The Dissertation Committee for Michael Gott Certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

Re-charting French Space: Transnationalism, Travel and Identity from the Postcolonial *Banlieue* to post-Wall Europe

Committee:

Hélène Tissières, Supervisor

Dina Sherzer, Co-Supervisor

Michael Johnson

Madhavi Mallapragada

Andrea Loselle

Re-charting French Space: Transnationalism, Travel and Identity from the Postcolonial *Banlieue* to post-Wall Europe

by

Michael Robert Gott, B.A.; M.A.

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2011

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all of my committee members and in particular my supervisor Hélène Tissières and in my co-supervisor Dina Sherzer.

Re-charting French Space: Transnationalism, Travel and Identity from the Postcolonial *Banlieue* to post-Wall Europe

Michael Robert Gott, PhD.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2011

Supervisor: Hélène Tissières

Co-supervisor: Dina Sherzer

Contemporary French identity issues are often conceived spatially in popular imagination and political discourse. France and French identity have been mapped into a series of imagined exclusionary spaces through media representations and political rhetoric. This dissertation argues that artists in the fields of film, rap music and fiction are actively yet often indirectly intervening in French identity debates by reframing the question of "integration" and by demonstrating that not only can one be simultaneously French and "other," but that French identity is always already more complex and transnational than prevailing discourses of "imagined" identity will admit. This is done most effectively, I contend, by avoiding the clichéd and reductive spaces and spatial categories that inflect the debate. The works I examine employ travel and motion to move beyond the discursive ghettos such as *beur* or *banlieue* cinema or "minority" music and fiction. While often less overtly political these responses are more effective than the more typical *banlieue* narrative of clash and confrontation with power. Taking examples from cinema, I argue that the road movies I address are effective weapons of the weak

precisely because they avoid the traps inherent in representing the *banlieue.* My analysis demonstrates that the discursive ghetto is not always a bad thing for a filmmaker because referring to representational stereotypes can open the possibility of more readily "trapping" the viewer and therefore forcing him/her to actively participate in the process of decoding the author's positioning. Often works attempting to contest spatial exclusion run the risk of simply falling into entrenched binary conceptions of society, reinforcing what the viewer already thinks they know about life in the suburbs or as a minority in general. Looking beyond cinema to music and literature, I demonstrate how artists are mobilizing narrative of space and identity to re-chart France with "hyphenated" perspectives, from African and Algerian to Portuguese and *Pied-noir*.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Contemporary French identity issues are often conceived of in spatial terms in popular and political discourses. France and French identity have been mapped into a series of imagined exclusionary spaces through media representations, political rhetoric and in general what Lyotard has termed "language games" (Lyotard 1979). At the same time, critical approaches have tended to reinforce these often arbitrary divisions by examining identity issues within narrow discursive categories such as Black, *Beur* or Jewish. This project is concerned with two ways by which this exclusion functions spatially. Both forms of exclusionary spatial mapping are center-periphery models that relegate minorities to a series of marginal spaces. The first is horizontal and based on actual spatial divisions and binary conceptions of inside and outside, the other vertical and constructed according to "imagined" notions of national identity, to use Anderson's famous formulation (Anderson 1983). The following chapters will deal with a variety of complex approaches which engage with the spatial dimensions of France differently and create counter-narratives of French identity within space and conceptions of space.

Identity is often discussed in terms of an inside-outside schema that often corresponds to the very real but highly complex social/physical division of central Paris, where "French" live, from the *banlieue,* or suburbs, where immigrant populations tend to be concentrated. Media coverage of suburban violence has often reinforced this binary division by feeding the popular image of minority youths as "lawless barbarians threatening to break down the gates of French civilization" (Hargreaves 1996). This is nothing new, as perceptions of suburbanites as "barbarians at the gates" date to the mid-19th century. What is new is that this fear is unavoidably linked to the perceived "blackening" of the suburbs (Stovall 2003). Once known as the "Red Belt" for the preeminence of the French Communist Party in the marginal, industrialized outskirts, the Parisian *banlieue* is now the "Black Belt." At the same time, the question of topographical exclusion in France is far more complex than a simple issue of ghettoization of minorities.

One commonly cited study on hiring practices in France demonstrated that the resumes of applicants with named that sound un-French are far less likely to be considered than resumes with equal qualifications attributed to a person whose name sounds French. It often goes unnoticed that the same discrimination was demonstrated towards all applicants, regardless of their name, from the stigmatized suburbs of Paris (Weil 2005). Likewise students at suburban universities face similar prejudices despite the fact that diplomas earned at a campus in Saint-Denis is a national qualification, based on the exact same criteria and standards as a diploma from the universities inside of Paris proper (Benguigui 2008). In short, while race and ethnicity are factors in discrimination and inequality, so too are spatial prejudices.

This center-periphery dichotomy lends itself to broader yet related exclusionary constructions based on the official borders of the French Republic, perceived as under strain from outside factors such as the European Union, vague notions of "Globalization" and, most recently, E.U. expansion towards the East. This is clear from the tenor of the so-called "National identity debate" launched officially in November 2009 by French President Nicolas Sarkozy and Eric Besson, head of the recently created ministry for Immigration, Integration and National Identity. Unofficially, it is a debate that has been raging for some time and which took on a particularly rancorous tenor in the 1990s. Former president Giscard used the word "invasion" to characterize the immigration situation faced by France in a 1991 Figaro magazine article. The far right National Front party has had electoral success, most notably in 1995 and 2002, with its alarmist "immigrant invasion" discourse, feeding off both the fear of others already here and those trying to come. These negative images are linked to the formulation of imagined closed spaces and to the notion of a "real France" that is and always has been monolithic: white, Catholic and unchanging. The opposition to European integration is part of a broader "*front du réfus*" (a line of refusal) formed by Front National voters and others against perceived infringements on their way of life, a barrier constructed against the encroachment of "foreigners" and also against symbols of technology and

"modernity" (Mayer, 147). The debate over eastern expansion of the E.U. into countries such as the Czech Republic and Poland of the E.U. has added a new layer of complexity to the issue of immigration and integration. Polish immigrants offer a useful basis for analysis because Poles in France represent complex layers of belonging and exclusion. Earlier waves of Poles are now considered wholly "integrated," or are at least "invisible minorities," while more recent arrivals have become the extremely visible poster boys for the fight against open European borders (the famous "Polish Plumber").

This brings us to the second spatially conceived model of exclusion that I would like to focus on, based on a vertical hierarchy of Frenchness. The inside-outside topographic model of exclusion is a vestige of the vertical hierarchy of French identity that can be traced back to the nation's colonial project, a link that has not gone unnoticed by scholars like Dominic Thomas or by actors in the identity debates such as activist-signer Magyd Cherfi of the erstwhile band Zebda (Thomas 2007, Cherfi 2004). Thinking of the hyphenated identity in topographical ways is my starting point. In theory, just as French citizenship has been based on the principle of *jus soli* rather than *jus sanguinis,* the French republican conception of identity is not based on ethnicity or race but has traditionally been seen as molded and imparted by means of education. In practice, however, *souche,* or stock is of fundamental importance: in a vertical model of French identity, those lacking the proper *souche* are relegated to hyphenated status. Anderson describes the nation as being, despite various differences within the population, "always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 1983). The vertical hierarchy subverts this horizontal comradeship by imagining some French as more French than others. Another way to think of the vertical model is a recurring survey that poses the question of how well "integrated" communities living in France are perceived to be. Italians, Spanish, Poles, and Portuguese are perceived to be the best integrated, Algerians and Gypsies the worst, and Tunisians, Moroccans, West Indians and *Pieds-noirs* somewhere in the middle (Hargreaves 1996). Those at the top of the list are, presumably, considered more French while those at

the bottom are considered at best hyphenated French or, worse, *Noir* or Arab, terms that carry highly pejorative connotations.

This sort of survey poses numerous problems and questions, two of which are particularly relevant to a general understanding of my project. First, many of the members of these "communities" are not immigrants but where born in France, attended French schools and speak French as their primary language. As young French of immigrant "origins" often are forced to the reiterate, they don't need to be integrated; their neighborhoods are part of France, too (Hargreaves; Begag; Brouard; Thomas). Returning to the spatial dimension, those who do not "look" French are frequently cast as immigrants and exteriorized in narratives of identity. One particularly amusing example of this is provided by a conference held in 2004 by the *Haut Conseil à l'intégration* (High Council on Integration), named the "Forum de la réussite des Français venus de loin" (Forum on the Success of French from Far Away). The conference featuried guests such as French actress Isabelle Adjani, who was born and raised in the suburbs of Paris yet qualified for the "from far away" tag because her father was Algerian (Marteau and Tournier 2006: 15). This brief example should suffice to demonstrate how the lack of Gaulic ancestry triggers a spatial signifier, marking the subject as belonging outside the imagined parameters of Frenchness. This institutional reflex to posit difference in terms of otherness or "outsiderness" seems to be largely responsible for the French tendency to frame the debate on what in the United States or England would be considered "race relations" as a question of "immigration" (Hargreaves, 1996). The result of this is that all those differing from the widely accepted model of "*Français de souche*" are exteriorized in French narratives, transformed into "immigrants" even if they have always been French citizens.

Another issue with these survey results is that such conceptions of "well integrated" or "badly integrated" communities are formulated in terms of value judgments that overlook a long history of

immigration in France. As Gérard Noiriel has worked to demonstrate, those now considered entirely integrated were once poorly received and experienced numerous difficulties when they initially arrived. This facet of immigration history is overlooked and the fact that Italians, Poles and other European immigrants are considered in retrospect "good" or easily assimilated immigrants is frequently used to paint more recent arrivals in a negative light (Noiriel 1998, 2002). The history of immigration in France and the existence of lingering communitarian allegiances or subjectivities has been ignored and glossed over, for different reasons, by both the Left and the Right. On the Left, this tendency is evident in the work of sociologist and Constitutional Council member Dominique Schnapper, who argues that nation and *ethnie* are opposing concepts and defines citizenship in the nation as the aptitude to break from ethnic determinations that enclose people in particular cultures (Schnapper 1998). As I will argue, ethnic determinations in a French Republican context do not always signal an enclosing communitarian reflex. Rather, the acknowledgement of difference on a variety of levels opens the door to a less exclusive vision of French identity because it conceives of the putative center of French citizenship and identity to be significantly less central than it is often imagined to be.

Noiriel posits that immigration must be addressed not as an issue that affects France from outside but rather from the interior of the republican narrative, the history of which could just as well be described as *Immigrants into Frenchmen* rather than Weber's famous *Peasants into Frenchmen.* Noiriel believes that what he calls the "unanswered questions of French republican history" have more to do with relationships of individuals to institutions than the immigrants themselves.[1] In other words, is it not these institutions (state, party, nation are mentioned by Noiriel) that are responsible for issues of "origins" and "feelings of belonging" that are exclusionary by nature? Hafid Gafaiti has built on this to argue that exclusive narratives, which are in contradiction with the somewhat more inclusive reality of French

[1] Cited in Gafaiti 2003: 187.

history and the overall complexity of the dual French experience as a Republic and a colonial empire, have long been cultivated by institutions:

> Until very recently, sociologists and politicians, critics and theorists have had the tendency to describe the relationship between the French and immigrants in terms of oppositions, putting forward binary terms such as assimilation and difference, national and foreigner, universal and particular. One should explore to what extent this series of dichotomies is an accurate reflection of reality considering that the notion of "nation" is an ideal construction based on the idea of unity and homogeneity that the social, ethnic, and cultural facts of every country structurally and permanently contradict (Gafaiti 2003: 191-2).

Thus the narrative of a monolithic and pure French culture is contradicted by the realities of centuries of cross-cultural contacts occurring both within and outside of the borders of present-day France and is also the results of the colonial expansion of France beyond those borders.

The spatial/topographic nature of the French identity questions will be examined here through the consideration of political discourse, polling statistics and other significant cultural issues. This politico-cultural context will set the table for the primary thrust of this project, the examination of various interventions in the debate that are re-imagining France and French space in more inclusive ways. I will analyze a variety of "hyphenated" perspectives, from African and Algerian to Portuguese and *Pied-noir*, and argue that these should be considered together, in relation to each other and to the center. In my earlier example, the experience with the HCI forum on French from "far away" illustrates how certain topographic biases are conflated with identity questions. If citizens born in the suburbs of Paris risk being considered by some to be not quite French, hyphenated French, or in other words a Frenchman from "afar," it is in no small part due to the tendency to see the *banlieue* as fundamentally un- or less-French, a tendency long linked to the marginal, generally immigrant populations living there. At the same time France has long been a European exception, a nation of immigrants, and many Frenchman have origins from "afar," even if their difference is not immediately visible. This dissertation is concerned with such

invisible or less visible subjectivities. What is at stake is the issue of what France, and the French, look like—or should look like—and how the nation is positioned in and vis-à-vis Europe, its former colonies and the World. I will examine directors, rappers and writers who contest the closed, monolithic conception of Frenchness and the inside/outside binaries inherent in such a structure. My approach will insist on deconstructing these binaries from both the putative inside and outside, and it is in this perspective that the project is unique and will address key ways in which this contestation is manifested spatially, through a process of reimagining of French identity as de-centered and through a re-charting of Frenchness.

In an effort to escape the inevitable reductionism of the analyses offered within national binaries, scholars have proposed "transnationalism" as a framework for examining postcolonial contact and diasporic subjectivity. James Clifford posits that the "overlap of border and diaspora experiences in late twentieth-century everyday life suggests the difficulty of maintaining exclusivist paradigms in our attempts to account for transnational identity formation..."[2] Returning to the French context, Gary Wilder argues that the complex and often contradictory narratives of Republic and Empire have resulted in a situation where "transnational can be located within the nation-state itself" (Wilder 237). In short, this means that the very idea of "being French" is far more complex than the prevailing discourse would admit. As the use of Clifford, a cultural theorist, and Wilder, a historian, might indicate, my project draws on an interdisciplinary approach. In the area of diaspora studies, in particular, recent interventions have proposed more nuanced perspectives on what has previously been understood in oppositional terms of home and host. Clifford's analysis opens the door to what I will call "layered" perspectives on ethnicity and identity. Film has been a fruitful medium for the expression of layered subjectivities, and my analysis will draw heavily on a number of films from the past fifteen years. In the following chapters on film in

[2] *Routes,* cited in Thomas, p. 14.

general, and chapter three in particular—which addresses the tricky politics of naming *beur* and *banlieue* cinema—I will be particularly focused on how issues of identity in cinema are treated by scholars. The name games surrounding cinema in particular are emblematic of a wider problem of terminology. The slippery categories applied to films and filmmakers are simply an extension of the vocabulary used in wider cultural debates, both by scholars and in French public and political discourse. While I will endeavor to define these categories and outline their use and misuse, I will refrain from proposing any new terminology. I will, however, insist on slightly alternative definitions for some of the terms I choose to use.

To cite one example, I have chosen not to use the terms "mapping" or "remapping," which I find are irrevocably colored by Tom Conley's work on maps in cinema (*Cartographic Cinema,* 2007). While I do not necessarily seek to distance myself from Conley's work, my application of the term is far more literal. While Conley tracks a variety of maps—and more frequently various and sundry symbols thereof, such as the markings on a Holstein cow in *La Haine*—and their application in cinema, I am primarily concerned with maps used quite literally to chart territories in new ways. In *Jeunesse dorée,* for example, the protagonists map out a specific route, which they update along the way with a marker. Again in *Le grand voyage,* a real map is used as a recurring prop that often comes up in the generational conflict that is at the very heart of the film's concerns. By opting to use "re-charting" instead, I hope to signal my differing use of the map motif. Moreover the second definition for "chart" is a "sheet giving information in tabular form." (Merriam-Webster 2009). Thus when I extend my use of "re-charting" from the literal process of navigation in voyage to the symbolic concept of navigating through French identity, the term will also refer to the various polls and statistics pertaining to identity and integration that my reading hinges on.

Given that my own project draws from a variety of fields and genres—from politics to media studies, cinema, literature and music—naming my approach could also prove problematic. Since it involves deep and interdisciplinary cultural analysis, tracing the fundamentally spatial nature of identity debates in France as well as analyzing the various cultural artifacts representing contributions to that debate (or perhaps protests against it), the term cultural studies seems to best encapsulate my approach.

Re-charting French identity

The re-charting of French identity, a major focus of this project, involves escaping binary formulations of exclusion by quite literally moving beyond them. As discussed above, it seems fruitful to consider contemporary identity as a far more complex and flexible construction than imagined notions of national identity have traditionally allowed. As Zygmunt Bauman has noted, "If the modern 'problem of identity' was how to construct an identity and keep it solid and stable, the postmodern 'problem of identity' is primarily how to avoid fixation and keep the options open" (Bauman 1996). In other words, postmodern identity is identity in constant motion and therefore defies the reductive approaches commonly applied in French discourse and in typical academic approaches.

Using Bauman's brief definition, then, I will focus on what could be considered a postmodern version of the French "identity problem." With this in mind it is worth noting that many important interventions in postmodern theory have underscored the fundamental role of mapping or charting. Lyotard adds a spatial twist to the concept of identity as ideology in an Althusserian sense: "Even before he is born, if only by virtue of the name he is given, the human child is already positioned as a referent of a story recounted by those around him, in relation to which he will *chart his course*" (*La condition postmoderne,* my emphasis). In *L'invention du Quotidien*, de Certeau talks of cities as unreadable power networks that escape "conceptual mapping" (de Certeau 1990). Guy Debord and the Situationists set out to map the "physchogeographic" contours of a city, which have "constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that

strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones" (Debord, *Theory of the Dérive*). Baudrillard's *Simulacres et Simulation* opens with an anecdote about a map that covers the entire territory that it represents: a second-degree simulation in which cartographers replace reality with a map (Baudrillard 1981). Frederic Jameson pushes the spatial issue the furthest, contending that any "model of political culture appropriate to our own situation will necessarily have to raise spatial issues as its fundamental concern" (Jameson 1991). Jameson focuses on spatiality as a specifically "cartographic" issue, using the example of Lynch's *The Image of a City,* which describes the situation of mid-20th alienated city as a space in which people are unable to map, "in their minds," either their own positions or the urban totality. The essay pursues this line of thought beyond urban issues, arguing that we all "cognitively map" our social relationships within local, national and international systems.

The following chapters will take as a given the fact that many among the youth of France, whether visible or invisible minorities, cannot map their position in the French totality beyond their own quotidian space. They are relegated to that space by societal exclusion, pointed to notably in the 1995 film *La Haine*, which made an enormous impact and was famously watched by former French President Jacques Chirac and his cabinet in an attempt to understand the situation in France's suburban estates. *La Haine* portrays the division of space along the lines of *la fracture sociale* (social divide): the *banlieue* is isolated from Paris, as if it existed in a vacuum. This exclusion is such a recurring theme that it becomes almost a running gag, an acrid cream pie tossed in the face of the youths each time that republican inclusion seems more possible. After the trio is separated following the arrest of Saïd and Hubert in Paris, Vinz and another group of friends are denied entrance to a nightclub. Almost simultaneously Saïd and Hubert, who have just been released from their holding cell, arrive at the station just as their train is departing and the doors have been locked. Then after they are escorted out of the art gallery and denied a ride in a cab Saïd curses "Nique sa mère, on est fermés dehors!" (Fuck, we are shut outside!). The

separation from society is reinforced by the remark that the gallery owner makes as he shuts the door on the trio: “le malaise des banlieues.” This suggests a notion that one can simply close the door on the issue. The problem is therefore seen as not something within society, but outside: the malaise us not a question of “us” but “them.” The second half of this introduction will address this film in more detail, by way of establishing a comparison against which my conception of mobility is set. Kassovitz’s film will reappear as a reference point in a variety of discussions in the following chapters. My reading of the film suggests that while it has been approached as a violent film, that it is primarily about negotiation and accommodation. If violence ultimately prevails in the film, it is because the trio is stuck within a restrictive spatial zone, outside of French society and indeed in their cases, beyond the realm of hope. Despite the theme of negotiation, the film is a constant reference point for this project because it ultimately is unable to break out of the closed spaces of the *banlieue,* something that the works I examine in more depth do in a variety of ways.

The restrictive immobility of the film’s trio presents a stark contrast to the liberatory trope of movement that fuels the other works dealt with here. In many ways, *La Haine* could be read as a film concerned with movement. In a narrative sequence covering only one day, the young men move from *banlieue* to Paris and back. Relentlessly, restlessly, they move within the parameters of those two spaces. Even the camera and the plot are incessantly motive. Yet, motion here does not translate into mobility in a broader sense, social or otherwise, which seems to be off limits to the protagonists. Yosefa Loshitzky argues that the film’s “nervous movement not only conveys a sense of restlessness and lack of peace of mind, but it also expresses a state in which fixity and belonging are impossible because the latter demands possessing a place or belonging to a place, something that is beyond the experience of the three young males” (Loshitzky 2010:107). This observation that *banlieue* youth must struggle to find a place in society is justified textually by moments in the film. One might think, for example, of the scene in which

youth hang out peacefully on a tower roof, an improvised recreation center of sorts, only to be kicked off by the police. I would argue, however, that the fundamental issue facing the youth and the *banlieue* itself is not lack of fixity but ghettoization, which in turn leads to immobility. The youth's tripartite multiethnic friendship is an expression of belonging, but this does not and cannot extend beyond their local setting because of society's exclusionary stance that stigmatizes the *banlieue* and its inhabitants. I would therefore suggest that the film's nervous movement expresses a desire for mobility and a need to escape the clichéd suburban spaces and to forge connections between periphery and center. In short, fixity is part of the problem, not part of the solution. As Hubert confides to his mother, "I've got to get out of here." Furthermore Loshitzky's analysis, by suggesting that those who live there —or at least the younger generation— can never truly belong, seems to inevitably lead to a reading of the *banlieue* itself as "placeless." This is a sentiment that some of the works covered in the following chapters attempt to refute.

La Haine: the *banlieue* as closed space/*Black, Blanc, Beur* as potential open space

Mathieu Kassovitz's film *La Haine* famously features a *Black, Blanc, Beur* trio and has been the subject of much discussion and debate. While it has now been fifteen years since the film's release, the issues it deals with still seem equally relevant today. Perhaps this is why the debate continues, with a book on the film having been published as recently as 2005 and chapters devoted to it in recent works by Tom Conley (2007) and Yosefa Loshitzky (2010). Azouz Begag cites the film as representative of the latest, ongoing stage of *banlieue* disintegration (Begag 2005: 39).

La Haine's trio is drawn together in a solidarity of situation. Their "we" is separate from the wider French "we," a fact that the film continuously underlines. The trio faces economic and institutional exclusion, symbolically represented in the film by the city of Paris, separated spatially from the *banlieue.*

The question of equality, and especially equality of representation—as seen in the depth of characters—within the trio has been much debated by critics. Each member cannot be said to be entirely equal, but it is clear that a certain balance is sought. The interactions within the trio are manipulated by the director in an effort to subvert stereotypes that are commonly attached to each character's ethnic group. To this end, Vinz is the aggressive one while Hubert is wise and circumspect. As for Said, he defies stereotyped expectations, for example when he calls the *Beur* whose beating at the hands of the police provoked the riots shown in the film a "gangster" or when he rebukes a neighbor who has lumped him in with the youth of the *cité* who were involved in rioting.

Kassovitz's credibility as a chronicler of life in the *cités* has been called into question, casting doubt on the film's "authenticity" as a *banlieue* film. A group of *beur* directors cast dispersions on the film and its creator, arguing that Kassovitz was an "outsider" and that *La Haine* represented therefore an "inauthentic" portrait of life in the *banlieue* (Loshitsky 2010: 96) Likewise, critics tend to agree that Vinz, the Jewish character played by Vincent Cassell is portrayed with more depth and is the focus of more close-up shots than his *beur* and black cohorts (Vincendeau 2005: 64). By granting Vinz a privileged position, the film has been accused of marginalizing the two minority characters. Some critics have argued that Said, the *Beur* character lacks social depth because his home is never shown and that Hubert, the black character, is denied "social progress." These and other shortcomings have led to the suggestion that the film reinforces stereotypes despite its good intentions. The ultimate example of this would be the final scene, where Vinz is shot accidentally by *inspecteur Notre Dame*, who is then shot by Hubert. Vincendeau points out that Vinz, the most violent character in the film becomes an innocent victim at the end while the black character shoots the officer of his own volition (Vincendeau 2005: 60).

I will not attempt to refute these conclusions but rather to add an extra layer based on the actions of resistance by the group and suggest an alternative interpretation of the interplay amongst the film's

problematic trio. In any construct of "we," one gaze must be privileged. Thus the film's gaze is inherently flawed and limited, but perhaps necessarily so. Moreover, through its insistence on the predatory nature of the media gaze, the film itself reflexively points out the potential for voyeurism inherent in seeing anything through the lens of a camera. When Hubert yells to a television news crew questioning the trio from the relative safety of their car that they are not at Thoiry (a drive-through safari park), the viewer is once again reminded of the problematic nature of the camera's gaze. If Vinz is the primary focus of the gaze it because it is a white Jewish gaze. It is important to remember that however imperfect his vision is, Kassovitz has taken a significant step by seeking to see things through the diverse eyes of the multiethnic trio, and by extension through the eyes of the *banlieue* itself. In this sense, the gesture of openness towards others seems more important than the question of *banlieue* authenticity. This issue of vantage point, and the debate over who can represent whom, will reemerge in my discussion of Ghorab Volta's *Jeunesse dorée*, in which the *beur* director has opted to cast two white French girls as protagonists.

Returning to *La Haine's* narrative, it is clear that most of the resistance on the part of the trio is simply a manifestation of reflexive anger. Violent outbursts aside, there is little or no constructive attempt to fight the system. Each character has his own manner of resistance, which is tied to what Vincendeau called their "props." Vinz is associated with the gun, underscoring his violent temperament. His frequent outbursts are generally aimed at the police. Hubert's prop is boxing, a violent pastime but one that seemed to be productive and endorsed by the system. The *Beur* police officer that gets Saïd out of jail offers to help Hubert get funding to rebuild the gym. Until his gym was destroyed, Hubert was working within the system. Its destruction, however, seems to have left him disillusioned. Hubert is no saint, but nor is he a reprobate. He seems to have initially been willing to work within the system, perhaps to gain entry to society at large, and expresses his hope of escaping the *cité.* We see that he had quit smoking dope and stealing, only to take up both bad habits again. Even his illegal activities seem

moderated and help pay his mother's bills, effectively keeping himself and his family within society rather than outside of it, suggesting that he is effectively trapped between two undesirable choices.

Sociologists and other observers of the *banlieue* often point out the withdrawal of frustrated subjects from society into localized defensive formations, whether family, traditional values from the culture of origin, or, in the case of youth, the neighborhood (Body-Gendrot and Wihtol de Wenden 2007: 28). With Hubert having withdrawn from the public space, Saïd's intervention is the only one that can be viewed as positive or a gesture of openness and solidarity. Vincendeau maintains that Saïd has no prop corresponding to Vinz's gun and Hubert's boxing, but I would contend that he does. It is the spray can, or *bombe.* The film opens with a shot of him tagging the back of a police van that his essentially "occupying" the *quartier* with his name and "nique la police." He tags once more in Paris, crossing out the v in a billboard with the caption "le monde est à vous" (the world is yours) to make "the world is ours." Instead of leaving his mark in the form of a vulgarism as in the opening sequence when he vandalizes a police vehicle that essentially represents an occupation of his neighborhood, Saïd's Paris graffiti appears to betray a softer side. It is a gesture of solidarity that extends at least to his two friends or perhaps, given the large photo of earth seen from space, even beyond.

The scene immediately preceding the Paris graffiti takes place on a rooftop overlook, with the Eiffel tower and the city of Paris as a backdrop. It is the most tranquil moment of the film and also the trio's only occasion for quiet and reflective, even philosophical conversation. Reality imposes itself in the scene, in the form of skinheads seen below, but on the overlook they are above the fray and temporarily out of harm's way. Two disparate storylines unwind in this philosophical episode; in the foreground Vinz and Hubert are carrying on a serious conversation while in the background Saïd provides a running commentary of what he sees below in his typical garrulous manner. Hubert and Vinz joke about clichéd

maxims, which they call “des phrases à la conne” (idiotic sayings), such as “à chacun son métier” or “*liberté, egalité, fraternité.*” The latter, they say, is so rich that they save it for “special occassions.”

The wisecrack on republican ideals serves as a transition to a serious “philosophical” discussion about the old man in the cafe men’s room. In the midst of a heated debate about killing a police officer, the man emerges from a stall seemingly oblivious to the topic being discussed and utterly unfazed by the presence of three angry youths from the “dangerous” class. He recounts a story that is simultaneously banal and horrendous. While washing his hands, he tells the trio about the logistic challenges of relieving oneself while traveling on a prison train in Siberia, explaining that his friend Grunwalski was too modest to use the ground close to the train during toilet stops and was left behind to freeze one day when he failed to get back on board in time. Vincendeau rightly points out that this non-diegetic intervention by the director serves the purpose of evoking images of ineffable violence and racism, perhaps putting the violence depicted in the film into a clear historical perspective or continuity that allows us to better understand it. It is clear, however, that Hubert, Vinz and Saïd do not make a connection between the old man’s struggle and their own. They ask themselves numerous times why he told the story, but seem to focus on the lowbrow element rather than the suffering: “c’est Dieu qui fait pousser le caca? ... je ne comprends rien à la philosophie” (God makes the crap come out?…I don’t understand philosophy at all). Loshitzky suggests that the failure to understand the link between the persecution of Jews in recent history and the current, postcolonial situation generates an allegory about “Europe’s failure to understand the consequences of racism and to treat its postcolonial and other minorities justly, even in light of the aftermath of the Holocaust” (Loshitzky 2010: 101-2).

Loshitzky provides a footnote that opens the door to a slightly different reading of this episode in the film, one that is equally important in the context of contemporary French identity and memory debates. She is perhaps the only critic who has not entirely missed the point by ascribing the Grunwalski

story to the Holocaust. This seems to be an oversight by most—Loshitzky explains it by a lack of knowledge of the situation faced by Polish Jews—but in some instances the "oversight" becomes part of the story. Michèle Levieux, film critic for *L'Humanité*, seems to believe that the old man's tale directly references the Holocaust despite the fact that he explicitly locates it in Siberia: "This scene asks the question of how far you can go with hatred, Nazi hatred, because the ghettos were not like Saint-Denis, they were much worse" (Vincendeau 65). This recalls the longstanding French tendency to place the blame the deportation of Jews in France, along with other wartime atrocities, squarely on the shoulders of the Germans. This still recent episode in French history is quite relevant to the current debates and comes up in the work of Lydie Salvayre, which I discuss in chapter five, as well as elsewhere in the work of some of the filmmakers discussed in the following chapters. It is furthermore telling that Levieux, writing in a Communist newspaper, sweeps aside the obvious reference to Stalinist violence and conveniently assigns sole blame to the Nazis.[3] This is another example of willingness to push such issues aside, to abdicate one's own responsibility by ascribing it to the purview of some vague outside force. This reflex seems to mirror that of the gallery owner who conveniently shuts the door on the malaise, effectively closing himself off from it. They have both seen the enemy and he is somewhere over there, outside of the realm of French responsibility.

The juxtaposition of the Grunwalski scene with the joke about *liberté, egalité* and *fraternité* seems to suggest that the failure of these ideals is linked to the youths' lack of *fraternité* or *solidarité* outside of their circle of three. In other words, solidarity as a republican principal is incomprehensible to them. This is followed in turn by Saïd's interruption of the "philosophical" debate with the announcement

[3] Loshitzky's footnote explains that Stalin's deportations of Polish Jews to labor camps in Siberia (not extermination camps as critics tend to understand it) in fact saved the lives of the deportees, who otherwise would have likely fallen into Nazi hands (Loshitzky 2010: 185). This, however, does not change the fact that the Soviets willfully deported millions of people, whether Jews or not, and that the French communist press still is incapable of admitting as much.

that he has spotted a group of skinheads below, reminding the viewer again why the trio finds *fraternité* to be lacking and pointing out the fact that anti-Semitism is not limited to Nazis but can be found alongside other racisms in the heart of Paris. In this light, the reference to past Jewish suffering can also be seen as an attempt to destabilize dominant discourses on the superiority of French civilization and values by suggesting that such skinheads are not an aberration but can be positioned within a clear lineage. Such counter-narratives inevitably destabilize the vertical schemas discussed earlier that position "French" as the unquestioned pinnacle.

This segment of the film encapsulates the vicious circle*:* lack of solidarity precludes real gestures of solidarity. The trio has justifiably barricaded themselves from the elements of society represented by the skinheads and Le Pen, but their barricade has in turn closed them off from any positive or unifying gestures and any broader understanding of their struggle. The three youths fall into the category of what Begag terms the *rouilleurs*, youths "living outside of the normal social situation ... they have nothing to lose, and they set no moral limit on their behavior: they have no religion, no morality, no sense of civic responsibility, no fear" (Begag 2007: 43). Even in public spaces of resistance, such as organized demonstrations, the *rouillers* seem stuck, unable or unwilling to move beyond their anger to gestures of solidarity. Another example from Begag demonstrates this process:

> These people, for whom *les cailleras* has become a byword, engender feelings of rejection and exasperation among the general population. A recent sortie by this group took place in in March 2005 during student demonstrations against education reform. After mingling with the demonstrators they beat up, robbed, and insulted *petits blancs* (whites of lower social standing) of their own age.[4]

[4] Ibid., p. 43. *Caillera*is verlan, or reverse slang, for *racaille,* a term meaning scum that Nicolas Sarkozy famously used to qualify rioters while Minister of the Interior.

This seems like a lost opportunity for solidarity, or perhaps a demonstration of the impossibility of such a concept across the fracture lines of contemporary French society. Rather than feeling fraternity in a common struggle, the broader "we" disintegrates into smaller factions. In this case, as in *La Haine,* solidarity does not function in a public space but only in private ones. On the other hand, the youth's anger and violence, which sometimes borders on sheer delinquency, must be viewed next to the recurring image of their exclusion by society. They are thrown out or denied entrance no fewer than five different times: from a gallery, a train, a rooftop ad hoc rec center, a chic Paris apartment building and a club. Throughout the film the camera underscores this notion with shots that set the trio in the foreground with the evocative sights of Paris in the background. In the "philosophical" scene described above, Vinz, Huber and Said have the lights of Paris and the Eiffel Tower behind him. The city it is there for the trio to see, but it is inaccessible at best and hostile at worst. Indeed, after descending from the overlook they run into the skinheads they'd spotted from above and a melee ensues.

Throughout the film, the youth wander around idly, clashing with the police, scuffling with skinheads and being thrown out our excluded from diverse venues. An act of vandalism by Saïd represents the only concrete positive intervention by the group in the public realm. The film opens with a shot of him tagging the back of a police van with a popular insult against the police. Said's Paris graffiti—where he replaces the "v" in a billboard to make "le monde est à nous" (the world is ours)—appears to open the door to optimism. Even if the world seems accessible to them, there is perhaps hope. He will tag once more, this time in Paris where he replaces the "v" in a billboard to make "le monde est à nous" (the world is ours).

This optimistic take on an extremely violent film is based in part on Kassovitz's prior film. "Three's a crowd," reads the summary on the English language DVD cover of *Métisse* (translated oddly as *Café au Lait*). In this admittedly silly film the members of another problematic trio, this time a love

triangle, each sacrifice just enough of their self-interest and self-identity to come together in a Hollywood ending as an unlikely but functional family. Needless to say *La Haine* is more pessimistic. But there is some sort of solidarity implicit in membership in a trio, and we see this in the film. When Vinz is shot in the final scene, Hubert uses the gun that Vinz had just relinquished to kill the shooting officer. The sad irony is that Hubert, having finally convinced Vinz that shooting a cop was pointless, pulls the trigger himself. The same act by Vinz would have been utterly senseless, shooting the officer out of sheer reflexive anger and hate. By fulfilling his fallen comrade's oath to kill a cop if Abdel died, the shooting becomes an act of solidarity. It is however a private act, representing a closed form of solidarity. This negative form of private solidarity might be seen as a reaction to that concept's failure on a public level. The fact that the officer was downed by another officer's gun underlines the vicious circle of institutional violence.

With *Métisse* in mind, I would argue that the point of the *La Haine* is what ties together the trio, not what separates them. To function as a group, a "we," certain accommodations must be made within the *black, blanc, beur* trio. In the case of Said, critics have noted that the camera never enters his home. He seems to have been denied a layer of depth granted to the others. There are varied interpretations of this; for some the film "erases Maghrebi culture" while for others it is a positive step that the otherness of *beur* culture is not highlighted (Vincendeau 58-9). The validity of this interpretation might best be understood in light of the portrayal of Vinz's home life. As a white male, Vinz seems to have the best chance to integrate seamlessly into society. He, unlike Said, could easily pass for a "David," the name on a stolen credit card that the *beur* character tries unsuccessfully to use to pay for taxi fare. Paradoxically, Vinz's rejection of key tenants of Judaism, a stance that would facilitate his inclusion in secular society also permits him to "integrate" into the trio. From this perspective, the window into Vinz's Jewish home life seems to be there mainly to allow him to deny his own Jewishness, or at least some of its customs. He

is chided by his grandmother for preferring to "hang out" with his Black and *beur* friends over going to temple. On one level, her admonition underlines a generational shift. Likewise, the absence of Said's family might be explained by the generation gap that operates in many *beur* families. As Alec Hargreaves has pointed out, the reality of the immigrant experience in France is that each successive generation tends to see themselves as "more French" and less traditional than their parents.

With the question of assimilation in mind, I would like to briefly address the "invisibility" of identity in the "white" portion of the trio. On one level, the "white" member of a BBB trio might provide an opening for a link between the excluded minorities and mainstream society, thus breaking the French/Other dichotomy. On the other hand, the fact that Vinz is Jewish could propose that the Jew's true place in France is with the ranks of the "outsiders." The Jew has long been perceived in Europe as an outsider, Oriental and even sometimes as "Black" (Loshitzky 2010: 108). One survey shows that the French found Jews from Eastern Europe to be better integrated than Algerians and Moroccans but far less integrated than other "white" immigrants from Spain, Italy, Portugal and Poland (Hargreaves 2007: 144). The role of Vinz's Jewish identity is unclear in the film. This is consistent with a wider trend in French culture; as Mireille Rosello argues, Jewishness "continues to remain an elusive signifier" in French culture (Rosello 1998: 8). I would suggest that the complexity of Vinz's identity underscores a broader issue; the often overlooked question of "white" identity in France. White is not always straightforward, and is not always necessarily synonymous with "French." There seems to be a myth of invisibility surrounding previous waves of Catholic, European immigration. Many specialists on immigration in France refute the existence of communitarian identities within previous waves of immigrants (Schnapper 1998). The example of the Portuguese, as late as 1999 still the largest foreign population in France, demonstrates how the so-called "generic" French identity is not as clear as some would have it. Second-generation Portuguese in France have sketched the parameters of this identity online. "Miki," a character

created on a blog, represents the stereotype of a "second generation Portuguese," in the creator's words. The very fact that such a stereotype exists demonstrates the need for a reexamination of what the "norm" is in France. As the norm shifts, the roles and vantage points ascribed to those "inside" and "outside" might also change, perhaps collapsing that exclusionary binary altogether. Here we might think of the duality of perspective offered in the novels of Lydie Salvayre (chapter five). The hidden differences of her Spanish origins provide an interesting twist to her themes of anxiety and xenophobia. This question will also be taken up through an analysis of layered identity in *Salut Cousin* and *White* in chapter two.

Accommodation

Returning to the BBB trio, we might consider that is something to be gained, and given up, by opening one's space to others. This brings to mind Derrida's formulation of hospitality as an "interruption of self" (Derrida 1997). In *La Haine,* hospitality as a reciprocal value might best be conceived of as friendship, a private version of solidarity. While the youths are denied a broader, republican solidarity, the tripartite friendship that they forge portends the possibility of an opening beyond their own space. This concept could be thought of as accommodation, a simple term that conveys a number of associations in its dictionary definition. In the most general sense adaptation, adjustment, and reconciliation of differences; in a more specific context that will prove pertinent to this project, lodging and food for travelers.

An example of accommodation is represented quite literally in survey on the interactions between Muslims and non-Muslims in France. Researchers analyzed the reaction of Muslims invited to dine at the home of a non-Muslim. A small number (2%) stated that they would refuse such an invitation while 22% would only accept if their host served Halal food. Nearly three-quarters of those surveyed said they would accept, with 59% agreeing with the stipulation that *they* would avoid eating pork or partaking in alcohol. I am most interested in those who would accept and would be willing to adapt their own comportment to meet their hosts on common ground, or in this case a common table. What is attractive about this image is

the principle of people from disparate traditions coming together not by losing their own traditions, or even hiding from them, but through a simple process of accommodation. This is a concept that might be close to Balibar's notion of *civilité,* described by Susan Gearheart as lying "in the ambivalence of identification and the ambiguity of repression to the extent that it is viewed not as a limitation to overcome but rather as a condition of sociability and freedom. That means that civility cannot be identified with national culture but equally important it cannot be simply identified with minority or immigrant culture either" (Gearheart 2005).

To bring us back to the film, the spirit of accommodation on the part of the 59% is how I see the trio coming together. Whether or not this was Kassovitz's goal is a question of extra-textual interpretation, but it is clear that the lack of "social depth" allows the three main characters to come together around a common table. For the film to succeed as a portrayal of a *Black, Blanc, Beur* trio, the relationships amongst friends had to be privileged in the narrative above family links. The result is the trio's *amitié,* an inclusive place for those excluded from the French enclosed space. In the end, however, it appears that accommodation is not enough to spare Vinz, Hubert and Said from the violence engulfing their *banlieue.* The only solution possible seems to be escape, something Hubert longs for, but which is destined to go unrealized.

The reflexive anger manifested by *La Haine*'s trio is a response to societal exclusion and violence. This often takes the form of outbursts not dissimilar to those we see in the film, and has the direct effect of feeding vicious circles of exclusion, anger and resentment. For suburban youth this generally takes the form of violence directed towards the police or public buildings as symbols of the government or towards perceived symbols of capitalism such as shopping centers or cars. From the putative ethnic, cultural and social "inside" looking out, however, anger is often expressed electorally and as verbal outbursts in public forums. Such anger is often aimed at the perceived outsider, whether the immigrant or the *banlieue*

resident, and is a defensive and self-enclosing reflex. Each of the works examined in the following chapters—from music to novels and film—builds on the notion of "closed space" so central to *La Haine's* concerns.

The angry white men: *niniste* anger and the self-enclosing rant

La Haine provides a cogent demonstration of what the French closed space looks like from the outside. The sociology of the *niniste* provides some insight into how the closed space is formed vis-à-vis the suburbs and the wider world as well as into the anger and emotional violence that is prevalent in French identity debates. This perspective offers a helpful context for understanding the non-violent and non-confrontational nature of the artistic interventions in the debate that are analyzed in the following chapters.

A *niniste* is first and foremost a member of the unfortunate fraternity dubbed by political analysts as the "mâles blancs en colère" (Mayer 1999: 127). These "angry white men" are part of a burgeoning population of malcontents who appear to have been largely responsible for the spike in support for Jean-Marie Le Pen in 1995 and 2002 and more recently the rejection of the European Constitution and perhaps also to a lesser extent the electoral success of Nicolas Sarkozy. In the political context, the term is derived from the formulation "ni de droite ni de gauche" (neither right nor left), and also from the verb "nier," to deny. French political scientist Nonna Mayer suggests that the vote for the Front National in 1995 and 2002 was not the product of a resurgence of the extreme right in France but rather a "phénomène *sui generis,* généré par les transformations de la société capitaliste" (A sui generis phenomenon caused by transformations within capitalist society).[5] She proposes a sociological model that divides Front National voters into two camps, the *ninistes* and the *droitistes*. Each group accounted for half of the FN's electoral support and each has a very different outlook on politics. *Droitistes* are the voters who have traditionally

[5] Mayer, p. 14. All translations are mine.

subscribed to an ideology on the extreme right of the political spectrum. *Ninistes* are likely to come from a leftist background and have come to support the FN out of frustration (Mayer 2002: 34-41). They may cast a vote for Le Pen, but their support is ephemeral. They generally hold leftist ideas of politics and nearly half of them voted for candidates on the left in the previous election.[6] Furthermore, almost half say they would consider voting for candidate on the left in a future election (Mayer 2002: 231). *Ninistes* do not wish to engage in politics or join a political party; their vote is a protest vote stemming from frustration and anger.

Much of their anger appears to be connected to spatial concerns related to France's shifting position in a "globalized" world. As for the "nier" in *niniste*, that verb can be defined as to "deny reality." This is part of a reflex, which I will examine in greater detail later, of enclosing or barricading oneself into an imagined monolithic space. Of all groups of French voters, the *niniste* strain of the *Front national* are the most likely to consider themselves as "seulement Français" (solely French) when questioned about their identity vis-à-vis Europe.[7] The opposition to European integration is part of a broader "front du réfus" formed by Front National voters against infringements on their way of life.[8] This protective shield against the outside world is the product of a fear of immigration and a general attitude of "ethnocentrism" (Mayer 2002: 148).

The political characteristics of the *ninistes* are manifested in literary form by the practitioners of what I term "*ninisme littéraire."* The literary *niniste* may be considered related to but separate from the unaffiliated group that Daniel Lindenberg has named the "nouveaux réactionnaires" (Lindenberg 2002, Marteau and Tournier 2006). Their work provides a sort of xenophobic counter-narrative to the music,

[6] Mayer, pp. 225-7. The data is from the 1995 presidential elections and the 1997 parliamentary elections. Mayer's book came out before the 2002 elections, but her niniste-droitiste model seems to hold up in that election as well.
[7] Mayer, p. 248. The droitistes are more likely to call themselves "plus Français que Européen," while a slight majority of non-FN voters consider themselves "autant Européen que Français."
[8] Mayer, p. 147.

film and novels that I will analyze in the following chapters. The finest example of this ad hoc movement is Michel Houellebecq, whose ideological trajectory seems to have taken him on a passage like that of the political *ninistes*. He starts somewhere on the left with *Extension du domaine de la lute* (1994) and seems to tack to the right with *Les particules élémentaires* (1998) and then *Plateforme* (2002). For this reason he has often been compared to Céline, whose work demonstrates a similar trajectory from *Voyage au bout de la nuit* through *Mort à crédit,* culminating with incendiary and antisemetic pamphlets published before and during the Nazi occupation. The invectives of Céline's fiction provide the inspiration for Bruno, the angry white male protagonist of Houellebecq's *Les particules élémentaires*. Houellebecq's literary outbursts are analogous to the protest votes cast by the *ninistes.*

I consider Bruno to be a one man *front du réfus*. With vitriolic passion he rejects out of hand anything he deems superior, inferior, or otherwise different from himself. Of his many hateful monologues, the most relevant in this case is one provoked by the seemingly innocuous mention of Brazilian dance:

> "Pourquoi le Brésil? S'il y avait un pays detestable c'était justement, et *tout à fait spécifiquement, le Brésil*…je pourrais partir en vacances au Brésil. Je circulerais dans les favelas. Le minibus serait blindé. J'observerais les petits tueurs de huit ans, qui rêvent de devenir caids; les petites putes qui meurent du sida à treize ans…"
>
> "Why Brasil? If ever there were a detestable country, *Brazil would be exactly, entirely specifically it*…I could go to Brazil on vacation. I'd drive through the *favelas.* The van would be armor-plated. I would watch young , eight-year old killers who dream of becoming gangsters, the little whores who will die of AIDS before they turn thirteen… " (134, my emphasis)

Bruno imagines a horrifying and clichéd voyeuristic tour of the Brazilian ghetto, in which he would be armor-plated (*blindé*) for his own protection. His diatribes seem to construct a metaphorical barrier between himself and what he perceives as the dangerous barbarians that globalization and immigration have forced him into contact with. Looking further, the choice of the term *blindé* seems to betray a willful

attempt to connect the *favela* of Bruno's imagination to the French *banlieue*, where the term has a strong symbolic connotation.

The concept of being or armor-plated (*être blindé*") has been described by Azouz Begag as a reflex of self-defense by youth of immigrant background in which the quest for financial success is conceived as a means of armoring oneself against racism (Begag 2005: 44). For many *banlieue* residents, being armor-plated means protecting oneself from societal exclusion, and even sometimes from the violence perpetrated frequently by the police, who are often seen as society's only emissaries to the *banlieue.* Houellebecq has quite insidiously turned the tables, portraying the middle class and white Bruno in the role of the potential victim. Thus the apparently ridiculous over-specificity of Bruno's diatribe ("If ever there were a detestable country, Brazil would be exactly, entirely specifically it.") is in fact misleading. The *favela* would at first glance seem to serve as a metonym representing all ghettos. Yet considering the emphasis on specificity and the use of the term armor-plated phrase, we might also suspect that the *favela* equals the French *banlieue,* and perhaps by extension that all ghettos of the world equal the French *banlieue*. Bruno's misplaced specificity in fact underlines a double-edged anxiety towards both the vicissitudes of globalization and the more immediately disturbing presence of its representatives on French soil. For those like Bruno, the French *banlieue* is in fact the metonym for all of the perceived filth and disorder of the world, which he imagines being spread into France through globalization.

Bruno's stance is very defensive, and this is quite consistent with the latest trends in xenophobia. Unlike earlier integral nationalism, contemporary "racialized nationalism" is more concerned with national defense than with national aggrandizement (Silverman 1999: 48). For this reason, the discourse of the *Front National* has frequently been linked to a notion of decline (Maghraoui 2003: 223). The FN diagnosis points almost obsessionally to problems such as AIDS, the so-called "decline" of the family and

the diminishing quality of life in urban areas (Perrineau 257). What makes Bruno's *favela* rant particularly perverse is the fact that he reverses the typical *frontiste* motif of "invasion." Perhaps the key to the flipped roles is that the "invader" is perceived to have control, while the neo-colonial undertones of the sordid ghetto tourism excursion sets up a relation of voyeur to stereotype.

Both the *niniste* protest vote and the diatribes of Bruno are quite similar in origin as well as in effect to the rants I will discuss in chapter one. Those rants, I shall argue, are fundamentally concerned with the defense of an imagined closed space that must be protected. This discussion will be picked up again in chapter five, this time from a literary perspective. The "angry white woman" narrator of Lydie Salvayre's 1991 novel *La vie commune* (*Everyday Life*) is a solitary and paranoid individual who seems to differ solely by gender from the infamous angry white males who frequently vote for the National Front and their fictional equivalents in the novels of Michel Houellebecq. Her fiercely protective stance towards the frontiers of the two spaces in which she spends most of her time, her apartment building and office, are reflective of wider French border anxieties and provide the context for an analysis of Salvayre's 2000 novel *Les Belles âmes*.

Beyond closed spaces: road trips and rappers

In response to the closed spaces suggested in *La Haine* on the outside of the equation and the *niniste* ranters on the inside the following chapters approach the travel narrative as a process of "cognitively mapping" French identity, to return to Jameson's term. In other words, movement opens the possibility of mapping one's position in the national and global totality by proposing new perspectives on static formulations of identity. Through travel narratives, the writers and directors I will consider have subverted traditional representational models and escaped static binary formulations of identity. Chapter one, which focuses on rap music, examines movement from a slightly different vantage point. While the

lyrics and musicians I examine do not travel per se—with the exception of walking through their neighborhood—the music, as I hope to demonstrate, has done the traveling for them. The first chapter will engage with the concept of various vantage points on French identity through the starting point of the music and the public interventions of the rapper Mokobé, incorporating other pertinent examples from French hip hop such as NTM, Disiz La Peste and Abd al Malik. My goal is to demonstrate how the *banlieue*—a floating signifier that evokes images of invasion, drugs and delinquency for some—is re-appropriated in hip-hop as a space that is multicultural and transnational and yet still very French. My use of the term "hip-hop" here designates not just music and musicians, but a stance on the part of those musicians that manifests itself in their political and media interventions. This chapter suggests that rap music and French hip-hop in a wider sense invite us to envision the local as global. While rap is indelibly linked to the suburbs, in musical form as well as by ethnic makeup of artists and audience, French rap is a fundamentally transnational entity. Indeed in this sense rap is in tune with republican ideals, open to negotiation of difference and always already multicultural due to historical migration patterns and years of cultural mixing inherent in its musical influences. Finally, placing rap within the context of often violent and vitriolic identity debates, this chapter argues that it represents a largely positive and constructive influence in social discourse.

Chapter two moves from rap to cinema and begins the process of moving physically outside of the *banlieue* with *White* and *Salut Couisn,* two films made in France in the mid-1990s by filmmakers in exile. Continuing the thread of diasporic connections within French identity, this chapter examines how flexible stances towards diaspora and immigration in films by Krzysztof Kieslowski from Poland and Merzak Allouache from Algeria translate to a re-imagination of static conceptions of identity and a reevaluation of Frenchness within the context of a recently borderless Europe of the mid-1990s. Each filmmaker employs fresh narratives of diaspora and exile to present their respective identities (Polish and

Algerian) as layered with and within French identity. The various connotations suggested by Polish identity in France, from long-assimilated in the case of descendants of earlier waves to recently arrived and unwelcome in the case of post-Berlin Wall arrivals—epitomized by the "Polish Plumber" as scapegoat for E.U. expansion—point to the diversity of immigrant subjectivities present in France. Both films are above all comedies, albeit representing dark approaches to the genre. Accordingly, in *White* Karol Karol (Polish for Charlie, as in Chaplin) is not the gallant Polish exile of yore but a hairdresser who suffers in exile but is eventually able to carve a transnational existence. In *Salut Cousin,* Mok is an aspiring rapper who faces a substantial deficit in street credibility due to his failed attempts to fuse hip-hop and high culture. His unfortunate fate aside, the film forwards a vision of identity which privileges mobility across national borders and discursive categories. Each film presents new visions of immigrant and migrant trajectories. Rather than privileging integration as an end, these films posit notions of identity in which central places are accorded to peripheral narratives.

Chapter three continues with film, moving into an exploration of the road movie that will encompass the following chapter as well. The 2004 films *Le grand voyage* by Ismaël Ferroukhi and *Exils* by Tony Gatlif address what are considered by many to be the two most important components of the French identity debate: the role of Islam and the *travail de mémoire* (memory work) between France and Algeria. Each film stages identity questions within the context of voyage. After opening in highly evocative suburban settings, the films hit the road, suggesting that crucial questions about France and French identity can no longer be adequately addressed, let alone answered, in these rigidly defined, clichéd spaces that trigger a series of seemingly unavoidable associations about violence, immigration, integration, Islam and the identity debate catchword "insecurity." This chapter also engages in a discussion of the problematical parameters of the *beur* and *banlieue* cinema categories and the generic conventions central to those "genres" as well as to the road movie in its European iteration.

The travel, or road, film in particular provides a particularly rich platform for a reevaluation of identity. The road movie genre is known for rebellious protagonists who seek to escape the traditional limitations and conventions of society. European road movies, however, differ from the more famous American model by seeking rather to travel "into the national culture, tracing the meaning of citizenship as a journey" (Laderman 2002). Hitting the road allows a filmmaker to escape the particular set of representational and spatial expectations that accompany a movie that deals with identity issues.

The road narrative opens the possibility of reformulating inflexible and reductive formulations of Frenchness and also avoids a pratfall inherent in representing a "minority" or marginal perspective. Recent scholarship has underscored the issue of certain political and artistic interventions that reinforce preexisting representational binaries. As Lionnet and Shih have argued in *Minor Transnationalism,* traditional approaches to the "minor" question have reinforced, or relied on, major/minor binaries and otherwise keep the center central and those outside always outside, *à venir* (Lionnet and Shih 2005). In his book on political commitment in French cinema since 1995, O'Shaughnessy builds his analysis on Rancière's theory that a politics based on existing identities of dominated groups can only serve to reinforce the status quo (O'Shaughnessy 2007). These examples serve to demonstrate the potential traps inherent in representing the *banlieue.* Often works attempting to contest spatial exclusion contestation run the risk of simply falling into entrenched binary conceptions of society.

One specific example of this, taken from the field of cinema, will be central to my project. Since the 1980s, when some thirty films were made by *beur* directors, France has seen an explosion of films made by directors of North African origin, whether technically *Beurs* or not (Rosello 1996; Bloom; Tarr 2005). This clearly seems to be a positive development, and specialists can now speak of a "*beur* cinema aesthetic" and perhaps even a *beur* cinema genre. However the ossification of categorical givens poses

problems on the levels of reception and criticism. The category of *beur* cinema can be considered a "discursive ghetto," to use a term coined by Hamid Naficy. The discursive ghetto can "lock filmmakers into genre or ethnic categories that fail to account adequately for the filmmakers' personal evolution and stylistic transformations over time" (Naficy 204). Even for sympathetic viewers, the *beur* filmmaker might serve as the "native informant" of banlieue culture, repeating unpleasant but comfortably worn stereotypes about life on the margins. One additional pitfall inherent in such categorizations also merits mention here. *Beur* cinema is often confounded with *banlieue* cinema, which Tarr defines as cinema addressing suburban issues by directors of non-*beur* origin. This is problematic because while the latter tends to focus on violent confrontation, as in films such as *La Haine* and *Ma 6-T va crack-er, beur* films have been more concerned with peaceful negotiation of suburban issues. It is therefore not surprising that filmmakers have sought to escape the constraints and prejudices that their work faces by moving outside of typical *banlieue* settings. The following chapters will both problematize the naming of the *beur* category and expand on it.

Chapter four also discusses a film that starts in the *banlieue* before venturing into unexpected territory. Zaïda Ghorab-Volta's *Jeunesse dorée* (2000) narrates a voyage of discovery by two young suburban girls, who undertake a project to photograph isolated housing projects across France. Rather than staging the commonplace and expected periphery to center voyage, the film charts a course through a variety of peripheral spaces across France. Analyzed together with François Maspero's book project *Les passagers du Roissy-Express,* the film provides an unexpected portrait of France in which human contacts are more important than media stereotypes. Both works in fact use stereotypes to their advantage, offering them up with great subtlety in order to confound expectations of what we think we know on the topic on the *banlieue* and constantly forcing us to approach the issues from new angles. My reading of both works

draws out their subtle tactics of resistance to the spatial and identitarian clichés that predominate in French debates.

The final chapter addresses Lydie Salvayre's 2000 novel *Les belles âmes,* a mocking portrayal of upper class French who, imagining themselves curious and goodhearted humanitarians, undertake a "reality tour" of the worst suburban slums of Europe. Salvayre's novel links the vertical concerns of my research—epitomized by the polls on immigrants perceived levels of immigration, with "true" French identity at the top—with horizontal modes of exclusion. As white woman, Salvayre might seem to approach the suburban question from the outside. Her work, however, demonstrates a preoccupation with the darker side of French history and identity, often mediated through surreptitious references to her own background as the daughter of Spanish Republican refugees interned in French camps during the Second World War. My analysis of the novel examines Salvayre's satirical portrait of French approaches to the *banlieue* question and attempts to link anxieties surrounding the peripheral zones with wider spatial concerns stemming from reactions to European expansion. Salvayre's entire corpus is marked by a bitingly ironic style, which in *Les belles âmes* is aimed at the perceptions and clichés that stigmatize the *banlieue* and the general state of societal indifference shown by France to its citizens of lower classes. Her work also demonstrates a deep concern for language and the power it wields in society, and this novel approaches this question through the center-suburb divide, positioning the cultivated language of the ghetto tourists against the street slang endemic to suburban youth.

This chapter will place Salvayre's work within a wider context of contemporary French fiction—ranging from a group of engaged *noir* writers headed by Didier Daeninckx to the *Editions de Minuit* coterie of authors labeled as the *romanciers impassibles* (impassives) and a recent wave of young *beur* and *banlieue* novelists that includes Rachid Djaidani and Faïza Guène. I argue that this disparate group of

writers share a concern for topography that is linked to the shifting landscape of France and of French culture discussed in the preceding chapters.

Together the works examined in the following chapters represent a variety of perspectives on French identity, approached through numerous genres and vantage points. Several prominent themes can be traced through these varied works. Primary among these is accommodation, a stance of interruption of self and openness to others that facilitates difference within the framework of French identity. Often less obvious but equally important is the element of resistance. While some rappers are overtly political, many of the other authors or directors have used their work to question less directly the social, political, economic and, of course, spatial inequities that mark French society. Broad-based and clear-cut solutions are rarely proposed. Instead, each work addressed here offers a vision of life that while small in in scale, has the possibility of being vast in scope either because it reaches an audience that embraces the vision presented or by fosters discussions such as the one I am endeavoring to undertake here.

