Dan and Babar outside, they briefly gossip about him. We learn that Big Chief spent time in a *centre d'observation* (he was thus himself a delinquent), that he fought in the war, and that German Nazis may have tortured him. This links Big Chief's experience at the hands of Germans to the Arab man's experience at the hands of the colonizers who employ him: both bodies have been mistreated by governments of other nations. Germany comes up briefly again when Marcel returns the car he used for the failed Esso job to Hans, a physically fit blonde man who speaks French with a thick German accent. Marcel talks Hans into giving him money if he (Marcel) will "disappear" and, as he goes to get the cash, Marcel steals two identity papers and a gun [Figures 42-45]. As he leads Marcel to the door, Hans tells him, "I'll see you again in the *faits divers* [section of the newspaper]," alluding to the fact that Marcel will inevitably end up committing another crime. Marcel smiles knowingly, patting the breast pocket in which the stolen gun resides, and tells Hans, "*Auf Wiedersehen*" (Good-bye).

These brief scenes combined support historian Henri Rousso's theories in his influential book *The Vichy Syndrome: History and Memory in France since 1944*. The scenes describe a precise moment in French history—a postwar moment of regret for collaboration with the Nazi Regime and for France's own fascist Vichy regime, created in in 1940. Rousso writes that "Vichy's antisemitism, which had concrete, official ramifications in law and justice, was inspired not by Nazism but by French antisemitic traditions" (*Vichy* 7). This, along with the effects of the regime, are often repressed in French collective memory. At the same time, French people view World War II and France's concurrent "civil war" through the "prism of Vichy" (*Vichy* 9-10). Rousso explains,

A little like the unconscious in Freudian theory, what is known as collective memory exists first of all in its *manifestations*, in the various ways in which it reveals its presence, whether explicitly or implicitly. The Vichy syndrome is a heterogeneous ensemble of

symptoms, of manifestations, particularly in political, social, and cultural life; it reveals the trauma that the Occupation produced—particularly the trauma linked to internal divisions within France [that were largely initiated by Vichy]—trauma that oftentimes develops after the traumatic events are over. (*Le Syndrome*, 18-19, their emphasis)

Terrain vague falls under Rousso's time-category of "Repressions" (*refoulements*, 1954-1971), a period that falls between the "Mourning Phase" (1944-1954) and the "Return of the Repressed" (1971-1974). The screen memory of the Resistance myth often covers over Vichy and collaboration. This myth began when General Charles de Gaulle gave his famous radio speech upon liberation, proudly claiming that "France was liberated by itself." Because de Gaulle's rise to power in 1958 reminded the French people of de Gaulle's past relationship to France, the Resistance myth often governed the Repressions period (*Vichy* 68).

Produced in 1960, *Terrain vague* could only hint at the French collaboration with Germany by allowing its most aggressive delinquent character, Marcel, to manipulate a German character to further his own self-interest and capacity for crime. Similarly, via the short scene with the Arab customer, the film can only suggest that ongoing injustice against Arab peoples occurs on a wide scale in the outskirts of Paris, where many colonial 'immigrant workers' lived—and during a time when the Algerian War of Independence from French colonial rule was still raging. As such, *Terrain vague* is a cinematic manifestation of the Repressions period of the Vichy syndrome *and* we might call the Colonial syndrome or, as the writers of the collected essays mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation call it, "*la fracture colonial*." Rousso connects these two major historical events in his book, showing the ways in which memories of Vichy informed *métropole* inhabitants' opinions on the Algerian War of Independence (*Vichy* 80-82). With its allusions to both WWII and French colonialism, *Terrain vague* illustrates its commitment to the critical transnational pursuit of remembering multidirectionally.

To conclude this section, I return to the novel. The biggest difference (in relation to plot) between the novel's character, Mick, and the film's character, Babar, is the way that they die. While a driver accidentally hits Mick with their car—much as a car will kill a working-class man in *Muerte de un ciclista* five years later—Babar commits suicide at the end of the film due to humiliation and loneliness: the other boys call him a “rat” and kill his dog, and then he finds his friend Dan in Lucky's arms. While Driskell interprets this sequence of events as indicative of Babar's romantic love for Dan (145), Babar's perceived loss of Dan is based on platonic love. The way he chooses to kill himself is important because this is the same place where Dan and the other gang members made him prove his loyalty to the gang by stepping, blindfolded, off a ledge. While the former ledge was three meters above ground, he now steps off the one that is twelve meters high, this time proving his loyalty to Dan rather than the gang. The body of the racialized other is ultimately contained in the marginal space of the *banlieue*—Babar's martyrdom in suicide seals this fate, presaging Majid's suicide in Michael Haneke's *Caché* (2005). While I have argued in Chapter Two that Majid's suicide is politically meaningful in that it implicates both Georges and the spectator in his death and propels the spectator to find out more about the October '61 Massacre, Babar's suicide denies the spectator desire for political involvement, especially since Babar dies while Dan's escape from the *banlieue* allows the spectator to experience catharsis. The film's narrative works in such a way that it lets us believe that Babar must die for Dan to leave (and live). This comparison uncovers another way to interpret Dan's ability to escape: while keeping in mind that society's sex-gender system coerces her into this decision, because she is a white teenage girl, Dan *can* escape the *banlieue* by performing bourgeois heteronormative femininity—by trying on a dress and coupling with a boy. In contrast, Babar cannot escape the ‘bad’ space by performing gender because his gender is

racialized. In fact, his suicide may also be our final hint at the character's coded race since it is so often the person of color who dies in film. Further, Babar's suppressed and stigmatized sexuality renders his escape even more difficult because, for Babar, his sexuality and gender expression include femininity. While Dan's newfound femininity and heteronormativity save her, Babar's intersectional social location precludes him from such an ending.

The coalescence of Babar's coded social locations—his effeminate queerness and his racialization—may indicate Carné's attempt at relating the oppression of gay people to that of colonial laborers and other racialized people in the metropole. While we must certainly be wary of equations such as these, it may be helpful to view this early *banlieue* film character as an embodiment of multidirectional memory, at least in its most general form. With Babar, Carné may well have been urging us to reflect upon the similarities between societal stigmatization and oppression of both homosexual people and (post)colonial subjects. Despite its date of production, in its cross-cultural adaptation of Babar from *Tomboy* and *Babar the Elephant*, *Terrain vague* refrains from treating sexuality and gender as social categories that are distinct from race. While this appears promising, in the next section we will see that Dan's narrative development conflates heteronormative femininity with love and 'success'.

IV. Dan: From Virile *Banlieusarde* to Maternal Savior

[T]he ultimate competition for the French woman, her distant horizon of excellence, was the American woman who washed her hair every day. Modernity was measured against American standards. (Ross, *Fast Cars* 90)

The New York City literary character, Tomboy, becomes a slightly more feminized character in *Terrain vague*. Both characters have masculine nicknames (Kerry becomes Tomboy and Danièle becomes Dan),²² but there are some differences between the literary character and the cinematic one. For example, the novel describes Tomboy as always dressed “in dungarees and a sweater, her dirty blonde hair done up in braids and hidden under her frayed sailor hat” (Ellson 126). Her French counterpart, Dan, on the other hand, wears a nice jacket and jeans and wears her medium-length blonde hair down. Despite these differences in appearance, both characters act aggressively and swear. Dan calls Marcel names like “*salaud*” (bastard) and engages in violence (e.g. she pulls out a knife when Marcel approaches her; she punches Lucky). The most significant difference between Tomboy and Dan is their roles in the gang: Dan is the leader of the gang for the first half of the film, whereas Tomboy never holds this important role in the novel.

Terrain vague merely codes Babar as queer and racialized, but it explicitly portrays the virile gender performance and gender-based oppressions of Dan. While having girls within the gang was unrealistic and unsettling to film critics, Dan’s personality (conflated here with Gaubert’s acting ability) was also criticized in initial reviews of the film. In *Le Monde*, Jean de Baroncelli states that “Danièle Gaubert leads with indisputable authority, but one would have

²² Driskell relates Dan’s nickname to that of Mic in *Les Tricheurs*, who has also “adapted a male version of her name” (149).

liked her to be more spontaneous, more natural, more sensitive.” We might interpret this as Baroncelli’s distaste for Gaubert because she does not act like a Brigitte Bardot “sex kitten” (Jobs 205), nor does she physically resemble Bardot, as Mic (Pascale Petit), the female star of Carné’s *Les Tricheurs* (*The Cheaters*, France/Italy, 1958) had done on the big screen two years prior. *Les Tricheurs* is an entertaining film in which we become voyeurs to the hedonistic acts of good-looking young people with excess pocket money, who steal for pleasure and not out of necessity, drink alcohol to excess, have a lot of sex with multiple partners, dance in wine-soaked *caves* (basements), and somehow render discussions of nihilism and existentialism frivolous and light-hearted. Conversely, in *Terrain vague*, Gaubert’s incarnation of the young, postwar French woman made critics like Baroncelli feel uncomfortable, perhaps because her working-class virility did not cater to their desires. Unlike the bourgeois party girls of *Les Tricheurs*, or the infantile yet “aggressive and pouting sensuality” of Bardot in Roger Vadim’s *Et Dieu créa la femme* (*And God Created Woman*, France, 1956) (Jobs 196), Dan insults boys when they try to flirt with her, and she walks away when men try to do so.

Examining the workings of gender and sexuality in Ellson’s novel may help us to understand Dan’s expressions of virilism. In the novel, Tomboy exhibits feelings of internal misogyny, perhaps helping to explain why she expresses typically masculine gender characteristics. When Mick asks if Tomboy hates girls most of all, “Tomboy didn’t answer, for she hated all girls and women but she couldn’t say why” and wishes she could be a boy (Ellson 146-147). Tomboy asks the new female recruits to undress during their initiation into the gang. “When they were finished undressing one of the boys whistled and every one laughed but Tomboy, who stared at both girls with a sudden unreasoning hate in her eyes” (160). She then beats them savagely with a belt. However, Tomboy has also figured out a system that Gayle

Rubin has described as “the traffic in women.” Tomboy thinks:

The [other girls] were tough, but she was different, not like them. All they ever talked about was boys. All they ever dreamed about... Why am I different? She thought. And, in a way, she knew, knowing almost without thinking about it, that it was wrong to give herself as the others did, for that only meant to be talked about and to be passed on to another and another boy. This always happened, and she knew it could happen to her too, if she allowed it, if she gave in even once. But she wouldn't, she told herself. (147)

Here, Tomboy resists becoming an object that men use and trade. In fact, she likes and trusts Mick because he's “the only one who never made a pass” at her, similar to Dan's relationship with Babar (148). Tomboy wishes Mick were her brother, the same sentiment that Dan has for Babar in *Terrain vague*; Dan tells Babar, “I'd love a brother like you.” When Dan inducts Babar into the gang in *Terrain vague*, she ends the verbal contract by saying, “we are your real family,” reaffirming the kinship system that works outside of the biological family unit. The young people make alternative families to escape the neglect and abuse of their parents. Yet, this alternative kinship structure is abandoned when Dan leaves hand-in-hand with her male lover at the end of the film,²³ promising postwar France a hopeful new beginning—one in which the female delinquent gets out of the Parisian *banlieue* and into the provincial home to create a biological family.

Terrain vague illustrates how both teenage boys and grown men sexualize the female delinquent. Tomboy in Ellson's novel lives with her alcoholic father and a stepmother whom she hates: Tomboy thinks, ““Why doesn't he smack her around a bit? Why doesn't he kick her out of the house? We don't need her” (153). Conversely, Dan lives with her inattentive mother

²³ Driskell puts it this way: While Dan “is presented as having a degree of freedom,” her representation “comes round to a conservative vision of femininity. Not only does she lose the leadership of the gang to Marcel, an alpha male, she is also shown to mature into a conventional form of adult womanhood” (149).

(Dominique Davray) and sexually aggressive stepfather. When he tries to give her money, she refuses, later saying, “He’s started circling again. Someday I’ll smash his face in.” While this was an easy plot change that made Dan’s life even more worthy of an escape for which the audience would cheer, this inversion reveals a profound sentiment in French culture at the time: both Tomboy and Dan are products of divorced parents, but Carné and Rey’s gender inversion places more parental responsibility on the biological mother rather than the biological father (simultaneously allowing the stepfather to become a sexual aggressor to Dan). This representation fulfills the trend that Tsikounas and Lepajolec describe in their study on delinquent films. The films of their corpus put the most blame on the family for the child’s deviant behavior; alcoholism and parental failure are the two principal ills, but mothers are represented especially negatively, “incapable of taking charge of their children and lacking any maternal instinct” (17).

Carné’s film displays anxiety around a teenage girl’s sexuality and agency, ultimately showing us its desire for a virtuous, feminine, maternal figure—rather than an androgynous and aggressive teenage girl that leads a gang. Girls made up twenty to twenty-five percent of all juvenile court cases in the postwar period, but female delinquents were rarely part of the proliferating legal discourse on the subject. The female delinquent was “almost always discussed, if she was discussed at all, in terms of prostitution”; further, “Delinquent girls were evaluated in terms of their sexuality” and, while the goal of reeducation for boys was to prepare them to be productive citizens and workers, the re-education and socialization goals for girls ensured “their capacity to reproduce, to act as mothers within the familial household” (Jobs 193-5). When an *éducateur* (social worker who specializes in delinquents) visits Marcel’s mother to explain that Marcel has run away from the correctional facility, she tells him that she received

letters from Marcel explaining how miserable he was in “that prison.” In a close-up shot, the social worker looks directly at Marcel’s mother (and us), stating the he is “not a police officer” and that he “takes care of kids like Marcel [to prevent] gangs and promiscuity” [Figures 46-7]. While Dan does not sell her body for money—in fact, she refuses her leering stepfather’s offer of money—and the least virtuous act she commits is to kiss a boyfriend whom she loves, she does emerge within the film as an object over which multiple boys fight, echoing the portrayal of the single girl amidst a group of boys in the 1949 Alain Guyader trial: while the boy murderers were depicted as cold and jealous, the girl was depicted as “a temptress and the object of rival sentiment within the small group of boys” (Jobs 195).²⁴ In *Terrain vague*, Dan’s sexuality is put in the spotlight through her consistent refusal of it—and through her violent actions against the boys that approach and grab her—until the end of the film, when Babar finds her kissing Lucky after she has tried on a flowery American dress.

The film’s script reads, “The girl, Dan, 16 years old, dominates all of them with her authority” (Carné and Rey 21). It is quite surprising when watching the film for the first time to see a young woman who, from afar, appears to embody much of normative French femininity by today’s standards—albeit with a 1960 androgynous edge—leading a gang of violent *banlieue* delinquents, comprised mostly of young men. Our introduction to Dan begins with a long shot that reveals her, wearing pants, at the center of a masculine space within the abandoned factory that the gang has claimed as their own. A medium shot then highlights Dan’s authority within the space as her hands grip her seat and she turns to Le Râleur to say, “*Ta gueule*” (Shut up). Finally, a close-up shows us the virilism of her facial expression: she appears cold, tough, and assertive

²⁴ Jobs further explains that the media used cinematic words to describe her (vamp, starlet, coquette), revealing how popular culture—an avenue increasingly conflated with youth because of its consumption of this culture in the postwar period—“bled into other areas of society as well, helping to establish the terms by which the young were discussed while at the same time creating a forum for the discussion of young people in general” (196).

[Figures 48-50]. Dan performs a mixture of 1960 U.S. and French femininities—knowledgeable, powerful, and slightly androgynous, reminding us of contemporary cultural figures such as Françoise Sagan, who was only eighteen when she published *Bonjour tristesse* in 1954. As one *Terrain vague* reviewer puts it: “[Dan] wears ‘blue jeans’ with authority—‘blue-androjeans’ we could say” (Grousset). Another reviewer writes that the gang is led by “a loveable young girl who probably, along with her habit of sporting blue-jeans, has a taste for *porter la culotte* (wearing the pants; being in the dominant role)” (Beret).

Dan performs virilism throughout the film, her aggressive actions and words exploding from behind a hardened face. Dan even twice embodies the specifically bodily aggressive masculinity that the term *viril* connotes, even though she subverts its sexual connotations by using her body to *ward off* boys. For example, when she leaves the abandoned factory after Marcel takes over, Lucky runs after her. Suddenly, she punches him. They get into a physical fight and, as Lucky lies on top of her, he begins to grab her breasts. Looking angry but not scared, she gets out from under his grip and runs away. Later, when Dan visits Marcel alone in the abandoned factory to try to convince him not to do the Esso job, at one point Marcel looks her up and down and slowly approaches her, asking, “Are you a girl or a boy?” Her first response is to calmly yet swiftly pull out a knife that she holds near her hip, answering the question with a symbolic phallus. The image of the knife at her hip highlights the paradoxical element of (sexual) aggression in this defensive action. She then says, “I’d love to cut your pretty face,” placing Marcel once again in the feminine position.

Dan is not the only working-class youth to be represented as having a problem with excessive virility in the postwar period. In *Riding the New Wave: Youth and the Rejuvenation of France after the Second World War*, Richard Ivan Jobs illustrates why ‘youth’ is just as

important an historical category of analysis as race, class, or gender.²⁵ *Les trente glorieuses*—the thirty-year postwar period of economic and population growth in France—brought with them a baby boom and a nation-wide focus on the potential of youth and warnings against delinquency. Opening his chapter on “Rehabilitating Delinquent France,” Jobs tells the story of the Valence murder, committed by Josette Orfaure, a twenty-year-old hatmaker from Bourg-les-Valence. Her accomplice was a twenty-seven-year-old agricultural worker, Jacques Mayent. Sixteen-year-old Jacques Greve, the brother-in-law of the victim and Orfaure’s lover, had mentioned that his brother-in-law would be carrying a large amount of money that night. “Prompted by her young lover, Josette bought a .22 caliber revolver for the holdup, while the boy acquired a baton and convinced Mayent to wield it. The crime, it seemed, had been instigated and planned by a sixteen-year-old” (Jobs 142).

Jobs explains that “the notorious ‘Gang des J-3’ or ‘Les J-3 de Valence’, as they become known in the media, served as a cautionary example of the world gone awry” (142). These newspaper headlines reference the Occupation (J-3 refers to a rationing system age category) and Roger Ferdinand’s popular play of the Liberation period, *Les J3 ou la nouvelle école* (The J3 or the New School), which was made into a film in 1945. Set in Normandy, the school is full of delinquent youth who are making money from the black market. When a young female teacher arrives, she persists in reforming the five male protagonists and, as Jobs writes, “a struggle of wills ensues” (146). This play along with Ferdinand’s follow-up, *Ils ont vingt ans* (They are Twenty), “reflect an emerging conventional wisdom that blamed the war and the Occupation for juvenile delinquency and suggested that the solution lay in a form of reeducation for the young n’er-do-wells—a ‘new school’” (Jobs 146-7). While this ‘teacher as savior’ plot will be used

²⁵ See Scott, “Gender.”

decades later in *école laïque* films,²⁶ *Terrain vague* has a much different prescription for Dan. Instead of sending her to a ‘new school’, Carné and Rey attempt to rid her of her virile qualities by allowing Marcel’s charisma to oust her from the gang and by placing her in the arms of a working-class boy. Her willingness to adopt heteronormative femininity saves her.

Jobs explains that the Valence murder was “merely one link in a long chain of juvenile crimes that captured the public eye in the postwar period” (142). While the woman murderer of the Valence J-3 was part of the artisanal class, her accomplices—and most youth deemed ‘delinquents’ from the postwar through the present—are working-class. Carné’s film displaces these popular depictions of aggressive and armed French working-class youth onto a filmic adaptation of a novel set in the New York City ‘ghetto’, thereby aligning the *banlieue* with the social ills that U.S. multiculturalism produced. While Ferdinand’s play blames the Occupation (i.e. Germany) and its related economic difficulties for the students’ grave misbehavior (Jobs 146), Carné and Rey blame various postwar U.S. influences for the problem of delinquency. This argument is underlined by the fact that, among the gang members in *Terrain vague*, there are *blousons noirs* (literally: black shirts), a subcultural group that reached its height in 1958-61 after viewing U.S. cinematic imports *The Wild One* (Laslo Benedek, 1953) and *Rebel without a Cause* (Nicholas Ray, 1955).

The differences between the endings of Ellson’s novel and the film are also telling in regards to what this transcultural reinscription does. In the book, Tomboy leaves town with her male lover, but the reader is left with Tomboy’s fear and instability: as she and Lucky grab onto a moving train, he asks her how she feels and she responds, “Scared—scared as hell!” (268).

²⁶ As we will see in Chapter Four, the ‘teacher as savior’ plot is recycled in *Le Plus beau métier du monde*, *Entre les murs*, *La Journée de la jupe*, and *L’École pour tous*. In Chapter Five, we will see that *Mariam* refuses this trope.

This is the last line of the novel. Ellson refuses us a happy ending, instead offering us a social realist ending that instills fear in the reader so that, perhaps, we might act on behalf of the young people he depicts. While Carné's film desires to do the same, the narrative also shows us what their lives *should* look like: its non-reflexive melodramatic Western-genre ending prescribes the 'right' way to live. We are left with a happy ending that indicates a heteronormative life of receding into the home and consuming goods.

Terrain vague proposes France fix the problems of the *banlieue* via heteronormative femininity; relatedly, it blames the mother for the problem of delinquency,²⁷ thereby revealing a deep cultural fear of swiftly changing women's roles in late 1950s France. Many postwar men desired women to remain in the private sphere, chaste and virtuous, as they appeared before the war took them out of their homes and into masculine workspaces. In a survey of twenty-four French films across the twentieth century, Hayward and Vincendeau find a handful of patterns that emerge, including changing family roles across films, from the threat of the father figure in Marcel Pagnol's *Marius* (France, 1931) to his complete absence in *La Haine*. They maintain, however, that a few films challenge the reign of the father by focusing on the mother; included in this short list is *Les 400 coups* (6). The focus on the mother that we find in *Les 400 coups* coincides with a similar concentration in *Terrain vague*. This maternal focus helps to explain Dan's transformation at the film's end: she changes from virile *banlieusarde* to, we presume,

²⁷ Driskell claims that *Terrain vague* "places most blame for this state of affairs on the older generation," yet he does not specifically mention the mother (148). While Carné may not intend to place blame on the parents, as he states in the following quotation, his film tells us otherwise: "[T]he boys and girls born near a '*terrain vague*' and that live in HLMs at the gates of Paris barely resemble the '*tricheurs*'. These are not '*blousons dorés*' [bourgeois hipsters], but children of factory workers and other workers. Abandoned to themselves they settle themselves, meeting in groups and [...] try to manage by themselves. Contrary to the '*tricheurs*', they keep a sincere attitude devoid of affectation and they suffer from what educators call 'emotional neglect,' the cause of the majority of juvenile delinquency cases. Without a doubt, the parents are responsible, but it is difficult to reproach them. In the evenings, they come home fatigued from their job, they have their own worries, their material difficulties, and they feel that they have accomplished their job when they feed and house their children" ("Avec '*Terrain vague*'").

provincial mother-to-be.

