

Cosmopolitanism and Beur Representation in Contemporary Literary and Film Genres

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Abstract

This thesis addresses the shifting genres, themes, and modalities of what I term “a cosmopolitan register” in *Beur* diasporic writings and cinematic productions in French, spanning from the late twentieth century to 2016. It focuses on how these texts problematise space and borders shaped by racialised, colonial, national and religious dynamics. Central to the analysis is the tension between inherited legacies of French colonialism and *Beur* resistance to this, especially as they operate inside/outside private spaces of the *Chaâba/banlieues*. While mainstream French discourse often casts these spaces negatively, they are framed as vital reservoirs of Algerian religious, cultural and national heritage; a duality that both affirms *Beur* rooted subjectivities and undermines their potential for cosmopolitan mobilities. The study argues that *Beur* authors and filmmakers mobilise a diverse set of genres to reimagine *Beur* lives within and outside private spaces of deprivation. Realism offers critical insight into Orientalist frameworks that confine *Beur* identities to geographies of exclusion. The comedy, war and the road-movie genres facilitate a reorientation towards alternative diasporic imaginaries, either in French central areas or even in distant diasporic spaces, reflecting themes in a way that echo diasporic concerns. The diasporic experience of the characters represented in these texts chart gradually evolving pathways through which, what I refer to as, the “New *Beur* Man” transitions from private, and often marginalised settings to form what I term “homogeneous proximities” with the French mainstream population. This thesis contends that *Beur* literary and cinematic productions undergo a gradual shift from rooted and oppressed mechanisms towards more egalitarian, potentially rootless and assimilationist perspectives of cosmopolitanism. I see these writings’ changing cosmopolitan trajectories of *Beur* subjectivities as influenced by the contradictions

of the French Republican model, wherein the dynamics of integration are governed by a logic of uniformity and dominant narratives of national identity.

Dedication

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis sparks from my interest in late twentieth and early twentieth-first century *Beur* literary and cinematic output. It surveys literature and film published or produced from the mid-1980s to 2016, namely Azouz Begag's *Le Gone du Chaâba* (1986), Djamel Bensalah's *Il était une Fois dans L'Oued* (2005) and *Beur sur la Ville* (2011), Rachid Bouchareb's *Indigènes* (2006), Mathieu Kassovitz and Rachid Djaïdani's *La Haine* (1995), Djaïdani's *Boumkoeur* (1999), and *Tour de France* (2016). No previous attention has been given to the systematic and profound analysis of these literary and cinematic works as a cohesive group assembled for the first time in this thesis; a perspective that has yet to be explored in existing scholarship. These texts are characterised by their diverse and distinct yet compelling genres and cosmopolitan styles. These works depict renewed interest in the intersection between "borders" understood in multiple ways, and religious, nationalist, and cultural signs of differences in the *Beur* context. For the last two decades, the focus of these writers and directors has developed to articulate their subjectivities in contemporary French diaspora in the face of the limitations of assimilatory models of cultural and religious diversity. They examine the difficulty of being part of the French nation, as demonstrated by the establishment of the French suburban *Bidonvilles* or *banlieues*.

For *Beurs* and their immigrant parents alike, these poor, low-income, and multi-dwelling housing regions constituted their first settlement in late 1950s and 1960s France. They were part of the project that responded to the post-war residual crisis involving Maghrebi immigrants. Rather than merging with their rich ancestral heritage into the

predominant French societal framework, Algerians and their French-born descendants were cocooned inside these enclaves known as *ZUS (Zones Urbaines Sensibles)*, initially created by the French government. In his analysis of the geopolitical complexities of the *banlieue*, Dimitri Almeida contends that its borders are erected as a tool to restrict North-African communities' movement. Particularly, its isolation is grounded on 'rules of affiliation according to a diverse set of categories including nationality, ethnicity, education, gender, age, religion, sexual identity, socio-economic status and, of course, place of residence' (Almeida, 2021, p. 377). The marginalised suburbs have often been characterised by stereotyping, urban decay, and substandard housing, contributing significantly to the stagnation of migrants, and a pervasive lack of mobility in their lives.

The condition of *Beur* and immigrant populations is reinforced by the French Republican model's paradoxical demand for inclusion, which is masked as secularism. Though often framed positively in the French press, this model subtly instils and maintains boundaries of difference. This situation raises critical questions about France's efforts to set limits to those *banlieusards* (residents of the *banlieues*), those who as Emma Chebinou observes, 'fail to be considered French' (Chebinou, 2024, p. 12) by what he terms 'the *disabled Republic* which refuses to hear and see' them (p. 182). This Republican project thus creates the distinction between those who are considered as fully part of the Republican fabric and those cast as Other, or 'unworthy of "Frenchness"' (Tchumkan, 2015, p. 1). The ideological impetus behind the establishment of decentralised suburbs is driven by the French desire to repress Algerian cultural expressions and national and religious signs of diversity, which are framed as posing a threat to French national cohesion.

Sociological accounts of the migratory phenomenon conducted in late twentieth-century France assert '*l'assimilation difficile*' (the difficult assimilation) faced by Algerian immigrants and their children, attributing this struggle to their cultural differences within the larger French Republican system (Khellil, 1991, p. 45). This official material also reflects the guiding principle of *Laïcité*, which, in advocating inclusion and secularism, often works to contain visible markers of Algerian identity by relegating them to the outskirts. David Gordon (1962) identifies this process of cultural assimilation as being orchestrated by a dual logic: 'the one is ethnocentric – to dominate. The other is generous and progressive – to liberate' (Gordon, 1962, p. 4). This contradictory dynamic is further articulated by Max Silverman, who describes the French Republican model as intrinsically paradoxical. The immigrant subject is told 'you can and you cannot be like us, you are both same and different at one and the same time' (Silverman, 2007, p. 634). While the model purports to offer inclusion, it functions to 'strip' minorities of their particularities, thereby limiting their access to French citizenship (p. 630). Besides, in seeking 'to convert the Other into the same', its mechanisms of homogeneity make 'the boundaries of the Other [...], paradoxically, fixed ever more firmly' (p. 630). Similarly, Nicolas Bancel *et al.* confirm that the model is consistent with the colonial renunciation of the model of heterogeneity within a universal national identity wherein '*la République ne saurait accepter les différences sociales ou culturelles*' (the Republic cannot accept social or cultural differences) (Bancel *et al.*, 2003, p. 28). Rather, the process of 'absorption' enacted by the nation requires "*rendre française les populations incorporées à l'espace national*" (to render French the populations incorporated into the national space) (p. 98). With its fundamental tenet of homogeneity, the integration of difference in French transnational spheres is a hard-earned privilege for Algerian Arab/*Berber* Muslim immigrants and their *Beur* descendants. The contextual material exploring the paradoxical ideals of

French republicanism will be utilised in this thesis to examine the work's representation of *Beur* diasporic inclusion.

1-From the *Banlieue* to the March: French Republicanism and the Right to Difference:

The ghettoisation of Algerian difference within the *banlieues* triggered persecutions, poverty and a swift change of the political atmosphere in the French diaspora. A series of anti-racist movements were ignited throughout France, notably *La Marche des Beures*, also *La Marche* of 1983. The March is identified by Laura Reeck as 'the longest and largest nonviolent demonstration in French history' (Reeck, 2011, p. xi). Inspired by Martin Luther King's civil rights' activism, the protests were launched in Marseilles and attended by thousands of young *Beur* demonstrators and activists from different French cities who all finally converged in Paris. Led by Toumi Djaidja, a son of an Algerian immigrant family acting as the Lyonnaise community organiser, the march was deemed as the first national protest joined by 'over 100,000 young demonstrators in Paris on the final day of the six-week March' who all demanded political and social recognition (Jones, 2006, p. 94). The March assisted in highlighting *Beur* or *Rebeu*, the verlan term for Arab, as isolated entities collectively struggling for political change. In revealing the social exclusion endured by *Beur* marginalised groups and other minorities, the protestors called for Algerian/*Beur* integration that respected difference, encapsulated in the slogan of "*Vivre ensemble avec nos différences dans une société solidaire*"¹ (living together with our

¹ All quotations originally in French have been translated by myself, unless stated otherwise.

differences in an equal society) (Pigenet and Tartakowsky, 2014). Kathryn A. Kleppinger emphasises how *La March des Beures* was intended to unite the immigrant population under one voice. She declares that 'these activists glossed over differences in favour of a broader identity that could effectively promote a new engagement with French society' (2015, p. 85). These debates were ultimately framed around the notion of "*le droit à la différence*" (the right to difference) (Yonnet, 1993; Hargreaves and McKinney, 1997), constituting in the Algerian demand for recognition and equal citizenship.

Along its political dimensions *littérature mineur*, *La Marche des Beurs* further represented a cultural affirmation. Abdellali Hajjat underscores this dual role, arguing that the March symbolised '*à la fois l'immense soif d'égalité et l'apparition des enfants d'immigrés maghrébins dans l'espace public français*' (both the immense thirst for equality and the appearance of children of Maghrebi immigrants in French public spaces) (2014, p. 671). Such initiatives further encompass *Beur* reclamation of suppressed aspects of their heritage. As Paul Silverstein explains, one key factor grounding *Beur* youth's determination to join the March is the appreciation they have come to develop as teenagers in association with their Algerian cultural and religious heritage, and which 'had been obfuscated in school' (Silverstein, 2004, p. 152). A second key motivation pertains to their urge to actively resist the pervasively biased and discriminatory practices they encounter in their everyday lives (p. 152). This struggle is compounded by the French environment which, as Alec Hargreaves argues, leaves little opportunity for individuals to connect with and understand the legacy of their culture, particularly Islam (Hargreaves, 1991, p. 49). Additionally, although a handful of first-generation Algerian immigrants initiated different educational schemes to redress the lack of religious knowledge for their offspring, 'Islam has a much weaker hold on second generation members of

the immigrant community' (Murugkar, 1994, p. 2477). While these heated debates locate Algerian diasporic struggles for equality, they point to a form of "integration with difference" which they aim to obtain in French society and which I shall return to later.

The French authorities' response to The March, however, seemed sadly perfunctory as its political agencies were meant to uproot French Republican policies of acculturation and assimilation. These policies originally consisted in the process of "frenchifying" former colonial subjects, including the Arabs/*Berbers* of Algeria and their descendants. According to Valerie Orlando, this approach is currently applicable to preserve a 'homogeneous', 'unitarian' republican model subverting of other peripheral ethnicities (Orlando, 2003, p. 395). It directly undermines Algerian immigrant groups' slogan and claim for '*le droit à la différence*', given that the latter poses a threat to its universal ideals of the French Republic since Rousseau and the French Revolution of 1789 (Orlando, 2003, pp. 397-398). At the same time, the insistence on French universalism has raised controversy about the place of Algerian religious, ethnic and cultural expression in diasporic contexts. Despite the efforts of *Beur* activists to alert the French government to its social unfairness and exclusionary practices, racial discrimination, hate crimes and the rejection of difference are still on the rise (Silverstein, 2004, p. 129). In this light, *La Marche* has become not only a symbol of peaceful resistance, but also of the violent and heated tensions that erupt when France's assimilationist ideals are contested.