The potential reach of each of the works is one factor for their inclusion in this project. Rap in particular has reached an extraordinarily wide audience of young people, while remaining relatively marginal on the radio airwaves[9]. Film, at least in some instances, has been not far behind when television rebroadcasts and DVD screenings are added to initial box-office receipts. Of the directors I will address, Merzak Allouache, Tony Gatlif and Ismaël Ferroukhi have reached relatively large audiences. Though they were all screened at Cannes, Zaïda Ghorab-Volta's films have not enjoyed the same reach. *Jeunesse dorée* is nonetheless a thought-provoking work that should continue to generate critical debate for a long while. This is in no small part due to the fact that the director has gone to great lengths to avoid the

[9] While numerous rappers boast large sales figures and more than 50% of people younger than 18 are said to have attended at least one rap concert, in 2007 only 4.7% of airtime devoted to playing music was allocated to rap, whether French or otherwise. "Statistiques de la culture" report from the French Ministry of Culture and Communication. http://www2.culture.gouv.fr/culture/deps/2008/pdf/Chiffres-cles-2009.pdf

clichés that cinema industry movers have asked her to put in her films to attract an audience. Cinema also has the advantage of being able to express the complexity of the issues at stake through image, dialogue and music. Often at least two of these elements are at work in any given scene, promoting more complex readings of the narrative. For these reasons and others, a great number of artists have found in cinema a medium for their engaged art. While as a field cinema is clearly not as easy to break into as rap—many of the first wave of successful French rappers famously literally emerged into studios from the street—the CNC's *avance sur recettes* funding scheme (advance on box-office receipts) has made it much easier for first-time directors to make a film. A number of *beur* directors in particular have also worked outside of typical production circuits to produce films (Tarr 2005: 10).

The vantage point on the *banlieue* of Lydie Salvayre, the novelist whose work I have chosen to examine here, reminds us that irony is still a powerful weapon of the weak in the fight against predominant narratives that are oversimplified and exclusionary. Her work has not reached as wide an audience as most of the previously discussed rappers and directors but is nonetheless worthy of attention. My choice of a relatively obscure writer should not be taken to mean, as many voices have charged, that engaged and provocative fiction has lost its luster or its reading public, even if both seem diminished. On the contrary, some of the writers I discuss in that chapter by way of establishing the context for Salvayre's work have had great success. Notable among these is the engaged *noir* writer Didier Daeninckx. The fact that the written text remains a powerful force in France is demonstrated by the choice of a growing number of musicians to "crossover" into writing fiction. Among the performers who are discussed in chapter one who have done so are Magyd Cherfi of Zebda and rappers Abd al Malik and Disiz la Peste. This trend goes beyond music; Tony Gatlif's latest film, *Liberté* (2009), was also released concurrently as a novel.

The porosity of these media categories brings us to another important point. The primary sources I employ come from a range of media but trace the lines of a narrow thematic, this within a limited time period. While I anticipate a certain degree of criticism aimed at the variety of genres and media covered in this project, I would argue that it is not possible to provide a coherent and complete picture of the issue without addressing examples from across the broader field of culture. From the perspective of reception of the artistic works in question, the annual reports of the French Ministry of Culture and Communication demonstrate that French cultural practices are more varied and fragmented than ever. People in France engage with culture through music, at the cinema, on television and, increasingly, online. In attempt to analyze the cultural resonance of a particular theme at a particular moment in France seems doomed to failure if reductive generic parameters are applied. In 2007 a mere 58% of French people read a book and only a slightly higher number (61%) went to a movie.[10] With this in mind, a complete picture cannot be sketched from a single medium. From the perspective of artistic production and engagement, then, telling the story one wishes to tell, and reaching an audience with it, may require a variety of approaches. If auteurs are jumping from one medium or genre to another, it seems logical to take a similarly flexible critical angle. Moreover, it seems particularly reductive to approach a study on "boundary crossing" in a cultural and political sense from a perspective that has encoded generic or other limitations. After all, as the forthcoming discussion will bring out a number of times, the critical approach to these works has often fallen into binaries that replicate those they seek to refute.

Audience is just one element of the equation. In a more general sense, moving past the statistics, the subversive task undertaken by the auteurs addressed in the following chapters calls for a diversity of counter-narratives and a variety of modes of expression. Each of these represents a small contribution

[10]Annual French Ministry of Culture and Communication report, accessed October 2010. http://www2.culture.gouv.fr/culture/deps/2008/pdf/Chiffres-cles-2009.pdf

towards resistance to prevalent narratives and the seemingly inescapable stereotypes that they propagate in French society.

Chapter 1 - Rants and Raps: Hip-hop, transnationalism and new republican spaces

"I often let people say or write that I grew up in the *banlieue* because it amuses me," French rapper Oxmo Puccino tells an interviewer. "It fits the cliché too well! When someone belongs to a certain ethnic category, they inevitably are from the *banlieue.* But I grew up in the 19th arrondissement of Paris."[11] Puccino's anecdote encapsulates a mindset prevalent in France, one that equates the marginalized space of the suburbs with racial stereotypes. Left unstated in his remark is the equally widespread (and somewhat more accurate) perception of rap as a *banlieue* musical form. While some rappers have fueled such clichés, purveying a particularly sensational, angry and violent brand of hard-core or "gangsta" rap and linking it to the realities and stereotypes of the suburban districts they come from, many others have worked to complicate representations of spatial and racial marginality. Rap music and hip-hop culture in general has been mobilized as the primary, and often sole, medium through which the suburban youth of France can articulate their vision of France and the World and of their marginalization (Oscherwitz). In the process notions of French space and identity are complexified, while the very premises of exclusionary discourses that relegate rap to the margins and push marginal residents to a zone outside of Frenchness are deconstructed. Rather than striking back at the center with fury and violence, which as *La Haine* demonstrates would seem to reinforce and perpetuate alienating dichotomies and also engender further violence, French hip-hop is capable of providing an appealing counter-narrative to the xenophobic flare-ups emanating from some quarters of French society and politics. Oxmo Puccino's game—pretending to be from the *banlieue* to those who appear not to know any better while letting others in on the secret—is just one example of the flexibility that French rappers demonstrate in dealing with questions of origins, place and racial identity.

[11] "Au-delà des couleurs," an interview with Oxmo Puccino. *Monodomix,* volume 037, Nov/Dec 2009.

This chapter approaches French rap from a wide angle, pausing to zoom in more closely on the infamous group NTM and the solo rapper Mokobé. I attempt to sketch a picture of French rap as an inclusionary and transnational entity, from the starting point of the defensive and self-enclosing outbursts that I qualify as rants. Rants are verbal tirades that construct closed spaces. As I aimed to demonstrate in the introduction, the formation of enclosed spaces can be distilled down on a fundamental level as a negative reaction to globalization. Having found themselves on shaky ground and facing perceived economic and social pressures emanating from a vague "elsewhere," many have responded with defensive fury. Their anger derives from, and in turn contributes to, social atomization and has a self-enclosing effect. This enclosed space established by xenophobic discourse can be interpreted as a *front de réfus*, a line of defense protecting an idealized and even mythical *France profonde* against a mythicized barbarian invasion. Brice Hortefeux, the first chief of the Ministry of National Identity, founded by Nicolas Sarkozy in 2007, explained that the effort to preserve French identity was a response to both "globalization and identity politics" (Tshimange 2010: 267). As this statement demonstrates, the lines were clearly drawn to position Frenchness as an immutable essence and everything else as a menace to be combatted. The specific geographic lines of demarcation in this battle are difficult to pin down, as they clearly do not correspond to the external borders of France (or Europe) but are extended to internal enemies. While Hortefeux connected the perceived ideological dots between globalization and national identity, Sarkozy was arguing that "there is a clear link from the unregulated immigration policies of the past thirty or forty years to the social unrest in the suburbs" (Tshimange 2010: 267).The stance of the new French ministry might best be summed up by the syllogism: insecurity equals immigration equals the *banlieue.* Whether these so-called enemy forces are concealed around Calais or living openly in the *banlieue* seems immaterial; often the *banlieue* comes to be equated with a foreign body on French soil.

Some might also perceive danger lurking in seemingly innocuous places such as the music for sale at the FNAC or in the food stalls of the local market, where the tangible artifacts of globalization are on offer. The behavior of Bruno—Michel Houllebecq's infamously crass and spiteful "angry white man" fictional creation from *Les particules élémentaires* who is quoted ranting in the introduction—provides a humorous link from a vague nostalgia for a lost (and equally vague) Frenchness to the angry, xenophobic reactions that have bolstered the National Front in election standings and contributed to the formation of the stigma surrounding the *banlieues.* As I have argued, Bruno's diatribes seem to construct a metaphorical barrier between himself and what he perceives as the dangerous barbarians that globalization and immigration have forced him into contact with. His xenophobic syllogism could be summed up as: bossa nova equals *favela* equals *banlieue.* In other words, in Bruno's rant a contrived connection between French suburbs and the world's ghettos is made. The *banlieue* becomes a fantasized metonym for global slums, triggered by seemingly innocuous references to global culture (here Brazilian music). Discourses on globalization and insecurity have combined to create a multifaceted amalgam of border anxieties. As Begag points out, social exclusion has led to a situation in which travel between center and *banlieue* resembles crossing a border (Begag 2007: 37). The anger of Bruno, like the anger of National Front voters, is a self-enclosing gesture, a rant with the effect of shutting the door to France as well as numerous doors within the country. What makes Houellebecq's fictional ranters pertinent is that they seem to be representative of trends that fuse concerns over globalization, immigration and integration.

Often the targets of these rants are not "foreigners" but citizens and residents of foreign (or perceived foreign) origin in France, for whom the *banlieue* or the "*banlieue* youth" serve as metonyms. I would first like to set out the parameters of this "closed Republican space." While the lineage could certainly be traced farther back, the pamphlets of Céline, whose shadow is evident in the work of

contemporary literary ranters such as Houellebecq, seem to be a good starting point. There is a fundamental similarity between the structure of the *célinien* rant (in pamphlet form) and its contemporary incarnations. The invective of the pamphleteer-ranter is oral, non-constructive, reflexive and solitary in nature. In other words, a verbal storm that does not seek to sway an audience: anger for anger's sake, without any direct practical or political application. Albert Chesneau outlined a schema of the components common in this sort of expression of xenophobia, taking the example from Céline's pamphlet *Bagatelles pour un massacre*:

- A closed space, ensuring its inhabitant protection
- A barrier or wall surrounding the closed space
- Hostile beings who wish to enter (pénétrer) the space to kill the inhabitant[12]

In other words, the primary elements are a closed space (real or imagined) and hostile persons (again real or imagined) who serve as scapegoats for all that is wrong and harmful (once again, sometimes real but often imagined). In the current discourse, the closed space (France) remains unchanged, though the "hostile being" has shifted from the Jews targeted by Céline to the "Arab," the scapegoat of preference for contemporary ranters. The particular examples I have cited so far are literary, but the model is evident in contemporary public and political speech as well. Here is how Azouz Begag described a rant he was subjected to as a guest on a call-in radio program:

> ...an exasperated listener from Nice tore into me on the air, screaming that he no longer dared even say the word *Arab* in everyday conversation for fear of being taken as a racist! "We're not even allowed to call them Arabs" he screamed at me. For him, that was the ultimate act of dispossession. He found the situation grotesque and intolerable: he was no longer *at home,* with the familiarity and intimacy where you can say whatever you want, whatever you think, about 'foreigners sticking their *souk* into your quiet, ordinary

[12] Cited in Sébold, p.41.

> life'... I let him carry on spitting it all out until the program presenter asked him to moderate his remarks, which were becoming openly racist... (Begag 2007: 22, Begag's emphasis)

This rant follows the classic model: once the speaker builds up a head of steam he forgets about his interlocutor and audience. Meanwhile his monologue grows ever more spiteful before sliding irreversibly into hate and perhaps even dementia. The reaction to the perceived incursion into his enclosed space, his "home" or "quiet life," by the *souk* has a double effect. First, the speaker relegates the other to their own enclosed space, in opposition to his own. The other's space is exclusively "foreign" and "Arab"; a *souk* cannot be French, he seems to say. Secondly, he gets so engrossed in his tirade that he closes himself off even more, seemingly forgetting that he is participating in a conversation. This effectively eliminates any possibility of exchange or dialogue with those outside of his own imagined enclosed space.

The development of this verbally expressed exclusionary binary is not just the purview of ranting radio callers and provocative authors. President Nicolas Sarkozy, as might be expected, is also not exempt from ranting. Jean Quatremer, a journalist with *Le Monde* covering the E.U. beat, reported in his blog on that newspaper's site xenophobic rants by Nicolas Sarkozy during meetings with his Irish and Swedish counterparts in 2007. The tirades, according to Quatremer's sources, carried on for twenty minutes as Sarkozy invectively bemoaned the presence of "so many Muslims in Europe" and their "difficulty of integration." The French President then continued to cite the "clash of civilizations" theory which positions Europe and Islam as polar opposites incapable of negotiation.[13] While Sarkozy is a particularly

[13] "L'histoire se raconte dans les chancelleries européennes. Nicolas Sarkozy, recevant le Premier ministreirlandais, Bertie Ahern, le 21 septembre, puis suédois, Fredrik Reinfeldt, le 3 octobre, se serait livré à une véritable diatribe anti-musulmane devant ses invités. Selon mes sources, le chef de l'Etat (photo: Thierry Monasse) s'est lancé dans une diatribe confuse d'une vingtaine de minutes, *« dans un langage très dur, très familier, choquant pour tout dire»*, contre le *« trop grand nombre de musulmans présents en Europe »* et leurs difficultés d'intégration. Il a aussi décrit de façon apocalyptique le « choc de civilisation » qui oppose les musulmans à l'occident." "Coulisses de Bruxelles" Blog, 14 November, 2007.

divisive figure, this rhetoric represents nothing truly new. It has been argued by Hafid Gafaiti that these exclusive narratives, which are in contradiction with the inclusive reality of French history, have long been cultivated by French institutions.[14] Often the terms used to frame the debate, whether well intentioned or not, have contributed to the externalization of those not deemed "truly" French. Thus concepts of "*l'insertion*," once favored by the Left, "*l'assimilation"* proned by the Right or Le Pen's "*l'invasion des immigrés"* discourse, each nuanced and coded with its own political meaning, all imply an enclosed space.[15] One particularly amusing example of the prevalence of this inside/outside thinking and how it pertains not only to the external barriers of France or of "Fortress Europe" but also to internal barriers constructed within France, demonstrated by the conference held in 2004 by the *Haut Conseil à l'intégration*, named the "Forum de la réussite des Français venus de loin." One of the invited participants, Larbi Benboudaoud, a former judo world champion who happens to be a *Beur* declined the invitation. When a journalist asks why, he retorted with anger and exasperation "Je ne suis pas 'venu' de loin, je suis né à Dugny, dans les 93! Pendant combien de temps on va me rappeler que mes ancêtres ne sont pas gaulois? (I haven't "come from far away," I was born in Dugny, in the "93." How long are they going to keep reminding me that my ancestors are not Gauls?)[16] This anger, a response from the other side of the exclusionary binary is this chapter's starting point.

While it is entirely understandable, we could imagine that such anger would have little persuasive power and also in turn risks falling into the traps of the rant. Rather than refuting the tenants around which the original closed space is constructed, it forms a second closed space. This does nothing to call into question the tenuous principles and sundry contradictions that the original xenophobic rant are founded on. What, for example, does it really mean to be *Gaulois*? Tying the parameters of contemporary

[14] Gafaiti, pp. 191-2.
[15] An outline and history of the use of these terms in the "immigration" discourse can be found in Maghraoui, pp. 220-3.
[16] Marteau and Tournier, pp. 15-16. My translation.

Frenchness directly to Gaul is clearly a questionable proposition. Benboudaoud's rebuke, however, leads us to the inevitable chicken and egg question that rears its head constantly in debates over the *banlieue* in general and rap music in particular. To what extent is behavior deemed as anti-social or, often, anti-French simply a response to exclusion by society and its institutions? Alex Hargreaves argues that the riots of 2005 were simply an expression of frustration by youth who find themselves on the outside looking in (Begag 2007). Of course the unrest in the suburbs has in turn been a boon for politicians who wish to play the "insecurity" card, leading to discourse and eventually policies that reinforce further the initial sentiment of isolation.

The danger of perceptions forming barriers around the *banlieue*—both from the outside and from within—is demonstrated in two sequences from the novel *Boumkoeur,* a story of life in the *banlieue* by Rachid Djaidani, a young writer of Sudanese-Algerian origins. In one sequence a television journalist came into the *cité* to interview a group of youth. He gives the young men alcohol in order to "make the verlan flow" and asks clichéd questions such as "Who among you has a gun?", "Who sells drugs?", and "Which of you spent time in prison?"[17] The youths, at once resentful of the stereotyping and wishing to uphold their image, metamorphose into a "poster for *La Haine,*" before beating up the "voyeuristic" cameraman and taking the camera as a reward, in a nod to the scene in *La Haine* in which the youth chase away a camera crew with rocks (21-22). In a later scene, the novel's narrator and protagonist Yaz falls prey to stereotypes in quite a similar way. His new friend Grézi keeps him in an underground cave in the bowels of their HLM, on the pretext that he is hiding from the police. Grézi confides to Yaz that he has killed a man, a racist who mistreated him. Yaz feels for his friend, whom he considers "une nouvelle victime de la société qui sera punie d'avoir commis un meurtre à cause de l'orgueil fougueux de la jeunesse et aussi à cause d'un poivrot, facho comme un rat, qui possède chez lui une véritable armurerie

[17] Djaidani,21. All translations are mine.

pour se protéger du bicot et du négro (yet another victim of French society who will be punished for having committed a murder out of foolish youthful pride and also because of a drunkard, a fascist rat whose house is armed to the teeth in order to protect him from dirty Arabs and Negroes, 61)." So both boys are closed in, the cave transformed into a "véritable bunker" (a quite literally closed space) to protect Grézi from the police.

We eventually learn that Grézi did not kill anyone but rather he had used the story to kidnap Yaz in order to extort ransom money from his parents. So Yaz had allowed himself to be tricked into getting shut off from his family and from society, *blindé* or "bunkerised" in a sense, based on a prevalent image of racism and an equally clichéd conception of a "typical" response to it. The moral of the story is similar for the reader—who should have been forewarned by the journalist's experience earlier in the novel—if he/she also fell into the same trap of believing in the clichés surrounding both the "facho" and the violent ghetto youth. Those who expected a clichéd narrative of racism and crime (in short, voyeuristic ghetto literature) are therefore disappointed, although a different sort of crime was committed. It seems that the lesson both for the fictional Yaz and for us as readers is that perception, more so than reality, is often responsible for creating barriers.

The issue of barriers, whether real or imagined, around the *banlieue* brings us back to rap. In his 1998 study of French rap, the first of its kind, Manuel Boucher examines the violent lyrics of the group Ministère A.M.E.R. The group's 1992 album *Pourquoi tant de haine?* (Why so much hate?) aims its venom at the French police, rapping explicitly about beating officers or sleeping with their wives. Boucher concludes that the anti-cop tone of the group is "to a large extent backed up by the sentiment of *banlieue* youth" (Boucher 2008: 204). Again as in Benboudaoud's case, the anger is justified in the context of *banlieue* exclusion, but the response is not a step towards a better level of understanding (though attacking a police officer is clearly a more serious act than berating a journalist on the phone).

The anger of many other rappers is, on the other hand, primarily expressed in ways that promote fusion, *métissage* and *mixité*. Similar to the situation in *La Haine,* rap formulations of *solidarité*, epitomized by the "possé," are more localized, limited to a *cité* or perhaps a *department*. Rap and hip hop diverge from the divisive if justified reflexive anger on display in *La Haine* in their desire to transcend boundaries that enclose spaces and separate individuals from society at large. Rather than building up walls they seek to "knock down doors," to borrow a line from a rap by NTM co-founder Kool Shen.[18] Not acting out with the potentially balkanizing acrimony, the response of rap is largely constructive and has the goal of building solidarity from the bottom of the republican space to the top and also across national and transnational borders. Rap and hip-hop music in France propose not simply alternatives to ideological constructions of an imagined and static "true" France, but also call into question the very notion of immobile or rooted identity (Oscherwitz).

My examination of French hip-hop and rap aims to demonstrate how the music maps the local—tthe *banlieue,* the *cité* or even thea dministrative department—as a microcosm of France[19]. This is not France as it sees itself, but an openly and willfully multicultural France. French rap is primarily concerned with *métissage,* spatially, culturally and ethnically. Building on the work of Edouard Glissant, Françoise Lionnet describes *métissage* as "the constant interaction, the transmutation between two or more cultural components with the unconscious goal of creating a third cultural entity—in other words a culture—that is new and independent even though rooted in the preceding elements."[20] The rappers that I examine here are actively working to create a culture rooted in French republican values yet inextricably linked to a variety of transnational sources.

[18] "On a enfoncé des portes," Kool Shen.
[19] Several such administrative departments around Paris, such as the "93" and the "92," both of which will come up in te following chapters, are essentially suburban or at least perceived that way in popular imagination.
[20] Lionnet 1989, Ibrahim 2008: 233.

While music itself represents an example of constant interaction corresponding to the unconscious criterion set out by Lionnet, the musicians in question are highly conscious of the task they are undertaking. From its very origins, the makeups of many French raps groups have corresponded to the multiethnic composition of the *banlieues* from which they emerged. While we can consider French rappers and hip-hop artists as representatives of *banlieue* diversity that recalls the image of *Black, Blanc, Beur* accommodation presented in *La Haine,* I contend that music successfully breaks past the barriers that immure that film's trio in a hopeless and ultimately inescapable closed space. This aspect of the French rap scene is reflected in two key ways. First, even some of the most provocative, confrontational and notorious rap groups, while espousing protest, promote a vision that is not fundamentally oppositional. Rather, they seek to redefine the concept of French identity to be more inclusive and reclaim a place in France and in French society rather than simply protesting against it from the outside. While some rappers are staking a claim in a broader, more inclusive conception of French space, one in which the *banlieue* is an active and equal part of France, others are complexifying local and marginal identities. Rap music invites us to envision the local as global, for while rap is indelibly linked to specificity of the suburbs, in musical form as well as by ethnic makeup of artists (and audience), French rap is a fundamentally transnational entity. Indeed in this sense rap is republican, open to negotiation of difference and always already multicultural due to historical migration patterns and years of cultural mixing.

Rap Culture: Between Anger and Engagement

Rap in France, as art and as action, is in a liminal space, somewhere between alienation and engagement. Once again, Kassowitz's work provides a helpful point of comparison within the recent political context. Representing, in the words of Serge Toubiane in *Cahiers du Cinéma,* a return to the political, *La Haine* is clearly an engaged film (Gabon 2009: 122). However as a political film it must be

considered within a contemporary context. Like other films of the *jeune cinéma français* movement is considered a product of a "post-ideological" era in which traditional forms of political engagement have made way for often violent individual revolt or a "retreat into family, friendship or fantasy" (Vincendeau 2005: 35). This can be seen as part of a wider trend. Silverman points out that "the breakdown in the ability of the modern institutions of industrial society and the republican tradition (state education, secularism in the public space, trade unions, political parties, political parties, the army, and so on) to integrate people around the common projects of equality and *solidarité* has opened up a new space for the clash of cultural identities" (Silverman 1999: 49). On a political level, this new postmodern space could leave an opening for increased ethnic or racial strife. In 1993 Sami Nair warned that the processes of "unfettered globalization of the economy, the general deregulation of social systems and the institutional breakdown of the nation … have undermined traditional forms of collective solidarity, accentuated selfish individualism and provoked irrational defensive actions … in this situation ethnicity is of crucial importance as in ex-Yugoslavia."[21] While Nair's analysis presaged upheavals in the *banlieue* in 1995 and once again in 2005, there is no indication that the situation has degraded to that extent that a civil war along the lines of that experienced after the dissolution of Yugoslavia is a real possibility.[22] Moreover, while *La Haine* cannot be considered an entirely realistic portrayal of urban reality, its depiction of increasing fragmentation along lines of social and class exclusion rather than ethnicity does appear to be accurate (Vincendeau 2005: 60).

As I have attempted to demonstrate, observers often point to globalization as a source of disquiet for certain elements of French society. While some on the Right and on the Left have viewed it as an unwelcome assault on traditional French values, most rappers seem to have a very different vantage point.

[21] Sami Nair, 'Ou va la France?', *Le Monde,* June 16, 1993. Cited in Silverman.
[22] 'Autant de signes qui nous rendent optimistes et nous poussent à croire qu'en dépit des discours anxiogènes, la guree civile n'aura pas lieu." Marteau and Tournier, 12.

Even the most provocative artists of this genre, while politically engaged and often enraged, do not generally promote violence such as that envisaged by Nair. While some French rap lyrics are unquestionably confrontational, the violence they do promote is limited and frequently channeled specifically through "*la haine du flic,"* which I shall address later. Nor do they promote a racially driven discourse. The first wave of successful French rap groups were all multi-racial, a pattern of ethnic composition that has been frequently repeated by the groups that have subsequently emerged from the *banlieue*.[23]

Many French rappers have undertaken the task of breaking down barriers and stereotypes both in their music and through their media and public interventions. This effort can be encapsulated as a general stance in support of cultural *mixité.* There is no doubt that as French rap has enjoyed greater success it has also grown increasingly commercialized (Cannon 1997: 162-3). Charles Tshimange observes that while commercially relevant and even enormously successful, French rap is more than an entertainment commodity because it "creates counter-narratives in conflict with official discourse." The record sales of female rapper Diam's, for example, topped 2.7 million Euros in 2006, the third highest totals of any French musical act. Diam's is perhaps best known for her song "Ma France à moi," which openly challenges the government and President Sarkozy in particular. This sort of success and the prevalence of rap on the French charts since the early 1990s have led Tshimange to conclude that French rap "suggests that popular culture is the site at which cultural hegemony is being challenged" (Tshimange 2010: 253-260). On the level of diversity, the concept of *Black, Blanc, Beur* in a rap context should be seen not as a slogan or a commercialized buzzword, but rather as reality. Rap or hip-hop has been associated with the term since its origins in the 1980s of *S.O.S. Racisme* and *La Marche des Beurs*. While focusing on a narrowly constructed and localized notion of the posse, the majority of rappers simultaneously benefit

[23] *Le Monde*, February 5, 1991.

from a global perspective that might best be described as "rhizomatic." Globalization is not a menace but a reality that is manifested in a spirit of cultural, political and artistic *métissage*. I would like to emphasize that this is not an idealized construct, but a fact demonstrated by the ethnic makeup of rap groups. Ethnic diversity has been a hallmark of French rap since the music form was introduced in France. For example, the groups represented on the first major French rap release, entitled *Rapattitude,* include:

> Assassin (from the *18e arrondissement* in Paris, "composé de membres dont les origines vont du Maghreb à l'Afrique noire, en passant par la Corse, les Antilles et l'Ireland"; Dee Nasty (a white deejay from the Cité de la Pierre-Plate in Bagneux; EJM (mother from Martinique, father from Cameroon); Lionel D (from Vitry-sur-Seine; white mother, black father)... Saliha (a *rappeuse* from Bagneux; Maghrebi father, Italian mother) and Suprême NTM (from St Denis; their two permanent members are white rapper Kool Shen and West African Joey Starr). (Cannon 1997: 153-4).

This diversity remains on display today and is explained by the simple fact that most groups are formed in the ethnically diverse *banlieue.* To cite more recent examples, 113, the group whose cofounder Mokobé I will discuss at length later, comprises members with origins in the Maghreb, Guadeloupe and sub-Saharan Africa.[24] Meanwhile star *rappeuse* Diam's is French-Cypriot and a rapper from Val-de-Marne who goes by the name Rocé himself represents Algerian, Russian and Argentine origins.[25] Today, even many of those that aren't multi-racial seem to promote – both through their lyrics and through engagement and media interventions – societal inclusion and more opportunities for the *banlieues*, and in general to reclaim more solidarity for disadvantaged youth within a republican framework. Despite the influence of hard core or "gansta" rap, French rap offers a constructive criticism of society and focuses on negotiation of difference.

[24] "L'Afrique rap de Mokobé," *Le Monde,* 12 June 2007.
[25] **"**Les intellos du rap**,"***Le nouvel observateur***,** 18 May, 2006.

In a series of interviews carried out by *Libération* following the 2005 riots, rap artists from the Paris *banlieues* made a variety of comments that defied stereotypes of rap as inherently violent and bellicose and which surprised casual observers in France and elsewhere: "j'attends plus de solidarité"("I expect more solidarity," Bams), "il va falloir une mixité sociale plus grande"("a greater level of societal mixing is needed," Ahmed from La Caution), "je trouve que la France ne me donne pas le respect qu'elle me doit"("I think that France does now give me the respect she owes me," Base from Brigade), and "il faut lancer le débat sur les discriminations … il y a une quête d'équité a laquelle il faut répondre"("a debate on discrimination should be launched…there is a search for identity that needs to be addressed," Doc-K from Brigade). Some went as far as to point out that the youths needed to remember the importance of their right to vote (Oxmo Puccino) and even to "learn to say thank you" for their right to protest and express themselves (Disiz La Peste). Even Kool Shen, formerly of the notorious group NTM., refused to justify the violence, while reminding readers that sometimes violence seems like the only solution to frustrated youth: "est-ce que brûler des voitures et des écoles c'est la solution? Certainement pas, mais ca a l'air d'être la seule. D'un coup, on débloque les budgets pour créer 20 000 jobs" (is burning a car or a school the solution? Of course not, but sometimes it seems like the only option. All of a sudden they make room in the budget for the creation of 20,000 jobs).[26]

Solidarity, social mixing, debates on exclusion: these terms seem to come directly out of traditional French republican discourse. In each instance, however, they are invoked to critique the fact that these republican principals are in short supply in the Republic that purports to stand for them. Unlike the memorable scene in *La Haine* in which the trio calls the republican slogan "*Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*" a "stupid phrase" worthy of no more than mockery, each of these artists seems to hold these tenets in high regard. The point of contention centers on the unequal racial and territorial application of

[26] Stvphanie Binet, 'Les rappeurs l'avaient bien dit', *Lib*ération, *November 15, 2005.*

such republican ideals. In this light, it is not surprising then that those who feel excluded are seeking new formulations of identity, as Doc-K's comment above suggests.

It is important to qualify that the various interventions of these artists should not necessarily be considered as "engagement" in the tradition of the French engaged intellectual. While a number of rappers could be qualified as intellectuals—members of La Rumeur boast a Masters' degree and a PhD, Abd al Malik has a philosophy degree and is prone to cite Camus and Derrida while Rocé drops names and ideas from Kateb Yacine to Molière—it is the engaged component that is up for question.[27] As numerous observers point out, the collapse of the *grandes croyances collectives* in France (The Church, the Communist Party, even workers' identity) has significantly informed practices of engagement. The reality of engagement post-1968 seems to be that there are no longer any large, inclusive groups fighting as a unified front. Contemporary engagement is less public and collective and more private (if not individual) in nature.

Across the ideological spectrum, French are growing less politically active and are less likely to join a political party. These trends are even more pronounced amongst young people. There are indications that the success of the *Front National* and the hardening of anti-immigration or xenophobic discourse may provide the impetus to reverse these trends. A poll by *Sofrès* indicates that the highest factor of motivation to become engaged is "the struggle against a party that appears dangerous" (the *Front National* was not specifically mentioned but the wording strongly implies that party is in question). However, a corresponding statistic points to the difficulty of harnessing the collective potential of that engagement. Only 57% of the youths questioned said that they were ready to become part of a specific

[27] "Les intellos du rap," Le nouvel observateur, 18 May, 2006.

group combating a "dangerous" party, and only 2% of respondents claimed to be a member of such a group.[28]

This retreat from the political has led to some seemingly contradictory impulses in the hip-hop and rap scene. On one hand, etymologically speaking the verb "to rap" means in French "bavarder," "scander," "proférer." Rap, by definition therefore implies the desire to speak out and to reach an audience.[29] On the other hand, many rappers express discomfort at the idea of being seen as an ideological or political spokesman. In *Le Monde de Demain*, NTM sings: "Je ne suis pas un leader, simplement le haut-parleur" (I am not a leader, just a loud speaker). This sentiment is verified by co-founder Kool Shen in interviews, where he has emphasized that he is not a role model (Boquet 191). Other rappers have embraced activist roles, from Mokobé and Diam's who collaborated on a song in honor of the seventeen African immigrants who died when a fire struck their tenement in the 13th Arrondissement in August, 2005, to the rapper Casey, who sees rap as part of the media, with the role of reporter.[30] MC solaar, perhaps the best-known French rapper and the first to go mainstream, has been a fixture on television news programs, where he appears to speak out against Le Pen and the National Front (Winders 2006: 156). Other rappers opt for a grassroots approach: Ministère des Affaires populaires (NAP) sponsors local writing workshops and volunteer in prisons.[31] With this in mind, I would suggest that the "debate on discrimination" and "search for identity" that Doc-K from Brigade mentions in *Libération* plays out in French rap as a multidirectional process, at times linked to activism and at others playing out in the music.

Rap and Republican spaces

[28] Horvath and Varouxukis, p. 148. The Front National was was not mentioned, but the researchers who led the study believe it was inferred.
[29] *Le Monde*, November 11, 2005.
30 **"**Les intellos du rap**,"**Le nouvel observateur**,** 18 May, 2006.
[31] Ibid.

Rather than selectively examine rap lyrics culled from a range of artists, I will focus on tracks by NTM. The group is a multiethnic duo, comprised of Kool Shen, who of Portuguese origin, and Joey Starr whose family is from Martinique. They are perhaps best known for the "*affaire NTM,"* in which they were charged with "outrage par paroles" for insults directed at the police during a 1995 concert. It is the introduction to a song that got them in trouble (song lyrics themselves are protected by artistic free speech laws). This occurrence of reflexive anger would meet the criteria for a rant, but most of the group's lyrics seem to be constructive, sometimes angry but seeking an audience and promoting a certain viewpoint, if not a platform per se. NTM at times wore both the hats of angry men from the *banlieue* and of proponents of *métissage* within the republican framework. For NTM this tension is manifested in the seemingly contradictory raps "J'appuie sur la gachette" (I am pulling the trigger) and "Pose ton gun" (Put down your gun).

NTM addresses the French "other"—those in power—with the informal *tu,* a technique commonly employed by rappers to belittle their target. But they do not seek to form or reinforce divisions, rather to break down barriers separating the *cités* from mainstream French society. NTM expresses disdain for the police, but also chastises violent youth and criticizes the government for its lack of interest in the *banlieue*. I will look at some lyrics from the controversial song in which "Joey Joe" (presumably Joey Starr) dreams of shooting a *keuf* (verlan for "cop") before examining in greater detail two raps that promote solidarity and *métissage*.

NTM was introducing the song "Police" at the 1995 Concert des Libertés when they asked the crowd to start chanting "nique la police" (Fuck the Police) and "nique Joey Starr." This gesture does not seem particularly provocative coming from a group whose name stands for "nique ta mère." However it was enough to earn them a fine and a 3 month jail sentence. While the lyrics of the actual song may seem offensive, calling officers "souvent mentalement retardés"(often mentally retarded), repeating the insults

from the introduction, and asking for bullets "pour la police municipale"(for the municipal police) the song sounds less like a threat and more like a warning of future problems. A denunciation of excessive "contrôle de papiers" (document checks) and unwarranted violence leads to the warning: "Eduqu*ons* les forces d'ordre pour un peu moins de désordre" ("Let's educate the forces of order for less disorder," my emphasis). As in *La Haine*, where the fantasized shooting of the police officer is carried out only after the youth are subjected to several *interpellations* by the police*,* the rap describes two *contrôles* before the dream of tracking down a cop in the subway. These internal ID checks, which have the ostensible goal of detecting illegal immigrants, have been the source of great distress and frustration for those (often young) French citizens who differ visibly from the perceived "typical" Gallic look. In *9.3 Mémoire d'un territoire,* Yamina Benguigui interviews a young man from Clichy who recounts being submitted to nine such identity checks in the course of a single day when he ventured into a nearby affluent neighborhood. Essentially selective internal "border checks," these *contrôles* leave many citizens in a position of constantly proving they belong in France (Hargreaves 2007, xiv).

While it does seem to justify violent responses to police discrimination, the track also promotes participation in government. The lyrics formulate two levels of we*,* two communities, which can be considered public (and ostensibly republican) and local formulations of the term. While there is obviously a barrier constructed between these spaces, it is equally clear that NTM is claiming a stake in both. The first-person plural form of the verb "éduquer" suggests a republican *nous* exclusive perhaps of only of the police, the ones being educated. It implicates anyone and everyone in the formulation of public policy choices that have very real impacts on the ground level.

Additionally, there is a second, more local *nous,* that of the posse: "Je préfère faire confiance aux homeboys de ma rue, vu" (I'd rather place my trust in the homeboys from my own street) and "De la part de tous mes complices/Des alentours ou des faubourgs" (From all my accomplices / From the outskirts

and the suburbs). Unlike in *La Haine*, in which there appears to be no possible overlap of the "we" comprising the three protagonists and the broader republican "we," the space outside of their *cité,* this rap suggests a possible fusion of the two conceptions of "we" through a dialogue.

"Homeboys" and "complices" reference the notion of the "posse," developed in other NTM raps such as "Soul Soul": "Quelques coups de fil à Saint-Denis / pour avertir le posse" (Some quick calls to Saint-Denis / to warn the posse).[32] Rappers in general, and NTM in particular, often claim not to represent the entirety of disaffected youth but specifically their posse in particular or the youth of their own *quartier* more broadly. NTM cofounder Joey Starr proclaims "nous, on se veut représentatif des gens des cités de Saint-Denis" (we want to represent the people of the projects of Saint-Denis).[33] Yet by placing their accomplices in "les alentours" and "les faubourgs*,"* NTM seems to speak from and for the periphery without reinforcing the harsh binary dichotomy that the word *banlieue* would suggest. There is a subtle but clear movement from the street to the wider concept of "outskirts." At the same time, they are not hiding from their native Saint-Denis, the primary city in the infamous 93 *département.* The very mention of the 93 provokes a series of negative images, both real and mediatized. Many of these are addressed with great subtlety in Benguigui's documentary *9.3 Mémoire d'un territoire* (2006). To cite another example in the film, sociologist Daniel Verba of suburban Paris XIII University explains that many of his students express skepticism over the value of their degrees when in competition with more renowned universities closer to the center of Paris. They have, he remarks, internalized a "*stigmatisation du territoire*." There is a degree of ambivalence, however. Many residents of the 93 are simultaneously aware of the stigma surrounding the department and proud of coming from there.[34]In rap this ambivalence

[32] Boucher, p. 254.
[33] Joey Starr, quoted in Boucher, p. 167.
[34] While teaching at Paris XIII University in the 93, I was quite surprised to see that many students incorporated their suburban home department (whether 93, 92 or 95) into their e-mail addresses.

is often manifested in a tension between concepts of violence or exclusion on one hand and accommodation and belonging on the other.

In the above lyrics NTM speaks to the center, and perhaps to everyone who will listen, from the carefully chosen and willfully vague "alentours," which they attempt to present as spatially if not culturally and politically marginal. In "Le monde de demain" (The World of Tomorrow), by contrast, they push their "infamous" *banlieue* origins to the forefront. Here they do not shirk from identifying themselves with the notorious side of the *banlieue*, as the opening lyrics show: "Pur produit de cette infamie appelée la banlieue de Paris" (Pure product of the infamy known as the *banlieue* of Paris). The notions of local solidarity between posse and *quartier* are still evident: "Dans mon quartier la violence devient un acte trop banal" (In my *quartier* violence becomes too banal) and "Pourquoi les jeunes de mon quartier vivent dans cet état d'esprit" (Why do the youth of my *quartier* live with this frame of mind).

The lyics of this rap confront the issues facing the suburbs and draw out the lines of a local solidarity. But when they ask, "combien sont dans mon cas..." (how many share my situation) they are opening out beyond the posse and beyond Saint-Denis. The movement is from local to republican, a "we" is established that transcends the posse to suggest a wider notion of solidarity and common purpose. This we reappears in the stubbornly optimistic and activist refrain: "Le monde de demain quoiqu'il advienne nous appartient / La puissance est dans nos mains alors écoute ce refrain" (Tomorrow's world, whatever it may become, belongs to us / The power is in or hands, so listen to this refrain).

The barrier that excludes this we, keeping it outside and marginal, is once again at the level of the state, or the system: "Même le système qui nous pousse à l'extrême" (Same as the system that pushes us to the extreme). It is the leaders, the same one responsible for the security policies that lead to the incessant identity checks, who have isolated the *banlieue* and approached it with indifference:

C'est que depuis trop longtemps

Des gens *tournent le dos* Aux problèmes cruciaux

Aux problèmes sociaux qui asphyxient la jeunesse

Qui résident aux abords au Sud, à l'Est, à l'Ouest, au Nord

Ne vous étonnez pas si quotidiennement l'expansion de la violence est telle

Car *certains* se sentent seulement concernés

Lorque *leurs proches* se font assassiner...

Est-ce ceci la liberté-égalité-fraternité ? J'en ai bien peur

It's that for too long

People have turned their back on crucial prroblems

On the social problems that suffocate the youth

Who live on the outskirts to the South, East, West and North

Don't be surprised when the violence spreads each day

Because some people are only concerned when those close to them are killed…

Is that liberté-égalité-fraternité ? That's what scares me

The lyrics criticize a closed, limited version of fraternity preferred by those who would "turn their back" on the problem*s*, recalling the scene in *La Haine* where the door is shut on "le malaise des banlieues." Again also in *La Haine,* the republic is criticized with its own slogan by the excluded, who ask if it is living up to these words. The lyrics specifically single out France's leaders : "Alors va faire un tour dans les banlieues / Regarde ta jeunesse dans les yeux toi qui commande en haut lieu" (So come take a tour of the *banlieue* / look in the eyes the youth, you who rules from up high). The informal *tu* form is a common insult in rap and a way to re-appropriate the rules of grammar to subvert conventions. It also seems an appropriate response from below to those "up high" whom have made a habit of talking down to the

banlieues, from Chirac's "le bruit et l'odeur" speech to Sarkozy's "racaille" comment. The lyrics insult representatives of the Republic while simultaneously extolling the ostensible tenants that same Republic was founded on.

I have already mentioned that NTM declares in this song that they are not "leaders," but "loudspeakers." This stance seems in conflict with the message of the refrain: "the power is in our hands." Perhaps the goal is not to lead but to speak out, as they rap in the same track "En tant qu'informateur je me sens obligé de dévoiler la vérité / Car le silence ne sera plus jamais plus jamais toléré" (As an informer I feel obliged to unveil the truth / Because silence will never again be tolerated). As rappers, NTM's version of engagement is a struggle through words: "je suis armé de paroles" (I am armed with words). This posture might be understood as a constant tension between engagement and alienation.

A similar tension is at play between the notion of speaking out and fighting through words—the idea of "le mic" as a weapon is common in French rap—and the possibility of actual physical violence.[35] The recourse to violence might be best understood in light of the concept of "être blindé," or being armor-plated, that is described by Begag as a reflex of self-defense.[36] As Begag described the term, a quest for financial success is conceived as a means of armoring oneself against racism, but it seems that "arming" oneself would serve the same psychological purpose. In *La Haine* Vinz sees the gun is a way to be armor-plated, as a reaction to institutional exclusion and the specter of police violence. NTM's armor-plating is fundamentally different in the sense that it serves the purpose of breaking down barriers. As the title of the track "White and Black" (from the 1998 album *Suprême NTM*) suggests, they target the divisive racists discourses that would connect France space to race:

[35] Caffari and Villette, p. 101.
[36] Begag, 2005.

Multiraciale est notre société alors bougeons ensemble, et créons l'unité

Car depuis longtemps, trop longtemps, oui depuis trop longtemps

Depuis que le monde est monde, la *couleur est une frontière*

Une barrière, c'est clair, je déclare la guerre

A la terre entière, d'un revers autoritaire

Je balaie, je combats puis, l'un après l'autre,

J'abats le Front National, les skins, l'apartheid, le ghetto.

Multiracial is our society, so lets get moving together and create unity

For a long time, too long, yes for too long

Since the world was the world, color is a frontier

A barrier, it's clear, I'm declaring war

All around the world, from an authoritarian setback

I sweep in, then I combat them, one after another

I beat down the National Front, skinheads, apartheid, the ghetto

The movement from a *frontière* created by color, more suggestive of a border – whether national or natural – to *barrière,* which evokes a more pedestrian wall or barrier recalls the tendency to transfer border anxieties from the international to the national. The notion of color is confounded with the notion of borders by some. NTM's lyrics suggest a direct connection between the politics of the FN and spatial segregation: *Front National* to *les skins* (skinheads) to the ghetto. The first line cited encourages listeners to "get moving together," an invitation to solidarity that is open to all those who are not *frontistes* or skinheads. In addition to being a literal call to action ("let's get moving"), the verb *bouger* might also suggests that movement in the most literal sense is the proper reaction to the politics of spatial dichotomies: moving outside of and beyond the barred, walled-off spaces. This reflex of movement will

be a recurring theme in each of the works I will address in this dissertation: hitting the road, getting moving in order to escape the reductive spatial dimensions of the French identity debate.

Returning to the track in question, "White and Black" also provides a closer look at NTM's multiracial position. As I have already mentioned, Kool Shen is white of Portuguese origin and Joey Starr is a black West Indian. It is often argued that white Europeans immigrants have a different experience than the so-called visible minorities because their difference is assumed to disappear more quickly. One of the goals of this project is to complexify this reading of the situation. While it is true that second generation difference becomes more difficult to detect, it is not the case that second generation subjectivity is lost. The Portuguese experience in France provides an interesting illustration of this. As late as 1999 the Portuguese were still the largest foreign national population in France, and their predilection towards retaining elements of Portuguese identity suggests that "generic" French identity is not as clear-cut as some would have it. Miki, a character created on a blog by French-Portuguese teenagers, represents the stereotype of a "second generation Portuguese."[37] The very fact that such a stereotype exists demonstrates the need for a reexamination of what the "norm" is in France. As the norm shifts, the roles and vantage points ascribed to those "inside" and "outside" might also change. Even beyond his *banlieue* sensibility, we might ask if Kool Shen considers himself an outsider, even if someone who passes him on the street might not label him as such. It is clear that as a resident of Saint-Denis he sees himself as spatially outside, which allows him to construct an affinity with other outsiders regardless of their ethnicity. What distances his diatribes from those of the angry white men discussed in the introduction is the spirit of *métissage,* an openness to others. To cite again from "White and Black":

---

[37] See "'Miki-le-toss ou comment repérer un guech en quelques leçons': l'identité ethnique 'tos' en France à travers les blogs de jeunes lusodescendants," in *PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies*, Vol 4, No 2 (2007).

Noir et blanc, blanc et jaune, jaune et rouge, rouge ou beur

Je m'adresse à la jeunesse, celle qui se dresse, sans cesse

Sans peur ni crainte, face aux dictateurs

Dont l'empreinte reste une offence, pour ce monde qui avance.

Black and White, White and Yellow, Yellow and Red, Red or Beur

I'm speaking to the youth, those always who stand up

Without fear or dread, against the dictators

Whose imprint is an insult to a world that is advancing

The lyrics reveal the "white and black" of the track title to be not absolutes or opposites but elements of a spectrum of colors and identities, each nuanced in some way. As for the "dictators" of hatred, it is not only Le Pen, but anyone who promotes a racially driven ideology or discourse: "Farakhan ou Le Pen même combat pour la haine" (Farakhan or Le Pen, same combat for hate), the rap continues. This warning about the attractions of sectarianism and discourses of race, whichever side of the debate they emerge from, provides an important reminder that French rap has never been attracted to the idea of racial solidarity but has remained faithful to the tenants of *métissage* that have marked it since its origins in the multiethnic *banlieue.* This is not to say that French rappers have not embraced connections to Africa. Many have, while simultaneously retaining a French republican perspective. The artistic and cultural *métissage* of Mokobé, one such rapper, will be the topic of the following section. If NTM are concerned with breaking down the walls between races and separating *banlieue* and the center, Mokobé has taken a slightly different tack in his effort to contextualize the space of the *banlieue* and its place in France and indeed the world. This French rapper of African descent undertakes a mapping of the local space as transnational by re-appropriating the hyphen that has typically been used to mark some people as "less French" than others.

Local and diasporic connectivity: Hyphenating Frenchness

The African diaspora in France is, and has been, a complex construction, marked by different origins and trajectories (Caribbean, African) and different positions on the grid of French citizenship (citizen, évolué, colonial subject).[38] Paul Gilroy's formulation of diaspora as chaotic and living, represented by the metaphor of ships in motion, will provide a useful stepping stone to my examination of African diaspora through a republican optic. Furthermore, Gilroy's ships embody "double consciousness," looking "(at least) two ways at once." Perception, looking, of course implies vantage points or angles of vision, terms that come up repeatedly in Gilroy's argument. It is my contention that the black French vantage points can only be thoroughly analyzed within the *Black Blanc Beur* construction and with postcolonial continuity in mind. The angle of vision of the black diasporic subject in France is from within a republican framework, where contact with the other B's is a necessity. Therefore black identity is being formed and reformed not only within a transnational diaspora, but also within a French republican framework. This framework extends from the streets of the *banlieue* to its cultural practices, evident notably in the creation of a French strain of hip-hop music. It is essential to see the angles of vision in question as both 'of' and 'on' black diaspora subjects. Viewed from a "French" vantage point, the notion of the other is a shifting formulation that calls into question the prevalent notions of French identity. Analyzing these questions through a cultural standpoint inevitably leads to an assessment of music, perhaps the artistic form most conducive to formulations of transnational identity. After all, rap music specifically represents a complex interweaving of styles and traditions that have been in constant motion between Europe, the Americas and Africa.

[38] Wilder, 237-244, and Conklin, 3-14.

The spatial and racial exclusion highlighted in NTM's lyrics underline the difficulty of integrating into French society and the challenge of being accepted as "truly" French. As Dominic Thomas argues, the original goals of the colonial civilizing mission—to create "French-African cultural prototypes"—were rapidly abandoned, effectively relegating all colonial subjects to a hyphenated status that continues today for postcolonial subjects:

> Their status as colonized subjects and constructs inscribed by a hyphenated identity forever precluded their access to some distant evolutionary point, much in the same way as today's ethnic minorities are relegated to topographic zones in the *banlieues* outside the parameters of Frenchness.[39]

It is my intention to argue that this hyphenated status is at the same time an obstacle to overcome and the vehicle to a new, more accurate conception of "authentic" French identity. Many voices in the French hip-hop movement are on one hand embracing French Republican principles and demanding access to them for all while on the other cultivating links with Africa and embracing the African part of their identities within a French framework. Rappers such as Mokobé, Disiz La Peste and even the previously discussed and quite notorious NTM share an angle of vision which allows them to view this hyphenated status as something positive, as long as the acceptance of diversity coincides with an equality of chance and access. While NTM supports *mixité* by "breaking down the doors" that divide French society, other rappers are promoting minority identities within French identity. One way this is being done in music and youth culture in general is through linguistic re-appropriation, a common strategy in rap in particular and amongst minority French youth in particular (verlan, re-verlan), etc. In an interview with *Le Monde,* Mokobé has posited his vision of *mixité* in part by re-appropriating the hyphen. His use of the term "Franco-français" as an alternative to the often inflammatory construction "Français de souche" effectively relocated the distant evolutionary point Thomas writes of. Mokobé describes his vision of France as built on the multicultural reality of his neighborhood:

[39] Thomas, p. 28.

> Ce qui est important, c'est de construire une France moderne, c'est à dire qui vive dans la mixité, comme on le voit dans les concerts rap... moi, je veux pouvoir aller acheter ma baguette chez un boulanger franco-français, boire mon café chez les Portugais, acheter ma viande dans une boucherie algérienne, mon journal dans un bar PMU tenu par un Chinois.

> The important thing is to construct a modern France, meaning one that lives in *mixité,* like we see in rap concerts…as for me, I want to buy my baguette from a *franco-fran*çais baker, have my coffee with the Portuguese, buy my meat from an Algerian butcher shop and my newspaper in a newsstand run by a Chinese man.(*Le Monde,* May 17, 2007).

On one level, the hyphenated concept also provides a metaphor for the complex interactions and circulations contained in the musical form itself, as well as the approaches that musicians bring to the creation of rap music. Mokobé's precision that this vision corresponds to what he "sees at rap concerts" suggests that the rap music community and fans represent an openness to diversity that does not yet exist elsewhere in French society. Mokobé's stance is one of awareness of difference, but also acceptance. Furthermore the hyphenation of the norm, "franco-français," places that identity on equal footing with the others mentioned. France has traditionally and officially avoided the American-inspired hyphenated identity construction (Noiriel 1998: 211). This, of course, does not mean that everyone is considered entirely French. On the contrary, the traditional perception is that there are those who are French and those who are less (or non) French; "immigrants" and minorities who are not yet French must work their way up a vertical hierarchy of national identity. The perception has long been that once one is "assimilated," any vestige of original identity is lost. For this reason hyphenated identities have been neglected by some specialists on immigration in France who refute the continued existence of communitarian identities within previous waves of immigrants of European and Catholic background.

Cultural Historian Bertrand Taithe remarks that "one of the central impediments to the recognition of any hyphenated identity in France was the holistic attitude of historians and intellectuals who tend to regard France as an indivisible entity" (Taithe 2001: 113). Dominique Schnapper, for example, suggests that there is no longer any residual Italian identity in France from the immigrants who arrived in the early parts of the twentieth century. I would argue that this is easily disproved by a reading of Jean-Claude Izzo's Marseille trilogy of detective novels, whose hero Fabio Montale is clearly in touch with his Italian roots but also celebrates the ethnically multifarious character of that city. The interest in *italienité* is equally present in the music of another Marseilles native, rapper and film director Akhenaton (né Philippe Fragione), not to mention the *noir* writer Tonino Benacquista, born in the Paris suburb of Choisy-le-Roi to immigrant parents. Meanwhile, some on the Right articulate a position very close to Schnapper's, using the alleged seamless integration of past immigrants as point of comparison to demonstrate that more recent immigrants from Africa or the Maghreb are incapable of assimilating.

Looking at the issue from a slightly different angle, the absence of the hyphen in public discourse on identity does not imply acceptance. A seemingly endless array of terms have been used to underline the less-than-entirely-French status of some with immigrant origins, including "jeunes d'origines maghrébine" (youth of Maghrebian origin), "Nord-Africains" (North Africans), "Français musulmans" (French Muslims), "les enfants d'immigrés maghrébins" (children of Maghrebian immigrants), "jeunes des quartiers" (youth from the "neighborhoods"), "jeunes de banlieue" (youth from the *banlieue*), etc. (Marx-Scouras 2005: 46, Liebig 2010, Malik 2010: 61). As the last two examples illustrate, concepts of identity and of space tend to converge in such discussions, inferring that the *banlieue* is somehow less French.

Mokobé's comment calls us to look more closely at the perceived purity of the term "French." This opens the door to a re-appropriation of Le Pen's infamous "France for the French" discourse. Who is

really French? What does it really mean to say "French"? The formulation allows other hyphenated identities to access to equal standing and pushes the concept of "pure" or "generic" French beyond its limits to create a more inclusive model.[40] If Frenchness is already hyphenated by various influences, from Portuguese to Italian to Polish (see chapter two), the conception of French identity as a monolithic and impermeable entity starts to break down. It is important to refrain from viewing the use of the hyphen as an endorsement of American conceptions of communitarian identity. Rather, it is a way to accept difference within a common framework. As Gary Wilder points out, the dual French experiences of Republic and Empire have created a place for transnational narratives at the very center of the nation-state (Wilder 2003: 237). On a related note, Wilder has also noted a "cycle of organization, mobilization, and collapse in the field of black cultural politics" in France. This is explained in part by the tendency among French African subject or citizens to "use transnational forms of racial identification in order to secure a place *within* French *national* society" (Wilder's emphasis, Ibid: 239). It is therefore not surprising that when rap caught on in France, the simultaneous efforts by some to spread Black nationalism did not (Cannon 156-7).

Rap and rappers: Franco-African identities

While NTM's lyrics seek break down barriers and promote *métissage* by including peripheral voices in a national discussion, effectively bringing the outskirts to the center spatially and to the forefront socially and politically, many rap and hip-hop music voices are complexifying the very concept of the outskirts. Rap music opens the door to a conception of the *banlieue* as multiethnic and transnational, and in many ways more open to diversity and alterity than the ostensibly color blind Republic is. In the context of French identity politics and in the music itself, rap paints the local as always already global. This is a conception that lays the groundwork for eliminating reductive classificatory

[40] Cited in *Le Monde,* May 17, 2007.

frameworks and allowing, to quote Thomas, for an elaboration of Blackness containing "simultaneously the potentiality of a fixed and mobile identity" (Thomas 2007: 14). This stance opens up the possibility of hyphenated identities, of looking at least two ways at once, and for a diasporic subjectivity that collapses binaries and thus opens up the possibility of feeling both French and African.

The extent to which an impulse to connect with African identity is based on exclusion is worthy of consideration. As Alec Hargreaves has pointed out and many surveys show, the reality of the immigrant experience in France is that each successive generation tends to see themselves as "more French" and less traditional than their parents (Hargreaves 2007). Many rappers, as evidenced by their comments on the riots above, do not think of themselves as outsiders. This sentiment is echoed by rapper Ahmed, from the group Caution: "je suis complètement français, je ne connais pas les réflexes sociaux du Maroc ou du Sénégal" (I am completely French, I don't have the social instincts of Morocco or Senegal).[41] At the same time, the situation of considering oneself French but also feeling rejected or excluded by society has long been prevalent.

Today, perhaps in response to the dual phenomena of exclusion from republican frameworks and investment in those same frameworks, many rappers seem to be forging new links with Africa. This does not mean that they see this as an alternative to French identity. On the contrary, they are carving out identities that are French and republican, but which are pushing beyond the traditional constraints of "pure" republicanism, which does not allow for communitarian allegiances. In other words, these new identities circumvent traditional Republican structures without seeking to reject outright the principles of French republicanism.

Disiz La Peste, one of the biggest names in French rap, recently recorded an album under his Senegalese name, Serigne M'Baye Gueye (he was born in Evry to a Senegalese father and French

[41] Stéphanie Binet, 'Les rappeurs l'avaient bien dit', *Lib*ération, *November 15, 2005.*

mother). Mokobé, born in France to parents from Mali, made a name for himself as co-founder of the edgy rap group 113. As a solo artist he released a pan-African hip-hop album entitled *Mon Afrique* in 2007 with the assistance of prominent African pop musicians Youssou n'Dour, Seun Kuti, and Tiken Jah Fakoly.[42] It should be pointed out that this can be done without even leaving Paris. In the 1980s musicians made Paris the "capital of African pop music," and while this has changed a little since the 1990s there are still a large number of African musicians based in France (Winders 2006: 6).

This politically charged album linked identities beyond the pan-African sphere as well. Mokobé also teamed up with *rappeuse* Diam's, the daughter of a French mother and Cypriot immigrant father, on a rap entitled *Une nuit de flammes.* The song honors the seventeen African immigrants who died when a fire struck their tenement in the 13th Arrondissement in August, 2005 and calls for an investigation into their deaths. Mokobé and Diam's dedicated the song to each of the victims, spelling out all seventeen names on the album liner notes, emphasizing the individual, human element on this tragic event.[43] As Rosello argues in her discussion of the "hospitality" debates raging in France during the 1990s, the migrants or refugees so often at the center of the storm are essentially invisible until a specific controversy brings them to media and public attention. One such event was what the media dubbed the "affaire des sans-papiers de Saint-Bernard," in which some 300 undocumented Africans holed themselves up a Montmartre church for a number of months. The result of this action, which ended with the forcible removal of the immigrants from the church by the state, was that *clandestins* become more visible and came to be known as "undocumented," a status that confers more legitimacy than suggested in the term

[42] *Le Monde,* June 12, 2007.
[43] *Le Monde,* May 17, 2007.

clandestine (Rosello 2001: 2). Immigrants from Mali, the birthplace of Mokobés's parents, were often at the center of such contentious incidents that seemed to inevitably lead to widespread deportations.[44]

The white-black collaboration with Diam's underlines Mokobé's vision for France as expressed in his discussion of the diverse neighborhood in which he lives. Hyphenation in the service of *mixité* is a participatory activity in which the "minority" subject not only demands control of his own identity but also claims a stake in what is considered to be the "dominant" or majority identity. As Thomas points out, hyphenation is used in a French context to relegate minorities to the lower echelons of what is essentially a top to bottom model of citizenship where some, despite what their passports may say, are "less French" than others. Re-appropriation of the hyphen is a participative gesture. It might be considered an act of "Minor Transnationalism," to use the formulation of Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih. Participation is a key element to their formulation:

> Common conceptions of resistance to the major reify the boundaries of communities by placing the focus on action and reaction, excluding other forms of participation in the transnational that may be more proactive and more creative even while economically disadvantaged. By extracting the site of resistance and defining it as transnationalism from below it appears that there are two different transnationalisms in opposition and conflict, when in reality the major and the minor participate in one shared moment and space structured by uneven power relations (Lionnet and Shih 2005: 6).