Jobs explains that, already in France's Third Republic (1871-1940), the family became a critical site for the government in its desire to create a secular yet morally grounded society. The idea of the "morally abandoned child" entered France's legal framework when a series of laws passed in 1889 allowed government officials to enter private homes to remove 'at risk' children. In 1945, a new system to deal with the increasing problem of juvenile delinquency was put in place: French law moved from strict penal sanction to rehabilitation, re-education, and socialization, and the crimes of those aged between thirteen and eighteen were to be reviewed on a case by case basis; this system came from the desire to know the familial and social environment of the child, as well as his/her character, because "bad conditions were believed to be the determining factor in the criminal behavior of minors" (Jobs 149).²⁸

From its first sequence, *Terrain vague* foregrounds the figure of the mother as responsible for producing the juvenile delinquent. Religious organ music plays as we look upon a stone angel atop Saint Chapelle church on *Ile de la Cité* in the center of Paris. Panning left and downward to reveal the medieval church and the *Palais de Justice* next to it, we cut to an indoor sign that reads "*Tribunal pour Enfants*" (Children's Court), accompanied by faster-paced, anxiety-inducing music. A judge (Georges Wilson) tells seventeen-year-old Marcel and his mother (Denise Vernac) that, since it is the fourth time he has been caught committing a crime—this time for stealing three recorders—he will be put into a correctional facility for minors. When the judge asks Marcel's mother why she does not look after him, she answers, "I work all day," and when he asks Marcel what he wants to do with his life, he answers, "I don't want to be a

²⁸ Further, the "rupture of war and the concomitant rise in delinquency rates enabled advocates of reform (psychologists, psychiatrists, lawyers, judges, social workers) to bring about massive legal and institutional changes to the juvenile justice system" (Jobs 151).

slave like my parents.” As Michel Legrand and Francis Lemarque’s melodramatic music sets in, we cut to shots of darkened *banlieue* HLMs. When Marcel’s mother returns to her HLM, she runs into the building’s concierge, a young woman who asks her if they “kept him.” Affirming that they did keep Marcel, the young woman replies, “Perhaps it’s better this way.” Marcel’s mother responds, “That’s what the judge told me. There will be games, a huge park, fresh air.” The woman responds, “So, everything we don’t have here.” This short dialogue near the beginning of the film reveals the *banlieue* as worse than a reformatory and likens it to a prison.²⁹

Terrain vague continues to foreground the figure of the mother in its opening credits as Marcel’s mother takes a long, slow, tired journey up the seemingly endless stairs, which is filmed in one long take.³⁰ We see disappointment and fatigue on her face, if not also shame [Figure 51]. When we finally enter her apartment, she strokes Marcel’s boxing gloves, a reminder of her lost son [Figure 52], and we cut to a shot of their window, the camera looking in on her. The camera pans down and left, stopping on the window of Babar’s apartment, but in between these two spaces of maternal neglect, we get a glimpse into the apartment of a seemingly happy family, a plump woman at the sink and tending to her laughing child who sits at the table for dinner [Figure 53]. Thus, as the camera pans to show the proximity of Marcel’s and Babar’s HLM apartments, we also get a glimpse of the film’s prescription for the problem of juvenile delinquency: a mother who cooks and cleans for her son.

In “Oracles of Suburbia: French Cinema and Portrayals of Paris *Banlieues*, 1958-1968,” Ravi Hensman examines how *banlieue* films represent a warning against the social ills of the

²⁹ It also connects to a scene in Chris Marker and Pierre L’homme’s *Le Joli mai* (France, 1962), in which *banlieue* building designers discuss the layout of their project.

³⁰ For a discussion of Marcel’s mother’s long walk up the stairs also see Driskell 147.

banlieue and a nostalgia for old Paris. While *Terrain vague* is largely missing from his study,³¹ Carné's film aligns with Hensman's narrative because it is both a warning against the negative effects of HLMs on youth and because the film is nostalgic for the traditional gender roles of old Paris. In a pivotal scene, Lucky and Dan are in the back room of Big Chief's store talking as Dan runs her hands across a dress at the end of a rack of dresses. Lucky asks, "Do you want to please me?" Dan answers "Yes," and he says, "Try on one of those dresses." They look through the dresses and she chooses the most feminine among them, with a low collar, cinched waist, and flowery fabric.³² Dan spreads hanging clothes apart and walks through them to another part of the room where Lucky cannot see her. While Dan is changing, Lucky says, "Dan... There's been something I've been wanting to tell you... I think I've fallen in love with you." The counter-shot to Lucky is the line of hanging American clothing that Dan has used as a dressing room [Figures 54-55].

When Dan emerges from behind the clothing, Legrand's and Lemarque's melodramatic music swells [Figure 56]. Lucky asks Dan if she heard him and she responds, "Yes. I've been thinking the same thing." We see Lucky's pleased reaction and half-smirk as he looks her up and down, and then we get a close-up on the newly feminized Dan [Figure 57]. As Driskell states, "the camera lingers on her feminine beauty, stressing that she has now found her 'rightful' place" (149). She walks to him, he holds her face, and they kiss. This scene is eerily reminiscent of a famous scene from a then-recently released U.S. film, Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958), in which Scottie (James Stewart) knows exactly how he wants Judy (Kim Novak) to look and coerces her into embodying this look [Figure 58]. The main differences here are that Scottie is

³¹ Hensman readily admits to this gap in his study and attributes it to lack of space.

³² Also see Driskell on Dan's choice of dress (149).

forcing Judy to perform gender like a specific, high-class woman from his past did, while Dan willingly tries on the dress for Lucky and appears content to do so.

Jobs writes, “As a social group, young women in France had historically been defined by their ordained future as wives and mothers” (189). *Terrain vague* allows Dan to escape her life of sexual harassment, poverty, and boredom in the *banlieue* only after she tries on a dress and declares her love for a boy. At the end of the film, she leaves hand-in-hand with her male lover, who has been promised a job in Tours. As Driskell writes, “To emphasize further the shift towards conservative gender roles [after Dan tries on the dress], the film concludes with the heterosexual couple—Dan and Lucky—walking away into the distance together, with Big Chief smiling paternally after them” (149). It is only when the nuclear family begins to form at the end of the film that we have hope, which makes *Terrain vague*’s depiction of the liberated postwar woman extremely “ambiguous” (Driskell 148). On the one hand, the film gives us a representation of a female gang leader who “plays pinball with her male friends” (Driskell 149), who is smart and confident, who is an excellent shot, and who is admired by her male cohort as such—further revealing her virile qualities [Figures 59-60]. On the other hand, Dan must discover the ‘perfect dress’ and try it on before she is able to physically leave the ‘bad’ space of the *banlieue*.

Dan’s significant transformation from virile and powerful leader to the feminine half of a heterosexual couple fulfills both parts of Turk’s claim in *Child of Paradise*: his films tend to reduce women to “banal sweethearts or mythologize them into awesome sorceresses” (51). Further, Dan’s transformation reveals an important consistency between Carné’s postwar and prewar films, the latter of which Vincendeau claims “centre on a melodramatic struggle between idealised pure love and world-weary corruption” (“Paradise Regained” 1). The difference here—

between *Terrain vague* and the prewar films, and between *Terrain vague* and *Les Tricheurs*—is that the *banlieue* film portrays a much more ambivalent ending than the others. Rather than staunch pessimism, it balances Babar’s suicide with the hope of the heterosexual couple escaping the *banlieue*. At one point, Lucky says to Dan that he is “tired of being a wimp” because of her. When she puts on the dress, she and Lucky finally express their love for one another. It is only because of Dan’s feminine transformation—a symbolic revelation of her dependence on Lucky, her submissive position in the relationship, and her rejection of working-class virility—that the couple can finally reveal their feelings for one another.

Mack writes that virile “gender performances have been subject to the most intense debate when they are seen as indicative of *banlieue* social disorders” (Mack 7). Dan embodies an early, postwar, white version of the virile working-class *banlieusarde*, thus warranting the film’s prescriptive transformation of her gender performance at the end of the film. This ‘happy ending’ follows the ideology of French Republic universalism because it upholds heteronormativity, including normative (French) femininity, and normative (French) masculinity. Dan and Lucky can escape the *banlieue* only after she has performed classic femininity by trying on a dress, and only after he has found a job in Tours. (Perhaps not coincidentally, Tours is still known for its inhabitants speaking the most ‘perfect’ version of French because their accent mimicked that of the court before the Revolution of 1789). As Dan and Lucky walk away from the camera, we imagine their future life as one of heteronormative consumption and biological reproduction—a different kind of family than the one with which the gang provided them.

In Dan’s action of trying on the dress, the film also symbolically rejects the U.S. ghetto, including its influence over gender performativity—e.g. boyish girls like Ellson’s Tomboy and working-class femininity—presumably influenced by the shifting roles of women in the U.S.

during and after the war.³³ The coding of Dan's virility as U.S. American facilitates the film's simultaneous rejection of female masculinity and the *banlieue*. Dan transforms from androgynous and virile to hyper feminine, a traditional femininity for which the filmmakers seem to be nostalgic, by donning an unwanted artifact to escape the French ghetto that, to the filmmakers, appears too much like that of the U.S. Several reviews of the film refer to Dan, following from the nickname of her literary U.S. counterpart, as a "*garçon manqué*"—a tomboy (literally, a "missed boy"—a boy that *could* have been). Carné's reconstruction of the burgeoning nuclear family at the film's end reveals his culture's deep anxiety about woman's new place in postwar French society, much as Truffaut's *Les 400 coups* exposes this anxiety.

In *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture*, Kristin Ross argues that France's national retreat into the hexagon (and out of the colonies) and private retreat into comfortable bourgeois homes and cars coincided with the pushing of colonial immigrants to the *banlieue* (11). Ross discusses "the immediate postwar purges (called *épurations* or 'purifications') and attempts to rid the nation of the traces of German Occupation and Pétainiste compromise and complicity," which "set the tone for a new emphasis on French national purity" (74). The purges comprised the punishment and removal from positions of authority those who had collaborated with the German Nazis or the Vichy regime (Paxton), but also included social hygiene campaigns such as closing the brothels of France and a more general culture of cleanliness (Ross, *Fast Cars* 74). Ross suggests:

[I]n the roughly ten-year period of the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s in France – the decade that saw both the end of the empire and the surge in French consumption and modernization – the colonies are in some sense 'replaced,' and the effort that once went into maintaining and disciplining a colonial people and situation

³³ Women worked in traditionally masculine jobs when the men were away at war and, when the men came back, many women did not want to return into the private sphere of the home.

becomes instead concentrated on a particular ‘level’ of metropolitan existence: everyday life. (77)

Due to gender codes and norms, women are most affected by this focus because, especially as mothers, they are the class of people who are most responsible for consumption and the social existence of human beings.³⁴ Women “*are* the everyday: its managers, its embodiment. The transfer of a colonial political economy to a domestic one involved a new emphasis on controlling *domesticity*, a new concentration on the political economy of the household [...] If the woman is clean, the family is clean, the nation is clean” (Ross, *Fast Cars* 77-78, their emphases). French femininity at this time was largely constructed by women’s magazines such as *Elle*, the founder of which, Hélène Lazareff, spent five years in the U.S. working with magazines such as *Harper’s*.³⁵ With her colleague Françoise Giroud, Lazareff created *Elle* in 1945 with her time in the U.S. in mind: “the look projected by the American woman of that time was [...] one of hygienic self-assurance” (79).

Given this context, it is significant that Dan discovers her dress in the back room of Big Chief’s U.S. surplus store. Big Chief sells U.S. goods while also offering young people a respite from their family lives. He gives them shelter when needed, offering Lucky a bed in the back of his shop, aligning him with the paternal figure of the social worker in *Rebel without a Cause*. However, Big Chief is not an adult of an institution, as many adults who sympathize with young people are in other delinquent films, such as *Rebel* or *Los Olvidados*. Nonetheless, he saves the day in the end: he provides Lucky with a bed and finds him a job in Tours after his father kicks him out of the house. Most importantly, his store provides Dan with her dress from America,

³⁴ For a discussion of the mother’s historical role as socializer of children, see Ortner.

³⁵ The young woman protagonist of Carné’s *Les Jeunes loups*, Sylvia (Haydée Politoff) is a journalist at *Elle*.

which allows the two young people to finally come together into a privatized, consuming couple. Like *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange*, which alludes again to the Western when the story's hero and heroine (Valentine, played by Florelle) escape into the horizon at the end of the film, *Terrain vague*'s heroic couple walk into the horizon to escape the *banlieue*—and with the help of Big Chief, the most explicit Western genre icon in the film [Figures 61-63].

V. Conclusion: A Postwar Femonationalist Vision?

In its transcultural reinscription of a U.S. pulp fiction novel and the Western genre, *Terrain vague* leaves the spectator with a taste of the ills and joys of postwar U.S. cultural influence and economic imperialism in France. Carné also infuses his film with his signature poetic realist style to illustrate the beauty and defiance of working-class delinquents while hinting at the injustices of colonial ‘immigration’—three decades before *La Haine* will offer us this unique, transnational mixture. *Terrain vague* is a postwar *banlieue* film that illustrates the French fear of, and resistance to, postwar U.S. multiculturalism, as well as an ambivalent view of U.S. gender expressions, cultural products, and consumer products.³⁶ It represents a cultural working-through of French conflicts via different U.S. products. The film works through France’s nation-wide issues with postwar delinquency—thought to be caused by a still-repressed WWII—by displacing blame onto U.S. multiculturalism and delinquency, as represented in U.S. imports like *Tomboy*. It simultaneously reveals attachments to ‘good’ American imports such as Western films and feminine clothing; paradoxically, a traditionally feminine American dress saves Dan from her U.S. ghetto virilism.

The film allows the virile female delinquent to escape her life of sexual harassment and poverty, but only after her queer and racially coded sidekick kills himself, and only after she follows the script of heteronormative femininity. These prerequisites for her successful escape reveal a profound cultural anxiety around changing women’s roles in postwar France. The escape

³⁶ While French filmmakers at the time generally had a profound admiration for Hollywood cinema, including the film noir and Western genres, Kinder explains that, in the national film movement of former fascist nations, the U.S. “would be figured as a hegemony that was able to replace, perpetuate, or co-opt fascism—primarily through the economic leverage of the Marshall Plan [1948-1952] and the cultural imperialism of Hollywood” (36). While Kinder maintains that this was true in Italian neorealism, the New German Cinema, and the New Spanish Cinema (36), we can also view France as a former fascist nation due to the German Occupation and the Vichy regime’s active participation in the attempted extermination of French Jews and other marginalized people. If many of the films belonging to the French New Wave movement admire U.S. cinematic and popular culture much more than they demonize it, *Terrain vague* illustrates a more complex and ambiguous view of the U.S. via its use of intertexts.

itself reflects a burgeoning fear of the *banlieue* and U.S. influence, including its power to transform a pretty working-class girl into an androgynous, aggressive delinquent. In this way, we could read Dan's escape at the expense of Babar's life as an early, even if unintentional, iteration of "femonationalism" (Farris). Different from post-9/11 versions of femonationalism, this 1960 representation values the girl's safety, happiness, and 'proper' image and place in society in addition to her (historically limited, prescribed version of) 'freedom', i.e. her ability to escape the already marginalized *banlieue*. It centralizes Dan's ability to assimilate into heteronormative postwar France while killing Babar, symbolizing the impossibility of his universalization and successful assimilation into French society. Conversely, we might reflect upon why Carné has shown us white-French Dan's ability to escape by adapting to feminine standards and using them for her own gain, while queer of color Babar's feminine characteristics are punished.

Terrain vague makes its pedagogical purpose explicit in its epilogue: "*Une sélection hommes et cinéma... Pour que les adultes prennent leurs responsabilités envers la jeunesse*" (A Men and Cinema selection... So that adults take responsibility for the young).³⁷ Over fifty years later, we can read *Terrain vague* not only as a warning against delinquency, but also as a warning against the burgeoning construction of HLMs in the zone and in the wider *banlieue*, represented as a New York City 'ghetto'. Bernard Buffet's "veritable frescos," which were painted on the three cinemas that screened *Terrain vague*, give us more insight into this warning. This was the "first time in the history of cinema [that] the facades of cinema *salles* would be conceived by a grand painter" ("Bernard").³⁸ Buffet's painting consists of a tall adolescent with

³⁷ It even had an educational matinée screening at Ambiance cinema, which was funded by the "Hommes et Cinéma" association and *associations familiales* of Puy-de-Dôme ("Les associations").

³⁸ They adorned the front of the Paris (Champs-Élysées), the Berlitz (Boulevards) and the Wepier (Montmartre). In addition, la Chunga, the "celebrated barefoot *gitane* (gypsy) [sic]" who was born in a *terrain vague*, accepted coming from Madrid for one night to dance outside the Berlitz for the world premiere of *Terrain vague* ("Bernard").

his back to us in the middle of the frame, splitting it in half. He stands on a path of some kind, perhaps train tracks or a road, but what is clear is that this path forms a division, a boundary, a border: to his right, HLMs reach the height of his head—the ugliness of modern boxed projects—and a crane makes it apparent that this site is still in construction. To his left, we see more traditional buildings and homes with slanted roofs, leaving much more room for sky, as well as streetlights or train track lights. The adolescent, his hands in his jean pockets, looks to the right, alerting us to the fact that these *banlieue* HLM skyscrapers will dominate his future—and France's.

Chapter Four

Laïcité as Cruel Optimism in *La Journée de la jupe* (2009)

I. *La Journée de la jupe*

[The public school] is like a sounding board, a place traversed by the turbulences of the world, a microcosm where questions—of equal and unequal opportunities, of work and power, of cultural and social integration, of exclusion—play out very concretely.
~Laurent Cantet (qtd. in Mangeot 6)

While our *Terrain vague* heroine must try on a dress to flee from a life of poverty and sexual harassment in the Parisian *banlieue*, the heroine of Jean-Paul Lilienfeld's controversial film *La Journée de la jupe* (*Skirt Day*, France, 2009) is told repeatedly by school administrators *not* to wear a knee-length skirt because she teaches in a 'culturally sensitive' school—and called a "pute" (whore) by some of her male students for doing so. The film represents the professional milieu of Sonia Bergerac, played by Algerian-German-French star Isabelle Adjani,¹ as hostile toward this type of 'unchaste' feminine gender sign due to the large population of Muslim students at her school. At first glance, then, it represents a popular reiteration of "femonationalism"—nationalistic discourses that instrumentalize 'women's equality' for racist-Islamophobic ends (Farris, "Femonationalism" 185). Five days before *La Journée* was released in a few Parisian cinemas, it was viewed by over 2.2 million spectators on the Franco-German Arte channel on March 20, 2009—one of the ten best scores in the history of the channel, even beating France 2 that night (Guerrin and Herzberg).

¹ Adjani won five acting awards for the role of Sonia Bergerac: *Nymphe d'or de la meilleur actrice au Festival de Monte Carlo* (2009); *Lumière de la meilleure actrice* (2009); *Globe de cristal de la meilleure actrice* (2009); *Etoile d'or de la meilleure actrice* (2009); *César de la meilleure actrice* (2010).

Anxiety-ridden Bergerac teaches French literature to middle school students within a site of double precarity: a REP school within a ‘*quartier sensible*’.² As we watch Bergerac pop a Xanax and break up two fights, she directs the students in a Molière play, echoing the students’ rehearsal of Marivaux’s classic play in Abdellatif Kechiche’s *L’Esquive* (*Games of Love and Chance*, France, 2003). When Bergerac finds a gun in the possession of Mouss M’Diop (Yann Ebongé)—a tall, Black teenage boy—this is the last straw: in a panic, she holds her students hostage within the soundproof amphitheater, all the while telling the police that Mouss is holding the class hostage. She insists on teaching “a good class” on Molière, while also passionately teaching them about the hypocrisy inherent to racist, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, and misogynistic actions, words, and attitudes. She makes teaching moments out of racial slurs and sexual double standards under the auspices of *laïcité*, which she firmly believes creates equal opportunity for all.

While much of the film focuses on what occurs behind the chained doors of theatre-classroom, cross-cutting gives us insight into the lives of those who try to assess and control the situation from the outside, such as Lieutenant Labouret (Denis Podalydès), the non-threatening RAID³ negotiator with whom we are meant to identify—and who identifies with Bergerac; and the more sinister Lieutenant Bechet (Yann Collette), who wants to take her down as soon as he discovers she holds the gun via a camera they have planted underneath the stage. We also meet Principal Cauvin (Jackie Berroyer), a blustering older man who appears to have given up long ago on issues relating to student misbehavior in his school; and Bergerac’s white-French friend, Cécile (Anne Girouard), the only other female teacher we see, and who consistently argues for

² *La Journée de la jupe* is set in a fictional middle school in the *banlieue*, Collège Maxime Gorki.

³ RAID (*Recherche, Assistance, Intervention, Dissuasion*; Search, Assistance, Intervention, Deterrence) is an elite police special forces unit of the French National Police.

Bergerac's innocence. Immediately after learning that one of her students, Farida (Sarah Douali), is the survivor of a gang rape, Bergerac demands that the French government create a national day when all women and girls would be invited to wear skirts to school with the promise of not being called a "whore." Bergerac's demand for a national Skirt Day⁴ has led some commentators to assume that the skirt controversy in the film symbolizes the 'headscarf controversy' that has transpired in France since the late 1980s, culminating in the 2004 law forbidding "ostentatious" religious signs in public schools.

Bergerac also demands the following: the right to speak with journalists; and that officers arrest the three rapists and Mouss, who filmed the rape. Mouss, who had been accidentally shot in the leg, pretends to feel ill so that Sonia comes near him, and he strangles her. Nawel (Sonia Amor) immediately gets hold of the revolver to protect her teacher and, after students help Bergerac to break free of Mouss' hold, she gives the gun back to Bergerac. Mehmet (Khalid Berkouz) later gains control of the gun and shoots his white-appearing Maghrebi-French classmate, Sébastien (Kevin Azaïs), as the latter begs him not to shoot and mentions that he will "protect" Mehmet's sister while Mehmet is in jail. Bergerac tells RAID officers that she shot Sébastien. While we read Bergerac as of 'French origin' throughout these events, we—along with her students—are shocked to learn, within the last fifteen minutes of the film, that she had an Islamic upbringing [Figure 64]. As such, she has been successfully passing as "Franco-French." As she speaks to her father (Benhaïssa Ahouari) on the phone, her mother (Malika Kadri) sitting next to him, he sings in Algerian Arabic to her. She briefly replies in this language. When she hangs up, one of her students asks, "Why didn't you tell us you were—" and Bergerac

⁴ After the film's release, the group *Ni Pute Ni Soumises* (Neither Whores Nor Submissives) called for a Skirt Day to be held on November 25, 2010. Since then, numerous Skirt Days have been organized by high school students, some of them encouraging boys to also come to school in skirts.

interjects, firmly stating “*Prof de français*,” highlighting her belief in *laïcité* as the ultimate equalizer. Despite Labouret’s attempts to bring Bergerac to safety, RAID forces pretending to be journalists kill her at the end of the film and three female Arab-French students wear skirts to her funeral.

While *La Journée de la jupe* contains a profound nationalist undercurrent, I reveal how it usefully portrays the current tensions between universalist nationalism and cultural pluralism. It drives these tensions to the point of explosion, inspiring us to reflect on pertinent social issues such as assimilation and Islamophobia via its polemical dialogue and shocking story. I show how the film is attentive to these tensions by reproducing the paradoxes that result from attempted enforcement of universality on bodies that are anything but ‘universal’. Ultimately, *La Journée* represents the unjust social and spatial immobility of non-universal bodies and cultures.