La Marche became the target of brutal police assaults against *Beur* youth, igniting violent clashes that wreaked havoc on French property, law and order (Kleppinger, 2015). Unfortunately, the initially unified movement soon started to splinter and appeared to be

losing momentum as the protestors lost all hopes for change (Kleppinger, 2015, p. 85). In addition to the fact that there was hardly any cooperation or sympathy from French citizens, aside from a few allied groups on the left (Beaud and Masclet, 2006), the political leaders and journalists mutually persisted in viewing and portraying the protestors according to their status as *Beur*. In the 1990s, 'with the economic climate worse still', one of the symptoms for the impotence of the post-March era is that the total number of unemployed immigrants and their French-born descendants remained stable (Beaud and Masclet, 2006). By 2001, the situation became more dire, with immigrants increasingly becoming part of the underclass, suggests Kleppinger (2015), and by the same year, Didier Fassin explains that 'as industry's need for unskilled labour has diminished considerably, immigrants swell the ranks of the unemployed and are three times more likely than nationals to have no job' (Fassin, 2001, p. 5). The post-March trajectories reflect key socio-political barriers that have continued to marginalise *Beur* communities despite their early peaceful protest.

The outright hostility towards *La Marche* has come to epitomise the colonial manifestations of the long-standing Franco-Algerian enmity, shaping *Beur* representations in France. Similar to Algerians during the War of Independence (1954-1962), *Beur jeunes ethniques* (ethnic *Beur* youth) were subjected to physical and psychological abuse during *La Marche*. This reinforced a narrative of historical continuity with practices of French imperialistic torture, framing the *banlieues* as suburban zones of control shaped by the lingering legacies of colonial violence (Donadey, 1996; Tarr, 2005; Tchumkan, 2015). By enforcing strict measures to curb what they perceived as *Beur* youth delinquency, the French authorities overlooked the possibility of rectifying past wrongdoings. As Ahmed Boubeker notes, 'the clocks were set back to the time of an eternal France of assimilation', suggesting

that *La Marche*'s claim for difference posed a threat to Republicanism (Boubeker, 2009, p. 74).

2- *Beur* Cultural Production and the Legacy of Colonial Assimilation:

The ongoing, unaltered reality of the *Beur* diaspora, characterised by bleak existential experiences, has become the focal point of literary and cinematic expression. This socio-political climate gave rise to what is known as the *Littérature Beur* of the 1980s notably marked by its literary inauguration of a whole generation of *Beur* writers like Mehdi Charef, Azouz Begag and Farida Belghoul. In *Immigration and Identity in Beur Fiction*, Hargreaves (1997) argues that the formation of *Beur* identity in these texts is inextricably linked to the socio-historical context of the period, particularly *La Marche pour L'égalité et contre le Racism*. Their writings mainly arise from the colonial, socio-economic and political malaise plaguing the *Beurs*, and are particularly shaped by the ongoing challenges they face in navigating border controls, which continues to assert their sense of difference. This imagined position of resistance reflects a recurring theme of opposition to French assimilation, echoing the broader (anti-colonial) struggle of Algerians during the colonial era.

I explore these texts in the light of the ways in which a postcolonial sensibility bears on Algerians'/*Beur's* reluctance to let go of their cultural ties. This will be examined as part of new diasporic integration imaginaries depicted in the texts studied, that are firmly based on defying longstanding colonial logics. As Zakaria Fatih notes, the Franco-Algerian imperialistic cultural policies stand prominent in the repression of Algerian differences, keeping their religious and nationalist distinctions at bay (2013). In this context, Azzeddine Haddour's observations serve as a significant contextual resource to clarify concepts of integration. His

influential research traces contemporary French assimilation back on the Algerian mainland as orchestrated by destroying Quranic schools, excluding the Arabic language, and therefore disavowing Muslim identity. Reflecting upon Albert Camus' *The Guest* (1957), Haddour maintains a tough stand against French assimilation discourses, claiming that Algerian culture was 'displaced' by the coloniser. In other words, there was no earnest endeavour made by the French to call for assimilation (2003). Instead, the primary colonial objective, as elucidated by Bancel *et al.*, was to '*transformer les colonisés en Français, les assimiler*' (to transform the colonised into French, to assimilate them' (Bancel *et al.*, 2003, p. 33). Because the writers in question value contact with their Algerian origins, they prompt readers to question the physical, cultural and (post)colonial implications of borders, which will be seen as impacting both the *Beur* youth and their relation to both their Algerian colonial past and contemporary French policies.

The shift in nomenclature from late twentieth-century *literature des Beur* and *Beur* film towards *La Litterature de Banlieue* has triggered numerous scholarly discussions over the thematic concerns of *Beur* literary and cinematic creations in contemporary discourse. Mireille le Breton notes that the thematic articulation of *literature des Beur* reflects '*un paradigme de la victimisation*' (a paradigm of victimisation) (2013, p. 13). Whereas the former is involved with '*Le marqueur socioculturel ethnique des années 1980 et 1990*' (the ethnic socio-cultural marker of the years 1980 and 1990), *La Litterature de Banlieue* exhibits '*un marqueur socioculturel géographique*' (a geographic sociocultural marker) (Le Breton, 2013, p. 13). The issue of geographical immobility constitutes a major issue for the *banlieue* writer who is prevented from discursively and physically penetrating the white French mainstream.

Like *La Litterature de Banlieue*, the composite term *écrivain de banlieue* has been widely disputed by many scholars. Laura Reeck (2011) writes at the conference of the *Institut du Monde Arabe*, taking place in Paris (2007), that several *banlieue* writers were unable to set the phrase *les récits de vie en banlieue* (Life stories from the *banlieue*) to a single definition. There was uncertainty amongst the writers in question whether one must have first-hand experience of life in the suburbs to be considered deserving of that title. Others declared their displeasure with the label altogether. Premising her arguments on the analysis of Azouz Begag's *Le Gone du Chaâba*, Farida Belghoul's *Georgette* (1986) and Leïla Sebbar's *Sherazade* (1982), Reeck goes on to argue that while the *Beur* author is concerned with the pursuit of legitimacy, *le écrivain de banlieue's* purpose is to challenge 'limits' imposed by the French authorities so as to specifically fix them to their marginalised origins (Reeck, 2011, p. 119). The divergent opinions cast doubt on fixed notions of identity, and as such, these first-wave *Beur* thinkers urgently grapples with the relationship between geographical movement and *Beur* cultural representation. I contend that the late twentieth-century *Beur* writers who have been unable to find a voice inside the *banlieue* long to break free from postcolonial constraints placed upon them, much like the protesters of *La Marche*, who were mostly confined to the *banlieues*. The attempt they make to advance to other central parts indicates a sense of determination to bring down colonial boundaries and have their identity and difference expressed beyond limits. Providing the starting point of my research, I explore the changes in the portrayal of *Beur* identity as they seek a departure from geographies of exclusion to broader, more open diasporic spaces.

Similarly, *Cinéma des Beur* (or the *Beur* cinema) as a subgenre of Francophone cinema by *Beur* directors, has been devoted to debates about the feasibility of integrating the

minority *Beur* population into mainstream French society (*French & Francophone Film: A Research Guide*, 2021). It equally seeks to depict *Beur* social stigmatisation and discrimination in the *banlieues*. Its reception immortalises the depiction of the disquieting facets of Franco-Algerian colonial violence. Postcolonial themes in these films mainly resurface in response to the 1999 French political climate officially recognising past Franco-Algerian conflicts as a formal 'war' rather than simply domestic disturbance, downplaying its significance. In this regard, Guy Austin assesses the colonially inspired tensions in later 1980s and 1990s Francophone cinema to bear intersections between France and its previous Algerian colony in their diverse themes and concerns. Austin draws on Anne Donadey (1996) to argue that the incessant violence against immigrants and their offspring during the 1980s emanates from what he terms 'Algeria Syndrome'. Donadey describes this as a situation in which anti-*Beur* sentiments are yet to be healed and the seeds of the present tension lie in the countries' shared colonial past, which continues to haunt their present. Having many films shot elsewhere (other than Algeria), Austin reflects on *Beur* producers' disinclination to return to Algeria as a site of postcolonial 'trauma' (Austin, 2009, p. 116). While this cinematic trend seeks to negotiate facets of past Franco-Algerian aggression, however, its 'expression of minority culture' came to be criticised for its battles with censorship, the limitation of its audiences, and problems of distribution which had the adverse effect of limiting its global popularity (Bluher, 2001, p. 79). Its cinematic landscape is similarly described by Carrie Tarr (2005) as negotiating minimal budgets and limited cultural content, compounding its marginality compared to other minority cinemas in the diaspora. Tarr particularly positions these *Beur*-authored films through their realistic and postcolonial contours which provide disempowered themes compared to the more current *Cinéma de Banlieue* marked by the release of Kassovitz' *La Haine* (1995). The more contemporary themes of gender, *Beur* male

sexuality, and liberation are emphasised in her interpretation of the later *banlieue* filmic output (Tarr, 2005). I shall argue that the *banlieue*-set films shift the focus away from the previous articulation of *Beur*-specific narratives of integration within the *Chaâba*. Rather than continuing earlier forms of resistance, these films adopt more ambivalent and obscure affiliations to Algerian religious and cultural legacies, signalling a shift in how identity and mobility are negotiated on screen.

Post-Beur cinema reflects a significant thematic evolution, transitioning from the postcolonial narrative characteristic of *Beur* cinema to more cross-border representations of identity. Will Higbee (2013) offers a compelling analysis of this shift, tracing the trajectory from the *Beur* filmmaking of the 1980s, mainly via Mehdi Charef's *Le Thé au Harem d'Arch**Ahmed* (1983), to the more expansive thematic concerns of post-*Beur* cinema from the 2000s onwards. Higbee's critique of 'the excessive, even obsessive impulse' of reviewers to profile North-African *émigré* filmmaking based on *Beur* racial and ethnic background serves as the basis for his book (Higbee, 2013, p. 21). He asserts that the new wave of *Beur* filmmaking produces broader trajectories beyond the binary representations related to Self/Other. Rather, *Beur* filmmaking's complexity and interconnectedness render it exceedingly challenging to attempts at categorising its colonial histories as 'French' or 'Algerian' (Higbee, 2013, p. 64). Higbee's discussion effectively maps a shift towards *Beur* cinematic engagement with more open cross-border spaces showcasing sympathetic encounters shared between *Beur* and French subjects.

However, Higbee's work omits to conduct a more critical reading of the films' painstakingly biased movement towards an unproblematic 'Frenchness' as a destination for *Beur* subjects and endpoint of their integration. In contrast to Higbee, I shall argue that the

post-*Beur* cinematic landscape, despite its outward turn from explicit postcolonial conflict, continues to reproduce unequal power dichotomies, albeit through less aggressive and confrontational modes. I shall focus on what I will argue are the cross-border genres — comedy, war film, and the road movie— to examine how post-*Beur* cinema engages with major ideological shifts. These shifts often align with French Republican expectations, which frames ‘integration as a process by which individuals subordinate their particularistic origins and accept membership in a unitary nation-state’ (Blatt, 1997, p. 46). I shall trace the gradually shifting modalities determining Franco-Algerian sympathetic connections in post-*Beur*: *Beur sur la Ville* (Bensalah, 2011), *Il était une fois dans L’Oued* (Bensalah, 2005), and *Tour de France* (Djaïdani, 2016). These films, I argue, endeavour to transcend colonial and contemporary wounds and traumas. In doing so, however, they instigate the ideological move from postcolonial to egalitarian, yet homogeneous dynamics that align with dominant French narratives of assimilation.