Participation, for Lionnet and Shih, goes part and parcel with "shared space," which they insist is different from binary spaces or "above" and "below" models. In Mokobé's case, his participation takes

[44] When Pasqua deported 101 Malians in 1987, his pronouncements about loading illegals into a train "to be rid of them" coincided quite unfortunately with the trial of Klaus Barbie and conjured memories of Vichy and wartime collaboration. See Winders 2006: 54-100 and Max Silverman, *Deconstructing the nation : immigration, racism and citizenship in modern France* (64-65).

place in and across multiple zones of identity. He is simultaneously Republican and Pan-African, speaking and performing as a French citizen while embracing ties to his African origins. Furthermore, his relationship to French identity is in no way oppositional. Rather, he posits a conception of French society that is always already mixed, enhanced by Chinese, Algerian and Portuguese additions, to use his own examples. And all of this without even leaving his neighborhood; the local is global. As an artist working in a musical form imported via the United States but with origins in Africa and Jamaica, Mokobé has at his disposal an arsenal of cross-cultural musical capital. In short, "participation" here signifies shifting models of power and agency: the subjects of France's former colonial empire are now hyphenating France, even if the power relations are still unequal. In the process they are moving closer the "distant evolutionary points" of French identity, to borrow Thomas's term. Rap and hip-hop problematize on a variety of levels the notion of French identity as an inflexible and static entity that so-called "immigrants" must integrate in order to achieve.

Musical Identities and Transnational sampling

Mokobé's hyphenated construct and the very act of walking through his neighborhood serves as a metaphor for hip-hop in France and the wider circulation of musical forms. It emerges from the local—whether the neighborhood, the *cité*, or the *department,* and often from a *banlieue* terrain—but has origins everywhere and practitioners from a multitude of backgrounds. Furthermore hyphenation is inherent in the musical form itself, which incorporates elements of blues, reggae, raga and even French *chanson* (Oscherwitz). The fusion of elements and traditions is most evident in the process of sampling, which incorporates vocals or melodies borrowed from an array of sources. A particularly famous example of the practice is found in *La Haine,* where Kassovitz displays a deejay sampling and mixing a classic Edith Piaf song as the camera sweeps over the *cité* in a memorable helicopter shot. That particular example has been read as either subversive or as an example of cultural fusion. Mokobé's *Mon Afrique* opens by sampling

Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech, a gesture expressing transnational solidarity and interconnectivity that also suggests that while French rap has been influenced by American "gangsta" rap it can also borrow from the pacifist wing of the American Civil Rights movement. Abd al Malik's album *Gibraltar* samples from sources as diverse as the Lebanese singer Fairuz, Jean Ferrat and Nina Simone. The music of the latter suggests a variety of connotations. Simone was well-known for her civil rights activism and took her stage name from French actress Simone Signoret, a trajectory that reminds us that cross-cultural points of contact are nothing new.[45]

Malik's album also features piano and accordion from musicians who played with Jacques Brel. Mixing traditional French musical elements with rap has been a surprisingly common practice since the genre's inception in France. The artists Koma and Ol'Kainry have also sampled Brel, while other rappers have borrowed from such stalwarts of French music as Georges Brassens (notably on Cliqua's track "Les quartiers chauffent"), Charles Aznavour (by the group Idéal and a great many others) and Serge Gainsbourg with Brigitte Bardot (MC solaar). The latter combination is particularly interesting within the context of this discussion. MC solaar's track "Nouveau Western" samples and rearranges the famous Gainsbourg and Bardot duet "Bonnie and Clyde."[46] What could be more emblematic of international cultural flows than a French artist signing in a form that arrived from the USA (via a variety of sources) and which often embraces an "outlaw" perspective borrowed from an earlier French artist signing about (in)famous American outlaws?

On a fundamental level, some of the musical components of rap are the result of centuries of circulation and exchange between cultures. In his study of African music and musicians in Paris, James

[45] "Gibraltar," *Les Inrockuptibles*, 31 August, 2006.
[46] The hip-hop webzine abcdrduson.com did a story on twenty examples of such fusion of rap and *la variété française*. http://www.abcdrduson.com/blog/2010/08/amour-et-haine-la-variete-samplee-par-le-rap-1-2/ Accessed 20 Septemebr, 2010.

Winders points out that conceptions of "pure" or "traditional" African music are misleading. African music is the product of "decades of articulation with European genres brought to Africa and Western styles returning across the Atlantic." To cite one example, the Senegalese capital of Dakar is a major port city and Atlantic point of contact. Winders notes that "to say 'Senegalese' is already to indicate a complicated mixture of styles and influences. These include Caribbean, and Cuban" (Winders 2006: 25). Put another way, when French or Franco-African artists incorporate "traditional" African elements into their music, they are simply adding another layer of complexity to music derived from a wide array of sources.

Local, Global, Regional

I would be remiss to discuss marginality and transnationalism in contemporary French music without turning my attention, however briefly, beyond Paris. The music of groups like Zeba, Les Fabulous Trobadors, Massilia Sound System and Moussu T e lei jovents have combatted an additional and different sort of exclusionary binary, one that privileges Paris over the provinces. These groups from the south and southwestern parts of France have retained a markedly local perspective yet successfully framed it within an international context, demonstrating that musicians can be both local and global and remain relevant in both spaces. Daniel Marx-Scouras says that the most famous of these, the "crossover" group Zebda, has accomplished just that, presenting their native Toulouse as a new capital for their brand of engagement and succumbing neither to local exclusionism nor to the "unaccountabilty of dispersion." She quotes musician Claude Sicre of Les Fabulous Trobadors, who contends that Zebda's stance "does away with the universalists from nowhere, who are so much from everywhere that we can never know what they do *chez eux"* (Marx-Scouras 2004). As with French rap, the international character of this music is not simply concerned with borrowing from a variety of disparate sources, but draws on the

transnational links that are an essential part of local culture in southern France (and indeed in many regions of the country).

Speaking (or singing) from a doubly marginal position, a *banlieue* in the provinces, Zebda's music proclaims, "this is France, too." The regional elements are more conducive to looking at nations and people in terms of connections and flows rather than in stark binaries. Marx-Scouras insists that Zebda is not a rap group, but simply a group that performs French music and is classified in music store bins in the general category "*variété française."* Others have grouped them (mistakenly) as rappers or, more credibly, as "*banlieue* musicians" whose style is a fusion comprising elements of disparate traditions from rap to Spanish guitar, passing through *la chanson française* (Oscherwitz). Another southern group, Massilia Sound System blends Occitan with elements of Jamaican music and hip-hop. An offshoot of that band, Moussu T e lei Jovents, combines elements of reggae, Brazilian music and the regional culture suggested by the Occitan language contained in their name. This is not simply eclecticism, but is based on centuries of points of contact between cultures.[47] Inherent in those local identities is a transnational component that troubles notions of pure Frenchness. Zebda co-founder Magyd Cherfi proclaims "I often find it difficult to call myself French, but by contrast I always feel profoundly Toulousain" (Marx-Scouras 2005: 99). Again, as in the discussion of rap, musical elements provide an interesting way to see identity. Marx-Scouras notes that Zebda often employs the accordion in their hybrid style. But as member Remi Sanchez points out, this instrument that is often indelibly associated with the traditional French music has more complex origins, with "the Italian pariahs and the people of Auvergne, also outcasts themselves, who created the *musette* genre that has become a symbol of France." A fine response to those who think *métissage* is harmful, Sanchez concludes (Marx-Scouras 2005: 120-1).

[47] "Bouillabaisse Blues," *FRoots,* May 2005.

This brief glance at fusions of regional and global in southern French music brings us back to the projects of Mokobé and the Parisian rappers. Using a musical form related to African traditions, via the Caribbean and the USA, and already adapted to a French specificity, Mokobé brings the music full circle by reaching out again to Africa. He and other French rappers are positioning themselves in a variety of places, borrowing from a range of sources. With Gilroy's notion of diaspora as a tradition "of ceaseless motion" in mind, it is possible to see in this project as a specifically republican update of diasporic connectivity (Gilroy 1993:122). In a postcolonial French context, rap music is capable of traveling without ever leaving the suburbs. This is due on one hand to the fact that the French suburbs represent diverse slices of the world. While this is seen as a menace by some of the ranters I have described, to Mokobé and a great many others the multicultural and multiethnic aspect of the *banlieue* represents the future of France and, on a micro level, the local realization of the otherwise unattained French republican ideal of *Franternité.* On the other hand, rap is diverse in its very essence: as the result of centuries of "ceaseless motion" from a plethora of origins, both the music itself and the rebellious attitude it often encompasses bring a worldly consciousness to suburban audiences. Again in this sense, the *banlieue* can be seen as a model for the rest of France. The notion of building a conception of France from the ground up, one that resembles audiences at rap concerts, expresses a hope that rap is capable of opening doors, or perhaps more aptly knocking them down, and in the process creating new conceptions of republican space from the bottom up. Indeed, it seems clear that French rap is reaching an audience beyond the *banlieue.* One study, while somewhat dated at this point (1997), found that one-third of French 18-year-olds listen to rap on a regular basis while half of those in the same age group have attended at least one rap concert.[48] This seems to indicate that rap is capable of opening doors, or perhaps more aptly knocking them down, and in the process creating new conceptions of republican space from the bottom up.

[48] Anne-Marie Green, *Des Jeunes et des musiques,* 1997. Quoted in Oscherwitz.

Chapter 2 - Decentering France: layered identity and diasporic vantage points in *White* and *Salut Cousin*

Within a French republican context the "other" is a shifting formulation that calls into question the prevalent notions of dominant French identity. The dominant or "generic" French identity faces increased instability due to factors such as E.U. expansion and the vaguely defined forces of "globalization." This chapter proposes to further complicate the inside/outside division, reevaluating the very notion of French identity by destabilizing its center. Merzak Allouache's 1996 film *Salut Cousin* problematizes the notions of "insider" and "outsider" by moving away from the familiar conventions of narratives of Algerians in France. Working through "Algerian" characters with different trajectories (2nd and 1st generation , "assimilated" and new immigrants), Allouache complexifies the issue of representation and challenges the Maghrebi/French binary. Krzysztof Kieslowski's 1994 film *White,* inspired by the French republican theme of equality, provides a starting point for the analysis of one "white" community that is simultaneously positioned inside and outside and a stepping stone to a shift towards the East in my analysis of layered French identities. Just as there are multiple positions for North African immigrants and their so-called "second generation" offspring vis-à-vis "home" and "host," Polish immigrants in France represent complex layers of belonging and exclusion. Earlier waves of Poles are now considered wholly integrated while more recent arrivals have become the poster boys for the fight against open European borders (see the famous "Polish Plumber" in the 2005 European Constitution debate). The goal of this chapter is to underscore a shared vision by two directors who followed similar trajectories to France, but from quite different places. In the process, the categories of White and *Beur* can be examined outside of restrictive discursive categories. Unlike the previous films discussed, these are not road movies per se. Rather they are films about migration and immigration, each beginning and

ending with travel. Both challenge the idea of fixed exilic identities and suggest that one can be French, or at least in France, and still have a fluid sense of self and some level of agency in forming one's identity with elements comprising "here" and "there," home and host.

What can be gleaned from each of these films is an updated vision of the concepts of immigration and diaspora. Both filmmakers were considered to be "exiled."[49] Their approach to this condition is not oppositional, bipolar, nor uniquely concerned with memory and loss. Life in the host country is portrayed as difficult but navigable, and most of all an experience more complex than that of simple assimilation. In other words exile and immigration are multidirectional processes, characterized not by passage but by circular and constant motions, to paraphrase Paul Gilroy, and by overlapping of diaspora and border experiences, to use James Clifford's construction. Points of arrival and departure are in flux while exile, immigration and diasporic subjectivity are all revealed to be layered experiences.

A logical extension of this circular, flexible stance towards diaspora and immigration is a re-imagination of static conceptions of identity, a reevaluation of Frenchness. Zygmunt Bauman has remarked that "If the *modern* 'problem of identity' was how to construct an identity and keep it solid and stable, the *postmodern* 'problem of identity' is primarily how to avoid this fixation and keep the options open" (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006: 1). As Gérard Noiriel has argued, French national identity was already molded before large waves of immigration started, leaving the immigrants to navigate Frenchness as a vertical hierarchy of assimilation. Yet contrary to prevalent narratives, previous identities are not always left behind at the French border, or even at the door of the republican school, long considered the great equalizer (Noiriel 1988: 184-5). Does a history of immigration combined with the reflex of "looking

[49] Allouache quite literally feared for his life, but Kieslowski's exile is perhaps more of a matter of choice, like that of his protagonist Karol. This explains why *White* was partially filmed in Poland while *Salut Cousin* could not be filmed in both countries, as the original plan called for. Kieslowski's status was referred to by the press as "exile," a term that he did not seem to refute. See *Le Monde,* May 16, 1991, an interview in which *La Double Vie de Veronique* is referred to as his "first film in exile."

more than one way at once," as Gilroy describes the diasporic stance, lead inevitably to a different and perhaps more skeptical approach to Frenchness?

With this in mind, the *Black, Blanc, Beur* formulation, which emerged in the 1980s, provides a useful theoretical starting point. Privileging a tripartite construction over a binary division of French and "Immigrant," the formulation allows a better frame of analysis for the complex interweaving of French and immigrant experiences. While neither film addressed here employs a BBB trio, analyzing *White* and *Salut Cousin* together helps paint a picture of the *Beur* and *Blanc* components in a layered fashion that avoids traditional binaries. As Mireille Rosello argues, it is fruitful to approach Franco-Maghrebi identity as never autonomous and "always attached to other connotations, other communities, other problematics" (Rosello 2001: 49-51). In this case, examining the intricacies of *Beur* identity as linked to the *Blanc,* putative center of the BBB trio and of French identity, allows the possibility of new perspectives on the diaspora experience as well as on French identity.

Before concluding the introduction it would seem helpful to establish a brief historical context for the films. Both *White* and *Salut Cousin* are products of, and reflections on, a period of time where European borders were falling and new notions of Globalization were opening economic and technological barriers. Simultaneously, in France attitudes towards "foreigners" and immigrants were hardening as nationalist reflexes gave rise to increasingly xenophobic political and media cultures. In this vein the Pasqua (1993) and Debré (1997) laws, respectively, set in place restrictions on 2nd generation immigrant claims to citizenship and made housing or hosting an undocumented immigrant a felony. These highly divisive laws essentially made it more difficult to "become" French. Meanwhile the National Front and its leader Jean-Marie Le Pen successfully converted anti-immigrant sentiment into electoral success. The party received 4.5 million votes in the 1995 presidential elections, a dramatic increase from the 200,000 they garnered in the 1981 legislative contests (Mayer 1999).

In a wider European context the post-Berlin Wall migrant count is estimated at 4 million within Europe alone between 1989 and 1994 (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006: 140). More than one million people were said to have left Poland from 1980 to 1993. At the same time the European Union was making strides towards open borders and closer ties with the 1992 Maastricht Treaty and the 1990 signing of the second phase of the Schengen Agreements, with implementation starting in 1995. Thus the period was marked by the perhaps contradictory impulses of opening borders within the boundaries of an "expanding" Europe and closing the gates to the outside world. Within what some have theorized as "Fortress Europe," the very concepts of citizenship, home, foreigner and exile were undergoing constant changes (Rosello 2001: 49-51). The result is, as Yosefa Loshitzky puts it, that today's Europe should be seen as a "site of negotiation over identity" (Loshitzky 2010: 8).

White

The second film in a trilogy inspired by the symbolic themes of the French *tricolore* flag and the republican slogan, *White* is the only one of the three set partly in Poland. The films have separate narratives but were written, shot and edited concurrently and various threads tie together at the end of *Red,* the final film in the trilogy. Equality is the motif of this film and Kieslowski made the interesting—and for him unusual—choice to use comedy to capture this elusive concept. It is worth pointing out that the director approached the concept of equality with a healthy dose of skepticism: "*White* is about equality understood as a contradiction…There's a saying in Polish: There are those who are equal and those that are more equal" (Kickasola 2006: 293). Indeed the film deals with themes pertinent to the "more equal" debate: unbridled capitalism, a recent arrival in Poland, and on a largely symbolic level the place of Poland in the West and within Europe.

The first image in *White* is of a large trunk lurching down a conveyor belt, presumably at an airport. Each of Three Colors films start with a similar mechanical image, suggesting that the characters

are being pulled along by fate, if not by the shifting forces at work in Europe. The conveyor belt in *White*, however, is a narrative flash forward. The film then cuts to a tracking shot that is the beginning of the narrative: worn shoes on pavement. The moving feet echo the traveling theme invoked by the large moving suitcase of the opening shot. Both feet and the suitcase belong to Karol Karol, the film's hero. Karol is the Polish equivalent of Charlie, as in Charlie Chaplin, a connection verified by the director (Kickasola 2006: 282-3). *White* has been widely interpreted as a cartoonish satire rather than a realistic narrative (Ibid: 280). With this in mind, Karol is a caricature, as a hairdresser a particularly humorous symbol of a (relatively) ruthless and scheming capitalist. In this sense he represents an unusual and humorous twist both on the traditional Polish exile narrative as well as on Poland's headfirst jump into capitalism following the fall of the communist regimes.

Salut Cousin

Salut Cousin tells the story of a young *Beur* named Mok and his Algerian cousin Alilo, who is staying with him in Paris. The narrative revolves around their clashes: Mok judges that Alilo is a bumpkin while Alilo gradually discovers that Mok is a mythomaniac. Mok is an unemployed aspiring rapper who admits that he has not yet made any money rapping but claims to be building a career. Meanwhile he awaits a call from his "impresario," who supposedly manages famous French musical acts. Alilo is working in "trabendo," the practice of smuggling imitation designer clothes across borders in a suitcase. He is visiting Paris for the first time to pick up a suitcase of contraband clothing which he will take to Algiers, where his boss can sell it for a large markup. The suitcase is of course a typical symbol of the immigrant, an issue we will return to later. In this case it marks Alilo as both a participant in a marginal or parallel economy and also as an outsider. The running gags of the film play on Mok's false insider status and Alilo's simplicity. For this reason many critics read it as an update of the "Town Rat and the Country Rat" (Rosello 2001: 98). I will argue that the film in fact collapses such binaries of place and, to some

extent, notions of insider and outsider. Indeed at the end the roles are reversed: Mok is unceremoniously deported while Alilo meets a girl and stays in Paris.

Salut Cousin is what Hamid Naficy terms an interstitial film, subtly working the in-between spaces and gaps, particularly around clichés and stereotypes. As he does in his entire corpus, here Allouache chooses not to avoid stereotypes but to address them directly in order to break them down. The director found himself between France (as an outsider struggling to fit into the film industry) and Algeria, from where he had to flee for safety due to the killings of other major liberal cultural figures. In France he was inaccurately lumped into the *beur* category. In this way the film seemed to be relegated to a discursive ghetto, another Naficy formulation. A cinematic "discursive ghetto," according to Naficy, can "lock" filmmakers into genre or "ethnic" categories which fail to account adequately for the filmmakers' personal evolution and stylistic transformations over time" (Naficy 2001: 2004). *Salut Cousin* does not meet the expectations of the *beur* cinema ghetto, namely a confrontation of French v. Arab in which each group fits into clearly defined categories. A 2003 essay by Peter Bloom sums up the "*beur* filmmaking aesthetic" as the "stylistic representation of a compressed spatial economy of HLM apartment living and a nostalgia for return…" (Bloom 2003: 49). Allouache puts his characters in settings unrecognizable to the viewer expecting a *banlieue* narrative or a journey of return. This may explain why, despite showing at Cannes and winning prizes on the festival circuit, it took a while for the film to find a distributor (Rosello 2001: 86). As I will discuss in Chapter four, Zaïda Ghorab-Volta recounts having similar issues with finding funding for her projects that do not meet the expectations of the sort of films a *beur* director should make. With *Salut Cousin* Allouache has made a film that deals with the issues facing Algerians in France and French of Algerian origin, but not in a typical fashion. As I will describe below, this is clearly not a film that fits into the accepted parameters of *beur* or Algerian-in-France film conventions.

The *beur* movie is a formulation that traps films and filmmakers into inflexible categories by

relegating them to the margins of French ethnicity, society, and even physical space (for the *beur* filmmaker is supposed to serve as the "native informant" of *banlieue* culture). Further unpacking the issue of cinematic stereotyping reveals that "discursive ghetto" is not always a bad thing for a filmmaker. On the contrary, representational stereotypes can open the possibility of more readily "trapping" the viewer and therefore forcing him/her to actively participate in the process of decoding the author's positioning. Allouache incessantly lays such traps for his audience, forcing us to think about in more complex ways the identities he represents in his films.

A positive hyphenated identity

Chapter one focused on how hip-hop artist Mokobé has posited his vision of *mixité* in part by re-appropriating the hyphen. His use of the term "Franco-français" as an alternative to the often inflammatory construction "Français de souche" effectively relocates the distant evolutionary point that is non-hyphenated Frenchness. As some scholars have argued, the history of France might easily be conceived of as more inclusive—or at least far more complex—than the prevailing institutional narrative tends to admit. Noiriel in particular has argued that state, party and national institutions are responsible for constructing Frenchness in exclusionary terms that allow no room for immigrant narratives. As we will see below, French institutions are responsible for some of the difficulties of the protagonists in both *Salut Cousin* and *White.*

In a similar vein, Alec Hargreaves points out that a tendency on the part of French institutions to formulate difference in terms of otherness has helped to frame the debate on what in the United States or England would be considered "race relations" as a question of "immigration" (Begag 2007: 2). In other words, problems with identity are perceived to be imported from elsewhere. The result of this is that all those differing from the widely accepted model of "Français de souche" are exteriorized in French narratives, transformed into "immigrants" even if they have always been French citizens. Hafid Gafaiti

argues that exclusive narratives, which are in contradiction with the somewhat more inclusive reality of French history and the overall complexity of the dual French experience as a Republic and a colonial empire, have long been cultivated by institutions, despite the fact that the facts often contradict idealized constructions of the "nation" (Gafaiti 2003: 191-2). Here it might then be useful to consider, with Althusser in mind, French "identity" to be the product of ideology rather than of real experience: "In ideology the real relation is invariably invested in the imaginary relation, a relation that expresses a will, a hope or a nostalgia, rather than describing a reality" (Althusser 1970: 234). In a French context, the narrative of a monolithic and entrenched French culture is contradicted not only by the realities of centuries of cross-cultural contacts occurring both within and outside of the borders of present-day France, and the results of the colonial expansion of France beyond those borders.

The insistence on everyday life and lived reality is important. As demonstrated by Gafaiti and Noirel, French "ideology" has not caught up with the multicultural reality of French life. That is not to say that "minority" elements of French society have not been indoctrinated into Republican ideology. I would suggest that in France the overlap of Republicanism and Diaspora is taking place on several levels within French identity itself. Gary Wilder argues that within the French context the complex and often contradictory narratives of Republic and Empire have resulted in a situation where "transnational can be located within the nation-state itself" (Wilder 2003: 237). Looking at French identity through a transnational optic serves to complicate the notion of "being French," which is far more complex than the prevailing discourse would admit.

***Black, Blanc, Beur*: A short history**

The *Black, Blanc, Beur* construction might best be seen as containing a transnational orientation with France clearly in the center. BBB allows for difference within a preexisting republican framework, clearly avoiding a break from the tripartite constructs of the republican slogan (*Liberté, Egalité,*

Fraternité) and the three colors that symbolize the French nation. At the same time, republican values are implicitly criticized for falling short of their stated goals. After all, BBB became a particularly necessary alternative because *Bleu, Blanc, Rouge* has been co-opted as an exclusive nationalist slogan by Le Pen and his National Front.

BBB is both diasporic and republican. Black, instead of *noir,* avoids reductive colonialist stereotypes associated with the French term and also points to the American and English influence in certain realms of French culture (Thomas 2007: 11). In the artistic realm this influence has manifested itself most notably in cinema and more recently rap. *Beur,* a *verlan* or "reverse slang" term, is well known and requires little introduction. The term in its strictest sense signifies those born in France to North African immigrant parents of Arab or Berber background. However it has been applied broadly and often incorrectly, especially in a cinema context, as referenced above. The discursive ghetto of the *beur* cinema "genre" will be discussed at greater length in the following chapter. *Blanc,* the final component of this trio, might seem the least interesting and most straightforward on the surface but in fact holds the possibility of a bevy of invisible identities and hidden nuances. "White" may appear to be the most obvious, the most common, or generic, French identity. In other words the category represents the standard, monolithic identity, or French *souche* (roots) whose place is at the top of a vertical model of citizenship and belonging. I will argue, however, that this aspect of French identity is riddled with "invisible" signifiers and is far more complex below the surface. This complexity is important in terms of viewing the BBB trio as an interwoven ensemble rather than a dichotomous construction opposing white and the other "less French" categories.

While the notion that invisible and overlooked difference helps open the door for a re-imagination of French identity is central to my reading of the situation, it is clear that difference from the "norm" does not always engender unqualified acceptance of diversity. An example of this is provided by Alain

Finkielkraut's comment to the Israeli daily Haaretz in 2005 that the national soccer team, celebrated as emblematic of *métissage* in France following their World Cup victory in 1998, should be called "Black, Black, Black*"* rather than *Black, Blanc, Beur*. Speaking in the context of the 2005 *banlieue* riots, Finkielkraut charged that "People say that the French national team is admired by all because it is '*Black, Blanc, Beur'*. In reality, today's team is 'Black, Black, Black' and the slogan is the laughing stock of all Europe."[50] Lilian Thuram, who played on the 1998 team and is now on the *Haut Conseil à l'intégration* responded in an interview published in *Le Monde.* Thuram, who is from Guadeloupe and therefore a French citizen by birth, pointed out how the philosopher's comments focused on race rather than on the complexity of French identity:

> Finkielkraut déclare que l'équipe de France de football fait rigoler toute l'Europe parce que, aujourd'hui, elle est ''black, black, black,'' cela signifie t-il que les Noirs ne sont donc pas français? Si vous êtes d'origine russe, italienne ou polonaise, vous êtes un Français parfaitement intégré. Mais moi qui suis antillais et français depuis une éternité, est-ce que je reste un non-Français à cause de la couleur de ma peau? Oui, les mots ont un sens…
>
> Finkielkraut declares that the French soccer team makes all of Europe laugh because right now it is "Black, Black, Black." Does this mean that Blacks therefore are not French? If you are of Russian, Italian or Polish origin you are a perfectly integrated Frenchman. However, I, who is from the Antilles and have been French for an eternity, do I remain a non-Frenchman because of the color of my skin? Yes, words have significance. [51]

While Thuram puts his finger on something important, race is only one factor at play in a very complex web. While racism clearly plays a role in French attitudes towards "outsiders," it is not the only issue. One 1984 poll on immigrants' perceived levels of integration shows that just as many French (21%)

---

[50] "Les gens disent que l'équipe nationale française est admirée par tous parce qu'elle est 'black-blanc-beur'. En réalité, l'équipe nationale est aujourd'hui black-black-black', ce qui en fait la risée de toute l'Europe *Le Monde* 24 and 27-28 November, 2005 and 7 June, 2006.

[51] "Lilian Thuram : 'Ouvrez les ghettos !'," Article and interview by Alain Constant, 25 March, 2006. My translation.

consider *Pieds-noirs* (repatriated Europeans from Algeria) to be as "badly assimilated" as West Indian populations in France.[52] West Indians in France would most likely be from Martinique and Guadeloupe. Citizens of these former colonies chose to become departments of France rather than seeking independence in 1946. This means of course that they *are* French. However those living in mainland France were perceived as being less well integrated than immigrants from Italy, Spain, Poland and Portugal. As for the *Pieds-noirs* they were French citizens in Algeria long before being "repatriated" in 1962.[53] For this reason the perception of them as being less integrated than Poles, Portuguese and Italians is noteworthy. As for the rankings of perceptions about minority groups, it is an interesting phenomenon in itself. It is altogether surprising that the average respondent (the "average" Frenchman?) would feel qualified to comment off the cuff on the level of integration of sixteen different communities living in France.

This leads to two issues. First, who is the "average" Frenchman responding to this survey? According to Noiriel, approximately 20% of persons born in France in 1991 had at least one immigrant parent or grandparent. Including great grandparents increases the percentage to nearly one-third of the population (Noiriel 1996: xiii). Secondly, the paradox of this survey is that if the if respondents were truly familiar enough (that is to say having regular interactions or day-to-day contacts) with all of these groups to comment knowledgably on their status in France, the groups would seem to have to be quite well integrated into daily French life. Of course this leads to the debate over models of assimilation and integration. How much otherness can one present to his neighbors and still be accepted as French? That question, of course, might depend on who one's neighbors are. Furthermore, it is altogether likely that

[52] Hargreaves 2007, p. 144. Twenty percent responded that *pieds-noirs* were "badly assimilated," a figure matched by the West Indiansa and also the Yugoslavians. The immigrant groups considered to have best assimilated were (in order) the Italians, Spanish and Poles, followed closely by the Portuguese. Algerians were last.
[53] "Repatriation" is a sticky concept here because many *pieds-noirs* had never set foot in France. The French presence in Algeria dates back to 1830. Moreover, many of the European settlers in Algeria were recruited from Germany, Italy, Spain and Malta. See several articles in the edited collection *Europe's Invisible Migrants*, Andrea C. Smith, ed.

such surveys are filled out based on media conceptions, clichés, and stereotypes rather than real encounters. This state of affairs is something that the works I address in chapter four seek to address by staging voyages beyond that allow people of different backgrounds to come together. Moreover, the very term integration is problematic and the concept of "successful" integration hinges primarily on a priori value judgment. For this reason many have come to prefer the terms "*diversité*" and *"vivre ensemble,"* which allow for some level of difference (Body-Gendrot and Wihtol de Wenden 2007: 18).

Returning to the issue of ranking people according to (perceived) Frenchness, one could ask if someone who "looks" French and is in fact well integrated or assimilated, how would they be pegged for a Pole, Italian, or *Pied-noir*? As in *White,* music becomes a potential clue, serving to connect two Poles in Paris whose "Polishness" would otherwise be invisible. Another obvious answer would be to look at surnames. This approach is not as reliable as it might seem, as many foreign surnames names have been converted into more typically French-sounding names. The *francisation* of immigrant names has long had an important place in the debate over integration policy. During one such debate preceding the 1945 Nationality Code legislation, concern was expressed that of all the players on the French soccer team only five could be identified as "true Frenchmen" by name. A formula was proposed for *francisation* that would apply strict norms of vowel conversion. Italian *i* and *o* could be transformed into more French-sounding *y* and *eau.* This, it was lamented, did not solve the problem of Polish names It was suggested that "perhaps Wanilewski could be approximately replaced by Basile" (Noiriel 1988: 74-75). Many names that were not deliberately converted were subjected to modification by administrative practice. To cite one example, civil servants, by transcription error or due to communications difficulties, frequently transcribed the Polish consonant cluster *szcz* as *srez, sc,* or simply *er* (Ibid: 75). Thus many Polish names where instantly transformed into French ones, facilitating their eventual invisibility as immigrants with unique subjectivities.

The prior perception of Poles as well-integrated was revisited when a new wave of Polish immigrants followed the fall of the Berlin Wall and subsequent European Union expansion. In the months leading up to the eventual "no" vote for the European Constitution in 2005, the infamous "Polish Plumber" became the symbol for an influx of skilled but low-paid workers flooding French markets from Eastern Europe. The French rejection of the constitution has been explained as a retrospective referendum on European expansion into central and Eastern Europe.[54] In fact *Eurobarometer* polling carried out in 2004 showed France to be the nation most resistant to European expansion.[55] Adam Michnik, a leading resistant in the Solidarity movement of the 1970s and 1980s and current Editor in Chief of the Warsaw newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza,* told French interviewers from the magazine *L'Express* that Poles had been better treated in France before E.U. expansion.[56] Following the anxieties that accompanied the cost and open border implications of expansion, Poles were vilified as uncivilized and scapegoated for the perceived menace of economic change and increased unemployment. Michnik observed with a laugh (noted by *L'Express* interviewers) that in the post-expansion climate the Poles "are no longer considered part of the Western family, we are barbarians."[57] It is particularly ironic that new waves of immigrants from a European and Catholic country whose previous waves of immigrants had been (often retroactively) lauded as "good" and readily assimilated in contrast with subsequent immigrants from North and Sub-Saharan Africa are now again relegated to the category of "bad" or menacing immigrants. In other words, they are again outside of the symbolic parameters of Frenchness after having once been inside. Thinking in wider European terms, the fact that the Poles were being symbolically banished from the West at a time when conceptions of "Eastern Europe" were shifting and perhaps even disappearing is emblematic of the significance of the changes to Europe's political-psychological landscape over the past

[54] *Le Monde,* June 4, 2005.
[55] Ibid.
[56] *L'Express, June 6, 2005.*
[57] *L'Express, June 6, 2005*.

twenty years. A 2009 exhibition at the *Centre Pompidou* exemplifies the shifting politics of topography and naming. The advertisements plastered around Paris for the exhibit—featuring works from artists from the Czech Republic, Poland and Romania, among other countries—delimited the geographic boundaries of the exhibit as the "former East European countries" (l'ancienne Europe de l'Est).

Layered diasporic subjectivities and "cool Paris"

If (erstwhile?) Eastern Europeans find themselves on literally shifting ground between their places of origin and France, Algerian identity questions have tended to be embedded in inflexible, reductive and stigmatic categories (see chapter three). One way Allouache teases out the complex layers of identity endemic to Franco-Algerian issues is to employ expectations and clichés in order to point out the limitations inherent in their construction. The primary narrative of *Salut Cousin* works against expectations and clichés by underscoring the different trajectories of its "Algerian" characters. Mok is the insider, a native Parisian who receives his cousin Alilo from Algiers. The latter has never been to Paris and Mok promises to be his guide to "Paris branché" (cool Paris). However as Rosello points out, Mok is an unreliable informant (Rosello 2001: 89). His judgment proves questionable on issues as trivial as pedestrian safety and the chic factor of his dilapidated neighborhood. In the first instance he warns Alilo that one must be careful when crossing the street in Paris, only to jump in front of traffic an instant later, proclaiming "this is Paris, you have to be fast" as braking drivers honk in anger (Ibid: 96). In the second case his assessment of his La Moskowa neighborhood as "up and coming" is refuted by a neighbor who calls it the "home of poverty," due to be destroyed in short order.[58] Indeed Moskowa lacked basic utilities

[58] It is worth noting in that La Moskowa was named after the first Prince de la Moskowa, Marshal Ney, for whom the title was created by Napoleon after he distinguished himself during the French invasion of Russia. Known as the "last Frenchman on Russian soil" following Napoleon's retreat, Ney went on to command an army that included Poles against the Prussians in Poland. This is no more than a fortuitous coincidence in the context of this chapter, but it does serve to remind us that the French did not have to wait for immigrants to experience their first contact with the "East." See Michael V. Leggiere (2003), Napoleon and Berlin: the Franco-Prussian war in North Germany, 1813.

and was declared an "unsanitary district" in 1938 before being almost completely razed and redeveloped by the end of the 1990s.[59]

With this questionable track record in mind, viewers would be wise to take Mok's accounts of his family's misery in the *banlieue* with a healthy dose of skepticism. He recounts a litany of clichés about *banlieue* life to a horrified Alilo: his father is on the dole while his mother is depressed, his brothers are junkies and his sister works as a prostitute. Delinquency, drugs and decay; in short, his description could have been cut and pasted directly out of National Front propaganda. As Rosello notes: "The narrative is a perverse form of mimicry: even if his own life contradicts the popular discourse about *banlieues,* Mok has more or less schizophrenically internalized the scenario of the undesirability of his (social and ethnic) 'origins'" (Rosello 2001: 96). Here Allouache uses humor to suggest a litany of related chicken and egg questions. How much of what we "know" about the *banlieue* is the product of reality rather than representation? And how is this reality affected by the representation?

Having initially acquiesced to this stereotype of what the majority of viewers would surely expect from a suburban setting, Allouache then takes a slightly different approach to debunking *banlieue* myths than that of the artists addressed in other chapters. As in *Jeunesse dorée* (chapter four), clichés are not avoided but referenced and then directly refuted. In *Salut Cousin,* however, this is done with a significant dose of humor. When Alilo visits the family he finds Mok's version to be wrong on all counts. Mok's father is retired rather than unemployed, his daughter not a prostitute but a taxi driver, and his sons seem to be respectable citizens instead of delinquents. One has moved to the United States to work in cinema while the other is serving in the army. The choice of taxi driver for the daughter's career stands in stark contrast to the common *banlieue* themes of lack of mobility and spatial isolation. While shots of suburban youths missing the last train to or from Paris (most famously in *La Haine*) or plodding along astride a

[59] *Le Monde*, January 17, 1991 and April 3, 1996.

non-functional motorbike are classic images of the *banlieue* genre, Mok's sister dashes around Paris in a shiny late model vehicle. As for their housing estate, it is pleasant and orderly. This depiction offers a twist to the generational gap that operates in many *beur* families.

As Alec Hargreaves has pointed out, the reality of the immigrant experience in France is that each successive generation tends to see themselves as "more French" and less traditional than their parents. In this case, Mok's parents are quite well integrated and don't appear to need their *beur* children to serve as cultural mediators between them and mainstream French culture. This doesn't mean that they necessarily act "French"; the father still attends a local mosque and watches satellite broadcasts from Algeria (though he characterizes the imam as a "crook"). They do, however, speak French fluently, even at home, and are financially stable and enjoying retirement after years of work. Likewise the children seem well assimilated and relatively successful, but are not apparently "more French" than their parents. The opportunity to travel to America to work in cinema is clearly an example of social mobility; it is not something the parents would have been likely to venture. This recalls Ali, the protagonist of Allouache's 1987 film *Un amour à Paris*, who dreams of moving to America to become an astronaut. The recurrence of this theme in Allouache's work seems to point to a different outlook on migration and immigration, one focused on flexibility and movement that works against static perceptions of identity.

The brother's voyage to America to work in film, a case of extended migration if not emigration, demonstrates that France is not a fixed point of arrival. Eva Hoffman, who emigrated from Poland to America as a child, describes the "bipolar" configuration of exile as implying a choice between two distinct realities of *home* and *abroad*. She proposes that in the "nomadic" mentality these notions are divested of its powerful magnetism: the "new nomad" operates in a world were all boundaries are crossable; he moves freely among countries and cultures (Hoffman 1999: 55-6). Deleuze and Guattari's formulation of "nomadic thought" as an unanchored counter-practice also applies. In this case the

generational immigrant narrative becomes a point of "resistance" against the neo-colonial, vertical model of assimilation. As the polling data I discussed shows, it is common to see French identity as the apex of a progression from "immigrant" to "integrated." By moving on again, the cycle of second generation assimilation is reframed in a non-binary context that questions the linking of identity to a specific national framework.

Mok has internalized just such a typical narrative of immigrant "progression." Unstable and insecure, Mok clings to the clichéd *banlieue* story to validate his own perception of himself as "more French." After being booed off stage by a decidedly young and mixed crowd he complains that "they can't accept that I left the *banlieue."* If life in the projects is terrible in Mok's narrative, "leaving" would represent progression on the vertical grid of Frenchness. By insisting on his superiority, Mok unwittingly underlines an essential point about the variety of "immigrant" experiences and subjectivities. Layers of "Arab"/French belonging and assimilation become clear in Mok's comments regarding the recently arrived Algerians his cousin visits. When Alilo announces he is going to see friends in the Barbès neighborhood Mok chides him for associating with such riff-raff. Then he claims "I don't give a damn about these creeps from the *bled*, I'm French." *Bled* is somewhat inadequately translatable as "village" or "hole," but carries an unavoidable connotation with North Africa. Meanwhile Barbès has become associated with immigration, particularly from Africa. Dominic Thomas observes that this Paris neighborhood "enjoys a mixed reputation as simultaneously the nucleus of a vibrant multiculturalism and the focal point of negative characterizations of the immigrant underclass; because of this, deconstruction of the term 'Barbès' reveals a multiplicity of signifiers" (Thomas 2007: 193). In other words depending on one's vantage point on the question of diversity and of what France should look like, the district carries positive connotations for some and pejorative for others. By joining the former camp Mok is unwittingly supporting a viewpoint that will lead to his own deportation from France. Fittingly given his

propensity for self-contradiction, Mok treats Barbès with derision, though its description by Thomas as a "nucleus of a vibrant multiculturalism" matches Mok's own wishful description of his *La Moskowa* neighborhood.

Mok's dismissal of the residents of Barbès indicates that "he" is not like "them," a reminder that all "Arabs"—who may or may not in fact be Arab—do not all share identical perspectives despite the tendency to lump them all together as "immigrants" whether or not they were in fact born in France. It would be incorrect to read his stance as an endorsement of absolute assimilation. While he affirms his own Frenchness in spatial opposition to "them," whether they are in the *bled,* in the *banlieue,* or in Barbès, Mok also celebrates diversity of his neighborhood. When he proclaims that La Moskowa is in fact a desirable address, a stupefied Alilo compares the run-down district to Algiers. While the connection he makes is likely a valid one as it applies to the dinginess of the area, Alilo misses one key point Mok is making. However inconsistent his logic may be, the latter is trying to present diversity as the epitome of "cool," something the rest of Paris and indeed France might do well to take as a model. This is illustrated further inside the apartment, where Mok cooks Alilo's first dinner in Paris. "Thai style spaghetti" is on the menu, a hybrid dish signaling his multicultural credentials. When Alilo protests that he isn't cooking the pasta correctly, Mok smiles and replies "it's my recipe." Mok's personal narrative is contradictory—embracing and rejecting stereotypes in turns—but it is his own recipe, neither "typically" French nor "typically" *beur.* With this in mind we can reevaluate Mok's statement on Barbès, placing it within spatial considerations of identity. While he clearly deems himself superior and "more French" than those he considers typical of Barbès, he also seems to be against the idea of finding himself stuck in a neighborhood that is unavoidably linked to immigration in the popular imagination, a discursive ghetto that might serve as a hindrance in greater society. Mok does not wish to be hemmed into any particular narrative that is spatially defined on a societal level. His imagined corner of Paris is constructed in his

head neither as "typically" Parisian nor as "typically immigrant," rather as simply a multicultural Paris *branché.*

New narratives of "exile"

Just as *Salut Cousin* isn't a typical Algerian immigrant narrative, *White* does not represent a traditional story of Polish exile. In this film Kieslowski displays what Izabela Kalinowska describes as a more "positive exilic optic in Polish cinema" (Kalinowska 2002: 122). Karol Karol breaks the mold of the traditional Polish exilic hero as canonized in literature and film. Like Mok, he writes his own story, redefining a new concept of identity and belonging. The recurring motif of the color white can be seen as a blank slate, a page to be filled not with lamentations for the past but a program for the future. White fills the screen at key moments of symbolic rebirth. First, Karol's return to Poland is staged in snow-white field, apparently a trash dump. The setting appears to be a nod to Andrzej Wajda's *Ashes and Diamonds*, perhaps the classic Polish film of reference (Falkowska 1996: 150). In the concluding scene of that film a resistance hero dies in a trash heap in 1945 Poland, a country recently liberated from the Nazis only to fall under the control of the Soviet Union in rapid succession. Mortally wounded and staggering around the dump in rather melodramatic fashion, his blood soils the center of a bed sheet hanging on a clothesline. The combination of red on white conjures the image of Poland's flag and represents the nation's symbolic death. When Karol returns to the scene, so to speak, the trash is brightened with a layer of white snow: this white sheet is a blank page, suggesting rebirth. Later, Mikolaj is symbolically reborn after Karol "shoots" him with a blank round in an attempted "assisted suicide" (Mikolaj having claimed he wanted to die but lacked the courage to kill himself).[60] The ensuing scene of mirthful celebration is staged a on a

[60] Insdorf, p. 165. As Insdorf points out, the French expression for shoot a blank is "tirer à blanc." 'Blanc' is 'white' in French.

frozen white pond in wintry Warsaw, itself portrayed in the film as a blank slate for capitalism and economic development, but also suitable for the reinvention of personal narratives and identities.

The respective situations of Mikolaj and Karol are examples of updated, layered conceptions of exilic and diasporic subjectivity. Their encounter takes places in a corridor of the Paris metro, where Mikolaj "recognizes" Karol as Polish because of the melody the former plays on his comb. According to Insdorf the tune is "The Last Sunday," a popular Polish song about doomed lovers (Insdorf 1999: 155). While both share this cultural reference, the second song Karol essays demonstrates that there is flexibility for difference in their shared space of memory: in other words, not all Poles are the same. It is a song popular at Communist-era youth camps, and therefore a strange choice for a "typical" Polish exile. After all, following the Second World War Paris was a choice destination for exiled anti-communist dissidents, most notably Nobel laureate Czeslaw Milosz. Mikolaj plays smooth and successful to Karol's disheveled and demoralized. He clearly seems to be well-adjusted, at least on a socio-economic level. Established in France, he appears to have been there longer than Karol. While he has lost his will to live, unlike Karol he lacks not for money, wife, nor passport. What else could a (straight) man want in contemporary Europe? The two Poles have widely varied lived experiences in France. They could pass each other in the street or in the metro, as they almost did in the film, without recognizing each other as Polish. Yet the common musical memory is something that remains no matter how "French" either becomes.

Comedy and Fate

Each film employs dark comedy in their representations of diasporic life in France. In both cases this approach provides a means to comment on the situation in their respective countries of origin with a certain level of subtlety. Kieslowski's satirical approach has been convincingly read as a strategy to critique money, capitalism, materialism and power without seeming overly zealous or polemical

(Kickasola 2006: 280). For his part, Allouache recounted to an interviewer that he resorted to comedy in an attempt to testify about the situation in Algeria and to "conjure fate."[61] Laughing at fate provides a hopeful way of representing the ridiculous situations that the characters find themselves in. In this context humor could be seen as accompanied by fatalism (though certainly not capitulation). The films share a vision of chance and destiny that could be described as perhaps migrant or "minor," not in a Deleuzian sense but rather expressing a certain resignation to the fact that one's destiny is in the hands of greater powers. In Kieslowski's case I would call it a very Polish or Central European perspective. Since Poland's partitioned in 1772 by the Hapsburg, Prussian and Russian empires, it has been ruled by outside forces, including Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia, and saw its cities razed to the ground in World War II. This historical reality of outside domination made exile, according to Izabela Kalinowska, the "central problem around which modern Polishness was built" (Kalinkowska 2002: 107). Put in the words of novelist and filmmaker Tadeusz Konwicki, Poland's fate was to be a "small, luckless country that keeps on dying (Konwicki 1999: 90)."

Kieslowski winks at this national mythology of exile and return by staging Karol Karol's homecoming in what appears to be a garbage dump. After enduring a beating by corrupt baggage handlers who alight with him in the suitcase, imagining that such a heavy package must be valuable, Karol falls unconscious into a heap. When he comes around he stands up and admires the dump while proclaiming "Jesus, home at last!"[62] Kieslowski satirizes the mythic exilic Pole by representing him not as a writer or warrior but as a hairdresser. Instead of a pen, sword or gun, Karol is armed first with a comb which he "plays" for money in the Paris metro and then a pair of scissors which he wields ineffectually against his

[61] *Le Monde*, November 26, 1995.
[62] The Jesus reference perhaps again pertains to Polish national mythology. It was common to refer to Poland as the "Christ of Europe," sacrificed to Russia to save the West.

assailants. In the new Poland one need not be a fighter, for even hairdressers now seem to have a stake in building society.

Allouache's treatment of Algeria's fate is less lighthearted though but the tone set is by no means funereal. The civil war that that raged in that country in the 1990s—referred to in the film as the "situation"—-mediates many of Alilo's interactions with fellow Algerians, though he rarely says much about it beyond nodding his head in dismay. One of the most interesting displays of nostalgia for Algeria occurs when Alilo goes to pick up the suitcase of contraband merchandise from Maurice, a Jewish *pied-noir* tailor. In keeping with his project of complexifying the *beur* and Franco-Maghrebi categories, Allouache also chose to portray Algeria's historical ethnic complexity. Maurice offers Alilo "typical" Algerian *thé à la menthe* and admits that while he has been in France for more than thirty years he still listens to Algerian music when he finds himself "struck by nostalgia." Maurice asks Alilo if he recognizes the music and the latter's acknowledging smile inspires the tailor to imagine out loud a walk down the streets of Algiers. If the detailed panorama of Algiers seems fresh in his mind it may be that the director is channeling his own (more recent) nostalgia through the tailor, the only character in the film to speak at such length about Algeria. It is also interesting to note what Allouache has chosen to have Maurice remember. *Pied-noir* nostalgia, at least in its collective manifestations, tends to gloss over difficulties and differences of the colonial period, painting Algeria as a harmonious site of inter-ethnic connectivity (Cohen 2003: 130-1). On the other hand, a small but outspoken lobby for repatriated Algerian *Pieds-noirs* has pushed a more divisive agenda comprising commemorative plaques for OAS commandos and support for the February, 2005 law that proclaiming the "positive effects of colonization" (Tuquoi 2007: 35-38).

Maurice forgoes the political realm altogether, choosing instead to focus on physical memories: the streets, the sea and music. His evocation of sea and sun recall *Pied-noir* Albert Camus's *Noces.*[63] In other words, Maurice remembers reference points common to all religions or ethnicities of Algeria rather than specific cultural contexts. In this sense he adds a nuanced and often unheard voice to what Paul Ricoeur termed the "*travail de mémoire*" between France and Algeria (Tuquoi 2007: 13). The connection of music and place provides a useful and nuanced way to think about identities. As I seek to demonstrate in chapters one (African music and hip-hop) and three (Mediterranean music), music tends to evoke geographic spaces, and cultural circulation between places, more so than a specific national or ethnic identity. Often, music that is perceived as "authentically" Andalusian, Algerian or Senegalese is in fact the product of a variety of traditions and travels.[64]

The use of music as a cultural link recalls the scene in *White* where Karol and Mikolaj meet thanks to the tune the former was playing on his comb. Just as Karol does not necessarily "look" Polish, Maurice would not stand out as Algerian on the streets of the French capital. The shared cultural heritage mediates the connection and provides a lesson on the floating signification of Algerianess and the danger inherent in stereotyped representation. Maurice would be equally out of place in postwar conceptions of Algeria as in the prevailing French imagination of "Algerian." Mention of that word likely conjures the

[63] "Au printemps, Tipasa est habitée par les dieux et les dieux parlent dans le soleil et l'odeur des absinthes, la mer cuirassée d'argent, le ciel bleu écru, les ruines couvertes de fleurs et la lumière à gros bouillons dans les amas de pierre… " Camus 1950.

[64] James Winders notes that "pure" or "traditional" African music are misleading. African music is the product of "decades of articulation with European genres brought to Africa and Western styles returning across the Atlantic." For example, "to say 'Senegalese' is already to indicate a complicated mixture of styles and influences. These include Caribbean and Cuban." (Winders 2006: 25). Musicologist Tullia Magrini defines Mediterranean music as such: "we would use the term for those musical phenomena which cross the sea, which have in their DNA a genetic patrimony that united elements of different cultures."[64]

term “Arab,” which in turn unleashes a negative chain of connotations. Writing in the same cultural and political moment in which *Salut Cousin* was filmed and released, Rosello proposes:

> Try using the word “Maghreb” or “Arab” in France today. Try inserting them into a sentence innocently, as if by chance… Say the word Arab and you have pressed a discursive and cultural button, unleashing a Pavlovian herd of images … Islam and fundamentalism and mosques and crowds and suburbs and fanaticism and fundamentalism and racism (Rosello 1998: 43).

The inclusion of the Jewish *pied-noir* into a narrative of Algerian nostalgia disrupts the chain of associations conjured by the word “Algerian,” destabilizing the prevalent image. This is similar to the game Allouache plays with *banlieue* stereotypes. The suggestion inherent in this choice is that ideology is not the only optic through which to consider identity. As an “imaginary relation,” according to Althusser’s formulation, ideology can in fact dissimulate other shared references.

Another episode in the film signals the permeability of ethnic categories with a reference to “passing.” Alilo’s Algerian friend Rachid, living in France illegally while hoping to get to Canada, recounts that he carries around a yarmulke, which he puts on in the case of an ID check, a common occurrence for dark-skin people in France. The cap, he confides, allows him to “pass” as a Jew: “they never think I’m an Algerian.” Switching cultural signifiers therefore allows him to navigate around juridical restrictions on his presence in France. More importantly perhaps, it also invites us to question the fixity and permeability of such cultures within France, a cultural space within which the contradictory narratives of Republic and Empire have resulted in a situation where “transnational can be located within the nation-state itself” (Wilder 2003: 237). Again, as with the case of Mok’s brother moving to America, the desire to migrate to Canada suggests that France is not necessarily a fixed and final destination. This is an issue that political and social commentators are increasingly raising in France: a migration of

movement is replacing the sedentary immigration of the past, and states need to accept and account for these changes (Weil 2005: 14).

Intersections of fate: Train stations and phone booths

Whether intentionally or not, in addition to "conjuring fate" Allouache's film also conjures *White*, or at least Kieslowski's particular vision of fate and destiny. At the beginning of *White* the juxtaposition of shots showing the trunk moving along the airport conveyor belt with a tracking shot of Karol's feet on a Parisian street suggest, as Annette Insdorf argues, that Karol, "like the trunk, is being pulled along a predetermined path" (Insdorf 1999: 158). I would interpret the juxtaposition as a dialectic relationship: Karol is on one hand pulled by the unseen machine, the Karol of destiny, and on the other the Karol of chance walking the streets of Paris on his own volition. As opposed to the belt, which moves objects towards a fixed destination, the grid of streets offers a multitude of possibilities, invoking to some degree choice and to a greater extent chance. Chance, after all, plays a preeminent role in Kieslowski's oeuvre. In his films the intersections of fate are sometimes literal intersections, crossroads, as in *Bez konca* (*No End,* 1984), when Ula's car mysteriously stalls for a few minutes along a desolate stretch of road. Once back on the road she finds that there had been an accident at the next intersection. Had her car not stopped for no apparent reason would she also be injured or dead like the motorists she drives past? In *Przypadek* (*Blind Chance*, 1981), Kieslowski locates the intersection of fate in a train station. In that film the protagonist Witek is a young medical student whose life follows three very different trajectories based on the seemingly banal occurrence of making or missing one train. The student goes on to become in turn a Communist Party member, a dissident and finally a devoted doctor and family man, though as a person he is not fundamentally different in any of these variations.

In *White* the critical intersections are underground, in the Paris metro. The encounter between Karol and Mikolaj, which changes the trajectory of both of their lives for the better, takes place at the

crossroads of two underground passages leading to and from the trains. Obviously if Karol had not met Mikolaj in the metro, he would have never had the opportunity to return to Warsaw as his checked luggage, marking a point for chance over predestination. It is also interesting to note that Kieslowski edited thirteen different versions of *White* before settling on one, suggesting that even he lacked a firm vision of Karol's fate Insdorf 1999: 153). At the same time, it should be pointed out that the blank slate of post-communist Poland seems to open the door for personal (and, symbolically, national) initiative. Once Karol returns to Poland, the plot is driven not by chance but by his scheme for achieving equality (or revenge).[65]

Salut Cousin opens and closes on a platform in a train station, a reminder that voyage has made the narrative possible. The opening sequence, a tracking shot of Alilo's feet amidst those of other arriving passengers, resembles the shot of Karol's feet in front of the courthouse. Allouache stays with this shot for a while; we see Mok's feet approaching Alilo, who explains to his cousin that he has lost the address where he was supposed to pick up the suitcase full of merchandise and that it is a very serious problem. With the focus remaining on the feet, Mok insists that Alilo not call him "Mokrane" but by his nickname. Thus our "introduction" to the characters occurs from the rather anonymous perspective of their feet: they are indistinguishable from the sea of people surrounding them. Like in *White*, where our first image of Karol (not counting Karol inside a moving suitcase) is of his feet, this choice underlines the fact that both cousins are migrants or at least travelers, whether wittingly so or not.

We finally see the upper half of the protagonists when Mok proceeds to suggest to Alilo that he phone Algeria to get the address. Thus the first proper image of Mok and Alilo shows them in a telephone

[65] In *Blind Chance* Kieslowski seems to ascribe to Witek little agency in choosing his path. The political situation prevents him from such plans as those undertaken by Karol. However he ends up in the same place—dead in a plane crash—no matter what path his life follows. At the end of the trilogy Karol also ends up in a transport disaster, a collapsed ferry, but he survives.

booth, introducing the film's second privileged "intersection" of fate. The brief mention on the platform of the suitcase, the quest for which will drive Alilo's narrative, foreshadows the end of the film where the suitcase and the train station combine to alter his destiny. Remaining on the phone theme, the final words of the film are from Alilo, possibly phoning from the same telephone booth we see at the beginning, telling Mok's answering machine that he is at the train station and his *trabendo* bag was confiscated and destroyed by the police, forcing him to stay in Paris rather than returning to face the wrath of his employer. Alilo's fate is Kieslowskian in the sense that it has been sealed on the station platform, not by missing the train but because of heightened security measures in force following the 1995 bombings carried out in Paris by Algerians. It is also significant that Alilo lost track of his suitcase, thus rendering it abandoned and therefore suspicious, because his love interest Fatoumato met him at the train station to bid him farewell. This in turn links us back to a fortuitous encounter at a different phone booth, where Alilo first speaks with Fatoumata and makes the connection that will lead to her presence at the train station. The closing of the film, again, reiterates the vision of the train station as a privileged point of encounter, where one makes connections with trains, people and destiny.

The telephone booth represents a postmodern or virtual point of connection and a faster way to "travel" between France and "home." As Clifford has argued, new technologies of communication have fundamentally altered the migrant experience: "dispersed peoples, once separated from homelands by vast oceans and political barriers increasingly find themselves in border relations with the old country thanks to a to-and-fro made possible by modern technologies" (Clifford 1997: 304). For the residents of Moskowa, who unlike Mok may not have their own telephones, the local phone booth provides a connection to home. Throughout the film important conversations and encounters that place in or around the public phone. Alilo meets Fatoumato because when he saves her from a group of skinheads harassing her in the booth. Later he runs into her when trying to call Algeria; she is visibly upset after receiving the

news (as we learn later) that her relationship was ending because her boyfriend decided to bring his wife from Africa. This, of course, opens the possibility of Alilo and Fatoumata coming together at the end. Before finally reaching the person in Algiers with the address he needs, Alilo repeatedly uses a phone booth and encounters a variety or characters there, including several people who seem to be phoning home to Africa, or perhaps to relatives dispersed elsewhere in France or Europe.

The telephone also plays an important symbolic role in *White* as in the Three Colors trilogy in general. Karol telephones his ex-wife once to find her with another man, then again from Warsaw to demonstrate his improved French proficiency (he had been practicing on tape). Finally, following his fake death, Mikolaj summons Dominique to Warsaw by phone. Kieslowski seems to place telecommunications on the same symbolic level as mechanical apparatuses. As in *White,* the other films of the trilogy open with a mechanical image. In the Red that image is a phone being dialed followed by a trajectory through a wire and filaments under the English Channel, linking the voice of Valentine to her boyfriend Michel in England. As Insdorf observes, the shot and accompanying distorted voices and sounds "convey the technological path that the human spirit must travel in the 1990s" (Insdorf 1999: 169). It is clear that Kieslowski does not unconditionally embrace technology or present it as part of a liberatory trope. The first film of his *Decalogue* series, about a tragic accident caused by unmitigated faith in a computer, is sufficient to demonstrate this. I would argue, however, that the modern communications technologies that Clifford writes of play a role in what Kalinowska has described as Kieslowski's more "positive optic" on Polish exile. In *White* the telephone—along with air travel—has transformed the Polish exile experience into a border experience.

In *Salut Cousin,* the focus on modern communications, symbolized by the phone booth is clearly not incidental. Allouache has been particularly interested in how technology mediates postcolonial experiences. His most recent film, *Bab-el Web* (playing off the name of his home district of Bab el-Oued

in Algiers and his 1994 film *Bab el-Oued City*) , tells the story of a young Algerian trying to connect with French women on the Internet. When Alilo alights in Paris without the necessary address Mok suggests that they look it up on *Minitel,* a rudimentary French precursor to the Internet that was apparently an unknown commodity to his Algerian cousin. Despite the potential of instantaneous global connectivity and information, *Salut Cousin* also underscores the uneven power relations inherent in Western telecommunications networks. Many residents rely on public phones that don't always work, or have to queue while a neighbor calls family. When Mok has to explain to his cousin that the relatively modern phones in France work with phone cards rather than coins, we are reminded that telephony in Europe is significantly more advanced and accessible to the average person than it is on the other side of the Mediterranean.