La Journée de la jupe is an exemplar of what I call ‘*école laïque* films’ (films set in a public, and thus secular, school). By superimposing the spaces of the secular public school classroom and the theatre, *La Journée de la jupe* and its predecessor *L’Esquive* impel us to think critically about which bodies are asked to perform universal ‘Frenchness’—and thus potentially undo their transcultural identities—within postcolonial France. Via the ideologies of Republican universalism and *laïcité*, the French government expects children and adults alike to assimilate—rather than merely acculturate or integrate—into the French culture and language, thereby erasing their transcultural identities/differences. This is antithetical to an inclusive and culturally plural society. Throughout the chapter, I show how *La Journée de la jupe* opens a space for assessment and critique of universalism and *laïcité*, which act to keep REP students contained in the disadvantaged *banlieue*. In section II, “The *École Laïque* Film Genre,” I argue for the usefulness of placing films set in the public school in a genre of their own.

In section III, “Affect as Method,” I outline French film scholar Geneviève Sellier’s useful criticisms of *La Journée*. Most importantly, Sellier warns us that audiences could uncritically consume the film’s ideological message, which we could read as an iteration of femonationalism. This section presents Sellier’s “paranoid reading” of *La Journée* and offers the method of “reparative reading” (Sedgwick, “You’re So”) as an alternate way to understand the film through a transnational feminist lens. I propose that Bergerac is plagued by what Lauren Berlant calls “cruel optimism”—“the condition of maintaining an attachment to a significantly problematic object” (*Cruel Optimism* 24). Bergerac’s problematic object is *laïcité*, a particularly French version of secularism that stems from French Republican universalism, because she believes that it leads to equal opportunity for all. However, instead of freeing REP students from social barriers, the film shows us that *laïcité* works to imprison them within marginalized spaces. While Bergerac’s overwhelming faith in *laïcité* may seem to undermine its transnational feminist elements, I argue that the film does transnational feminist work by exposing *laïcité* as a form of cruel optimism.

Section IV, “Intertextual Reparation,” reads the film through intertexts to which it alludes—U.S. and French films, as well as canonical French plays—to show how *laïcité*’s demand for universalism ultimately harms many racialized students. *La Journée* consistently uncovers the tensions between universalism and its contrasting ideology, cultural pluralism. Finally, in section V, “‘Franco-French’ Sexism,” I argue that *La Journée* portrays sexism that stems directly from the hexagon, thereby implicitly critiquing the racist notion that only “‘foreign’ sexism” exists (Delphy, “*Une affaire*” 64).

II. The *École Laïque* Film Genre

As explored in the previous chapter, the ideology of French Republican universalism prescribes abstract individualism to all French citizens and, as such, there is a general fear of multiculturalism in France. In the dominant French view, multiculturalism comprises *integration* rather than *assimilation*, and it involves the negative aspects of ethnic conflict, affirmative action (placing someone's racial identity above their individual merit), social fragmentation, group identity politics, and political correctness. This current view of integration/multiculturalism stems from a long history of assimilationist discourse. Scott states,

Throughout the nineteenth and most of the twentieth century, France was a society of immigrants; it received more foreign-born people than any other Western country, including the United States. Unlike the United States, however, which, under the sign of what came to be called multiculturalism, professed accommodation of the ethnic and religious diversity of newcomers, France required its immigrants to conform to existing cultural norms. (80)

During the 1989 bicentennial celebration, “distorted depictions” of U.S. society warned French people about the dangers of multiculturalism (Scott, *Politics* 11, 23).

Throughout the history of the *école laïque* as institution, teachers have acted as “secular missionaries,” making sure students successfully transition from the private sphere of the home to the public sphere of the nation (Scott, *Politics* 99): from the particular to the universal. While socio-economic class, religion, and regional dialect and identity were the primary concerns in the late nineteenth century, the immigration of (post)colonial subjects into the *métropole* from the mid-twentieth century to today have shifted the assimilationist goals of the *école laïque*. In *Screening Integration: Recasting Maghrebi Immigration in Contemporary France*, Carrie Tarr describes a “cluster of [recent] films”—including Laurent Cantet’s *Entre les murs* (*The Class*, France, 2008), Kechiche’s *L’Esquive*, and Eric Rochant’s *L’École pour tous* (France, 2006)—

which “builds on a series of representations of the school in French cinema that engage with contemporary anxieties about the problematic role of the French education system and its ability to delivery equality, and by extension integration [assimilation], in a postcolonial, multicultural France” (“Class Acts” 127).

Expanding on Tarr’s work, this chapter proposes the utility of discussing films that are set in public, and thus secular, schools as a genre of their own, closely linked to both *beur* and *banlieue* films. The genre characteristics that are most significant to *école laïque* films are setting, characters, themes, iconography, and clothing. Mise-en-scene and other formal elements matter less to these films as a group since they intersect with various other genres in addition to *beur* and *banlieue* films, including social realism (*Le Thé au harem d’Archimède*, *Entre les murs*), melodrama (*L’Esquive*, *Mariam*), hostage and *policier* (*La Journée de la jupe*), comedy (*Le Plus beau métier du monde*, *L’École pour tous*), art house and thriller (*Caché*).

In terms of iconography, beginning with *Le Thé au harem* in 1985, most *école laïque* films (like *banlieue* films) allude to U.S. culture within a space that is already permeated by French and Maghrebi cultures. As Alec Hargreaves explains, U.S. popular culture has dominated the “globally circulating cultural flow” of media for decades in France, heavily influencing the young people of minority ethnic groups, as well as dominant French youth, in terms of language, clothing, music (e.g. rap, hip hop, and reggae), street art, and tagging:

[E]ven when the action takes place entirely in the physically closed space of the ‘banlieues’, the films set in this milieu need also to be seen as located in wider, global spaces. Moreover, in their cinematic practices filmmakers raised in this milieu are often influenced by American models and from a very early stage North America has featured as a real or imagined location in some their most significant films. (“From ‘Ghettos’” 28)

We see this mixture of cultures and the tensions they produce play out in *école laïque* films as

well, and especially within the space of the classroom, as we will see in *La Journée* and *L'Esquive*. Like *banlieue* films, post-1985 *école laïque* films contain the French backslang *verlan* (e.g. *femme* becomes *meuf*, *Arabe* becomes *beur* and then *rebeu*) in addition to a mixture of Arabic and French languages.

A number of conventions render the *école laïque* film a more specific genre than the *banlieue* or *beur* film genres. All *école laïque* films are set, or contain integral scenes, in public schools, a setting that inevitably underlines the pedagogical aspect of their narratives. As such, students and teachers are important characters in *école laïque* films, the teacher often represented as 'civilizing' the transcultural students by teaching them canonical French and European literature (e.g. Molière in *L'École pour tous* and *La Journée*; Marivaux in *L'Esquive*; *The Diary of Anne Frank* in *Entre les murs*). Many *école laïque* films are set within REPs and, because the majority of REPs are in the *banlieue*, most *école laïque* films are set there. One notable exception is *Entre les murs*, a film set in a REP (Collège Françoise Dolto) in the twentieth arrondissement, just inside the *péripherique* highway. Key *école laïque* films set in the *banlieue* include Algerian-French director Mehdi Charef's classic *beur* film *Le Thé au harem d'Archimède* (*Tea in the Harem*, France, 1985), Faiza Ambah's *Mariam* (France/Saudia Arabia/U.S./United Arab Emirates, 2015), and the comedies *Le Plus beau métier du monde* (Gérard Lauzier, France, 1997) and *L'École pour tous* (Eric Rochant, France, 2006).

Most importantly, regarding theme, *école laïque* films highlight the secular public school as an ideologically charged space meant to assimilate children of diverse backgrounds into universal French citizens. Early school films, produced before the visible ethnic diversification of France, focus less on resistance to *laïcité* and more on class, regional, and language

difference.⁵ For example, Jean Vigo's *Zéro de conduite* (*Zero for Behavior*, France, 1928) reveals students' rebellious attitudes toward their teachers and administrator's attempts to instill cosmopolitan ('high' class) words, gestures, and actions within the students via the adults' penchant for disciplining and punishing them. François Truffaut's *Les 400 coups* (*The 400 Blows*, France, 1959) continues this critique of the school as a space for class assimilation by alluding to Vigo's film and allowing Antoine Doinel (Jean-Pierre Léaud) to rebel not only against his teacher, but also against reformatory administrators.

As immigration from the colonies and former colonies increased in the post-war era, the idea of instilling cosmopolitan 'Frenchness' in students remained, yet it took on new meanings: in addition to emptying rural and working-class students of low-class signifiers, teachers and administrators began forcing students to remove signs of (extra-hexagonal) transcultural experience and identity, the most glaring of which is the Islamic headscarf. In 2003, President Jacques Chirac set up the Stasi commission, named after the head of the commission Bernard Stasi, to gauge how well *laïcité* was working in secondary public schools. While *laïcité* is *theoretically* an equal opportunity anti-religious secularism, the commission's report ended up pitting France against Islam and took assimilation "to be a prerequisite for education, rather than its outcome"; Scott argues that "Jules Ferry's vision of the school as the crucible of citizenship, the space of transition from private to public, from family and community to nation, was replaced; the school now became a miniature version of the nation, conceived as a collection of abstract individuals who were shorn of any identity other than their French citizenship" (*Politics* 102-3).

⁵ For a detailed account of how the French Republic, and the central Parisian government in particular, 'colonized' the provinces by attempting to erase regional identity and language (e.g. Breton) from 1870-1914, see Weber.

As such, *école laïque* films are attentive to power asymmetries. Post-1985 *école laïque* films highlight themes such as neocolonialism, institutionalized and daily Islamophobia and racism, as well as intersectional oppressions—social justice issues that stem from patriarchal, colonial, and imperial power relations. These films reveal that certain ‘marked’ students are unjustly contained in marginalized spaces such as the ‘ghetto’ of the *banlieue* and the REP school. As I discussed in Chapter Two, the REP student’s résumé is marked by its ‘inferior’ location, significantly lowering her/his chances for upward mobility (Scott, *Politics* 110). By concentrating on a microcosm of the postcolonial French nation—the global within the local—*école laïque* films underline social and spatial (im)mobility and the institutionalized suppression of minority cultures within France.

III. Affect as Method

[*La Journée de la jupe*] opens on a swarm of insults thrown among young people *issus de l'immigration* [of immigrant origin]. The majority of these middle school students are *issus de minorités visibles* [visible minorities] and they all seem like delinquents. The clichés are so often repeated that they should irritate us. However, the director Jean-Paul Lilienfeld pushes on them *to show the rage that springs directly from racism*. (L.G., my emphasis)

In her chapter in *Screening Integration*, entitled “Don’t Touch the White Woman: *La Journée de la jupe* or Feminism at the Service of Islamophobia,” Sellier does a reception-based study of how the film promotes institutionalized feminism at the expense of religious freedom and the right of boys of color *not* to be repeatedly represented as inherently violent and sexist. In short, Sellier implies that the film uses a “nationalist feminism” (Moser) to naturalize a racist agenda.⁶ Sellier’s chapter carefully examines gender, race, and class “as concepts that [...] circulate and work in different and linked ways in different places and times” (Grewal and Kaplan, “Postcolonial Studies” 9)—in this case, within the specific context of the postcolonial Parisian *banlieue* in 2009. Sellier therefore does a ‘transnational feminist’ analysis of *La Journée de la jupe* (even though she does not call it such⁷), considering histories of imperialism and colonialism, ongoing asymmetrical power relations, and intersectional identities and oppressions. In doing so, she usefully examines the potential racist-Islamophobic implications of the film.

In line with other *banlieue* films that pay homage to the social upheaval and political rebellion of May ’68, *La Journée de la jupe* turns the *usine occupée*—a factory occupied by

⁶ As Delphy puts it in her reaction to the larger context of feminists who were for the headscarf ban in public schools: “I understood that the feminist movement had been manipulated” (*Separate* 31). Mack echoes the title of Sellier’s article: “When virility is isolated to sexual violence and hardness, cut off from any affective or socializing function, all that it can signify is criminality, streamlined into ideal fodder for political scapegoating” (28).

⁷ Importantly, Sellier does cite Guénif-Souilamas and Macé.

striking workers who take ownership over the goods—into a *salle de classe occupée*, wherein the teacher is depicted as the victim who must occupy her classroom and take control of her students. Sellier critiques this representation because it can lead to dangerous stereotypes that uphold structural racism, daily discrimination, and violence against people of color. She summarizes her concerns in her conclusion:

La Journée de la jupe effectively reactivates the fears of the ‘cultured’ middle class (Arte’s audience) for whom the social ladder has ceased to function, and who fear being swallowed up by the (lower) social strata of immigrant origins. At the same time it diverts the question of inequalities between men and women—an area in which France lags behind relative to her European neighbors as much on a political level as on the level of salaries and the distribution of tasks—toward the questions of cultural difference. By focusing on cultural difference, the telefilm is then able to stigmatize Muslim communities as the primary element responsible for the discrimination against women. (155)

We should necessarily heed Sellier’s important warning, especially since *La Journée de la jupe* offers closure via its conventional ending: Bergerac is buried while surrounded by skirt-laden Muslim-French girls who have finally ‘learned the value of *laïcité*’ from their martyred teacher. As such, the film seems to uphold “values positively propounded in dominant cinema’s characterization of the role and nature of social institutions” (Klinger 100)—in this case, the value of *laïcité*, the role of the secondary school teacher as secular missionary, and the role of the public/secular school in helping students to assimilate.

In these ways, Bergerac and the film believe that the French government can and should ‘save’ Muslim-French students, falling in line with Fadela Amara’s discourse in her book *Ni Putes Ni Soumises* (Neither Whores Nor Submissives), named after the organization she started

in 2002. As *Secrétaire d'état chargé de la politique de la ville*⁸ of Nicholas Sarkozy's center-right government (2007-2010), Sellier maintains that Amara "has been crowned the new face of state feminism by the Right, which only cares to denounce the violence of young Arab men and the wearing of the Islamic headscarf by girls who are inevitably oppressed" ("Don't Touch" 158).

While Sellier brings up significant points regarding what *La Journée* does wrong when we look at it through a transnational feminist lens, she has not addressed significant details within the filmic text itself. Following Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's method of reparative reading, I nuance Sellier's paranoid reading of the film by illustrating how it is doing transnational feminist work. Sedgwick explains that, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Paul Ricoeur's "hermeneutics of suspicion" led to a "paranoid imperative": the paranoid method was the only legitimate way to read a text in politicized academic fields (126). Sedgwick writes that, in repairing a text—in allowing ourselves to find moments of pleasure in it—we can extract "sustenance from the objects of a culture" that was never meant to sustain us (151).

My students often desire to extract sustenance from *La Journée de la jupe*. I have taught it in six classes, four times Film Studies courses and twice in Women's and Gender Studies courses. Many of my students have understandably sympathized with Bergerac because she has an extremely difficult time dealing with students who are behaving poorly, some even threatening her with rape. Both Scott and Sellier point out that teachers have increasingly lost their authority, especially in REP schools.⁹ In *L'École en crise au cinéma*, Daniel Serceau adds

⁸ Secretary of State in charge of urban policy

⁹ Scott writes, "Facing challenges to their authority from angry, disaffected students and parents, they not only felt a loss of control but found their professional identities destabilized. [...] Add to this cuts in government funding for education, depressed salaries, and decreased spending for social services and community centers in the *banlieues*, and the difficulties for teachers were compounding (*Politics* 113-4). Sellier adds that "the film seems to acknowledge the suffering that male and female teachers endure in the everyday exercise of a profession that has

that student aggressions against teachers are multiplying, students and parents openly contest teachers' decisions and grades with increasing violence, and the social stature of teachers is held in contempt; in sum, teachers are much less respected than they once were, due in part to "a society that interprets money as the only real value" (7-8). With this context in mind, it is not necessarily Bergerac who my students have a problem with but, rather, the system. This system, which includes structural racism and sexism, drives her to desperation. My students are often eager to discuss the following question: is it inherently racist that Bergerac pleads with the students to "give meaning to [their] parents' sacrifice" of leaving their homeland for a new nation? Sellier contends that

This monologue reactivates the meritocratic discourse of the republican education model based on an ostensible notion of equal opportunity, which ignores the importance of social structures, the dysfunction of school, and the symbolic violence that it exerts. It places the responsibility for the 'problems' that their integration poses on the immigrants themselves. ("Don't Touch" 154)

Yet, many of my students have said that Bergerac's plea is understandable if we consider her social location and her well-intentioned investment in the students' lives. Here, Berlant's concept of cruel optimism becomes useful for our reparative, transnational feminist reading of the film: it allows us to sympathize with Bergerac while simultaneously critiquing her ideas and methods. That is, while she honestly believes that *laïcité* will save her students, she fails to see that *laïcité* is unattainable for most of her students—and that the ideal itself often acts as a cover for the scapegoating of Muslims.

Bergerac's attachment to *laïcité* is ultimately destructive to her students (and to herself—

lost all of its social prestige, including in the eyes of the students" ("Don't Touch" 152).

she dies for it). She believes that the only way she can occupy her students' thoughts and change their minds is by putting a gun to their heads—this, of course, is where my students disagree with her, if we take the film's narrative literally. I offer my students a metaphorical reading of the film. Desiring to open their minds, help them to respect each other, and do her duty as secular missionary of shaping productive citizens of France, Bergerac creates and directs a play of her own, which deals with similar themes to the Molière play that the students are rehearsing for class. What occurs in the theatre-classroom during this 'play' illustrates that Bergerac is bound "to fantasies that block the satisfactions they offer" (Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* 51). Again and again, she proves that she is philosophically and emotionally bound to the fantasy of *laïcité*, which ultimately works to block the satisfactions of equal opportunity and social mobility for her students. Indeed, the film exposes the contradictions inherent to universalism and *laïcité* via its allusions to films and plays that are similar to it in terms of theme and via its highlighting the theme of performance.

IV. Intertextual Reparation

A. French Intertexts

[The racialized difference of European people of color] permanently bars them from full membership, paradoxically ascribing to them a nomadic status while simultaneously drastically reducing their mobility. (El-Tayeb 22)

Behind the power of the gun, Bergerac is finally able to make an Arab-French student, Farid (Karim Zakraoui), take off his hat, which he claims is “religious.” She proclaims: “But this is a public [and thus secular] school!” Farid replies, “What about Christmas holidays? [...] That’s Christian!” Bergerac’s demand for a skirt day points to the hypocrisy of French Republican universalism, which Farid’s astute comment highlights: in theory, *laïcité* would allow girls to wear skirts without being subjected to sexism (because skirts are not usually viewed as religiously affiliated—unless a Muslim girl is wearing one), but *laïcité* would *not* allow headscarves in public schools. It has not in practice since the French government passed the 2004 law.

In *La Journée de la jupe*, the REP school becomes a symbol of the ultimate containment of youth in the *banlieue*. Because of her belief in *laïcité*, which cruelly promises a path toward equality and potential social mobility, Bergerac contains her students in the theatre-classroom with deadbolts and the threat of violence. Despite an implied long-term suffering on her part due to her students’ misbehavior, she locks them up only when she holds a particularly U.S.-inflected weapon, a gun. This entrapment within the classroom acts as a metaphor for the students’ lack of social mobility. Because they are *banlieusards*, their chances of moving up the social ladder are much slimmer than those of an adolescent who lives in central Paris. Moreover, REP students can never truly escape their ‘difficult neighborhood’ because their résumé will always mark them

as having come from it. Bergerac appears ignorant of this important marker. Tarr explains, as Pierre Bourdieu (*Distinction, Homo Academicus*) has shown, that “the system serves rather to reproduce the dominant culture, one that requires those who wish to be French citizens to distance themselves from the language and culture of their country of origin” (“Class Acts” 128).

To distance oneself from a culture often requires performing elements of another culture to successfully ‘pass’. *La Journée de la jupe* stresses the theme of performance in various ways: it is set in a school theatre; it highlights the performance of a canonical French play that contains the theme of socio-economic class performativity, Molière’s *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* (*The Middle-Class Aristocrat*, 1670); the characters enact gender expressions and actions they have seen in U.S. films; and Bergerac forces the students to repeat certain phrases as if memorizing them for a future play—their yet-to-be assimilated life in France, perhaps. In “Marivaux in the Suburbs: Reframing Language in Kechiche’s *L’Esquive*,” Vinay Swamy explains,

Several [*beur* and *banlieue*] films—ranging from *Le Thé au harem d’Archimède* [...] to [...] Kassovitz’ *La haine* [1995]—have attempted to foster a critical debate about the status of both immigrant and other such socio-economically marginalized communities by *staging a dramatic, if sometimes violent, opposition between the so-called high (read canonized) culture and low or popular culture* that supposedly characterizes the French. In so doing, many of these films call into question the success of the French model of integration [assimilation], which privileges belonging to the nation while downplaying, if not turning a blind eye to, the import of ethnic or community-centred constructions of social identity. Consequently, they highlight the extent to which socio-political and ideological factors have a hand in marginalizing these individuals. (58, my emphasis)

La Journée de la jupe follows in this line of *banlieue* films by staging a dramatic opposition between French ‘high’ cultural intertexts, such as the Molière play, and U.S. popular culture intertexts and iconography—including a gun and *The Negotiator* (F. Gary Gray, U.S., 1998)—

which signify U.S. cultural imperialism.

La Journée de la jupe implicitly critiques U.S. cultural imperialism in France by embedding ‘low’ cultural productions from the U.S. within the film, while its French cultural intertexts are derived largely from ‘high’ culture. Molière’s play, *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* (an oxymoronic title), is about a man who is bourgeois (a *burger* or a member of the mercantile class, comparable to modern day middle-class status) who dreams of ascending the social ladder. He attempts to do so by wearing the clothes of a *gentilhomme* (a nobleman or aristocrat) and learning about culturally prestigious topics, such as philosophy and the arts. His wife and friends find his clumsy impersonations of aristocracy foolish. Meanwhile, his daughter Lucile is in love with a middle-class man, Cléonte, who reciprocates her love, but Monsieur Jourdain is against their marriage due to Cléonte’s socio-economic class (which, ironically, is the same as Monsieur Jourdain’s actual class). The play thus highlights the performative aspects of social class—including wearing expensive-looking clothing, speaking ‘high’ language, and spouting pretentious knowledge—even while poking fun at Monsieur Jourdain’s ‘silly’ ways of attempting to climb his society’s social hierarchy.

One of Sellier’s main problems with *La Journée de la jupe* is that Bergerac violently forces her students to learn about Molière: “She finishes by contenting herself with making them say the ‘true name’ of the author, Molière, under the threat of a handgun!” (147). Although understandably angry at Bergerac’s threat, Sellier seems to have missed an important intertextual point, failing to mention Molière’s “real name.” Bergerac teaches the students that Molière’s birth name was Jean-Baptiste Poquelin—a name that Jahwad (Arié Elmaleh) also mentions to his students in Rochant’s *école laïque* comedy *L’École pour tous*.¹⁰ As Bergerac makes clear to her

¹⁰ In fact, in Rochant’s comedy, Jahwad’s multicultural REP students learn Molière’s *Le médecin malgré lui* (*A*

students, Molière changed his name from Poquelin to Molière to protect his family's reputation. Molière was an actor, a profession that was often viewed as beneath the values of the middle-class during his time. While no longer vilified by the state under Louis XIV, actors were still not allowed to be buried in sacred ground. This societal view of actors remained through the revolution of 1789: "Actors and executioners both exercised professions that were considered 'infamous'; actors took someone else's role on the stage and were reputed to be immoral in their behavior [...] As a consequence, neither actors nor executioners could vote or hold local offices before 1789, and they were often shunned" (Hunt, *French Revolution* 84). Jean-Baptiste's father was the king's valet and upholsterer—a bourgeois post for which one paid—which meant he was of a moderately high socio-economic class, and Jean-Baptiste took over this post in 1641. Thus, even *Molière* was forced to change his name when he abandoned his social class for an acting career for the purposes of allowing his family to remain in a higher class.