3-Cosmopolitanism from the Margins: The Rearticulation of *Beur* Difference:

Pivotal to this thesis’s theorisation of *Beur* cultural, religious, and nationalist representation vis-à-vis the different geographical private/public settings is Kwame Anthony Appiah’s pioneering *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2006). His concept of ‘rooted cosmopolitanism’ will serve as an umbrella theory around which the chapters are built. His cosmopolitanism presents a revived engagement with ethical theory, a branch of philosophy guiding human behaviour, which addresses kinship, heritage culture and family in addition to the value of universal humanity. Appiah begins by discussing the origin of the term which derives from the Greek word *kosmopolites*. Broadly speaking, it was coined by the

Greek Cynics flourishing in the 4th century BC to denote the notion of “citizen of the cosmos” (Appiah, 2006, p. 9). The foundation of Appiah’s more self-aware type of cosmopolitics, however, relies on the foregrounding and acceptance of local allegiances. The dual composition of ‘the value of particular human lives’ and ‘the value of human life’ (p. 10) are given serious consideration in his cosmopolitan paradigm. The first strand, “roots”, describes the special affinities that an individual shares towards their ancestral, religious, and cultural past, and which gives worth and power to their sense of origin. The second strand on the other hand deals with what he terms “wings”, and it emerges out of ‘what we owe to strangers’ (Appiah, 2006, p. 70), those outside our immediate affiliations. Specifically, it encompasses the fundamental human obligations we share with one another ranging from equality, compassion, sympathy and understanding, among other things. In this context, the uniqueness of difference, or “roots”, serves as the foundation for the cosmopolitan dialogue; a dialogue where people may not fully agree, yet still encourage cross-cultural curiosity, recognition and respect for the distinctiveness of others.

Appiah’s concept of “roots” will be approached in this thesis to address the texts’ articulation of *Beur* particularistic subjectivities, as they renegotiate nationalist, religious and cultural traces of distinctions, anchored in the private *Chaâba*, which symbolically extends back to Algeria and its colonial past. Conversely, the concept of “wings” will help analyse the texts’ engagement with cross-border fluidities, as they write/screen the *Beur* out of their postcolonial exclusion and Islamophobic profiling. Together, “roots” and “wings” form a dual-axis framework that captures the complexities of the *Beur* subjectivities, caught between inherited histories and the desire for belonging. My approach to rootedness and cosmopolitanism in these diasporic settings is also influenced by my own background, coming

from a long line of Algerian, *Berber* patriots, while also being exposed to geographical mobilities involving various multicultural connections. This unique blend of rootedness and fluidity informs my understanding of identity, belonging and the complex dynamics of diasporic existence. My theoretical framework thus enables me to consider multiple narrative genres spanning different geographical locations, all negotiated through their cosmopolitan rooted scopes. It also illuminates how *Beur* literature and film respond to the assimilative pressures of French Republican mechanisms, especially impacting their characters' sense of origin and capacity to consolidate difference in public spaces.

A central aspect of this thesis discusses the way *Beur* narratives draw on the articulation of “universalism” and “ambivalence” to represent *Beur* subjectivities both within and beyond the *banlieues*. This analysis will primarily focus on the discourse of “roots” as key to the idea of universalism, highlighting both the pressures of assimilation and the need to transcend contemporary French diasporic and colonial conflicts. In his discussion of the cosmopolitan tradition, Gideon Baker comments that ‘since identity and difference are mutually constitutive, attempts to transcend the dichotomy in the direction of singularity, as much as in the name of universality, are fundamentally flawed’ (2009, p. 109). The articulation of an identity able to reconcile both the particular and the universal constitutes Baker's problematisation. Drawing on Bhabha's notion of the “third space” which typically fosters productive engagement with difference and the emergence of innovative forms of subject positions, he highlights the potential of liminality to fuse identity and difference. However, Baker argues that this potential is undermined by a so-called universality which disrupts the productive function of the third space. It is meant to be productive in the sense that the Otherness of the stranger/host ought to be legitimised by the guest and not contained by

assimilatory modes of control (2009). Baker's theoretical observations will help explore the tensions in the concept of *Beur* as "universal" in their public integration which troubles and depoliticises the contours of *Beur* "integration with difference". I shall investigate how *Beur* authors' negotiation of the past is revoked in the name of French national unity. Put differently, these works implicitly undergo, what Baker terms, 'the violence of assimilation' (2009, p. 109) in their search for other new cross-border ways of being a *Beur* in France. Baker's theorisation is integral in the condemnation of uniformity which constitutes an indispensable attribute of French *Laïcité* and its ideologic stance of: "integration with secularism" and which goes against the grain of respecting *Beur* legitimate difference.

Regarding the notion of "ambivalence", the thesis relies on Homi K. Bhabha's theoretical work on hybridity and diasporic locations. I utilise his concepts to interrogate *Beur* works' experimentation with mimicry which is, as Bhabha argues, 'constructed around an ambivalence' (Bhabha, 1984, p. 122). For Bhabha, 'in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference', as attributes that disturb the very authority it seeks to imitate (p. 122). In the context of *Beur* literature and cinema, ambivalent spaces will be explored alongside their different intersections with concepts of rootedness. In *Le Gone du Chaâba*, such ambivalence is grounded in the text's construction of empowering spaces that are embedded in the Algerian past, enabling characters to simultaneously inhabit and resist dominant French structures. Particularly, the narrative disables assimilation through what David Huddart describes as the refusal of 'an exaggerated copying of language, culture, manners and ideas' (2006, p. 39). This anti-assimilatory stance will be seen through the significance it offers to *Beur* renegotiation of "roots" and their incorporation into, rather than erasure by, French mainstream. Conversely, the ambivalence in *Boumkoeur*, as well as

post-*Beur* genres of comedy and war films, poses a more sceptical reflection on the notion of “roots”. This reading of *Beur* ambivalence, again, will unfold through the French Republican model which ‘ensures that any ambivalence remains firmly repressed and displaced’, and thus pronounces the postcolonial discourse of Manichaeian binaries ‘between universalism and particularism, assimilation and difference, citizen and subject, civilization and barbarity, secularism and faith, public and private’ (Silverman, 2007, p. 631). These works will be seen as contesting the fixity of cultural origin by exposing their instability within the logic of the French nation.

While Baker’s and Appiah’s cosmopolitan models offer a valuable framework for examining how *Beur* cross-border writings and films engage with universal paradigms of identity, they fall short regarding the discussion of *Beur* potential to legitimise their ethnic and religious differences, no matter how “assimilable” they may appear. To address this gap, the thesis turns to Delphine Fongang’s cosmopolitan model of ‘Afropolitanism’ (2017) which complicates perspectives on hybridity by foregrounding the constraints placed on African subjectivities in diasporic contexts. Fongang’s reading of Teju Cole’s *Open City* (2011) presents African subjectivities as being displaced due to their position of liminality within postcolonial contexts. She explains that however well-educated and privileged the African individual might be, their qualifications do not guarantee their admission into the discriminatory Western system. This insight is particularly relevant to the *Beur* cross-border genres, where cultural, religious and national identities remain suspect, surveyed and obscured, even when *Beur* characters meet the requirements of integration and citizenship.

For Fangong, the difficulty in adapting to or being accepted into metropolitan spaces reflects the idea that 'intellectual capital alone is insufficient' to surpass African social marginalisation (p. 150). Unless there is 'already a validation of inclusive, egalitarian heterogeneity, of tolerance of difference and Otherness', Fangong argues, the African subject is bound to their ethnic marginalisation (p. 146). Racial disparities in this sense have a direct hand in curtailing the possibility for African and particularly the Nigerian subject to achieve full inclusion into Western transnational diasporic spaces. Therefore, diaspora becomes a liminal, unstable space where the navigation for belonging is consistently foiled by systematic exclusion. This reading of Afropolitanism resonates with Algerian existential rootedness in *Le Gone du Chaâba*. Here, *Beur* adaptation to the hybrid agency of intellectual capital is contested and deeply shaped by persistent, private and internalised stereotypes that act as invisible borders. These barriers continue to obstruct *Beur* subjects from approximating the French Other, even when they fulfil the intellectual standards imposed upon them. Moreover, I shall argue that the Republican principle of universalism reasserts itself not only in peripheral spaces yet also features in central spaces external to the *banlieues*, functioning as a mechanism that neutralises or counteracts *Beur* subjectivities associated to their state of Algerianness.

Gayatri Spivak's essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Provides a foundational framework for this discussion, questioning whether postcolonial subjects are constrained by Western discourse in their ability to define their own existence. This inquiry serves as a starting point for examining the mechanisms of ethnic stereotyping faced by marginalised groups, such as the *Beur*, who are often constructed as the Other. Spivak's concept that 'proper names' are converted 'into common nouns, translating them, and using them as sociological evidence'

(Spivak, 1992, p. 102) is particularly useful for deconstructing the objectification of cross-race groups striving to assert their existence in the *banlieues*. Similarly, the postcolonial perspectives of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (2003) and Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1962) provide crucial theoretical lenses for comprehending the processes of reduction that affect the marginalised Other. For Said, the postcolonial subject is constructed as an "Oriental" inhabiting a decentralised "East" and often depicted as a threatening figure to the Western imagination. This construction is integral to understanding how the *Beur* are perceived and reduced within the French mainstream. Fanon's analysis of the violent processes of dehumanisation is also crucial, as it illuminates the psychological and physical violence that manifests in the form of identity crises and in physical conflict. additionally, the colonised propensity for violence. Fanon's concept of the colonised subject's propensity for violence helps explain the *Beur*'s reclamation of justice, sometimes through force, as a response to systemic marginalisation. While postcolonial discourse often stifles such voices, the thesis redirects this issue towards cosmopolitan dynamics.

Another cosmopolitan stream of thought which I engage with, and which redirects the path to diasporic narratives of the "subaltern" and "oriental", entails a form of "cosmopolitanism from below". For example, Katharyne Mitchell defines the subaltern as 'typically identified with marginalised groups, especially those whose subordinate status makes it difficult, if not impossible, to represent their own positions and interests' (2007, p. 712). Mitchel goes on to introduce subaltern cosmopolitanism as a practice embedded through subordinate groups' act of undertaking transborder unity to combat ethnic segregation. A similar model 'from below' is deployed by Fuyuki Kurasawa (2004) to champion multi-ethnic sets of solidarities "without bounds" as a manner to contest national tyrannies

and advocate transnational justice. I appropriate this critical conceptualisation of transnational attachments and agencies “from below” to read *La Haine* as a site of insurgent cosmopolitanism, foregrounding the commonality of minority tragedy and multiethnic destiny. I examine how this ideological framework strengthens the wider multicultural trajectories seeking the promotion of cognitive fluidities within marginalised urban spheres. While this model powerfully contests ethnic stereotyping and affirms multicultural networks, I explore how it does not ensure the actual physical mobility for the mixed-race agencies and active webs it champions. These remain politically muffled within national borders. More than that, I demonstrate how the discourse of universal struggle approached by subaltern groups, while unifying, often overshadows the specifically *Beur* affiliations to cultural, religious and linguistic heritage in favour of a more generic subaltern cosmopolitanism.