Documenting Identities, Decentering Identity

If train and metro stations and phone booths are the updated sites of immigrants' intersections of fate, suitcases and passports (or identity cards) serve as their updated props. The latter identifies its holder and legitimizes his/her presence as well as providing entry through borders and transit points. As Noiriel notes, it is "often overlooked that legal restriction, identification documents and laws are what, in the final analysis, determine the 'identity' of immigrants" (Noiriel 1988: 45). The identity card is also symbolic in the French context of the frequent "identity checks" that darker-skinned youth often endure (see chapter one). In *White* Karol loses his passport twice. The first time follows his divorce: left with no money and no passport he is unable to leave France (why he cannot simply replace it at the Polish embassy is never explained). The loss of money is symbolized by the shredding of his debit card by a bank employee, who tells Karol that his account is blocked. As Kalinowski points out, the bank card is the ideal emblem of contemporary identity (Kalinowska 2002: 109). The loss of access to his accounts relegates Karol immediately to the margins of society. As Insdorf notes in her analysis of the film, the words we see on

the ATM screen when Karol inserts his card are quite apt in this sense: "type in your code then press validate." In other words, one is "validated" by the content of one's bank account. Money problems aside, Karol's primary concern is replacing the lost passport that would allow him return passage to Poland. He briefly mulls the idea of obtaining a fake passport outside the Polish church, only to be rebuked by Mikolaj, who tells him that these passports are of questionable quality. Interestingly, this is the only reference to a Polish diasporic community in Paris. One might have expected a needy Pole in a foreign land to seek out the Polish community, which was quite well established in the French capital.[66] Again, this fits with the notion of a new optic on exile; even alone and without means Karol does not have the traditional diasporic reflex.

Back in Poland, Karol replaces his passport and becomes, officially, a person and a citizen again. As his plan for revenge or "equality" develops, Karol decides he must "die" again to lure Dominique to Poland. His rather tangled plan is to make a large sum of money and use the "inheritance" to pique his ex-wife's interest enough for her to come to his funeral. In order to obtain the death certificate the new passport is shredded. Officially a non-person once again, Karol must obtain false documents. Kieslowski uses Karol's return to paint a satirical picture of Poland's unbridled capitalist élan. In this climate anything—whether identity papers or actual humans—is available for purchase, as one character remarks when they buy a body to bury as Karol. The conditions are also highly favorable for the reaping of quick capital; through a bit of hard work and a variety of shrewd maneuvers Karol earns a quick fortune.

Dominique does come for Karol's funeral and to collect the money he left for her in his will. Observing from a distance, Karol sees her crying and realizes that she perhaps did love him after all. In a fulfillment of his fantasized plan, he waits for her in her hotel suite that night, surprises her, and finally

[66] Kalinowska calls Paris the "privileged site of Polish immigration starting in the 19th century." p. 110. Flashbacks from the wedding of Dominique and Karol indicate that it was held at a Polish church in Paris.

consummates the marriage. Back "home" in Poland, it seems, Karol has no potency problems. To even the score completely, however, Karol planned to have her arrested for his "murder," thanks to a tip phoned in to the police by Mikolaj. He disappears from the hotel in the morning and she wakes to the police knocking on her door. Dominique is told that she is under arrest for suspicion of murder. She immediately announces that she is a French citizen, establishing her "otherness" in this situation, and the police notify her that the consulate has been contacted and request that she turn over her passport. The confiscation of her identity papers symbolizes equality. After all, she was responsible for relegating Karol to non-person status in Paris. Imprisoned and deprived of her passport, now it is Dominique's turn to no longer "exist."

The implication of flexible conceptions of exile and diaspora in France (and Europe) is that French identity also becomes instable and fluid as succeeding waves of immigrants (or migrants) become established there. Frenchness becomes less French as it is layered with other identities, other conceptions and other memories. I would suggest here that *White* symbolically de-centers Frenchness, pointing out the fact that Europe's eastward expansion has a destabilizing effect on the very concept of being and feeling French. Dominique is cast out of France to the margins of a newly "reunited" Europe by a former immigrant. Her experience in Warsaw, where her existence is unmoored and she is treated to a strange brand of justice, mirrors that of Karol in Paris. At the end of the film we see her in her prison window, looking out at Karol who "visits" her from the courtyard. Dominique is imprisoned despite the lack of evidence (there can be none, of course since Karol isn't really dead). Does mere suspicion suffice because she is a foreigner? In this sense equality is established with the French justice meted out at the beginning of the film. Humiliated before the judge, Karol protests through his translator: "Where is the equality? Is it because I don't speak French?" The appeal falls on deaf ears and Dominique proceeds to take him to the cleaners, leaving him without home or money and setting in motion his rather ungraceful repatriation.

Dominique's passport taken, imprisonment represents an evening of the score. "Deported" and displaced to the (perceived) hinterlands of Europe, her presence in Poland represents a symbolic de-centering of her French identity. Likewise French identity within Europe has shifted as European borders expand, both shifting balances of power within the continent and ostensibly allowing Poles and others formerly trapped on one side of the Berlin Wall complete and free access to France and the rest of Western Europe. With this in mind it should be recalled that in the first film in the trilogy, *Blue,* Julie (played by Juliette Binoche) takes over her deceased husband's commission to compose an anthem for a "European Unification" concert.

The recent commemorations surrounding the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall have brought the issue of the "new" Europe back into the limelight in a more positive sense than we saw during the debates of the Treaty of Lisbon. *Le Monde* led its coverage of the anniversary with the euphoric headline "How the fall of the Wall gave birth to the Europe of 2009."[67] In this Europe of 2009, Poles in France have the right to travel back and forth between the two countries in the cabin of the plane, with an assigned seat and without border controls. Karol's lost passport would therefore be of little consequence. This process has not been without rough patches between the West and the erstwhile East, as witnessed by the awkward handoff of the rotating European Union presidency from France to the Czech Republic and the riff over the proposed U.S. missile defense shield installations in Poland and the Czech Republic. Furthermore, and anecdotally, Czechs and Poles living in Paris have expressed their disappointment in the coverage of the events.[68]

The focus of media attention has indeed been largely on the symbolic event, the literal breach and subsequent disassembly of the Wall, to the detriment of coverage of events such as Prague's Velvet

[67] *Le Monde,* November 10, 2009.
[68] This observation is based on personal conversations and on exchanges that took place on the Franco-Czech "Petite Prague" listserv in 2009.

Revolution and the Solidarity movement in Poland. The cover of *Libération* for November 9th features the image of a man breaking through the Wall with a German flag, followed by a page two story on the events of 1989 in Berlin. Readers had to hunt a bit to find references to Solidarity buried in a page three commentary (reminding us that Lech Walesa has already reminded us that "the first wall was knocked down in Gdansk") or an interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski on page six ("What happened in Berlin started in Gdansk, Poland, more than a year before.").[69]

The Berlin Wall was certainly the quintessential symbol of the Cold War but also emblematic of the physical and psychological borders that had to be removed in order for Europe to take its current shape. The emphasis on the Wall as a physical entity seems to underscore two lingering perceptions that are related but which have very different ramifications for Europe. First, the reader is reminded incessantly that the new member states of Europe were once *over there*, on the other side of the Wall. In this vein, ignoring or relegating to second-tier status the home grown democratic protest movements of Poland and then Czechoslovakia (inextricably linked to their traditions of, and self-image as, Western democracies) establishes an implicit vertical hierarchy within Europe. On the other hand, the references to the Wall also underscore the fact that there is no more Berlin Wall, and no more walls in Europe, certainly a positive development for Poles.

The Suitcase as Cultural Baggage

Like identity papers, the suitcase also marks its carrier as an immigrant. Discarding the suitcase would traditionally mean establishing oneself in some permanent capacity, becoming "at home" in the host country. Both films address the issue of expectations of the host society towards immigrants,

[69] *Libération,* November 9, 2009.

suggesting that the criteria for "assimilation" and "integration" are unclear and unfair.[70] Karol's courtroom outburst seems to suggest that he is treated this way because he is not French and therefore lacks the capacity, linguistic or otherwise, to navigate the French court system. If the definition of Frenchness is linguistic and cultural, Mok seems to have met the requirements. He speaks French fluently and is well versed in French high culture. This is demonstrated by his project of rapping to the words of La Fontaine's fables, including the *Town Rat and the Country Rat,* or as he rather academically (pretentiously?) puts it he is "working on La Fontaine's texts" (Rosello 2001: 87). Like his recipe for spaghetti "à la thailandaise," this project of re-appropriating and reworking cultural capital underscores Mok's self-image as a flexible citizen of a France that is multicultural and *branchée.* Mok's cultural capital is highlighted in humorous contrast to Alilo's relative ignorance and inability to wrap his head around his cousin's project, which he describes to a relative as "singing with animals" (Rosello 2001: 101). Allouache portrays a France that is perhaps not ready for such daring fusions of "high" and "low" culture: Mok is jeered by suburban youth at an open mic night rap concert and later deported by French authorities.

As for suitcases, they are the ubiquitous symbol of travel. Hamid Naficy has called the suitcase the "phobic partner" representing the symbolic value of exile, which contains "souvenirs from the homeland, denotes travel and living a provisional life, and connotes a pervasive sense of being closed in, profound deprivation, and diminution of one's possibilities in the world" (Naficy 2001: 218). Both Kieslowski and Allouache re-invent the exilic suitcase, depicting it more as a positive tool than as a burden. In Alilo's case, the suitcase does not carry the typical connotations, for it has not traveled from Algeria with him. Rather, he is to pick it up in Paris and deliver it to Algiers. This trajectory is the

[70] Noiriel distinguishes 'integration' from 'assimilation'. He describes measurements of integration as straightforward: one needs only "evaluate how immigrant populations compare with nations in terms of income, occupation, and so forth. The question of assimilation, however, is much more complex." *The French Melting Pot,* p. xix.

opposite of typical suitcase narratives, for Algerians are meant to bring baggage—metaphorical or otherwise—with them to France, not the other way around. The suitcase full of contraband clothing is the reason behind Alilo's voyage, and as Rosello has pointed out, when the suitcase disappears Alilo's journey ends (Rosello 2001: 112). In this sense while Alilo is preoccupied with the suitcase throughout the film, it does not define him or represent him in any significant way. The provenance of the suitcase—Maurice the *pied-noir*—is also an eerie reminder of the slogan "the coffin or the suitcase" that menaced Algerians of European origin during that country's war for independence (Ibid: 113). The suitcase therefore represents the specter of violence and exile, all the while reminding us that Arab and Berber Algerians aren't the only ones with hidden baggage.

In *White,* Karol's rather large suitcase is presented as the literal souvenir of his marriage and symbol of his homelessness. Following the divorce proceedings his now ex-wife dumps it unceremoniously in front of him at the courthouse steps before speeding off. We then see him struggling to lug the trunk around the streets of Paris. Though it seems like weighty and symbolic "cultural baggage," it later appears to be almost empty aside from Karol's diplomas and certificates from hairdressers' conventions across Europe. These certificates are discarded as useless relics of the past by Karol, who is determined to use the trunk for positive means. He cuts an air hole in the side and returns to Poland in Mikolaj's checked luggage. The symbol of migrant deprivation therefore becomes a useful tool that facilitates his return.

Conclusion

In *Red,* the final film of Kieslowski's trilogy, several of the characters from each film cross paths. In a fitting intersection of fate, they are the sole survivors pulled from a collapsed ferry in the English Channel. Among these are Karol and Dominique. While the context recalls Adorno's concept of exile as a lifeboat floating between coasts without arriving at either shore, the rescue lends an optimistic tone to the

scene. Karol and Dominique have left Poland and are travelling again, not as perpetual exiles but as a mobile transnational couple. Similarly, in *Salut Cousin,* the tragedy of Mok's deportation to a land he has never seen is mitigated by Alilo's good fortune. Though he cannot return to Algeria, he has found love in Paris and another transnational allegiance is formed.

In the case of each film mobility is privileged over fixed notions of immigration, exile and diaspora. Comings and goings are staged around transnational allegiances. The hyphenated identities that are forged provide new perspectives on identity and destabilize totalizing notions of Frenchness. More importantly they work against prevailing narratives of assimilation by which the immigrant either becomes French by losing his otherness or fails to shed his otherness and never succeeds at becoming accepted as French. It seems fitting that *White,* the only film of the three to address immigrant subjectivity, was placed at the center of a trilogy dedicated to the French national themes. Perhaps the best vantage point on Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity is found through a layered and multidirectional conception of identity.

Both films are essentially about defining one's own narrative within a French framework, be it the French cinema industry and community for the directors or everyday life for their protagonists. Kieslowski as an outsider with a claim to universalism who forced his way into the center and in the process used his position to de-center French identity in an expanded Europe, Mok as a would-be and wannabe insider who simply was not given the leeway to write his own story in a France that was not ready to accept him as French. Kieslowski's film is a portrait of an era after the collapse of the Wall; a significant barrier has been pushed aside, offering the possibility of new stories. For Allouache as for Mok, however, significant political, social and cultural barriers remain. Old stories, such as that told by Maurice the *pied-noir*, must be recounted and symbolic baggage unpacked. Mok, an Algerian version of Karol, is unable to stake his claim within Frenchness. We are however left to wonder if he, like Karol in

the culminating sequence of Red, will eventually return. After all, Allouache's oeuvre and indeed his own personal trajectory are centered on an incessant *va et vient* between Algeria and France. It is significant that even while Mok is deported, he is replaced by another Algerian, reminding us that they are in France to stay and indeed a central part of the national narrative.

Chapter 3 – Open roads and transnational identities in *Le grand voyage* and *Exils*

Le grand voyage (Ismaël Ferroukhi, 2004) opens with a short series of motion shots. A hilly tree-lined landscape whirs by, seen as if from a passenger point of view in a moving car. A bicycle moves into the frame; the camera lingers on the spinning pedals before cutting up to a close-up view of the rider's face. The camera then tracks our rider, Réda (Nicolas Cazalé) with trees racing past, then proceeds to a fleeting but exhilarating montage of traveling shots, the road movie's archetypal expression of "travel for travel's sake" (Laderman 2002: 16). When Réda arrives at his destination, a car junkyard where his older brother Khalid works, we see a brief encapsulation of the hierarchical family structure. Khalid pushes his younger brother around, ordering him to help piece together a car until an annoyed Réda escapes on his bike. His freedom is short-lived, however, as we next see him entering the family apartment in a housing project. The restrictive, claustrophobic inside spaces are in sharp contrast to the freedom Réda enjoyed outside on his bicycle: door frames and closed windows doors dominate these shots. Meanwhile his father is stewing silently in a corner. Réda proceeds to ask his mother what is going on, signaling that he and his father barely talk and that she must serve as the mediator. Thus in the first four minutes of the film, the parameters have been set, the lines drawn: an exilic family riven between the traditions of their old home and the mores of their new one, with Réda caught somewhere between in the archetypal *beur* dilemma. This sort of situation tends to be portrayed in prevalent discourse as an irreconcilable conflict with each space of Réda's life closed off from the other.

The second film this chapter discusses also opens on a similarly emblematic social chasm. *Exils* (*Exiles*, Tony Gatlif, 2004) opens with a naked man standing in a window of a Parisian high-rise, looking out over more high-rises and the congested *périphérique*, the symbolic boundary between Paris and its

maligned *banlieues.* The man drops a half-consumed glass of beer out of his window and watches listlessly as it smashes on the pavement below before the camera pans to a naked woman, lounging in a bed and gluttonously consuming melted cheese. Both their location and their countenance suggest the trifecta of *banlieue* malaise: "boredom, indifference and alienation."[71]

Each film commences on a fault line of the French *fracture sociale,* in locations that are both extremely evocative in contemporary identity debates and prevalent settings for contemporary French cinema. Yet the films do not tackle these problems head on. Rather, voyages are quickly staged from these sites that are pregnant with signification but also overflowing with stereotypes. Each film suggests that crucial questions about France and French identity can no longer be adequately addressed, let alone answered, in these rigidly defined, clichéd spaces that trigger a series of seemingly unavoidable associations of violence, immigration, integration, Islam, and "insecurity." This chapter considers these two road movies—and theorizes the French road movie genre—in relation to two crucial issues in the so-called French identity debate. These issues are inextricably connected yet distinctive. The voyagers in *Exils* travel to Algeria, and that nation's link to France and the implications it has for French identity is the question I will address in relationship to the film. *Le grand voyage* narrates a pilgrimage to Mecca, a highly contentious undertaking for Réda, who does not share his father's traditional religious views. My discussion of this film will suggest that it offers insight into the "Islam question" that dominates French identity debates.

Within the context of these fundamental issues, the discussion of each film will be limited to the convergence of space—particularly travel through space—with identity. In *Exils* music and travel

[71] Sharma and Sharma, "So Far so Good," *theory Culture and Society,* June 2000. At the same time, the representation of this alienation in the *banlieue* but with subjects that are not the typical *banlieue* subjects (at least in Zano's case) provides an important reminder. Alienation and boredom are far from belonging solely to the domain of suburban youth, but are a prevalent generational condition.

combine to forge transnational concepts of space and identity. In *Le grand voyage* the interior space of the car proves to be more important than the landscape, while language replaces music as the primary cultural signpost for the voyage. This chapter will situate these films in relation to and/or within the *banlieue* and road movie genres or categories. Accordingly, I will engage in a discussion of the conventions, tropes and styles associated with each genre as well as of the politics of naming the *banlieue* and *beur* cinema categories.

Exils and *Le grand voyage* were both released in 2004 to wide acclaim. Gatlif won the best director prize at Cannes and Ferroukhi garnered the best film award at the Venice Film Festival. Each film represents a return of sorts for its director. For Gatlif it is a literal return to Algeria, where he was born before independence from France. For Ferroukhi, on a symbolic level the filmic voyage represents a cultural-religious revisiting of his past. The latter was born in Morocco and immigrated to France with his parents at the age of 3. The "return" narrated in *Exils* is of second generation *pied-noir* Zano (Romain Duris) and his casual girlfriend Naïma (Lubna Azabal), a *Beur,* who set off for Algeria on an apparent whim. They travel lightly and mostly by foot, with intervals on trains, buses and a boat. Along the way they cross paths with Leïla and Habib, a brother and sister duo headed in the opposite direction in search of employment. These figures represent Gatlif's effort to account for both the joy and possibility of travel as well as its flip side, what Bhabha termed the "specter of departure," concerned with the loss and suffering of forced migrations. The Algerians laugh at Zano and Naïma's pronouncement that they are leaving France for Algeria, the same reaction Naïma initially had when Zano suggested the trip seemingly out of the blue.

In *Le grand voyage,* the trip is more of an order than a suggestion. Assimilated Réda, in his final year of *lycée* in the southern city of Aix-en-Provence, is informed one day by his father, who cannot drive, that he will be driving him to Mecca. *Le grand voyage* retraces a trip made by the director's own

father, also by car, and has the distinction of being the first fiction feature film allowed to shoot inside that holy city (*Sight & Sound,* November 2005). The voyage will take the protagonists through Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, "Yugoslavia" (as the father calls it, though in actuality Serbia at the time of filming), Bulgaria, Turkey, Syria and Saudi Arabia. Réda has no interest in the pilgrimage and the three thousand mile voyage is particularly inconvenient because it will force him to leave behind his French girlfriend Lisa as well as his studies. The reason behind the desire of the father, who is unnamed in the narrative, to carry out his pilgrimage by car is only revealed later on, after the two antagonistic parties have grown closer on the road. En route, the father falls seriously ill while they repose in the car amidst the snowy cold mountains of Bulgaria but recovers with miraculous speed, as if cured by the power of his faith. They also encounter an array of travelers, including enthusiastic fellow pilgrims and a mysterious and solitary elderly woman.

As I have suggested, the initial setting of *Exils* could lead the viewer to expect what is generally referred to as a "*banlieue*" (or *beur*) film. While the film is clearly not "about" life in the *banlieue,* nor does it engage directly with the social situation there as other road movies have done, the choice of this setting is significant. Here Gatlif's earlier film *Gadjo Dilo* (1997) is worth bringing up by way of comparison. That film also stages a "return" of sorts, or at least a search for family memories. *Gadjo Dilo* begins with the hero Stéphane, also played by Romain Duris, already on the road and apparently nearing his destination. This intertextual context might lead to questions about the grounding of *Exils* in the specific, culturally significant location of the *banlieue*, orienting the film conceptually towards its starting point rather than looking immediately forward towards the final destination. This setting also suggests that *Exils* is not the usual Gatlif road movie, a point to which I will return later. It is also not, however, a *banlieue* movie by the standard understanding of that term. Of course there are many movies that are not *banlieue* movies, but most of these do not start in the *banlieue.* This strategic choice of setting then

proposes on one hand that we do not read the film as a *banlieue* movie, while on the other hand that we read the film with the *banlieue,* and *banlieue* cinema, in mind. Furthermore I will argue that the film is not to be read as a typical road movie. With this in mind, a brief contextual examination of *banlieue* and road cinema—and the convergence of the two categories—will be helpful in order to understand how not to read *Exils.*

Le grand voyage is also a film that straddles two categories. First, as the name suggests, it is clearly a road movie. A road movie sensibility is crucial to this film, which often does not stray far from the established (and perhaps clichéd) conventions of the genre. Some critics, notably Bertrand Loutte in *Les Inrockuptibles* (1 January, 2004), have called the film too conventional in this regard. However, I would argue that *Le grand voyage* both leans on and resists road movie formulas. In the first instance, what is borrowed from the American strain of the genre is applied to the European context quite cleverly. Meanwhile, Ferroukhi eschews certain standard tropes of the open road. To cite one example, the voyage begins not with a moving shot of the open road but with a traffic jam, encapsulating the utter lack of joy the young protagonist is feeling as he hits the road with his father. A little later, the father chides Réda for driving too fast, again reminding us that this is not a film that celebrates the exhilaration of travel. The main protagonist is a *Beur,* marking *Le grand voyage* also as a *beur* film. The exact signification of this category is something that I will discuss shortly. A related topic that will be addressed is the conflation of the discrete terms *banlieue* and *beur* in cinema criticism. Because these are both films that deal with identity questions, of which the politics of naming plays a key part, these terms should be clearly defined.

As Carrie Tarr has argued, *beur* and *banlieue* cinema are often lumped together because they address similar concerns and ply similar territories: "Because many of its practitioners are interested in topographical explorations of the *banlieue*, *beur* cinema is a category that overlaps with that of the *cinéma de banlieue*, a genre that also experienced a rebirth in France in the 1990s" (Tarr 2006: 2). More

recently Tarr has remarked that the term *beur* cinema is disappearing, though it still resonates, replaced in part by "Maghrebi French" (Tarr 2007). Increasingly film scholars such as Vinay Swamy and Yosefa Loshitzky have opted to meld the two terms together, referring to *La Haine* as an example of "*beur/banlieue"* cinema (Loshitzky 2010: 92 and Swamy 2007). The latter choice acknowledges the porosity of the categories in question and implies that *beur* films are not just by *Beurs,* but also can simply be about them and their experiences.

The media and academics have embraced the *beur* category in discussions of cinema in particular but also in broader cultural, social and political issues contexts. Many of the so-called *Beurs*, however, have rejected or at least shied away from this categorization, fearing ghetto-ization implicit in such categories. Carrie Tarr argues that while there is no essential difference between *Beurs* and other French, "individuals of Maghrebi descent (a heterogeneous and permeable category) have experienced sets of social relations and discourses which potentially inflect their cinematic production differently from that of their white peers" (Tarr 2005: 13). Also, what about *beur* themes? Can a film be *beur* if it deals with *beur* concerns, with *beur* characters? The thematic approach (*beur/banlieue*) seems like a logical way to delineate a distinctive category of cinema, but it does not address the issue of the still relatively rare films by *beur* directors that do not deal with *beur* or *banlieue* themes.

We must be aware that this discussion of the merits and limitations of the term is not taking place outside of the topic, but is contributing to how such categorizations are used. It is my assertion that such categories are limiting and at times reductive, but with that firmly in mind they are necessary because they delimit the admittedly fluid contours, not of a genre, but of a body of work by or about a group of people who exist as an entity in public and media discourse. While I have faced irritated directors when I bring up the term *beur*—directly related to the French tendency to stick filmmakers into creatively limiting discursive categories— the fact remains that it exists in French popular imagination and

discourse and, as Tarr also comments, it is a simple way to meet a necessary goal: categorizing films. Moreover these name games underscore wider issues at stake, as Tarr also notes: "the difficulty of naming this section of the population is indicative of their ongoing problematic status within French culture" (Tarr 2007). My discussion of the genre is concerned primarily with the spatial implications of this terminology, also linked to wider anxieties about the status of *Beurs* in French society.

Beur/banlieue cinema: a closed space?

Although once overlooked by critics, recently much has been made of the trend in French cinema to move beyond the *banlieue* when representing immigrant (particularly Maghrebi immigrant) life. We might even be able to speak of the emergence of a *beur* road movie subgenre, seeking to get away from stereotypes and clichés by getting out of the *banlieue.* These films are not all by *Beur* directors, a slippery and problematic category, but do focus on *beur* experience in a context wider than that of the tense suburban settings of most early *Beur* cinema. *Le Grand Voyage* is a good example of this. Others include Mehdi Charef's *La fille de Keltoum* (*Daughter of Keltoum,* 2001) and *Drôle de Félix* (2000) by directors Olivier Ducastel & Jacques Martineau.[72] The latter portrays another young *Beur*'s voyage accross France in search of his long lost father. While the open spaces of "beur road movies" allow the possibility of new, non-binary conceptions of the *Beur* experience, they also straddle two distinct "discursive ghettos" in a way that is potentially fruitful but also quite possibly problematic. A cinematic "discursive ghetto," according to Hamid Naficy's formulation, can "lock" filmmakers into genre or "ethnic" categories which fail to account adequately for the filmmakers' personal evolution and stylistic transformations over time (Naficy 2001: 204). The task of the viewer is therefore to be cautious in regards to such discursive categories, to read certain films not just as outside of or beyond these categories but also as within them,

[72] Charef's film *Le Thé au harem d'Archimede* is perhaps the most famous example of *banlieue* cinema, La fille de Keltoum does not deal with a *Beur*, strictly speaking, but a young woman from Algeria who was adopted by a Swiss family.

for the purpose of understanding how the film works against such categories. In this light, the reference to the category becomes an important tool.

A *beur* cinema category risks trapping the film into a cycle of repetition of themes of exclusion, violence and difference, presented in terms of binary oppositions that aptly express the frustration of inhabitants of these communities but also reinforce and essentialize difference. The *beur* movie is a formulation that traps films and filmmakers into inflexible categories by relegating them to the margins of French ethnicity, society, and even physical space (for the *beur* filmmaker is supposed to serve as the "native informant" of *banlieue* culture). For Carrie Tarr, the designation *beur* cinema suggests "both an agency in the production of representations by this particular ethnic minority and a challenge to dominant representations of 'Frenchness' and 'otherness'." However, the empowering aspect is mitigated by the fact that *beur* cinema is "grounded in an essentialist understanding of ethnic difference" (Tarr 2005: 49). Even many academic approaches to the analysis of *beur* cinema seem unable to escape the dichotomies of inside/outside, exclusion/belonging, and White/*Beur*. A 2003 essay by Peter Bloom simplifies *beur* cinema to the point of caricature, summing up the "*beur* filmmaking aesthetic" as the "stylistic representation of a compressed spatial economy of HLM apartment living and a nostalgia for return" (Bloom 2003). As Tarr also points out, such categories carry the additional disadvantage of building an audience that sees *beur* cinema as separate and unequal to "mainstream" French cinema and therefore approaches it "in terms of their positive or negative images of specific ethnic groups, rather than their potential opening up and problematizing of the question of difference itself" (Tarr 2005: 49).

Mireille Rosello demonstrates that while discourse surrounding the category *beur* on one hand allows *Beurs* a voice in the formulation of their own identity and representation, on the other its very existence as a category means that a conception of "*beur"* is being formed and re-formed outside of *beur* subjectivity. Rosello takes the example of a special issue of *Le Nouvel Observateur* entitled "Les Beurs

tells qu'ils se voient" ("the *Beurs* as they see themselves"), proposing the question "Y a-t-il une culture beur?" (is there a *beur* culture?). A number of prominent *Beurs* are mentioned, among them the actor and comedian Smaïn and Mehdi Charef, but further reading reveals that one of those mentioned has declined to participate. Despite Smain's desire to "not appear in a study on *Beurs*," his name still figures in the description of the issue. Rosello argues that his absence would have been glaring because we already have in mind a "mental list of so-called *beur* artists. (And) … it quickly becomes obvious that this pre-established list exists independently of how *Beurs* see themselves" (Rosello 2001: 154). In *Exils,* it is significant that Naïma is not referred to as a *Beur,* nor does she see herself as such. We become aware of her origins indirectly. She recounts to Zano that her father never taught his children Arabic because he wanted to forget his home country. Nonetheless her name marks her as Arab and she faces continuous questions about her origins, highlighting the difficulty of escaping such categorizations. This issue is linked to the refusal of some invitees to attend the High Council on Integration's "Forum on the Success of French from Far Away," which I addressed in chapter one. In that case, a "non-French" surname was enough to trigger a spatial assumption about someone's identity, much to the dismay of *Beurs* born and raised in the suburbs of Paris.

Further unpacking the issue of cinematic stereotyping reveals that the "discursive ghetto" is not always a bad thing for a filmmaker. On the contrary, representational stereotypes can open the possibility of more readily "trapping" the viewer and therefore forcing him/her to actively participate in the process of decoding the author's positioning. Two films discussed in Bloom's essay on *beur* cinema offer textual examples of this. In Mehdi Charef's *Le thé au harem d'Archimède* (*Tea in the Harem of Archimedes)*, a *Beur*-White duo cynically exploit racial stereotypes to rob a "typical" (which is to say white) Frenchman on the Metro. The young men work in tandem. Pat, the white character picks the man's pocket. In the meantime, Majid, a *Beur,* has positioned himself nearby. When the man notices that his wallet is gone he

scans the faces of fellow passengers and immediately confronts the first "minority" profile he sees. While the victim harangues at Majid, whom he demands to search, Pat slips out at the next stop with the billfold. In a second film, *L'œil au beur(re) noir*, a *beur* character named Rachid hires tough-looking white guys to harass and accost young women. Rachid then sweeps in to scare the attackers away, proclaiming "A *Beur* saves a girl from two white guys, the world's turned inside out." This tactic usually results in a date for Rachid, who exploits stereotypes of *Beurs* as delinquents and hoodlums to make himself look all the better in comparison. Mireille Rosello calls this the "Rachid system," and implicates the viewer in the task of identifying the stereotype in a scene that seems just a bit too perfect to truly be what it appears to be. Rosello argues that the Rachid system relies on repetition of narratives; the girls must read the situation correctly to avoid falling into his trap (Rosello 1998: 166). This level of interpretation is second-degree and Rosello suggests that the viewer serves as a "third-degree" interpreter: "The third-degree reader is trained to see difference through sameness. Symmetrically, third-degree discourse, of which I suggest that *L'œil au beur(re) noir* is an example, can be imagined as a series of self-conscious and ironic audiovisual echoes, as a constant and conscious reference to previous images or dialogues" (Ibid: 166). In this vision, the work of the filmmaker and of the viewer is to work through the optic of the categories (or discursive ghettos) to which the film belongs yet to avoid the traps that lay within the category.

The same tactic is in evidence in the work of many so-called *beur* filmmakers, who are pushing beyond that category but finding its specter hard to avoid. Merzak Allouache describes being incorrectly grouped in the category when he came to France from Algeria. Karim Dridi, who does meet the criteria laid out for the *beur* term, has strongly resisted being categorized as such, as does Zaïda Ghorab-Volta, whose film *Jeunesse dorée* will be addressing in the following chapter.[73] Keeping these ambiguities in mind, a third degree reading—a keen eye for distinguishing difference disguised as sameness and also

[73] On Allouache, see *Le Monde,* 11/26/95. On Dridi, see Tarr 2007.

sameness within difference, to tweak Rosello's formulation—will be crucial when considering *Exils* and *Le grand voyage,* the two films that are the focus of this chapter, as well as *Jeunesse dorée.* Each of these films employs the associations of a *banlieue* discursive ghetto to subtly confound expectations and to expand on our understanding of those categories, encouraging us to look beyond the binaries inherent in them.

On the road: open spaces and new identities

As opposed to the "closed space" of *beur* cinema, road cinema proposes the trope of open spaces, invisible boundaries and freedom, and in short "possibility." Since the road movie is significantly less contentious as a genre—albeit perhaps equally rife with stereotypes—I will focus on a discussion of its generic conventions rather than the nuances of the name itself. I will also use the example of one film to point out the potential limitations of the road movie. In his seminal study of the genre, *Driving Visions: Exploring the Road Movie,* David Laderman describes the road as "universal symbol of the course of life, the movement of desire, and the lure of freedom and destiny (…) Conjuring an array of utopian connotations (most generally "possibility" itself), the road secures us with direction and purpose" (2). Road movie scholars have remarked that the desert is the privileged space for the genre because it is a "void where long established meaning vanishes." Vast open spaces and boundless horizons make the desert an ideal locale for the road film, a genre in which "freedom becomes rediscovered as movement across open space" (14-15). On a technical level, the road movie is characterized by its use of traveling shots. The traveling shot, as Laderman puts it, is intended to convey "a visceral sense of traveling at a hyperhuman, modernized speed." This is in contrast to the conventional tracking shot, which tends to be related to walking or running (15). As Laderman notes, montage sequences featuring a variety of perspectives on the car, on the driver and/or passengers and on the passing scenery are commonly used to express the joy of movement, "travel for travel's sake" (16).

The European road movie is widely assumed to be derivative of the American road movie genre. While there has clearly been a dialogue between the two branches of the genre, certain distinctions can be outlined. The American genre's protagonists are generally rebellious, seeking to go outside of society, to get away from it all, while European cinematic road trips tend to lead their protagonists "*into* national culture" (all emphasis is by Laderman). Furthermore, as opposed to the American genre that revolves around a fetishism of the automobile, European films "foreground the *meaning* of the quest journey rather than the *mode* of transport" (248). Whether European or American, the journey as metaphor is a key component; the inevitable cliché in reviews of road movies is that the protagonist(s) and the viewer set off with a goal in mind but eventually discover that "the voyage is more important than the destination."

While the notion of broadening horizons is a positive goal, the road movie tends to fall into the not unrelated traps of (postmodern) hyper-celebratory multiculturalism or over-romaniticized travel. One example of this is Wim Wender's *Lisbon Story* (1994). Wenders is an interesting case; fitting tightly neither with the American nor the European currents, he garnered a great deal of attention for his road movies set in America during the 1970s and 1980s (142). This film seems to have adapted American conventions to a distinctly European setting. *Lisbon Story* celebrates "European identity" and the open borders of post-Schengen Europe by traveling to Portugal, the "West Coast" of Europe, and a relatively new member of the E.U. at the time of filming (having joined in 1986). The protagonist, a film sound man and self-described "European national" named Philip Winter, marvels at the open borders and the fluidity of movement as he drives from Germany to Lisbon, where he is to do the sound for a friend's project. Winter races across Europe, bypassing trucks and passing through old border control posts to the soundtrack of radio broadcasts in German, French and finally Spanish. In the middle of the voyage he proclaims "It seems that Europe is getting closer. It is becoming one country." He continues to extol his vision of united Europe: "The languages change, the music is different and the news, too. But that doesn't

mean much." The linguistic barrier does force Winter to learn Portuguese as he drives, and he will later put the lessons to rather awkward use in Lisbon.

It is not clear if Winter knows French but he appears unmoved by the news report on French radio of a death-toll in the thousands from conflicts in Algeria. Later he will remark that the European landscape hasn't changed much, it is still telling the "same story of an old continent tired of wars." As Mazierska and Rascaroli point out, Winter (and Wenders) seem oblivious of the wars in progress elsewhere in Europe. Bosnia and Northern Ireland are apparently not part of "Winter's Europe" (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006: 204). Even more troubling is the total absence of multiculturalism in Winter's (and Wender's) Europe. Not a single foreigner or non-European is portrayed or referenced in the film, despite Portugal's long colonial past. Moreover Winter—despite his admiration for Lisbon and Portugal—does not interact in any meaningful or permanent way with the local culture (Ibid: 209). As the film celebrates open borders, it seems oblivious to "border" concerns at the very heart of Europe, symbolized by the violence in Algeria. For while it is a postcolonial question, it is also a contemporary European question, for both France and Portugal are indelibly linked to their former colonies and those connections play a central role in the conception of French, Portuguese and indeed European identity.

As a result of such oversights, this beautiful film is essentially a tourist guide to Lisbon in which centuries of colonial and decades of post-colonial experience are erased. Fittingly, the narrative begins with Winter receiving an invitation in the form of a postcard from Lisbon. The voyage that follows seems little more than a postcard interaction with the places he visits. This brief summary of Wender's film should suffice to demonstrate that a road movie can travel across physical and cultural borders without truly seeing anything new or engaging with local culture or with other travelers. Put another way, Wender's film does not acknowledge (or notice) the darker side of travel, suggested in the news report we hear from Algeria and the numerous others from Bosnia that we don't hear but which were undoubtedly

available to be heard.

The dark side of these news reports inevitably relate to a discussion of travel and mobility in Europe because the conflicts they describe will lead to displaced populations. *Exils* and *Le grand voyage* allude to these concerns, even if indirectly in the case of the latter and rather cryptically in both cases. In this sense they both approach travel through what Homi Bhabha has called the "exilic optic," rooted in the "spirit of arrival and the specter of departure" (Bhabba 1999). To clarify my interpretations of these terms, the spirit of arrival represents the positive nature of migration or voyage, and also the joy of departure in a "new nomads" or wanderlust sense. By the "specter of departure" is alluding to threats facing migrant workers in the west. If the "spirit of arrival" refers to the possibilities of movement, the "specter of departure" is concerned with the loss, pain and suffering of forced migrations, wars, refuges. Some scholars argue that this incessant flow of migrants towards the west is simply part and parcel of Globalization, under which poor populations are coming under increasing economic strain while simultaneously being fed a stream of images of a "West" that resembles an economic promised land (Loshitzky 2010, Diome 2006).[74]

A growing number of French films are focusing on these migrants, from the recent and very successful *Welcome* (Philippe Loiret, 2009) to *Eden à l'Ouest* (Costa-Gavras and co-written by playwright Jean-Claude Grumberg, 2009), *Nulle part, terre promise* (Emmanuel Finkiel, 2009), *Bleu le ciel* (Dominique Boccarossa, 2001) and *Code Inconnu (Code Unknown,* Michael Haneke, 2001). It should be pointed out that many of these films come from directors or writers who have outside perspectives on Frenchness, whether Jewish or from another country. This seems to be the case as well with films addressing uncomfortable aspects of French treatment of minorities in the past as well, such as the events

[74] While I am referring to a novel by Diome, she completed a PhD dissertation on the theme of Voyage in Sembène Ousmane's work, so I classify her as a scholar.

in Paris of October 17, 1961, the Algerian War and Vichy collaboration. In fact the directors addressed in this chapter have followed up their road movies with films focusing on minorities in France during the Second World War. The conjunction of minor subjectivities and the reevaluation of dominant French historical narratives will be discussed in chapter five, which is focused on the writer Lydie Salvayre, born in France to Spanish Republican refugees.

Returning to the migrant films, we might group these as negative or dark road films, in the sense that they focus primarily on the generally futile attempts by migrants to reach new destinations and establish better lives (films focusing on what happens when and if they do arrive at their destination comprise another group altogether). Other films share with *Lisbon Story* a primarily positive outlook on travel, viewing it if not as a liberatory trope then at least as a route to new and improved conceptions of identity. I would argue that these "positive" and "negative" road movies do not represent contradictory impulses, but are rather two sides of the same coin. The same French and European propensity to control borders and police immigration that forces migrants into clandestine routes is responsible for the constant reproduction of internal barriers, whether social, cultural, psychological, or legal. These are the same static and inflexible parameters that positive road movies react against through recourse to movement as freedom from confined spaces and from discursive ghettos. *Exils* and *Le grand voyage* are examples of this tendency to escape fixed, closed spaces in order to better articulate identity issues.

Exils and the question of Algeria

As his profile page on a popular movie information site notes, Tony Gatlif was born in "Algiers, Alger, France, now Algeria," a birthplace he shares with Daniel Auteuil, an iconic "French" actor and Merzak Allouache, an "Algerian" director (often mistaken for a *Beur*).[75] This trio of names—each born

[75] http://www.imdb.com/search/name?birth_place=Algiers,%20Alger,%20France%20[now%20Algeria]. Accessed 10 September, 2010.

within a 6 year span in the same city—is suggestive of the wide array of complexities and connotations attached to Franco-Algerian identity questions. Gatlif's father was a Kabyle and his mother a Roma from Andalusia, and he is widely considered simply a French director. Though Gatlif's cinema has most famously linked him to questions of Gypsy culture and Roma identity, this is not the first time he has addressed France's colonial past in Algeria.[76] *Exils* works in the spaces between these cultures, suggesting a reconfiguration of French and Algerian identities. Gatlif's film should be seen as a salvo in the ongoing French identity debates (his 2009 film *Liberté* is an even more unambiguous contribution in this vein), the fight over the very concept of what it means to be "French."

In *The Invention of Decolonization: The Algerian War and the Remaking of France* (2006), historian Todd Shepard posits that Algeria's role in French identity and in France's very conception of itself as a Republic is one of the great unanswered questions in recent history. He contends that "the Algerian War posed fundamental questions about who was French and how the country must be governed … in their determination to exorcize Algeria, officials ignored French laws and French History, (with) lasting effects on France " (2). Shepard points out that most people in Algeria who had French citizenship in 1962 had lost it by 1963. The semantic aspects of this process are worth noting, keeping in mind both my discussion of *beur/banlieue* film and the confusing identities assigned to the three film luminaries born in Algiers: "those who were 'Muslims' became Algerians (official documents refer to 'Algerians of Muslim origin'); the minority—called "Europeans" (roughly one million)—continued to be French. Race and ethnicity appeared as meaningful markers to explain who could be considered French at a moment when definitions premised on legal codes or tradition proved weak" (2-3). Sheppard's study details how, in a process he terms the "invention of decolonization," these ambiguities were covered up for political expediency and have never to this day truly addressed. Thus, this process "allowed the French to forget

[76] *La Terre au Ventre* (1978) is set during the Algerian War and *Je suis né d'une cigogne* (1993) is partially set there.

that Algeria had been an integral part of France since the 1830s and to escape many of the larger implications of that shared past. Through this forgetting, there emerged novel definitions of French identity" (2). *Exils* suggests that this memory question is at the center of its protagonists' malaise; one "Algerian" character lives in the past while the second has completely wiped it from her memory. Their voyage, "in search of memories," is a battle against forgetting and an attempt to come to terms with Algeria's place in French memory and identity. In this light, the personal quest undertaken by Zano and Naïma is indicative of the wider "*travail de mémoire*" playing out between France and Algeria.[77]

Positioning *Exils*: transnational multiplicity and the rethinking of home and away binaries

Exils opens in an archetypal "non lieux" (to use Augé's term). A high-rise overlooks more high-rises and the congested *périphérique*, the symbolic boundary of Paris. In his *Sight & Sound* review, Danny Leigh suggested that viewers would be tempted to seek in the film some insight into the 2005 riots in the *banlieue* (*Sight & Sound*, February 2006). Indeed in one way this setting teases the viewer into expecting a confrontation or at least a dialogue between the inside and outside represented by the initial spatial mise en scène. But there is not direct confrontation in the lineage of typical *banlieue* cinema. Nor does the film engage directly with themes of exclusion beyond the obtuse depiction of the protagonists' ennui. Instead it approaches the question indirectly, by deconstructing the spatial and symbolic binaries of inside and outside. *Exils* comes to term with the inside by de-centering it through movement, tracing and retracing roots and routes and redefining "here" and "there" within a structure that is more rhizomatic than bipolar. Zano's status as white (inside) is complexified while Naïma's Algerian (outside) or "*Beur"* (cultural mediator between inside and outside) identities reveal complex layers of memory and belonging. This task is more than simply interstitial, filling in gaps and cracks in the edifice of the dominant

[77] Tuquoi, p. 13. Paul Ricoeur coined this term and it comes up frequently in debates on the topic as well as in official discourse, notably in speeches by Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

discourses of "Imagined Communities." Gatlif's exilic optic proposes a new conception of the edifice. In *Exils* French identity is found outside of the *périphérique*, locating the transnational within a national space. It is through music that this conception becomes possible. Playing against the fixity of *banlieue* cinema and the aloof unattachment of road cinema, music in circulation creates an intermediate space that provides the key to peeling back the layers of identity inherent in the voyage and hidden below the surfaces of Naïma and Zano's identities. The "discovery" is not so much made by the characters as by the viewer, who must also resolve to be a close listener. While *Exils* diverges from American road movie convention of car travel, it does approach travel from a primarily positive angle, equating crossing space to discovery and self-development. New, transnational notions of identities are formed as the narrative progresses south through Spain and then into North Africa.

I will employ "transnational" as a broad synonym for a stance that looks across borders and is not centered in a single national space. And while in the context of *Exils* my argument will focus on issues that in many ways relegate the national space to a secondary importance, the film itself—even while traversing spaces that are pre- or extra-national—still allows for a preeminent role for national identity. With this in mind, I would like to build on our understanding of transnational by incorporating a complimentary concept into my discussion. In 2007 the journal *Studies in French Cinema* devoted an issue to the neologism "transvergence," proposing it as a useful addendum to the term "transnational cinema," which they consider wanting because "the national on its own is too 'limiting', and the transnational not specific enough or sufficiently politically engaged" (Higbee 2007). The concept of transvergence first emerged in the study of architecture, in an essay by Marcus Novak. Will Higbee suggests that through a "cinema of transvergence" we might better understand the complex exchanges between national, transnational and post-colonial. Deleuze and Guattari's formulation of the rhizome, characterized by multiple links and connections rather than rigid and binary conceptions of identity, is a

useful addition to the debate. The rhizome, instead of the root, suggests flexibility and multiple connections. Multiplicity is therefore

> the key to understanding and applying the concept of rhizome, offering us a way of understanding the complex and shifting matrix of local, national and global positionings that first-world diasporic film-makers work within (and beyond). It alerts us to the fact that Kinder's notion of an 'interface' between the global and the local is not enough because 'interface' suggests one point of contact, whereas the rhizome emphasizes the fact that these points of contact between filmmakers, (trans-) national cinemas and film cultures intersect and reoccur, moving back and forth not only with continuity but also with rupture (Higbee 2007).

Exils offers an ideal cinematic demonstration of these concepts. While the film begins with Zano's decision to "re-connect" with his *pied-noir* Algerian roots, the narrative of his voyage with Naïma, a *Beur* woman also separated from her Algerian roots, plays with routes to complexify the very notion of what Deleuze and Glissant term the "*racine totalitaire*." Gatlif's treatment of *pied-noir* memory and identity opens the door to a reevaluation of the notion of exilic "roots." For *Exils* at first glance seems to be about here and there (France and Algeria), but all point A to point B voyages initially end short of the destination, pointing to the slippery nature of any idealized or preconceived destination. As Paul Gilroy has put it, "It ain't where you're from, it's where you're at"(Gilroy 1991). Gatlif's twist is that where Zano and Naïma are "at" is just as much where they're from as where they're from is. Of course they don't know this until they hit the road, bringing us the inevitable road movie cliché "it's not the destination that counts but the voyage." While Zano and Naïma don't seem to realize this— at least not until the end—we do.

Throughout their travels, through the music they hear, Zano and Naïma are oriented in a way that calls into question the poles of "here" and "there." Stuart Hall posits that there are two fundamental ways

to think about "cultural identity" (234). The first, analogous to the root, emphasizes shared or "essentialized" conceptions of identity. He views this with skepticism; the coherence of this identity "imagined" (235). By contrast, the second viewpoint posits that essentialism is simply not an accurate way to represent reality. Cultural identities are "the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture … not an essence but a *positioning*" (237). The voyage recounted in *Exils* is one of positioning, allowing for a more flexible conception of identity.

Music, identity, travel

Exils uses thematic devices and cinematic techniques to weave together music, voyage and identity, suggesting that the latter cannot be properly understood or formulated outside of the framework of the first two. Music will be linked to Zano's identity, indeed to his self-understanding (for he proclaims that music is his religion). For Naïma, it will be the process of travel itself that has the greatest effect on her conception of identity. The quest for identity is tied to the act of voyage from the very beginning, as it gradually becomes clear that Zano's impetus for the trip is linked to a quest for family memories. At the same time, he and Naïma reveal themselves to each other and to us as they advance towards their destination. While Zano's trek seems destined to confirm something he already knew, a basic truth about his past frozen in personal memory, Naïma ventures into transformative territory. She discovers new levels of self-awareness along the way, shifting her self-definition in the process. The film also suggests a distinct link between music and identity; Zano's decision to travel to Algeria seems to be triggered by the song, entitled "Manifesto," which he nods along to in the opening scene. Before setting out, he symbolically buries a violin in a stone wall along with the keys to his apartment in a way suggestive of a time capsule. This foretells his experience in Algiers, where the old family home appears to be frozen in time amid a landscape destroyed by a recent earthquake, an image symbolic of immured exilic identity.

The key chain he entombs alongside the violin is a small globe—the only map we see in the film—connecting travel and music, roots and routes.

As Zano digs the opening song fades away, making way for the unmistakable background sounds of unseen cars flying past on a busy motorway. This is not the only time that sounds of travel will merge with the soundtrack. The first traveling sequence starts with a high angle, aerial extreme long shot of the couple walking down a road that cuts through verdant fields. From this silent shot, the film cuts to a series of traveling shots that fuse music and movement. The next take looks upon moving tracks from the perspective of a train driver, the rhythmic sound of the rails joined with the whishing of the windshield wipers. The beat of the rails continues as Gatlif cuts to a close-up of Zano in headphones, bobbing his head rhythmically, and then to a close-up of Naïma's feet propped against the train window. She taps her foot against the glass as we see the Spanish countryside race by, still to the sound of train moving over rails. Before cutting to a medium shot of the travelers facing each other while looking out the window, the camera zooms in for a close-up of their music player, propped between them with a cable extending to each person's headphone. During the ensuing medium shot, the techno beat they are listening to takes the place of the rhythmic hum of the rails, which it resembles closely.

In this quick sequence travel as action and travel as music are linked, while a participatory element is also suggested. Naïma's feet tapping on the window add to the soundtrack and also serve as an evocative image of travel; those feet will propel much of the voyage and by extension the soundtrack with it. Crucially in my reading of the film, the sequence also establishes a dialectic between what we as viewer-listener hear and what the protagonists hear. While the opening "Manifesto" emanates from large speakers in Zano's apartment and therefore blurs distinctions between narrative and soundtrack, the headphones limit on one hand what we hear, while on the other affecting what Zano hears. Sometimes the

soundtrack will merge with the headphones, but at other critical moments the headphone motif suggests a self-enclosing reflex by Zano and his failure to hear has both narrative and symbolic consequences.

Before considering how music constantly intertwines with travel—and how travel intervenes in the production of music—I would like to look at how music was used to construct *beur* identity in a contemporaneous film. Thibaut Schilt's analysis of music in the 2000 film *Drôle de Félix* provides a useful entry point for a musical analysis of *Exils. Drôle* is also a film in which identity is constructed and re-imagined on the road. In this case the identity in question is that of the title character, who leaves his hometown of Dieppe, where he was raised by a white mother, in search of a long-lost father of Maghrebi descent. Schilt contends that music intersects with the voyage in key locations to create "hybrid strains" that push us to rethink conceptions of Beur and French identity.[78] Three such convergences of music with the *mise en scène* are particularly important. The film opens with Félix cycling through the port area of Dieppe to the tune ''Tout doucement,'' sung in heavily accented French by American singer Blossom Dearie. Later key episodes are accompanied by Hughes de Courson's arrangement *Mozart l'égyptien,* which combines classic music with Egytian rhythms, instruments and chants.[79] The last example I will mention, though certainly not the last "hybrid strain" in the film, is raï musique. Raï originated in Algeria before becoming popular in France and elsewhere. In the film Cheb Mami's raï music plays while Félix drives through the Auvergne countryside with Jules, a young friend he met on his trip. Schilt argues that the distinctively "Arab" or "foreign" sound of raï, juxtaposed with the idyllic backdrop of "*la France profonde*," proposes a hybrid space:

[78] Schilt, p. 364. In defining his use of the term hybrid, he relies on Bhabba's conception: ''ambivalence [that] enables a form of subversion' (112), from which minorities can resist dominant discourses and 'intervene in the unifying and totalizing myths of the national culture'' (249).

[79] Ibid. p. 365.

> Raï music acts as a bridge-building mechanism, first between Félix and Jules (and, by extension, the other members of his fabricated family), second between the two sides of Félix's being, the well-known maternal side and the ''other'' side, which Mami's melody renders more familiar. The distinctly Arabic music played against the backdrop of the French countryside suggests the possibility of a euphonic marriage between Félix and his surroundings.[80]

The bridge-building function of music is another layer of complexity added to a film that already proposes a nuanced hybrid vision. The soundtrack simply adds another "clue" for the viewer to interpret. It seems important to note that filmmakers have applied a subtle touch to the use of music. As shown above, there is more to these hybrid strains than a Franco-Arab connection, which is already present after all in Félix's very lineage as son of an Algerian man and non-Arab French woman. To cite one example, the initial setting in Dieppe, where Félix has just lost his job due to the discontinuation of the ferry route to Folkestone, England, reminds us (with the help of Dearie's singing) that hybridity is nothing new. The Dieppe hybrid connection allows the film to escape the binaries inherent in France/Algeria discussion. In this regard it is significant that Félix, who would be considered by some to be of "non-traditional" French *souche,* loses his quite traditional job due to new economic factors attributable to "globalization" or New Europe (the Chunnel that now physically links France to the U.K.). According to some narratives the figure of the North African replaces the more abstract concept of "globalization" as the face or scapegoat of wider economic trends that lead to job losses or fear of job losses. Here that situation is complexified, with a native Normand-*Beur* losing his position.

Music plays a central role in any Gatlif film. As he explains in an interview, it is not an afterthought but a crucial piece of the puzzle: "I imagine the music for my films at the same time as I create the *mise en scène*. Then I collaborate with a number of musicians to express the exact feeling I

[80] Ibid. p. 366.

have in relation to the narrative."[81] In *Exils,* music is the key to understanding the couple's identity quest and opens up the door for a reexamination of the very notion of identity as a fixed concept. Accordingly, the viewer should also be a listener; as I suggested with *Drôle de Félix,* the soundtrack provides clues to the meaning of the film. The various musical elements in *Exils* offer a way out of the trap of inflexible national binaries by focusing on connections that extend across national borders to the entire Mediterranean region and beyond. If music plays a bridge-building role in *Drôle de Felix,* in *Exiles* it serves an even larger purpose. Music *is* the bridge, both culturally and from a narrative perspective. The soundtrack is intrinsically linked to the route, demonstrating a continuity of traditions that transcends borders and languages, from Zano's I-pod soundtrack to Andalusian dance, migrant laments and Sufi trance music.

As Zano and Naïma push south, music plays a crucial role in moving the voyage forward while contributing to our understanding of identity. While the travelers sometimes contribute to the soundtrack (as Naïma did by tapping her feet on the train), I will argue that they do not always hear what they should, or don't always "get" what they hear, leaving a crucial interpretive task to the viewer-listener. Music is often linked to travel and to identity questions pertinent to the French couple. They attend a flamenco concert in Spain, a Sufi trance session in Algeria, inadvertently witness a traveling concert by musicians on a rickety bus in Morocco and hear a migrant lament on the radio at an improvised migrant dwelling. Each of these episodes reflects movement in different ways, suggesting a constant movement of musical traditions between North Africa and Spain. The Moroccan musicians are literally in motion, while flamenco is not only indelibly tied to movement in the form of dance but is also the product of cultures in motion. The Andalusian musical form has been at the center of an ongoing debate. Claimed by some as an "authentic" regional tradition, musicologists tend to agree that it has in fact been heavily influenced by

[81] "An innocent abroad," *Sight & Sound,* September 2007.

Romani and Moorish musical traditions. In other words it is an example of circulatory rather than fixed culture (Cooper and Dawe 2005: 182).[82] As for the migrant lament, its lyrics are about travel. "You get your passport and you left your village," the signer wails. It serves as a link between Europe and North Africa both as a musical piece—sung in Arabic and dealing with the sorrowful side of migration, the inherent loss involved—and because of its placement in the film. We hear the song at the ironically named "*casa,"* the temporary shelter for primarily illegal itinerant laborers where Zano and Naïma, who are headed south, unexpectedly cross paths for the second time with Leïla and Habib, who are meant to be headed north.

The live show the couple attends in a Seville flamenco bar provides a further link to travel and the participatory nature of the soundtrack, indeed itself a literal merging of travel and music. The performance is a participatory one, with the audience adding their clapping and dancing to the sound of the music. The flamenco bar is the site of a key moment in Naïma's shifting conception of identity, as I will explain later. For the moment it is sufficient to point out how the flamenco music merges with the next step in the journey, pushing the narrative forward. Naïma disappears from the bar with a Spaniard who picks her up while the oblivious Zano is watching the show. As Zano leaves the bar alone and walks dejectedly down an alley, the music continues in a duet of sorts with the amplified sound of his steps of his shoes on the stone of Seville. The music then fades out and the clapping fades in as he continues his jaunt through the dark streets. The clapping then fades as Zano begins to add his own touch to the soundtrack, again with his feet, by kicking empty bottles left by revelers as he traverses a vast plaza. Next the camera cuts to a traveling shot of Zano, headphones on as usual, looking out over the passing Andalusian plain from a train car. Here once again, the rails provide the only sound. Zano, who is sitting on the floor by a door, leans against a wall and gazes at Naïma through a half-consumed bottle of water,

[82] Cooper and Dawe, p. 182.

our first confirmation that they have reunited. The image of Zano's bottle provides a link to the "percussion" sequence in Seville and nicely encapsulates the film's musical sensibility. The reflexive suggestion of bottle-as-lens signals a link between seeing, symbolized by the act of looking through the camera-bottle, and hearing or making music, with the bottle employed as instrument.

Selfish travelers and poor listeners

At this moment in the narrative Zano proceeds to berate Naïma, making this a good time to bring up a discussion of the characters and how our perceptions of them might lead us to a better understanding of the music and of the meaning of their voyage. While Zano's hurt is easily understood, his words are extremely crass and spiteful, even abusive. At this juncture it is hard to sympathize with either the unreliable Naïma or the self-absorbed and trenchantly cruel Zano. In this vein, *Sight and Sound* reviewer Danny Leigh argues that the characters are too aloof and therefore the viewer cannot identify with them:

> …while Gatlif's conjuring of mood is heady, the development of his characters is not so successful. To travel happily alongside them, the viewer needs to feel an affinity for Zano and Naïma (or at least want to). But through much of the film's first half, they're sketchily, even unappealingly drawn, with Zano poutingly closed-off and Naïma the kind of cartoonish free spirit who could double as an advertisement for Hedex (*Sight & Sound*, February 2006).

I would contend that the unappealing nature of the main characters is the result of a conscious strategy on the part of the director. Not only are Zano and Naïma "poorly developed"—though part of this can be explained by the director's desire to have them reveal themselves in increments as their journey progresses—but they are extremely irritating and, often, uncomfortable to watch. In turns rude, smug, insular, and altogether uniformed for a duo trekking to Algeria in an ostensibly eco-friendly way, the pair epitomizes the "ugly tourist" and the self-satisfied hipster. A few examples should suffice to make this point. Although we learn later that she in fact does possess some at least rudimentary knowledge of

Spanish, Naïma interpellates the then strangers Habib and Leïla in an Andalusian village, asking then repeating almost obtusely in French if there wouldn't happen to be a bus to "Seville" (pronounced in French rather than Spanish). Elsewhere we discover that Zano lacks even a cursory knowledge of tourist-level Spanish, as he relies on cognates or approximations thereof to buy a pair of shoes and a toothbrush. This process itself is an example of how closely-knit Mediterranean national cultures are, a fact that viewers are sure to observe while also remarking the limited scope of Zano's linguistic knowledge and lack of preparation for a voyage that he seems to have been looking forward to for all his life.

The couple shares several particularly obnoxious tender moments, including cavorting tastelessly in an orchard where they have been hired along with a number of itinerant workers to harvest fruit. The job seems to represent their effort to "do the migrant thing"; they also generally prefer to walk (and often proclaim inaccurately that they are walking all the way), sleep outside in field or forest and smuggle themselves onboard a ferry, recalling Habib and Leïla's earlier evasion of Spanish police by riding under a truck bed. The scene preceding their peach tree sex romp demonstrates that they were taking jobs from those who certainly needed them more, as many migrant workers were turned away. The French couple, who are traveling for leisure more than necessity, after all, does not seem to have serious financial concerns. At one point they waste probably cheap yet still symbolic Spanish celebratory champagne by blowing it out their mouths at each other. Later Naïma admonishes Zano for trying to save 150 Euros on ferry passage after learning that they have smuggled themselves onto the wrong boat. Meanwhile Leïla and Habib are literally working their way to France, working assiduously to forge a slow trail towards the North. The second encounter between the couples appears to occur further south than the first, the opposite direction from Leïla and Habib's stated goal of "Paris or Amsetrdam."