This can be contrasted to Bergerac's experience; we can assume that she took her husband's last name (a popular practice in European and North American patriarchal cultures) and gave up her Arabic last name, which allowed her to climb the social ladder. Bergerac highlights Molière's name change to teach her students that, if they look closely, they will find inequalities and transgressions even within canonical (white and male) French culture. Thus, in addition to using his text, the *author* Molière becomes an important intertext with which to teach the students: his protection of his family's social class becomes a key point for Bergerac in her quest to teach her students that performing identity—whether performing French 'high' culture, U.S. popular culture, *laïcité*, or simply changing one's name—is sometimes a productive way to achieve access to social mobility.

Doctor in Spite of Himself—a high cultural text—"by heart in order to make fun of him" (Tarr, "Class Acts" 136).

The film therefore utilizes Molière’s text in a way that aligns normative Frenchness (e.g. French language and ‘high’ culture) with REP students. That is, whether *we* think assimilation is an ideal path, the film’s heroine believes that her non-white and non-Christian students have the potential to be as ‘French’ as Molière. Bergerac, whose married last name comes from the canonical French text *Cyrano de Bergerac*, uses Molière’s words and autobiography to woo her students into assimilation, belief in *laïcité*, and respect for each other. As she pronounces her plan to teach a “good class” on Molière, we see the following in a close-up shot: the gun covers and protects Molière’s play (her ‘Frenchness’) and Bergerac’s private parts at once. This visually communicates the teacher’s belief that teaching canonical Frenchness to the students will simultaneously teach them *laïcité* and respect for women—beliefs that she thinks are causally connected. A medium shot displays her self-assured gaze upon the students. Her confidence reveals her cruel optimism—her belief in the equalizing effects of *laïcité* [Figures 65-66].

She is insistent upon the students learning dominant Frenchness through their heartfelt recitation of the Molière play so that they have this opportunity to assimilate, as she did when she took her husband’s last name. This is precisely why Bergerac’s emotion comes to its height during this scene of the film: we see her crouch down to Mouss’ level on the ground, pointing the gun at his head and screaming, “*Quel était le vrai nom de Molière?!?*” (What was Molière’s real name?!). Her face reddens, and her voice hits hard on the final R in the playwright’s name [Figure 67]. In the counter shot, Nawel, Khadija (Mélèze Bouzid) and Farida are speechless as they watch their teacher threaten their classmate [Figure 68]. Bergerac tells the students this narrative about Molière’s name change—and urges them to memorize “Poquelin”—so that they remember that even *Molière* had to leave his family name behind because his family was ashamed of his low-status acting career. This pivotal scene exemplifies my metaphorical reading

of *La Journée*—that the film represents the *école laïque* as a carceral space. That is, however well-intentioned many teachers are in their commitment to teaching students canonical French culture and the values of *laïcité*, *La Journée* reveals that French institutions *violently* enforce *laïcité* as a supposed gateway to acceptance in French society and social mobility.

The interconnected themes of social mobility and assimilation are also prevalent in Marivaux's *Le Jeu de l'amour et du hasard* (*Games of Love and Chance*, 1730), which students rehearse in Tunisian-born Kechiche's *L'Esquive*, a critically successful¹¹ *beur*, *banlieue*, and *école laïque* film released four years before *La Journée de la jupe*. Marivaux' play is about two master/servant pairs who swap identities by performing socio-economic class. Silvia is a young woman of the Parisian *grande bourgeoisie* (nobility) who speaks worriedly to her *confidente* and *femme de chambre* (maid), Lisette, about her arranged marriage of convenience to the noble Dorante, whom Silvia has yet to meet. Silvia gets permission from her father to switch identities with Lisette so that she can take a closer look at Dorante. Meanwhile, Dorante had already decided to swap identities with his *valet* (man's servant), Arlequin, so that he can assess Silvia. Neither of the pairs knows that the other pair has swapped identities. Only the working-class characters speak to each other during the play (thinking that the person to whom s/he is talking is upper class), and only the noble characters speak to each other (thinking that the person to whom s/he is talking is lower-class) (Casalis 12-13). Arlequin and Lisette, still in their upper-class identities, fall in love—even if Lisette's love comes in part from her desire to climb the social ladder (Casalis 21). Despite Lisette's desire for upward mobility via marriage, when she discovers the truth of Arlequin's socio-economic status, they remain together. The play ends as they make a humorous moment out of their lack of social and economic capital: "*Monsieur, je*

¹¹ For example, the film won four César awards.

suis votre servante,” Lisette says to Arlequin, while he replies: “*Et moi votre valet madame. (Riant) Ah! Ah! Ah!*”¹² (Marivaux 112).

Kechiche’s film *L’Esquive* focuses on a group of multicultural adolescents who live in the Parisian *banlieue cit * of Les Francs-Moisins in Seine-Saint-Denis. The students rehearse for a year-end performance of Marivaux’s play while Krime (Osman Elkharraz), an Arab-French teenager, tries to win the heart of his white-French friend, Lydia (Sara Forestier).¹³ He bribes another friend, Rachid (Rachid Hami), to give up his role of Arlequin so that Krime can become Lydia’s on-stage love interest, thereby setting up “a parallel between the play’s plot, in which Arlequin woos Lisette, and that of the film” (Swamy 59). Krime’s ‘stealing’ of Rachid’s (and Arlequin’s) words reminds the audience of Edmond Rostand’s famous play, *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1897), from which Sonia Bergerac’s married name comes in *La Journ e de la jupe*. In her chapter on *L’Esquive*, Tarr points out that the juxtaposition of Marivaux’ discourse with “repetitive torrents of *verlan*, Arabisms, neologisms and insults [...] highlights that in both types of language, speech functions in a similar way: both are performative and theatrical, and, crucially, both demonstrate that there is a difference between what is said and what is meant”—and that both types of language are valid (“Reassessing” 136).¹⁴ Similarly, Swamy shows how Kechiche “adroitly weav[es]” the Marivaux play’s dialogue into the film’s narrative, revealing that one’s language is bound to one’s social location and identity: “Kechiche’s choice of Marivaux is crucial to his critique of the French model of integration [assimilation], for [his play] articulates a discourse which posits the essential nature of social positions” (58, 62). Echoing the

¹² Monsieur, I am your servant; And, I, your valet, Madame (Laughing).

¹³ As Sellier points out, “the seduction that Lydia/Sara Forestier exercises in the film’s story, as on the screen, is strongly tied to her blondness and the ease with which she embodies high culture” (“L’ cole” 56).

¹⁴ For more on the workings of language (and especially *verlan*) in *L’Esquive* and *Entre les murs*, see Strand.

discourse of the Marivaux play, as well as Pierre Bourdieu's theories on social mobility,¹⁵ the French teacher in *L'Esquive* (Carole Franck¹⁶) explains to the students:

We are completely prisoners of our social condition. When one is rich for twenty years or poor for twenty years, one can always dress up in rags if one is rich, in couture clothing if one is poor, but we cannot get rid of a certain language, a certain type of conversation, a particular form of expression, the way we behave, all of which indicate from where we come.

The film follows this logic by *not* allowing Krimo to be a good—or even adequate—actor in the play, thus representing his inability to perform dominant 'Frenchness'.¹⁷ As Sellier writes, "the film shows that this *école républicaine* fabricates excluded students, those who are unable to enact Marivaux" ("L'École" 57).

The character of Arlequin is supposed to perform nobility with a confidence that exudes "caricature" (Casalis 13). This is precisely the excellent performance that Rachid offers in *L'Esquive*, but that Krimo lacks. Thus, while some Arab-French boys can perform 'high' French culture, others cannot. As Krimo's flat voice mumbles some lines and forgets others in front of the class (Lydia feeds him a line under her breath), a counter-shot reveals a look of disdain on the French teacher's face [Figures 69-70]. We see students who laugh awkwardly, embarrassed for Krimo, as the teacher yells at him to "enjoy himself," to "leave himself to go towards another

¹⁵ See *Distinction* and *Homo Academicus*.

¹⁶ Franck previously played a social worker at a foyer for *sans abris* (homeless people) in Kechiche's *La Faute à Voltaire* (2000).

¹⁷ Swamy writes, "the film portrays the adolescents as perfectly capable of being culturally competent"; yet, "The fact that Krimo—the one who is excluded from the celebratory [end of the school year play performance] and whose absence goes mostly unnoticed—is a young French adolescent of Maghrebi descent is not lost on the viewer" (66). Focusing her analysis on the female characters, Geesey has a different conclusion: "In Marivaux's play, ultimately the message is that social origins will win out—the nobles fall in love even disguised as servants, the same for the servants disguised as nobles. Kechiche's film subtly undermines the play's assumptions about the inescapability of social origins, as it also overturns preconceived ideas in mainstream French media that adolescents from *la banlieue* cannot escape their social conditions either" (73).

language,” and to find ways to talk and move that are not his own. We see Krimo’s (and his classmates’) embarrassment and frustration in close-ups [Figure 71].

I take further the idea that Krimo cannot perform normative Frenchness by arguing that his inability to act in a canonical Marivaux play symbolizes his inability to perform *laïcité*. I move from the term ‘performing dominant Frenchness’ to ‘performing *laïcité*’ to highlight the point that *laïcité*, while an ideology that is supposedly meant to produce social equality, often acts as a screen concept for the propagation of white, canonical (‘abstract, universal’) Frenchness. Moreover, the term ‘performing *laïcité*’ highlights the school’s important role in France’s universalizing project—its civilizing mission within the *métropole*. The mise-en-scene of the end-of-the-year performance underlines these aspects when we see the white-French teacher backstage reading along with the Marivaux play, prepared to feed lines to the REP students. This shot highlights the secondary school teacher’s role as the French Republic’s agent of assimilation [Figure 72]. The successful performance that we see on stage from Frida (Sabrina Ouazani) “overturns the preconceived notion that young Maghrebi-French women are victims of oppression” (Geesey 173) [Figure 73].¹⁸ While this is important, the film also shows us that it is sometimes easier for girls and women of Arab origin to assimilate in France because—if they are not wearing the Islamic headscarf and otherwise performing ‘proper’ femininity—they do not pose the same perceived threat as boys and men of Arab origins, who are associated with terrorism and sexist violence.

¹⁸ Geesey writes, “The motif of adolescents from *la cité* performing classical French theater appears to have gained some currency of late. In Faïza Guène’s best-selling 2004 novel *Kiffe kiffe demain*, the narrator relates the tale of a young woman from the same *cité* who ran away from her family to pursue her desire to act on stage and has finally entered the Comédie-Française. Guène has also used this story line as the subject of her *moyen-métrage* titled *Rien que des mots* (2004). When Maghrebi-French female protagonists in film and literature perform as characters from France’s classical theatrical repertoire, it relays a message of a successful appropriation of some of France’s most esteemed cultural artifacts, symbolizing an integration that transcends boundaries of urban and cultural space” (176).

While, in theory, *laïcité* should extend ‘Frenchness’ to Muslim boys and girls—but without their religious signs—*La Journée de la jupe* and *L’Esquive* highlight the following: when a Muslim student in France is forced to leave their transcultural identity at the public school door, they are essentially made to perform *laïcité*, while other students are asked to simply be themselves. Sara Ahmed writes that privilege is an “energy saving device: less effort is required when a world has been assembled to meet your needs” (“Living”). Precisely which bodies are asked to use their energy to perform *laïcité* in the *école laïque*, and which bodies are *not* asked to do so? The bodies that already appear ‘*laïques*’—that is, of the status quo in French history, white and Christian¹⁹—need not heed the *laïcité* rule and the anti-headscarf law.²⁰ ‘Normal’ bodies, such as Lydia’s, are able to save their energy and put it towards, for example, acting well in a Marivaux play.

We might be swayed to believe that Krimo could act well but *chooses* not to if only the filmic diegesis did not lead us to believe that he *wants* to woo Lisette through Arlequin’s words. It is thus in his best interest to perform well. The tragedy of the film is that Krimo *cannot* perform *laïcité*. When Lisette tries to get Krimo to come out of his house at the end of the film, he does not, perhaps because he believes he can never be ‘French’ enough for her. *L’Esquive* does not allow him to perform *laïcité* not because of essentialist notions of race or ethnicity or gender, but due to the society in which he lives—which constructs him as unassimilable from the beginning. To add to Krimo’s difference, he is dressed in a *Comédie-italien* costume when he plays Arlequin: “Arlequin’s presence penetrates the bourgeois comedy with the fantasy of the

¹⁹ Paradoxically, the Revolution of 1789 and the Ferry laws desired to take away Catholic control, viewed as an enemy of the Republic and allied to monarchists. See Scott, *Politics* 99.

²⁰ Some critics may point out that *any* “conspicuous” (a word of which the meaning is contested) sign falls under this law and may not be shown on the body. However, small crosses are allowed and, as many scholars show, there are complex sexist and racist reasons behind the making and passing of this law: in effect, *the law was made to prohibit the headscarf*. See Scott (*Politics*) and Bouamama.

commedia dell'arte" (Casalis 22). When performed at the *Comédie-française*, the character of Arlequin does not normally wear the Italian costume; it is only when performed by the *comédiens-italiens* that he wears his colorful and clown-like *losange* costume. Krimo's clothing thus marks him as a foreigner even in the Marivaux play, rendering him doubly marginal [Figure 74].

Conversely, before the gun appears in *La Journée de la jupe*, Nawel chooses not to perform *laïcité*: she refuses to get up on the stage or even move at all ("*je bouge pas; je bouge pas, Madame*"—I'm not moving; I'm not moving, Madame). She knows the lines of the play but reads them without emotion, speaking them all in the same intonation [Figure 75]. She knows the words (the theory, the facts) but refuses to enact them, refuses to put them into practice. This refusal to embody a canonical French character again works as a productive metaphor for the student's refusal to perform universal 'Frenchness', to enact *laïcité*. After this, Bergerac asks Mehmet to choose a friend with whom to perform a scene on stage. Because of their quietness, Bergerac must keep telling them to speak louder, symbolizing again a refusal or inability to confidently embody canonical Frenchness, and *laïcité*, via Molière's words [Figure 76]. The unsuccessful nature of Bergerac's attempt to make her students perform *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* shows us the *banlieue* students' unwillingness to embody French 'high' culture and their repudiation of universalism.

Returning to *L'Esquive*, this film shows us that even white adolescents who *associate* themselves with adolescents of color are treated poorly by the state. The students never go to Paris to reveal the low culture/high culture divide, as many characters in *banlieue* films do. Rather, most of the time we see the *L'Esquive* students walk, talk, and rehearse the play—all of which occurs mainly outside. When they gain apparent freedom by driving a car—a symbol of

economic capital and social mobility in France since the postwar era (Ross, *Fast Cars*)—police stop and frisk them. One officer leafs through Frida’s copy of the Marivaux play, presumably looking for drugs or stolen money, and then hits her with it. This is a powerful symbol of the students’ inability to *legitimately* perform ‘Frenchness’; no matter how hard they try, no matter how perfectly they can memorize the words of the Marivaux play and embody its characters (as Frida does), they will never be accepted by mainstream French society. As Tarr writes, this “brutal confrontation with the police [...] is an important reminder of the power of the state and the institutionalized racism of the police, which keeps these adolescents where they belong, away from the city centre and the life of the nation, and which drives the sort of protests which took place in France in October/November 2005” (“Reassessing” 137).

La Journée de la jupe takes this theme of *banlieue* containment and immobility a step further by metaphorizing the theatre-classroom in which the students are made to perform *laïcité*: it becomes a prison, linking it to an early *école laïque* film, *Les 400 coups*. Anne Gillain asserts, “By setting its opening scene in a classroom, Truffaut immediately denounces the failure of an institution designed to facilitate the child’s adaptation to social reality”; Antoine is “punished and isolated in a corner, which is the first representation of a carceral space [in the film]” (146). *La Journée* continues Truffaut’s representation of the school as prison. Moreover, by superimposing the public school and the theatre, *école laïque* films such as *La Journée* and *L’Esquive* impel us to reflect on which students are unable to assimilate in contemporary France under the cruel promises that *laïcité* makes. These two films, along with *Mariam* as we will see, point to the hypocrisy inherent to French Republican universalism by revealing that some bodies are forced to perform *laïcité* (literally at gunpoint in *La Journée*), while more privileged bodies are not. As these *école laïque* films illustrate, the bodies and names of some remain marked and,

thus, unable to appear universal, since the ‘universal’ is not actually so, but white and of Christian background.

B. Language as Intertext

The scene of the play that Bergerac asks the students to perform reaffirms the film’s theme of performativity and points out that Arabic languages have long been part of French culture. In Act IV, Scene III of *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*, Cléonte’s *valet*, Covielle, disguises himself as a nobleman so that he can tell Monsieur Jourdain that the man who is in love with his daughter (Cléonte) is the son of the *Grand Turc*. More importantly, their marriage would make Monsieur Jourdain the father-in-law of the King of Turkey, a prospect about which Jourdain is thrilled. Not only does this intertextual *valet*-as-nobleman disguise echo that within *L’Esquive* (via Marivaux’s play), but this scene also underlines language’s ability to fluidly cross national borders. At the time of Molière’s play, Ottoman Turkish was spoken, which drew heavily on Persian and Arabic vocabulary.²¹ In trying to sway Monsieur Jourdain to accept the “*Grand Turc*’s” proposal to his daughter, Covielle speaks some (albeit largely fake) Ottoman Turkish,²² sparking Jourdain to reply: “*Voilà une langue admirable que ce turc!*” (What an admirable language this Turkish is!) (94). Partly constructed by Molière, and borrowing from Rotrou’s *La Soeur*, the peppering of Ottoman Turkish into Classical French dialogue is a prime example of plurilingualism in canonical French cultural production.

In “Intergenerational Verbal Conflicts, Plurilingualism and *Banlieue* Cinema,” Cristina Johnston examines intergenerational verbal conflicts in Thomas Gilou’s gang film *Rai* (1995),

²¹ This is in contradistinction to contemporary Istanbul Turkish, which is more closely related to Hungarian.

²² “*Acciam croc soler ouch alla moustaphgidelum amanahem varahini oussere carbulath*” and “*Marababa sahem*” (94).

arguing that the plurilingual framework—the mixture of French language and dialectic forms of Arabic—helps reveal the construction of complex identities in contemporary France. Johnston argues that many *banlieue* films indicate a “far more pluralist reality than the republican model is yet ready to admit” (91). The plurilingualism both within and just beneath the narrative of *La Journée de la jupe* falls in line with Johnston’s argument. From today’s perspective, a reader of Molière’s play who is ignorant of Ottoman Turkish might guess that the non-French language spoken is a form of Arabic. The Turkish language has gone through extreme transformations throughout history—just as *banlieue* films whose characters use *verlan* reveal that the French language has gone through enormous changes. While Ottoman Turkish was the formal language in Turkey for centuries, the common people were largely illiterate in it and spoke “coarse Turkish,” which had fewer loan words and led to today’s contemporary spoken Turkish (Glenny 99). The film, in its naming of this precise scene of the play (even if the film’s characters do not speak Ottoman Turkish), hints not only that language is fluid and changing, but also that Arabic languages had a large influence on French culture at certain periods in history.²³ Moreover, this specific scene in Molière’s play underlines the fact that ‘foreign’ and ‘Eastern’ nations were at one point held in high esteem. This scene therefore points to the (often repressed) fact that the transcultural is already embedded in canonical French culture.

Bergerac’s faith in *laïcité* seemingly blinds her to transcultural France. Even when Bergerac speaks an Arabic word to her students, she does so to symbolically punish them. She finishes her explanation of Molière’s name change to Poquelin by saying, “*C’est l’archouma, ça vous comprenez le mot*” (It’s shame—you understand *that* word), splicing an Algerian Arabic²⁴

²³ In *Le plus beau métier du monde*, the teacher (Gérard Depardieu) highlights the historical importance and influence of Arabic culture in class.

²⁴ For the use of Arabic in films made by Arab-French directors, see Hargreaves and Kealhofer.

word for “shame” in her otherwise French sentence [Figure 77]. When she says that the students understand “shame,” she implies that they understand both the Algerian dialect word (derived from Berber) for shame,²⁵ and the experience of living with (racial, class, and religious) shame as postcolonial subjects in France. Her cruel optimism convinces her that, if only her students would adopt universalist principles, they might release this shame and obtain the potential to succeed.

C. U.S. Intertexts

La Journée de la jupe partners the fashionable theme of education with a very Anglo-Saxon catastrophe. (Barnett)

At the beginning of the *La Journée de la jupe*, U.S. intertexts and icons are much more aligned with the teenage students than with adults. Throughout the film, we see these associations shift, revealing that aspects of U.S. culture—such as gun culture, celebrity culture, and U.S.-inflected toxic masculinity—have influenced the Parisian *banlieue* not only through the young students, but also through authority figures such as Bergerac and Lieutenant Labouret. Sellier maintains that Bergerac is a descendant of U.S. action film heroines who must use a gun in order to hold violent men at bay (“Don’t Touch” 150). This, along with film’s other various allusions to U.S. pop culture, highlights the element of performance that pervades *La Journée*. The gun acts as a symbol of U.S. cultural imperialism in that it refers to actual U.S. gun culture, and especially school shootings, as well as their representation in U.S. cinema via films such as Michael Moore’s *Bowling for Columbine* (U.S., Canada, Germany, 2002) and Gus Van Sant’s *Elephant* (U.S., 2003)—both of which were inspired by the Columbine High School shootings of 1999.

²⁵ The Arabic word for shame is *hachuma*.

The gun also acts as an ambivalent symbol of U.S. cinema genres, such as the Western, film noir, gangster film, and police and hostage thrillers. In the tradition of the western and film noir especially, the gun acts as a phallic symbol: the character that holds the gun also holds the physical and/or sexual power. Thus, when Bergerac takes control of the gun, she simultaneously takes back control of her bodily autonomy (which is often threatened by her students).

In addition, many of the adolescent characters in *La Journée* perform U.S. ‘gangster’ or ‘hard’ masculinity, refusing to perform mainstream French masculinity or canonical ‘Frenchness’.²⁶ In *Les féministes et le garçon arabe*, sociologists Nacira Guénif-Souilamas and Eric Macé maintain that homo-affective North African practices, such as kissing on the cheek (which also occurs in dominant French society) and hand holding, have been replaced in *métropole*-born generations with a harder, more U.S. American social etiquette, which includes the ‘no homo’ handshake of minorities (68-70). Guénif-Souilamas and Macé argue that this hardening occurs because of a combination of social factors, including a ‘host society’ that the French-born generation perceives as less than welcoming, and which produces resentment (74-75; Mack 28).