While the concept of “cosmopolitanism from below” provides a useful lens for reading *La Haine*, highlighting interethnic solidarities among marginalised groups, I also explore alternative forms of “proximity” fostered by cross-border and everyday interactions between *Beur* minorities and the French majority. These interactions, which emerge through more spatially open and less overtly political encounters, are approached via Mica Nava’s concerns in *Visceral Cosmopolitanism: Gender, Culture and the Normalisation of Difference* (2007). Nava’s work centres on how domestic intersections between race, gender and class negotiate what she calls ‘vernacular’, and ‘everyday’, ‘intimate’ encounters with ‘Otherness’ (p. 25). Drawing from a range of multicultural encounters and proximities, such as the romantic adventures of Princess Diana with Egyptian Dodi Al Fayed, the inclusive ethos of the Selfridges department stores and the cultural presence of the Russian Ballets, Nava dismantles the scope of a cosmopolitan register in twentieth-century London. Crucially, Nava interrogates how the

“scattered dispersion” of ethnic minorities and their relative geographic proximity to majority groups in the city of London contribute to the emergence of “visceral” or inward feelings amongst multicultural groups despite the widespread existence of racism. As the formation of spaces of ‘mutuality’ between minority and majority groups is enabled, London, she argues, unlike many other European cities, inwardly responds to the ‘allure of difference’, embracing diversity as a desirable value (p. 7). Public integration, in this context, relies on the cosmopolitan principle of ‘a positive engagement with difference’ (p. 5), which is inherent in ‘the fascination that it exercises for certain people’ (p. 12).

I draw on Nava’s model to initially contrast the “ghettoization” of the *Chaâba/banlieue* as peripheral spaces of socio-economic stigma, containing and defining *Beur* difference. Nava’s framework will be further deployed to analyse the shifting dynamics of cross-border encounters and “proximities” that emerge within more central and inclusive spaces. While these spaces are often shaped by contours of conviviality, ethnic diversity and inclusivity, they tend to obscure what Nava refers to as “the allure of difference” and are marked by *Beur* homogenised experiences. This is useful in interrogating how the public space is frequently constructed as “a site of deviance” implying a model of multicultural inclusion that is more a conditional tolerance predicated upon assimilation. This is particularly problematic when *Beur* religious, cultural and nationalist assertions are viewed as incompatible with shared civic experience. I return to how this model is inimical to the rooted cosmopolitan workings proposed by Appiah, which ‘prize conversations across cultures’ and fundamentally ‘are no friends of uniformity’ (p. 2). As such, significant cosmopolitan engagement becomes intertwined with the politics of sameness that mute the *Beur* diasporic presence.

Another important intervention comes from Berthold Schoene's *The Cosmopolitan Novel* (2009), which looks at the cosmopolitan register deployed in the contemporary British novel. Schoene emphasises the transformative role of literature in recasting a cosmopolitan endeavour in society that seeks to resist the homogenising forces of the globalised world. His literary discussions heavily draw on Jean-Luc Nancy's insights (1986) of what constitutes an "inoperative community", using it as a philosophical anchor to trace the singular connections in novels of a cosmopolitan promise which are also more inclined to demonstrate a flexible and overt sense of world-creative self-formation. His cosmopolitan vision is particularly attentive to the intersection between the local and the global, shedding light on how literary texts negotiate forms and strategies of resistance and agency, especially amongst suburban and marginalised groups situated within English spaces of subalternity. In his fifth chapter, for instance, Schoene discusses the representation of suburbia rendered not as an insular setting, yet as a site tinged with 'local specificity' (2009, p. 154) that expands to affect global dynamics. In this way, suburbia becomes a lens through which to explore how even the most seemingly peripheral sites are entangled in transnational currents of belonging.

This conceptual framework is useful when examining *La Haine*'s radical intervention, particularly its portrayal of multi-ethnic minorities within peripheral urban territories initiating a world-changing challenge to colonial legacies. However, Schoene's vision tends to avoid a deeper engagement with the 'more specific' (p. 42) affinities associated with "home" as a critical marker of memory, legacy, and socio-political agency. These historically situated affiliations play a crucial role in mobilising resistance and framing diasporic subjectivity. Moreover, Schoene critically engages with interpretations of anti-cosmopolitanism that are shaped by what he terms 'dynamic(s) of self-enclosure' and the 'atomisation and nuclear-

family seclusion', a tendency for individuals to withdraw into isolated and self-contained modes of living (p. 42). These claustrophobic dynamics negatively impact cosmopolitan openness and challenge initiatives to future political agency. This insight contributes to constructing a debate around *Le Gone du Chaâba*, particularly its portrayal of Algerian diasporic life as marked by inward-looking tendencies; what the narrative frames as a static mode of "cocooning" within domestic private spaces. Schoene's discussion, still, does not fully address the inverse case; especially within the French diasporic context, where genres that promote intercultural exchange tend to do so by suppressing the more specific cultural and historical narrative that underpins the *Beur* experience and sense of "home" in favour of advancing abstract forms of inclusivity.

As I examine the evolution of *Beur* cinema over time, it is necessary to broaden the theoretical frameworks I draw upon. In particular, the loss of "more specific" indicators or "roots" of *Beur* identity within increasingly cross-border genres will be problematised through critical and progressive dynamics of cosmopolitanism. This includes a focus on how abstract notions of equality, often celebrated within cosmopolitan frameworks, contribute to a discursive move away from the intertwining binaries of "rooted and Orientalist" towards the formation of "homogeneous and cosmopolitan" subjectivities. To interrogate this trajectory, the emerging discourse will draw on Debbie Lisle's *Joyless Cosmopolitans: The Moral Economy of Ethical Tourism* (2010), which contests mainstream debates on cosmopolitan ethics. Lisle questions the prevailing consensus and progressive narrative that frames ethical travel as a moral and emancipatory response to the exploitative dynamics of capitalism brought on by contemporary mass tourism. Despite its underlying egalitarianism, she reveals that such a

rhetoric leans towards specific and normative standards of proper conduct and what defines British citizenship. According to Lisle:

‘My point is that Cook’s efforts to bring travel to the masses cannot be understood as a simple or innocent propagation of egalitarian values; rather, such ‘emancipating’ practices must be examined for the way they constructed, disciplined and moralized the new subject position of the mass tourist’ (Lisle, 2010, p. 140)

Lisle’s limitations to progressive cosmopolitanism are understood through an analysis of the underlying goals of tourism and travel to ‘transform the “unruly” working classes of nineteenth-century Britain into cultured, enlightened and civilized subjects’ (p. 140). Through this lens, the supposedly inclusive formula that ‘travel is for everyone’ (p. 140) is reconfigured not as a liberatory ideal, yet as a projection of Western hegemony. Cosmopolitan inclusivity, which is exclusively shaped by dynamics of Western Christian moral codes of behaviour, underscores the continuity of unequal power relations. These encounters often involve strategies of ‘betterment’ of the diasporic tensions by resting on ‘a false notion of equality between Selves and Others’ (Lisle, 2010, p. 147). Lisle cautions that:

‘The emphasis on values of “respect” and “recognition” — absolute hallmarks of the progressive cosmopolitan agenda — does not neutralize or avert the ongoing work of power. Rather, such terms end up installing a false notion of equality between selves and Others, and in doing so, negate the difficult asymmetries that saturate all tourism encounters’ (p. 147).

My focus on the progressive model will interrogate utopian imaginaries embedded in Djaïdani’s *Tour de France*, and its engagement with abstract forms of egalitarianism and inclusivity within multicultural spaces. Lisle’s cosmopolitan aesthetic will be deployed

innovatively in this thesis to investigate how *Beur* literature and cinema often propend to annihilate *Beur* “roots” when engaging with Otherness beyond the confines of the *banlieues*. This project distinguishes cosmopolitan critical and progressive forms of cosmopolitanism, both of which are mobilised in *banlieue* and border-crossing narratives. While the critical strand interrogates the unequal postcolonial polarism in peripheral spaces, the progressive mode, despite its aspirational tone, frequently exposes the *Beur* subject to secularist cosmopolitan encounters that undermine *Beur* attachments to cultural heritage. I argue that transborder *Beur* texts often superimpose the very assimilatory schemes that *Beur* Movements like *La March* sought to resist. In this light, French diasporic proximities, depicting *Beur* and white French subjects in narratives of mutual compassion and reconciliation, will be seen through their complicity in advancing a symbolic “civilising mission”. The attempt to reclaim and re-imagine colonial histories of aggression within the *banlieues* will thus be regarded as promoting ethical concessions to ‘difference’, rendered exceptional in its utopian treatment of public diasporic encounters.

“Universality” in *Tour de France* will be positioned as a progressive ideal that reframes *Beur* diasporic representation through the displacement of the *banlieues* and the erosion of its nationalist, religious and cultural legacies. The diasporic experience, rooted in spiritual and cultural attachments in earlier genres, is reimagined through narratives of *Beur* uprootedness, leaving behind the *banlieue* and its associations with “home”. This transformation of the diasporic experience produces what I term “homogeneous proximities”: cinematic moments that renegotiate *Beur* Otherness within frameworks of openness and uniformity. Particularly, the new *Beur* status appears unthinkable in terms of the previous Orientalist discourse. However, their sense of openness towards the French subject is tied to a discourse of

assimilation, where Franco-centric notions of art and culture function as “emancipating” forces. This reading echoes Paul Morin’s critique of the current discourse suppressing (unhealed) national memories and history, as being “‘padlocked” by the state’ (Morin, 2020, p. 1); as does Thomas Elsaesser’s claim that universal identity ‘must repress differences of class, gender, race, religion, and history in order to assert its coherence, and is thus another name for internal colonization’ (2005, p. 36). While *Beur* subjectivities are framed as equal constituents of the French public order, they are evaluated as being ensnared in neo-assimilatory narratives that repackage inclusion at the cost of cultural specificity.

It is important to clarify that this thesis has no intention to homogenise the resulting comparative register, nor to project its arguments on all *Beur* film and literature. Additionally, its focus is specifically on male authorship and cinema within the French Algerian diasporic. This approach allows a more detailed study of the dynamics surrounding male protagonists’ empowerment and constructions of masculinity as they are shaped, contested and evolved in relation to *Beur* and Algerian nationalist, religious and cultural structures of power. However, this male-centered approach carries limitations, notably the exclusion of female voices and their contributions. Realist novels such as Farida Belghoul’s *Georgette* (1986) and Soraya Nini’s *Il Disent que je suis une Beurette* (1993) centre the *Beurette* (female *Beur*) as a protagonist, unlike the more marginal and minor positioning of female characters in male film and authorship. My analysis largely omits discussions of the hybrid spaces produced through female cross-border mobility explored in these texts, particularly the female movement from domestic realms of the home and family into French public spaces like schools. These narratives often engage with feminist criticism, addressing the *Bildung* growth of the *Beurette*, and the deconstruction of traditional Algerian gender roles and the negotiation of

Western liberal mores. Excluding female perspectives risks overlooking the intersecting dynamics of male and female empowerment. Similarly, the exclusion of *Beurette* filmmakers like Yamina Benguigui, whose works *Inch'Allah Dimanche* (2001) and *Soeurs* (2021) explore the double stigma experienced by the female *Beur*, leaves out key representations of gendered dislocation, resisting patriarchal figures enforcing moral codes, while simultaneously addressing the broader marginalisation of immigrant communities.