Last but not least, after finally arriving in Algiers, Naïma proves to be a bad guest as well as a bad traveler. To the consternation of her host, she attempts to cut to the front of an extraordinarily long taxi

queue and then refuses to wear a veil. After being accosted by a woman in the streets she discards the veil, again to the chagrin of her host who sees her discarded trash as a valuable commodity. Reviews, such as that I already cited from *Sight &* Sound, tend to portray Algeria as an inhospitable place for the couple. I would suggest that while they clearly lacked a realistic conception of what life there would be like, the shock of the confrontation between the travelers and their "native land" says much more about said travelers than it does about Algeria. They fail to display any pretense of accommodation, the stance of flexibility towards different cultures and customs that I outlined in the introduction in relation to the film *La Haine.* In short it seems clear that the viewer is meant to react with distaste, rather than with affinity, towards the protagonists. Nor should we travel "happily beside them" as Leigh suggests, but recognize them as bad travelers and therefore approach them with appropriate critical distance.

Zano's insularity is linked to his consumption of music by the recurring image of him wearing headphones. This seems particularly unfortunate and limiting for a traveler, who might otherwise be more open to the places and sounds he is encountering. The headphones represent a self-enclosing reflex; only once, picking fruit with migrant workers, does Zano share his music. Often those headphones seem to tune out important bits of information, changing the course of the voyage. Walking down a road in Spain, Zano thinks some Roma are hailing him when in reality they are yelling "*pero"* in an attempt to catch their dog's attention. The *malentendu* leads to the couple joining the caravan for the night and while they sleep (again in headphones), Zano is oblivious to the dog scavenging in his belongings and stealing his boot, which contained hidden cash.

My reading of the film suggests that in addition to being bad travelers, Zano and Naïma are also poor listeners. It is the task of the viewer-listener to hear things that they do not, or at least process what we hear differently. In this light, while Zano's proclamation that music is his religion seems trite, it in fact opens the possibility for new conceptions of transnational identity. This reading requires us to approach

the music differently than Zano and Naïma do. Reading the characters as unreliable cultural interpreters makes this possible. While it does appear that they both progress slightly in their awareness—or "grow," as a couple and as individuals—we are left with a seemingly hollow note. Zano's concluding gesture of placing his headphones on his grandfather's tomb seems to betray a bobo-MTV level of cultural understanding, a reduction oof difference to MP3 format. While Zano and Naïma may be slumming it on the road, or "doing the migrant thing," they do not seem to be really listening to everything that the road offers them.

Music in circulation, identity in movement

The characters should however be given some credit for actually hitting the road when they could have probably simply downloaded the soundtrack from home. In this sense the voyage of traveler-percussionists Naïma and Zano serves as a metaphor for wider trends of cultural circulation and conduit for the musical connectivity that extends beyond national identities. Like Paul Gilroy's "ships in motion," the travelers and their I-pods are "circulating systems," complex symbols of layers of identity not just crossing the Mediterranean—or national borders—but "moving to and fro." In *The Black Atlantic* Gilroy presents a persuasive case for a reevaluation of Black diasporic trajectories outside of the traditional constraints of the nation and the nation-state. As the title suggests, oceans provide the most fruitful geographic space through which to examine the history of the Black diaspora, from Africa to the Caribbean and the Americas and back to Europe. This movement is a constant movement, in which "ships in motion" provide the ideal microcosm for what Gilroy calls a "counter-culture of modernity" (Gilroy 1993). Modernity wreaked havoc on Africa, and these ships in motion carried slaves to the new world and the fruits of slave labor back to Europe, but the same ships also served as vehicles for cultural exchange. This exchange took place through literal movements from place to place and also within the crews, often heterogeneous groups exemplifying what would be called hybridity in today's parlance.

Gilroy builds his argument on a Peter Linebaugh's suggestion that "the ship remained perhaps the most important conduit of Pan-African communication before the appearance of the long-playing record" (Gilroy 1993: 14). Music circulates in and like a ship, carrying various cultural influences in circular patterns, from port to port. Gilroy offers the twelve-inch single as an example of how circulation propels cross- and sub-cultural creativity, a literal "mixing":

> Once dubbing, scratching, and mixing appeared as new elements in the deconstructive and reconstructive scheme that joined production and consumption together, twelve-inch releases began to include a number of different mixes of the same song, supposedly for different locations or purposes. A dance mix, a radio mix, an *a capella* mix, a dub mix, a jazz mix, a bass mix, and so on. On the most elementary level, these plural forms make the abstract concept of a changing same a living, familiar reality… The relationship of listener to text is changed by the proliferation of different versions. Which one is the original? (Gilroy 1993: 106).

Returning to the film and moving on to the Mediterranean, seeing the connection made by Zano as idealized world music fluff in fact dissimulates actual—"real" or lived—trends of acculturation. These trends, transnational byproducts of Mediterranean circulations, call into question the monolithic, exclusionary binaries of national culture and identity. *Exils* encourages us to ask "which one is original?" and, further, to question the very notion of originality. Indeed, one could ask the same question about the music in the film. Is the Sufi music Moroccan or Algerian? The Andalusian music Spanish, Moorish or Gypsy? The Gypsy music North African, "Eastern" or European? What happens when it is "remixed" en route by adding some rattling rail beats, bottles in a Spanish plaza or the tapping of a foot on stone roads? Musicologist Tullia Magrini echoes Gilroy when proposing the following reading of Mediterranean music: "we would use the term for those musical phenomena which cross the sea, which have in their DNA a genetic patrimony that united elements of different cultures" (Cooper and Dawe 2005: 182). Furthermore, in the cultural context of *Exils,* music can also be seen as a metaphor for identity in

movement. A knowledgeable viewer and careful listener can make the symbolic connection between Zano's soundtrack of multi-directionally hybrid, circulating music and the trajectory of his *pied-noir* Grandfather. After all, the *pieds-noirs* came to Algeria sometimes from France but often from the Mediterranean basin, in particular Spain, Italy and Malta.

When Zano's voyage reaches a symbolic conclusion with the placing of the headphones on the headstone we are reminded of the similar path of his Grandfather's precursors. In this sense, Zano's "return" doesn't just retrace the opposite trajectory of his family's exile in France, it repeats the earlier migration that brought them to Algeria in the first place. To this can be added the path to Algeria followed by Gatlif's Andalusian-Roma mother. *Exils* stages this return in a way that calls into question origins; perhaps offering a broader response to the questions of "who is Algerian?" and "who is French?" Though a second-generation "exile" himself, Zano initially exemplifies what Eva Hoffman has theorized as the "bipolar mentality" of exile. He lives in the past, not his past but a family past of legend, and at the expense of his sense of being in the present in France.[83] In this sense he represents the consequences of the national amnesia over Algeria that Sheppard discusses. Zano's exilic perspective sees identity and culture in a vacuum of tradition, while the music that accompanies his journey suggests otherwise. Does his final gesture connect both viewpoints by connecting the tombstone—the preeminent symbol of immobile family memory—with the music, a transnational and ever changing entity and also the pulse of voyage?

The various musical elements in *Exils* offer a way out of the trap of inflexible national binaries by focusing on connections that extend across national borders to the entire Mediterranean region and

[83] Hoffman's bipolar configuration is based on the concept of a passage - both literal and figurative - from home to a distant shore. Her passage from Poland to Canada aboard a ship full of émigrés is recounted in *Lost in Translation*. As she writes in "The New Nomads," her emigration created the sense of an impossibly wide chasm: "Poland was abruptly sundered from me by an unbridgeable gap; it was suddenly elsewhere, unreachable, on the other side, and I felt, indeed, as if being taken out of life itself."[83]

beyond. There is no direct France-Algeria clash. Spain, both as a physical place and as a cultural space represents an intermediate alternative to the dichotomies suggested by the film's opening sequence (France/Algeria, symbolized by *banlieue*/center). The voyage could have been carried out as a linear passage, or crossing, directly from France to Algeria. Instead, Zano and Naïma travel through the spaces of centuries of intercultural contact and also the site of their first contact with "Algerians from Algeria."

While Zano's personal identity debate is mediated through music and Naïma's is staged via travel, Spain is a key locale for both individuals. When Naïma is misidentified as a "Gypsy" by a Spaniard in the Flamenco bar in Seville, we are again encouraged to reconsider notions of "authenticity" and "fixity." Naïma's shifting responses to the seemingly banal question, oft posed to travelers, of "where are you from?" is worth tracking carefully. While Zano's father talked to him often about his heritage (represented by his grandfather), Naïma's father never spoke about Algeria or spoke to her in Arabic. Not only does she have no trace of ethnic, religious or cultural identity, she also lacks the slightest bit of socio-political consciousness. In this sense, she is the archetypal representative of the "assimilated" first or second generation immigrant.[84] This is demonstrated when Zano scolds her for confounding the terms "organic" and "ecologic" and by how she consumes music. In the opening scene, while Zano looks out his window, manifesting at least some interest or curiosity in the outside world, she gluttonously and languorously feeds herself melted brie from a carton, displaying the cheese-laden spoon high in the air before descending it slowly to her mouth. While "Manifesto" booms through the speakers, extolling the necessity of immediate political action ("We must speak for those who are absent. It is an Emergency"), her semi-prostrate position on the bed suggests anything but urgency. Later on she dances to another political song as if it were an exercise video, pretending to shoot a penalty kick while the signer chants

[84] Brouard and Tiberj, p. 59. Statistics on political affiliation show that descendants of immigrants grow increasingly further away from an affiliation with the Left and are more likely consider themselves "neither left nor right" with each subsequent generation.

about dictatorship and injustice. On top of this, her apolitical, consumerist orientation is underscored by the disposable Che Guevara tissues she carries. While the film does not seem to chart an evolving political consciousness, she does manage through travel to begin thinking actively and for the first time about her place in the world.

When she meets the two Algerians headed North in Spain, they identify her as Arab by her name: "You are Arab?" No, she replies dismissively, "It's just Naïma." It is Leïla who asks her why she does not speak Arabic, and gives her some rudimentary lessons (Naïma learns the only partially true phrase "we are walking to Algeria"). The Arabic lesson is one of the few instances in the film where Naïma comes across as genuinely happy. The intermediary space of Spain, it seems, has some transformative effect on both travelers. It is there also that Zano recounts the story of his grandfather and of the accident that took his parents' lives and left him literally and figuratively scarred. It is soon after that Naïma identifies herself—in Spanish—as "Algerian, Algerian from France." The use of Spanish is telling, as when she called herself French she did so in French. Stating that she is Algerian, but from France, and doing so in a language that is neither Algerian nor French suggests a flexibility of movement across national borders and cultural spaces. Just like Andalusian music is not strictly tied to Andalusia, Naïma is not geographically grounded by her identity. The question that prompted her response—"Where are you from? You look like a Gypsy"—suggests that the notion of origins is a fluid concept, and not just for Roma but for others with identities and affiliations that are traditionally more closely linked to place.

Not long after this scene, Naïma reverts to her French self-identification when she faces an identity check by Spanish police, who we previously saw arresting a migrant from Africa. Her riposte to their request for documents— "I'm French, asshole"—serves as a reminder that French nationality is a privilege that she had previously taken for granted. Once across the Mediterranean, her identity undergoes further transformation, this time in unclear directions. First, Naïma seems to retain this French

identification, offering no nuance to her nationality when a Moroccan inquires if she is Arab. Next her identity is symbolically erased when the guide who sneaks them over the closed Morocco-Algeria border tells them to "lose" their passports and get new ones at the French consulate. Naïma's post-border crossing identity profession expresses doubt and insecurity: "I am not well. I feel like a stranger. I'm a stranger everywhere." The mental disorientation has provoked a physical reaction that is perhaps cured by the dizzyingly exhausting ten-minute trance sequence that is the culmination of their stay in Algiers. This scene immediately follows one in which Naïma is told by a diviner that she "must find herself, must find her point orientation." Whether or not that point is located in Algiers is not entirely clear. Likewise, whether this experience or Zano's own watershed moment, when he breaks into tears in his former family home—incredibly still standing and seemingly untouched in the middle of a zone ravaged by a recent earthquake—have any real transformative powers is left to the imagination.

The only sequence we see afterwards is the somewhat cryptic one in which Zano cedes his I-pod to his grandfather's tomb and he and Naïma enjoy the tranquil vista over Algiers and the sea from the graveyard. This visual juxtaposition of tomb, music and Mediterranean does seem to neatly encapsulate the film's vision of identity. As the two head off, down a path from the cemetery the title *Exils* fades in, perhaps suggesting that the two are only now exiles, having truly connected with their point(s) of origins and of orientation. Perhaps this closing moment, where the film's title and its protagonists are firmly linked for the first time, allows us to reconsider the French couple in a somewhat less harsh light. I would be remiss not to mention that these travelers are also fundamentally scarred individuals, indeed quite literally, and this voyage in search of identity, both in the literal and metaphorical sense, is rife with emotion and pain. Zano bears marks from the accident that prematurely ended his family's voyage of return to Algeria when he was a child. Naïma's skin carries two blemishes, one from a violent boyfriend and the other from an unnamed and unspeakable event. While their process of self-realization and of

coming to terms with their identities is an uneasy one, it is perhaps necessarily so. If the voyage of these insular travelers can be irksome and even at times aggravating to watch, it is because the film is portraying a fundamentally disquieting and inherently violent personal process of Franco-Algerian "memory work."

Le grand voyage: reconciling Islam and France

Some six months before the 2005 *banlieue* riots that shook France, *Sciences Po* researchers Sylvain Brouard and Vincent Tiberj undertook the most comprehensive study to date of the attitudes towards France held by immigrants and French citizens of Maghrebian, African and Turkish origins. Their conclusions, which were reaffirmed in an introduction by Pascal Perrineau, indicate that by and large their subjects were—or desired to be—"French like everyone else." Brouard and Tiberj argue that the French model of integration is working on many levels, pointing out that the violence in the *banlieue* was carried out by a small yet highly visible minority whereas their statistical sample represented a majority of the immigrant community (Brouard and Tiberj 2005: 136). If *banlieue* violence occupies an outsized place in public discourse, so too does the question of Islam, which has been at the center of public and political squabbling since at least 1990. This is evidenced by the seemingly endless debates over the construction of mosques or the wearing of hijabs (38). The study concludes that the "question of integration is above all a questioning of the place of Islam in France" (137). This is precisely the question that *Le grand voyage* seeks to address, though the parameters set out in the film are not entirely representative of the statistics on practicing Muslims in France.

Brouard and Tiberj insist that the polling results demonstrate that while Islam is often the focus of attacks from those in French society who believe it to be incompatible with French values, those who practice it do not think this is the case; some eighty percent of practicing Muslims responded that they do not think integration and Islam are mutually exclusive (32). Looking more closely at the study's numbers,

it becomes clear that on one hand Islam does not represent the menace to "traditional" French life as some voices have claimed. On the other hand, it is a major factor that must be addressed. While some estimates show 4-6 million Muslims in France, more detailed study have pinpointed a much small number of 1.1 practicing Muslims (24). This is still a significant number and it does not appear to be waning with integration, as some might suggest. To cite one example of this, the age category of 18-24 has the highest percentage of self-described practicing Muslims, confirming the fears of a "reislamization" of France. Particularly pertinent to the discussion of *Le grand voyage* is a statistic showing that this age range also demonstrates the most interest in the Hajj, with nearly one hundred percent having already made the voyage or expressing intent to do so (29). Therefore, while *Le grand voyage* addresses a crucial topic, it does so in a way that, while perhaps the stereotype of generational evolution of religious practice, is not entirely consistent with the numbers. Far from being a shortcoming, this simply means that we must take into account the multiplicity of French vantage points on Islam, of which Ferroukhi's vaguely autobiographical account is just one.

Open spaces, shifting identities

If the opening sequences of *Le grand voyage* suggest an intractable confrontation staged between inflexible binaries, the road provides an outlet for possible escape. Unlike in *Exils,* that escape is not immediately realized in the freedom of the open road. Rather, the binary structure of the conflict is transferred to the road, where father and son are trapped in the close quarters of their automobile. The interior space of the car has provided a compelling space for character interaction in road movies, frequently staged as either romance or friendship but also on occasion as conflict (Laderman 2002:13-17). *Le grand voyage* certainly takes advantage of this opportunity for framing the opposing parties, often offering windshield shot compositions of the protagonists sizing each other up with a furtive glance. While unlike in *Exils,* the travelers in *Le grand voyage* do rely on an automobile for transit, the spirit of

their travel remains consistent with the slower European model of road films. The traveling shot that best conveys the notion of speed and freedom does not concern the car, but Réda on his bike in the opening sequence. There are no extended travel montage sequences that express the euphoria of car travel or the simple joy of movement through space. Travel is not for the sake of travel, but with a fixed destination in mind.

There are the requisite snow-capped mountain landscapes in Bulgaria and breathtaking desert expanses in Syria (though actually shot in Morocco), but the film focuses more on the inner voyage than on outside landscapes.[85] That said, the space traversed in the film does have a cultural significance, especially the Balkan borderlands between East and West and Islam and Christianity. Road movie scholars have remarked that the desert is the privileged space for the genre because it is a "void where long established meaning vanishes" (Laderman 2002: 14-15). My reading of the film suggests that the actual desert scenes are less evocative in this regard than the Balkan landscape, which serves as a metaphorical road movie desert. The dramatic shifts taking place in the region just before and at the time this film was made are suggestive of the disappearance of the "long established meanings" that organize life. Geographically, the father and son pass through literally shifting territories. The father describes a route through "Yugoslavia," which had in fact changed names in 2003, dropping the old appellation in favor of Serbia and Montenegro. While a voyage to Yugoslavia was planned, at the time of filming they would have been in Serbia and Montenegro, now simply Serbia after Montenegro split away in 2006. This process is pointed out briefly and subtly by two shots in *Le grand voyage.* After crossing the Serbian border the car passes a UN convey. That night, an establishing shot of the Hotel Balkan in Belgrade, with

[85] Ali Jaafar, "*Le grand voyage," Sight and Sound,* Nov 2005, pp 66-7.

neon marquee, orients the locale within the very heart of the Balkans, an extremely evocative region in the context of discussions of Islam in Europe and ethnic identity in general.

Even as the film was being made, the region was still in the process of Balkanization. Old maps would have been obsolete and the process of mapping new ground in the film also brings about a remapping of personal relations, a fresh start in uncharted territory. The space traversed en route has a second significance. The result of traveling by car to Mecca is that France and the Muslim Holy City are not presented in the sharp light or contrast and confrontation. Rather than the binary conflict that would be suggested, and furthered by, the extremes brought out by a rapid air passage, this voyage traverses an intermediary space. Slow progression smoothens over cultural differences as well as personal or generational ones between father and son. Culturally and religiously, the Balkans and Istanbul fulfill the role played by Spain in *Exils,* that of a border zone between two seemingly disparate traditions, an intermediary space where cultures meet. On a family level, the close quarters of the car provides the possibility to overcome the antagonisms and misunderstandings inherent in their rigidly defined and hierarchical domestic space and its contrast with wider French society on the outside.

The Balkans and Istanbul: spaces of transition and conflict

To outsiders, the term Balkans suggests a varied yet extremely evocative series of connotations. This ranges from the legacy of the wars there in the 1990s (linked to perceptions of centuries of ethno-religious hatred) and the attendant popularity of the term "Balkanize/*balkanizer,*" which in English dates back to 1919, to more nuanced perspective on the region as a site of cultural hybridity. The former angle is represented by a scene in *La Haine* in which the trio witnesses a news report on the fighting in Sarajevo. That report is shown concurrently with a caption announcing the death of a young immigrant youth of Maghrebi descent, seemingly drawing a link between the outright state of war there and the images of clashes in the French *banlieue* that the film opens with. Another, more direct, allusion draws a

line between the siege of Sarajevo, Christians attacking Muslims, and the French state's war on *banlieue* youth of Muslim heritage (Loshitzky 2010: 112).

That perspective on the Balkans also tends to be linked to the notion that an ingrained, almost primal ethno-religious chasm in inherent to the region. Such divisions date back to the Ottoman millet system, which divided populations into ethnic and religious categories, thus encouraging people to differentiate themselves from their neighbor (Iordanova 2007). Given the locus in *Le grand voyage* of cultural and religious difference within the home, this particular angle would seem to be a credible interpretation for the Balkan imagery in the film. Accounts of the collapse of Yugoslavia and ensuing war, an event hinted at in the film when the car passes a UN peacekeeping vehicle, often used the neighborhood or even the home as a metaphor (titles of English books chronicling the events include *A Paper House: The Ending of Yugoslavia* and *Love Thy Neighbor: A Story of War*). While specialists have questioned the significance of the mixed-marriage rate in the former Yugoslavia, the fact that some thirteen percent of marriages were inter-ethnic means that a substantial number of children found themselves either without a fixed ethnic or religious identity or stuck between two (Halpern and Kideckel: 223). This recalls in some ways Réda's position between family traditional and societal values. The reference to religious violence puts the generational conflict at the center of *Le grand voyage* into perspective; surely the differences between father and son are not nearly as irreconcilable as the darkest connotations of the term Balkan suggest.

There is also the more positive alternative to the reading of the Balkans as a land of interminable ethnic strife, which I alluded to before. Another film that was released the same year as *Le grand voyage,* Jean-Luc Godard's *Notre musique,* takes this angle. That film is set in post-war Sarajevo, at the European Literary Encounters conference, an event organized annually since 2000 by the André Malraux Cultural

Centre in Sarajevo.[86] The focus of this conference is on war, peace and poetry in the broadest sense (as the film's press dossier puts it *"à propos de la nécessité de la poésie, de l'image de soi et de l'autre, de la Palestine et d'Israël, etc."*). One of the attendees, a French Jew who has emigrated to Isreal, ascribes her desire to attend to her belief that the city is "a place where a reconciliation seems possible" ("*un endroit où une réconciliation semble possible"*). There she hopes to find some insight into the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular.

The Balkans are and have long been an intermediary space between opposing poles; Europe and Asia, Austrian and Ottoman, Islam and Christianity. The vision of the region as a culturally hybrid border space has gained currency in recent years, particularly since Maria Todorova's influential 1997 work *Imaging the Balkans* (Iordavova 2007). Moreover, Slovenia, which would have been the first non-E.U. member state on their route at the time of shooting (that nation joined in 2004) is also a shifting post-Wall space between the West and a rapidly changing East. In this sense it represents a step towards the East, a progression from Italian to Slavic, with Slavic to Turkish to follow.[87] Like most spots they travel through, Réda and his father do not spend much time in Slovenia. Our only indication of the border crossing is a radio news report in Slovenian. The two do, however, stop for some sightseeing in Istanbul. There they spend what is perhaps their longest non-sleeping layover to visit the Blue Mosque. Traveling to Istanbul as a voyage of discovery has been a popular theme in Balkan cinema, nodding to the region's deep-seated cultural and historical connection to that city (Iordanova 2007). The city seems to capture Réda's attention and interest, his tour of the Blue Mosque is an introduction to what he seems to perceive as a more "cool" side of Islam. These brief yet significant cultural signposts help us orient the voyage not just

[86] *Sight and Sound,* Jun 2005, Vol. 15 Issue 6, pp. 28-30.
[87] Slovenia, part of the Austrian Empire and much of whose territory once was under Venetian rule, has a significant Italian minority. Many towns on the coast are officially bilingual.

as one of growing accommodation between the protagonists, but also where the cultural space traversed serves as a metaphor for the personal voyage.

The linguistic roadmap

The subtle clues that orient the viewers within the geographic locations of the film are primarily linguistic. While in *Exils* the music alerted us to a transnational identity, in *Le grand voyage* the clues help us position the travelers within distinctive national contexts. Often we only hear a language at the border. With the significant exception of Belgrade's Hotel Balkan and the mosque looming in the background as Réda and his father approach the Turkish border, we do not see any monumental or otherwise remarkable architectural or landscape features. Language is the only point of orientation, and often the only sign of life and culture in a European landscape otherwise characterized by "placelessness."[88] While the iconic sights are passed over, we see ample representatives of what Augé has termed "non-places": gas stations, roadside stop-offs and hotels (Augé 2002). This is not as depressing as it might sound, however. A certain reading of placelessness posits it as a potentially positive alternative to national or cultural entrenchment, a stance held by permanent voyagers to whom nothing is ever strange or foreign (Sandhu 2007: 162-3). While the visual aspect of *Le grand voyage* seems to subscribe to a particularly placeless vision, the linguistic Babel of Europe that the film foregrounds works against this.

The travelers themselves are linguistically transnational, using two languages to communicate and improvising a third, often hand signals, to communicate with those they encounter. Often Réda's knowledge of English, considered the new transnational language of choice, proves useless for communication. These linguistic issues underline the difficulty of navigating transnational spaces. Unlike the effortless bounding across boundaries and cultures that characterizes *Exils,* Ferrouki's film implies

[88] There are a variety of iterations of this term. I am referring to Sandhu's conception, from "The *Guru* and the Cultural Politics of Placelessness," in Nguyen and Nguyen eds., *Alien Encounters: popular culture in Asian America* (Duke, 2007).

that transnationalism is not always easy. Some effort is required, as is some flexibility. Ironically, the "authentic" languages—in the sense that the director took great pains to have the endemic local languages properly represented—that orient the viewer by pointing out what nation the travelers are in along their route to Mecca, are also at times handicap to the travelers in their attempts to situate themselves more specifically along the roads of their route..

We hear Italian at the border and then again at a rest stop. The border crossing from Italy is signaled when we here a radio report in a language that even if not identifiable to everyone as Slovenian, is clearly not Italian. The Serbian border is then signaled by an excitable border guard, whose incomprehensible commands engender some confusion but no significant problems. Moving on to the Turkish border, the linguistic barrier leads to a seemingly intractable passport issue that threatens to end Réda's voyage. The young man's futile attempts to communicate with border guards in French or English get him nowhere until a Francophone Turk intervenes to smooth out the situation. This episode leads to two interesting observations about how language is portrayed in the film. First, English proves to be of little use to Réda in Southeastern Europe and Turkey. Several situations demonstrate the utter incomprehension between Réda and his various interlocutors. In one of these, after Réda tries out his English to no avail, the father successfully negotiates a black market currency exchange transaction with hand signals. This exchange exemplifies the differences between the educated son and the illiterate yet enterprising father, who as an immigrant in France would surely possess some real world education on getting by in a strange land. Secondly, in a linguistic sense at least, Turkey is portrayed as more cosmopolitan and "European" of any country they traverse. Both Mustafa, the man who helps them at the border, and a police captain they encounter later (when Mustafa has apparently stolen money from them) speak excellent French. It is through the conversations in Turkey with these two Turkish francophones

that we finally learn that the father does in fact speak French quite well. Up to this point he has only spoken Arabic, while his son addresses him in French.

Thus in a linguistic sense as well as cultural, Turkey becomes another intermediate space, where European languages mingle with others and where the father drops his rigid stance on speaking French with his son. Further along the route, the passage from Turkey is marked by the father, who speaks greets a gas station attendant in Syria in Arabic. From this point on the father can communicate, primarily with other pilgrims from across the world, while Réda can neither speak nor understand. As his father explains in Saudi Arabia to members of a hospitable multinational caravan headed to Mecca, Réda only understands Moroccan Arabic. It is also in Saudi Arabia where, the father-son rapprochement complete, Réda utters his first word in his father's language. Before moving on, it is worth recalling Stuart Hall's formulation of identity as positioning in relation to the linguistic progression in *Le grand voyage.* Cultural identities, he notes, are "the unstable points of identification or suture … not an essence but a *positioning*" (237). While Réda and his father are constantly repositioning themselves in relation to each other, they are also positioning themselves as Frenchmen abroad, and as French Muslims as in the scene in Saudia Arabia I just recounted, vis-à-vis the world. The linguistic struggles they face along the way symbolize their own communications difficulties and differences of philosophy. The fact that all of these difficulties are foregrounded in the film suggests that difference should be seen as something positive, not an obstacle but part and parcel of the voyage, and in Réda's case, an integral part of life.

Mapping the route, navigating generational differences

The film replicates both thematically and stylistically the initial binary structure suggested by the opening scenes: traditional, religious father versus integrated, secular son. The title is displayed in French and Arabic, representative of Réda's communication with his father: each speaks in the language they are most comfortable with. On a formal level, this difference is represented by a dual color scheme. Réda has

a red French passport while his father carries a green Moroccan one. Even their car is multi-colored: the body is blue but an orange replacement door has been added on the passenger side, where the father rides. These primarily generational and cultural differences are manifested in the literal mapping of the route, a process that leads to an eventual reconciliation between the initially antagonistic parties.

One of many points of generational contention in *Le grand voyage* revolves around the tactic used to map the route. The father spurns the map and seems to orient himself by what we might read as some sort of innate inner compass, insisting that they push forward on a back road against Réda's protests that this route is not marked on the map. The younger man would prefer to remain on major highways, while his father's stance is perhaps motivated by his expressed belief that a pilgrimage should be an arduous and deliberate process. "How do you know, you can't even read," Réda snaps at one point during a debate over the route. This comment lays out the defining difference between the two: the son believes in education and knowledge while the father looks to higher powers for inspiration. Regardless of the father's motivations, it is on the question of mapping that cracks begin to appear in edifice of paternal authority and innate—or elderly—sagacity. The father's unwavering steadfastness initially inspires confidence, but when the car reaches a fork in the road any notion that he has a plan quickly evaporates. Rolling down the window and peering at the sky for a moment, the father announces that they will stop there for the night, thus avoiding the question of orientation at least for the time being.

The next day Réda reminds him that they still do not know where they are going, a remark suggestive of the status of both the physical and metaphorical journey at that juncture. When they stop to ask for directions, a process always fraught with (primarily linguistic) difficulty in *Le grand voyage*, a mysteriously somber and semi-mute elderly woman invites herself into the car rather than responding to their request. This cryptic, specter-like character is never fully explained. Suffice it to say she is of little help with directions; she simply motions forward and murmurs a word that is deciphered by the travelers

as “Delichi,” which they take to be a town along the route without uncovering any evidence that this is the case. Stopping later for directions to Sofia, a man prattles on excitedly in an incomprehensible (to French or Arabic speakers) Slavic language. All that Réda takes from this exchange is that, perhaps, Sofia is over the mountains. Yet his expression speaks volumes; after this amusing encounter, Réda’s expression seems to indicate that he has slowly come to enjoy his father’s casual approach to navigation.

A second point of disagreement is over the stops that will be made en route. Réda yearns to see Milan and Venice, while his father insists they keep moving: “what do you think we are, tourists?” Such conflicts throughout the voyage prompt the younger man to snap that the two “are not on the same wavelength.” This stance is not motivated by a desire for speed, as the father espouses a slow trek. Rather, it seems linked to his religious beliefs and his desire for control, demonstrated early on when he slams his foot down on that of a recalcitrant Réda to stop the car. Religion is portrayed as a fundamental difference between the men, who are initially on different ends of the spectrum of this question. The scene in which the father wants to stop and pray in the middle of the Italian customs area symbolizes this. “You can’t pray, we are at the border station,” says the son, an objection promptly dismissed by his elder. The secular Réda puts his trust in law while the only law his father serves is religion. The father’s desire for the pilgrimage to serve as a religious initiation for his son seems to backfire when Mustafa, who takes a much more flexible and pragmatic approach to religion, starts sharing his views of Islam with Réda. When the young man seems surprised to see beer on offer at a café in Turkey, the older man gently chides that he has much to learn about religion. Mustafa then goes on to recount a Sufi parable about water and wine before the camera cuts to the two men stumbling drunk back into the hotel. When Réda awakes the next morning to his father’s ire it appears that Mustafa has absconded with their money. The money is later found, exonerating the man and keeping the episode from being read as a moral lesson on drinking and

apostasy.[89] Much like in the conflict over mapping, Réda seems to soften a bit and be able to see his father's viewpoint, this time with the help of an intermediary figure. Crucially, this all takes place in Turkey, which serves as a cushion of sorts between Europe and Islam.

An image from the film that is particularly evocative of the link between a literal mapping of the route and the more complex metaphorical process of mapping that is undertaken en route—a charting of courses between Islam and secularity, between "integration" and tradition, between father and son—is a scene on the eve of the voyage in which Réda is consulting the roadmap. His phone rings and the display confirms that Lisa, his French girlfriend, is calling. He rejects her call, pushing the button to send her directly to voice mail. As it later becomes clear, Réda has not divulged the plans for his trip to Lisa, as if she could understand neither the trip nor his obligation to his traditional father. The juxtaposition of the map and the phone (which will become a symbol of Réda's link to French society once on the road) in this scene establishes a seemingly intractable conflict between two facets of Réda's life and, symbolically, two key components of *beur* culture, often described as in between tradition and "integration." The objectives of the trip are not compatible with Réda's life in France, in French society, at least as he initially sees them. The link between the cell phone, a prevalent symbol of modernity and technology, and Réda's desired lifestyle is reaffirmed early in the trip when his father tosses out the phone as his son sleeps. "You were here, but your mind was elsewhere," he explains later. To the father the phone represents Réda's connection to his French girlfriend. Without it staying in touch becomes much more difficult, pushing him perhaps towards the elder man's viewpoints.

The end of the road: approaching *rapprochement*

Towards the end of the trip, we witness a scene where the father prays with other hajis while Réda goes off on his own and writes the name of his girlfriend in large script in the desert sand. A

[89] Jaafar, Ali. "*Le grand voyage,*" *Sight and Sound,* Nov *2005*, Vol. 15 Issue 11, p66-67.

maudlin moment, perhaps, but one that symbolizes reconciliation between father and son and a process of accommodation by which Réda accepts his father's approach to religion but chooses not to participate. In other words, he is happy to do his own thing while his father prays. At the same time, the name Lisa recalls an earlier scene in which the father contemplates the picture of her left in the car by Réda, who has stormed off after a particularly inimical confrontation. In the following sequence we see the father climb the top of the hill, where Réda is fuming, to offer a conciliatory gesture. He suggests that he could go on alone while Réda could fly back and be "free," surely a gesture of tacit approval for his son's "integrated" lifestyle symbolized by the picture of Lisa. As the end of the road approaches, the scene in the Saudi desert in which Islam and secular, integrated life are harmoniously juxtaposed is symbolic of the nascent understanding between the two men. This harmonious space is fostered on the open road and in the close quarters of the car, in sharp contrast to the seemingly rigid and irreconcilable structure of the home, where Réda first consulted the map. This familial and generational rapprochement is connected to the physical voyage—and to the act of mapping—when the men spot the first convoy of fellow pilgrims. "It seems that we are getting closer," Réda remarks with a smile ("*il paraît qu'on se rapproche*"). It is an observation that applies both to the physical and metaphorical voyages, both of which are nearing completion. When Réda draws his own "map" in the sand it signifies that he is mapping his own life, not in conflict with his father's views but harmoniously beside them.

The road makes this reconciliation possible by on one hand putting distance between the closed identitarian spaces of France, in which Réda feels compelled to formulate his identity as French and secular in opposition to his family traditions and his father's beliefs, and on the other hand by confining the antagonists in this identity drama within the tight space of the car. It is the actual gestures towards mutual comprehension that make this process possible, the opening up of one's space to others. Significantly, in the end, though distraught at the death of his father, Réda does not experience a religious

epiphany. He manifests no interest in becoming a practicing Muslim like his father, but he does appear to have internalized some elements of the elder man's belief system. Just before embarking in a cab for the return voyage, he stops to give money to a beggar. The woman's black hijab and djellaba recall the woman to whom the father earlier gave money, provoking a confrontation with his son who was concerned by their dwindling funds. Thus Réda does seem to be taking a lesson learned from the trip into the symbolic "voyage of life" suggested by the closing scene of the film.

Our final view of him, a traveling shot with the wind blowing into his face through an open window, recalls a shot near the end of *Jeunesse dorée* where one of the protagonists stands in the sky window of the moving car to feel the exhilarating mountain air (see chapter four). Both closing scenes capture a sentiment commonly portrayed in road movies: returning home changed, having seen and experienced more and often feeling stronger for the experience. Beyond his newfound connection with his father, what Réda will bring back is the spirit of accommodation, the conception that his secular stance is not necessarily incompatible with family traditions. It is crucial to note, in light of current identity debates, that this is more than a whimsical happy ending. On the contrary, the study by *Sciences Po* researchers Brouard and Tiberj demonstrates that the vast majority of practicing French Muslims do not think that integration and Islam are mutually exclusive, a figure that does not even take into account those who, like Réda, consider themselves secular (35). Réda has learned that through accommodation, Islam can be part of his life. My reading of this process in *Le grand voyage* suggests that it is related to the concept of adaptation laid out in relation to *La Haine.* There I argued that what holds the BBB trio together is a stance recalling Derrida's formulation in *Adieu à Emmanuel Levinas* of hospitality as an "interruption of self." I offered a sociological example of accommodation, in the form of a survey on the interactions between practicing Muslims and non-Muslims in France. Researchers analyzed the reaction of Muslims invited to dine at the home of a non-Muslim. A minority stated that they would only accept if

their host served Hallal food. Nearly three-quarters of those surveyed said they would accept the invitation to dine with the non-Muslim, with 59% agreeing with the stipulation that *they* would avoid eating pork or partaking in alcohol if it was served by their hosts. In short, there are alternatives to "integration" that do not present Muslims and non-Muslims in binary opposition. This concept seems to be at work during the scene in which Réda traces his French girlfriend's name in the sand while his father prays nearby.

The figures suggest that people from disparate traditions might be able to come together not by losing their own traditions, or even hiding from them, but through a process of accommodation. *Le grand voyage* locates this process within the family unit, suggesting that integration and tradition are not incompatible but sometimes require some effort to reconcile. Of course, this is probably easier to do on a family level, and it remains to be seen if the host that this survey refers to is willing to tolerate guests whose customs do not match their own.

Specters of departure

In *Exils* the protagonists encounter their traveling opposites in the form of a couple of economic migrants trekking north in search of jobs. They also cross paths with a more startling, almost otherworldly scene: a vast sea of people marking a trail in the opposite direction of Zano and Naïma. This image appears fleetingly as a flash forward with the title of *Exils* and is repeated as the couple approaches Algiers. It is not clear where this exodus of people is headed; most have no baggage, suggesting either that they are not migrants or that they were very quickly displaced. *Le grand voyage* has also incorporated an element of what I have described as the dark side of the European road (and by extension the European road movie), represented by the spectral presence of the traveling elderly woman. The only word she utters is "Delichi," which proves to be undecipherable. The father asks motorists at a gas station about this mysterious place but gets no response. It might be read as a corruption of the Spanish "*derecho,*"

perhaps privileging the reading of her as a Roma moving across Europe. Alternately, it sounds close to "*daleko*," meaning "far" in Serbo-Croatian and numerous other Slavic languages. She perhaps represents Roma culture, as she is apparently, and almost magically, "borderless." Shortly after inviting herself to sit in the back seat, the men look back while crossing the border into Serbia, only to realize that the woman has slipped unperceived out of the car. They clear border security rather quickly and while setting off again on the other side they find their path blocked by the woman, who is standing in the middle of the road. The sequence seems to suggest that it was unlikely that the woman had enough time to walk through border control, where a line of pedestrian crossers were queuing up. Later, after abandoning her somewhere in Serbia, Réda catches another fleeting glimpse of the woman, from a tram he is riding to the hospital where his father is recovering in Sofia. Since after leaving her at a roadside hotel the previous night they had driven directly to Sofia, the woman's presence again seems unexplainable. As Réda puts it after they initially pick her up, her presence is baffling, even fantastic: "It is strange, you have to admit. A woman in the middle of nowhere, without baggage, without anything."

Réda's remark about her lack of baggage also leads us to another theory for her presence. As a solitary woman with no possessions she could be a war refugee. Shortly after she joins them in the car, a United Nations vehicle passes headed in the opposite direction. As I mentioned above, the U.N. presence reminds us of the recently resolved conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. The inter-ethnic strife there prompted the expulsion or exodus of some 5 million people from or within the region (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006: 140). Whichever explanation we privilege, it is clear that she serves as a reminder that there are other travelers, less fortunate ones who are on the road not by choice but out of necessity. Like Leïla and Habib, this solitary woman represents the darker flip side of the transnational identity debate. While the protagonists in *Exils* and *Le grand voyage* seek out new territories and less rigid binaries of identity, others are hitting the road to escape war and poverty. In these two films, these refugees are

specter-like figures, spotted only furtively on our screens and not privileged in the narrative. This is perhaps fitting, considering that these figures are not readily visible in French life and, in the absence of controversies such as the deportation of Roma from France in Autumn 2010, from French media and collective discourse.

All four of the main protagonists in *Exils* and *Le grand voyage* are traveling with passports that allow them to cross borders and work in the West. As I suggested in my discussion of road movies, the impulses of "positive" and "negative" road cinema are not contradictory. They are simply the two sides of a reaction against French and European identity politics, which are inextricably linked to policing and screening borders and "strangers." Often these elements are not present simultaneously in a road movie: a film either celebrates the open road or depicts it as a trail of tears. To the credit of Gatlif and Ferroukhi, they have tried to account for both sides of the equation.

Conclusion

It seems fitting to end this chapter, like the first one, by invoking Gilroy's description of diaspora as a "tradition of ceaseless motion" (Gilroy 1993: 122). The music in *Exils* represents this incessant movement from the opening "Manifesto," which moves from English to Spanish then back to English. The final result of the mix of music and travel is the possibility of reconciling here and there by de-centering both concepts and placing the emphasis on the cultural movements that link rather than separate home and away. *Le grand voyage* shares a similar vision; in that film tradition itself is in constant motion. In both cases the result is a more flexible, open perspective on French identity. Frenchness is not presented as entrenched, but as a concept in constant movement, characterized by incessant negotiations of shifting topographies of France in the World. These road movies present visions that offer nuanced perspectives on contemporary French identity as well as on France's position vis-à-vis its former colonies, a new "borderless" Europe, and the rest of the World. The travel and road motifs have enabled

directors to re-imagine space, focusing on flows and connections and moving beyond the limiting spatial signifiers suggested by such oppositions as center and periphery, Islam and secularism, local and global, home and away, France and Algeria, East and West and North and South. The following chapter, devoted to the 2001 film *Jeunesse dorée* and Charles Maspero's 1990 book project *Les passagers du Roissy-Express,* will continue in this vein, but with a focus on internal factors, for each work focuses on travel within France. Ghorab-Volta's film also starts with a *banlieue* setting before veering off to map new territory. The protagonists of that film remain within France, exploring many facets of French identity and deconstructing the clichés that surround them. Accommodation will again be a key factor, as travelers from the *banlieue* adapt to other lifestyles and other vantage points.

Chapter 4 - Looking at the *banlieue,* looking at France: Re-charting France and French Identity in *Jeunesse dorée* and *Les passagers du Roissy-Express*

Like *Exils,* Zaida Ghorab-Volta's 2001 film *Jeunesse dorée* takes the *banlieue* as a starting point before detouring away in another *fausse piste.* However, while Gatlif's film travels well beyond the suburbs and indeed outside of France, Ghorab-Volta's work remains fundamentally concerned with the *banlieue*. I would argue, in fact, that there is much more new insight to be gleaned from this film than from the standard *banlieue* film that stages a confrontation between the state and the marginalized residents of the *cité.* The initial mise-en-scène of *Jeunesse dorée* is consciously staged to suggest a series of stereotypes associated with the *banlieue,* most of which are later subverted by the narrative. As Mireille Rosello has noted, when dealing with stereotypes one faces a particularly irritating catch-22, for they cannot be denounced without first being referenced. In turn, the very act of bringing them up in some way perpetuates the very stereotype that one sought to refute (Rosello 1998: 38). The prevailing and seemingly unavoidable stereotypes associated with the *banlieue* are well known and have already been discussed here at length. These often center on youth delinquency, quality of life and living conditions as well as the famous transportation gap that keeps the *cité* isolated from the center. The media has played a major role in creating and propagating clichés about the *banlieue,* which is often portrayed as the "mythical antithesis of *la France profonde*" (Hargreaves 2000: 13). Finally, and crucially, place is often linked to race in this formula, with suburbanites imagined as largely, if not exclusively, Black or Arab (Rosello 1997, Rice 2007). Ghorab-Volta's film uses these stereotypes to its advantage, offering them up with great subtlety in order to confound expectations of what we think we know of the topic and

constantly forcing us to approach issues from new angles. Rather than spoon feeding viewers more of the same, *Jeunesse dorée* asks them to think critically about identity and about how we look at the *banlieue.*

Zaida Ghorab-Volta grew up in an immigrant family in Colombes, a suburb northwest of Paris where *Jeunesse dorée* is set. She describes growing up poor, but not unhappy, and speaks of living in the "golden age of the *banlieue*"(Interview with the author, 9 November, 2009). An autodidact, her path towards directing was a circuitous one that led first through casual acting and production work. *Jeunesse dorée* is the third in a string of highly regarded films by Ghorab-Volta released between 1996 and 2002, each selected to be screened at Cannes (Interview with Martin O'Shaughnessy, Cineaste, Winter 2007). Only the first of these, the medium-length *Souviens-toi de moi,* is focused on ethnic minorities; in that film Ghorab-Volta plays Mimouna, a young French woman who voyages to Algeria. The protagonists of her subsequent films live in the *banlieue* –les "93" or Seine St. Denis in 1998 television film *Laisee un peu d'amour*, made for the Franco-German cultural channel Arte and Colombes in "les 92" in *Jeunesse dorée*–but are "typical" white Frenchwomen. This is a key point that the present chapter will delve into further, as well as an essential personal detail. In countless interviews, including one with myself, Ghorab-Zolta has expressed disgust with what she describes an inescapable categorization that dominates the cinema industry and everyday life in France. In short, she feels trapped in the sort of discursive ghetto that was discussed in the previous chapter in relation to cinema:

> In my life I don't feel different from others. In the cinema, however, I am constantly forced to confront that one particular difference. My origins. Everything I do is expected to revolve around that specific subject. And, what's more, always in a spirit of cliché and miserabilism.[90]

[90] Interview with Martin O'Shaughnessy, Cineaste, Winter 2007. Ghorab-Volta's comments appeared solely in English translation.

This sentiment is central to my analysis of the film and explains in part her use of characters that are not marked as ethnically different. The protagonists of *Jeunesse dorée* are two friends from Colombes, on the outskirts of Paris. Gwenaëlle and Angéla, who unlike the *beur* director are *franco-française,* win a grant from their local youth center to undertake a photography project of housing estates in isolated spots across France. The roles are played by non-professional actors, whom the director met at an unemployment center in Colombes. Roughly the first third of the narrative is used to outline the lives of Gwen and Angéla in Colombes. Each experiences a trying family situation and yearns to escape, if only for a while. Though both live in difficult circumstances, they are young and optimistic. Ghorab-Volta chose to work with characters this age because they are old enough to realize the grimness of their own situations yet remain optimistic about life.[91] While the girls are closely linked, each has a distinctive personality and outlook on life. Before the voyage, we see the girls practice their photography and "interviewing" techniques on friends, neighbors and other Colombes residents. Once on the road, they chart a carefully mapped course to the southeast and southwest corners of France, stopping at farms, villages, isolated homes, housing projects and campgrounds as well as attending a bike race and a village festival. Like the girls, the actors we see on the road are not professionals; they are some of the people that Ghorab-Volta met on her own voyage across France to scout locations and plan her script.

Everyone they encounter on the road is quite friendly, including the group of dark-skinned young men whose initial approach towards the girls is made to a backdrop of graffitied walls in a housing project. *Banlieue* movie conditioning has led viewers to anticipate in this scene some sort of rising menace, but this expectation is thwarted when the youth actually share a very engaging conversation about the girls' project and life in general. Their exchange encapsulates the girls' (and that of the

[91] Ghorab-Volta describes choosing to portray these characters as adolescents because they are still optimistic yet have lived enough to have a difficult past that they desire to escape. Intreview with Zaida Ghorab-Volta, referenced 9/1/2010. http://www.universcine.com/articles/zaida-ghorab-volta-un-voyage-c-est-un-vent-de-gaiete-et-d-espoir

filmmaker, as we will see later) style of travel: encounters are made, questions are asked and horizons are broadened, allowing each party to discover life beyond the many clichés that are attached to the stigmatized *banlieues* from where they come and also to life in the provinces where they travel. In other words, the film deals with a wide swath of life on the margins, the locales often misunderstood or entirely ignored by those who occupy a central place in French culture and society. Perhaps the most interesting element of this movie, which was done on a very limited budget, is how Ghorab-Volta incorporated some of her own encounters on the road into the film's narrative. Unlike the "plan-of-action script" (*scénariodispositif*) approach employed by certain Nouvelle Vague directors, this film is, in the words of the director, "very scripted" (Interview with the author, 9 November, 2009). That script, however, was based on and inspired by the director's preparatory travels and stages encounters between the traveling girls and the very same people the director met on her preparatory voyage, all of whom play themselves.

Like Zano and Naïma in *Exils* with their headphones, the girls also have props that accompany them on their voyage and which often shape their travel experiences. For Gwénaëlle and Angela these are a car, a camera, a road map of France—perhaps the same one used by the director to find the shooting locations—and a highlighter. They stop regularly to trace lines along the map, a gesture that serves as a metaphor for their entire project of re-charting France in more socially comprehensible terms. The act of (re)drawing one's own map is a participatory gesture while the car, borrowed from friends, is crucial because it offers the girls agency in charting their course, thus making that participation possible.

Ghorab-Volta described her voyage as a quest to capture "my own France" (Interview with the author, 9 November, 2009). The slice of French life captured in the film is small but not insignificant, especially considering that the girls have never traveled before and are experiencing the outside world for the first time. As they chart their course, the viewer is invited to see France and its inhabitants in a new way, one that does not necessarily correspond to the prevailing stereotypes of place and identity: *banlieuesards* as dangerous malcontents and provincials as xenophobic paranoiacs. As for the camera, it

is both the impetus for their travels and a tool that they use with great discretion, often facilitating their encounters with the many people they meet along their route. Unlike in *Exils,* where the headphones seem to discourage or impede contact with the world the couple travels through, here the camera provides the girls with an opening, a pretext for an encounter.

An examination of François Maspero's 1990 book *Les passagers du Roissy-Express* will help frame a discussion of the key suburban clichés associated with transportation, violence and living conditions. This will lead to a reading of the film that focuses on the interwoven principals of participation, dialogue and accommodation. I shall argue that these rather simple notions are the keys to making this a successfully engaged or political film, truly setting it apart from many films in the *banlieue* film genre. A discussion of Maspero's background will also be crucial to understanding the spatial parameters of French political action and allow for a reading of *Jeunesse dorée* as a cinematic gesture of resistance. Last but not least, we will examine how the film employs participation, dialogue and accommodation to tackle key stereotype surrounding the *banlieue*, race and representation. These principles provide an optic through which we can see *Jeunesse dorée* as the director intended it, a voyage of discovery through "her own France," which is simultaneously personal and connected to a greater social framework. In the process of their travels the girls not only forge their own identity, but they mold concepts of Frenchness in unique ways that blur distinctions between urban and rural and undermine binaries between center and periphery.

Reframing the *banlieue*

Jeunesse dorée's opening establishing shot of the *cité* starts with a view of an apartment building before scanning a horizon full of indistinguishable buildings then zeroing in quite slowly into a close-up on Gwenaëlle looking reflectively out of her open window. A pan of the *cité* and the expanse of similar developments spreading across the horizon supplies the requisite clichéd image with which to open a

banlieue film (as in *La Haine or Wesh-Wesh*). Likewise the tension established between the presumably confining space of the home and the world outside conjures another common theme of girls caught between difficult family and societal situations. In *banlieue* cinema, windows often serve as the liminal boundary representing inside and outside tensions, suggesting issues of intergenerational conflict, poverty and a wider spatial bind. Thus an initial focus on the threshold immediately conjures a series of inside and outside binaries that symbolize well-known conceptions of limits and possibilities. Viewers could then be forgiven for expecting the narrative to then slip into now quite familiar *banlieue* cinema themes of drugs, decay, disaffection and spatial isolation. However, after setting the stage in a seemingly predictable way, Ghorab-Volta proceeds to take the film into decidedly unexpected directions and less-charted territory. The result is that the viewer approaches the film with the *banlieue* firmly in mind, but expectations linked to *banlieue* cinema as a "genre" and discursive ghetto are repeatedly dismantled. The narrative is divided into two parts, one set in Ghorab-Volta's native suburb of Colombes and the second in which the girls set out on the road with the goal of photographing housing projects in the "middle of nowhere." This opposition is what makes the film so slyly effective, for it allows the film and the filmmaker to refer explicitly to a set of clichés and expectations while simultaneously refuting them.

Upon closer viewing, the opening scene proposes a distinctly different vision than what immediately springs to mind. The camera begins on a long shot on the small terrace of an *HLM* apartment before tilting up past several more then commencing a slow pan of the skyline of Colombes. The first terrace is cluttered, the second tidy, and both are clearly inhabited; these apartments are not just buildings, they are homes. The ensuing slow pan of nearly 360 degrees suggests that we are seeing a full perspective on the *banlieue,* one that encompasses the ubiquitous projects but also a fair amount of tress and some large, verdant athletic fields. Moreover the vantage point is not limited to the sordid side of life there. Upbeat classical music accompanies the scene—taking the place of the seemingly requisite rap

soundtrack—and while one might react with some aesthetic distaste to the *grands ensembles* that dominate the skyline, nothing in or around them signals decay, crime, delinquency, or hopelessness. The camera then tilts down and zooms in, unhurried and deliberately, to a medium shot of a teenage girl gazing reflectively out the window. To be sure, the window that frames her does suggest an element of domestic repression as well as a sentiment of entrapment (that will soon be countered by the road project). The slow, almost ponderous gaze of the camera meeting the silent gaze of the young woman sets the tone for this unique film; the question of vantage points, of looking and seeing, and the issue of who is looking and how are all at the very center of this film's concerns.

Jeunesse dorée does have the requisite shots of buildings, emphasizing the inhuman proportions and dreariness of the projects. The excited girls bid farewell to Colombes in a sequence showing the streets and high-rises fading into the distance in a traveling point-of-view shot from the car. However, the close-up and street-level details as well as the reality portrayed inside the concrete blocks differ markedly from typical representations of the *banlieue*. Absent are the shots emphasizing graffiti-covered walls, as are the non-functional elevators often employed as a pithy visual encapsulation of government neglect and funding inadequacies. Neither are there car burnings, drugs, or confrontations with the police, common ingredients in the genre. This is not to say that Ghorab-Volta pulls any punches: we do see the effects of unemployment, poverty and criminality. Gwen's brother seems to get into trouble off screen; the only reference to this is a scene in which he appears cleaning blood off of his hands and face. Their father lives in a nursing home and her mother is left weary by a job that barely pays the bills, leaving her eldest daughter to handle most of the household chores. Meanwhile Angela's boyfriend is trying to pull his life together after getting out of prison. As for failures in urban planning and government social policy, both are critiqued implicitly by the project residents the girls meet on their trip.

The girls' project is at once not about the *banlieue* per se yet inextricably linked to the concept of the *banlieue,* its existence as a cultural phenomenon/signifier. It is also concerned with being from the *banlieue*, and getting outside of it, not to leave it for good, but to broaden one's horizons and to forge connection and dialogue with others. The girls travel to see public housing projects that are not in the traditionally problematic *banlieue* estates surrounding Paris or to a lesser extent Lyon and Marseille, but set in unlikely or less expected places across France. At the same time the concept of housing projects "in the middle of nowhere," whether they are near the capital or lost in the provinces, is the ideal metaphor for the isolation of the *banlieue* in French society and politics. Therefore while the girls visit a variety of places across France, including villages and farms, the housing project (*cité*) remains firmly at the center of their concerns. In a discussion with the director, she protested to me that the girls did not visit *banlieues*, insisting on a clear distinction between the Parisian suburbs and the projects on the film's itinerary in provincial cities such as Saint Etienne and Besançon. While this stance may be explained in large part by the reception of the film and Ghorab-Volta's frustrations with being pigeon-holed in the *banlieue* director category, which I will discuss later, the keys to my own interpretation are found in the film.

Like *Jeunesse dorée*, *Les passagers du Roissy-Express,* written by François Maspero and featuring photographs by Anaik Frantz, is an account of an "unusual journeys," to use its author's own words. Both book and film had its genesis in a road trip, with their creators' voyages via the roads-less-traveled of France laying the groundwork for the finished products, which are in turn quite unique contributions to their respective genres. Maspero and Frantz set off into the Parisian *banlieue* with the possibility of making a book in mind but without a definitive goal. Ghorab-Volta traveled through France with a friend before later revisiting many of the same places and people she met along the way with her crew and actors in order to film the finished product. Both of these journeys are examples of what Charles

Forsdick has termed "travel-as-project," in which a central plan or concept is constantly valorized in the narrative (Forsdick 2005: 55). Both projects involve "meeting the locals" and therefore lend themselves to an analysis through the optic of hospitality. I have already proposed three related and interconnected concepts that I will argue go further—and in more directions—than simple hospitality: participation, accommodation and dialogue. These concepts are linked, and build on each other to create a socially and politically conscious work. My analysis of Maspero's travels from Paris into the much maligned suburbs will lead the way to a more complex examination of Ghorab-Volta's cinematic voyage from the suburbs of Paris out into the depths of *la France profonde.* While this chapter devotes more time to *Jeunesse dorée*, Maspero's book is essential to the establishment of both a new prism through which to see France's peripheral spaces and also an ethic of travel as dialogue that will resurface in Ghorab-Volta's film.

Les passagers du Roissy-Express: the *dérive* as resistance

In the spring of 1989 the writer and former publisher François Maspero set out on a voyage of the Parisian suburbs with photographer Anaïk Frantz. Plying RER line B and sticking exclusively to public transit, the pair spent one month visiting the areas surrounding the 38 suburban stations of that line. The goal of this "unusual voyage"—indeed what made it "unusual"—was the exploration of the zones outside of Paris where Parisians did not seem to go or even know much about. In *Passagers* the narrator laments how the seemingly interchangeable terms of "the environs of Paris," Ile de France, and *banlieue*—that is to say everything in the region of Paris yet outside of Paris proper—are now summed up in French guidebooks by a very short list of "monuments and curiosities." Those who venture beyond *le périphérique* into the outlying zones of metro Paris are encouraged to simply hop from point to point without giving much consideration to what lies between these destinations or how they are linked together as a totality within France and the Parisian agglomeration. As a counterexample, long passages from a

1921 guidebook discussing the region are cited (21-22). Maspero concludes that this tendency to select a handful of the region's "morceaux choisis" for tourists is illustrative of a broader trend: "One no longer voyages in the environs of Paris, one commutes. One hops from a point to another, and all that is between these points is simply the undifferentiated time-space of a trip by car or by train; a gray continuum linked in no way to the world outside" (22). The accomplishment of *Passagers* is in the fact that it does not reinforce this conception, but subverts it, in the process providing a voice to those on the geographical limits of Frenchness.

Maspero was first and best known as an editor and bookstore owner. His *Editions Maspero* published the essential reading for students and militants in 1960s Paris while the *La Joie de Lire* bookstore on rue Saint Séverin was a hub for intellectuals of the left and far left (Ross 2002: 82). The peripheral-oriented sensibility that Maspero brings to *Passagers* was already manifestly evident in these early ventures. *May '68 and Its Afterlives*, Kristin Ross's re-reading of the events of French 1968, pinpoints an essential spatial element to the movement that swept France that spring. Her contention is that May had "very little to do with the social group—students or 'youth'—who were its instigators. It had much more to do with the flight from social determinations, with displacements that took people outside of their location in society" (3). In other words, the events of 1968 were about refusing to remain in assigned places, challenging the prevailing order of society that confined students to the universities and workers to the factories. Such displacements threatened the very ability of the state to govern, to exert control on the populace. What was called into question was "the conception of the social (the social as functional) on which the state based its authority to govern. The political opening to otherness allowed activists to create a rupture with that order, to displace, if only briefly, the places assigned by the police."