Allusions to U.S. masculinity and films like *The Negotiator* make *La Journée de la jupe* self-reflexive: it knows what it is—a hostage thriller *à l’américain*. *La Journée*’s film form also mimics that of *The Negotiator*: the restless camera offers us quick cuts, shaky and intense hand-held moments, and a plethora of medium shots with close-up shots on main characters during dramatic scenes. Characters perform tasks that they learned only because they have viewed *The Negotiator*, nodding once again to the element of mimicry and performance. For example, Nawel

²⁶ This contrasts with many of the students (and especially the girls) in *L’Esquive*; even if Frida is “quick tempered” (Geesey 173), she is ultimately capable of, enthusiastic about, and extremely good at, performing dominant Frenchness via Marivaux’ play.

dislodges the camera that the RAID authorities placed beneath the stage, much like Danny Roman (Samuel L. Jackson) does in Gray's film. Later, when proving that she is comfortable as a hostage-taker, Bergerac boasts: "*Moi aussi, j'ai vu Le Negotiator!*" (*I saw The Negotiator, too!*).²⁷

The police thriller is not the only U.S. genre to which *La Journée* points. Near the beginning of the film, Bergerac asks Mehmet to choose a friend to take the stage with him. Mehmet chooses another male student (Koceila Aït-Ghezali). As they approach the stage, another male student alludes to *Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee, 2005) without mentioning the title when he says: "All you need now are the cowboy hats!" In *New Queer Cinema: The Director's Cut*, B. Ruby Rich offers a thorough discussion on how *Brokeback* became a cultural phenomenon in the U.S., its reception replete with homophobic jokes and parodies that revealed deep cultural anxieties about gay male sex: "the unprecedented coverage [...] represented a form of heterosexual panic" (194). Here we have a homophobic allusion to the film that proves an even wider cultural reach. The joke, in turn, reminds us of *L'Esquive*; as Sellier points out in her article on Kechiche's film, Rachid is "called a 'pédé' [fag]" by his male peers for successfully playing Arlequin in Marivaux' play ("L'École" 57). Sociologist Michael Kimmel writes,

Homophobia is intimately interwoven with both sexism and racism. [...] One of the centerpieces of that exaggerated masculinity is putting women down, both by excluding them from the public sphere and by the quotidian put-downs in speech and behaviors that organize the daily life of the American woman. Women and gay men become the 'other' against which heterosexual men project their identities [...] so that by suppressing them, men can stake a claim for their own manhood. (90)

We could certainly extend Kimmel's statement to the French context. In both *L'Esquive* and *La*

²⁷ To prepare for the shoot, Adjani re-watched *Dog Day Afternoon* (Sidney Lumet, 1975) (Adjani, "Le coup" 1).

Journée, male students tend to view femininity and ‘soft’ masculinity as negative, and as necessary prerequisites to being a good student. Even though the students allude to *Brokeback* in a derogatory way, this joke again portrays the tendency for *banlieue* youth to prioritize U.S. popular culture over French culture—to the annoyance of many French educational, cultural, and political leaders.

Finally, after an important teaching moment, Bergerac yells at the students, claiming that the only things they care about are money, clothing, and celebrities. This teaching moment begins when Farid uses the phrase “*sale race*” (dirty race; within this context, we could translate the slur as “Kike”). Bergerac tells him that this is “exactly the same” as using the term “*travail d’arabes*”—work done by Arab people, a pejorative term with the connotation of ‘bad’ work done by inherently ‘backwards’ people. Due to this anti-Semitic incident, Bergerac makes the students repeat, “In France, racist slurs are punishable by law,” after which a Black student mumbles under his breath, “A Kike [sic] law—we didn’t make [that law]” (a comment that refers to the Gayssot law, which forbids denying or questioning the occurrence of the Holocaust). Farid is surprised by Bergerac’s passionate stance on this issue, and—assuming Bergerac could care about anti-Semitism only if she were Jewish herself—asks, “Are you Jewish, Madame?” She responds, “I don’t have to answer that because this is an *école laïque*,” underlining her belief in *laïcité* as the single most important route to racial, religious, and gender equality. Immediately after this incident, Bergerac refers to Anglo reality television culture—made famous by shows such as *Pop Idol* (Britain, 2001-2003) and *American Idol* (U.S., 2002-2016)—when she urges the students to “dial 1” to vote for a particular student and “dial 2” to vote for another. Since neither the audience nor the students know what will happen to the student for whom they vote, Bergerac has turned a democratic form of modern entertainment into a potential nightmare—and

with visible pleasure. Smirking, she makes us wonder: will the student for whom they vote be allowed to leave the theatre-classroom, or will Bergerac shoot them?

The presence of these various U.S. intertexts in *La Journée* helps us to understand the transnational power dynamics at work in the *banlieue*. Bergerac uses a U.S.-inflected weapon to contain her students; she uses the rules of a U.S. reality show to heighten her students' fear; and she enthusiastically implies that she has learned how to successfully hold people hostage from a U.S. film. Bergerac thus uses against her students a culture with which they are obsessed, revealing how easily U.S. cultural imperialism can be co-opted by French nationalists—even those with whom we sympathize. More importantly, she inverts the meaning of American popular culture as another method to reach her students: she hopes to convince them of the value of Molière (canonical French culture) by pointing out the dangers of anti-intellectualism and violence that stem from U.S. culture.

D. Transcultural Gender

As discussed in previous chapters, Mack explains that dominant French culture perceives virilism as a regressive sexual/gender disposition that embodies old forms of patriarchy. He argues that we can view virilism as a potentially subversive gender performance because it appropriates what feminist and gay rights movements (which often exclude ethnic and religious minorities) have tended to reject as backward and 'macho'. Mack is most concerned with cultural formations such as the female gang member, Muslima 'soldiers', and *banlieue* girls/women who "adopt clothing styles and manners of speaking that the dominant society at large associates with masculine swagger" because these cultural figures "exemplify how *virility has been divorced from men and identified with immigration*" (23, my emphasis). Thus, the virile

girl/woman ‘immigrant’ is also perceived as a threat to national security, similar to the a “*garçon arabe*” (Arab boy) figure, and in contradistinction to the “*jolie beurette*” (Guénif-Souilamas, “*Française*”; “*Des beurettes*”): the pretty, intelligent, non-threatening woman of Arab-Maghrebi background who has successfully assimilated into dominant French culture and who never wears a headscarf.

Some of the teenage girls in *La Journée*, who have a habit of insulting and shoving each other, display virilism. We even see Farida strangle Nawel after the latter urges her to confess that she is a rape victim.²⁸ Mack proposes that *La Journée de la jupe*, Fabrice Genestal’s *La Squale* (*The Squaw*, France, 1999), and Céline Sciamma’s *Bande de filles* (*Girlhood*, literally *Girl Gang*, France, 2014) have been particularly useful in revealing how *banlieue* street fashion connects with female virility. In the latter two films, girl gang members earn respect in their communities by performing virility and a main character in each film goes through cycles of “butchness and effeminacy” (37). Referring to rape survivor Farida in *La Journée*, Mack criticizes the following way in which society understands virile women/girls: “butch minority women sport athletic wear to ‘veil’ an essential shame about a deeply buried femininity that can only be unearthed by secular representative of the French state” (37-38). As Nawel shows Farida her proof of the rape via a video on her cell phone, we see Farida’s virilism displayed in her all-brown tracksuit. Her virilism is highlighted by Nawel’s comparatively feminine look: although she wears baggy pants, she does not wear a tracksuit and she wears her curly hair down. Farida’s virilism is apparent even in her aggressive facial expression, especially when we compare her attitude to that of Nawel in this scene, who begins to cry [Figures 78-79]. For Mack, characters

²⁸ This confirms the tendency of white directors to paint a more negative image of *banlieusards*, as Tarr has shown throughout *Reframing Difference*.

such as Farida support the idea that *banlieusarde* female virility is simply a veiling of essential femininity in response to the sexual violence of *banlieusard* youth. Further, he maintains that virilism has much less to do with Maghrebi culture than the cultural and social dynamics of contemporary France (23). These dynamics include the U.S. cultural influences of film, literature, and music—rendering the gender performance of virility transnational. As such, Bergerac’s implied contempt of virilism (via her demand for a Skirt Day and ‘saving’ Farida from her shame of femininity) is yet another example of her cultural myopia: she does not see that some women/girls do not *want* to wear a skirt.

E. Adjani as Transcultural Intertext

Near the end of the film, we discover that Bergerac has been passing as Franco-French, thus falling in line with the principles of French Republican universalism. Bergerac is thus perhaps a surprising martyr who dies in the name of *laïcité*. Conversely, we may not be surprised at her martyrdom, for she is able to succeed in a society that prescribes *laïcité* and universalism because she is white. Although most scholars and critics fail to mention it, Adjani, the actress that plays Bergerac, is of Berber Algerian heritage and thus is *not* Arab-French. Bergerac may not see the unchangeable social marker of skin color because she passes as “Franco-French.” Because she passes, she has the same freedom of literal and social mobility that a white-French woman of similar socio-economic status would have.

Adjani was born in Paris to a German immigrant mother and an Algerian Kabyle father who fought in the French army in WWII. She grew up in a working-class household in the Parisian *banlieue* of Gennevilliers, “in an HLM surrounded by *terrains vagues* [wastelands] in proximity to violence and delinquency”; yet, she took the bus to Courbevoie high school each

day, so she was exposed to a different life than the one of her neighborhood: “I dreamed only of one thing: to have the means to leave ‘the back courtyard of the capital’” (Adjani, “La sensation” 2). In the 1980s, her films were successful at the box office and her acting was critically acclaimed, garnering César awards and an Oscar nomination. Guy Austin states that Adjani was “the French star of the 1980s,” with a star image of dark hair and contrasting pale skin and blue eyes (*Stars* 97-100). Her Algerian origins became a topic of discussion in the late 1980s, but her star image has been “recuperated” since the 1990s by transposing her Algerian background with a persona of the “unmarked kind: visible whiteness, stellar luminescence” (Austin, *Stars* 100-5).²⁹ As Sellier points out, it is this unmarked persona that is at the forefront in *La Journée de la jupe*. She critiques

the choice of an actress whose ethno-cultural heritage [...] had until recently been concealed, and whose star image has been built as the antithesis of that identity. Her blue eyes and white skin, as well as her classical training (the *Conservatoire* and then the *Comédie-Française*), as well as the totality of her roles, all give credence to the viewer’s belief in her “Frenchness.” In the same manner, in the film Adjani’s character, Sonia, constantly reaffirms her “pure” French identity until, in the last five minutes, we hear her speaking Arabic to her father. (“Don’t Touch” 146)

Yet, I would counter Sellier’s critique of Lilienfeld’s choice of actor precisely *because* Adjani’s whiteness has been foregrounded throughout her career as film star. It is our belief in her white-French ethnicity and Franco-French cultural background that allows the students and the audience members to experience shock when we finally discover that her family has roots in Algeria. This shock demonstrates that it is precisely *because of her whiteness* that she has been

²⁹ Higbee states that Adjani is “the first and still the only (at the time of writing) female star of Maghrebi immigrant origin in France” (*Post-Beur* 39).

able to pass as 'French'. Because the diegesis does not allow the spectators to (re)learn that Adjani is a postcolonial intertext until the end of the film, this jolt allows the audience to wake up to white privilege and its function in the neocolonial space of the *banlieue*. Bergerac's devotion to *laïcité* stems from her belief that it provides a *blanc* slate, an opportunity for equality in the eyes of the French Republic. But what she ultimately does not seem to understand is this: some bodies easily fit into the image of the abstract, universal French citizen, and some do not. For those who are not perceived as white, such as Bergerac's parents and many of her students, *laïcité* and universalism block the satisfactions they promise.

V. 'Franco-French' Sexism

The incredible media firestorm around 'dangerous' Arab and black *banlieusards* at times has made it seem like rape has an ethnicity, or that it was invented in the *banlieues*. (Mack 17)

When Nawel shows Bergerac the film footage on Mouss' cell phone that reveals Farida is the survivor of a gang rape, the camera is restless and shaky as it moves along with Bergerac's pacing, cross-cutting between her and a low-angle shot of the pacing Labouret. After their intense phone exchange, the camera stands nearly still as we cut to the Minister of National Education who has been called into the school to deal with the situation—a woman (Nathalie Besançon) who, as Sellier points out, is wearing a pantsuit (145). The Minister says that Bergerac's demand for a national Skirt Day is a "joke" because it would mean "decades of feminism down the drain" since women have fought for the right to be able to wear pants. She continues, "Why not a thong night?" alluding to the "string affair" of 2003, during which some school administrators sent girls home who showed their thong underwear above their pants.³⁰ As Karim (Louka Masset) will imply in *Mariam*, the headscarf ban is hypocritical considering the absence of a law against visible thongs in schools. This observation illustrates how the 'thong affair' and the 'headscarf affairs' operate on different sides of the same coin: whether forbidding girls from entering the *école laïque* due to the covering of their bodies or the hyper-visibility of them, those in power make policies that operate around the male gaze—the feeding or starving of it.³¹

This pivotal scene ends when the Minister concludes that Bergerac is "beyond logic." Unlike the Minister, Labouret and Cécile seem to believe that Bergerac is a rational agent, an

³⁰ See Scott, *Politics* 112.

³¹ See Mulvey; and Scott, *Politics* 112-113.

opinion that is confirmed when she tells the police that *she* shot Sébastien after Mehmet shoots him, thereby taking responsibility for her initial action of taking her class hostage. Keeping in line with these assessments of Bergerac, I reconsider her demand for girls' and women's right to wear a skirt in school without being called a whore, slut, or bitch by male French-Muslim students. To take Bergerac's demand seriously, we must examine it from a transnational feminist point of view. As Grewal and Kaplan explained in 1994, "transnational feminist practices" require a comparison of "multiple, overlapping, and discrete oppressions" rather than "a theory of hegemonic oppression under a unified category of gender" ("Introduction" 18). Transnational feminism thus urges us to: 1) examine how sexism operates (similarly and differently) in distinct geographical, historical, and cultural locations; and 2) understand that none of these sexist practices or beliefs should be deemed 'worse' than another. This second point is important because the hierarchizing of sexism promotes both the demonization of other cultures and the ignorance of sexist practices in the 'West' and Global North. Taking this formulation to the specific location of the Parisian *banlieue* of the 2000s, if we are to take Bergerac's demand seriously, we must also take seriously a girls' desire to wear the Islamic headscarf in school. The judgment of these desires and (in some cases) the subsequent control of girls' and women's bodies stem from a common source: a woman/girl is either showing 'too much' of her body or 'not enough' of it, thus centralizing the inherent value of the subject (the man/boy who gazes) while rendering women/girls visual objects.

In these final sections, I highlight the following transnational feminist task: when discussing the misogyny and sexism of particular cultures or communities, we must *consistently* acknowledge that sexism occurs across cultures yet manifests in various ways according to

specific cultural contexts, which are often tinged by transnational processes.³² Thus, to underline the transnational feminist claim that sexism is not simply confined to the ‘other’ culture, I offer a brief history of “Franco-French” sexism—sexist practices, beliefs, and policies that developed within the hexagon—focusing on the rights of women to be in, work in, and make important decisions in and for the public sphere. I then return to *La Journée de la jupe* to expose how it illustrates Bergerac’s “pute” qualities as projected onto her not only by her Muslim-French students, but also by her Franco-French and other white-European colleagues.

The history of Franco-French sexism is bound to French Republican universalism—the ideology that deeply influenced institutionalized *laïcité*, Bergerac’s cruelly optimistic object. Bergerac, like many French people, seems to forget that the nation is far behind in the realm of gender equality, as Sellier reminds us (155), even while blaming Muslim men for ‘subordinating’ women by ‘forcing’ them to wear a headscarf. Women in France did not get the right to vote until 1944, a rather late date for a Western country. This was, in large part, due to a popular fear that women would follow the political advice of their priests, and that this influence would sway the secular Republic too far toward the religious realm. This is an early example of how policy makers used the ideology of universalism to deny women rights in the public sphere, presaging the headscarf ban. Another factor that led to this late suffrage date was that the political category of ‘women’ did not exist in France at this time due to the Republic’s promotion of the abstract, ‘non-sexed,’ citizen. Scott explains that “the female was not an individual, both because she was nonidentical with the human prototype and because she was the other who confirmed the (male)

³² For example, Grewal and Kaplan explain, “[T]he well-publicized Islamic laws that prevent the prosecution of husbands who murder adulterous wives do not date from time immemorial but are borrowed from the nineteenth-century French Penal Code. What needs to be examined in light of such transnational hegemonic ‘borrowings’ are the ways in which various patriarchies collaborate and borrow from each other in order to reinforce specific practices that are oppressive to women” (“Introduction” 24).

individual's individuality" (*Only Paradoxes* 7-8).

The tradition of women's exclusion from the public sphere in France goes as far back as the *Ancien Régime*, when the *loi salique* (Salic law) forbade women from inheriting the throne. This law stated that a woman could never be leader of the country. She could, however, be a *Régente* if a widow, while waiting for her son to become old enough to take over the throne.³³ But, in the collective imaginary of the French people, the *Régente* is epitomized by Catherine de Médicis—who was constructed by popular discourse as a woman who could not be trusted. The only other female figure of a highly influential nature in the realm of politics was the *courtisane*, who gained access to power and influence over the public sphere through sexual favors (i.e. through private means that were unworthy of the public sphere, making her once again untrustworthy). Thus, before the Revolution of 1789, the two major politically influential feminine figures were known for using their sexuality to seduce and 'manipulate' men in power. In addition, the King's *culture de la court* promoted the idea of man's gallantry—that men must protect women from the hardship of dealing with issues related to the public sphere (i.e. politics, war). These traditions from the *Ancien Régime* remain in the collective imaginary of the French people, who therefore cannot imagine a woman *patron* (boss)—especially since the word does not exist in the feminine (i.e. *patronne*).

During the Revolution of 1789, women gained some access to rights, but only in the private sphere (the home, marriage, and children). Rousseau, whose ideas heavily influenced revolutionary leaders, wrote about how men's consciousness of sexual difference, experienced as the desire to possess a beloved object, distinguished them from 'savages': "whereas men must pursue their desire, women should contain or redirect theirs in the interest of social harmony"

³³ See Cosandey.

(Scott, *Only Paradoxes* 9). Inheriting ideas from Rousseau and other Enlightenment philosophers, as well as those of the Court, male revolutionaries held a “profound belief that female sexuality and the wellbeing of the body politic were closely intertwined” (Jones 233).³⁴ Further, Napoléon Bonaparte’s Civil Code of 1804 repealed women’s rights in the private sphere. Women were no longer able to inherit property or items, decide on divorce, or visit their children if their ex-husband decided against it. Throughout the nineteenth century, most of the inequalities decreed by the Civil Code were accepted, and they continued to deny women equal access to the public sphere.

While women today still do not have equal access to the public sphere, or equal opportunities when they are able to enter it, many changes have nonetheless occurred in the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century to ameliorate women’s access to it. These changes include theoretically equal access to good education (e.g. *les grandes écoles*), as well as many economic privileges given by the French government (e.g. free *crèches* and *écoles maternelles* so that mothers can work as well as be mothers).³⁵ Still, many barriers remain. For example, the glass ceiling is an unspoken obstacle that women face when attempting to gain access to higher positions in private companies and public office.³⁶ One of the few careers in which the glass ceiling is non-existent, and even inverted, is in the police force, since men feel more comfortable with women police officers behind a desk (the ‘private sphere’ of the police world) than out in the streets (the “public sphere” of the police world) (Pruvost).

The problem of language is also important to the question of women gaining access to the

³⁴ See e.g. Hunt. Nonetheless, some scholars show how women experienced empowerment during the Revolutionary decade, and that their political presence did impact the male revolutionaries, even if in small ways (Jones 5); see Abrey, Rose, and Hunt.

³⁵ See Fagnani; Frader.

³⁶ See Bereni et. al.; Casini and Sanchez-Mazas; Guillaume and Pochic.

public sphere. As Hubertine Auclert pointed out in the late 1800s, the French language itself presents a rigid barrier between a woman and her access to a position in the public realm (Scott, “*Le ‘social’*”). The word for ‘master’ in French is *maître*; but when this term is presented in the feminine gender, it becomes *maîtresse*, which means mistress, thereby reducing the woman to her sexual use value and defining her only in relation to a man, rather than her ability to master a certain subject or job. The word for ‘public man’ or statesman in French is *homme publique*; in the feminine form, this becomes *femme publique*, which means ‘prostitute’. Perhaps it is this aspect of mainstream French culture that encourages Bergerac’s male students to feel legitimized when they call her a “*pute*.”³⁷ This language barrier is important because, as Auclert said, we must first have language to describe something for it to exist in culturally legitimate ways.

The figure of *la femme au foyer* (housewife) also helps to explain the phenomenon of gender discrepancies and inequalities in the public sphere. In France, beginning with the ideas maintained by Rousseau in *Emile, ou de l’éducation* (1762), a woman is reduced to her ability to be a nurturing and educational mother and wife. The woman herself, as an individual, is eradicated in favor of her service to her sons and husband to help regenerate the Republic into a state of continuity, stability and virtue—themes that were again taken up by the Vichy regime during WWII. These themes were even (perhaps paradoxically) undergirded by the images of 2017 FN presidential candidate Marine Le Pen’s campaign advertisements, which portrayed her as a strong yet maternal figure with romantic heterosexual desires (Bereni, “Gender”). The *femme au foyer* figure has remained in the collective imaginary of the French people to this day, even prompting former FN leader Jean-Marie Le Pen to state that *les allocations familiales*

³⁷ While some may counter that a negative word like *problème* is masculine, while a positive word like *solution* is feminine, these words do not describe people or their functions as employees (or otherwise). Further, while this is not peculiar to the French language, and occurs in many languages that contain gendered pronouns, this fact does not take away the importance of this occurrence in the French context.

(welfare) should be augmented to allow the *femme au foyer* to stay home to take care of domestic duties.

Because of this history from the *Ancien Régime* to the present day, French women are *already* marked as non-universal, as strange. Not only is there a differential of access according to gender, but there is also a differential of evaluation and judgment once women do enter the public sphere (Marry et al.; Rennes; Sineau; Perrot). French women have a lot of historical baggage to negotiate, even without the added markers of Arabic, Maghrebi or Muslim origins. More importantly for transnational feminism, what I hope to have shown with this history is the following: if certain Muslim and Arabic boys/men in the marginalized Parisian *banlieues* believe that Bergerac is a *pute* for wearing a skirt, the dominant cultural acceptance of institutional sexism in France—from the *Courtisane* figure to the Dominique Strauss-Kahn affair³⁸—*legitimizes* the virgin/whore dichotomy.

In *La Journée de la jupe*, the woman Minister of Education implicitly justifies this dichotomy and the students' sexist comments when she calls Bergerac's demand for a Skirt Day a "joke." In this scene and others, the film portrays the everyday Franco-French sexism that this history upholds, thus working to dismantle the hierarchy of sexism that racist policies and discourses put in place. Delphy explains that these discourses work to de-nationalize 'extraordinary' sexist violence that occurs in the *banlieue*. She states sarcastically that "the 'harshest patriarchy on the planet' could only come from outside the Hexagon; it is African and

³⁸ Although Dominique Strauss-Kahn may have been largely discredited after he was accused of the sexual assault and attempted rape of New York City hotel maid Nafissatou Diallo, the charges against him were eventually dropped because of Diallo's 'lack of credibility'; this legal loophole works to frame the alleged perpetrator as innocent and the victim as a liar—a narrative that upholds rape culture. Crenshaw has pointed out that the media most frequently used the term "scandal," a purposely provocative word, to signify the DSK affair; the use of this word then silenced and marginalized the other issues at stake such as sexual abuse and other interior issues ("Sexual Violence").