4-From Realism to the “New *Beur* Man”: The Crisis of Cosmopolitanism in *Beur* Genres:

The genre of realism, which vividly captures *Beur* struggles in the *Chaâba* and *banlieue*, is approached when handling earlier twentieth century *Beur* fiction and film. *Le Gone du Chaâba*, *Boumkoeur* and *La Haine* are anchored in these marginalised spaces and explore the intersection between private lives and anti-cosmopolitan aspiration. they also highlight the spatial and cultural effects of the *banlieue*, where architectural inadequacies consolidate social immobility and stereotypes. This thesis extends a discussion of how such texts expose both physical and cognitive boundaries to contain *Beur* cultural and religious differences. Realism in this context underlines critical cosmopolitan agendas to condemn the border line separating the suburbs from the French central city. The *banlieues*, laid out by their conspicuous tower blocks and peripheral position vis-à-vis the centre, are unwrapped as part of a major imperialistic control, inhibitive to fluid mobility. As part of the early wave of *Beur* production, these works' initial account of the diasporic experience is inevitably shaped by the *Bidonvilles*, which Hargreaves describes in *Immigration and Identity in Beur Fiction* as the 'collections of ramshackle buildings thrown up on spare land around the edges of major cities' (1997, p. 150). The spatial dynamics of these zones create a climate of confinement that sustains postcolonial trajectories, encapsulating clear parallels between the

harsh conditions of the colonial past and the marginalised realities of the diasporic present. These insights are vital for evaluating these writers' critique of both physical and cultural borders which remain realistically rejected by French mainstream.

The *Beur* resistance to French assimilation is a defining feature of the realism in Begag's *Le Gone du Chaâba*. The cosmopolitan reconciliation between "assimilable" and "rooted" subjectivities is what these post-March, and indeed "post-Independence", *Beur* writers and filmmakers see themselves sharing. This theme is reflected in the *Chaâba*'s unique *Berber* social order, in its embrace of Algerian traditional heritage. The community's patriarchal authority and ostentatious performance of traditional religious, national and cultural practice express a strong connection to the ancestral past. These dynamics closely resonate with post-colonial Algerian cinema, which Mani Sharpe characterises as 'highly politicised' and deeply shaped by narratives of male patriarchal dominance and depictions of masculinity (Sharpe, 2015, p. 450). Sharpe's reading of Ahmed Rachedi's *L'Opium et le bâton* (Opium and the Stick) (1969), via Frantz Fanon's notion of "'the New Algerian Man'", further illuminates how the Algerian male character 'experiences a profound ontological transformation as the narrative progresses from an apolitical and emasculated member of the urban bourgeoisie to a fearless partisan of the rural Resistance' (p. 462). Similarly, Begag's novel (and its film adaptation) mirror this transformation through the *Bildung* growth of its *Beur* male protagonist, who evolves from a state of assimilationist disempowerment towards a politicised, culturally and religiously rooted subjectivity. Unlike Sharpe's oppositional framing of Franco-Algerian relation, however, I argue that Begag's depiction of cosmopolitan resistance remains hybrid, reclaiming rootedness while still sympathetically engaging within Western intellectual dynamics. I later expand on these

insights to consider and compare how the new breed I describe as the “New *Beur* Man” is represented and framed in subsequent transborder *Beur* genres, mainly the war epic genre film and the road-movie. In these texts, in contrast to Begag’s vision, the *Beur* male cosmopolitan consciousness remains rudimentary, and does not necessarily advance towards a reclaimed rootedness, reflecting a secular arc of identity negotiation in the French mainstream.

The fierce realism in Kassovitz’s *La Haine* and Djäidani’s *Boumkoeur* represents a raw portrayal of *Beur* life in the urban projects of the *banlieues*. These works will primarily be studied through the intensity of colonial modalities, largely perpetuated by the media. I refer to these texts as not only featuring police brutality and discrimination yet also the stereotyping of *Beurs*, which stifles cosmopolitan potential. Hargreaves and McKinney argue that the *banlieue*’s neo-colonial framing, reinforced by television, depicts ‘migrants and their descendants as alien to the national community and/or as the beneficiaries of paternalistic condescension’ (1997, p. 9). The postcolonial dynamics of borders in these texts construe the *banlieue* as a religiously and ethnically Othered setting, producing visibility/invisibility paradigms that affect the *Beur* protagonists’ sense of self. Particularly, the texts highlight how media depiction of their invisibility relegate them to the status of inferior, second-class French citizens. Visible agendas, often arising from colonial and Islamophobic narratives, present *Beurs* as entities triggering threat “from within”. Television coverage of *Beur* violence, for example, frame their uprisings as the work of ““terrorizing gangs,” Islamic fundamentalists, or repeat-offender petty criminals’ (Harsin, 2015, p. 49). I draw on Ahmed Boubeker to highlight how these texts reflect ‘the paradox of invisibility for those living in these neighborhoods is that they are still subject to total public visibility’ (2005, p. 71). In addition to depicting socio-economic stigmatisation in the *banlieue*, the texts illustrate Boubeker’s notion of these areas

as sites where residents are ‘cast as dangerous members of the deviant sect of “communitarianism,” an Islamist, sexist Mafia’ (2005, p. 71). This double stigmatisation, which deepens diasporic divides and perpetuates harmful stereotypes, is explored in these texts.

Despite the critical cosmopolitan agendas in these texts, and engagement with transborder perspectives, their realism will be addressed in existential terms. The politics of the genre evokes the existentialist hook of *La Marche*, which ties to the theme of *Beur* alterity, being a stranger “*chez soi*” (at home), and the exclusion from the French nation-state. On this basis, the politically, materially, and culturally excluded *banlieue* renders *Beur* voices muted and underrepresented. Reflecting Hargreaves’ claim that ‘it is harder to integrate migrants from the Third World as opposed to those from Europe’ (p. 51), I discuss how the texts focus on the sealed *banlieues*, and the difficulties of traversing both material and cultural divides. This reflects how the enforcement of borders around the marginalised *banlieues* can function with greater rigidity than those between actual nations-states (Almeida, 2021). As such, the *banlieues* are treated as geographies haunted by the failures of assimilation, manifesting unresolved tensions of (post)colonial exclusion. While these realist texts may gesture towards the potential of crossing borders, this “invitation” remains abstract rather than fully actualised. At the same time, I draw to how subsequent genres of comedy, war, and the road-movie differently negotiates *Beur* cross-border identities, especially when interacting with white French subjects. While Djaïdani’s texts are less engaged with the heterogeneity of Algerian subjectivities than Begag’s, both authors ultimately fail to mobilise and transfer these identities across borders in their simultaneous strife for equitable representation of the subaltern. Realism, with its inherent constraints, remains allied to the conventionally (post)colonial Manichean clash and divide between the centre and the periphery despite its

cosmopolitan contours. The realism neither challenges this binary, nor is it preoccupied with space-shifting paradigms that might reconfigure the relationship between the centre and periphery.

To this end, I explore the thesis's evolving trajectory toward emergent transborder genres that engage with the complexity of mobility and border-crossing, forms through which these writers reimagine spatial, cultural and political boundaries in both fiction and cinema. These boundary-challenging initiatives echo Christina Horvath's sociological framework, which addresses the obstacles involved in 'break(ing) up the ghettos' (2014, p. 123). Drawing on interdisciplinary approaches on memory, art and lived experiences of voices from within the *banlieue*, Horvath examines different political projects such as French Minister Jean-Louis Borloo's City and Urban Renewal (2003), which aims to gentrify the *banlieues*, particularly having the potential to 'enhance the memory and heritage' of the neighbourhood (Horvath, 2014, p. 127). This would entail the 'physical renovation, economic development, and institutional restructuring' of all networks for artistic creativity (2014, p. 123). While Horvath's model imagines cultural revitalisation and seems promising regarding the internal bettering of the ethnic and economic situation of its *Beur* inhabitants, it can also be read as negative, destroying the cultural life and memory of its ethnic population. Reflecting on Horvath's perspective on inclusion, particularly the attempt to 'dissolve the distance between the city and its suburbs' (2014, p. 124), will inform my study of cross-border genres aimed at "demolishing" borders and fostering "proximities" with the French mainstream. *Beur* texts of the twenty-first century often reflect this ideological stance, constructing inclusive diegeses while adopting assimilatory and concessionary practices towards Algerian culture and national memory. This reflects a shift towards a *Beur* conceptualisation of inclusivity, where

crossing borders becomes a metaphor for transcending the combat zones of postcolonial dynamics, while also opening space for counter-heritage subjectivities.

Cross-border genres of comedy and war will also be negotiated through the swinging movement between French and Algerian landscapes, where the *Beur* occupy an ambivalent position within both private and public dynamics. By “cross-border genre”, I mean texts that challenge private boundaries and move across distinct cultural, linguistic and geographical divides. These new public spaces reshape the genre conventions and theoretical cosmopolitan spectres looming over the comedy in Djamel Bensalah’s films *Il était une Fois dans L’Oued* and *Beur sur la Ville* and the war genre in Rachid Bouchareb’s *Indigènes*. Turning their back on realism, these films assiduously veer from a postcolonial rhetoric to “demolish borders” and disengage from colonial and racialised legacies. These genres display defiant resistance to persistent racial tensions, summarised by Jayson Harsin as issues of ‘employment, housing, and political and media representation’ (Harsin, 2015, p. 49), and instead blur the lines between literary imagination and media frames wielding power over the viewers in relation to delinquent *banlieusards*. Their aim is to nurture more supportive forms of tolerance and spark solidarity by revisiting colonial histories and the post-9/11 war on Terror as a modern extension of imperial control. Ultimately, they seek to undermine the dominant French media’s attempt to condemn Algerian and *Beur* Muslim groups as menacing. As Almeida notes, ‘the act of crossing these borders acquires a particularly subversive and threatening meaning’ (2021, p. 14). In this context, transitional public environments emerge as tense, fluctuating spaces, caught between the historical ordeals of visibility/invisibility and more fluid, rootless expressions of identity.

Although these narratives may be seen to offer a chance for *Beur* Muslim minorities to be envisaged in more open ways, I still challenge the assumption that cross-border subjectivities innocently offer cosmopolitan, peaceful narratives of belonging. Instead, they often reflect counter-heritage postures or significantly downplay religious and cultural attachments. The earlier postcolonial trajectories of violence in the *banlieue*-centred narrative are replaced by cheerful or dramatic imaginaries of diasporic unity that reveal *Beur* ambivalence towards Algerian anti-nationalist or anti-religious affiliations. The texts' cosmopolitanism falls short of what Paul Gilroy frames as 'the ability and the desire to live with difference on an increasingly divided but also convergent planet' (2005, p. 4). Comedy and war will be contested as offering narratives of *Beur* disempowered "roots" in their defiance of postcolonial discourses associated with private localities. Resonating with Almeida's accounts of *Beur* 'identity destabilization', induced by the relocation into residual areas (Almeida, 2022, p. 385), these genres will be seen to reflect the cost of "crossing" or venturing into the mainstream. Though they promote "*le vivre-ensemble*" (the living-together), the texts' narrative of diasporic settlement belies a detachment from proactive and empowered stances towards "roots". I claim that the resultant trajectories avoid efforts to emphasise Algerian collectivistic culture as seen in the *Chaâba*, transport it to public framework, or even bring it together with French exchange.