Perhaps the key term to draw from her analysis is *participation*, what Ross terms 'real participation': "thousands – even millions of people – were led farther than their education, their social

situation, their initial vocation would have allowed them to foresee" (25-26). Ross highlights two key contributions by Maspero to what she describes as fundamentally a revolt against spatial categories. By arguing that the existence of *La Joie de Lire* neatly coincides with the approximately twenty-year period during which "the periphery become the center of interest to European, and particularly to French intellectuals," Ross places Maspero's shop and press at the center of the process by which the "geography of a vast and international struggle—the "North/South" axis—became transposed onto the lived geography, the daily itineraries, of students and intellectuals in Paris in the early 1960s" (82). Simultaneously these militant itineraries often included *La Joie de Lire,* described as a place of "chance meetings and impromptu conversations outside of any determined political framework— be it party or even 'groupusculaire'— might occur: across factions, and above all, across nationalities" (83). Maspero's travelogues or travel-as-projects represent a clear continuation of this spirit, from *Passagers* to the subsequent *Balkans Transit*, a travelogue that took him to Sarajevo and beyond in a period marked by newly porous European borders and massive refugee flows.

In *Passagers,* the duo's "trek" through the Parisian suburbs from Roissy and Mitry-Claye in the North to Saint Rémy-lès-Chevreuse in the South is an inspiring and unlikely voyage that refutes stereotypes by pushing beyond facile clichés into the realm of human connections. The trip was not about investigative journalism but is a simple "inquisitive walk" ("balade le nez dans l'air") (20). The approach would be to move slowly, without a particular goal in mind, without seeking to answer any specific questions or even to address them directly: "They were not racing the Paris-Dakar. They were not looking for anything exceptional. They were not seeking 'events'" (23). The residents of the communities along line B are approached as people rather than as subjects of study, sociological analysis or photojournalism. The narrative is interspersed with photographs, but these images do not fit into the category of predatory or drive-by journalism criticized in *La Haine*. The mantra of Anaïk Frantz, the photographer who accompanied Maspero, is to "discuss, get to know, then photograph" (128). Thus these images do not

represent simple clichés (meaning both "snapshots" in French, as well as clichés) that gloss over the realities of life beyond the periphery of Paris. Rather they capture in time a more profound connection, perhaps even an amity, which is discovered in travel.

A 1973 interview that Ross uncovered in her research on 1968 seems equally relevant to Maspero's travels of some thirty years later. He describes witnessing an event as a student in the 1950s that would mold his thinking in an important way. Attending what is described as the first festival of ethnological film to be shown in Paris, Maspero witnessed the vivid criticism aimed by Africans in the audience towards the "folkloric" elements of a Jean Rouch film on hippopotamus hunting. These audience members proceeded to point out that laws in their own country denied them access to a camera without the consent of their government. Maspero would later attribute his own commitment to providing a voice of self-representation to the culturally and politically marginalized (Ross 2002: 85). While these comments speak directly to his experience as a publisher and bookseller, this reflex is readily apparent in *Passagers,* both in the effort to create a dialogue with the residents encountered along the way and also, notably, in the approach it takes to the photography of its subjects. As we will see later, the travelers in *Jeunesse dorée* will take a very similar approach, using photography not as an intrusive device, but as a means to create dialogue and foster understanding while chronicling life in France. In this film the tables are turned in a sense as the camera is not in the hands of the ethnographer but in those of the subjects, long the objects of seemingly endless if shallow curiosity and study in contemporary France.

The voyage in *Passagers* has its starting point in the concourse of the Roissy-Charles de Gaulle airport, where the travelers observe the departure board and whimsically choose hypothetical destinations. This humorous moment is a wink at the reader, but on a more serious level it calls into question the very concept of travel and the parameters of travel literature. Is a departure board necessary to really travel? A plane, train, or a car with a full tank of gas? Must the destination be exotic and unknown? On this note,

the pair finishes their coffee and sets off on a route that leads south to *Roissy-Village.* "Do you know Roissy-Village?" the narrator inquires. This is a rhetorical question; aside from those who live in or nearby the destinations covered in this book (whose responses are fascinatingly incorporated into the 1993 postface), Maspero had discovered that Parisians didn't "know" line B (20). He also found that the unknown outskirts of Paris were in general considered a dull and joyless morass entirely devoid of interest. They, he writes, employing the third-person that refers to the vantage point of the narrator and Frantz, "discovered that many Parisians saw the suburbs as a shapeless jumble, a desert of 10 million inhabitants, an expanse of indistinguishable grey buildings, a circular purgatory with Paris-Paradise at its center"(24). It is in fact this Paris-centric vantage point that provides the impetus for the project; the goal is to see France from different angles.

While criticized on some fronts as offering up an exotic portrayal of the *banlieue* or for bringing the oversimplified or naïve perspective of a tourist, adventurer or explorer to an enormously complex issue, Maspero's book was a resounding success and found a wide audience. More importantly the project succeeded in giving a voice to an overlooked and often ignored periphery by creating a dialogue with the otherwise overlooked suburbanites encountered along the way (Jones 3). It is the spirit of the "unusual voyage," as well as of voyage as dialogue that provides the connection to *Jeunesse dorée*. In addition to the various textual and travel strategies that promote this dialogue, the result of a final published project has been to foster a continuing discussion. The author's 1993 postface to the book recounts its creators' appreciation for the stream of letters from readers, which serve as a "continuation of our voyage, the extension of a chapter, the addition of a new voyage" (333). These letters relate, among many things, a variety of other "unusual" voyages carried out by readers. Many of them share with Maspero's project a Debordian/Situationist approach to travel, moving against the grain or outside of the

"physchogeographic" contours of a city, which have "constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones" (Debord).

Enthusiastic readers, "les amoureux de voyages insolites" ("lovers of unusual travel") as Maspero dubs them, wrote en masse to share their own unique approaches to travel. One spends his vacations in Paris, discovering the city's parks, streets and squares in alphabetical order while another recounts an epic train voyage from Brest, Brittany to Brest, Ukraine (333). This seemingly random approach to voyage might be dismissed out of hand as pointless screwball folly, a pretentious stunt, or, as *Passager*'s narrator recounts from experience, simply a "stupid and snobby joke" (20). Yet this belies the profoundly worthwhile goal, or at least corollary, of all of these expeditions: to see places that have fallen into inattention in a new light, to reclaim the overlooked margins as worthy of interest. For Maspero, as for Debord, moving outside of the usual parameters of movement—taking a *derive*—is not simply an aimless act, but a gesture of resistance. While Debord criticized the absolute reliance on sheer chance that guided Surrealist expeditions through the countryside, he defended the process of producing "psychogeographic" maps by the use of maps from one region in an altogether different place. The example he gives is exploring the Hartz region of Germany with only a map of London for navigation:

> Even the introduction of alterations such as more or less arbitrarily transposing maps of two different regions, can contribute to clarifying certain wanderings that express not subordination to randomness but complete *insubordination* to habitual influences. (Critique of Urban Geography)

Remaining insubordinate to "habitual influences" means taking the road less traveled, or, to continue with the concept that links these chapters, to re-chart France in more comprehensible and realistic terms. Straying from the habitual, well-tread route seems perhaps to be too facile an image for the discussion of travel narratives. However in both works discussed in this chapter going off the beaten path is more than a handy gimmick; it is both a narrative and political strategy and the literal trajectory of the voyages

undertaken. There is, furthermore, no randomness in the wanderings recounted: each auteur/traveler has painstakingly researched and mapped the route to be followed.

Banlieue **dialogues: beyond the** ***fait divers***

From Roissy-Village Maspero and Frantz head off to visit communities served by line B, meeting people, talking with them and sometimes photographing them. In turns travelogue, travel guide for zones not generally covered by such publications, history of France cum history of urbanism and social critique, the final product is a nuanced portrait of an area not far from the capital city but miles away in the popular imagination. Before setting out, the narrator recounts, the pair found their fellow Parisians to be dismissive, ignorant and occasionally outright hostile towards the suburbs and its denizens, calling it a "wasteland" inhabited by only "wasting souls" (16). Visiting this "wasteland," moving beyond the "fixed points and vortexes" Debord writes of, is the book's first gesture of insubordination to habitual influences. Its second gesture is taking the time to speak with the people who live along the route. In her analysis of the project, Kathryn Jones focuses on the element of conversation and dialogue central to the endeavor. Her reading of Maspero's work builds on Mary Fulbrook's understanding of "common memory" as a set of public discourses and "collective conversations" (Jones).

The significance of *Passagers* lies in the authors' insistence on allowing their suburban subjects to speak for themselves outside of the realm of sensationalist journalism or academic study. Relying solely on the vicissitudes of public transportation, as well as their own feet, and talking to people before shoving a camera or microphone in their face, the pair undertake a project that couldn't be further from the sensationalist brand of "drive by journalism" critiqued in *La Haine.* When Hubert yells "this is not Thoiry" (a drive-through safari park) to a television news crew questioning that film's trio on the riots taking place in their *cité* from the relative safety of their car, the viewer is reminded of the sometimes problematic nature of the camera's gaze. Moreover, through its insistence on the predatory nature of the

media gaze, the film itself points out the potential for voyeurism inherent in seeing anything through the lens of a camera rather than in the flesh. When the boys chase away the crew by throwing stones at their car, the journalist ends up with images that are more powerful and clichéd than the despairingly venomous and hateful sound-bytes they surely were hoping for. In other words, their method of approaching the *banlieue* subject resulted in the reaffirmation of the stereotype they "knew" when they arrived. Because they are not journalists, Maspero and Frantz are inspired to visit the suburbs out of interest, not in search of a headline. A common criticism leveled on the media in France is that the suburbs are only covered when something bad happens. This state of affairs seems to be just as true today as it was at the time of *La Haine* and *Passagers.* A November, 2009 front-page headline of *Le Parisien* seems to betray surprise at their reporters' findings: "Les autres visages de la banlieue: Loin des clichés habituels, nos reportages sur la banlieue montrent une réalité méconnue, ni rose ni forcément morose" ("The other faces of the suburbs: Far from the habitual clichés, our reports on the suburbs show an unrecognized reality, neither rosy nor inevitably morose," *Le Parisien*, 29 November, 2009).

As a further example, based solely on the headline a December, 2009 story in *Le Monde* would seem to be yet another *banlieue* crime story: "L'université Paris-XIII-Villetaneuse, victime d'intrusions et de violences répétées" (Paris-XIII University at Villetaneuse, victim of illegal trespassing and repeated violence). However, reading beyond the *fait divers* (a non-fatal stabbing in an auditorium) that occurred at this institution that is situated between two housing estates in the northern suburbs of Paris, reveals a secondary—and perhaps more interesting—storyline. Paris-XIII is describes as a *"fac ascenseur social"* (a campus for social mobility), serving students from disfavored suburban zones of primarily immigrant and working-class background. Meanwhile, though some professors and administrators are ill-at-ease in the environment, students have a different perspective, demonstrated by this quote from a 3rd year student in Communications: *"dans cet espace mélangé, où chacun trouve sa place, avec ses différences …il faut arrêter de stigmatiser la banlieue en laissant penser qu'on est plus en danger ici qu'ailleurs*" (In this

mixed space, where everyone finds their place while retaining their differences…we must stop this stigmatization of the *banlieue,* which leads us to believe that we are in greater danger here than elsewhere, *Le Monde,* 16 December, 2009). While the depth and breadth of the reportage, the effort of digging further to nuance the story that could have been simply another *fait divers* is admirable, one would be justified to ask why it took a stabbing to interest *Le Monde* in this suburban university in the first place. Isn't there a story here independent of the violence?

These brief examples underscore the significance and uniqueness of projects such as *Les passengers,* which steers clear of the "habitual clichés."Maspero and Frantz travel to the capital's suburbs not to chase a news story but because they are there, and because they are unknown, or little known to a certain segment of the population. In the process they give the people they encounter along the way a platform to speak about themselves, about their lives in a banal, workaday context, not in response to a violent incident. What they have to say is sometimes surprising, and breaks the mold of conventional narratives.

The camera as tool of participation, The image as accommodation

Ghorab-Volta's project, as a venture into travelling photo-essay within a film, is remarkably similar in spirit to Francois Maspero's book. As in *Exils,* the travelers in *Jeunesse dorée* have props that are essential both to their actual voyages and to the viewer's task of decoding and interpreting the significance of their travels. In *Exils,* headphones are that pair's traveling companions. While Zano does occasionally share his music, wearing headphones is essentially a self-enclosing gesture. Not only does it restrict the music to the personal realm rather than communal use (as in the bar in Seville, where music is a group activity and also a participatory act), it limits the possibility of encounters and conversations with fellow travels or those encountered on the road. Gwen and Angela's camera, by contrast, brings people together. They photograph groups of people outside of their homes after speaking with them, the camera

serving as a premise for an encounter that might not otherwise have taken place. Their initial photographs, taken before they set of on their voyage, display the many faces of the *banlieue*. A wide range of people, situations and moods are represented in the photos. The girls instruct their subjects to display to the camera happiness, sadness or silliness (Tarr 2005: 184). This evocation of the many moods of the *banlieue* subjects willfully flaunts the stereotypical portrayals of their lives as dominated by misery, decay and hopelessness. Unlike the story from *Le Parisien,* this film takes it as a given that *banlieue* residents have other emotions, other *visages* – quite literally, in the case of the photos - beyond sadness or distress. As I briefly discussed above, Ghorab-Volta has repeatedly expressed frustration with being mired, as a director from the *banlieue,* in a cinematic category that is expected to represent only the woeful side of life in the suburbs of France. *Le Parisien*'s "other face" of the *banlieue* headline suggests that the "normal face" of the suburbs must express misery; other registers of emotion or otherwise nuanced expressions seem to provoke surprised reactions from journalists and by extension, perhaps, many of their readers.

The girls' approach to photography mirrors the style of camerawork utilized by the director to capture images of people and of the places they inhabit. Photos in *Jeunesse dorée* serve as a mise en abyme for the film itself and also as a metaphor for the process of accommodation that takes place on several levels. Textually, it occurs between the girls and the various people they encounter on their voyage. On the level of interpretation, we are encouraged to shift our own perspectives and vantage points. The photos inside the film invite us to look at the surroundings and at those encountered on the trip as the girls do, thanks to the insertion of the shots from the point of view of their camera. The girls and other characters, in turn, are framed by the director's camera in ways that challenge stereotypes. In both cases, the vantage point is not a predatory gaze, but rather a "look" entailing dialogue. Ann Kaplan has outlined this distinction in *Looking for the other: feminism, film and the imperial gaze* (1997). Her work looks at colonial images, suggesting that the most problematic of these provided Europeans with the

opportunity to gaze at the other. The gaze here reflects an imposition of imperial desire on the other, in contrast with "the look." The gaze denotes a "one-way subjective vision," the look connotes "a process, a relation" (Maxwell 13). This process-relation operates in the work of both Maspero and Ghorab-Volta in a way we might see as a tactic for the re-appropriation of space.

These tactical approaches intervene where neo-colonialist strategies have organized both the space and the imagery surrounding the French *banlieue.* The invocation of colonial strategies as they relate to the image is particularly helpful in the task of formulating how the camera(s) of *Jeunesse dorée* work in subtle yet radical ways to combat clichés and the domination-ghettoization of spaces and of people. Malek Alloula's incisive examination of the link between voyeurism and oppression in the form of the apparently benign colonial postcard further illustrates the link between photography and hegemony (*The Colonial Harem,* 1986). The analysis of such colonial images takes us a long way towards elucidating the mechanisms and thought processes involved in domination. Alloula first identifies a quest for and pretense of "authenticity" that invariably relegates the image to the status of hackneyed imitation. In the case of the postcards he analyzes, the studio is the scene for the imaginary:

> The whole array of props, carefully disposed by the photographer around and upon the model (trompe l'oeil, furnishings, backdrops, jewelry, assorted objects), is meant to suggest the existence of a natural frame whose feigned 'realism' is expected to provide a supplementary, yet by no means superfluous, touch of authenticity…Indeed, if the double, or rather the stand-in, is always an impoverished version of the original—its schematic representation—it is because it saturates the meaning of the original by the plethoric multiplication of signs that are intended to connote it(18).

A quest for a *banlieue* "real" in media, and often in cinematic, representations functions in an analogous way. A very similar impulse for factitious authenticity was humorously adapted into contemporary context in a passage from the Rachid Djaidani's novel *Boumkoeur* (1999). A television journalist comes into the *cité* to interview a group of youth. He gives the young men alcohol in order to "make the *verlan*

flow" and asks clichéd questions such as "Who among you has a gun?"; "Who sells drugs?"; and "Which of you have spent time in prison?"[92] The youths, at once resentful of the stereotyping and yet wishing to uphold their image, metamorphose into a "poster for *La Haine,*" before beating up the "voyeuristic" cameraman and taking the camera as a reward. If the image precedes the reality here, and only comes to fruition with the participation of the photographer, that image should be understood as primarily linked to territory. That territory is a fantastic *banlieue* of the imagination, populated by equally fantastic inhabitants.

The voyeuristic connection between subject and the territory inhabited by that subject is linked to colonialism in Alloula's analysis of a popular variety of postcards displaying images of a woman "imprisoned" in her own home, or rather a studio facsimile of it. The colonial photographer's studio, "brimming over with connotative signs, thus becomes a versatile segment of urban or geographic landscape. Whereas the model is a symbolic appropriation of the body (of the Algerian woman), the studio is a figure of the symbolic appropriation of space. They are of a piece together" (21). The most compelling and immediately eye-catching aspect of these images—aside from the bars that crisscross the frame—are the eyes of the "captives": "Young, then older, girls, and finally women will be made to pose behind bars, their gaze resolutely turned towards this other gaze that looks at them and may bear witness to their confinement" (21). Yet the look seems to say nothing about them, they are defined by their location, their "home" represented as a barred window, the image of which has been coopted by the photographer along with their own image. It is such a "double movement of appropriation" that leads Alloula to the conclusion that "photography is a stealer of souls" (Alloula 1986: 92).

[92] Djaidani, 21. All three novels by this Franco-Sudanese-Algerian writer and actor deal directly with *banlieue* stereotypes, often in unexpected ways. In *Mon nerf,* the narrator is a *Beur* living in the suburbs, but not the *banlieue.* He admits to never having set foot in the "projects" once in his life.

Jeunesse doorée takes great care to avoid this pitfall. As the girls travel across France they look before snapping photos. The camera functions as a tool of dialogue and accommodation that places each individual into home context that they themselves have outlined, explained in conversation. The camera allows us, invites us, to see the world through the optic of the girls (Tarr 2005: 184). Meanwhile it also feeds a process of continuous dialogue, layering their voice and perspective with those of the people they meet along the way. Gwen and Angéla's élan comes through in their project, both in the pictures that one can hold in one's hands and look at, but also in the process of meeting people, discussing their lives and then taking their picture. The communal element of the photography project is further underscored by its genesis. While in *Exils* the choice to travel to Algeria as an individual decision, perhaps founded equally on interest in family history and out of boredom, and in *Le grand voyage* the voyage was based on individual religious beliefs, the girls' trip is the result of extensive communal planning and community effort. The project is conceived at and funded by a youth center. The girls research their route at a library with the assistance of an extremely kind and helpful librarian. As Tarr points out, this is not a commonly portrayed space in *banlieue* cinema. Friends and neighbors make contributions to the travel fund, from small change to the use of the car that will take them across France. Finally, a helpful shopkeeper demonstrates the process of taking pictures to the girls, whose obvious lack of experience with photography is no match for their enthusiasm ("don't take pictures facing the sun," etc.). Thus from start to finish the camera underscores the communal nature of their project and helps bridge the gap between their local (*banlieue*) community and those that they encounter when they hit the road for the first time in their lives. Ghorab-Volta describes this as representative of her experience during the "glory days of the red banlieue" (Interview with the author, 9 November 2009). A tight-woven and strong community is frequently conceived of, and indeed formulated, as a safe haven in opposition to the outside world, seen as dangerous or simply fundamentally different. The sense of community in *Jeunesse dor*ée is not

juxtaposed with hostile spaces outside that tightly-knit space. Rather, the girls successfully forge a sense of community and solidarity on the road, with different people and in varied places.

I will take as an example the scene, briefly mentioned above, in which the Gwen and Angéla are approached by a band of young men. Following an establishing shot of the girls in front of a large apartment building that could be in Paris if not for the backdrop of a verdant forest on a steep hill, we see them walking along a path in front of the same building, seen from a different angle that excludes the trees. This tracking shot includes more "typical" *banlieue* imagery than the entire narrative portion set in Colombes. As they approach an open space between buildings, the background is swallowed by projects and the girls are framed in a landscape of parked cars and relatively dilapidated buildings with laundry drying on the balconies. Meanwhile in the foreground, debris is strewn about a concrete picnic table and a high, graffiti-covered wall comes into view. As the girls approach the wall, four dark-skinned figures appear from behind a building, heading towards them—unseen as if to build tension—seemingly on the opposite side of the wall but in fact just off camera. The scene is set for a situation that is common in *banlieue* narratives: a relatively seedy setting and the dark-skinned youth who outnumber the girls by a factor of two, viewers may have anticipated the specter of danger.

Violence towards young women holds a prominent and outsized role in the public conception and media coverage of the *banlieue,* evoked and denounced in works such as *Ni Putes Ni Soumises* Fadela Amara and Samira Bellil's *Dans l'enfer des tournantes*.[93] However when the boys emerge on screen to find Gwenaëlle and Angela sitting under a neglected basketball hoop, the budding tension is almost immediately squelched. The two groups hit it off immediately; the guys are just as fascinated by the girls' unusual voyage as the girls are by information on the boys' lives in the projects. The camera cuts between

[93] Recent studies have demonstrated that reported incidents of "gang rape" are no more common in the Parisian suburbs than elsewhere in France. Often, however, they have received extensive media coverage. See Laurent Mucchielli, 2005 and Etienne Liebig, 2010.

medium shots of the two girls side-by-side to medium close-ups of the individual boys. The shots of the girls together underscore their solidarity, emphasizing the bonds that link them even though they each have strong individualistic streaks. The focus on this type of bond between females is not common in French cinema, particularly in films that are grouped into the *banlieue* subcategory (Tarr 2005: 154).

As for the boys, the medium close-ups immediately allow us to see them as individuals, where moments before as a group they were nothing more than potential stereotypes. As stereotypes of *banlieue* youth they might be grouped into a whole series of associations that runs the gamut from delinquency to drugs and subjugation of women. Once we begin examining them as individuals, it is clear that nothing could be farther than reality. The medium close-up shots frame them tightly, revealing their expressions as they talk and, particularly, their smiles. We watch as each shares insights into his life and asks the girls about their project, creating a dialogue between two groups who have much in common. The boys' comments bring us back to the distinction between *banlieue* and projects. On one hand, as one remarks, the "landscape here must be different than by Paris." On the other hand, another seems amused at the idea of travelling to find projects, which are everywhere in France ("Bouger pour voir les immeubles?")[94]. It is in fact this very gesture—"moving to see housing projects"—that makes the film so original and compelling. When asked where else they have been, the girls admit that this is their first trip, something made obvious to viewers in scenes such as the one where they ask a bemused hotel owner if legends of breakfast in one's room were really true. One of the boys then adds that he also has never left on vacation. Asked how they pass their time, the responses are "walking around," a repetition of "school-quartier, school-quartier," and finally "I do what you do, just hang out" ("je fais come vous, je zone"). This moment recalls the scene in *La Haine* in which the typically stoic Hubert confesses with emotion to his mother a profound desire to get away from the *banlieue,* a hope that is never to be realized.

[94] All dialogue from *Jeunesse dorée* is transcribed and translated by me.

The "like you" response underscores what has become clear in the course of this exchange: despite differences of "landscape," the youths have much in common, and face similar social and living situations in their respective projects. Affinity and mutual understanding separate this exchange from a similar encounter that immediately precedes it. Before their arrival in this *cité,* the girls talk to three boys in a small town. While similar issues of spatial isolation come up in the discussion, there is no "like you" moment in that conversation, suggesting that the two groups are not quite on the same plane d. Our final view of this extended conversation scene does not correspond to the end of the conversation or the girls' departure. Rather, as the narrative moves on we have the impression that the conversation is just getting started, demonstrating that there is far more to the trip and the connections it engenders than the camera can capture.

The sophisticated fashion by which the director turns her lens on male subjects underscores a key point: while the film takes a decidedly female perspective—even feminist— it does not simply turn the tables on the male gaze. Rather, each and every shot of an individual, regardless of their sex, is part of a process of accommodation, a bilateral "look" rather than a predatory or voyeuristic "gaze," to use the distinction laid out by Kaplan. It is worth examining another scene in which this cinematic approach leads to the possibility of greater understanding rather than a simple reinforcement of truisms. The *banlieue* and its residents are often seen uniquely through the prism of their physicality; from fights to riots to "urban" dance and soccer, the physical is seen as emblematic of the French suburbs (Liebig 2010: 33). It perhaps goes without saying then that like scenes in libraries, philosophical conversations set outside of suburban apartment blocks are not common cinematic representations of the *banlieue*. *Jeunesse dorée* stages one such discussion in which a multiethnic group of four anonymous young men in Colombes start discussing car theft and end up posing some profound questions about society and the nature of desire:

Man 1: Going to prison for a beautiful car is kind of dumb.

> Man 2: (…) When it is there for the taking, who can resist?
>
> Man 1: That's the problem. Why do you want it? I don't, because it isn't for me. And if I do, I'm screwed.
>
> Man 2: But everything is organized so that you want it…
>
> Man 1: That is why it's dumb. You want something because they decided that you want it. That's all…we have to change desire, we have to.[95]

The sequence cuts from person to person as the discussion continues. Again, as in the scene where the girls encounter the three young men, thee camera captures each individual in a medium close-up as they speak and while they express non-verbal reactions. The sequence involves 14 cuts, each from one individual medium close-up to another. The effect is an emphasis on the individuality and variety of faces and perspectives; each is shown as an individual rather than another member of an idle gang of youths. As for the discussion itself, in tenor it would not seem—slang aside— out of place in an Eric Rohmer film, as part of a lively debate set on the beach or along the paths of the Luxembourg Gardens. Such a preference for intellectual over physical prowess is considered unusual for the *banlieue* setting, where antagonists might be expected to slug it out rather than debate. As for the content of the discussion, the perception of unfairness in capitalist-consumer society is commonly cited as a source of frustration and violence in the suburbs. Azouz Begag has remarked that *banlieue* violence can be explained in part by the regularly foiled desire to participate in consumer society, which the car represents in this scene (Begag 2007: 39). In this scene Ghorab-Volta underscores the real social and economic factors involved in resentment—not an outright rejection of society but a frustration at being excluded from it—while also demonstrating that this does not necessarily lead to violence. In the process she counters stereotypes while presenting the episode not as exceptional and commonplace for a *banlieue* setting. At the end the group disbands to change into clothes for "playing some ball," instilling their discussion with a normative quality; this is not a group of intellectuals but just some regular guys.

[95] *Jeunesse dorée.*

Here I would suggest that a process of accommodation is playing out on a number of levels. On a literal level, as the young men debate and discuss accommodation and adaptation are taking place. Visually, this process is similar to what Kaplan describes as the "look": a relation or process rather than a one-sided "gaze." The alternating medium close-ups offer us some insight into each *banlieue* youth as an individual, how they think, how they react. The effect is to draw us in, to invite us to see through their perspective, or rather perspectives, as each young man has his own angle. The cameras of the girls and of the director are not only focused on the *banlieue*; their travel into the provinces and through the countryside also plays a key role in identity formulation and in my conception of accommodation. The girls' own understanding of their identity shifts as they travel through the French countryside and see France from a myriad of vantage points.

In one instance, their encounter with a rural family takes place in a very different way than their initial encounters with city or suburban residents. In most cases before and after this one they would first photograph someone and then be invited inside for coffee or a meal and conversation. In other words, the camera is linked to hospitality. This initial rural encounter, however, seems to get off to a bad start: as the girls eat a picnic lunch outside of a church they notice a man who appears to be staring at them. Here the director's camera captures the man as the girls often do in their own pictures: a long shot framed by the subject's home, in this case a quaint stone cottage. This contact between the girls and their potential subject is different because it is initially read as voyeuristic on the part of the man. After some internal debate ("what does he want?...he's been staring for a while"), the girls—who are in fact staring back at him, and as the outsiders could be seen as voyeurs themselves—respond to his signal and are invited inside to meet the family. "I saw you sitting there and wondered if you were lost," he explains at the table. Implicit, again, is the idea that nobody comes to such places and the girls must therefore be "lost." Later the man shows them around his barn and garden and takes them fishing. After the girls meet his hunting

dog they express their disgust for that practice in rather strong terms. “It’s not for me,” says Angela before Gwen calls hunting “a wacko thing.” The man responds kindly, “It is a way of life… you have to know it” before issuing the mildly admonishing warning “don’t believe what people say…what if I went around talking ‘*banlieue* youth this, *banlieue* youth that’?”

In the end the girls take a picture of the entire family in front of their home before exchanging pleasant goodbyes. This non-voyeuristic photo—framed in the girls’ camera in the exact same fashion of the initial cinematic shot of the man—underscores the process of accommodation that played out in this encounter that seemed to begin with a sort of staring contest between opposing groups. As is the case with the approach the camera takes to male subjects, this is not simply a question of reversing the gaze. The man’s original gaze, read as predatory or judgmental, is not simply reciprocated. Rather, a process is started by which the lives of others can be better understood. The ensuing dialogue allowed each side to learn something about each other, and become more accepting in the process. The man can now say from experience that all *banlieue* kids are not troublemakers and the girls are aware that hunters (and rural residents in general) are not in fact psychopaths.

The *cité*: home, infamous home?

In one of the first *beur* novels, which was later adapted into one of the first examples of *beur* cinema, Medhi Charef describes the *cité* as a gloomy concrete wasteland: “Ça chante pas le béton, ça hurle au désespoir comme les loups dans la forêt, les pattes dans la neige, et qui n’ont meme plus la force de creuser un trou pour y mourir” (“The concrete doesn’t sing, it screams of despair like wolves in the forest, their paws in the snow, lacking even the strength to hollow out a hole to die in,” Charef 117). The description from this 1983 novel has become emblematic of the perception of the *banlieue* in popular imagination. One of the key approaches in both *Jeunesse dorée* and *Passagers* is to counter this impression. This is done through thoughtful and unexpected portrayals of residents and also by a careful

and considerate mise-en-scène of their homes. The realities of the *cités* are not whitewashed or ignored in either work, but the perception of them as no more than dangerous and dilapidated zones of misery and despair is refuted.

Maspero's book again provides a helpful approach to this issue. His narrative counters the prevalent discourses that represent the physical space of the *banlieue* as at best morose and at worst crime-ridden and crumbling. In *Passagers* the approach to the infamous projects known as les 3000 in Aulnay-sous-Bois emphasizes that community's spatial isolation from the center. The approaching terrain is described as a vast open space leading to "distant buildings," a veritable desert, a "no man's land" of fallow earth, concrete barricades that hold nothing in or out, "scrawny" plants and innumerable billboards (44). "Will there be people here one day?", the narrator asks of these "apparently uninhabited lands" (45). Having presented a description that seemingly corresponds to the low expectations of Parisians enumerated in the opening pages of the book ("wasteland," uninhabited and, especially, uninhabitable, etc.), the duo enters into the particularly infamous suburb of Aulnay-sous-Bois. The initial mise-en-text of this city (isolated, distant, fallow wasteland) would seem to set the table for encounters with miserable and disaffected residents. However, Maspero has something else in store for his readers, as expectations and stereotypes are again refuted through conversation with residents. Two teenagers (perhaps the same age as Gwen and Angéla) hail Maspero and Frantz and begin a conversation. "Ici, c'est la zone. La Rose des Vents. Les 3000 d'Aulnay: vous ne connaissiez pas? Pourtant c'est célèbre. Mauvaise reputation. Vols. Agressions. Drogue, surtout. Les seringues qu'on trouve dans les caniveaux. Un garcon mort d'une overdose, il n'y a pas longtemps. Les journaux en ont parlé" ("It's the slums here. The Rose des Vents. The 3000 of Aulnay: you must know of it? It's famous. Bad reputation. Theft. Attacks. Most of all, drugs. Syringes are found in all the gutters. A boy died of an overdose not long ago; it was in the papers," 47).

It is a depiction that reflects their own observations and experiences, but also one that is very conscious of the social narrative surrounding their home. The girls seem to have accepted and internalized the stereotypes associated with *banlieue* life. In this sense their words are similar to Mok's clichéd account of his family situation in Merzak Allouache's *Salut Cousin*, addressed in the second chapter. Taking Maspero and Frantz for journalists ("Vous travaillez pour *Oxygène*?"), they commence with these requisite stereotypes. One can imagine that many journalists, pleased with this sound bite, would keep moving. Maspero and Frantz, however, are patient and stay long enough for the discussion to continue and the tone to change. The comments by the girls are represented in free indirect discourse, allowing them to address the reader directly: "Pourtant, ici c'est chez nous. Au moins, il y a de l'air. De l'espace. On respire. Vous venez de Paris? A Paris on étouffe. Comment peut-on vivre à Paris? Vous avez raison de vous balader: il y a de belles choses a visiter par ici" (And yet, this is our home. At least there is fresh air. Space. We can breathe freely. You come from Paris? Paris is suffocating. How can you live in Paris? It was a good idea for you to walk around: there are some beautiful things to visit around here," 47). By the end of the paragraph, the question has been inverted: not only are there advantages to living here, we cannot imagine living in Paris. How does one live there? As are the travelers in *Jeunesse dorée,* Maspero and Frantz are congratulated for their "unusual" choice of destinations. As unusual as this choice appeared to Parisians, it does not seem that the girls see a visit to their area in such light: there are beautiful things to see here. This passage is an example of Maspero's approach of letting the residents he meets speak for themselves and stake a claim in their own narrative.

Jeunesse dorée follows a similar path, using dialogue with residents to depict housing projects as homes, not just maligned buildings. In an interview, Ghorab-Volta described making shirts as a teenager in Colombes that read "J'aime mon battiment" ("I love my tower block," Interview with the author, 9 November 2009). This sentiment comes out in her film, both in the sense of community on display in

Colombes and discovered on the road. *Jeunesse dorée* highlights a sense of belonging and even pride in one's community, one's *banlieue,* one's building. This is manifested in the scene where Gwen and Angéla witness the demolition of a housing project near Saint-Etienne. The crowd applauds as a huge tower is imploded, but interviews reveal that spectators are not unanimous in their dislike for the old buildings that used to be their home. "Even if people didn't like it, it was our home…there were our families, our parents, kind of like a village," remark a pair of girls interviewed by Gwen and Angéla. These "interviews," while often based on encounters the director had during a preparatory voyage, were in fact scripted for the filming, even though the actors are non-professionals. This apparently subtle remark is not simply an innocent statement uttered in passing, but an attempt to break down divisions between (sub)urban and rural by linking the apartment tower to the village. That suburban-rural dichotomy also opens the door to conceptions of "real France"— the unchanged village—and a volatile un-French space inhabited by a steady flow of new immigrants.

"Everyone knew each other, it was good place to be," continues the girl, who admits that she is so moved that she is having trouble walking. The central message here is that despite the negative portrayals, based on reality and perception, these *cités* serve as homes to people. Considered alongside the earlier interview with a man displaced by yet another demolition project, a pattern emerges offering an implicit social critique: inadequate planning leads to the displaced families. At other times, the buildings "speak" for themselves, with only an establishing shot—frequently from the point of view of the girls' camera—to testify to their existence. This act of chronicling such architecture is the impetus for the girls' project, and when combined with the testimonials of residents their shots seem to express a connection to the buildings, a desire to rehabilitate the reputations of maligned structures and inscribe them into the history of life in France. The first sequence of project shots captures on film four buildings of divergent style and size. The camera stays on the first one for a relatively long while, certainly more time than needed for an

establishing shot, while children play happily in front. As I suggested in my analysis of the opening scene, the shots of buildings emphasize their status as homes, places where people live and play. Accordingly, the camera seems to privilege shots framing playful children in the foreground, bringing notions of permanence, belonging and feeling at home—no matter how one's home is seen by others—to the forefront.

Peripheral trajectories

The common trajectory of *banlieue* narratives leads from periphery to center, often to Paris. As the geographic location of the rural encounter discussed above indicates, the trajectory of voyage in *Jeunesse dorée* works to dismantle narratives of vertical *banlieue* to center "progression." At the scene of another preceding conversation, the description by the young men of their housing project as "la cité au bout du monde" ("the project at the end of the world") echoes the spatial signifiers associated with the Parisian suburbs and demonstrates the far-reaching path traveled by Gwen and Angéla. As this scene demonstrates, cutting against the grain, moving from *banlieue* to country or *banlieue* to *cité* escapes reductive binary clashes and promotes dialogue rather than confrontation. In contrast to *Jeunesse dorée,* the typical *banlieue* travel narrative, whether initiatic or escapist, sticks to the widely accepted contours of social mobility or immigrant progression. Rather than "moving to find projects," most *banlieue* films stay in the suburbs—where indeed there are plenty of projects to be found—or stage a journey of initiation or confrontation into the center. As Danielle Robinson notes, "these journeys are not innocent: on the contrary, one rather suspects that they are not there so much for the characters' storyline as for the benefit of spectators who are forced to watch the narrative unfurl within an archetypal French landscape" (Robinson: 205). Movement from the outside towards the center reinforces conceptions linked to a vertical grid of identity and belonging. *Banlieue* subjects desire and demand access to the center, the archetypal French landscape. When this is denied they act out, perpetuating a vicious circle on the level of

reception, where their otherness, their spatio-cultural difference becomes a truism. The example of Mok in *Salut Cousin!* demonstrates this from a slightly different perspective. He sees his relocation from the suburbs to the 18th as a symbol of social ascension and evolution towards being more French. When the youths don't like his rap performance and boo him off the stage, he sees them as simply acting out their frustration at still being in the *banlieue* while he has successfully "escaped."

Whether the focus is placed on possibility or, more often, on the impossibility of access to the center, that center is portrayed again and again as fundamentally, irrevocably, central. For *banlieue* residents, access to this center is portrayed as at best unlikely, as in the memorable shot from *La Haine* that focuses on the BBB trio in the foreground with central Paris in the background, underscoring spatially the *fracture sociale* that informs that film's narrative (Vincendeau 2005: 13). To get to Paris, the boys have taken the train, a voyage shown as prohibitively long and difficult. Saïd and Hubert, who have just been released from their holding cell after a confrontation with the police, arrive at the station for the return trip just as their train is departing. The doors have been locked and they are stuck in Paris for the night. Later, after they are escorted out of the art gallery and denied a ride in a cab Said curses "Nique sa mère, on est fermés dehors!" ("Fuck, we are shut outside"). The youths' struggle for mobility and the demonstrable difficulty of moving between seemingly antipodal social spaces underscore key issues that have yet to be addressed.

While these are valid, timely and important issues, the repetition of them in *banlieue* cinema seems to simply reinforces stereotypes and divisions. *Jeunesse dorée* is an insightful and effective film because Ghorab-Volta has chosen to ignore these issues almost completely. In the introduction I aimed to demonstrate how nationalist and xenophobic rhetorical strategies forward a notion of "Frenchness" that is formulated in terms of closed spaces, within which fictions of purity and isolation are created. Attacking the hard shell of this closed center as many films do risks simply perpetuating the very divisions one aims

to undo. Destabilizing these closed spaces appears to be a more effective route to take, as Zhorab-Volta has opted to do by subverting the typical voyage from *banlieue* to center. Her film ignores this confrontation altogether, opting instead to focus on alternate conceptions of French identity ("her France"). In this sense *Jeunesse dorée* meets the characteristics laid down by David Laderman of European road films, which seek to travel "into the national culture, tracing the meaning of citizenship as a journey" (Laderman 2002: 167). In short, while many *banlieue* films stage citizenship in terms of confrontation and antagonism, in *Jeunesse dorée* it is constructed in travel and relies on dialogue and accommodation. The former is rigid and static while the latter is malleable, flexible and in perpetual movement. The film refers to the well-known spatial divisions at play in French society, but without becoming preoccupied with them as a defining issue. Instead, it highlights life in the marginalized spaces, positing a very different conception of Frenchness and of the spaces of France itself. This is not about demanding entrance, pounding on the gates in expected fashion, but revalorizing what is to be found outside of those gates, and with only a cursory glance at the center.

This strategy effectively shifts the focus from a lack of agency and access on the part of the *banlieue* subject to an emphasis on participation, working to change society by getting outside of one's assigned spaces. Returning to the earlier discussion of 1968, Ross' analysis of the events centers on displacements of the populace, people placing themselves outside of their assigned places and thus undermining efforts by the state to exert control on the populace. If the *banlieue* narrative par excellence is the repeated clash with state authority that has relegated some of its citizens to peripheral zones, is not the best strategy to avoid this a movement outside of or beyond that assigned space? In this sense *Jeunesse dorée* represents not a demand to participate, but "real participation." In the film this participation does not simply manifest itself in voyage to other *cités*, as the previous discussion on

photographing a farm family demonstrates. An additional locus of dialogue is rural France, where a move is made from similarity (*banlieue* to *cité*) towards difference, both real and perceived.

It would be tempting to look at the *Jeunesse dorée* as representing in one sense the opposite of *Passagers:* the film places the camera and the map in the hands of the *banlieue* subjects, who set off on their own voyage and documentary mission. Indeed the itinerary of Maspero and Frantz is close in spirit to that of Gwen and Angéla. However, while in *Passagers* the route leads from Paris into the suburbs, when then the girls travel out of the *banlieue* it is not the center that they seek. Though the journey to Paris seems to be the archetype voyage for suburban youth, they never even discuss this possibility, though it is suggested in the narrative. At their very first stop, the girls ask a passing student how people get to an isolated university campus. Before continuing on his way, he inquires if they are headed towards Paris, to which they reply "no, we just left." This is emblematic of the travel tactics in *Jeunesse dorée:* misdirection and decentering are privileged. After starting in the *banlieue* the route veers into "uncharted" territory, which the girls in fact proceed to literally chart as they go with a highlighter on their road map. Instead they strike out from Colombes to unusual places across France, both rural destinations and *cités* in seemingly improbable locations. There is a clear progression in their movement from *banlieue* to *cité* then to countryside. The movement is from urban to rural; progressively, they trade the *banlieue* for the village, the farm and the forest.

The housing developments Gwen and Angéla visit are at times marginalized as provincial and stigmatized as *cités*, that is to say doubly peripheral and thus far removed from Parisian power and influence. On the other hand, the rural areas are stuck between the margins and the center, geographically and politically. At times *La France profonde* that has been hailed as the locus of the true essence of Frenchness, and indeed like the suburban girls in *Passagers* who cast aspersions on Parisian living, provincials often have a thing or two to say about life in the capital. The center, however, has long

dominated the periphery on issues from cultural politics to transportation policy. On the political side, the linguist Jean-Louis Calvert has used the term "dictatorship of the French language" to describe the centralizing linguistic policy of the 3rd Republic. In her book on the Toulouse band Zebda and the resurgence of regional identities in French culture, Danielle Marx-Scouras points out that as far as Jules Ferry's educational policy was concerned, Bretons and Basques, Africans and Arabs were all "savages" in need of civilizing (Marx-Scouras 2005: 55). From this vantage point, then, there is a hierarchal progression from province to "Frenchness" that is conceived along lines similar to those that an immigrant is supposed to follow on a trajectory out of the *banlieue* (see Weber's *From Peasants into Frenchmen).* The provinces are portrayed with subtlety in *Jeunesse dorée*; they are neither marginalized nor presented as the epitome of France. They do represent a model of sorts, as the primary characters we see there have chosen to live a more balanced and ecological life as a form of resistance. This model is not forwarded as better than *banlieue* life, however, but simply as another optic, another perspective on life that might enrich the girls' lifestyle.

Rural France: French identity and the "return to the land"

Popular discourse has tended to posit *banlieue* and *France profonde* as polar opposites. While the *banlieue* has frequently been the locus of a collective fear of a danger posed to French identity, the provinces have on some level long stood in for some sort of imagined pure notion of Frenchness. Going back to the centralizing efforts of the 16th century Valois monarchy, Du Bellay's *Défense et Illustration de la Langue française* was riposted by Barthélemy Aneau, who wrote "Qui ha *Pays* n'ha que faire de *Patrie*" ("Those who have a region do not need a nation"). [96] The tension between center and province was at the very heart of debates over what Timothy Hampton terms the "pre-history of nationalism" in France (Hampton 2001). Today the distinction between *pays* and *patrie* seems insignificant; each word is

[96] *Quintil Horatian*.

given as a possible definition of the other in contemporary dictionaries. And the connotations suggested in each word, "country" or "village" for the former and "homeland" or "nation" for the latter tend to overlap, merging into one seamless concept of what might be termed a nostalgia-hued "Frenchness." The modern word *patrie* has come to encompass the dual notions of an identity based on solid ground, terrain—mountains, forests, fields—and a more symbolic sense of collective memory, or "spiritual principle" to borrow Renan's formulation. Barrès' description of the term contains both terrestrial and spiritual elements, locating an essence of Frenchness in the soil: "pour nous, la patrie, c'est le sol et les ancétres, c'est la terre de nos morts." ("For us, *patrie* is our soil and the ancesters, the earth where we bury our dead," Barrès 67).[97] The nostalgic appeal of the *paysan* (peasant or peasant farmer) and the soil in rural imagery would continue into the first half of the twentieth century, as demonstrated by Vichy's *Corporation Paysanne* and the "workers gardens," as well as by a vogue for the idealized salubriousness and authenticity of the countryside expressed in the "retour à la terre" ("return to the land") movements in the teens and twenties.[98]

More recent culture wars have staged the question of rural identity within the broader framework of the debate over Globalization. The clichéd French image of the *paysan* is perhaps best embodied today by José Bové, leader of *Confédération paysanne* and modern folk hero. John Westbrook has coined the term "cultural bovéism" to describe the phenomenon of this sheep farmer turned political agitator who has made the peasant into the symbol of the moral guardian of Frenchness:

> The term bovéism came to me quite spontaneously over a year ago as a diagnosis for a symptomatic nostalgia on a variety of cultural fronts. *Mal bouffe* had become a household term in France and Bové, a cultural hero... The French press presented this new Astérix and his peasants as bearers of the French national character. "Bovéism" served to describe a sort of clichéd cultural reaction to a postmodern world

[97] Barrès, *Scènes et doctrines du nationalisme*. p.67.
[98] See Gervereau and Peschanski, *La Propagande sous Vichy, p. 48* and Pagès, *Les fictions du politique chez Céline,* p. 135.

> dominated by individualism, globalization and technology; a nostalgic appeal to "true" French values of land and community...(Westbrook)

The "true" French values that Westbrook mentions in relation to Bovéism can be simplified to a handful of what he calls "anthropomorphized material signifiers of rurality and 'peasanthood'."[99] For Bové, these images are a pipe, a knife, a mountain hat, and the "most precious posession ... the land of the Larzac" (Westbrook). To that list—Bové's own, from his book *The World is Not For Sale*—could easily be added Roquefort, for which he supplies milk. It was in protest of American tariffs on this quintessentially France of cheeses that Bové famously attacked a McDonalds in Millau, France. However, as Westbrook points out in his analysis, Roquefort has long been part of the global marketplace; farmers first started exporting it to the United States in the 18th century (Westbrook). Tracing the intertwined threads of such logic leads to series of admittedly confusing ideological conclusions. This revisionist and opportunistic posturing belies a stagnant view of identity and culture. What is read by some as a monolithic conception of a Frenchness "unspoiled" by outside contact can also be seen as a route to a more complex level of self-identification for the girls and for the trio of rural residents they encounter and stay with for a while on their trip.

Looking back to the 1980s and 1990s, the success of heritage films offering a quaintly nostalgic image of France seems to be indicative of the appeal that rural conceptions of France had to mainstream audiences (Caquot-Baggett, Powrie). Marie-Pierre Caquot-Baggett has identified a trend away from such rural glorification in cinema since 1996. Citing such films as Emmanuel Bourdieu's *Vert Paradis* (2003) and Isabelle Mergault's *Je vous trouve très beau* (2006), she argues that recent cinema tends to portray rural life as sterile, joyless and altogether devoid of quaintness (Caquot-Baggett). In short, then, *la France profonde* can be read as double-edged signifier, meaning the "true France" to those obsessed with *souche*

[99] Westbrook.

and a suffocating, unsophisticated hinterland to others. Significantly, in *Jeunesse dorée* the rural areas filmed are peripheral, rather than culturally central and "typical," and represent an opening to otherness. The girls travel to the border hamlet of Latour-de-Carol in the Pyrenees and spend the most time in a rural area almost at the end of their route and also at the "end" of France. Saint-Nazaire-le-Désert is only 150 kilometers from the Italian border and less than 100 kilometers from the *Pays Niçois,* not attached to France until 1860—after Algeria. This does not seem to be a random choice, given the extensive narrative attention paid to the girls' route planning and research as well as their stated intention to "head towards the borders so not to be hemmed in by the sea." While they express no interest in crossing those borders to leave France, this comment demonstrates that the girls place no liminal significance in the border: they could continue past it if desired, unlike the sea that creates an unavoidable barrier.

Ghorab-Volta's gesture of tying the girls' quest for understanding their place in society to a rural idyllic is not necessarily an obvious one. It can certainly not be taken as a given that suburbanites and their rural countrymen will find a common ground, let alone a sense of solidarity, based on a shared experiences of marginalization. If anything, small and rural communities have often been portrayed as even more closed-minded and perhaps viscerally racist places than urban centers. In *Jeunesse dorée* the essential is not a discussion of sameness—showing that the girls are just like rural residents—but development of the framework for conceptions of difference and individuality, encapsulated by Ghorab-Volta's conception of the trip as one through her own France. The contact between urban and rural is neither truly about clashes on one hand or sameness on the other, but stages a process of accommodation with difference. Connections take place without the mediation of the center, people overcome preconceived notions and biases to meet on a personal level. Paradoxically, perhaps, this meeting of marginals is made possible not only with the help of neighbors (through the car and the change collection) but also through state funding in the form of the youth center grant.

Their route then takes the girls into remote corners of France. Heading east, they stop to ask a woman in Saint-Etienne where they can find housing projects "in the middle of the country" ("les immeubles en plein milieu de la campagne"). She points out a town called Chenaux on the map. When the girls arrive they snap photos of the city and before visiting a cow pasture, officially marking their passage from visiting projects that are simply isolated from the city to those that are isolated from everything, truly in the countryside. It is one of the rare stops where they do not meet any people, instead opting to cross into a pasture to feed grass to a herd of cows. The absence of humans heightens the sense that the girls now indeed find themselves "in the middle of nowhere." En route to this part of France they had stayed with a woman who lived alone in the countryside. "I'm glad you stopped here, nobody ever comes through. It's nice to see people," she announces, reminding us again that the girls are truly on an unusual voyage to less traveled parts of France. Farther on, in a remote village aptly named St. Nazair- le-Désert, the girls meet three men who live in the forest. The men have a firewood business where everything is done traditionally, by hand and with horses. "That's what we like, contact with nature and animals," they tell the skeptical girls. Gwen and Angela spend a number of days there, helping with woodcutting and exploring the forests and village and add sheep and horses to the list of animals they have encountered. Here again the narrative portrays a gradual process of accommodation and adaptation. Gwen initially states that she cannot imagine living in such a place, echoing the earlier conversation with the hunter. By the end, however, she seems to have had a change of heart and seems distressed about leaving.

An "imagined" affinity or collective sense of identity is clear when the girls encounter other inhabitants of housing projects along the way. This is similar to Benedict Anderson's conception of the nation as an "imagined political community." What connects the denizens of this community is the catalogue of common images engrained in their collective memories: "It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 5). A quite

different process is carried out in *Jeunesse dorée* when urban meets country (as in *Passagers* when urban meets suburban). Contrary to Anderson's formulation, it is in fact the very act of getting to know their countrymen that makes imagining community possible. Before their voyage the girls cannot imagine living like those they meet. There is a progression from the state of mind "I cannot imagine living here" (Gwen) to an understanding, even an affinity. This process of accommodation is demonstrated by the girls' encounters with rural inhabitants. Here Zygmunt Bauman's observation is relevant: "If the *modern* 'problem of identity' was how to construct an identity and keep it solid and stable, the *postmodern* 'problem of identity' is primarily how to avoid fixation and keep the options open" (Bauman 1996: 18). In other words, *postmodern* identity is identity in constant motion, a perpetual re-imagining of links made possible by travel and accommodation. *Jeunesse dorée*'s rural trio is a good example of this. One of them, Pascal, explains that he grew up in a *cité* but moved because he enjoys the stress-free lifestyle afforded by country living. They do not earn much, but they enjoy the contact with nature and animals. In the off season they ski cross country, hike in the woods and pick mushrooms. In short, their "feet are on the ground but their heads are in the clouds."

This posture towards identity does not only pertain to rural life; it also seems to apply equally to Gwen and Angéla's experience. Rather than presenting a rural lifestyle as a static way of life, free of outside "pollutants" and in conflict with other modes of living, Ghorab-Volta espouses constant movement as a route to better ways to live. When the girls arrive, Gwen admits to Pascal that she finds the mountains oppressive. He reassures her that this is a normal reaction for newcomers, prompting her observation that Pascal has a talent for making others feel "normal." Gwen and Angéla's experience there will perhaps not lead the skeptical girls to relocate to the country, but it will certainly leave them with a better understanding of the world, and of ecology and balance in life, principals they can apply to their own lives in Colombes. In an interview, Ghorab-Volta explains her interest in the rural side of France: "I am a city dweller, I've always lived in the city. I like concrete. (…) I carry in me two different

worlds, distinct and paradoxical…This is the combination I grapple with."[100] When she enthusiastically thanks the mountains as they drive away, we can see that Gwen has reconciled those worlds and will bring some of her experience back with her. In the process, the girls have gained a more complete picture of the world around them and the potential for becoming involved and engaged in it. Unlike in *Exiles,* where a politically and socially oblivious Naïma confuses simple terms such as organic and ecological, the girls will have more tools for comprehending life and for finding everyday avenues of resistance.

Modes of transport and geographies of transit: the car and participation

Charles Fordsick points out that while studies of travel literature have a tendency to take for granted the mode of transportation, the choice of the RER is central to Maspero's project (188). A city's transit system is a key component in the system of what Debord termed the "constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones." In this sense the voyage by RER, alighting at each of the stations of line B, while seemingly arbitrary, in fact acknowledges a structural factor of power. The RER line connects certain places to the center and bypasses others. This connectivity is a double-edged sword. While it makes the trip to central Paris possible, the network is famously Paris-centric. Moreover, as the opening pages of *Passagers* demonstrate, the RER encourages people to hop between axes without noticing what is between, while at the same time underscoring the very isolation or distance of these "connected" places. In discussing his travel plans, the narrator of *Passagers* recounts, he is faced with the question of the "reality" of his voyage. Parisian friends ask him: "naturally, *dans la réalité,* you are going to travel by car?" (24) In other words, the reality of reliance on the RER is unfathomable to many living in the twenty arrondissements of the French capital or in its inner periphery, connected by frequent metro trains to the center. Beyond *le périferique* the RER is synonymous with *out there,* the dull and gray morass. The *banlieue* is a territory

[100] Interview on universcinme.com. Accessed 8/30/2010. My translation.

where few from Paris seem to venture or know much about, at least outside of the typical and truistic "malaise des banlieues" discourse common in media, political and sociological contexts. "Exit" is therefore discouraged, to use Debord's phrase, for *dans la réalité* no one would want to venture out there. Meanwhile entry follows a predictable and exclusionary script and little or nothing is said about moving from *banlieue* to *banlieue* or from *banlieue* to *province*. For those living in the *banlieue* and reliant on the RER for their connection to the center, the voyage is commonly fraught with difficulty and sometimes danger—from crime in the trains to the common strikes by SNCF personnel and the even more frequent technical problems that plague the aging system, delaying passengers and adding even more time to already long commutes. Their own connection to the center is, therefore, unimaginable, inconceivable, un-chartable. This recalls another postmodern conception of space brought up in the introduction, where de Certeau writes of an "ideologized city (that) cannot be mapped conceptually" (de Certeau 1984).

I have already discussed how missing the last train to the suburbs in *La Haine* symbolically underscores the issue of spatial isolation along center/*banlieue* lines. While providing a deserved indictment of policies that have contributed to the isolation of the periphery both on a practical level and in the public imagination, this conception also leads invariably to a reductive division of society.[101] Indeed transportation is a reflection of powerful social structures; some forms of transportation in this context are modes of resistance because they allow for routes that bypass these fixed points and vortexes. By moving outside of the prevalent currents of the established system, Maspero is able to propose new

[101] Suburban public transportation, and the communities it serves have received more nuanced treatment in a number of recent works by minority authors such as Faiza Guene and Rachid Djaidani. Both novels depict life along the outer limits of the RER network in ways that complexify common center-periphery narratives. While distant from Paris, the protagonists of these novels do not live in the stereotypically dangerous *banlieues chaudes* and they enjoy relatively higher socio-economic standing than the typical characters of *banlieue* cinema and literature. Guène's *Les Gens du Balto* (2008) is a surprising mystery story set in a small town (*bourgade)* at the "end of the RER line," while the *beur* narrator-protagonist of Djaidani's 2004 *Mon nerf* lives in a single family home that overlooks an RER station. The home is drab and lacks imagination, but it represents a financial and social step up from the *cité*, where he has never set foot (17-35).

conceptions of society. The multiplicity of levels of isolation/hierarchy of periphery is reinforced when Maspero and Frantz seeking to reach an outlying place of interest from the RER station. The common refrain is "why would you want to go there?" or "what is there to do in Garonor?"(26-28). Some of the destinations are doubly isolated, falling in the periphery's peripheral zone where transit is discouraged and difficult. The desire to seek out these places signals immediately that this is not "normal" tourism. Maspero's narrative is laced with the history of such places, focusing on urban policies and stories of overpopulated and underfunded housing developments abandoned and forsaken at times by government, but also by industry (52-54).

Perhaps the most damning indictment of urban and transit planning seems to be provided by the description of the Villepinte station: "the station has the particularity of being situated at a great distance from any human habitation, including among others from Villepinte itself, in the middle of a vast desert which on maps took the form of a green space bordered on all sides by highways" (43). Consulting their map, the voyagers plot their walk: "They saw on the map that turning their back to Villepinte, located towards the East and on the other side of the track, and by walking towards the distant buildings that framed an expanse of withered fallow land dotted with occasional bulldozers, they could join Garonor and their hotel via the North highway… Why submit to the law of distant suburbs: wait, always wait?" (44)

Distant buildings are also a common sight in *Jeunesse dorée* as is the refrain that emerges: "How does one get there?" The corollary question "why would you go there?" seems to be a prerequisite for the chosen destinations of Angéla and Gwen. However the girls do not have to worry about what others think about their chosen itinerary, nor are they required to stick to the beaten path, for they have mapped out their trip in advance and are therefore free to drive wherever they want rather than relying on the vicissitudes of public transport. The girls chart their own course. Rather than questioning their choice of destinations ("why would you go there?"), they are praised for their unusual choices by those they visit.

Just as the choice of RER was central to Maspero's voyage, the car in *Jeunesse dorée* is needed to escape the *banlieue* its seemingly requisite dichotomies. It is the car, with the aid of the camera, which allowed for points of contact, the prerequisite for the process of accommodation that is established between the girls and the disparate people they encounter.

This freedom of movement is of course mitigated, for this is a very temporary situation as they are using a borrowed car and traveling on a fixed budget. This voyage hedges simultaneously on the spirit of escape, the realization of possibilities and the optimism of youth on one hand, while on the other framing it within the parameters of an inevitable return. The girls tell their friends early on that if they skimp on expenses they can last two weeks on the road. Of course relying on the train would mean sticking to a predetermined route or going to great pains to find alternative modes of transport from train stations. The reliance on public transportation and accordingly, on government sanctioned and mapped routes, has been a very common theme in *banlieue* cinema. The recurring motif of struggling to maintain mobility in a world of flows is seemingly ubiquitous. Shots of characters pushing mopeds appear in films from *Le thé au harem d'Archimède* to *Etat des lieux* and *Wesh-Wesh*—which also opens with the protagonist unsuccessfully trying to hitch a ride home after being released from prison—underscore the impossibility of access to a contemporary society that is driven by mobility (O'Shaughnessy 2007).

The means of transport in *Jeunesse dorée* is significant for the agency it provides the girls. Their approach to the use of an automobile is also notable as an exception to clichés of the road movie genre as well as to those surrounding the use of the automobile in contemporary society in general. In these frameworks the car represents two extremes of contemporary life. On one hand the alienation of the commuter, driving through a wasteland of "non-places" (Augé) to fulfill the requirements of contemporary living, while on the other the rebellion of the road-tripper anxious to get outside of that society (Mazierska & Rascaroli 2006, Laderman 2002). In *Jeunesse dorée*, however, the car serves a

dialogue-building purpose because the girls employ it specifically to seek out people who are often unaccustomed to having visitors. This may seem counterintuitive, but the car (with the camera as a crucial prop) seems to offer more possibility for connection than the RER. Maspero mentions the inapproachable façade constructed by the Parisian commuter ("the law of the RER is never to engage your neighbor in conversation") and Allouache's first film made in France, *Amour à Paris,* uses this image to underscore the protagonists' outsiderness in a memorable scene in which every rider on the metro has their face buried in a copy of *Les Amants* by Duras. In the case of *Jeunesse dorée*, recourse to the automobile allows participation. Riding public transit would simply keep the girls outsiders, marginalized, reliant on the system and insulated from those they encounter.