Muslim” (150). The film points to the fact that sexism and misogyny are just as rooted in dominant French culture as they are in minority communities of the *banlieue*. It thereby exposes universalism—the ideology that undergirds *laïcité*—as a form of cruel optimism by representing ‘universal’ (white-French) men such as Principal Cauvin and Lieutenant Labouret as capable of sexist acts and words.

For example, when Labouret thinks that he is speaking to Mouss, he uses the terms “*entre hommes*” (between men)—and then repeats it in the English, “man to man”—to set up a homosocial bond that might allow Mouss to feel comfortable enough to make a deal with him. The use of this clichéd phrase in English also underlines the performance of U.S. masculinity as a bond between boys and men in France and elsewhere. As Sedgwick points out in *Between Men*, homosociality between men often works at the expense of women. The film makes its stance on Labouret’s clichéd phrase clear when Bergerac becomes visibly angry—*she* is on the other end of the phone, not Mouss. More importantly, when Principle Cauvin speaks with other authorities, he conflates Bergerac’s “*pédagogie*” (her pedagogical practice) with the fact that she wears a skirt. Early in the film, when Labouret meets Principal Cauvin, he asks him if Bergerac can protect the students in this hostage situation (at this point, they think Mouss is holding the class hostage). The principal answers: “She is fragile. Her pedagogy, it’s iffy. Her methods aren’t subtle. For example, I often told her that it is not advisable to come to school in a skirt in this establishment, it’s not a neutral context. Then she wore a skirt on purpose because I’m ‘a bastard, repressive, a misogynist’.” Cauvin does not see Bergerac as a French teacher, but as a woman who is transgressing the cultural norms of the heavily Muslim-populated REP school by wearing a skirt. Her teaching methods are meaningless next to her clothing. This objectification of a woman by a white-French man is a prime example of Franco-French sexism.

Labouret then asks, “Would you say she’s a prude?” Cauvin answers that she is an uptight Catholic. Confused, Labouret says, “But she wears a skirt,” insinuating that a skirt-wearing woman could not be a prude. Finally, Julien (Olivier Brocheriou), another male teacher jumps in: “But nuns wear skirts and that’s not an invitation to rape... It depends on the skirt” [Figures 80-82]. This scene’s dialogue reveals the profound sexism within white-European culture. The sexism of the school administrators, RAID officers, and male teachers is so deeply rooted that it is invisible to them. Their conversation becomes nearly comical until Bergerac’s friend Cécile finally breaks it by saying: “Let’s show a little respect. There are lives on the line here.” Cécile’s interjection breaks up their conversation, which had begun by assessing Bergerac’s ability to protect the students, but which had quickly deteriorated into a sexist conversation about her clothing. These representations of verbal sexism by white men in positions of power do transnational feminist work by undermining the mainstream’s tendency to posit that men of color are sexist while white men have ceased to be so.

Finally, Bergerac fails to see that (patriarchal) Christian teachings underpin *laïcité*, rendering the ideology much less ‘universal’ and inclusive than she has imagined. As Scott explains, *laïcité* is based upon the “distinction between private and public (religious belief and one’s obligation to the state) [which is, in turn,] based in traditions historically associated with Christianity” (*Politics* 92). More specifically, in “Sexual Politics, Torture, and Secular Time,” Judith Butler shows how secular national cultures are rooted in Catholicism. She explains that *l’ordre symbolique* (the symbolic order)—a term used in French public discourse that values the cultural significance of the father—prevents same-sex couples from gaining adoption rights. While the *Pacte Civil de Solidarité* (PACS, civil union) was legalized in 1999 and has normalized gay/lesbian coupledness, many politicians who fought for it did so under the

assumption that same-sex couples would *not* be allowed to adopt children (7). Butler argues that these legal unions have been granted only because they have been “rigorously separated” from the “norms of kinship [that] are referenced by the term, *l’ordre symbolique*” (9). She maintains that

there are many reasons to question whether [*l’ordre symbolique*] transmits and maintains certain theological notions, predominantly Catholic. This becomes explicitly clear, for instance, in its defense by the work of anthropologist Françoise Héritier³⁹ who argues, on Catholic grounds, that the symbolic order is both theologically derived and a prerequisite of psycho-social development. (9)

Butler usefully connects this Catholic-inspired cultural norm to public reactions to the 2005 *banlieue* riots. Politicians such as Nicolas Sarkozy and Ségolène Royal, the 2006 *Parti Socialiste* (PS, Socialist Party) presidential candidate, blamed the riots on the absent Muslim ‘immigrant’ father rather than on state policies that work to keep ‘immigrant’ families apart (8).⁴⁰

Butler ultimately suggests that we replace our focus on achieving personal ‘freedom’ with a “focus on the critique of state violence and the elaboration of its coercive mechanisms” (6). She thus follows Saba Mahmood in urging us to re-think the notion of ‘modernity’, which relies on a progress narrative that promises an increase of personal freedom as time passes (3, 6). This notion posits Islam as anachronistic and backwards, while glorifying French sexual, gender, and family politics as ‘progressive’. As the white-French sexism portrayed in *La Journée de la jupe*—and Butler’s explanation of *l’ordre symbolique*—prove, contemporary French politics are not as ‘progressive’ as they might seem at first glance.

³⁹ Butler’s text does not offer a complete citation of Françoise Héritier’s text.

⁴⁰ *Libération*, 2 June 2006.

VI. Conclusion: The ‘Ghetto’ School

While *La Journée de la jupe* is far from an unproblematic representation of *banlieue* REP students—that is, while Sellier’s critiques are valid and useful—I have attempted to show how the film also does transnational feminist work. Rather than conflating ‘extraordinary’ violence with the *banlieue* and its racialized inhabitants, as even feminists who are in favor of the headscarf ban have done, the film reveals the similarities between ‘ordinary’ white-French sexism and the sexism that occurs in Arab-French and Muslim-French communities in ‘the ghetto’. These similarities help to remind us that sexism occurs across cultures and, thus, that we should stop racializing sexism. Moreover, the film reveals the ideals of universalism and *laïcité* as objects of cruel optimism. The film seems to ask us: if the ‘universal’ dominant French culture is just as rooted as ‘other’ cultures in sexist ideologies that continue to legitimize daily and structural sexism, then why would Bergerac continue to uphold as ideals? Not only do these ideals harm her students who are marked as non-universal, but they also harm her—a Franco-French-passing woman.

I also hope to have shown that, in addition to considering the popular reception of *banlieue* films, it is critical that we utilize complex films such as Lilienfeld’s as pedagogical and critical tools—as texts that help us understand the tensions between cultural pluralism and *laïcité*, between transnational feminism and universalism. Specifically, when we read *La Journée* through the lens of cruel optimism, the film makes visible the problems inherent to the ideology of French Republican universalism and its subsequent assimilation model. A central part of this model in its contemporary formulation, *laïcité* tends to exclude racialized citizens, rendering them unable to successfully integrate into French society or move up the socio-economic ladder. Through its metaphor of the public secular school as a theatre and prison, the film exposes *laïcité*

as a mechanism of entrapment, doubly marking REP students as non-universal by associating them of the stigmatized spaces of the 'ghetto'.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

I. Contemporary Transcultural Paris: *Mariam*

École laïque films such as *La Journée de la jupe*, *L'Esquive*, and *Caché* open up space for spectators to assess and critique the specific violences that the assimilationist model enacts upon students of color. I begin the conclusion to my dissertation with a brief analysis of Faiza Ambah's medium-length *école laïque* film *Mariam* (France/Saudia Arabia/U.S./United Arab Emirates, 2015), which does not allegorize the headscarf debates or the Muslim-as-racial-other's inability to assimilate, but narrates the *banlieue* as transnational site of negotiation by representing a teenage Muslim-French girl's personal struggle with the anti-headscarf law when it was passed in 2004.¹ Ambah, *Mariam*'s director, was raised in Saudi Arabia "by an idealist feminist father and a fearless free-spirited Sufi Muslim mother" (Ambah). In the late 1980s, she began working as a journalist for a Saudi Arabian news organization and she worked as *The Washington Post*'s Gulf correspondent from 2006-2009, at which point she quit journalism to focus on filmmaking: "I had become a journalist to tell realistic stories about the Arab world, having endured years of media sound bites demonizing my culture. Though film was no better, it liberated me from editorial constraints" (Ambah). *Mariam*, Ambah's directorial debut, earned the

¹ *Mariam*'s meaningful representation of the wearing of the veil counters the "rather superficial treatment" of it in Malik Chibane's *beur* film *Douce France* (France, 1995) (Tarr 212). However, in comparing these films, we must acknowledge the difference in authorship, as well as the fact that *Douce France* is a pre-headscarf ban film. For more on pre-2005 representations of Islam (and the general lack thereof) in *beur* cinema, see Tarr 111-112. For analyses of post-2005 representations of Islam in French cinema, see Tarr, "Looking at Muslims." Here, she argues that the handful of films that do represent Islam "underscore the need for the exercise of social justice, not just by outlawing racial discrimination but also by recognizing and accepting Islam as a legitimate component of Frenchness. [...] It is nevertheless significant that none of these films attempts to problematize the negative stereotype of the young veiled Muslim woman in France or to explore sympathetically the spiritual, political or other reasons why such women might choose to wear the veil" ("Looking at Muslims" 532).

Special Jury Prize at the 2015 Dubai International Film Festival, Best Short Film at Mizna's 2016 Arab Film Festival, and it screened at UNESCO as part of the commemoration of the 2015 International Day of Peace.

In Ambah's film, Mariam (Oulaya Amamra) is an Arab and Muslim-French teenage girl who lives in Bagnolet, a commune in the eastern *banlieue* of Paris. Her father (Ahmed Hafiene) is upset when Mariam decides to go to school wearing a headscarf after the law is passed. He says to her, "I fled Islamic Extremism for a better life—not to find it in my own home." Mariam had only just started wearing it after experiencing the *hajj* with her grandmother at the end of the summer (which we do not see). Her sudden wearing of the headscarf attracts interest from Karim (Louka Masset), whom Mariam likes. We, along with the characters in the film, do not know why she has suddenly chosen to wear it until she explains this choice to her white-French friend, Sophia (Lou Lévy). Mariam has felt unsafe since her mother died. Experiencing *hajj* with her grandmother, including the practice of wearing the *hijab*, filled her with a sense of safety, comfort, protection, and empowerment, along with a feeling of being closer to God. When she returned to France, the practice of wearing the headscarf continued to instill her with these positive feelings.

In *The Politics of Piety*, Saba Mahmood explains that white Western feminists tend to reify binaries by measuring how much agency women have and by questioning how 'free' and 'autonomous' we are—adjectives that Western societies have imbued with inherent value since Plato. She asks us to go beyond the question of agency and the subversion/submission dichotomy—frameworks that white Western feminists have enthusiastically utilized since Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*²—by acknowledging how women in other cultures *experience, feel,*

² Beauvoir makes explicit her goal of assessing women's *freedom* rather than their *happiness* (Ch. 1). Butler writes: "a certain version and deployment of 'freedom' can be used as an instrument of bigotry and coercion. This happens

and understand their cultures. Drawing on Judith Butler and Michel Foucault,³ Mahmood affirms that we are produced through the social systems into which we are born. Therefore, the cultural traditions of piety, including wearing the headscarf, cannot be understood as simply subversive or submissive, but must be thought about in relation to the tradition's specific historical and geographical context—including each culture's ways of feeling and thinking about the world. These ways of feeling and thinking might include the desire to be part of a community or valuing one's attachment to God via rituals of reverence (Mahmood Ch. 1). To impose our epistemology on other cultures may be a colonizing move. To put it another way, the white Western principles of agency and autonomy may not be inherently feminist, nor are they desired by all women.

More specifically, Mahmood's book studies women's rituals in the Egyptian mosque movement, which is part of a larger Islamic piety movement. She explains that these new movements understand Islamic rituals of everyday life, including the practice of putting on the headscarf, not as simple descriptive signs of one's identity, but as actively helping to create (and prescribe) one's self (Ch. 1). In the film, Mariam's explanation of her choice to wear the headscarf connects to this idea of the headscarf as ritual transformation of the self. She is not following a trend, using the headscarf as an identity sign, or attempting to rebel against her father or the dominant French culture, as Sophia implies ("Why don't you just get a tattoo?"). The scene in which she lays out her mat and prays along with a television prayer program underlines

most frightfully when women's sexual freedom or the freedom of expression and association for lesbian and gay people is invoked instrumentally to wage cultural assaults on Islam that reaffirm US sovereign violence. Must we rethink freedom and its implication in the narrative of progress, or must we resituate? My point is surely not to abandon freedom as a norm, but to ask about its uses, and to consider how it must be rethought if it is to resist its coercive instrumentalization in the present and have another meaning that might remain useful for a radical democratic politics" ("Sexual Politics" 3).

³ See e.g. Butler's *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter* and Foucault's *History of Sexuality*.

these elements of ritual and piety. Her habit of donning the veil stems directly from an experience she had during a religious journey with her grandmother, and she continues this ritual because it makes her feel both empowered and pious (“closer to God”). This explanation deconstructs the white Western feminist idea that we must be either empowered *or* reverent, a master of our lives *or* submissive to other powers. Mariam teaches her white-French friend and the spectators that these categories need not be opposed.

As the film continues, Mariam refuses to remove her headscarf outside of the home and, because of this, the conflict with her father escalates. Mariam’s stepmother (Fadila Belkebla) tries to ease the tension, which reflects how the affective labor of mediation often falls on women. Meanwhile at school, Mariam is among a group of girls, including Black-French Fatimata (Soumaye Bocoum), who are kept in a small room apart from the other students because they refuse to take off their headscarves [Figure 83]. A kind white-French teacher who believes in Mariam’s academic abilities, Mme. Bouchard (Natalie Beder), is nonetheless stern when it comes to lecturing the girls about the new law and, frustrated by their collective verbal push-back against it, tells the girls that she “doesn’t make the laws.” Later, when Mariam passes Mme. Bouchard as she smokes a cigarette outside school, Bouchard tells her that she misses her in class and is bored by the other students’ writing. When they again get into the conversation about the new law, Mariam ends the conversation by asking rhetorically, “Who makes the rules?” In this way, *Mariam* breaks with the common ‘teacher as savior’ *école laïque* plot by allowing the student to teach the teacher an important lesson. That Mme. Bouchard has learned this lesson becomes apparent only in the film’s final scene, explored below.

One day, from the window of the small classroom where she and the other headscarf-wearing Muslim girls are held, Mariam sees Karim kissing a girl who is not wearing a headscarf.

She becomes upset and runs out of the room. However, while this conflict appears to be a key plot element, as does the conflict with her father, the film is careful to let us know that Mariam's most significant conflict is personal-as-political: she must choose between going to school and the ritual of donning the hijab. In fact, the film uses the boy-girl storyline as a red herring, thus subverting our expectations of a romantic, heteronormative 'happy ending'. When it becomes apparent that Mariam will be expelled from school if she comes to school once again wearing the headscarf, she spends hours in her room, refusing to communicate with anyone. When she finally allows Sophia to enter her room, she tells Mariam that Karim is no longer with the girl that Mariam had seen him kissing. Mariam assures Sophia that it no longer matters to her, and the spectators realize (if they had not already) that Mariam's long reflection period concerns only her choice between her religious principles and her education.

Mariam is an important recent example of the *école laïque* film genre not only because it explicitly narrates the passing of the law that banned the Islamic headscarf from public schools, but also because it consistently subverts dominant representations of Islam and Muslims in the West. In its representation of Mariam's father as fully assimilated, and even firmly secular, the film undoes the stereotype of the overprotective Muslim father (or brother) who subjugates the girls and women of his family due to his Islamic religious-cultural principles. Similarly, it represents a counterpoint to the stereotype that Muslim men force girls to wear the headscarf since it is Mariam who chooses to first put it on and then chooses to continue to wear it; moreover, this practice stems from her time not with a man, but with a woman—her grandmother.

Ambah's film also works to subvert the headscarf's stereotypical, socially constructed meanings. It does so not only through Mariam's explanation to Sophia of why she has chosen to

wear it, but also through carefully assembled mise-en-scene. Mariam wears, among others, a bright pink headscarf made of shiny, satin cloth, revealing a soft femininity that works to oppose the view that headscarves necessarily hide femininity. In this instance, femininity is not covered over or suppressed, but *revealed* via her choice of headscarf. On the day that she sees Kareem flirting with a white girl from the window of the carceral classroom, her layered scarves symbolize traditional femininity via flowers and colors [Figure 84]. As Mack states, the dominant view of the Islamic headscarf leaves “no room for those who use the hijab to be conventionally ‘feminine’: women who might accent their hijab with makeup, who play with textile color, draping, and transparency while respecting the laws they believe to be religiously mandated” (43).

It is significant that Mariam’s father tears this particular headscarf into pieces. He does so in frustration when Mariam continues to refuse to take it off when going to school. In this pivotal scene, Mariam enters her room to find her father sitting on her bed, scissors in hand, a myriad of small pieces of pink garment floating across the floor. In a close-up, the cut up pink headscarf spans the cinematic frame from left to right, highlighting the extent of the violence within this action [figures 85-6]. In a complication of stereotypical images of Muslim culture, the father has exploded Mariam’s feminine headscarf: *dominant French secular culture* has rendered him violent. He acts out against what he perceives as his daughter’s stubbornness and “extremism” by destroying a garment that simultaneously signifies her femininity and her religious belief.

In the penultimate sequence, we see Mariam’s father shaving his beard before Mariam looks at herself in the mirror, her thick, curly hair filling much of the frame [figure 87]. In the next scene, Sophia enters Mariam’s room excitedly, as Mariam finishes wrapping her head in blue scarf. Sophia asks, “You’ll take it off before school?” and Mariam implies a ‘yes’ by

remaining silent. As the students enter the school, Principal Levert (Eric Herson-Macarel), who is much more litigious than Mme. Bouchard, maintains a check-point in the school's hallway where he does not allow headscarves to pass. Since he has warned the girls that they will be expelled from school if they do not remove their scarves on this particular day, he waits patiently as headscarf-wearing girls take their garments off in front of his eyes before he lets them pass into the main part of the school. Fatimata does so and, when she walks away, Mme. Bouchard looks after her, irritated at this state-enforced stripping. Then it is Mariam's turn: she slowly unwraps the blue scarf from around her head as the counter-shot displays Principal Levert pursing his lips in anticipation, his satisfied, near-perverse gaze reminding us of media images that chronicled the recent *burquini* ban [Figures 88-89]. Mariam reveals her head, shaven, and returns the principal's gaze with a look of defiance. She then points her defiant gaze toward Mme. Bouchard, who—although visibly upset by the public strippings—is nonetheless complicit in the girls' unveiling. Sophia reacts to Mariam's rebellious act with a look of admiration [figures 90-91].

Principal Levert is shocked, along with Mme. Bouchard, but the latter's expression soon turns into a complicit smirk as she laughs. The principle becomes visibly angry and says, "Do you think it's funny?" The last shot reveals Mariam and Sophia walking away from the camera, down the hallway that had previously been forbidden to the former, as they discuss regular teenage concerns (e.g. how Mariam's bald head suits her). Thus, Mariam suppresses her femininity only in the last five minutes of the film—and it is due precisely to the anti-headscarf law. That is, rather than revealing Mariam's 'natural' femininity, as the dominant French view desires (Scott Ch. 5), *laïcité* paradoxically works to suppress it in this instance. Mariam's choice of a blue, rather than a pink, headscarf on the day that she must remove it foreshadows the

boyishness that lies beneath it. Since Mariam's headscarf was the most feminine aspect of her, we can blame the French government for (paradoxically) forcing her to relinquish any semblance of her femininity, thus rendering her even more virile. In order to go to school *and* keep her hair invisible to the public gaze, which gives her a feeling of protection, she shaves her head. Moreover, comparing this action to the action of her father shaving his beard—which gives her the idea to shave her head—illustrates the double standard around hair in dominant Western societies. We typically want girls/women to grow out the hair on their head and render it visible in the public sphere, whereas we fear the (Brown) man who grows this same hair out on his face—which, we can assume, is why Mariam's father shaves his.

Mariam's final act of rebellion becomes particularly complex and powerful when we contextualize it within Mack's concept of virilism. Much like the characters of Marieme, a.k.a. Vic (Karidja Toure), in *Bande des filles* and Farida in *La Journée de la jupe*, Mariam embodies virilism in the way she wears her slightly baggy jeans, the way she walks (with a bit of swagger), and the way she talks—especially when we compare her clothing and mannerisms to those of her white friend. Further, she is assertive with Karim (*she* gives him a CD) and brags to Sophia about how he wants her. This virilism is then balanced by her feminine headscarves. Together, these gender expressions display Mariam's androgyny. This androgyny is denied at the end of the film when she shaves her head, rendering her performance of virilism knowingly and explicitly subversive. Since the Islamic headscarf is most often viewed in the West as a way of masking a woman's sexuality, femininity, and freedom (Reckitt 181), the true rebellion of Mariam's act is *not* that she has figured out a way to go to school and maintain her religious principles (we are not sure that the latter is the case), but that she negates one of the underlying (if unsaid) purposes of the headscarf ban: to uncover the 'natural' femininity of the girl/woman

so that she may offer it to the public sphere as object of the male gaze.⁴

In this way, the anti-headscarf law descends from metaphors used during the French colonization of Algeria, often discursively and visually described as an act of unveiling, penetration, or rape (Silverstein, *Algeria* 46-48). The harem and the veil became symbols of enticing barriers to illicit sexual activity for the colonial imaginary, and the colonizers often fantasized about Arab women as prostitute figures, to the extent that they constructed the Ouled Nail women of southern Algeria ‘prostitutes’ (Scott, *Politics* 53).⁵ Cartoons and postcards of these constructed images proliferated in Algeria as well as in the *métropole*.⁶

Sara Ahmed’s analysis of the headscarf debates in the context of French Republican universalism relates to her theory of “affective economy,” upon which I drew in the second chapter of this dissertation. She writes,

[T]he argument that the national idea is abstract (and the difference of the Muslim woman is concrete) breaks down. The intimacy of the national idea within an ideal image suggests the national idea takes the shape of a particular kind of body, which is assumed in its ‘freedom’ to be unmarked. The ideal is an approximation of an image, which depends on being inhabitable by some bodies rather than others. *Such an ideal is not positively embodied by any person: it is not a positive value in this sense. Rather, it accrues value through its exchange, an exchange that is determined precisely by the capacity of some bodies to inhabit the national body, to be recognizable as living up to the national ideal in the first place. But other bodies, those that cannot be recognized in the abstraction of the unmarked, cannot accrue value, and become*

⁴ See Scott, *Politics* Ch. 5; and Guénif-Souilamas, “*Française*,” especially 115.

⁵ The Ouled Nail people adhered to Islamic culture but the women in this group had extraordinary sexual freedom and were well known and respected for their dances. They did not wear veils like women of the north. The colonists constructed them as “prostitute-dancers” and they quickly became Orientalist figures in the colonial imaginary. They were turned into a “sex tourist” attraction and ‘Ouled Nail’ became synonymous with ‘prostitute’ (Scott, *Politics* 53).