A later utopian, yet bold move, then, will be dedicated to the road-movie genre. My reading of the more contemporary film *Tour de France* stretches the genre as a complementary stage to previous comedy and war genres. Unlike realist genres, which often confine *Beur* characters to immobility within *HLM* (*Habitation à Loyer Modéré*/Housing with moderate rent), the road-movie overlays new prospects of visualising *Beurs* in typical French settings in the heart of diaspora and is shaped by uncommon models of compassion and

empathy developed between *Beurs* and white French individuals. Its utopian imaginaries further introduce diasporic inclusion, diversity and citizenship as grounded in the symbolic “demolishing” of borders and its past, particularly figures like the Algerian father and the *Pied-noir*. As road-movie narratives remain underexplored in *Beur* cinematic and literary criticism, this genre will be mainly supported through unconventional dynamics of space that goes far beyond colonial projections and contemporary racialised diasporic discourses. The film focuses on intimate yet homogeneous narratives of proximity, made possible by actual border-lifting. I negotiate a form of cosmopolitanism cut off from the past, and this time, *Beur* religious, rooted agency is not only erased, yet relocated into and appropriated by Western, particularly Christian norms and behaviours. I discuss how this genre recognises the “New *Beur* Man” on uniform and equal grounds, responding, imitating, and assimilating into the French creed of *Laïcité*. The limitations to this “progressive” cosmopolitan model still supply settings that construct neo-colonial forms of affiliations, binding ethnic characters in uniform and rootless ways of belonging. This new cosmopolitanism prompts important questions about the extent to which the *Beur* imaginary endures amid the current socio-political circumstances in the French diaspora.

5-Thesis Structure:

This thesis consists of the introduction, four chapters, and the conclusion to discuss the selection of late twentieth and early twentieth-first Algerian diasporic Francophone writings and films whose range of ethnicities and locations provide a stimulating environment for the emergence of a wide range of cosmopolitan registers. The chapters are organised according to the genre-defining critical and progressive cosmopolitan trajectories, while also

negotiating spatial dynamics of borders. I adopt a comparative approach which enables me to analyse *Beur* subjectivities as they transform from late twentieth-century narratives to more progressive forms of identification.

Chapter one, 'Cosmopolitan Realism in the *Banlieue*: Navigating Assimilable Roots in Azouz Begag's *Le Gone du Chaâba*', explores the *Beur* religious *Bildungsroman* and its engagement with rooted cosmopolitan trajectories in Azouz Begag's *Le Gone du Chaâba*. The chapter evolves through the identity dilemma undergone by first-generation children of North-African descent fuelled by their socio-economic and cultural exclusion and marginality. It initially engages with the French assimilatory model inside the Franco-centric school, marked by the child protagonist's sense of shame, insecurity, inferiority, estrangement, and closeness to his parents' inheritance, denying his roots, and blindly integrating into the French secularist models. The overcoming of *Beur* identity crisis is tightly linked to a sense of "proactive difference" that he ultimately develops towards the Algerian religious past and heritage culture. The cosmopolitan framework discussed here entails the creation of hybrid spaces of male empowerment that seek the incorporation of "roots" into public frameworks. I focus on how the production of liminal spaces engenders subjectivities navigating both "roots" and "wings". These spaces substitute private Algerian immobility, illiteracy, and the reluctance to engage with the white French mainstream with a more dynamic vision grounded in empathetic and inclusive French educational ideals, which still value *Beur* ethnic difference and recognise cultural uniqueness. Key amongst the theoretical points raised in the first chapter associate with Yusuf Waghid's insights on "cosmopolitan Islam" and the promotion of a maximalist religious vision that can be assimilable in public academic settings. This is key to understanding how mobility in this case breeds politicised

forms of agency, enabling the *Beur* subject to actively engage with their histories in order to foster communal empowerments in the *Chaâba* and to contest systematic racism. Bhabha's ambivalence is also seminal here, as it helps to situate the *Beur* experience of liminal space as neither grounded in disempowered roots nor reduced to the mere imitation of the dominant French identity. The novel's vision of rooted cosmopolitanism is also mirrored in the author's autobiographical elements, particularly his lived experiences and sociological observations. I demonstrate how both the narrative and the author's intention comply with the ethos of *La Marche*, advocating for an "integration with roots" rather than through cultural erasure.

The transition from the social realism of the later twentieth-century texts to the experimentation with the relaxed genre of comedy is what the second chapter is preoccupied with. Entitled 'Laughter Across Borders: Comedy and Cosmopolitanism in Djamel Bensalah's *Beur sur la Ville* (2011) and *Il était une fois dans L'Oued* (2005)', it examines how Bensalah's films subvert the seeming threat of *Beur* identity, while minimising its cultural and religious agencies related to the past. The comedic ambivalent strategies that ridicule and fuse *Beur* conventional representations in private spaces are embedded through the characters' penetration of private realms. The chapter's powerful screening of the themes of danger and threat is indeterminate by ethnic or religious identities. Through a series of reversible roles of what makes up French/*Beur* typical spaces of belonging and subversion of media stereotypes, Bensalah opens up new diasporic forms of consciousness replete with humorous and compassionate ethnic encounters following *Beur* and French entrances into the diasporic centre. For the first time, the ethnic *Beur*/French Other is provided with the opportunity to experience a space which is not their own, moving in and out of French/Algerian hostile diasporas. I demonstrate how humour contributes to the dissolution

of colonial tensions in *Il était une Fois dans L'Oued*, and Islamophobic problematisation of the *banlieue* in *Beur sur la Ville*. On this occasion, both films defeat French/Algerian expectations of “visibility”, and what constitutes menace especially considering historical traumas such as France’s colonial massacres, and the post-9/11 portrayal of Islamic radicalism, in which the burqa has been framed as a symbol of threat. Concurrently, I demonstrate how the ambivalence created in the texts is characterised by a striking withdrawal from religious and cultural difference. In blurring the borderlines setting up colonial and Islamophobic threats, I demonstrate the intersection the genre creates in relation to the axis swinging between rootedness and the process of “laughing back” to the centre. The genre centres on transborder patterns of belonging that demonstrate the absurdity of “visible stereotyping” attached to the ostracised *Beur* subject, deconstructs their Otherness in public spaces, yet virtually overlooks the value of religiosity as a sacred component of a *Beur*/Algerian sense of the past. As such, records of colonial and Islamophobic aggressions that were once conceived to be perilous are recalled and revisited in a way that privileges France’s national identity. Relying on Bensalah's autobiographical cinematic career, I demonstrate how comedy initiates a form of cosmopolitanism which takes over the value of “living with difference”. I deploy cosmopolitan theories, relief/release theories of comedy.

Chapter three, ‘A counter-memory of War: Cosmopolitanism in Rachid Bouchareb’s *Indigènes*’, discusses Rachid Bouchareb's film *Indigènes* (Days of Glory) (2006) to offer new perspectives on the cosmopolitan axis swinging between counter-nationalist rootedness and mainstream solidarity and belonging. The film presents a counter-memory of war as a tool to reflect on border-crossing mobilities and encounters. This memory of Franco-Algerian colonial dialogue, however, will be accented as evoking the passive loyalties

encapsulated in the “*Harki* story”, aiming to unify the diasporic community. I contend that the physically transborder movement of Algerian veterans is structured around a new dimension of “passive loyalties” accorded with resistance to nationalist “roots”, and the prospect of cherishing cosmopolitan sympathetic encounters. I demonstrate how the contemporary immigration issues in the French diaspora are adversely affected by this re-assessment of war legacies. Even while the axis makes it possible to reframe Franco-Algerian history away from its antagonistic colonial context, it is nevertheless expected to generate passive communal sacrifice and victory. I assert that, like comedy, the war genre either distorts or disempowers nationally rooted histories to generate French Republican ideas of collective sacrifice. I compare how a weaker posture towards Algerian and cultural heritage is evident in the dramatic and humorous responses to the colonial ordeal. The choice they make to French public settlement will be discussed as part of the newly diverse, multi-ethnic environment that the *Beur* protagonists occupy. It symbolises a new vision of the French diasporic space in which all subjects share similar privileges under the logo of French citizenship. The chapter draws upon Cliona Hensey’s work on “*Harki* story”, and Rothberg’s multi-directionality of memory, to contest the genre’s cosmopolitan axis in what Rothberg (2017) terms as ‘the question of solidarity across difference’.

The concluding chapter, ‘Voyage from the suburbs to the Centre: Cosmopolitanism in Rachid Djaïdani’s Road Movie *Tour de France*’, compares Rachid Djaïdani’s *Boumkoeur* and Mathieu Kassovitz’ *La Haine* with the former’s latest film *Tour de France*. These three texts interlock distinct cosmopolitan models from critical to progressive. The first section focuses on *Boumkoeur* and *La Haine* and provides a critical and well-documented portrayal of *Beur* claustrophobic existence within the *banlieues*. *La Haine*, as a breakthrough social

thriller, navigates the lives of an ethnic minority trio living in the highrise towers of the *HLM*. The film articulates them as spaces of stifling control wielded by the French authorities. In parallel, *Boumkoeur* recounts the oppressed existence of the *Beur* protagonist within the *banlieue*, a geographic and symbolic location that encapsulates the colonial past inside its walls. Its architecture reflects conflicting power relations. In *La Haine*, these tensions translate through repeated episodes of violence and hostility between the centre and the periphery, representing the police and ethnic minorities, respectively. These conflicts are inflicted by the borders dividing *Beur* communities from the white French majority, yet they also produce multi-ethnic alliances. The critical cosmopolitan model portrays the *Beurs* as part of an (in)visible mass, constructed as both degraded and threatening, while also seeking a voice through ambivalent modes of resistance as well as multi-ethnic solidarities ‘from below’. I demonstrate how *Beur* forms of resistance target colonial ideologies, validate their suffering as human, yet detaches them from particularist *Beur*/Algerian collective solidarities. I explore the notion of internal travel or “voyage” in *Boumkoeur*, and its distant narrative technique aiming to inform the reader of the cognitive obstacles which upset any prosperous socio-economic prospects in *Beur* life. It also uncovers a cluster of ambivalent realities in the *banlieue* that are necessarily fuelled by *Beur* antagonism towards their roots.

The second part of the chapter deals with Djaïdani’s latest film *Tour de France* (2016) framed as a continuation of the first part, realising *Beur* desire to transform and erase borders. The film endorses unconventional dynamics of friendship and unity between *Beur* and white French characters, prospering during shared journeys along the French coasts and villages. These trans-spatial encounters carry implications of *Beur* transformation towards integration and new models of French citizenship. I discuss how

the film's depiction of passionate experiences of "travel" and "journeying" negates ethnic-based attitudes, while paradoxically patronising assimilatory Western codes of behaviour. I look at this film to problematise Djaïdani's complementary reflection of his project of universalism and inclusivity within the French mainstream. The concept of progressive cosmopolitanism will be used to highlight the curious paradox between *Beur* inclusivity within the French diaspora and the generation of what I refer to as "homogeneous proximities". This will be discussed via *Beur* mobility to the mainstream, where the new scope of 'on the road' produces more expansive notions of "voyage" for both *Beur* and white French characters. I argue that the film assumes that the *Beur* character subscribes to uniform ideals that exclusively appropriate French, and even Christian ideals; implying that Algerian nationalist, cultural or religious loyalties are outdated and unimportant to *Beur* youth. The film's cosmopolitan direction re-imagines diasporic France as utopian, transformative and progressive in the sense that it is marked by a change of thematic focus expressed in terms of historical and political correctness. Although the film demonstrates divergent ethnic, historical, artistic, and generational interests evinced by the characters, their trans-spatial proximity and physical contact summons Franco-centric endeavours of integration. By the end of the section, I locate the film's preoccupation with *Beur* spiritual pilgrimage, baptism and Christian emancipation as themes exploited to preach Djaïdani's notion of universalism. I draw from the context of Lisle's critique of progressive cosmopolitanism, and Mica Nava's cosmopolitan insights, to trace the narrative's deviation from older models of heterogeneity towards those of homogeneity.