The trope of car travel, specifically in the cinematic road movie genre, is likely associated with as many clichés as *banlieue* cinema is. *Jeunesse dorée,* again, surprises on this level by dismantling key generic conventions. As Laderman has noted, the European exception in road movies is that continental forays into the genre often eschew common American themes that foreground the automobile as an instrument of escape and rebellion. European road movie travelers tend to rely on public transit or walking rather than the automobile, while their voyages are not outside of society but "into the national culture" (Laderman 2002). *Jeunesse dorée* has adapted elements from both traditions: the automobile, of course, is key to their voyage. Its *mode d'emploi* is different, however, as the girls do not see themselves as rebels hitting the open road to avoid the constraints of society. Rather, their aim is to use the car to discover and better understand the culture they live in.

The film also adds a decidedly feminist twist to road movie conventions. The girls do not obtain access to travel through men, as is often the case. Furthermore, road movies have tended to perpetuate a hierarchy of masculine fantasy. Men seek adventure, open roads, and often women, picking them up and dropping them off on a whim before setting for new horizons (Mazierska and Rascaroli 2006: 161-165).

As Laderman points out: “the road movie tends to define the active impulse as male, relegating women characters to passive passengers and/or erotic distractions” (Laderman 2002: 20). In *Jeunesse dorée*, the girls set out alone, against the advice of a skeptical male advisor at their youth center. Alone, it is the girls who are free to call the shots: they map the itinerary, they choose where to stop and how long to stay. In a reversal of the common road narrative, it is they who “pick up” the men. For the duration of their stay on the farm, Gwen and Angéla do yield the driving duties to the men, who take them between the home and the village, showing them the region along the way. The girls, however, remain in control. They stay as long as they wish, and generally dictate the terms of their relationships with the males. Gwen avoids the seemingly requisite vacation film summer fling, while Angéla seems to fall for Pascal but does not drop everything to follow him.

Until the end, the film eschews long sequences of road movie traveling shots, demonstrating progression instead by cutting from one stop along the route to another. Often these establishing shot comprise a building or home as seen from the point of view of the girls’ camera, sometimes with the resident posing in front. We do see a variety of wayside layovers common to driving films, from rest stop picnic tables to a service station. The result is that there are just enough travel images to credibly push the narrative and the voyage forward. However rather than focusing on the sheer joy of driving or equating freedom with movement through space as American road movies tend to do, the emphasis remains on personal development and the significance of landscapes and buildings encountered. The traveling shots that are employed tend to emphasize character interacts and reactions to travel such is in the first shot of Gwen and Angéla on the road, a frontal windshield shot in which the girls bid Colombes farewell. The camera then cuts to a low angle traveling shot of projects moving past, seen from the passenger window. When the camera cuts to an over the shoulder shot of a highlighted road map in Gwen’s hands and then pans out to track her and the map in the moving car we have the emblematic image of the film. The map

reappears numerous times, on occasion merging with the traveling shot. In two instances it is folded on the dashboard and appears in reflection on the windshield as the car moves. Frame compositions of the windshield (or mirrors) are often employed reflexively, to "foreground the crucial act of looking or seeing while driving," as Laderman describes the technique. Often, characters appear as reflections in the glass, a technique that "helps visualize aesthetically the theme of self-exploration as a projection of self through space" (Laderman 2002: 16). In *Jeunesse dorée,* the reflection of the map could be seen as linking the act of mapping to the notion of self-exploration, for the route was mapped by Gwen and Angéla, who have also added their own touches to it with a highlighter. Tom Conley has identified the map in a film with an ontological function, encouraging us to consider "where we come from and where we may be going" (Conley 2007: 3). The ontological significance of the actual map resonates particularly in *Jeunesse dorée,* for this map is the tool used for charting the physical voyage and also signifies the symbolic re-mapping of France in terms more comprehensible to the girls. Again, this cognitive mapping process is charted by the girls, who trace routes in marker on their map.

The traveling shots that best capture the euphoric pleasure of travel are saved for the end. In one sequence, Gwen stands on the front seat of the moving car to observe the passing mountainous landscape through the skylight. Her satisfaction is clear when she yells into the air to thank the mountains. Another joyful traveling shot, this time of both girls, captures them not in the car but in the uncovered tourist car of the famous *Train jaune* that cuts through the Pyrenees by the Spanish border. Here the girls express their happiness with laughs and screams, raising their arms as if on a roller coaster as the train passes through tunnels. Added to an earlier traveling shot of the girls riding with a farmer in the cabin of his tractor and then later on horses and a bit of a parody of road movie conventions emerges. Clearly, while the car is central to the narrative, Ghorab-Volta has avoided making it object of fetish. This stance also

comes out in an early discussion of the auto as a consumer "notion of pleasure"—to use Debord's term—in contemporary society, which I discussed earlier in the context of camera techniques.

Accommodation

Accommodation in *Jeunesse dorée* is predicated first on participation. This is what allows the girls to venture outside of their assigned spaces and make contact with others like them, and, most importantly, unlike them. In turn the dialogue that is made possible by their participation in wider society opens the possibility for a process of accommodation. As discussed in the introduction in reference to the *Black-Blanc-Beur* trio in *La Haine,* we might consider that there is something to be gained, and given up, by opening one's space to others. An example of this principle applied to workaday life is demonstrated by this quote from a 3rd year student in Communications at the University of Paris XIII, cited in the *Le Monde* coverage of the stabbing on that campus: "this is a space of mixing, where each person can find his place, with his differences." (*"dans cet espace mélangé, où chacun trouve sa place, avec ses differences.*") Implicit in this is the acceptance of others. In *La Haine,* accommodation as a reciprocal value might best be conceived of as friendship, a private version of a solidarity long since lost in the public sphere. In *Le grand voyage* (Chapter three), it is staged on a family level, along with the suggestion that the newfound lessons of accommodation may be applied to life in society. *Jeunesse doré* retains the personal element to this, as accommodation is a process that hinges on dialogue and human encounters, but moves out of the private realm. In the introduction I outlined a conception of accommodation with the example of polling statics on hypothetical dinner invitation extended by "typical" French to practicing Muslims. The gesture of accommodation I underlined was the statement made by 59% of participants that as practicing Muslims they would accept the invitation without condition and would themselves refrain from pork and alcohol if necessary. In other words, "integration" is not the only common ground; difference within a shared framework seems possible. Accommodation is a principal related to

hospitality, as hosts are indispensible in the process. Travelers are greeted and then often offered hospitality, whether in the form of accommodation, food and drink, or simply information.

In *Jeunesse dorée* accommodation takes a very literal form. The girls are offered beds to sleep in numerous times, which they accept with one exception. However, this goes beyond literal hospitality, or offering a spot to sleep out of fidelity to a principle or law of hospitality. In one instance, the girls are staying at a campground, a service they surely received in exchange for money, and are aided in the process of pitching their tent by a fellow camper. Another stop is at an inn, where accommodation in the most literal sense is an economic transaction. This is not really a question of hospitality because the girls are paying for it. Yet even here, the host must be flexible and offer the guests some leeway on the terms of the transaction in order for it to take place and make accommodation possible. The girls arrive on the night of the inn's weekly closure. Not seeing this posted, they ring the bell several times. While the innkeeper emerges slightly piqued, he seems to take pity on these girls who are clearly not seasoned travelers and accommodates them for the night. Ghorab-Volta received similar treatment during her preparatory travels preceding the filming; in this case the earlier gesture of accommodation was a prerequisite for this portion of the narrative (Interview with the author, 9 November 2009).

Again, this is a business transaction, so while we are in the realm of kindness it is not exactly hospitality that is at stake here. Furthermore, the notion of accommodation implicates the traveler as well. If the host is expected to behave in certain ways, so is the traveler. The criteria for a "good traveler" may be up for debate, but an obvious starting point is to be adaptable and accepting, or at least open-minded. To continue the culinary metaphor, a good traveler will try the local specialties, and if they do not meet his or her dietary standards, he/she simply refrains from partaking, much like the 59% of French Muslims described in the survey. *Jeunesse dorée* does not approach this process from the angle of food, as it surely could have given the number of times that Gwen and Angéla dine with hosts along the way. Instead,

accommodation is spurred by dialogue and experience. As the girls confront things they do not like (or do not know), they gradually become more accepting. Likewise we can imagine their hosts have broadened their horizons in the process.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined how the progression from participation to dialogue to accommodation leads to a political gesture of decentering and also new optic through which to see the *banlieue* in particular and French identity in general. Thanks to their photography, we see things through the eyes of the two girls. The perspective is decidedly theirs (young, enthusiastic, naïve, perhaps limited), but the project was informed and molded—en route— by processes of dialogue and accommodation. Likewise the film is a personal and therefore subjective portrait of the Ghorab-Volta's France. Seeing things through the eyes of the girls is an important step between individual conceptions of France as "my France" and of a broader concept of community, a possible "our France." Some commentators have argued that the film is somehow weaker because the characters are "Franco-française" rather than ***Beur***. Carrie Tarr commends the film for demystifying the *banlieue* and breaking down divisions between the center of France and its margins, but argues that Ghorab-Volta's choice of actresses mitigates this achievement: "it is no doubt telling that Ghorab-Volta has chosen white women as her nomadic subjects, and that the possibility of Black or *Beur* woman accomplishing similar feats is less easy to imagine" (184). I would argue that, to the contrary, the director's choice of actresses who do not share her own ethnic background is the key to *Jeunesse dorée.* The reversal of perspective offers an angle of vision that is askew, outside of the habitual, and which challenges viewers to interrogate the perspective they bring to the film. What *Jeunesse dorée* does is require us to look through the eyes of the girls, just as the girls are forced to look beyond their own conceptions while on the road, and as the director does in working outside of her own ethnic perspective to some extent. This is another way of challenging expectations,

along with the constant refutation of stereotypes. The result is that viewers (like the girls) are navigating outside of their comfort zone and their assigned spaces. The choice of actresses who do not correspond to her ethnic background demonstrates on one hand an effort by the director to work outside of the categories that she risks being assigned to and trapped within. Ghorab-Volta's description of her experience within the *beur* cinema discursive ghetto, provided in a written interview with Martin O'Shaugnessy, are worth quoting at length here:

> In France, we put people in boxes and keep them there and so it is very hard, for a director, to move from one genre to another. It doesn't matter that I make films that involve French families, in locations other than the outer city, in the middle of the mountains, with mothers called Monique or Chantal, that the subjects are childhood, the construction of the self or a certain poetry. There's nothing I can do. It always comes back to the same thing: where I come from, where I've lived, where my parents are from. Three films that I have directed have been selected for Cannes. My first medium-length film, *Souviens-toi de moi* (*Remember me*) was chosen by the ACID, the independent cinema distribution agency. My first TV film, *Laisse un peu d'amour* (*Leave a Little Love*) for Arte (the Franco-Ger man cultural channel) and my first full-length feature, *Jeunesse dorée* (*Gilded Youth*) for the Director's Fortnight. I travel all around the world with my films to represent "France." And it's only in France that I get invited as an Arab from the projects. All these years I've been working, using up a lot of energy, to try and prise myself free from this insidious, prejudiced, and omnipresent mentality that ceaselessly seeks to use my name, my past and my appearance to draw me back to my origins rather than recognizing the reality of my life and the content of my films. At the present time, things are even worse. In my life I don't feel different from others. In the cinema, however, I am constantly forced to confront that one particular difference.[102]

The fight against such inflexible assigned categories that take on their own existence as truisms is what links the two works discussed in this chapter. Both employ travel to dismantle discursive ghettos

[102] Interview with Martin O'Shaughnessy, Cineaste, Winter 2007. The translation is by O'Shaugnessy.

and closed spaces. The tactics of Ghorab-Volta and Maspero are indeed quite different. On one hand, echoing the rhetorical strategies followed by the rapper Mokobé (chapter one), and common in debates over the divisive term "integration," the projects of Ghorab-Volta and Maspero reject the notion that "France" is not to be found in the peripheries. Their projects fight to de-center the center not by confronting it directly, but by almost ignoring it altogether and by insisting on the centrality, and the Frenchness, of those on the periphery. On the other hand, rather than challenging the socio-economic realities directly (vertically), they choose to confront them by lateral movements that have the potential to break down the divisions in question. This is resistance in/by movement, on a small scale, comparable to Agnès Varda's 2000 film *Les Glaneurs et la Glaneuse*. While all is not rosy in *Jeunesse dorée,* unlike in Varda's film and in Maspero's book, social issues are not the object of focused attention. To cite one example, the only encounter with the police leads to a friendly safety reminder rather than the confrontation or the *bavure* one might expect. In an effort to avoid the stereotypes attached to suburban life, is Ghorab-Volta guilty of disregarding reality along with realism? To answer this question, and to eventually address the issue of representation brought up in Tarr's critique of the film's protagonists, we need to consider the arguments of Martin O'Shaughnessy on the role of the political in contemporary French cinema. He argues that the properly political film is effective because it avoids aligning people solely with their social class. A successful political film must "define those at the bottom not by their identities but by their recalcitrant agency, by their non-coincidence with their allocated roles and by their determination to resist immobilization "(33).

While O'Shaugnessy does not mention *Jeunesse dorée* in his study of films since 1995, I can think of no better encapsulation of the film's political relevance. It is by refusing to coincide with *banlieue* stereotypes that Ghorab-Volta, and her heroines, are able to assure their agency, their participation, their mobility. O'Shaunessy's analysis is built on a reading of Jacques Rancière's theories

of engagement and of cinema. Rancière argues that a politics based primarily on the existing identities of a dominated group can only reinforce that dominance (32-33). The introduction of this dissertation discusses a similar point made by Lionnet and Shih, who insist that critiquing the center inevitably keeps it central. By altogether avoiding the center, *Jeunesse dorée* is able to channel resistance in a less obvious, but potentially more effective way. For Rancière the films that stage a direct confrontation along familiar lines of combat are conservative rather than activist because they simply show us yet again what we already know. While he doesn't implicate *banlieue* cinema specifically, the archetypal suburb/center clash—generally represented as police versus minority youth, but also implicit in the spatial construction of *banlieue* mise-en-scène—is a prime example of this. On the other hand, works that contradict, destabilize or reframe what we "think we know" are more effective according to Rancière's vision (32-33).[103]

This is precisely the strategy of Ghorab-Volta's film: start out with a mise-en-scène that is familiar enough, juxtaposing an outside landscape of inhospitable-looking concrete expanses with a female subject "imprisoned" inside the home. The slow zoom towards Gwenaëlle, sitting inside the window and looking onto the outside world with yearning and ambivalence, as if unable or unwilling to cross the threshold, appears equally predictable. Yet having established "what we think we know" in the opening sequence, the film proceeds to dismantle every expectation that accompanies that initial moment of recognition. First, this apparent *banlieue* film is in fact a road movie. The initial suburban setting, as we have seen, does not correspond to preconceived notions. And as for the girl looking out the window, as we have also seen, is not even a *Beur*. The director could have made a film *about* the *banlieue,* inserted the requisite image, and cast *Beurs* in the leading roles. Instead she made a film about France, portrayed

[103] Rancière only mentions documentaries as effective, but this film is "documentary style" in the sense that the narrative follows a documentary photo project – this meets Rancière's qualifications, for the "real" is established from the onset and doesn't need to be "proven" in the fictional narrative.

from a multiplicity of perspectives and angles. Her fictional travelers leave the *banlieue,* receiving hospitality across France. In the process they provide both their host and their viewers with a new perspective on their own misunderstood neighborhoods, while themselves learning to accept other viewpoints and ways of life that were just as strange and aberrant (if not also abhorrent) to them as suburban living is to those from outside the *banlieue.*

This chapter has attempted to outline how *Jeunesse dorée* untertakes a symbolic re-charting and re-imagining of France and Frenchness, a process continually referenced textually by the presence of maps and by the actual redrawing of those maps by Gwen and Angéla. Just as in *Exils* and *Le grand voyage,* where the trip from France is not a passage but a voyage in incremental steps, *Jeunesse dorée* moves progressively from suburban to rural, stopping to point out along the way that there are *cités* everywhere, not allowing us to forget that the raison d'être for this voyage was not a search for something different but an effort on the part of the girls to understand the situation in which they live on a broader scale, to contextualize it rather than seeing *cité* and the world beyond it in separate vacuums.

Chapter 5 - Lydie Salvayre's "Reality Tour": The *banlieue,* insider ambivalence and layered realms of memory

This closing chapter will discuss the novels by Lydie Salvayre, particularly prolific novelist who turned to writing in the middle of a career as a psychiatrist. My primary focus will be on *Les belles âmes*, the story of a sordid and supremely misguided "reality tour" that starts in the Parisian suburbs before moving on to some of the "poorest neighborhoods of Europe." This novel's approach to the *banlieue* is distinctly different; rather than seeking to move outside of it or avoid it, these travelers head directly into this maligned slice of France. In Salvayre's hands the tour bus serves as a veritable moving panopticon and on display within is France's *fracture sociale.* On one side tourists, representing a wide swathe of the Parisian bourgeoisie in all its vacuity, on the other three residents of the sort of unaffluent suburban areas on the itinerary: a young "ambiance agent" named Jason and his girlfriend Olympe, as well as Vulpius, the bus driver. Select examples from Salvayre's body of work will, in particular *La vie commune* (1991), *La compagnie ses spectres* (1997) and *Passage à l'ennemi* (2004) will provide context on the prevailing themes in her copious oeuvre. These themes resurface in *Les Belles âmes* and offer some insight into the role of the author's personal background in her fiction. Salvayre is the daughter of Spanish Republican refugees who met at the Argelès concentration camp in Southern France after fleeing Franco's forces in 1939. Salvayre grew up near Toulouse in the "modest milieu" of Spanish refugees and did not learn French until she entered primary school.[104] This background is particularly essential to my reading of her work because, as I will argue, her personal history not only rears its head thematically—though this occurs indirectly, unexpectedly and in small doses—but is fundamental element of her approach to narrative.

[104] "Biographie: Qui est Lydie Salvayre," by Noel Blandin, 20 August, 2009, *La Republique des Lettres.* http://www.republique-des-lettres.fr/10860-lydie-salvayre.php Accessed 15 October, 2010.

Much like in the "unusual voyage" of François Maspero in *Les passagers du Roissy-Express*, *Les belles âmes* narrates a voyage to untouristed territories, "the part of Europe banished from guidebooks" (38). This so-called reality tour comprises a "descent towards the real" (40), starting with the northern suburbs of Paris before "descending" along a purportedly vertical scale of poverty to Molenbeck, outside of Brussels, then on to several cities in Germany before concluding in the suburbs of Milan. The areas visited are the "poorest" and "most pitiful" of each metropolis (49, 100). The theme of the voyage recalls the paternalistic 19th century visits by bourgeois to the workers' districts on the outskirts of Paris. The attitude of these contemporary bourgeois voyagers are suggestive of society's common perception of the suburbs, as outlined out by author-educator Etienne Liebig in his book *Les pauvres préfèrent la banlieue* (2010). The *banlieue,* he notes, has long served the role of "anti-city," allowing the "center" to exist as such and offering it a vision against which it can revel in its own importance and superiority (23).

Les belles âmes calls into question the way that French society approaches the *banlieue,* suggesting that the average French person sees the suburbs—and indeed the underprivileged populations of France and Europe in general—through superficial and mediatized lenses that preclude any real societal action to solve the issues faced there. At first glance, Salvayre's book seems to present an outside view of the *banlieue*, but upon closer inspection the very notions of inside and outside are called into question. In order to create fresh horizontal narratives—new conceptions of how the *banlieue* and minorities in France in general are seen, approached and spoken to by the center—vertical narratives are employed. I am using "vertical" here in two senses. First, it evokes the hierarchy of French identity that can be traced back to the nation's colonial project and which tends to be expressed in the form of polling data showing perceived levels of "integration" amongst immigrant or ethnic groups (see introduction). In other words, this data aims to demonstrate who is thought to be "more French" according to a vertical scale that has "Français de souche" at its apex, Algerians at the bottom end, and various other groups in

between. Salvayre's work also invites us to think about a different yet related vertical question, that of uncovering forgotten history and its corollary, the correction of the historical record and the struggle to include "foreigners" in French national narratives.

The objectives of this chapter are twofold. First, a link between Salvayre's perspective as the daughter of Spanish Republican refugees and her vantage point on the *banlieue* will be established. I will argue that the experience of Spanish Republican exiles in France has been in some ways remarkably similar to that of ghettoized suburban citizens who face a variety of invisible barriers constructed by society. Using key examples from Salvayre's corpus, I hope to demonstrate a link from her ever-so-subtle work on the Spanish "realms of memory" and a spirit of openness to those in unfavorable social situations whose lives are at the center of concerns in *Les Belles âmes.* In other words, Salvayre's novel links the vertical concerns of this wider project with the spatially-based horizontal modes of exclusion. Secondly, I intend to point out how this is manifested in Salvayre's writing style and narrative approach. Salvayre's metafictional references help orient the reader within the text and also establish links between the authorial voice and the marginal characters in the novel, in particular those who are in need of a voice.

In order to explain the choice of Salvayre as my sole representative of French fiction, I will offer a brief discussion of some writers whose work I might well have chosen to analyze instead. These fall into three categories that encompass certain affinities and commonalities of approach or theme, but are by no means schools of literature: young *banlieu* writers, engaged *noir* authors, and the coterie of *Editions de Minuit* writers know unofficially as *les romanciers impassibles* (the impassive novelists) or the *nouveau-nouveau romanciers.*

Rachid Djaïdani and Faïza Guène head up the first group, comprised of young *banlieue* writers who present nuanced visions and invite more complex readings of the spaces at the end of the French capital's RER line. Their work is particularly compelling because it presents a fresh vision of the margins,

one that is—to borrow a headline from *Le Parisien* discussed in the previous chapter—"neither rosy nor inevitably morose." Djaïdani has penned three novels set in the suburbs of Paris. His 2005 novel *Mon nerf* recounts the musings of a young *Beur* from the *banlieue* as he rides the RER to regular meetings with his psychiatrist in Paris. Typical expectations of periphery to center passages are thwarted, and readers soon learn that they are not dealing with a "typical" *banlieue* resident when Djaïdani's protagonist reveals that he lives in a house rather than a tower block and admits that he has never so much as set foot in one of the notorious towers that dominate our imagination of suburban space. Guène is also author of three books set in suburban Paris. The first of those, *Kiffe kiffe demain* (2004), was published when the author was only 19 and earned her acclaim as well as a wide audience. *Les gens du Balto* (2008) is a mystery novel set not in the *cité* but in a tranquil village at the end of an RER line. This atypical setting allows the book to deal with common issues of ethnicity and delinquency from a different perspective and outside of the clichés surrounding many *banlieue* settings. Other works by young authors that merit mention here are *Le bon, la douce et la caillera* by Diaby Doucouré, which narrates the guided visit of a young Parisian journalist to the *banlieue, Désintégration* by Ahmed Djouder and *Cités à comparaître* by Karim Amellal.

In recent years French and foreign *noir* novels have reached a wide audience while struggling to avoid the common perception of the genre as formulaic, popular in the worst sense of the term and derivative of the American genre. Such perceptions have led to the relegation of *noir* novels to a sub-category of fiction, a grouping that often leads to a spatial isolation from the "high culture" fiction section of French bookstores. In the popular Parisian Left Bank outlet of the Gibert Joseph bookseller chain *noir* novels are located in the basement alongside children's books. This perceived second-class status is noteworthy because it corresponds to the outsider perspective of many notable *noir* authors in France. Often openly and unapologetically committed, *noir* novels are using a "popular" formula to incite readers to reevaluate dominant narratives and to call attention to injustice. Interest in minority rights frequently merges with spatial questions and travel narratives—often in the form of the investigative voyage. Gianni

Pirozzi has focused on the plight of Roma living in France in *Hotel Europa* and *Le quartier de la fabrique,* novels whose narrative spaces traverse European conflict zones from Northern Ireland to Kosovo. Fabio Montale, the hero of Jean-Claude Izzo's Marseille trilogy, haunts that city's Italian immigrant enclaves and suburban high rises while on the case to undercover crime and corruption. Most pertinent here is Didier Daeninckx, perhaps the most prolific contemporary French writer—*noir* or otherwise— who has set a number of novels and short stories in his native Saint-Denis. His other books have narrated voyages from Paris to Normandy in *La route du Rom,* post-Wall Czechoslovakia in *Un château en Bohême,* New Caledonia in *Le retour d'Ataï,* Mali in *Lumière noire* and Toulouse in *Meurtres pour mémoires*, each time in an attempt to uncover an injustice—whether historical or contemporary—that can often be traced to the highest levels of the French government.

The latter novel combines the *banlieue* and the road in an intriguing way while also suggesting a different sort of vertical reading of the marginalized zones, a literal digging through the past to uncover and recover France's forgotten history. In *Meurtres pour mémoires* that history is layered with the story of the *banlieue*. Thanks to the work of two historians of the Parisian suburbs—one working on a study of the capital's outer ring of fortifications, the other on a history of the suburban city of Drancy—some of the darkest moments in recent French history come to light. The novel is notable for revealing in great detail the complex layers of what was at the time an otherwise forgotten or ignored story, that of the massacres of countless and to this day uncounted Algerians on October 17, 1961 in Paris (Ross 2002: 45). That crime was uncovered by the fictional Inspector Cadin, the hero of a series of novels by Daeninickx, in the course of the investigation of another crime. The murder that sparked the investigation was that of an amateur historian who had inadvertently uncovered some damning evidence of French deportations of Jews while writing his history of the seemingly banal suburb of Drancy, now infamous as the site of the first mass-scale public housing project in France as well as for the camp. Inspector Cadin's trajectory

crisscrosses France throughout Daeninickx's work as he falls deeper into disfavor with his superiors. His penchant for muckraking earns him frequent transfers to the forlorn outposts of France.

Les romanciers impassibles are perhaps a less obvious choice, but I would argue that their concern for France's shifting topography and politico-cultural landscape underlies a profound interest in spatial marginality that is elaborated both thematically and within narrative structure. The work of the *romanciers impassibles* displays a preoccupation with the shifting spatial dynamics of contemporary France that is often linked to a sense of narrative uncertainty. These concerns are evident in a diverse number of novels in which aleatoric trajectories meet aleatoric narrative styles, from the peripatetic wanderings of a young woman on the margins of French society and territory in Jean Echonoz's *Un an* to the explorations of the Eastern limits of then-Western Europe in Jean-Philippe Toussaint's *La télévision* (Berlin) and *La sale de bains* (Venice) and the Western limits of Europe in Antoine Volodine's *Lisbonne, dernière marge*. Like *Les belles âmes,* these works are all to a significant extent "chronicles of their own elaboration," to use one theory of specular fiction (Dallenbach 1977).

Under Spanish Eyes: Layered identities, hidden subjectivities

In chapter two I argued that layered conceptions of exilic and diasporic subjectivity could dissimilate difference, or at least different subjectivities. People who "look French" on the surface and seem perfectly integrated culturally, linguistically and economically may in fact retain some connection to, or trace of self-identification with, their roots, whether Algerian, Polish or other. In many cases, difference effectively becomes invisible with the second generation, whose members attended republican school and speak French with native proficiency. Often, one immigrant group is propelled more quickly towards "assimilated" status by the arrival of new immigrants. Noiriel describes how each subsequent national wave of immigrants pushed the preceding ones to a higher social and economic status. In Lorraine, for example, the Italians took advantage of the arrival of Poles to climb the social hierarchy,

followed by Algerians and Portuguese. There are regional variations of this trend. In the southern coal mining region of Aveyron the initial wave of Spanish miners profited from the arrival of Poles to move out of that industry (1988: 311). If the new immigrants took on the dirty work, allowing prior waves to move into factory work, commerce and artisanal fields, they also served as new poster boys for immigration and thus bore the brunt of xenophobic frustrations. Today while Maghrebis and Africans are frequently the target of racist attacks or of police brutality, it is difficult to imagine a recurrence of events targeting white immigrants such as the mob attacks on Italians in the southern town of Aigues-Mortes that lead to between eight and fifty deaths (Noiriel 1988: 261). While the violence of the colonial system is a key factor differentiating the experiences of immigrants of European and African origin, the fact remains that many European groups faced difficulties when they arrived in France. For many, as I will demonstrate, this experience has affected their subjectivity as French.

Through the dual processes of assimilation into French life and the arrival on the scene of newer foreigners, each earlier wave has become more and more "French" and the Europeans among these groups are often now seen as entirely French and perhaps, retrospectively and incorrectly, as "good" immigrants who had little trouble assimilating into French society. As I aimed to demonstrate previously with the discussions of Miki, the mascot of self-styled "second generation Portuguese" (see the introduction and chapter one) and of the Polish experience in France (chapter two), it is misguided to argue—as some have—that these earlier or "invisible" immigrant subjectivities have disappeared. This is evident in Salvayre's work, in which immigrant memory reveals itself through indirect references to family history and to in subtle invocations of Spanish culture or language.

The case of Spanish exiles in France in particular lends itself to a comparison of *banlieue* and other marginal subjectivities. Scott Soo's research on the cultural and remembrance practices of Spanish exiles in Southwest France, most of whom were among the 500,000 that arrived during *La Retirada* of

January and February 1939, offers unique insight into a group that in many ways appears integrated and in fact has successfully adapted to French customs and business practices. Soo argues that this process was fraught with difficulty and its results are not as permanent as they may seem at first glance. The process of "border crossing" did not end with physical arrival in France, rather Spanish migrants subsequently faced a "series of boundaries that related less to national territory than to the metaphysical and cultural delineation of French national identity." While "less visible to the naked eye, these boundaries nonetheless exercised a tangible influence on the lives Spanish refugees" (Soo 2008: 96). The Spanish refugees were initially housed in a series of what were officially termed "concentration camps" established in Southwest France.[105] Salvayre's parents were interned in Argelès, one of three camps constructed along the coast in the Pyrénées-Orientales administrative department. Soo's research finds that the treatment faced by refugees at these camps as well as the difficulty of their subsequent interactions with French society outside of the camps has led to a great deal of resentment that is often still present, simmering beneath the surface.

As Nancy Wood suggests in *Vectors of Memory*, this is a common symptom in communities whose harrowing experiences have not been publicly and openly addressed.[106] If this latent anger still plays a role in the perception that many Spanish exiles have of France, it is due in no small part to the fact that their treatment was never addressed, nor were their many positive contributions to the French Resistance ever acknowledged. Soo points out that rapprochement between the postwar Gaullist government and the Franco dictatorship is partly to blame for this. Another factor is the complicity of a French republican government in the creation of these camps. While the blame for wartime mistreatment

[105] Soo notes that in addition to the official terminology, the camps were also alternately referred to in official documentation as "internment camps" and "reception centers." Soo also points out that while the conditions in the camps were abhorrent, a clear distinction should be maintained between the French "concentration camps" and those in and around Germany where millions were put to death.
[106] Wood 1999: 199. Cited in Soo, p. 112)

of minorities is commonly ascribed to foreign forces or to the "Vichy anomaly," these camps were built before the Vichy episode by a freely elected French government (Soo 2008: 102-110, Noiriel 2005). Furthermore the common perception of held by Spanish exiles is that they "personify an unknown history buried beneath the interests of the French state." As a tangible example of this, Soo points to the fact that despite significant contributions made to the Resistance by Spanish exiles—who were often, after all, trained and seasoned fighters by the time they arrived in France—there is no mention of them in Bordeaux's *Centre National Jean Moulin* (CNJM), a museum devoted to commemorating the Occupation and Resistance (Soo 2008: 112). Some of this has been recently redressed in cinema. Robert Guédiguian's 2008 film *L'armée du crime* narrates the story of a group of 25 immigrants active in the Resistance, including a number of Spaniards and others who served in the international brigades.

The page for the CNJM on France's official government web site for historical sites around the country, cheminsdemémoire.gouv.fr ("roads of memory"), still has no reference to the role of Spanish exiles or any other foreigners in the Resistance. Spanish Republicans are solely mentioned along with a number of other groups as victims who were interned in camps or deported. The camps themselves are mentioned under the rubric of "Deportation," one of the museum's stated themes, and are vaguely attributed to the Nazis:

> Les camps nazis de concentration sont l'une des premières institutions mises en place dès l'arrivée d'Hitler au pouvoir en 1933. La terreur, développée auparavant par des groupes paramilitaires nazis (S.A. et S.S.) devient légale. Les opposants les plus hostiles au régime sont arrêtés et internés. Dès le début de l'occupation, les autorités allemandes ont utilisé en France le système de la déportation. Les premières victimes sont des détenus rassemblés dans les camps du Sud de la France (Autrichiens et Allemands, réfugiés politiques, combattants des Brigades internationales et républicains espagnols, juifs étrangers)…

> The Nazi concentration camps were one of the first institutions put into place when Hitler came to power in 1933. Terror, previously carried out by Nazi paramilitary groups (S.A. and S.S.), became legal. The most hostile opponents of the regime were arrested and interned. From the early days of the Occupation *the German authorities made use in France of the system of deportation.* The first to be deported were those being held in camps in the south of France (Austrians and Germans, political refugees, combatants for international brigades and Spanish Republicans, foreign Jews)… [107]

The carefully worded statement dances around French complicity without explicitly denying it; rather than "using French camps" the Nazis "made use *in* France" of camps. The continued official reticence to come to terms with the French role in establishing and operating these camps and in carrying out deportations from them—for this was in the *zone libre* and Vichy forces were charged with such tasks—is more than a mere historical footnote in the national identity debate. As suggested in the discussion of a Holocaust reference in *La Haine* (see introduction), the past treatment of minorities in France and Europe is particularly germane to the current debates. For not only does the airing of historical atrocities tarnish the idealized veneer of French moral and cultural superiority, but it suggests some officially undesirable parallels with current treatment of minorities. These points were not lost on Maspero when he visited Drancy's *Cité de la Muette* in *Les Passagers du Roissy-Express*:

> La cité de la Muette, 1935, one of the most grandiose attempts at public housing of the interwar period.
> La cité de la Muette, 1941-1944, camp for transit towards death.
> La cité de la Muette, 1989, decrepit public housing estate.
> La cité de la Muette, a play in three acts. Radiant cité. Cité of death. Banal cité (175).

Often those involved in Vichy crimes reappeared in later episodes of repression. It is more than a coincidence that the cloud of official obfuscation covering the October 17, 1961 massacre of Algerians in Paris was only lifted during the 1998 trial of Maurice Papon for crimes against humanity committed under the Vichy regime (Ross 2002: 45). Papon, who was subsequently linked to the deportation of Jews

[107] http://www.cheminsdememoire.gouv.fr/page/affichelieu.php?idLieu=541&idLang=fr . Accessed October 2010.

to Nazi extermination camps that occurred under his watch while a police official in Bordeaux, would later serve as prefect of police in Algeria during the Algerian War and then as chief of police for Paris. The same year that he oversaw the bloody repression of Algerian demonstrators in Paris, Papon was awarded the Legion of Honor, France's highest honor, by de Gaulle.

This minor digression from the camps set up for Spanish Republican exiles to the wider question of camps in France and French comportment towards minorities in general is justified by two factors crucial to my reading of Salvayre. First, while she has not written a novel directly based on this topic, upon close examination it is seemingly unavoidable in her work. References to the Argelès camp are frequent if slyly made in her corpus. Her 1997 novel *La compagnie des spectres* (*The Company of Ghosts*) explicitly addresses the Vichy period and crimes committed by the French *Milice*. These are—again with a great deal of subtlety—linked in the narrative to the Spanish exile experience. Secondly, it is important to remember the contemporary resonance of these issues. Official acknowledgement of crimes committed by the French during the Occupation and under Vichy has been a constant topic of discussion; a plaque commemorating the 1942 *Vélodrome d'Hiver* roundup and admitting French complicity in the crime was finally placed in the Bir-Hakeim metro station in 2008. Likewise, the official narrative of remembrance surrounding the camps where Spanish Republicans were interned is also still up for debate.

When a memorial plaque was placed at the site of the Argelès camp in 2003, authorities insisted that the term "camp" replace "*camp de concentration*" (Soo 2008: 105). The latter term was at the time part of the official French government nomenclature, making this not a dispute over facts or even interpretations, but a willful effort to manipulate historical narratives of the French nation. This inclination to avoid or suppress historical fact is certainly nothing new. Alain Resnais's documentary *Nuit et brouillard* (*Night and Fog,* 1955) was perhaps the first major French film or book to present an openly critical vision of French comportment during the occupation years. Resnais faced a particularly glaring

example of censorship, in which an image of a French policeman participating in the arrest of Jews had to be cut. Historian Julian Jackson writes that "what made this case particularly flagrant was the fact that it concerned not a fictional representation but an authentic photograph from the period" (Jackson 2001: 604-605).

The events of 1939 also remain fresh in the minds of many Spanish exiles and their offspring living in France. In a series of interviews in the Spanish community of Bordeaux, Soo discovered a particularly fascinating trend. While a majority of Spaniards in France found themselves forced to conform to French societal and business norms in order to survive, this "assimilation" has in many cases proven to be complex and limited. Soo describes a series of interviews with a couple, now retired, who expressed as stance of resentful resignation towards the adoption of French customs. They did adapt, primarily for practical reasons. After retiring, however, they reverted to Spanish customs that they preferred such as later meal times (Soo 2008: 110). Their identity is, in other words, both layered and latent. I hope to demonstrate that a similar spirit is at work in Salvayre's fiction, and in particular in *Les Belles âmes*. This sometimes hidden otherness can rear its head at critical junctures, informing Salvayre's world view (and that of her narrator). While Salvayre was not born until 1948, memory of the events of 1939 clearly plays a significant role in her vision of the world. In *Les Belles âmes*, her subjectivity as Spanish, while completely latent and only perceptible to those with some knowledge of her background and work, provides a link to the disfavored characters who, while appearing to be on the outside of society, are allowed some measure of power in the narrative structure.

Salvayre's "realms of memory"

Salvayre won the *Prix Novembre* for *La compagnie des spectres,* also judged the best novel of 1997 by the magazine *Lire.* Her work encompasses 15 novels plus an essay on Picasso. Many of these books display a preoccupation with the constant questioning of totalizing notions of national history and identity. Salvayre's subtle approach to identity and origins disorients givens and decenters preponderant narratives of Frenchness. Her narrators tend to point accusing fingers at Spanish immigrants, along with other minorities. This wink at her own origins and hidden or invisible layers of identity and minority status allows us to read a great deal of distance into her writing.

One could argue that much of Salvayre's work—and in particular the works addressed in the present chapter—is concerned with what Pierre Nora termed *lieux de mémoires* (Nora 1984).[108] Nora's study has played a significant role in the process of studying and coming to terms with French history, and the term he coined has been officially added to the French language. The *Grand Robert* dictionary defines *lieu de mémoire* as "a significant entity, whether material or nonmaterial in kind, which has become a symbolic element of memorial heritage of a given community as a result of human will or the work of time."[109]

Some of Salvayres *lieux de mémoire* are more obvious than others, but all are protean, flexible and above all personal rather than ideological or national in nature. In the official category would fall The National Museum of Port Royal, where the narrator of *La puissance des mouches* (1995, *The Power of Flies*) works as a guard. While he is obsessed with Pascal, whose sister was a nun in the Port Royal convent, and goes so far as to compare the 17th century intellectual to his mother, he appears to have no knowledge of French literature beyond that writer's *Pensées* and has not even heard of Montaigne

[108] See Motte 2008:92 and Lasserre: 332).
[109] Translation by Naomi Greene, who cites it in her discussion of French memory in historical cinema. Green 1999: 4.

(118).[110] In other words, this self-described compulsive reader is not interested in the French canon of literary and cultural tradition but selects a particular slice of it that holds a specific appeal to him. National memory issues are transferred to a very personal space in in her proceeding novel, *La Compagnie des spectres*, which narrates the story of a mother and daughter whose apartment is being seized by a process server. Rose Mélie, that book's supposedly "crazy" mother, seems incapable of differentiating between this contemporary representative of the French government and the Vichy regime, under which her brother was brutally murdered by two members of the French militia. She asks the process server if Darnand (who headed the Vichy militia) sent him, and is constantly remarking the similarities between politicians on television and "Putain's gang" (Rose Mélie refers to Philippe Petain as "Putain," 29). The link between past and present are more explicitly elaborated in another diatribe:

> Specters exist, she began, over the past few days I have assembled twelve examples proving their existence…Specters, unlike us, cannot be expunged or expulsed, said Mother, and not without humor. They go wherever they see fit. They cross borders and walls as they please. (In a neutral tone the speaker announced a new crime in Algeria.) Today they are in Algiers, as the news story said, and tomorrow they will be in Egypt… (The speaker announced the discovery of a mass grave in Rwanda.) You ask me who they are and where they come from, my dear. Specters are those killed by Putain and his gang who have risen from the dead and have come to watch us live. (150)

Even the daughter-narrator remains skeptical of her Mother's claim that contemporary massacres in Africa are linked to Vichy France. Yet Rose Mélie, who Motte has called "Salvayre's loudest shouter," presses on with her counter narrative of French history (Motte 2006). While she is said to be the "crazy" one, a state her daughter is constantly apologizing for, her pronouncement that specters of French past are lurking just below the surface seems to carry water. The fact is—as Maspero alludes to in Drancy—that many of those responsible for Vichy, if even in a small way, remained in power. Further connections are

[110] Warren Motte discusses this character and his reading habits in a very different context in *Fiction Now.*

made in the novel, linking the Vichy period specifically to Spain and connecting Rose Mélie's concerns with those of the author. For Salvayre, Spain seems to be an unavoidable specter hovering just behind the scenes of her work.

Elsewhere the narrator contemplates shouting "*no pasaràn*" to the process server and while barring his entry to another room of the apartment (59). "They shall not pass" has been widely attributed to Petain at the Battle of Verdun, but is most famous as a slogan first used by Spanish Republicans during the siege of Madrid in 1936, an irony that surely did not escape Salvayre. A further link to Spain—and to the author's family narrative—is provided in the character of Filo, a family friend whose story is recounted but who does not directly appear in the novel. Filo is from Spain and arrived in France during the exodus of early 1939, and like Salvayre's parents she spent time in the Argelès camp (139). Filo was also menaced by the same militia hoodlums who murdered Rose Mélie's brother (164). Their actions are again linked to subsequent events when Rose Mélie mentions that they also "pushed an Arab into the Seine," seemingly a reference to brutal the repression of Algerian demonstrators on October 17, 1961. The inference is clear: those who mistreated minorities during the War were still wielding power in 1961. The link between family memory and national history serves to call into question the legitimacy of narratives of French superiority, whether cultural or political—contexts often linked, after all, notably by colonialist ideologies. In typical Salvayre style, *Compagnie* calls into question national narratives through an unlikely voice, one that is relegated to the margins of society and would otherwise go unheard.

Elsewhere in Salvayre's work, this is done by a similarly unlikely and marginalized Spanish character, which imbues the wider question with personal significance. In *La vie commune* the narrator Suzanne's nameless Spanish cleaning woman makes a darkly humorous and seemingly offhanded reference to the Argelès internment camp (135). Argelès, some 10 miles from the Spanish border, was the southernmost of dozens of camps set up during World War II to intern or imprison Jews and various other perceived enemies of France, in particular Spanish Republicans fleeing Franco's victory (Noiriel 2002:

21). This shameful and largely ignored portion of the national narrative is employed here to remind readers of Salvayre's own tenuous position as an "insider"—for while she looks and sounds French her origins and subjectivity are more complex—and to dismantle the sanctity of the carefully elaborated closed space that the narrator is creating for herself. While the cleaning woman's comment refers to the austerely organized rehabilitation clinic in which Suzanne is recovering from a fall, the reference to a concentration camp also seems to refer to Suzanne's practice of "surveying" every move made by her domestic employee. The narrator Suzanne is a solitary and paranoid individual who seems to differ solely by gender from the infamous angry white males who frequently vote for the National Front and their fictional equivalents in the novels of Michel Houellebecq. She casts dispersions on Jews, Communists and homosexuals, to name a few, and in a clear reference to French border anxieties is fiercely protective of the frontiers of the two spaces in which she spends most of her time: her apartment building and office.

While *Compagnie* is Salvayre's only work that could be classified as historical fiction, elsewhere in her work the often subtle references to national and personal memory serve to destabilize the official discourses that forward monolithic visions of French identity and history. In this sense her name can be added to a growing list of artists with immigrant pedigrees who in response to contemporary debates over French identity have mobilized narratives (or counter narratives) of the French Occupation and Resistance during the Second World War. This roster includes several of the directors discussed in this project and is dominated by filmmakers in general. Works such as Robert Guédiguian's *L'Armée du crime* (2008), Rachid Bouchareb's *Indigènes* (2006), Tony Gatlif's *Liberté* (2009) and Ismaël Ferroukhi's forthcoming *Les hommes libres* are all set during the war and focus on French collaboration with the Nazis, the role of

immigrants in the resistance or the French army, or both.[111] More than simply representing volleys fired in the current debates over French identity and immigration, these works have in common a desire to correct the historical record. For a long time after the war, while the Resistance was the subject of great interest in French literature, film and culture, the history of the Vichy regime and of French collaboration was almost ignored. To give one concrete example of the proliferation of literature of Resistance, a bibliography compiled in 1964 listed more than 1,200 books on the topic (Jackson 2001: 9). The experience of Spanish exiles who feel that their contribution went unnoticed is not exceptional. The role of immigrants in fighting units such as the FTP (*Francs-tireurs partisans*) has been likewise overlooked, part of what Noiriel terms the "general amnesia" on the topic of immigration (Noiriel 1988: 19).

In the case of Salvayre, what her books are saying is perhaps of less interest to me here than the narrative means she uses to say it. Often the prejudices that Spanish refugees faced are invoked, as Warren Motte observes, "through the very voice of prejudice" (Motte 2004). In *La vie commune* Suzanne is apparently referring to her underappreciated cleaning woman when she confides in a coworker, "I know someone who professes Communist ideas, an excessively vulgar woman: an incredibly ill-bred Anti-Franquist Spaniard, and with such rustic manners!" (69). Given the fact that the book is narrated by this xenophobic woman, who is primarily concerned with maintaining the integrity and inside/outside duality of her closed space, such a reference to the author's own background has a destabilizing effect on readers, who are trying to discern the distance between often inconsistent narrative and authorial voices, a task that can be confounding, as critics point out. In *Les belles âmes* a similar insider ambivalence is at play between the "voices of prejudice" and the narrative and authorial voices. Intolerance towards Spaniards is

[111] Didier Daeninckx is an overtly political writer whose novels, often classified as mystery or *noir*, have used shameful episodes of French history, including World War II, to frame current issues. While he is not of immigrant origin, he is from the *banlieue* of St. Denis and embraces his marginal status. Several well-received novels examine to come out in the past year examine the war from a foreign vantage point, including *Jan Karski* (Yannick Haenel, 2009), *HHhH* (Laurent Binet, 2010, *Prix Goncourt* for First Novel) and *Mon enfant de Berlin* (Anne Wiazemsky, 2009).

never directly evoked, yet it is hinted at via the prejudice shown by the tourists towards the disfavored people and quarters they visit.

"Reality tour": *la fracture sociale* on wheels

The daily itineraries of this "reality tour" include visits inside the apartments of the "new look" poor and graffiti-strewn underground parking lots and end with drawn-out repasts and copious conversation in fine restaurants (30). One can only spend so much time in poor areas, it seems. The tourists, initially enthused and full of bonhomie towards each other and the miserable souls they are endeavoring to leer at, quickly tire of the incessant panorama of poverty. By the third day of their trip they are suffering from a severe case of what might be called compassion fatigue, causing them to completely lose interest in the places and people they traveled to see: "leur budget compassion est bouclé" (Their compassion budget was exhausted, 101). By the fourth day, all enthusiasm was lost: "…telle est la vérité pour les tourists, à mi-chemin de leur voyage…Mort, l'enthousiasme pour le social" (Such was the truth for these tourists, at the midpoint of their voyage…Dead was their enthusiasm for social questions, 119). By this point the tourists have even lost interest in dinnertime conversation, a pastime they view as an art form. One couple rues that this trip is just as stressful as a "photo safari" and wishes they had opted for an actual safari in Africa (132). This bit of information confirms what we might have suspected all along, based on the narrator's presentation of the tourists: they see the *banlieue* as a wild and foreign place, akin to Africa, which is surely not an innocent choice for a comparison.

On a wider level, this is symbolic of how France sees the *banlieue*. It is not a coincidence that the "photo safari" allusion comes up in *La Haine,* when Hubert tells journalists that his neighborhood is not Thoiry, an African "drive-through" safari park. Indeed the tourists approach the *banlieue* and all of the poor neighborhoods they encounter on the trip with clichés and platitudes. If the voyage seems to do nothing to illuminate them, it is due to their fundamental lack of interest in grappling with big questions

in a serious way. The tourists as a group seem to expect burning cars, ubiquitous graffiti and trashy parking garages (13). In the parking garage on their itinerary, one remarks that it would be a good spot for a rave party, once an artist spruced up the colors and rendered the décor "more destroy" with the addition of artistically burning cars (43). Another, a novelist, takes verbatim notes for his next novel during a visit to the apartment of a single mother, hoping to capture the sense of "looking at horrible things" (33). The tour guide, who has led a number of these trips, identifies the four stages of reaction that take place with every successive group of travelers. First is humanitarian enthusiasm, followed by profound pangs of conscience, a "catastrophic phase" and, finally, "cowardly solace" (115). This utter inability to look beyond the image of the *banlieue* and to examine its issues seriously is not simply the problem of a few random tourists. These thirteen tourists are a representative sample of the most powerful forces in French social and political life.

More than simply being representative of the French elite, the tourists are caricatures. On one hand this helps even the score, as this is how the tourists approach the *banlieue*. "*Beur* is beautiful," exclaims one female tourist who falls under Jason's charm, before correcting herself: "but, wait, he isn't a *Beur*…all *banlieue* youth aren't *Beurs,* what a silly idea!" (25). Jason must be a priori *Beur,* for he comes from the suburbs. On the other hand the voyagers, being clichés and caricatures rather than people instilled with depth and humanity, represent an ideological panorama of French society and its failure to continuously adequately address the *banlieue* question, which tends to be ignored until a flare-up brings it to the forefront. On the Left is Flauchet, a modestly successful novelist who is prone to break into enthusiastic orations that are described by the narrator as feckless and "typiquement gauchiste" (typically lefitist, 49). Facing him on the Right of the spectrum is Lafeuillade, a successful flour and dough magnate and, according to the narrator, a "caricature, just as I wished him to be" (117). He counters Flauchet's leftist monologues with his own proclamations that the benefits of being poor are not as "negligible as we

like to imagine." They, he contends, "live on public assistance and are excused from paying taxes" (49). When he later seems to experience an about-face, the true reason for his interest in the *banlieue* is revealed. There must be, he squawks while looking out over a particularly depressing display of poverty, some solution to be found to aid the poor, in order to "stop them from, someday soon, rising up against us. And hanging us" (Et empêcher qu'un jour prochain ils n'insurgent contre nous. Et nous pendent. 115). This insight into Lafeuillade's motivation perhaps encourages us to read into the voyage a link with the riots that periodically impel the suburbs into a position at the front and center of French society's concerns. The coverage of such events often seems to focus on the possibility of their spread from the outskirts to the center; "Risque de contagion à Paris" was a common refrain in the media coverage of the 2005 riots (Leibig 2010: 125). In other words, the *banlieue* is of little interest to the Right until it poses an immediate danger.

The staff, in particular the young "ambiance agent" named Jason, have also had their fill of the privileged tourists, these "excités de la misère," as he labels them (42). The young man seems to have had Lafeuillade, the particularly smug and outspoken business tycoon, in his sights since the onset. Salvayre's novels frequently end with a rumpus. In *La vie commune* Suzanne finally has it out with the new secretary while in *La compagnie des spectres* Rose Mélie and her daughter toss the process-server out the door. Sparring is not limited to the final pages; *La vie commune* also recounts a newspaper report of fisticuffs at the European Parliament between Front National leader Jean-Marie Le Pen and Belgian socialist José Happart (70). For all the streams of vituperations in Salvayre's texts, it seems that—perhaps this is her psychiatrist's insight—she believes that, more than talking, people really desire to slug it out. As the end of the voyage approaches in *Les belles âmes*, it also appears that a clash is inevitable.

The tourism theme and bus setting allow the narrative to frame a *banlieue/*center clash in an unusual way. As in some of the road movies examined in previous chapters, most notably *Le grand*

voyage, in which the closed space of the car forces father and son to rethink their differences and learn to coexist, the interaction of the inside and outside elements of French society are pushed to the forefront in the confined spaces of the bus. However, if people from very different backgrounds and socio-economic standing come together, they ultimately do not find common ground across the center-*banlieue* chasm. Unlike previous road trips that chart courses outside of the problematic and reductive spatial constructs that predetermine identity questions, in this case the voyage explicitly targets destinations that epitomize the *fracture sociale,* throwing the two camps into bold relief. The *fracture sociale* is, in fact, brought on board the bus. After all, the *banlieusards* on board are there precisely because they are "examples" of stereotypical suburban misery. Vulpius, the driver has lived in the *banlieue* for thirty years and in addition to chauffeuring the tourists on their excursion he is responsible for making the initial contacts with various "specimens de pauvres" (specimen of poor people, 42). As "ambiance agent," Jason is charged with painting a darker picture of the scenes unfolding before the gullible tourists ("Noircir le tableau. A dessein," 13). As for Olympe, Jason's girlfriend, she is there not as an employee but as a guest, providing the tourists with an opportunity to demonstrate their generosity and also avoid the discomfort of having an unlucky count of thirteen passengers (16). The travel motif works differently in *Les belles âmes* than in the other works discussed previously. The reconciliation of inside and outside does not take place within the narrative, but the two poles are juxtaposed in a way that allows the reader the opportunity to reimagine such categories. Employing textual and intertextual techniques, Salvayre presents a series of challenges to inside-outside binaries.

Looking beyond the obvious social divisions, something else is also at work here, calling into question the divisions of French and foreign, rich and poor and high culture and low culture. On one hand, the narrative voice is difficult to pinpoint, wavering between that of passive spectator and explicit author. This is significant because as the former the narrator seems to be socially, culturally and

economically aligned with the tourists, despite her disdain for them. As the author, she is also revealed to be an outsider, a realization that serves to destabilize the basic tenets of this division. It is the ambivalence of this position that allows here to speak for the powerless characters, notably Olympe. On another level, the *banlieue*/center confrontation is staged as a verbal sparring match between Jason and the tourists. The use and power of language is a central theme, and the ease with which Jason employs his language—at first glance simply the clichéd slang of *banlieue* youth—suggests that he wields more power than we first imagine.

Language, Identity and Resistance

Abdellatif Kechiche's 2003 film *L'Esquive* (*Games of Love and Chance)* has received a great deal of scholarly attention for questioning spatially constructed distinctions between high and low culture (Swamy 2007, Strand 2009). The film stages this debate around the production of a play by Marivaux in a suburban high school. Critics have suggested that through linguistic interplay the film counters the message of the Marivaux play—that social conditions cannot be transcended. The adolescent cuuharacters speak a version of French that incorporates *verlan* and a variety of borrowings from Arabic and Wolof (Strand). This is very similar to the language employed in Salvayre's novel by Jason, and at times mimicked by the tourists as a sort of misguided "when in Rome" reflex. It is clear that while the slang is just another element of the seemingly endless language games played by the bourgeois tourists, it is an integral part of Jason's identity, part of how he formulates his sense of being in the world. Linguist Meredith Doran categorizes suburban slang as

> A product of the particular spaces and populations of *la banlieue*, marked by marginalization, multiculturalism, multilingualism, and persistently negative dominant representations … a set of linguistic practices that differ from Standard French in ways that have symbolic value and identity stakes for their users; … and a strategic and functional tool used to construct an alternative social universe … in which

> youths can define themselves in their own terms, along a more métisse and hybrid identity continuum that rejects the fixed categories of "French" vs. "immigrant" that continue to dominate in mainstream journalistic and political discourse.[112]

In *Les belles âmes* Jason's speech also serves to construct such an "alternate universe," often for the benefit of the tourists who are more than happy to listen on while he spices things up a bit. But this performative use of *verlan* serves to hide the fact that it is, more than simply an act, an integral part of Jason's self-understanding and social identity. Some of the most evocative and prevalent *verlan* words are linked to the naming or categorization of people and represent efforts to recuperate stigmatizing terminology employed in wider social discourse.

Beur, of course, is one key example of this. Another is *caillera,* reverse slang for *racaille,* the pejorative generally translated into English as "scum" that was famously employed by then-Minister of the Interior Nicolas Sarkozy to characterize *banlieue* youth who participated in the riots of 2005. *Caillera* has been reclaimed by *banlieue* youth and is used in a positive sense. In both cases the intent was to give minorities a voice in the language that is used to refer to them and to escape the stigmas attached to terms such as *Arabe* and *racaille.* As Doran notes above, these words do not derive from a foreign language but are hybrid variations on French terms and therefore deconstruct binary categories between French and "not French.". Verlan slang terms have led to other wordplay, such as the re-reversing of *beur* to form *rebeu* and the adopting of the Arabic word *zebda* for the name of the famous French band. *Zebda* means butter in Arabic, while French for that is *beurre,* a homophone of the slang term (Marx-Scouras 2005: 25). Thus the group's name refers back to a French slang word in a subtle way that may only be recognized by those who know some Arabic, playing on notions of inside and outside and how they are linked to language.

[112]Doran 2007: 498, cited in Strand in reference to *L'Esquive.*

If *verlan* then is often firmly linked to suburban and other hybrid French identities, its use by the tourists on the reality tour betrays their utter lack of understanding of its significance. Their approach to it is, like their use of language in general, incredibly shallow. At the end of dinner one night Lafeuillade utters a *verlan* goodnight: "soirbon Chéflaut." This catches on and soon the entire table is having a go this activity that is seen as great fun for all: "brusquement, toute la table s'essaie au verlan. C'est d'un drôle" (All of a sudden, everyone gave *verlan* a whirl. How amusing. 54). Thus a linguistic practice with identity stakes is reduced by the tourists to a simple rearrangement of syllables. This is indeed consistent with how the tourists see language in general. Rather than being linked to his identity, Lafeuillade's use of language is connected to his quest for social standing and is presented by the narrator as an extraordinarily superficial brand of posturing.

Lafeuillade is a "grand amateur de maximes, proverbs, calembours et histoires belges…Grand amateur aussi d'explétifs tels que ciel, diable, fichtre, tudieu, diantre, damnation, saperlipopette, car il croit élégant leur côté démodé et se convainc que leur usage tourner la tête aux femmes." (Quite the connoisseur of maxims, proverbs, puns and Belgian jokes… and also an enthusiast for arcane curses in the order of heavens, devil, … [a variety of not directly translatable words, some of which will be explained shortly]… which he believes to be elegant in a certain old-fashioned way and is convinced that their use helps turn ladies' heads. 21). Lafeuillade's choice of words is particularly illustrative. Just as *verlan* often replaces a pejorative or negative term with a positive one, Lafeuillade's expletives tend to be terms that fulfill a similar role, albeit in a very different socio-linguistic context. *Fichtre, tudieu* and *diantre* are old words that all originally served euphemistic purposes. *Diantre* is defined in the 1762 *Académie française* dictionary as "a highly colloquial word that is used to avoid saying Devil."[113] *Fichtre* is described in a 1872 dictionary as a term used in place of a another crude word. As for *tudieu,* the same

[113] This definition and all of the following were accessed in the University of Chicago ARTFL project's *Dictionnaires d'autrefois* database. http://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/node/17

dictionary lists it as a euphemism for "*tue Dieu*" (kill God) employed in 18th century theatre. Examples from Molière and Voltaire are cited. While all of these terms have come into vogue simply as esoteric ways to curse, the provenance of some of them in 18th century *comédie* reminds us of an important point about linguistic transformations and the role of time in dulling of distinctions between high and low culture. As Vinay Swamy points out in his discussion of *L'Esquive,* the linking of suburban slang to 18th century language that is now considered to epitomize classical French is less of a leap than one might first imagine:

> In his day, as the Enlightenment philosopher d'Alembert remarked, Marivaux was himself often chastised by his contemporaries for the 'bizarreness of his neologisms [which were] so far removed from everyday language [langue commune]' (D'Alembert 1968: 987). Palissot proclaims that although an ingenious author, Marivaux often 'sinned against good taste and at times even against the French language' (Palissot 1968: 966). In this sense, Marivaux's own unusual use of language, too, was suspect in eighteenth century France, a fact that is mirrored in part by the perceived illegitimacy of current day *verlan* or back-slang (Swamy 2003).