⁶ See Taraud; Scott, *Politics* 45-61. For a particularly visceral account of this harm from the point of view of a Jewish sex slave in colonial Algeria, see Aziz, who describes situations of girls and women who were, in addition to gendered and other markings, marked in terms of skin color. Officials and overseers in this system, unsurprisingly, treated these racial others worse than white ‘prostitutes’ (Taraud 248; Aziz 100-101).

blockages in the economy; they cannot pass as French, or pass their way into the community. The veil, in blocking the economy of the national ideal, is represented as a betrayal not only of the nation, but of freedom and culture itself, as the freedom to move and acquire value. (*Cultural Politics* 132-33, my emphases)

While French media represents the headscarf as blocking the national ideal's economy, and French policies and laws work to undo this 'threat', *Mariam* shows us what actually blocks the potential for ideal citizenship: the *école laïque* and the 'universal' French culture to which this institution expects them to belong. The school is embodied in the character of Principal Levert, who literally blocks the headscarf-wearing girls from going to class.

Comparing *Mariam* and *L'Esquive*—both by 'Arab' filmmakers (Ambah is Saudia Arabian and Kechiche is Tunisian-French)—is a productive way to examine the different obstacles that Arab-French girls face on the one hand, and that Arab-French boys face on the other. While *L'Esquive* implies that the intersection of Krimo's masculine gender and Arab race (which dominant society often conflates with Islam) stops him from successfully performing dominant French nationality and, thus, from successfully assimilating, Ambah's film focuses on the intersection of Mariam's gender characteristics (she is virile but wears pink headscarves) and racialized religion. That is, while Krimo cannot escape the oppression related to his *racialized gender* precisely because he is an Arab boy, Mariam cannot escape the oppression related to her *racialized religion* because she is a girl who has decided to don the hijab. While dominant French society tends to see Krimo as the "Arab boy" that Guénif-Souilamas describes—as the image of the terrifying and violent boyhood Majid that Georges created as a child and continues to project as an adult—this same society sees Mariam as the "veiled girl"—the subjugated girl who needs France to save her from her 'oppressive' culture ("*Française*" 110-111). Yet, as Guénif-Souilamas explains, the veiled girl signifies much more than this in the contemporary

French imaginary: “one suspects that behind this veil lies a bearded man, the shadow of the Islamist threat” (“*Française*” 115).

In both performing virilism and in wearing the pink hijab, Mariam rejects societal, assimilationist pressures that urge her to embody the figure of the “*jolie beurette*”—the pretty, ‘liberated’ Arab girl (Guénif-Souilamas, *Des “beurettes”*). She is able to reject this prescription *and* keep going to school because she can shave her head, whereas Krimo can do nothing to change his status as “Arab boy.” However, as cathartic and joyous as Mariam’s final act of rebellion is, we can only guess what might happen to a bald girl like her in terms of her ability to succeed in French society. Further, we must acknowledge the reality that, even if we agree that some girls/women of color *can* assimilate more easily than boys/men, it is only because of sexist systems that are in place, which render girls/women objects to be ‘saved’ and visually consumed.

II. Imagining a Transnational Community

The *banlieue* and its inhabitants continue to be disproportionately affected by colonialism, U.S. cultural influence and imperialism, ‘state of emergency’ laws, and the structural racism that REP schools propagate via their ‘bad’ geographic location—which translates into a ‘bad’ social location on a student’s résumé. Throughout this dissertation, I have striven to show how a select group of films narrate local *banlieue* experiences, relationships, and spaces as transnational. The films tell transnational stories in different ways, and for different ends, according to their filmic genres and historical contexts. The *banlieue* films in my archive open a space for critique of transnational processes that stem from nationalism—war, colonialism, and economic and cultural imperialism, which have often exacerbated economic, racial, and patriarchal inequalities. They simultaneously reflect the transnational, transcultural texture of French society via their representations of complex, non-universal *banlieusard* characters, many of whom are racialized postcolonial subjects who may or may not identify transculturally. Via their representation of non-normative genders, transcultural traditions, and racialized bodies, these key *banlieue* films allow us to assess and critique French Republican universalism. As an activist documentary, *Octobre à Paris* puts issues of race, colonial status, and Algerian identities at the forefront, while *Terrain vague*, made by an established director, could only connote its anti-racist critique via Babar (coded as racialized) and a brief close-up of the Arab ‘immigrant’ worker’s acid-burned hands. Fifty years later, *La Journée de la jupe*, *L’Esquive*, and *Mariam* centralize and polemicize these issues, while *Caché* takes a subtler, but no less explicit, art house approach.

While illustrating how my set of *banlieue* films narrate the *banlieue* as a transnational space and *banlieusards* as transcultural citizens, I have also examined the films through a transnational feminist lens. I have argued that transnational feminist theories are the most

adequate set of theories with which to study the *banlieue*'s representation because they are attentive to (neo)colonialism and cultural and economic imperialism while also centralizing the analytical category of gender.

A. Women/Girls

Surprisingly for their dates of production,⁷ both *Octobre à Paris* and *Terrain vague* address experiences specific to women/girls in the early 1960s. In *Octobre*, a woman looks directly into the camera and states that she had no idea that *bidonvilles* existed in France, and that she and her children followed her ('immigrant worker') husband unknowingly. The camera rests on images of poverty-stricken children who sleep and live in one small shack. *Terrain vague* deals explicitly with sexual harassment in its representation of Dan's stepfather's and her peers' unwanted sexual advances. Because *Terrain vague* is an early mainstream *banlieue* film, it is perhaps of little surprise that there are no main characters that are girls/women of color in the film. This absence of intersectional representation follows a general trend of the postwar period.⁸ Yet, in its cross-cultural adaptation of Babar from the U.S. pulp fiction novel *Tomboy* and the French children's series *Babar the Elephant*, *Terrain vague* refrains from treating sexuality and gender expression as social categories that are distinct from race. However, the film's generic form renders these concerns ambiguous at best: Babar must die, revealing that France is not yet ready to include queer racial minorities in its ideology of universalism, and Dan must transform into a perfect girlfriend.

Nearly fifty years later, *La Journée de la jupe* alerts us to the centrality of its gender-

⁷ Although, this may not surprise us if we acknowledge the activist and queer social locations of the films' respective makers.

⁸ For example, in *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir compares women's oppression to the oppression of African-Americans, but she fails to discuss the experiences of, for example, African American women.

based critique in its title. The film not only considers Franco-French-passing Bergerac's gender-based oppression, but it also explores the intersectional identities and oppressions of female students of color. *Caché* and *La Haine*, by contrast, do not contain a central critique of the treatment of girls/women of color. Kassovitz has implied that he purposely left out female *banlieusardes* so that he could focus *La Haine* on universal (read: male) race- and class-based critiques.⁹

B. Authorship & the 'Bad' *Banlieue*

As Tarr documents in *Reframing Difference*, filmmakers of Maghrebi descent tend to use classic and popular French intertexts within their films (e.g. *L'Esquive*), while white-European filmmakers tend to appropriate U.S. intertexts or meld U.S. and French intertexts (e.g. *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange*, *Terrain vague*, *La Haine*, *Caché*, *La Journée*). Perhaps this is the Maghrebi filmmaker's (conscious or unconscious) way of proving his/her ability to be fluent in the French culture and language (Tarr, *Reframing* 210). Racial, class, and gender privilege allow Renoir, Carné, Kassovitz (even while Jewish), Haneke, and Lilienfeld to focus on how U.S. American culture and imperialism has affected French culture—whether via a critique of U.S. popular culture (*La Journée*), a critique of and homage to it (*Terrain vague*), a celebration and transcultural reinscription of it (*Le Crime*), or a celebration of African-American culture (*La Haine*).

The white-authored *banlieue* films I have studied here tend to reify the representation of the *banlieue* as a 'bad' space that is linked to the violence of the U.S. urban 'ghetto'. As early as

⁹ Kassovitz states in *Humanité-Dimanche* (1995) that women are largely absent from *La Haine* "to keep the idea [of the film] as pure as possible" (qtd. in Vincendeau, "Designs" 315).

1960, *Terrain vague* illustrates the *banlieue* as a space from which one must escape to become a productive, ideal, ‘universal’ citizen. It is a place rife with sexual harassment, gang violence, and parental neglect. *Terrain vague* and *Octobre à Paris*, both produced in the early 1960s, contain certain similarities in their negative representations of the *banlieue*. In the documentary, we see *bidonvilles* and early HLMs amidst the general lack of infrastructure in the greater *banlieue*, while in *Terrain vague* we see early HLMs amidst the wasteland of the zone [Figures 18-19; 32-35]. Both films portray the *banlieue* as unappealing and claustrophobic, while the center of Paris is portrayed as a space of discipline (Marcel is punished there) and, in *Octobre*, as a space that had cruelly promised “*la belle vie*” to its colonial ‘immigrants’.

Nearly fifty years later, *La Journée de la jupe* reveals a continuity between the *banlieue* of the 1960s and that of the 2000s: students are imprisoned in an *école laïque*, an institutional space within the ‘ghetto’ that has already entrapped them and marked them as socially inferior. *Mariam* continues this representation of the *école laïque* as a carceral space, especially in its portrayal of the small, cramped room in which she and the other headscarf-wearing girls are kept—two of whom wear the red, white, and blue colors of the French flag on their heads—as well in the principal’s hallway checkpoint. Yet, *Mariam*’s room is feminine, open, and full of light, and she and her friend Sophia are shown walking on rather charming and bright Bagnolet streets. In this film, made by a non-French person, it is only the *banlieue* public *school* that is represented as particularly negative and stifling.

Some *banlieue* cinema scholars question the political value of negative representations of this already marginalized space—which, they presume, can only lead to further stigmatization of its inhabitants. Indeed, it is hard to ignore the fact that, in the three films I have analyzed most closely—*Terrain vague*, *Caché*, and *La Journée de la jupe*—the main (post)colonial character

dies. Moreover, we see them die on screen, and they are the only main character in each film that dies. This returns us to an initial research question, stemming from Tarr's work in *Reframing Difference*: How do directors who hold a dominant position in European society (i.e. white, male directors) represent girls, women, and ethnic and religious minorities? Have these white directors fetishized the deaths of these postcolonial characters, further Orientalizing them via their spectacular deaths? Or have they simply revealed their lack of imagination for an alternative that would give (post)colonial subjects a meaningful future? In Ellison's novel *Tomboy*, Irish-American Mick (the character upon whom Babar is based) is killed by a car—but he does not kill himself. In the cases of *Terrain vague* and *Caché*, the body of the racialized other ultimately contains itself in the *banlieue* via suicide. Babar is stuck, as Majid is stuck. Perhaps *L'Esquive*'s Krimo will remain stuck, too. We last see him in his *banlieue* home, rejecting the calls of the white girlfriend he had hoped to attain, and who may have brought him one step closer to acculturation (if not assimilation). However, it is a significant difference that he does not die at the end of the film. While an Arab-Tunisian-French director merely implies the social immobility of his Arab hero, the white-European directors metaphorize it more explicitly via their deaths.

Majid is politically depressed because he knows that French Republican universalism is a false promise. This leads him to suicide. Conversely, Bergerac is a victim of cruel optimism—she still believes in the system that Majid has decoded due to her ability to 'pass'. Despite this difference, both characters end up dead. What does it mean that RAID forces—agents of the French government—kill the only postcolonial character in the film that has successfully assimilated, as well as the character that has vigorously attempted to convince her multiethnic students that they must not give up trying to fit into dominant French society so that they might

‘succeed’? Her murder leaves her, like Majid and Babar, stuck in the *banlieue*—we even see her burial amidst HLMs in the film’s final scene. This linkage between (post)colonial body and *banlieue* may work to essentialize *banlieusards*, reifying political and popular discourses that conflate the violence of *banlieue* ‘ghettoes’ with ‘immigrants’.

Conversely, it may be useful to think about how these white-authored films represent racialized and/or (post)colonial *banlieusards* as dying *because* of the *banlieue*. That is, perhaps these films enact a critique by blaming the *banlieue* for the deaths of marginalized people. At least implicitly, they seem to call out the structural violences that control this space and its inhabitants. The films reveal the difficult realities inherent to many of the *banlieues*, especially in regards to its racial and economic ghettoization and its ongoing treatment as a neocolonial space via government policies and personnel.

C. Intertextuality & Transcultural Identities

I have also examined the films’ intertextual elements as another way to think through issues related to the *banlieue* as a site of transnational negotiation. Each of the films I have focused on somehow integrate—appropriate, reinscribe, allude to, and/or adapt—novels, plays, music, and films of France and of the U.S., and we can find meaning in these spatial and temporal reinscriptions of classical and popular texts into *banlieue* films. The films I have studied here tend to integrate previously produced French media and literature, *both canonical and popular*, yet they often allude to and/or appropriate only *popular* literature, film, and music of the U.S.: a pulp fiction novel, the Western film and film noir (*Terrain vague*); the popular thriller/hostage drama genres (*La Journée*); African-American-influenced rap and hip-hop music¹⁰ (e.g. the

¹⁰ See Orlando.

diegetic and extradiegetic music of *La Haine*, *L'Esquive*, and *Mariam*). This is in contradistinction to many French films set within one (or multiple of) the twenty central arrondissements of Paris that allude to U.S. 'high culture': e.g. Faulkner (*A bout de souffle*). These stark differences in the representation of high/low culture alert us to the cultural ghettoization of the *banlieue*, which in turn points to the socio-economic ghettoization inherent to the space.

In Chapter Two, I refrained from discussing the particularly transnational aspects of *Caché* because I wanted to firmly establish the (post)colonial and neo-colonial elements of my definition of 'transnational' in this first main chapter. *Caché* contains numerous transnational elements, especially in its intertexts. These include news images of the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan on the Laurent's television screen and Pierrot's Eminem poster. However, *Caché* largely fails to represent transcultural identities, perhaps because Haneke's intention is to prove that Arab-French postcolonial subjects have successfully acculturated to France—even though dominant French society refuses to see this acculturation and continues to demand full assimilation, which is impossible because their skin color reveals their 'other' origins. As such, *Caché* focuses on a critique of dominant French culture rather than prescribing the acculturation or integration of transcultural citizens. It critiques mainstream culture, in part, by integrating the phony French intertext of Georges' literary television show. Georges' show alludes to the actual literary television shows *Apostrophes* (1975-1990), one of the most viewed shows on French television with around six million regular viewers, and its successor *Bouillon de culture* (1991-2001). The phoniness of the books that line Georges' shoulders on his television show—their performance of high culture—underlines Georges' performance of white-French bourgeois masculinity as talk show host. This gentle yet confident and well-humored act contrasts with the

aggressive masculinity that he reveals when a Black bicyclist crosses in front of his footpath, when he yells at and threatens Majid and his son, and when he yells at his wife. Majid and his son, on the other hand, reveal a relative lack of gender performance. In fact, Majid seems to lack the energy to perform anything. Even though Georges tells Anne that his crying must be fake, Majid's lonely sobs on the videotape appear sincere to both Anne and to us.

In Chapter Four, I also refrained from discussing in detail the Berber ethnic background of Isabelle Adjani, who plays Mme. Bergerac; this was to maintain the integrity (or joy?) of my reparative reading. As Silverstein states, "Historically, Berbers in the French imagination have been less religious and more easily assimilated into French civilization than Muslim Arabs"; while French colonial discourses constructed the Berbers as independent, uncivilized warriors who defended their mountainous lands against invasions, they were also viewed as nearly European, much less under the influence of Islam than Arab-Algerians and thus they were chosen as the preferred colonial administrative agents in Algeria (Silverstein, "Realizing Myth" 11-12). *La Journée* becomes more complicated if we consider Adjani's Kabyle background within the context of the "Kabyle Myth" that Silverstein describes. We could read Bergerac as a neo-colonial fantasy—as the fully assimilated Berber who is allied with the French colonists and who is now colonizing the Arabized and Islamicized *banlieue* behind the power of a colonial weapon. Perhaps Bergerac, as agent of assimilation, has taken on the burden of a civilizing mission that French colonists gave to her Berber ancestors. As such, this representation could make white-French people feel comforted because this civilizing work has been passed on to a colonized and assimilated ethnic 'other'.

Many of the *banlieue* film characters I have studied perform and/or experience transcultural identities that stem, in part, from transnational processes such as globalization and

colonialism, and which differ from dominant national identity (the ‘abstract, universal’ citizen). As such, these films work to dismantle myths related to postcolonial experiences and transcultural practices and identities. For example, Mariam acts in ways that illustrate both ‘feminist ideals’ (e.g. bodily autonomy) and her Islamic faith, which deconstructs stereotypes about the subjugated Muslim girl who lacks agency. Additionally, these key *banlieue* films deconstruct the myths of acculturation and integration by demonstrating that *assimilation* is necessary—yet often impossible—for the spatial and social mobility of racialized subjects in contemporary France. Like universalism and *laïcité*, assimilation is a cruel promise.

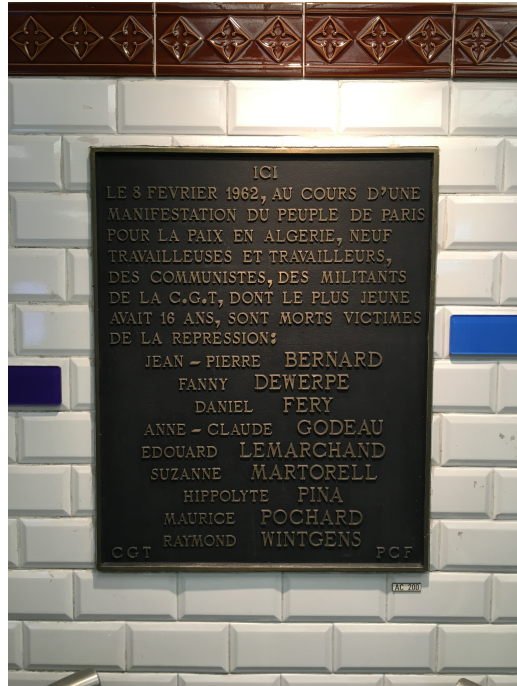


Figure 1: The Charonne Massacre plaque inside the Charonne metro station, well-lit from above, a brass rail protecting it from below (photo by author)



Figure 2: "Place of February 8, 1962" under the Charonne metro sign on the platform (photo by author)



Figure 3: One of the three above-ground signs naming and commemorating the “Place of February 8, 1962” (photo by author)



Figure 4: The nearly hidden commemoration of the October Massacre on the side of the St. Michel bridge: “In memory of the numerous Algerians killed during the bloody repression of the peaceful demonstration of Octobre 17, 1961” (photo by author)



Figures 5-6: A barge floats along the sunny Seine; *Ben Hur* plays at Cinema Saint Michel (stills from *Octobre à Paris*)



Figures 7-8: October 1961 Massacre Survivors testify and reveal their scars (stills from *Octobre à Paris*)



Figure 9: Rothberg's "multidirectional memory" in *Octobre à Paris'* title shot (still from the film)



Figure 10: In the adult Georges' dream, Majid as a child (Malik Nait Djoudi) embodies the '*garçon arabe*' (Arab boy) figure: he cuts the head off a chicken because the child Georges (Hugo Flamigni) tells him to (which we can assume did happen) (still from *Caché*)



Figure 11: ... and then walks threateningly toward him with the same axe (which we can assume did not actually happen) (still from *Caché*)



Figure 12: Georges (Daniel Auteuil) and his son Pierrot (Lester Makedonsky) surrounded by warm colors and books (still from *Caché*)



Figure 13: Majid (Maurice Bénichou) embedded within in his unhappy *banlieue* HLM. Majid's domination is highlighted by the relatively high camera angle as he looks up at Georges, standing (still from *Caché*)



Figure 14: The hidden camera's view of Georges' current Parisian home (still from *Caché*)



Figure 15: Georges' provincial childhood home in 1961 (still from *Caché*)



Figure 17: Georges' childhood home in 2005, the same as it was in 1961 (still from *Caché*)



Figure 16: Georges' view of Majid's Romainville apartment from the café across the street (still from *Caché*)



Figures 18-19: Left pan from the Nanterre *bidonville* (right) to an early HLM (left) (stills from *Octobre à Paris*)



Figure 20: Georges' experience of Majid's sullen hallway is reminiscent of Goffman's 'total institution' (still from *Caché*)



Figure 21: Majid's sad apartment (still from *Caché*)



Figure 22: Dirtied plastic espresso cups and plastic water bottles outline Georges' shoulders as he looks across the street towards Majid's HLM (still from *Caché*)



Figure 23: Anne (Juliette Binoche) and Pierre (Daniel Duval) sit among porcelain, glass, and wood in Saveurs & Co., a café in the center of Paris (still from *Caché*)



Figure 24: Map of Paris in the convenience store across the street from Majid's apartment, central Paris highlighted in yellow (still from *Caché*)



Figures 25-26: Abdelkader Bennehar (still from *Octobre à Paris*); Majid (still from *Caché*)



Figure 27: Majid dies under the light as Georges' shadow looms to the right (still from *Caché*)



Figure 28: Abdelkader Bennehar continues the struggle after a police officer clubs him on the head with a *matraque* (photo by Elie Kagan in a still from *Octobre à Paris*)



Figures 29-30: Photos of peaceful demonstrators with their “hands up—[don’t shoot]” (stills from *Octobre à Paris*)



Figure 31: Majid’s son (Walid Afkir) and Pierrot in the lower-left of the frame in front of the latter’s public school (still from *Caché*)



Figures 32-33: Midway through the film, Dan (Danièle Gaubert) and Babar (Jean-Louis Bras) discuss Marcel's entry into the gang, their bodies framed by an HLM and rubble, amidst which adolescents in the background play (stills from *Terrain vague*)



Figures 34-35: Dan watches Babar run off with his school books into the rubble of the *terrain vague*, a foreshadowing of events to come (stills from *Terrain vague*)



Figure 36: Poetic realism remains in the postwar period: Babar (right, center), his innocent face lit from below by candles, is inducted into the gang, whose bodies overlap to form a dark threat (left) (still from *Terrain vague*)



Figure 37: Big Chief (Roland Lesaffre) in his Western vest and stubble (still from *Terrain vague*)



Figure 38: The “delinquents” wait for Dan and Babar outside of Big Chief’s U.S. surplus store (still from *Terrain vague*)



Figure 39: Babar at his induction into the gang (still from *Terrain vague*)



Figure 40: A close-up on the Arab worker's hands, scarred by acid, from Big Chief's perspective (still from *Terrain vague*)



Figure 41: The Arab 'immigrant worker' (foreground, right) tries on a jacket in Big Chief's U.S. surplus store while Dan and Babar (background, right) wait for Big Chief (still from *Terrain vague*)

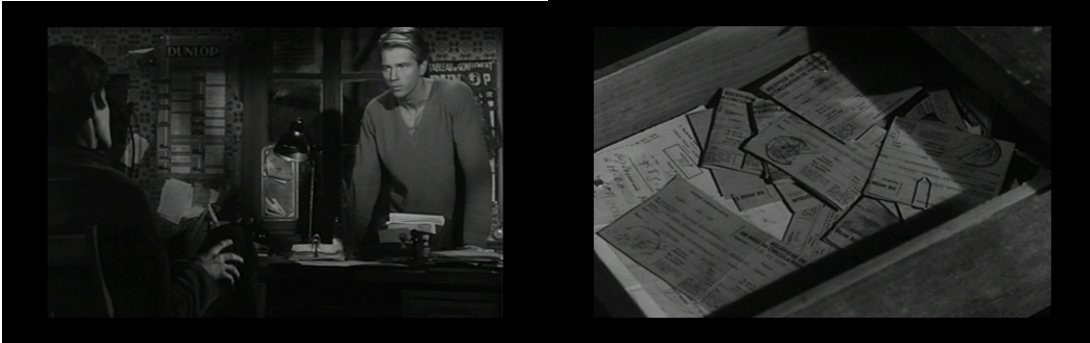


Figure 42: Hans (Alfonso Mathis) lectures Marcel (Constantin Andrieu)