CHAPTER ONE

ROOTED IDENTITIES AND DIASPORIC STRUGGLES: RETHINKING ASSIMILATION IN AZOUZ BEGAG'S LE GONE DU CHAÎBA

Introduction:

This chapter explores the cosmopolitan dynamics used to negotiate homogeneous French models of integration in postwar France. It looks at how the work reframes these discourses to create an assimilable identity space rooted in the Algerian past, and to

incorporate it into public French cultural frameworks. This will be done via my reading of Begag's autobiographical *Bildungsroman*, *Le Gone du Chaâba* (Shantytown Kid) published in 1986 and adapted into a film by Christophe Ruggia in 1998. The narrative centres on the experiences of Algerian immigrants in the *Chaâba(s)* and portrays the necessity of moving beyond these secluded, marginal *zones sensibles*. These areas will be studied through a paradoxical lens: while they function as significant markers of Algerian cultural and religious difference, they are also sites of economic, moral, and social deprivation. The *Bildungsroman* portrays the *Beur* child's growth and struggle in relation to the pressures of assimilation in his negotiation between private and public diasporic spaces of interaction, notably represented by the shanty town and the French school. In the analysis, I study the narrative distinctively from previous scholarship by focusing my reading on the role of the autobiographical *Bildungsroman* which is framed as a space where *Beur* religious and cultural identity is negotiated in the face of French hegemonic assimilationist models. Particularly, I suggest the *Bildungsroman* is deployed as a politicised strategy that accommodates the requirements of the French school while also retaining "more specific" and deep-rooted Algerian motifs of the past. With this approach, I demonstrate how Begag's narrative presents an adherence to the historical and political calls of "*le droit à la différence*" in its experimentation with hybrid spaces. It is symbolically made by *La Marche des Beurs* to assert the right for a kind of public integration without the loss of roots. In deploying the cosmopolitan strands of "wings" and "roots", I address the evolution of the protagonist's religious and cultural identity, which foregrounds a unique knowledge of the *Beur* subject as incarnating anchored, yet assimilable subjectivities. Furthermore, I contend that the novel's transborder hybridities translate through past links of a *Pied-noir* (*Black Feet*) experience. Historically, this term carried derogatory connotations and referred to French Algerians who faced disdain upon their

repatriation to France after Algerian sovereignty (Hubbell, 2015, p. 25). These hybrid subjectivities will be negotiated as cosmopolitan resources, and not barriers, to *Beur* communal gain. They are driven by a responsibility to empower, speak for, and attain justice to *Beur* minorities. I finally explore how the text conveys that the new configuration of *Beur* difference, meaning to decentralise a passive sense of Algerian traditional heritage, fails to survive in the face of borders.

Begag's novel relates the story of nine-year-old Azouz dwelling in 1950s French Lyonnaise *Chaâba* (shanty town). His illiterate, Arabic-speaking father, Bouzid, his neighbours, El Bouchaouis, and numerous other Algerian economic migrants relocated from the Algerian city of Sétif. The suburbs share both a spatial and cultural isolation which arguably imitates a colonial model in its physical layout and poor living conditions. Its cultural geography is remarkably similar to a colony where the coloniser builds their own central space and expels the colonised into a marginal unpleasant environment. Begag's portrayal of the *Chaâba* recalls a colonial North African setting, a context that David Gordon identifies as being marked by a glaring division between "the native quarter" (the *medina*) and the modern city the French have built by its side, the "new city" (1962, p. 5). Concurrently, although culturally and politically degraded, it is also regarded as a space of freedom. Primarily, the *Chaâba* constitutes a niche community for the Algerian migrants, whose practice of religious and cultural rituals, Algerian dialect, and Algerian heritage or roots, normally problematic in public domains, is maintained and preserved. As a result, however, they are stereotyped due to their lack of mobility and perceived as, using Mark Nabors's term, 'inassimilable' into the culture of the French other (2014, p. 51). Dissatisfied with his illiteracy, which French strategies of colonisation had a hand in, Azouz's father encourages his son to seek education and secure a

prosperous life away from the *Chaâba*. However, while Bouzid views it as a space of impoverishment and marginalisation, he also expresses anxieties towards the French secularist nature in the world external to the suburbs, which might tarnish, displace and corrupt his son's cultural and religious heritage.

Azouz's 1960s diasporic experiences in the French school are marred by the derogatory perspectives held by his Franco-French teachers. The fact that he foregrounds an Algerian identity establishes him as inferior, unaccepted, less sophisticated, and primitive in their eyes. Azouz's attempt to rise above the passive image pinned on him by the French education system is paradoxically through excelling at school. As a result of his academic success, Azouz is placed at a disadvantage with the rest of the *Chaâba*. Most significantly, however, the form of schooling that the *Chaâba* kids experience is alienating, and fosters exclusionary and racist techniques, which sideline them as inadequate by the school which does not recognise them properly. Mainly adopted by his Franco-French teachers Mme. Valard and M. Grand, their discriminatory conduct towards the Algerian children leads them to disengage with school and withdraw to the *Chaâba*. However, it is thanks to his French teacher M. Loubon, an Algerian-born *Pied-noir* that Azouz eventually develops an active contact with, knowledge of, and pride in his Algerian cultural and Muslim origins.

As a prolific writer, social economist at the CNRS, former Minister of Equal Opportunities, and a father married to "a French woman" (Mehrez, 1993, p. 26), Begag draws upon both personal and political experience to interrogate the complexities of integration. However, despite their efforts toward integration, these authors reveal a deep existential unease that marks this integration as ultimately unfulfilling. Even though their realism comes

to emphasise a transgenerational connection identified by all *Beur* generations since the time their parents started a life in France, the act of crossing boundaries and acknowledging the private religious and cultural past within that of the diasporic present and future is futile. This connection is felt in the face of the colonial binaries of white French secularist authority vis-à-vis *Beur* Muslim subalternity. The writer's futile societal duty of grappling with tensions of keeping communal Algerian domestic and religious identity intact, while also generating an overlapping and mutually inclusive space in France, becomes existential. The existential dynamic has been a matter of grave concern in a wide range of *Beur* critiques, arguing that *Beur* children 'have grown up in this situation of forced exile' (Mehrez, 1993, p. 28). I argue that the resulting identity dilemma discussed in *Le Gone du Chaâba* and other first-generation *Beur* writings of the 1980s is mainly disturbed by the desire for an unattained rooted cosmopolitan identity space cherishing equality *with* a difference. This ambition is most evident in Begag's work, which aims to restore and politicise a sense of "roots" that has been eroded by French Republican assimilationism.

One of the significant themes that *Le Gone du Chaâba* documents is related to Algerian 'invisibility' inside the French Lyonnaise shantytown, where Begag himself was born and brought up. The ethnic invisibilities pinned upon Algerian immigrants is related to their centralisation on geographies of exclusion: of adverse post-colonial socio-economic conditions. Mehrez (1996) claims that Algerian communities are caught in a situation of involuntary exile. This places the narrative in the category of *littérature mineur*², or minor literature when limitations are imposed on the possibilities of minority. Its main

² The term *littérature mineur* derives from Franz Kafka's *Pour une Littérature Mineur* to address the struggle of minorities in navigating and destabilising the norms and forms of the dominant language (Deleuze et al, 1983).

characteristic, the “deterritorialisation” of minorities, is mirrored in *HLM* districts. Hargreaves comments that Begag’s autobiography, as a representation of these experiences, describes a first-hand account of ‘the disadvantaged minority ethnic groups concentrated in stigmatised urban areas’ (1995, viii). Hargreaves further offers an account of the socio-economic challenges faced by immigrant communities, noting that ‘by the 1990’s, more than a third of the residents of the *HLM* were of North African descent, only slightly over 10% of these owned their apartments, compared with over half the remaining French residents’ and that the jobless rate in the *banlieues* is estimated to stand at 50 per cent in (p. 71). Reflecting the legacy of colonialism, Hargreaves contends that the *banlieue* housing estates were ‘inherited to a large extent from the colonial period’ and has been overwhelmingly linked to the negation of an Algerian sense of being (2006, p. 218). As such, Begag’s narrative uncovers Algerians and their offspring to be subject to a form of colonial and epistemic violence as they seek to assert their identity.

In the narrative, the protagonist’s religiosity is central to the exploration of his *éducation sentimentale* (sentimental education). It shifts from developing inferior, blasphemous attitudes towards his parents’ religion of Islam to feelings of loyalty, pride and success that reflect his learning journey in school. I argue that the narrative develops in Azouz’s *Bildung* formation achieved through a “knowledge” gained from his cross-border transfer from the last year of his *primaire* (primary school) followed by two years of *moyen* (middle school). The novel’s *Bildung* passage will be reflected on in terms of the set of transformations which Azouz the protagonist undergoes as he negotiates between his ancestral heritage and the French assimilatory doctrines inherent in the *Chaâba* and the school respectively.

In James Hardin's definition of *Bildung*, he suggests that it follows 'the cultural and spiritual values of a specific people and social stratum in a given historical epoch and by extension the achievement of learning about that same body of knowledge and acceptance of the value system it implies' (1991, p. xi). The notion of cultural and intellectual development resonates with Meaghan Emerey's reading of *Le Gone du Chaâba*, where she discusses *Beur* mobilisation of specifically hybrid identities inside the transborder sphere of the French school. Her insights on mobility are grounded in French cultural theorist Michel de Certeau's concepts of "*récit de voyage*" or "narrative of travel" where the sense of journey involves a multifaceted transformation of identity. Building on this theoretical conceptualisation, she proposes a foregrounding of *Beur Bildungsroman* and agency as part of transcending 'opposed geographical and mental spaces of the French urban landscape' (2004, p. 1153). This model is broadly useful in terms of explaining the role of the school as a site of cultural alienation and *Beur* identity crises. However, her model, which proposes a 'reordering of subjective space' (p. 1159), does not emphasise the diasporic binary opposition in the school as dismantled and resolved by the particular presence of a French *Pied-noir*. His experiencing of Algerian life first-hand, despite his colonial subject position, introduces Azouz to a clear knowledge of his Algerian past, while also fostering his emotional growth. I will be revisiting Emery's readings to pull out the paradoxically active contribution of the *Pied-noir* in dismantling assimilationist agendas of identification in the school context, offering instead a model of potentially rooted cosmopolitanism developed inside the French school.