In other words, the adaptation and refashioning of the French language is nothing new and past examples of this have in time become widely accepted and even celebrated. *Marivaudage* and *marivauder* are even officially recognized as words by the *Académie française*. As Swamy admits, however, the stakes involved in Marivaux's linguistic creativity are not quite the same as those facing suburban speakers of *verlan.* After all, the playwright was firmly and comfortably entrenched in the bourgeoisie, while contemporary speakers of *verlan* are approaching French society and language from the outside and for this reason may be seen as even more threatening to the perceived linguistic and cultural purity.

Returning to our "reality tour," while an outsider, Jason has mastered several registers of French language. He is also able to use his French to speak to power with a certain authority that is eventually judged by the tourists to be dangerous. Brigitte Louichon has remarked that a primary goal of Salvayre's

work is to "give voice to the voiceless" (Louichon 2009: 322). Often these otherwise unheard voices are placed in dialogue or confrontation with the voices of power and authority. As critics have pointed out, Salvayre's novels regularly stage a competition of voices (Motte 2003 and 2004, Huglo 2006). As Rose Mélie, the purportedly crazed mother in *Compagnie*, sagely observes, "power consists of the ability to shut the mouths of others" (*Compagnie* 20). In *Les belles âmes,* Jason is the only voice with sufficient stridency to stand up to the prattle of the tourists, who are "endowed with the gift of strong speech" (doués de paroles fortes, 24). The novel contains numerous references to language and the power it holds. To cite one example, when Flauchet quotes Descartes over the dinner table the narrator remarks that, "the citation was successful. Flauchet takes advantage of this to keep the control of the conversation ("garder la parole") and to steer the topic to his latest novel (85-86).

On the *banlieue* side, Olympe has not yet found her voice, and the narrator must "stay by her side" in order to speak for her (24). Vulpius is forbidden from speaking his opinion on anything, whether positive or negative. The tour guide spews an incessant, overwrought narrative ("This *cité* he exclaimed, deeply moved, resembles a prison," 27) that often falls on deaf ears. Everyone, from Jason to the tourists, seems to have quickly learned to tune him out. In short, aside from Jason, these outsiders validate the observation that in Salvayre's writing "the power of language is the primary power which the poor are deprived of" (Louichon 2009: 322).

Jason's role requires that he speak and his use of language moves from humorous, in support of his mission as "ambiance agent," to subversive and therefore dangerous. The tourists find him charming until his humorous banter crosses the line into language as power. His voice immediately commands attention. A few lines after we read that Olympe lacks the power of language, we see that Jason does not have the same problem. He speaks with ease and authority, and his announcements are initially met with approval:

> Jason annonce aux tourists, large sourire, qu'il va faire avec eux le tour du proprio.

Comme il est drôle!

Vous risquez, dit-il, de croiser quelques individus aux traits australopithèques (d'où tient-il ce langage?) .Mais ne craignez rien, ces personnes sont totalement inoffensives.

Mais qu'il est amusant! (24)

Smiling widely, Jason announced to the tourists that he will take them on a tour of the property.

How funny he is!

You run the risk, he said, of crossing paths with individuals demonstrating Australopithecal traits (from where did he get this kind of language?)

Never fear, these people are totally harmless.

He really is entertaining!

I will examine the narrative structure at greater depth later. Here it is sufficient to note the occasionally unclear presence of an authorial (or at least authoritative) voice in the midst of pure discourse. The parenthetical remarks are from the narrator, who is mediating Jason's discourse but not the exclamations of the tourists ("He really is entertaining!"). As for the content, Jason amuses the tourists by incorporating prevalent negative representations of the banlieue while also underscoring the rift between the world of the tourists and what they take for granted as undesirable and not up to their standards. Taking them on to check out the property, as if they were planning to move in, is humorous to them because they could never imagine living there. Meanwhile the comparison of the terrain's actual residents to African hominids is a thinly veiled reference to the prevailing stereotype of the banlieue as the "black belt" surrounding Paris, peopled with immigrants of inferior standing and perhaps even inferior blood. Despite their admiration for his verbal talents, the tourists do not accept Jason as one of their own. What seems to draw them to him (particularly the case for the women) is his exotic rough quality, his rawness: "son verbe cru, sa brutalité joyeuse et la façon don't, insolemment, il les bouscule, tout cela les excite énormément" (His raw language, his joyful brutality and the way that he so insolently pushes them. It all excited them enormously. 25)

The cliché parade continues when Lafeuillade, the "dough and flour tycoon," asks if the residents of the banlieue, "to the extent we would like them to, capitalize (*exploiter*) on the opportunities offered them by their cité." Jason responds again with a series of banlieue associations that the tourists must have in mind, but this time his words seem to betray a latent subversiveness:

> les habitant de la cité non seulement exploitent toutes les possibilités offertes mais se montrent de surcroît extraordinairement imaginatifs. Par exemple, ils transforment les toits des immeubles en rampes de lancement, les parkings en cours de récré et les caves en baisodromes (24).

> Not only did the residents of the banlieue capitalize on all of the possibilities offered them, they, moreover, have proved themselves to be extraordinarily imaginative. For example, they transformed the roofs of buildings into launching ramps, parking lots into playgrounds and tower basements into sexodromes.

The reaction of the tourists is again positive. "S'ils étaient tous comme lui!" (If they were all like him) exclaims an anonymous tourist, while another observes that there is a "good side to poverty if it blesses minds with such piquancy" (25). Once more Jason takes information the tourists already "know" about the suburbs—or think they know—and transforms it into the sort of witty banter that they hold in high regard. Yet while he is speaking to them with a wit and sophistication of phrase they appreciate, the language of the tourists works to underscore the uncrossable barrier between their conception of the world and Jason's. The double entendre encoded in Lafeuillade's question—*exploiter* suggesting simultaneously a socio-political meaning and the notion of the banlieue as a natural resource—exemplifies the sort of hollow verbiage and affluent class business-lifestyle jargon employed by the tourists. "Ne comptez-vous pas entrer un jour dans la vie active?" (Don't you plan on entering professional life some time), asks another tourist of Jason. His riposte,"Entrer, mais par où?" (Enter. But through where?), inspires more admiration ("Quel aplomb! Quelle malice!" 25). The response also reminds us of the commonly cited studies on the difficulty of finding a job with a resume carrying a suburban address, hitting on the

essential issue being danced around in the banter. One study demonstrated that a white Parisian male was five times more likely to get an interview based on a CV with equal qualifications as a male with a Maghrebi name (Weil 2005: 78-79). While we do not know Jason's ethnic background beyond the fact that he is apparently not a *Beur* according to the tourists, all residents of the so-called "troubled" *banlieues* face similar discrimination when applying for jobs.[114] This gulf in vantage points is demonstrated by the tourists' own backgrounds.

One of them, Mademoiselle Faulkircher, owes her job as a magazine journalist to her father's influence and connections (65). In other words, her professional standing says very little about her talents or abilities. Yet she has the habit of referring to her acquaintances by their professions: Jean Ribaut, *journaliste* or Luc Autran, *publicitaire* (43). Flauchet, a writer, seems to earn a living on his own, but leans on his father's fortune for the trappings of high-class literary lifestyle, as when he needed a car and a country home. None of the tourists have any awareness of the fact that their success, indeed their very understanding of the term "success" is based on their specific socio-economic standing and is utterly incomprehensible to Jason. Their observations are peppered with platitudes such as "vouloir, c'est pouvoir": "Mr. Boiffard firmly believes that the spirit of business will sweep through the 21st century … but it is only offered to those who want it, for wanting is having" (74). This is in sharp contrast with the perspective of Olympe, who dreams of becoming a stylist but cannot imagine how to negotiate this move from her current job at a dry cleaning shop. "But how can she move from pressing clothes into a styling career? Might as well wish to visit planet Mars!" (63)

The language employed by the tourists, whether platitudinous or clichéd ("enter into active life") demonstrates their position within the preponderant economic and cultural system and the difference

[114] The same study shows that the same resume with a white French name and a suburban address yielded 60% fewer interviews than the ones with Parisian addresses.

between their speech and that of the *banlieusards* underscores their privilege. Their words are the "passwords" to success. At the first dinner, Olympe sits by, idle and uncomprehending:

> Olympe écoute les discours des tourists sans rien comprendre ou presque. Elle dit: je capte rien. Mais bien qu'inintelligibles, ells les trouves beaux et souffre de ne pouvoir se mettre à l'unisson. Que dire de sensé lorsqu'on n'a pas les mots de passé?"
>
> Olympe listened to the tourists' discourses almost without understanding a thing. She says: I'm not catching anything. But while they were unintelligible, she found the discourses to be beautiful and she was upset that she was not on the same page. How can one speak sensibly without being in possession of the passwords? (50)

While she is a native French speaker, it is not the words that perplex Olympe but the cultural capital contained in the social meanings of the tourists vocabulary of privilege. This brings to mind Pierre Bordieu's position on how the system favors the already privileged, summed up here by Jean-Yves Rochex in reference to the school system:

> Social inequalities are tied to differences in 'cultural and economic capital' transmitted by the family, but they are also linked to whether or not one (*Être et parler* 263) possesses the 'pre-knowledge' useful for succeeding in school. Despite the claim that schools are accessible to everyone, the material taught, the study methods, the way orientation [tracking] works, seem to legitimize the culture of the favored social classes. (Rochex 2009)

The jargon of the tourists does not apply to life in the banlieue. Jason does not possess the "pre-knowledge" needed to succeed in school and in society in general, a fact humorously demonstrated by an exchange he has with Lafeuillade. Despite the fact that their respective forays into "bizness" are very similar, Lafeuillade knows the jargon that applies to his tactics: "Very quickly the two men realized that they both took part in le dumping, Jason by selling stolen televisions and cell phones (stolen), Lafeuillade

by selling flour and dough. Their bizness is therefore the same…" (78-9). While the rich man's business practices are called "dumping," Jason's is presumably labeled simply theft.

Despite his lack of familiarity with business jargon and the other cultural and economic capital that the tourists possess, Jason is initially lauded for his rapid wit and mastery of verbal communication. However as the tourists grow increasingly disenchanted with their voyage, they gradually begin to read Jason's witty ripostes as subversive—and therefore dangerous—rather than as amusing. In other words, as they move past clichés and come into contact with reality, Jason is seen as a threat rather than as a performer. When he suggests that the "specimen of poor people" visited on the bus trip should be offered merchandising opportunities such as Nique Ta Mère tee-shirts and "insurrectional rap compilations," the tourists do not know how to take his comments: "Are these genuine business proposals? A joke that should simply be laughed at? Or a provocation that demands a response?" (37). His later proposal, delivered with "furious irony," that poverty could be combatted not through education but by forced sterilization or simply "letting them die" is met with shock. "Odile is scandalized. Inacceptable. This language is inacceptable. This young man is mocking us and we aren't even reacting!" (116). Another tourist laments that the "wolf is now in the henhouse" (Ibid.). If Jason is initially seen as a "hen" before being recognized as a wolf, it is because he could play along, charming the tourists and playing off of their strange brand of banlieue exoticism. Jason's verbal attacks on the tourists are, however, ultimately rendered ineffective once he is read as simply another angry suburban youth. The narrator, however, remains a hidden adversary with false insider status, a fox disguised as a hen to continue the tourist's allegory.

Insider ambivalence and narrative voice

Salvayre's perspective appears to come from the inside. Her subtle approach to identity and origins decenters preponderant inside-outside narratives of Frenchness, but it also proves disorienting to

the very process of reading. The reader is encouraged to consider who is speaking from the inside and perhaps to question the very notion of "inside" altogether. Salvayre's book are usually narrated monologically, employing what Gérard Genette calls an intradiegetic-homodiegetic narrator, or a character who tells his or her own story, as in *Compagnie des spectres* and *La vie commune*[115]. In the former the voice is clearly that of an outsider who is defending her space against the government, the ultimate inside force. In the latter the narrator Suzanne is the insider, stubbornly defensive of encroachments on her space by perceived outsiders. In that case the lumping of Spaniards with outsiders creates critical distance between the author and the narrative voice, calling into question the very inside-outside schema that Suzanne's monologue seeks to defend. *Les belles âmes* is one of only two exceptions to the rule, as it is narrated by someone outside of the narrative, whose voices at times overlaps with the authorial voice. As Motte notes, in *Les belles âmes,* as Salvayre tends to do, the question of where the authorial voice begins is "deliberately left open, a technique that Dallenbach calls 'aporistic reduplication,' a structure of mise-en-abyme 'in which the relations of container and contained are deliberately problematized and impossible to decide'" (Motte 2008:103). This allows a certain amount of ambivalence is built into the narrative structure. The narrative position walks a fine line between inside and outside of society and—within the reversed context of the book in which the consummate insiders, a who's who of Parisian society, are thrust into the uncomfortable position of outsider— of *banlieue* insider and outsider. At times the narrator "comments on the characters as if she were one of them, a tourist among the others (Motte 2008: 103). The narrator (and author) clearly identify and sympathize with the *banlieue* characters, yet economically and perhaps culturally she is linked to the tourists, or at least to two of them.

[115] Motte 2006. The exceptions are *La Médaille* and *Les belles âmes.*

As Salvayre is prone to do, both of her professions are referenced in the text (Motte 2006). While elsewhere in her work these fields are approached with ambivalence, in *Les belles âmes* they are referenced disdainfully. Flauchet, the writer, is almost universally loathed: "Everyone by now avoids Flauchet, an elitist and a bore who walks around with a broomstick up his ass" (139). Lafeuillade, the object of even more universal contempt and the focus of Jason's scorn, is described as "speaking in the voice of a psychiatrist" (117). Despite the narrator's open disdain for these characters, their association with Salvayre's chosen professions suggests that she shares their milieu, or at least enjoys a similar position in the socio-economic hierarchy of French society. If the reader does not connect these dots that are both intertextual and linked to the author's personal narrative, the narrative position is at the very least quite confusing and requires some effort to orient oneself within it. As Louichon observes, the reader is "baffled" while reading *Les belles âmes,* by the attempt to "locate the unlocatable 'I', which cannot be oriented vis-à-vis the purely fictional characters" (Louichon 313). The result of this difficulty is that one must constantly grapple with the narrator's position in the text and within the inside-outside binary that the narrative, and indeed French society, hinges on.

I would suggest that the process of reading this book is quite similar to the process of watching the films discussed in earlier chapters, using what Rosello terms a "third-degree" interpretation. Rather than seeing "difference through sameness" as Rosello suggests, or sameness through difference as I suggested in tweaking her formula, the reader of Salvayre must decode her romantic irony in an attempt to find difference in unexpected places and reconcile the gap between words and their meaning. For Paul de Man, irony starts with the realization of the gap that exists not only at the heart of an utterance, but at the very center of the subject itself: "the relationship between sign and meaning is discontinuous, hence inherently unstable…conceiving ourselves in language thus creates a gap that will never be fully recuperated … we can never reconcile the linguistic world of imaginative possibility with the actual

world we inhabit" (De Man 1983: 200). Salvayre employs a narrative world that is hard to reconcile in order to offer the reader a glimpse into an utterly un-reconcilable "actual world." This actual world is a society in which *banlieue* and center are riven from each other, resulting in inequalities utterly incompatible with the principals of the French Republic. Try as they may, and despite their vain attempts to remain absolutely indifferent, the tourists cannot recuperate the gap between what they think and what they see:

> The visions and nightmares surged into their heads and entered into combat with all of their sublime ideas. And the interior combat stirred up a racket in their consciences. What specious acrobatics, what contortions of the soul were required to reconcile their sublime theories with the visions of horror (113).

These tourists, however, as the narrator indicates, do not need to reconcile the irreconcilable nature of the world they live in. All will be forgotten once they return home, to their "tranquil habits" (124). For Salvayre and her narrator, however, this is not the case. Beyond the irreconcilability of the "actual world," there is a gap at the very heart of the author's own subjectivity. She cannot return to the tranquil habits of an insider, for her subjectivity is, like her sympathy, with the outsiders. The "unlocatable I" referenced by Louichon is precisely that because of the gap between the narrator's ambivalent position.

Reading *Les belles âmes* is to decode this gap, to struggle to position the authorial voice within the inside/outside dichotomy. The metafictional self-reflexivity of the novel is employed primarily to situate the author-narrator next to Olympe, who cannot speak for herself and needs an ally. According to Linda Hutcheon, what such metafictional observations—which she terms "narcissistic narrative"— do by "flaunting, baring its fictional and linguistic systems to the reader's view, is to transform the process of making into part of the shared pleasure of reading" (Hutcheon 1980: 20). While Salvayre's narrative approach does to a large extent offer an insight into the novel's fictional and linguistic workings—"this is no way to end a novel, I already hear the criticism"(139), for example—I suspect that the motivation for

this goes beyond the desire to promote literature as a shared pleasure. Her books are, as Motte has put it, "difficult," and much of the difficulty stems from the constant necessity to orient oneself within the fictional space, to position the narrative, the narrator and the author in a confusing web of deconstructed hierarchies.

As I examine the narrator (and author's) link to the outside as represented by Olympe, it will become clear that part of the process of decoding Salvayre's fiction hinges on some level of knowledge of her history and work. As Hutcheon observes, irony does not create complicity between writer and reader, it presupposes it (Hutcheon 1994). Knowledge of her Spanish background and of the history I outlined above, as well as of the recurrence of these themes in her work, will aid a reader in understanding Salvayre's positioning here. Olympe is a "zero" in society: "if I hadn't created her she would have lived her nothing life without anyone noticing her at all." (19) Her character is also—at least originally—an afterthought in this book, but she begins to occupy more and more space (23). Despite remarking that "nobody can speak in the place of someone else," the narrator affirms that she will endeavor to do just that (51-52).

If Salvayre can and does speak for Olympe, it is because they are quite similar. "Have you understood," asks the narrator, "that Olympe carries my secret?" (125). The recurring description of Olympe's inability to speak might remind us of Salvayre's personal narrative, for she grew up in a Spanish community and arrived at school with no knowledge of French and no previous contact with French society. For Olympe, her first head-in confrontation with the world outside of her *banlieue* is at dinner on the opening night of the trip. There she realizes that she is separated from the tourists by an "impassible chasm" (infranchissible abîme) and this pushes her into mutism (51). While this connection clearly hinges on extratextual interpretation, Salvayre leaves some clues that bring her personal narrative into the fictional one. Olympe's mother, who came to France from Guadeloupe at a young age, warns her

daughter about men, who like the girl's father are "all sleazy, without exception." The shadiest, however are "Arabs, who beat women with belts. They are tied with Andalusians. And Guadeloupians "(76). This pronouncement starts out with a common stereotype about Arabs before linking that group to Olympe's family and also to the author's background. Here the chain of associations suggested by common stereotypes (Arab, Black) is interrupted by the unexpected presence of Andalusians. The ability to recognizing the gap between the sentence and its intended meaning rests on the author-reader complicity Hutcheon writes of. Such winks at her own origins and hidden or invisible layers of identity allow us to read a great deal of distance into her writing. Spain is mentioned again in a similarly indirect fashion when the bus driver Vulpius, who like Olympe is clearly on the outside of society and looking in, declares that his definition of a "good time" entails "drinking *Montilla* in the *bodegas* of Seville" (125).This suggests that he is Spanish as well, or at least signals to the reader that this novel is also dealing with hidden identities on one level or another. As I have already outlined, Spain is an ever-present if subtle theme in much of Salvayre's work. Often it links her to the ostensibly outsider and minority characters in her books. This link is, more than simply representative of an outside subjectivity, an affirmation of the complexities inherent in all identities. In *La méthode Mila* Salvayre writes "There is in the lineage of every Spaniard ... an Arab or a Jew. Or both" (111-112). In *Passage à l'ennemi,* Salvayre's other novel set in a suburban area, Inspector Arjona recounts being asked:

> 'You are really named Arjona? Your father is really Andalusian? Born in Cordova?' The undersigned acquiesced. 'I wonder,' added the aforementioned, 'if your name is not originally Arab. Very funny. That is if it is not Jewish. Better and better. Statistically, the chances are equal' (160).

Arjona, the sole major character in Salvayre's body of work that is openly Spanish, would not be pegged for anything other than a "typical" French person if not for his name. I have already discussed studies on the perceived level of integration of minority ethnic groups in France, which show the Spanish to be,

alongside the Italians and slightly ahead of Poles and Portuguese, at the top of the list of "well integrated" groups. West Indians, such as Olympe's family, are around the middle alongside Jews, while "Arabs" are at the bottom of the list.[116] Arjone, then, who is like Salvayre part of the best integrated category, may very well belong, however indirectly, to the more maligned categories.

This obsession with lineage extends beyond the parameters and complexities of Spanish identity. An attitude of xenophobic suspicion and preoccupation with *souche* is evident exchange in *La vie commune* between Suzanne and her doctor. Here Suzanne, describes a conversation about her boss with her new rival secretary: "Meyer, that's Jewish, isn't it? She interjects …My heart freezes, Doctor. Monsieur Meyer, a Jew. But I attempt no answer, distressed though I am by this suggestion…I explain to her, as if she had said nothing, that Monsieur Meyer is of Alsatian origin…. Well, you still can't tell me that Meyer isn't a Jewish name, she mutters" (31-32). The exchange demonstrates that French identity is also rich in complexities and potential ethnic variations.

Reading across this selection of novels, the recurrence of the theme of lineage and the constant questioning of belonging can be interpreted as a bond of outsider solidarity. Salvayre elaborates this solidarity through a constant tension between inside/outside binaries. Spanish identity and memory is not a dominant theme in her books; the vast majority of her characters have no Spanish connection and her stories are not set in places with significant Spanish communities. Her Spanish subjectivity is latent, bubbling up to the surface only at key moments and demonstrating that it plays a significant role in her view of France and the way it treats migrants, refugees, minorities and outsiders. A similar phenomenon becomes evident in the study of Spanish exiles in France, who seem to have "integrated" into French social and business practices while retaining a strong link to their traditions and more than a small amount

[116] Hargreaves 2007: 144. The immigrant groups considered to have best assimilated were (in order) the Italians, Spanish and Poles, followed closely by the Portuguese. Algerians were last.

of resentment over the treatment they or their parents were subjected to in France. Soo's research demonstrates that there is more to Spanish memory than resentment of ill-treatment. He suggests that associations with memorial and educational goals such as FFREEE (*Fils et Filles de la République espagnole et enfants de l'Exode*) have the potential to forge inter-ethnic solidarity (Soo 2008: 105). Part of this is linked to the fact that some of the camps were not ethnically or nationally specific. If created for one group, they were used to house all elements of society that the authorities found undesirable. Gurs, for example, originally housed Republicans but later held Jews as well, almost 4,000 of whom were deported from1940 to 1943 (Soo 2008: 103). Soo also cites the presence of members and leaders in FFREEE from the wider community, people who do not have Spanish roots but are interested in the history of their region and the correction of incomplete or falsified national narratives. In other words, activism spawned by memory seems to have the potential to cross ethnic and cultural boundaries.

Activism also becomes an explicit concern in the final pages of *Les belles âmes.* Jason's revolt is the most direct and outspoken, but if not for the intervention of the others it would have fallen into the category of the rants discussed in chapter one, outbursts of anger that reinforce the binaries they seek to lash out at. Had Jason roughed up Lafeuillade, everything the tourists thought they "knew" about the *banlieue* and its denizens would have been confirmed. When Jason finally resolves to give Lafeuillade the beating he has anticipated delivering since the first day—thus providing the reader with the *bagarre* he was surely expecting—he is stopped by Vulpius and the tour guide. The pair, along with Olympe, climb off of the bus, leaving the tourists behind, and proceed to drink a toast in a parking area while Jason's anger subsides. Their fraternity recalls a similar episode the previous night, when the foursome stayed up late to drink and discuss.

> What about the *banlieue*, they muse. Will they abandon it? Four all four, standing up alone against the injustice of the *banlieue* would be pure folie. The essential for now was to not let themselves be destroyed.

> Their wish: that their united cries, their laughs and their trumpets should crumble the shame of the *banlieue* better than arms ever could. [What dreamers!] (125).

The first step towards this dream is to seize control of language. If language is power, the narrator wields the ultimate discretion on its deployment. On the final page the balance of power is shifted to the outsiders. The tourists are abandoned by the narrative, as if their presence, their voyage was of absolutely no consequence and it is perfectly natural for them to be stranded and forgotten in an archetypal European non place, the parking area of a highway gas station. After all, for all their angst, the voyage got them nowhere.

Here the narrator interjects that this is not way to end a novel—the *banlieusards* are drinking vodka at a rest stop while the tourists stew in their coach: "as a 'happy ending' this is a flop" (139). Yet this unresolved ending seems like a challenge, a call to action. If the tourists have yet to learn their lesson, the book's outsiders seem to have grown and forged a sense of purpose and solidarity while on the road. So might have the readers. Motte argues that "Reading through Salvayre's metaliterary discourse in her books, it is legitimate to see a series of experiments intended to test literature's potential as an agent of personal or social change" (107). In *Les belles âmes* the test is to be able to look at the *banlieue*—and the very notion of inside and outside, whether linked to language or to identity—from different angles. In the process distinctions between high and low, French and foreign and center and periphery are called into question.

Conclusion

To write about French identity issues in a contemporary context is akin to painting a still life with living creatures in the place of a bowl of fruit. Events directly connected to the topics addressed in the preceding chapters are incessantly coloring the topic, adding new perspectives and additional angles of interpretation. No sooner had the official "national identity debate," launched by President Sarkozy in November 2009, been called off due to an unexpectedly negative response from many quarters of French society than the deportation of Roma to Romania and Bulgaria in possible violation of European Union law was thrust into the limelight. European Justice Commissioner triggered a major diplomatic welter when she seemed to compare the deportations to those that occurred during World War II. I am citing these examples not from a desire for this work to remain entirely up-to-date, surely an impossible task in these circumstances, but because they underscore two key points. First and foremost, each of the works I have addressed, from the overtly engaged rap of NTM to the infinitely more restrained works of Ghorab-Volta or Lydie Salvayre, should be seen as shots fired in this very current fight over national identity. While this work is not always manifestly "engaged," I would argue that the indirect approach espoused by them is more effective than direct confrontation. For these rappers, directors and writers are doing more than simply "debating national identity," they are reframing the very premises of the debate by re-charting France as more open, connected and inclusive and French identity as more transnational than prevailing discourses of imagined and static identity allow for. Secondly, as Ms. Redding's comments suggest, the past is an integral part of this discussion. There is a clear and direct correlation between the current identity debate and the colonial memory wars discussed in chapter three in relation to Algeria. As Philip Dine has observed, arguments over colonial history should be seen as essentially arguments over post-colonial identity (Dine 2008).

For many the connection between the events of World War II and current identity issues is equally apposite, if less obvious. Indeed the fact that this particular discussion is not staged along the same framework of colonizer versus colonized seems to be appealing to artists seeking counter-narratives. If most French institutions and citizens have been content to forget the mistreatment, deportation and murder of minorities under the Occupation or the Vichy regime, a salvo of voices—often those with an outside vantage point—are stubbornly refusing to let that happen while connecting the dots between the way France (and Europe in general) treated minorities during World War II and how they are dealt with today. The work of Salvayre frequently directs readers' attention to these issues—while linking them to her family's history as Spanish Republican refugees—at times openly, at others in an indirect fashion. Tony Gatlif and Ismaël Ferroukhi both followed the road films addressed here with projects dealing with minorities during the Occupation. Revisiting national narratives is an indirect way to influence the contemporary debate on national identity. As Eric Hobsbawm once remarked, what "what makes a nation *is* the past" (Hobsbawm 1992: 3). In these films the national past is reexamined by questioning the actions of the French government and French citizens and also by inserting Frenchman of foreign origin or immigrants into the narrative of the Resistance. Revising these narratives to be more inclusive than the (often revisionist) dominant version of history is a first step towards correcting the exclusionary constructs of national identity that, as Noiriel points out, have often been propagated by institutions.

Modes of resistance

In the course of the preceding chapters I have outlined a variety of theories of and approaches to engagement and resistance. Often these are premised on the interpretive task of the reader-listener-viewer. Rap or hip-hop, both as a musical form and as a general stance, is the most overtly activist medium that I have treated here. Yet many artists remain ambivalent. NTM maintained that they are not a "loudspeaker" while demanding that the walls separating the *banlieue* from the rest of France be knocked down. The

vast majority of rappers, despite frequently channeling the frustration of minority youth, do not exhort their followers to commit acts of violence or rebellion but implore society to launch a debate that will tackle the hereto unanswered concerns of the *banlieue.* Looking beyond the overt political nature of song lyrics or public discourses, on a certain level much of French raps's power to subvert totalizing national narratives lies in its inherent hybridity. Reading rap as multicultural and transnational—and therefore in direct confrontation with exclusionary and reductive national binaries—is the task of the listener, who must place it within a context of American, African and French musical traditions.

Moving on to literature, while, as Warren Motte has suggested, Salvayre's metaliterary discourse is intended to "test" readers as potential agents of change, the literature itself is not engaged in the strictest sense. Much of the task of interpreting the call for action is again placed on the reader. In the realm of cinema, Martin O'Shaughnessy posits that political films are effective because they avoid linking people solely with their marginalized social class. A successful political film must "define those at the bottom not by their identities but by their recalcitrant agency, by their non-coincidence with their allocated roles and by their determination to resist immobilization" (33). Looking at resistance in a broader sense, Kristin Ross argues that the revolt of May 1968 where primarily about "displacements that took people outside of their location in society" (3). In other words, the events were about challenging the spaces assigned by society. The road films addressed here do that while also, I would argue, going a step further by deconstructing the very basis of those spaces while also inviting the viewer to do likewise by presenting a series of contrasts between expected, or stereotyped, and unexpected images and themes.

For A Cinematic Mapping of Post-Wall Europe

Observers have noted a return to engagement in French cinema, traced back to the mid-1990s, a period that encompasses the release of *La Haine* and a petition signed by 59 directors denouncing the Debré laws and calling for civil disobedience. There has been much debate over the political efficacity of

this cinematic trend. Critics such as Martin O'Shaugnessy have convincingly argued that while the engaged cinema of the post-1995 period cannot and should not be compared to that of the 1960s, it is willfully and effectively political within its specific contemporary context. O'Shaughnessy points to the analysis of Jean-Pierre Jeancolas, who argues that political cinema no longer takes an a priori totalizing ideological approach but instead hones in on a limited section of the real, what he terms a "real of proximity," and searches for a new form of political action constructed within this limited focus (O'Shaughnessy 2007: 21-2). I would like to focus on films that have approached a question of re-charting French and European spaces in more inclusive ways through a lens that is not necessarily political but which is clearly engaged.

Two films from the last decade demonstrate this tendency and seem to posit a central role for cinema in the process. In *Sauve-Moi*, a 2000 film by Christian Vincent, a young *Beur* named Mehdi works in a provincial city as an unlicensed taxi driver, suggesting his inability to attain movement in the flow of society. He has never left his town of Roubaix, nor has he considered doing so. However his perspective on life changes one day when he picks up Agatha, a visitor from Romania and self-described "*Roumaine mélangée*," played by Rona Hartner, who is best known for her role in Gatlif's *Gadjo Dilo*. During the credit sequence, when asked where she is from, Agatha sketches out a map of Europe with her hands, a self-conscious reference to the film's project of re-mapping Mehdi's identity through contact with a traveler from outside. Agatha and her new map of France in Europe inspire Mehdi to seek movement in his life and to map himself as part of a totality that extends beyond his home town. In the process viewers are invited to think about spatial and identity constructions differently.

A second film, Emmanuel Finkiel's 2009 *Nulle part, terre promise,* also poses serious questions about France within a "borderless" Europe and the role that cinema may have in documenting those who travel to, through and within it. This question is proposed to the viewer from the opening sequence. The

first three takes of the film show a woman inside of an exhibit on cinematography, a shot of landscape through the window of a moving train and, last but not least, the point of view on a commercial and industrial highway landscape as seen from a small hole in a truck smuggling migrants. The film juxtaposes four different trajectories, some of which cut against the grain of commonly understood or analyzed patterns of migration. We see Kurds headed from Turkey to the United Kingdom via Bulgaria, a French executive charged with dismantling a factory and relocating it to Hungary, a Pole who has moved to Hungary in search of higher wages, and a student travelling for leisure and attempting to capture on film the migrants whose paths she crosses. Her camera provides the film inside of the film and pushes questions on the dangers of voyeurism and the empowering nature of representation into the forefront, encouraging the viewer to ask some serious questions about both the "reality" being filmed and the role of the medium it itself in capturing and representing that reality.

Both films suggest an important point in the identity debate, one that has yet to be fully taken into account. This debate is not truly about, or no longer about, demarcating the parameters of a fixed and permanent sense of identity that is inextricably linked to the nation-state. The newness—and indeed the ephemerality—of Agatha's map of Europe is highlighted by the fact that she sketches it with her hands rather than referring to a printed map or even writing out one of her own. As *Le grand voyage* demonstrates, Europe—in particular the swath to the East of France—is a constantly shifting topography. The implication of this is that static conceptions of identity are also fluid. Mehdi's position as outsider, or perhaps doubly outside of French identity as a *Beur* and as the resident of a small provincial town, is placed in a new context by Agatha's arrival. Likewise in *Nulle part, terre promise,* Finkiel posits a vision of European identities that breaks down the notion of binary opposition and of inside and outside by portraying the very act of being European or being in Europe to be linked to a constant motion that has liberatory potential but which can also be fundamentally destabilizing. Thus Finkiel's film posits that the

"identity debate" is not just about "them" coming to "us" and trying to adapt, but involves the decentering of preexisting identity structures.

The French social historian Patrick Weil has suggested that the new parameters of identity should be more flexible in order to take into account the new realities on the terrain. The state, he argues, must seek to "regulate" rather than "control" immigration, which he contends is more of a process of "migration in movement" (Weil 2005: 46). This observation is related to the status of retired workers from other countries, who wish to be able to travel back and forth between their native land and the place they worked and lived for a large part of their life. Weil also frames the question around the vantage point of the younger generations. He cites a case study by Nancy Venel on the relationship of Maghrebi-French youth towards the concept of citizenship. Venel outlines four attitudes: "practicing Frenchmen/women," who consider themselves more French than religious; "accommodators," who try to reconcile both attachments; "individualists," who are unwilling to limit themselves to a label; and the "neo-communitarians" (Ibid: 106). Building on the variety of vantage points on citizenship, Weil writes: "in the course of their life, these young people will perhaps circulate from one approach to self-identification to another. They may also wish to identify with a religion but rather with a career, a gender, or a political or union affiliation" (Ibid: 106). The key concepts in this analysis are circulation and individual choice. As Michel Wieviorka has remarked, the identification of an individual with a collective identity can no longer be simply transmitted or imposed, in what he calls the "multicultural reality of France," it is a question of choice (Wieviorka 1999: 418). These notions of movement and choice are brought to the forefront in the films I have addressed here. None of them propose universal models, focusing instead on individual trajectories and suggesting that they represent options.

I deliberately chose to introduce two new films here because those already covered in the preceding chapters are just some examples from a recent trend to mobilize narratives of space and voyage

in an effort to comment on French identity. In addition to those already addressed above and in the preceding chapters, a variety of films produced in France since 1995 by directors both French and foreign, canonical and new, have engaged with these questions within a road movie framework. The list includes *L'Emploi du temps* (Laurent Cantet), *Code inconnu* (Michael Haneke), *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse* (Agnès Varda), *La Fille de Keltoum* (Medhi Charef), *Monsieur Ibrahim et les fleurs du coran* (François Dupeyron), *Drôle de Félix* (Olivier Ducastel & Jacques Martineau), *Le Voyage en Arménie* (Robert Guédiguian), *Loin* (André Téchiné), *Bled Number One* (Rabah Ameur-Zaïmeche), *Western* (Manuel Poirier), *35 Rhums* (Claire Denis), *Welcome* (Philippe Loiret) *Depuis qu'Otar est parti* (Julie Bertucelli), *Bleu le ciel* (Dominic Boccarossa), *L'Intouchable* (Benoît Jacquot) and even Jean-Luc Godard's *Film socialism,* which is set on a cruise ship.

European cinematic road trips tend to lead their protagonists "into national culture," as Laderman has suggested (Laderman 2002). In the films I have been concerned with here, the voyage is requisite for delineating "national culture," which often—as in the case of *Exils*—is in fact transnational rather than national. The road narrative offers an appealing format for the exploration of identity issues because it offers the possibility of moving outside and beyond the reductive parameters that have been established in the French identity debate. Identity is presented as the product of constant movement and is in perpetual motion. Each of the films covered here views binaries with skepticism. Unlike more combative films such as *La Haine,* these films do not stage confrontations along the fault line between center and margins. Yet they are more effective, and more political, for this very reason. Notions such as French and Other, country and city, inside and outside, religious and secular, local and global are all deconstructed. More than challenging French identity, these films challenge the very premise of "imagined" identity by pointing out the flows and connections that link people, traditions and cultures. They propose new ways to think about identity, new ways to think about being French and suggest that one can be French and

something else, a long-standing juridical reality that is very slowly becoming politically or culturally acceptable (Weil 2005). Moreover they often—as in *Salut Cousin* and *Jeunesse dorée* in particular—use the stereotypes associated with these fault lines to their advantage, drawing the viewer into a process similar to what Rosello terms a "third-degree" interpretation, a reading against the grain that complexifies notions of identity.

Therein lies the engaged aspect of this cinema. Viewers, rather than seeing more of what they know or think they know, images and narratives that correspond to their preconceived notions of life in the suburbs or as a minority, are presented with scenarios that deconstruct their conceptions and re-chart France in terms that do not correspond to the common parameters of the debate. Watching these films is akin to traveling, outside of clichés, truisms and expectations and beyond the normal categories that cinema is put into.

Recasting History

In remarking on the diversity of positions on the grid of citizenship, Weil contends that these realities are slowly taking seed juridically and to some extent politically. Dual nationality is legal, as is the right of foreign groups to form associations, which was granted in 1981. However, he contends, along with Noiriel, that the fact of French diversity must still be taken into account in French history and national narratives (Ibid: 106). A number of filmmakers have, in addition to reimagining contemporary narratives of Frenchness, sought to revisit the past as well. World War II seems to be a privileged site for this reconsideration of memory. On one hand the myth of the Resistance holds a central place in the national consciousness and is still, as I suggested in chapter five, very much a contentious topic of debate.

Looking into France's recent past, colonial history would seem to be a more obvious starting point, along with ancillary events such as the violent suppression of Algerian demonstrators in Paris in October 1961. Yet directors, like French society in general, have been slow to address these issues. It is telling that *Caché* (2005), the most direct cinematic commentary on that event to this date—one that also directly links it to the present state of affairs—is not by a French director but by Michael Haneke, an Austrian working in France.[117]

The attraction of World War II narratives seems to be due in no small part to the possibility they offer for addressing contemporary issues less directly. Just as the road film provides the space for a meditation on identity outside of the typical parameters of the debate, the Resistance or Occupation narrative opens possibilities beyond black and white, French and foreigner. A film on colonial history would seem to simply replicate the contemporary binaries of colonizers and colonized. World War II narratives offer more nuanced possibilities. Binary divisions are troubled; rather than colonizer and colonized, the "foreigner" can be on the side of the French while some French can be on the side of the enemy. Telling the story of immigrants active in the French Resistance is a particularly compelling response to the immigrant as "invader" trope that frequently rears its head in contemporary discourse.

Resistance narratives have not always been fertile ground for the examination of the gray zones of French history. In keeping with the political climate of the de Gaulle era, cinema presented a decidedly black and white vision of a France united against the Nazis. Neither collaboration nor the role of foreigners in the resistance was given much consideration. Mythification was the order of the day starting in 1945. Films such as *Le père tranquille* and *La bataille du rail* (René Clément, both 1946) as well as Jean-Pierre Melville's *Le Silence de la Mer* (1949) not only glorified the Resistance but presented the idea

[117] Alain Tasma's film *Nuit noire, 17 Octobre 1961* (2005) addresses the events of that day directly, but was made not for the big screen but for television.

that most people resisted. The so-called "average Frenchman" was portrayed as a patriotic resistant, and Resistance cells were shown to be overflowing with Frenchmen (and women, to a smaller extent) from every walk of life and political orientation. French cinema, according to Jacques Scilier, successfully employed "reassuring and mythical fiction to hide the everyday reality of life in France under Petain and the German occupation" (Morris 1992: 24).

Again in 1958, with de Gaulle's return to power and the subsequent "pantheonization" of Resistance hero Jean Moulin in 1964, the Resistance myth was back in full force, marking the "second heroic cycle" of French cinema representations of the Resistance that would last until 1969 (Lindeperg 1997: 323). The reinvigorated *resistancialisme* of this period was represented on the big screen by films such as François Villiers' *La verte moisson* (1959, *Green Harvest*) René Clément's *Paris brûle-t-il*? (1966, *Is Paris Burning?*), and *L'Armée des ombres* (1969). Not until the late 1960s would films focusing on French collaboration or *attentisme* dominate the scene. Marcel Ophuls's *Le chagrin et la pitié* (*The Sorrow and the Pity,* 1969*)* and Louis Maille's *Lacombe, Lucien* (1974) are the most famous examples of this wave of cinematic reexamination of French life under the Nazi occupation and Vichy Regime.

Today films critical of French comportment during the Occupation are common. These include *L'Armée du crime* by Robert Guédiguian (2009)*,* Tony Gatlif's *Liberté/Kokoro* (2009), Rose Bosch's *La Rafle* (*The Round Up,* 2010) and Jean-Pierre Salomé's *Les Femmes de l'Ombre* (*Female Agents,* 2008). Rachid Bouchareb's 2006 film *Indigènes* takes a different angle, focusing on Algerians who enlisted in the Free French Forces in North Africa. All of this should not be taken to mean that the pendulum has swung decisively towards the side of more critical accounts of the French role. Will Higbee notes that following a period of critical perspectives on the Vichy period in the 1970s and 1980s, the Vichy heritage film of the 1990s returned to a "strategy of selectively remembering or reconstructing the past." This is most evident in films such as *Lucie Aubrac* (Claude Berri, 1997). Higbee charges that this film represents

a return to the resistancialist myth that was already largely discredited by the 1960s (Higbee 2005: 301-3).

There seems to be a correlation between the reflex to make road films and World War II narratives. If the former represent horizontal displacement of French narratives, the latter offer the possibility of rethinking things vertically by sifting through layers of history. Gatlif followed up *Exils* and *Transylvania* (2006), another road film, with *Liberté,* which addresses the treatment of Roma not by the Nazis but by French police in the so-called free zone under Vichy control. Ferroukhi's encore to *Le grand voyage* will be *Les hommes libres,* a project currently in filming that narrates the story of an Algerian man inspired by a Jewish friend to join the Resistance. Another pertinent example has not been directly addressed in the previous chapters. Guédiguian, whose 2006 road movie *Voyage en Arménie* recounts the experience of a French woman who rediscovers her family origins, recently made the resistance film *L'Armée du crime.* That film tells the story of a resistance cell comprised of immigrants and Jews.

This example is quite pertinent here because it suggests that both road and resistance narratives offer compelling detours from well-tread narratives of restrictive spatial binaries. The first twelve films of Guédiguian's thirty-year career were all set in the L'Estaque quarter of his native Marseille. *Voyage en Arménie* is only his second film to venture outside of that narrative space, while two of the other three are historical films. These recent films represent Guédigiaun's attempt to directly examine questions of identity in the wake of the collapse of the *grandes croyances collectives*, in particular Communism and working class identity and solidarity, in new ways and in new spaces. The director's work can be seen as a meditation on the theme of solidarity, which was in his early work linked directly to working-class identity and community sentiment, both menaced by the rising tide of globalization.

Though unlike the other directors I am concerned with here, Guédiguian is overtly activist and unapologetically political, *L'Armée du crime* offers some insight into the relevance of Resistance narratives to contemporary identity debates. Guédiguian makes no secret of his intent to throw his hat into the ring of the national identity debate and more broadly to promote the importance of resistance in

today's world. The director seems to be directly challenging Nicolas Sarkozy, who declared on the night of his election: "I want to bring back the honor of the nation, the honor of national identity. I want to give back to the French their pride in being French" (*Le Monde,* May 8, 2007). The film is openly critical of French "honor" by underscoring collaboration with the Nazis, both official and by individuals. This is in itself nothing new, but it is supplemented by an effort to insert immigrants into the French narrative of resistance, something not commonly seen in cinema. The poster for the film, like its DVD cover, prominently displays the origins of the immigrant fighters: "Jews, Poles, Hungarians, Romanians, Italians, Spaniards, Armenians,' followed by the labels "heroes" and "resistants." For Guédiguian, the contemporary application of this is that "We must never trust those who rule. There will always be a need to cultivate this attitude, a lesson in life for those who are oppressed. This lesson is more moral than political: Don't listen to what those in power—whether political, economic, media or business power—try to tell you" (*L'Humanité,* September 8, 2009). Elsewhere, the director affirms that he had the present in mind while filming this story from the past: "This capacity to resist, to reject the world as it is, we need this sense of resistance today for the undocumented immigrants, with all that is going on in the banking sector, with Molex (an American auto parts supplier fighting a legal battle to move a factory out of France)" (*Le Point*, September 15, 2009).

While Guédiguian's approach is more didactic that those taken by the other directors I have discussed, his interpretation of his own film's contemporary resonance corresponds to my reading of films like *Exils, Le grand voyage* and *Jeunesse dorée* as examples of resistance. These directors do not listen to the narratives of power, whether contemporary or historical, or—with Ross again in mind—remain in their assigned places. The road movie, like some resistance films, proposes transnational alternatives to French national narratives, versions of Frenchness that are primarily about accommodation and flexibility. What these share with the other projects discussed here, from rap music to fiction, is asking their audience to think differently about their place in France and France's place in the world.

Bibliography

Alloula, Malek. *The Colonial Harem.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

Althusser, Louis. *For Marx.* New York: Vintage, 1970.

Arnold, Edward J. ed. *The Developement of the Radical Right in France: From Boulanger to Le Pen.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

Augé, Marc. *Non-lieux : introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité*. Paris: Seuil, 1992.

Barrès, *Scènes et doctrines du nationalisme*. Paris: Félix Juven, 1902.

Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacres et Simulation.* Paris: Galilée, 1981.

Bauman, Zygmunt. "From Pilgrim to Tourist—or a Short History of Identity." In *Questions of Cultural Identity.* Paul Du Gay and Stuart Hall, eds. London: Sage, 1996.

Begag, Azouz. *Ethnicity, Equality: France in the balance.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007.

Ben Jalloun, Tahar. *L'Hospitalité française.* Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1997.

Bhabba, Homi. "Arrivals and Departures," in Hamid Naficy, ed. *Home, Exile, Homeland.* New York: Routledge, 1999.

Binet, Stéphanie "Les rappeurs l'avaient bien dit," *Libération*, November 15, 2005.

Blatt, David. "Immigrant Politics in a Republican Nation." In *Postcolonial Cultures in France.* Alec Hargreaves and Mark McKinney, eds*.* New York: Routledge, 1997.

Bloom, Peter. "Beur cinema and the politics of location: French immigration politics and the naming of a movement." In *Multiculturalism, postcoloniality, and transnational media,* Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, eds. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003.

Bocquet, Jose-Louis and Pierre-Adolphe, Philippe. *Rap ta France.* Paris: Flammarion, 1997.

Boucher, Manuel. *Rap, expression des lascars: Significations et enjeux du rap dans la société française.* Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999.

Brouard, Sylvain. *Français comme les autres:enquête sur les citoyens d'origines maghrébine, africaine et turque.* Paris : Presses de la fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 2005.

Caquot-Baggett, Marie-Pierre. "'It takes a village … ' : Transgressing Rural Geographies in Sinapi's *Camping à la ferme,*" *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, Volume 13, Issue 5 December 2009 , pp 555 – 562.

Camus, Albert. *Noces,* Paris: Gallimard, 1950.

Cannon, Steve. "Paname City Rapping." In *Postcolonial Cultures in France.* Alec Hargreaves and Mark McKinney, eds. New York: Routledge, 1997.

Céline, L.F. *Bagatelles pour un massacre.* Paris: Denoel, 1937.
--------. *Mort a credit.* Paris, Gallimard, 1952.

Clifford, James. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life.* Berkeley : University of California Press, 1984.

Cohen, William. "*Pied-Noir* Memory, History and the Algerian War." In *Europe's Invisible Migrants,* Andrea C. Smith, ed. Amsterdam: Amerstam University Press, 2003.

Conklin, Alice. *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930.*

Conley, Tom. *Cartographic Cinema.* Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

Daeninckx, Didier. *Meutres pour mémoire.* Paris: Gallimard, 1984.
-------*Lumière noire.* Paris: Gallimard, 1987.
-------*Le facteur fatal.* Paris: Denoël, 1990.
-------*Un Château en Bohême,* Paris: Denoël, 1994.
------- Le Retour d'Ataï, roman Paris: Verdier, 2002.

Derrida, Jacques. *Adieu à Emmanuel Levinas.* Paris: Galilée, 1997.

Dine, Philip. "Decolonizing the Republic," *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, Volume 12, Issue 2, April 2008, pp 173 - 181.

Diome, Fatou. *Le ventre de l'Atlantique.* Paris: Editions Anee Carrière, 2003.

Djaïdani, Rachid. *Boumkoeur*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1999.
-------*Mon nerf*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2004.

Doucouré, Diaby. *Le bon, la douce et la caillera*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007.

Durand, Alain-Philippe (ed.). *Black, Blanc, Beur: Rap music and hip-hop culture in the Francophone world.* Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2002.

Echenoz, Jean. *Un an.* Paris: Editions de Minuit*,* 1997.
------- *Je m'en vais.* Paris: Editions de Minuit*,* 1999.

Edwards, Brent Hayes. *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation and the Rise of Black Internationalism.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Falkowska, Janina .*The Political Films of Andrzej Wajda*. Oxford; Providence: Berghahn Books, 1996.

Fletcher, Yael Simpson. "Catholics, Communists and Colonial Subjects: Working-Class Militancy and Racial Difference in Postwar Marseille." In *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France.* Tyler Stovall and Susan Peabody, eds. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

Forsdick, Charles. *Travel in twentieth-century French and Francophone cultures: the persistence of diversity*. New York : Oxford University Press, 2005.

------- "Projected Journeys," In: Johnnie Gratton and Michael Sheringham eds. *Projects and Experiments in Twentieth-Century French Culture.* Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005.

Gafaiti, Hafid. "Nationalism, Colonialism, and Ethnic Discourse in the Construction of French Identity." In *French Civilization and its Discontents: Colonialism, Nationalism, Race.* Tyler Stovall and Georges Van Den Abbeele, eds. New York: Lexington Books, 2003.

Galt, Rosalind. *The New European Cinema Redrawing the Map.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.

Gearheart, Susan. "Psychoanalysis, Transnationalism and Minority Cultures." In *Minor Transnationalisms,* eds. Francoise Lionnet and Shih, Shu-mei. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.

--------"It ain't where you're from, it's where you're at: The dialectics of diasporic identification." *Third Text, 13,* 3-17, 1991.

Guène, Faïza. *Kiffe-Kiffe demain.* Paris: Hachette, 2004.

------- *Les gens du Balto.* Paris: Hachette, 2008.

Halpern, Joel and Kideckel, David. eds. *Neighbors at war : anthropological perspectives on Yugoslav ethnicity, culture, and history*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000.

Hargreaves, Alec. *Multi-Ethnic France.* New York: Routledge, 2007.

Hoffman, Eva. "The New Nomads." In *Letters of Transit*, Andre Aciman, ed. New York, New Press, 1999.

Hardwick, Joe. "Fallen angels and flawed saviours: marginality and exclusion in *La Vie de Jésus* and *La Vie rêvée des anges*," *Studies in French Cinema,* 7: 3, 2007.

Hargreaves, Alec. *Multi-Ethnic France.* New York: Routledge, 2007.

Higbee, Will. "Beyond the (trans)national: towards a cinema of transvergence in postcolonial and diasporic francophone cinema(s)." *Studies in French Cinema* : Vol 7: 2, 2007.
------- "Towards a multiplicity of voices: French cinema's Age of the postmodern," in Susan Hayward, *French National Cinema.* New York: Routledge, 2005.

Hobsbawm, E.J. and Kertzer, David. "Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today." *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 8, No. 1. (Feb., 1992)

Houellebecq, Michel. *Les particules élémentaires.* Paris: Flammarion, 1998.
------- *Plateforme.* Paris: Flammarion, 2001.

Insdorf, Annette. *Double Lives, Second Chances.* New York: Hyperion, 1999.

Iordanova, D. "Whose is This Memory?: Hushed Narratives and Discerning Remembrance in Balkan Cinema," *Cineaste,* 1 July, 2007.

Izzo, Jean-Claude. *Total Khéops*. Paris: Gallimard, 1995.
------- *Chourmo.* Paris: Gallimard: 1996.
------- *Solea.* Paris: Gallimard, 1998.

Jackson, Julian. *France: The Dark Years 1940-1944.* Oxford University Press, 2001.

Jameson, Frederic. *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.* Durham: Duke University Press, 1991.

Jones, Katherine. "Voices of the Banlieues: constructions of dialogue in Franccedilois Maspero's les passagers du Roissy-express." *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies*, Volume 8, Issue 2 Spring 2004, pp 127-134.

Kalinowska, Izabela. "Exile and Polish Cinema: From Mickiewicz and Slowacji to Kieslowski." In *Realms of Exile,* Dominica Radulescu, ed. Oxford: Lexington Books, 2002.

Kickasola, Joseph. *The Films of Krzysztof Kieslowski: The Liminal Image.* New York: Continuum, 2006.

Konwicki, Tadeusz. *A minor apocalypse.* Normal, Ill.: Dalkey Archive Press, 1999.

Koos, Leonard R. "Films Without Borders: An Introduction." Special Issue of *Post Script*, XXV:2 (Winter-Spring 2006).

Kundera, Milan. "The Tragedy of Central Europe." *New York Review of Books*, 26 April 1984, pp 33-38.
-------- *L'Ignorance.* Paris: Gallimard, 2003.

Laderman, David. *Driving Visions: Exploring the Road Movie.* Austin: UT Austin Press, 2002.

Liebig, Etienne. *Les pauvres préfèrent la banlieue.* Paris: Michalon, 2010.

Lindeperg, Sylvie. *Les écrans de l'ombre: La Seconde Guerre mondiale dans le cinéma français (1944-1969).* Paris: CNRS Editions, 1997.

Loshitzky, Yosefa. *Screening Strangers:Migration and Diaspora in Contemporary European Cinema.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.

Louichon, Brigitte. "Lydie Salvayre: 'Parler au nom d'Olympe.'" In Nathalie Morello and Catherine Rodgers, eds. *Nouvelles Ecrivaines: Nouvelles voix?* Amsterdam: Rodolpi, 2002. 309-25.

Lionnet, Françoise and Shih, Shu-mei. *Minor Transnationalism.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

Lyotard, Jean-Francois. *La Condition Postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir.* Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1979.

McGonagle, Joseph., 'The end of an era: Marseilles at the millennium in Robert Guédiguian's *La Ville est tranquille* (2001)', *Studies in French Cinema, Vol* 7: 3, 2007.

Al Malik, Abd. *La guerre des banlieues n'aura pas lieu.* Paris: Le cherche midi, 2010.

Marteau, Stephanie and Tournier, Pascale. *Black blanc beur… La guerre civile aura-t-elle vraiment lieu?* Paris: Albin Michel, 2006.

Marx-Scouras, Danielle. "Rock the Hexagon," *Contemporary French and Francophone Studies,* Vol. 8, No. 1 January 2004, 51-61.

--------*La France de Zebda: faire de la musique un acte politique.* Paris: Autrement, 2005.

Maxwell, Anne. *Colonial Photography and Exhibitions: Representations of the Native*. London; New York: Leicester University Press, 1999.

Mayer, Nonna. *Ces Francais qui votent FN.* Paris: Flammarion, 1999.

--------. *Ces Français qui votent Le Pen*. Paris: Flammarion, 2002.

Mazierska, Eva and Rascaroli, Lauren. *Crossing New Europe: Postmodern Travel and the European Road Movie.* London: Wallflower Press, 2006.

------ *From Moscow to Madrid: Postmodern Cities, European Cinema.* London: I.B. Tauris, 2003.

Morris, Alan. *Writers and the Mode Rétro in Post-Gaullist France.* New York: Berg, 1992.

Motte, Warren. *Fables of the Novel.* Normal: Dalkey Archive Press, 2003.

------- "Voices in Her Head," *Substance* #104, Vol. 33, no. 2, 2004, 13-29.

------- *Fiction now: the French novel in the twenty-first century.* Normal: Dalkey Archive Press, 2008.

Naficy, Hamid. *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Noiriel, Gérard. *Atlas de l'immigration en France.* Paris: Autrement, 2002.
---------. *The French Melting Pot: Immigration, Citizenship and National Identity.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

Perrineau, Pascal. *Le symptôme Le Pen : radiographie des électeurs du Front national.* Paris : Fayard, 1997.

Pirozzi, Gianni. *Le quartier de la fabrique.* Paris: Editions Payot & Rivages, 2009.

Powrie, Phil, ed. *The cinema of France*. London; New York: Wallflower, 2006.

Schnapper, Dominique. *Community of Citizens: The Modern Idea of Nationality.* New Brunswick: Transation Publishers, 1998.

O'Shaughnessy, Martin. *The New Face of Political Cinema: Commitment in French Film since 1995.* London: Berghahn Books, 2007.

Rees-Roberts, Nick. "Down and out: immigrant poverty and queer sexuality in Sébastien Lifshitz's *Wild Side* (2004)," *Studies in French Cinema* 7: 2, 2007.

Rosello, Mireille. *Declining the stereotype.* Hanover: University Press of New England, 1998.
--------. *Postcolonial Hospitality.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001.
-------- . "The 'Rachid System' in Serge Meynard's L'Oeil au beur(re) noir." In Dina Sherzer, ed. *Cinema, Colonialism, Postcolonialism: Perspectives from the French and Francophone Worlds.* Austin: UT Austin Press, 1996.

Ross, Kristin. *May '68 and its Afterlives.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Rousso, Henry. *The Vichy Syndrome.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.

Salvayre, Lydie. *La Vie Commune.* Paris: Julliard, 1991.
-------- *La puissance des mouches.* Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1995.
--------*La Compagnie des spectres.* Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1997.
--------*Les Belles Ames.* Paris: Editions de Seuil, 2000.
--------*Passag à l'ennemi.* Editions de Seuil, 2004.
--------*La méthode Mila*. Paris: Editions de Seuil, 2005.

Schalk, David. *The Spectrum of Political Engagement.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.

Schilt, Thibaut. 'Hybrid Strains in Olivier Ducastel and Jacques Martineau's Drôle de Félix (2000)', Contemporary French and Francophone Studies, 11:3.

Séebold, Eric**.** *Essai de situation des pamphlets de Louis-Ferdinand Céline***.** Charente : Du Lérot, 1985.

Sherzer, Dina, ed. *Cinema, Colonialism, Postcolonialism: Perspectives from the French and Francophone Worlds.* Austin: UT Austin Press, 1996.

Silverman, Max. *Facing Postmodernity: Contemporary French thought on culture and society*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Stora, Benjamin. *La gangrene et l'oubli.* Paris: Découverte, 1999.

Stovall, Tyler. "From Red Belt to Black Belt: Race, Class and Urban Marginality in Twentieth-Century Paris." In *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France.* Tyler Stovall and Susan Peabody, eds. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

Tarr, Carrie**.** *Reframing difference : beur and banlieue filmmaking in France*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005.
--------"Maghrebi-French (Beur) Cinema in Context." *Cineaste,* Winter 2007, pp 32-37.

Thomas, Dominic. *Black France: Colonialism, Immigration, and Transnationalism.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007.

Tshimange, Charles. *Frenchness and the African Diaspora*: *Identity and Uprising in Contemporary France*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009.

Todorova, Maria *Imaging the Balkans. Oxford; New Yor : Oxford University Press, 2009.*

Toussaint, Jean-Philippe. *La Télévision.* Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1997.
------ *La Salle de bains.* Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1985.

Vincendeau, Ginette. *La haine.* Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005.

Westbrook, John. "Cultivating Kitsch: Cultural Bovéism." *Sites: The Journal of 20th – century/Contemporary French Studies.* Fall 2002.

Weil, Patrick. *La république et sa diversité: Immigration, intégration, discrimination.* Paris: Seuil, 2005.

Wilder, Gary. "Panafricanism and the Republican Political Sphere." In *The Color of Liberty: Histories of Race in France.* Tyler Stovall and Susan Peabody, eds. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

Winock, Michel ed. *Histoire de l'extrême droite en France.* Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1994.

Zizek, Slavoj. *The Fright of Real Tears : Krzysztof Kieslowski Between Thoery and Post-Theory.* London : British Film Institute, 2001.