Figure 43: Identity papers in Hans' drawer, two of which Marcel steals



Figure 44: A gun in Hans' drawer

Figure 45: Marcel steals the U.S. icon (stills from *Terrain vague*)



Figure 46: A stern *éducateur* (social worker specializing in delinquents) visits Marcel's mother (Denise Vernac) (still from *Terrain vague*)



Figure 47: The *éducateur* explains his goal of cutting down on “gangs and promiscuity” to Marcel's mother—and to the spectators (still from *Terrain vague*)



Figures 48-50: Our increasingly close introduction to Dan (Danièle Gaubert): a long shot reveals Dan, wearing pants, at the center of a masculine space; a medium shot highlights her authority within the space; finally, a close-up on shows us her threatening, virile facial expression (stills from *Terrain vague*)



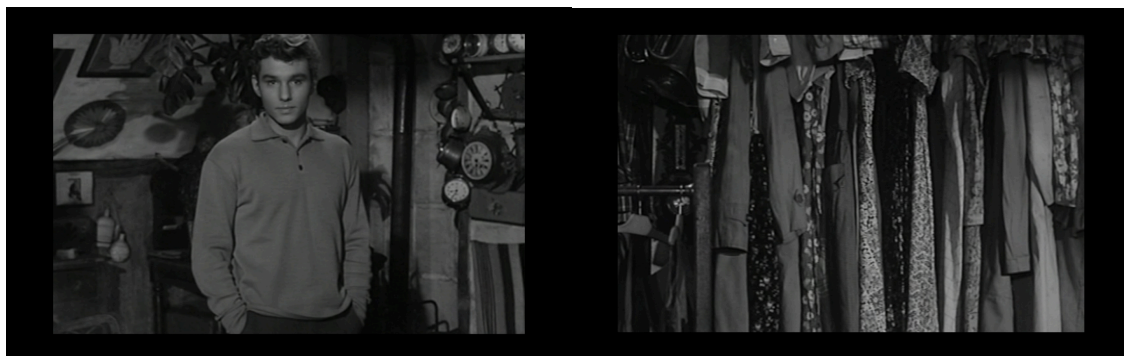
Figure 51: Marcel's mother (Denise Vernac) takes her long and weary walk up the stairs of her HLM building during the opening credits (still from *Terrain vague*)



Figure 52: Marcel's mother strokes the physical remnants of her delinquent son, embodied in his boxing glove (still from *Terrain vague*)



Figure 53: As the camera pans to show the proximity of Marcel and Babar's HLM apartments, we also get a glimpse of the film's prescription for juvenile delinquency: domestic motherhood (still from *Terrain vague*)



Figures 54-55: Shot/counter-shot: Lucky (Maurice Caffarelli) confesses his love for Dan to a rack of clothing from the U.S. (stills from *Terrain vague*)



Figure 56: Dan emerges, feminine (still from *Terrain vague*)



Figure 57: The camera fetishizes the newly feminized star (still from *Terrain vague*)

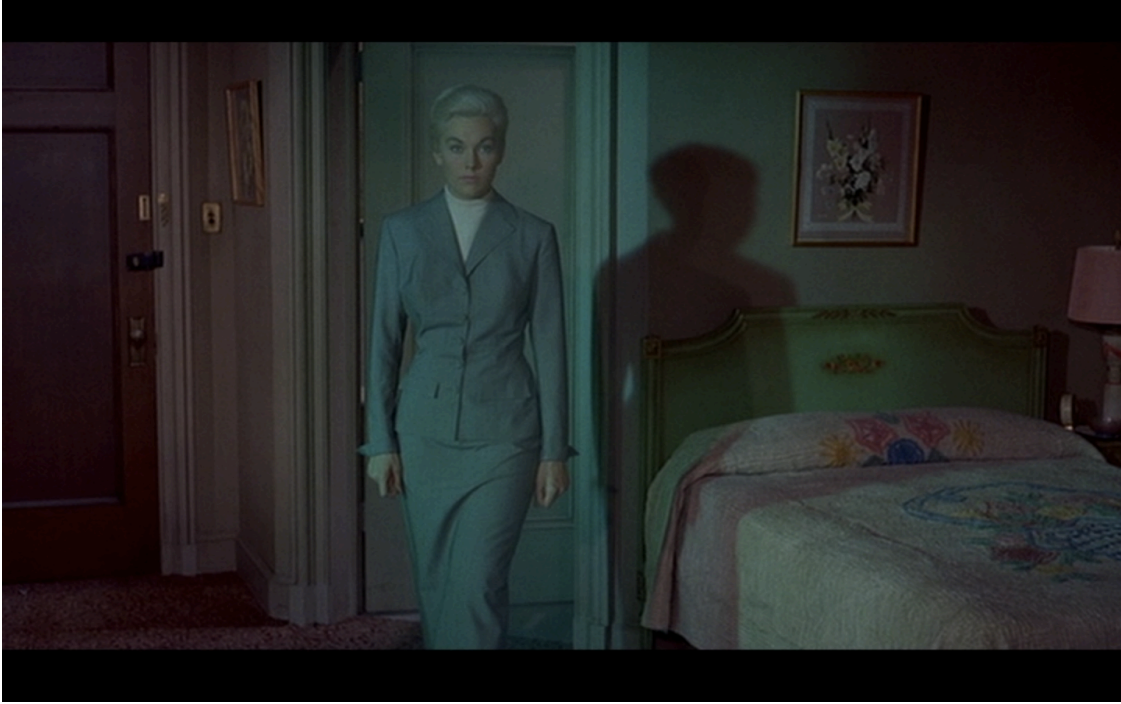
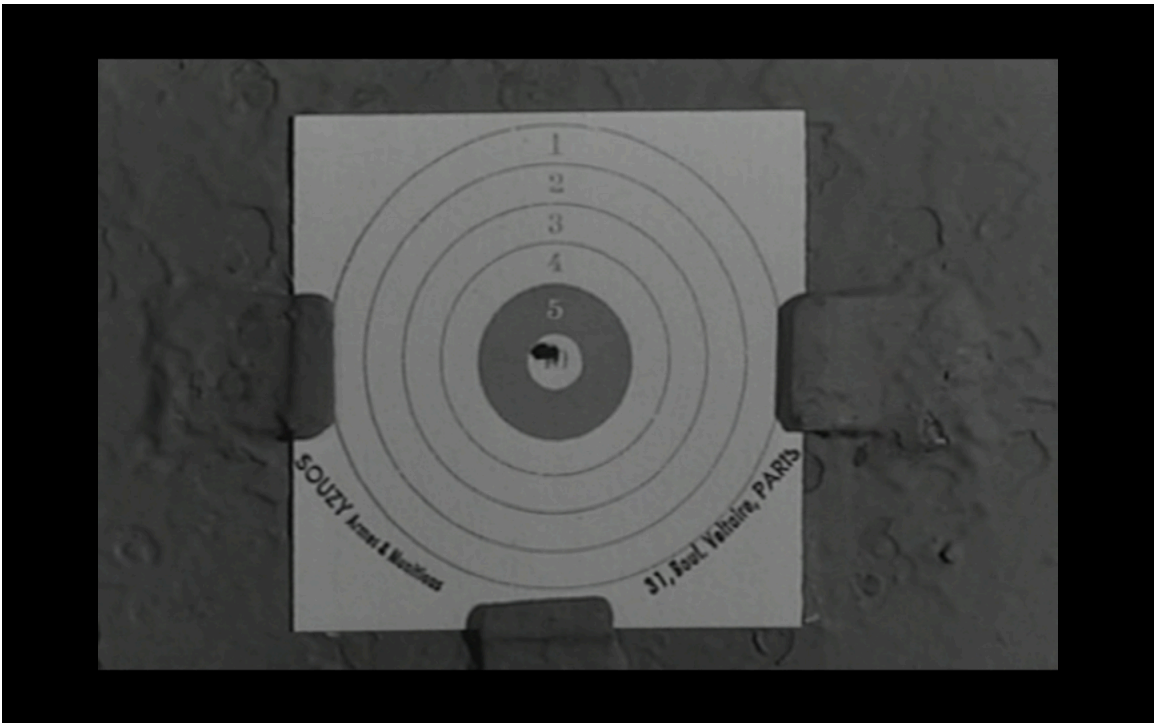


Figure 58: Judy (Kim Novac) emerges, Madeleine (still from *Vertigo*)



Figures 59-60: Dan is an excellent shot, highlighting her virile qualities (stills from *Terrain vague*)



Figure 61: In Renoir's *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange*, which alludes to the Western genre, the story's hero (Rene Lefèvre) and heroine (Florelle) escape into the horizon at the end of the film (still from the film)



Figure 62: *Terrain vague's* heroic, heteronormative couple walk into the horizon to escape the *banlieue...* (still from the film)



Figure 63: ...with the help of Big Chief (Roland Lesaffre)—the most explicit Western genre icon in the film—who watches them leave (still from *Terrain vague*)



Figure 64: The students are shocked to hear Bergerac speaking Algerian Arabic (still from *Skirt Day*)



Figure 65: Bergerac protects both her body and her 'Frenchness' as she pronounces her plan to teach a "good class" on Molière (still from *Skirt Day*)



Figure 66: The gun gives Bergerac new self-assurance (still from *Skirt Day*)



Figure 67: Shot: Sonia Bergerac (Isabelle Adjani) forces Mouss (Yann Ebonge) to say Molière's "real name" (still from *Skirt Day*)



Figure 68: Counter-shot: The girls watch their teacher threaten Mouss: Nawel (Sonia Amor), Khadija (Meleze Bouzid) and Farida (Sarah Douali) (still from *Skirt Day*)



Figure 69: Lydia (Sara Forestier) looks concerned for her friend Krimo (Osman Elkharraz) when he looks down while speaking and then forgets his lines (still from *L'Esquive*)



Figure 70: French teacher (Carole Franck) isn't impressed with Krimo's performance (still from *L'Esquive*)



Figure 71: Krimo is embarrassed and frustrated upon hearing his teacher's harsh words (still from *L'Esquive*)



Figure 72: The mise-en-scene reveals the French teacher reading along with the canonical play, prepared to feed lines to the REP students. This shot highlights the secondary school teacher's role as the French Republic's 'agent of assimilation' (still from *L'Esquive*)



Figure 73: girls can act (assimilate) easier than boys? Here, Frida embodies the figure of the *jolie beurette* (still from *L'Esquive*)



Figure 74: Krimo avoids looking at Lydia at the beginning of class rehearsal, dressed in a *Comédie-italien* costume, which marks him again as other (still from *L'Esquive*)



Figure 75: Nawel won't act (still from *Skirt Day*)



Figure 76: Mehmet (Khalid Berkouz), left, quietly performs the Molière play before the gun appears (still from *Skirt Day*)

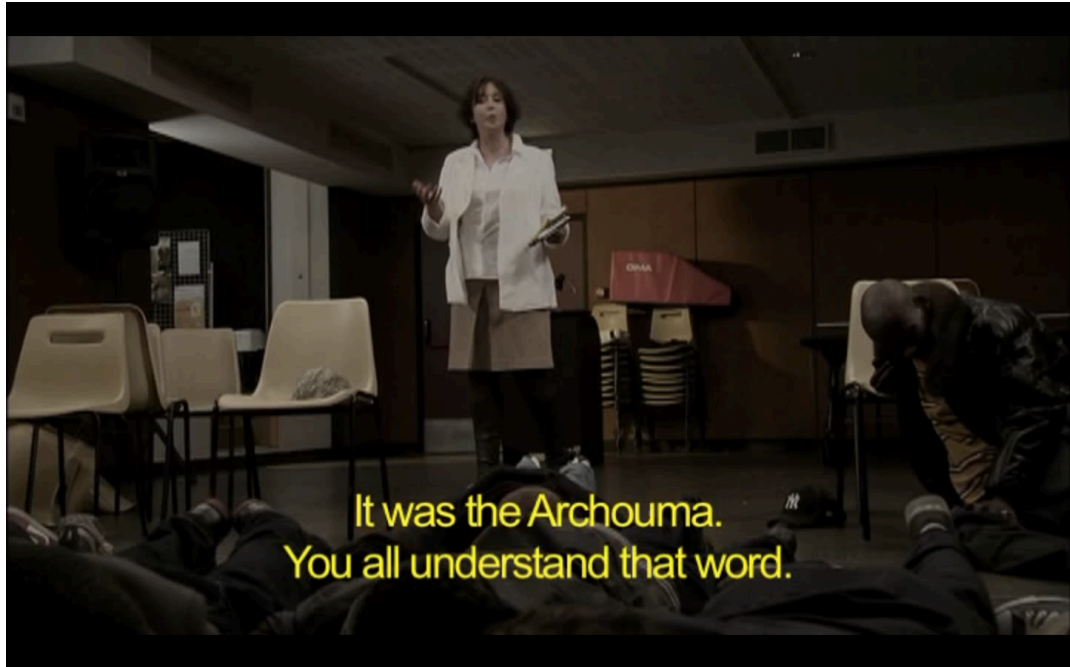


Figure 77: Bergerac discusses Algerian Arabic “shame” as she towers above her students (still from *Skirt Day*)

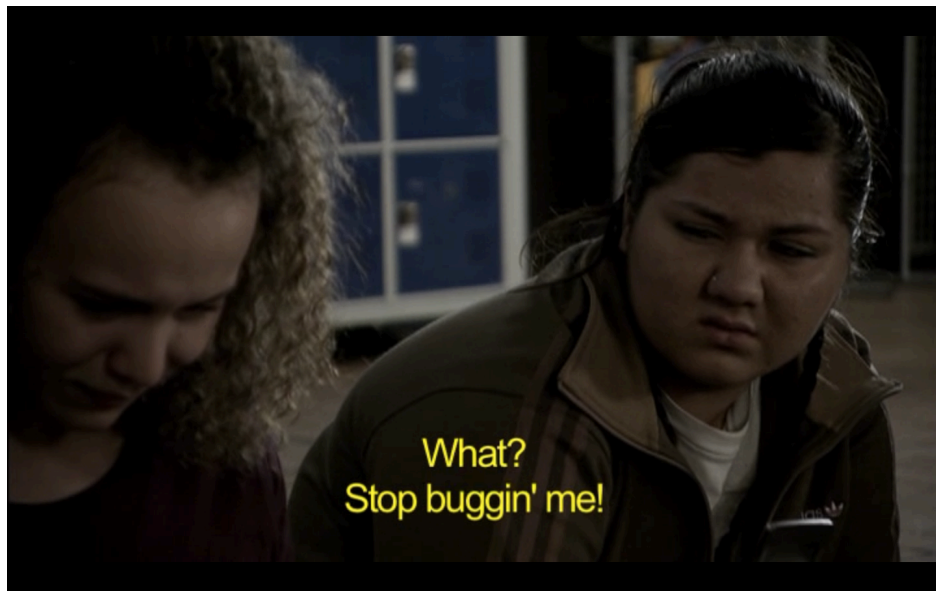
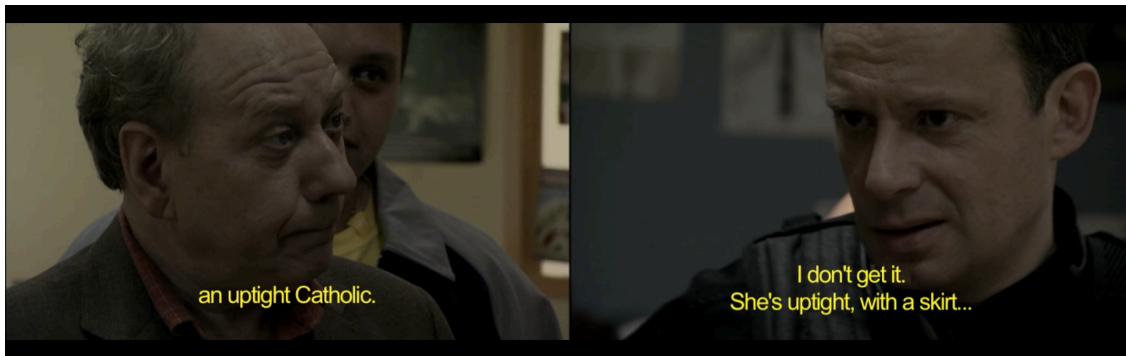


Figure 78: Farida’s virilism is apparent even in her aggressive facial expression (still from *Skirt Day*)



Figure 79: Nawel shows Farida her proof of the rape. Here, Farida's all-brown tracksuit displays her virilism (still from *Skirt Day*)



Figures 80-82: Clockwise from top left: Principal Cauvin (Jackie Berroyer), Lieutenant Labouret (Denis Podalydès), and Julien (Olivier Brocheriou) discuss Bergerac's ability to protect the students, which quickly deteriorates into a sexist discussion about her clothing (stills from *Skirt Day*)



Figure 83: Fatimata (Soumaye Bocoum), in the room of ostracized students who wear the Islamic headscarf, struggles to comprehend 'their' rules (still from *Mariam*)



Figure 84: Mariam's (Oulaya Amamra) layered scarves symbolize traditional femininity via flowers and colors as she gazes outside of the window to see Kareem flirting with a white girl (still from *Mariam*)



Figure 85: Mariam enters her room to find her father (Ahmed Hafiene) sitting on her bed, scissors in hand (still from *Mariam*)



Figure 86: In a close-up, the cut up pink headscarf spans the cinematic frame from left to right, highlighting the extent of violence within the action of Mariam's father (still from *Mariam*)



Figure 87: Mariam's unruly, feminine hair fills the cinematic frame as her facial expression illustrates an innocence that she will soon leave behind (still from *Mariam*)



Figure 88: Mariam begins to unravel her blue headscarf, the color of which already hints at her state-enforced virilism (still from *Mariam*)

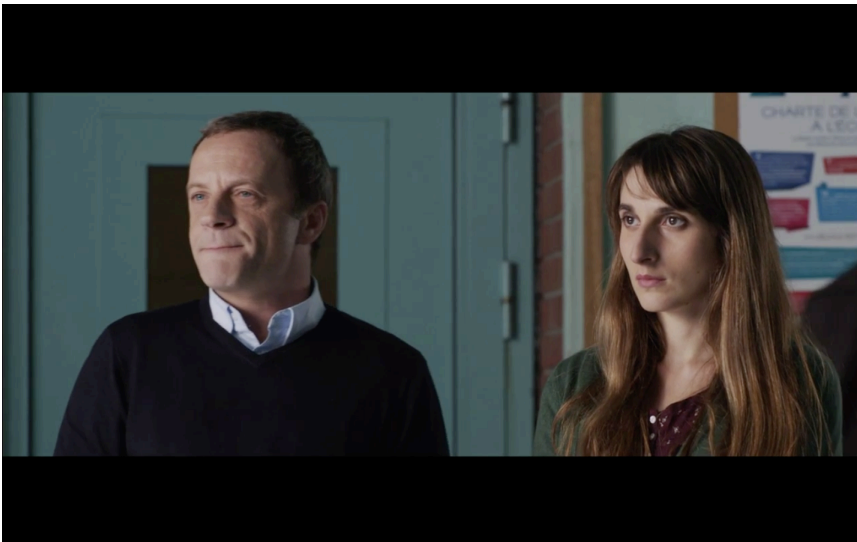


Figure 89: Principal Levert (Eric Herson-Macarel) purses his lips in anticipation as he gazes at Mariam's unraveling of her headscarf; Mme. Bouchard (Natalie Beder) is disturbed by this state-enforced stripping (still from *Mariam*)



Figure 90: As Mariam reveals her shaven head, she returns Principal Levert's gaze with a look of defiance (still from *Mariam*)



Figure 91: Mariam then points her virile gaze toward Mme. Bouchard, who—although visibly upset by the public strippings—is nonetheless complicit in the girls' unveiling. Mariam's white-French friend, Sophia (Lou Lévy), reacts to Mariam's rebellious act with a look of admiration (still from *Mariam*)

Chronological Filmography

- Zéro de conduite* [Zero for Behavior]. Directed by Jean Vigo, Argui-Films, 1928.
- Nogent, Eldorado du dimanche*. Directed by Marcel Carné, Michel Sanvoisin, 1929.
- Marius*. Directed by Alexander Korda and Marcel Pagnol, Mission Distribution, 1931.
- Le Crime de Monsieur Lange*. Directed by Jean Renoir, performances by René Lefèvre, Jules Berry, and Florelle, Obéron, 1935.
- Princesse Tam Tam*. Directed by Edmund T. Gréville, performance by Josephine Baker, Ciné-Arys, 1935.
- Pépé le Moko*. Directed by Julien Duvivier, Performance by Jean Gabin, Paris Film Production, 1936.
- Hôtel du Nord*. Directed by Marcel Carné, performance by Arletty, Imperial, 1938.
- Le Quai des Brumes*. Directed by Marcel Carné, performance by Jean Gabin, Ciné-Alliance, 1938.
- Le Jour se lève* [Daybreak]. Directed by Marcel Carné, performances by Jean Gabin, Jules Berry, and Arletty, Sigma, 1939.
- Les Enfants du paradis* [Children of Paradise]. Directed by Marcel Carné, performance by Arletty, Société Nouvelle Pathé Cinéma, 1945.
- Les Portes de la nuit* [Gates of the Night]. Directed by Marcel Carné, performances by Yves Montand and Pierre Brasseur, Pathé Cinéma 1946.
- Juliette ou la clé des songes* [Juliette or the Key of Dreams]. Directed by Marcel Carné, Films Sacha Gordine, 1951.
- The Wild One*. Directed by Laslo Benedek, performance by Marlon Brando, Columbia, 1953.
- L'Air de Paris* [The Air of Paris]. Directed by Marcel Carné, performances by Arletty, Jean Gabin, and Roland Lesaffre, Galatea, 1954.
- Chiens perdus sans collier* [Lost Dogs without Collars]. Directed by Jean Delannoy, performance by Jean Gabin, Franco-London-Film and Continentale Produzione, 1955.
- Rebel without a Cause*. Directed by Nicholas Ray, performances by James Dean, Sal Mineo, and Nathalie Wood, Warner Bros., 1955.
- Pardonnez nos offenses* [Forgive Us Our Sins]. Directed by Robert Hossein, Hoche, 1956.

Le Pays d'où je viens [The Country I Come From]. Directed by Marcel Carné, C.L.M. Société de Production de Films de Long et Court-Métrage, 1956.

Les Tricheurs [The Cheaters]. Directed by Marcel Carné, performance by Pascal Petit, Silver Films and Zebra Film, 1958.

Vertigo. Directed by Alfred Hitchcock, performances by Kim Novak and James Stewart, Paramount, 1958.

Les Jeux dangereux [Dangerous Games]. Directed by Pierre Chenal, Cino Del Duca and Zodiaque, 1958.

Sois belle et tais-toi [Be Beautiful and Shut Up]. Directed by Marc Allégret, EGE, 1958.

Les 400 coups [The 400 Blows]. Directed by François Truffaut, performance by Jean-Pierre Léaud, Carrosse, 1959.

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