This model of a rooted cosmopolitanism gathering between the strands of "roots" and "wings" identifies an interplay of integration with roots that goes hand in hand with what

Yusuf Waghid has defined as maximalist Islam (2013, 2014). Waghid's two key terms are religious maximalism and minimalism which engage/disengage with ideals of cosmopolitanism, and which will be deployed in the rest of this chapter. He defines a maximalist interpretation of Islamic religion as a model that promotes mobility and transborder connection constructed against the framework of minimalist religion. Mainly, the maximalist continuum of religious education 'considers every individual irrespective of linguistic, cultural, religious, socio-economic, political and ethnic differences as worthy of respect as persons' (p. 337). Besides, this model enhances openness of Muslims towards 'subjecting their views to scrutiny' and thus engage positively with the Other (p. 338). In Begag's narrative, the *Bildungsroman* consolidates an assimilable form of *Beur* identity shifting from religious minimalism to maximalism which Azouz finally cultivates across borders. This form can both 'question, debate and undermine' minimalist backward cultural concepts as well as nondemocratic, unjust practices based on racism. As such, the new dynamics of religion, to use Appiah's expression, 'manages to combine devotion to community with global concerns' (Appiah, 2019, p. 1). The protagonist's *Bildung* formation in this sense fosters non-conflicting spaces of interaction that convivially unite local devotion with the universal principles of French Republicanism.

Waghid's minimalist insights bring to the fore the attempt made by *Bidonville* (HLM) communities to preserve ancestral cultural practices which do not align with Islamic religion. I will consider the Algerian cultural stance towards superstition, cultural rigidity, immobility and illiteracy as one of the postcolonial "idiosyncrasies" inhibiting Algerian mobility in the diaspora. I situate the framework of universal maximalism as a central driving force in Begag's text to surmount the identity dilemma encountered by the *Beurs*, and by extension to ensure

mobile convivial diasporic relations. Simultaneously, I will examine the text's production of proactive spaces that do not counter cosmopolitan ideals of equality while allowing to forge a unique *Beur* sense of self. This underscores the novel's endeavour to perfect a non-colonial space that rejects the transition of ancestral values framed as passive, regressive, and inferior. Henceforth, the relevance of these terms in the religious *Bildungsroman* will be explored through Appiah's model of 'rooted cosmopolitanism' which proves appropriate in addressing the cross-border struggles of first-generation children of immigrants in recognising and engaging with their Algerian Islamic "roots".

Begag's text is constructed around ambivalent sites that critique the *Beur* community's rejection and concealment of their Algerian origins, portraying this as a strategy to facilitate their inclusion into the French mainstream culture. I will position the text's representation of *Beur* Muslim entities within this hybrid framing via a model of cultural and religious education. This model contests other approaches proposed by diverse critical readings of the text. In her discussion of the question of exile and territory in *Le Gone du Chaâba*, Mehrez underlines research on *Beur* empowerment and successful integration as developing under the French educational system. She regards French schooling as a solid foundation for the decentralisation of colonial binarism in French public spaces. Specifically, it accounts for *Beur* 'affirmation of the self and political identity' (1993, p. 31). Additionally, her perspective towards adopting a space of resistance for first-generation *Beurs* is grounded in the idea of ousting their 'countries of origin', as being always 'somewhere in the background', to construct a new productive space shaped by exile and nostalgia (p. 31).

Mehrez's view on the text's depiction of the 'struggle against exile and nomadism' (p. 27) and other *Beur* minorities thus problematises the *Chaâba* whose cultural and religious legacies are excluded from present dynamics of integration. Mehrez's claim applies to first-generation limited aspirations in life, reflected by illiteracy. Her analysis of *Beur* successful integration in Begag's narrative attests to a kind of 'rhizomatic' struggle. This framework is ubiquitous in Moroccan texts, to name one, Fouad Laroui's *De quel amour blessé* as discussed by Nouzha Baba (2023). Baba's theoretical foregrounding of Maghrebi empowerment is entrenched in Édouard Glissant's poetics of relation and concept of a rhizomatic identity (1997) which mainly 'extend(s) outward' and surpasses 'fixed roots, culture, and space' (Baba, 2023, p. 81). Mahrez's approach, like Baba's, departs from religious rootedness. Rather than seeking empowerment through a return to the past, it charts a different path. I contend that her rationale for establishing a connection with the French subject hinges on a dynamic of "uprooting" as a means of resolving *Beur* exile and identity crises. Such assessment of *Beur* empowerment is rather superficial, as it reflects an uprooted form of defining a *Beur* in France. Particularly, it overlooks the potentiality of constructing an "inwardly" active connection with the past, which continues to contest colonially inspired superstition and illiteracy inside *Beur* private spaces. As this aspect has been scarcely explored in critical readings of the novel, I consider how Algerian rootedness embodies a politicised form of empowerment, stretching "outward" and intersecting with the demands of active agency.

The opening section of this chapter centres on the colonial dynamics within the *Chaâba*, positioning it as a lingering holdover from Algeria's colonial past. Another key area of emphasis relates to the hybrid spaces that arise from the interactions between Algerian/*Beur* and Franco-French subjects, each carrying different postcolonial facets of

defining difference. The second section shifts to an exploration of white French teachers, whose assimilationist practices are rooted in the exclusion of *Beur* difference and the expectation of conformity to the French mainstream. The third section offers a reading of the text through a lens of religious maximalism, contributing to the investigation of new heterogeneous proximities shaped by the protagonist's *Bildung* process. This section concentrates on the mediating role of the *Pied-noir*, through whom the Algerian past is redefined, transitioning from a state of immobility, passivity and backwardness to one of activity and assimilability.

This chapter adopts a theoretical optic that shifts from post-colonialism to rooted cosmopolitanism to explore *Beur* subjectivities and their models of integration within the dominant culture. The *Bildungsroman* is particularly employed to illustrate the protagonist's self-problematisation of Algerian culture and Muslim heritage, portraying them within the *Chaâba* as passive and inferior. Republican notions of assimilation are incarnated by the white French teacher, who intensifies the *Beur* sense of shame regarding their difference, thereby encouraging a cosmopolitanism stripped of "roots", one that within this model must be rejected. The perspectives sustained by white French teachers and the French school pertaining the *Chaâba* are analysed through Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1967), as well as Edward Said's *Orientalism* (2003), both feeding into the (post)colonial framework to 'solidify the official discourse of Orientalism, to systemise its insights, and to establish its intellectual (knowledge)' (Said, 2003, p. 152-153). Within this structure, the *Beur* subject is projected as an exotic, isolated and subordinate individual inevitably belonging to the *Chaâba*. The shantytown, in this sense, expands itself as a horrendously "Othered" Orient in miniature, dominated and controlled by the French Republican model and its drive to assimilate. It is

hence discussed as part of a colonial model of separation and assimilation that, to employ Said's words on the Orient, 'lingers in present-day Asia, parts of North Africa, and *Islam everywhere*' (Said, 2003, p. 121-124) (My emphasis). I explore how the initial stage of the protagonist's *Bildungsroman* examines the ways in which the private space is created through and '(grown) out of these opposites' (Said, 2003, p. 172-174). This process entails navigating spatial hybrid mechanisms that are biased towards what is framed as the more dominant and superior French secularist centre. Thus, Said's Orientalism provides a postcolonial lens through which to view the *Chaâba* and its visibilities, clearly tied to the remnants of Algerian colonialism. The postcolonial representation of the *Chaâba* is further founded on a critique of the state's doctrine of *Laïcité*, which is framed as bringing about Algerian/*Beur* inevitable stagnation. As part and parcel of French Republicanism, it will primarily be examined as a highly anti-cosmopolitan model, with its secularist cornerstones aimed at erasing religious difference and exacerbating Orientalist 'knowledge' of the Algerian culture as inassimilable. In keeping with the Orientalist discourse that views the geographical Orient, in this case the *Chaâba*, as 'man-made' (Said, 2003, p. 5), the *Beur* is caught in a vicious existential circle of French stereotyping.

However, this chapter approaches the cosmopolitan perspective as a challenge to Orientalist discourse and its recurring trope of subjecting the *Chaâba* under a colonial assimilationist "gaze". The cosmopolitan framing aligns with Kwame Anthony Appiah's model of rooted cosmopolitan, which brings together the variants of "roots" and "wings". In essence, it is grounded in two lines of thought: the moral duty to engage and connect with others (wings) and the importance of embracing diversity (roots) (Appiah, 2006). For as the cosmopolitan subject swings from one strand to another, they establish a situation of alluring

heterogeneity that respects and acknowledges the Other. Therefore, the cosmopolitan approach to visualising identity will be explored as indivisible from specific layers of particularist difference when figuring out how to live together in French diasporic spaces. The ambivalence produced in the *Bildungsroman*, in this sense, emphasises the significance of *Beur* roots in the articulation of a liminal space. As Homi Bhabha argues, 'For me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'Third Space', which enables other positions to emerge' (Bhabha, 1990, p. 211). Although Bhabha's concept primarily focuses on the final articulation of unique sites of productive engagement with the coloniser, my analysis also deconstructs *Beur* productive spaces, emphasising how they derive their power from the value of "roots". This power is particularly realised through the role of the French *Pied-noir* in validating the *Beur* religious and cultural past.

The narrative ventures into new territories that challenge the notions of social immutability and stagnation. In this context, the binary colonial division of ethnic identity is confronted by resisting the establishment of such rigid boundaries. The novel's intriguing title signals an effort to reconcile and assemble two distinct identities, highlighting the possibility of bridging these divides. In an interview with Corinne Martin and Thierry Paquout, Begag explains that the titular *Le Gone* is the Lyonnaise dialect for the word 'a child', while the Algerian *Chaâba* denotes 'a shantytown' (2002, p. 72). Patt Duffy interprets the novel's selected title as symbolising 'a journey between at least two worlds, all or parts of which may well be outside the readers' ken' (Duffy, 2017). Similarly, in her discussion of the narrative's title, Mehrez observes that the author's use of the titular *gone* disempowers 'the quarantine that is placed around an entire community in the *Chaâba*' (1993, p. 33). Just as Azouz crosses

the *Chaâba* to reach the school, the blend of the French term *gone* and the Algerian term *Chaâba* symbolises the creation of a shared, assimilable space for identity. This fusion challenges the construction of a liminal space that integrates a seemingly “inassimilable” identity rooted in Algerian religious and ancestral heritage into the French context. The adoption of the title in this manner, thus, erects a strong theoretical connection to the eventual decentralisation of colonial discourse marked by the geographical as well as cognitive discontinuity between the *Chaâba* and the *Lyonnaise* centre.

1-Colonial Echoes: The *Chaâba* as a Remnant of Algeria’s Legacy:

The novel’s opening lines vividly portray the *Chaâba* as an invisible private realm that mimics an Algerian colony. It functions as a primitive clan governed by its own laws. Zidouma, an illiterate Algerian woman, embodies a slow pace of life through her daily ritual of fetching water for her garden from the Rhône River (Begag, 1986, p. 9). Owing to their lack of access to basic resources such as energy and water supplies, the local river tanks become the sole source for their daily needs. To emphasise this stagnation, Azouz notes that in the *Chaâba*, ‘rien ne change par rapport à hier [...] personne ne déménage’ (Nothing has changed compared to yesterday...no one ever moves house) (Begag, 1986, p. 12). He further illustrates its limited mobility by saying, ‘Le point d’eau est toujours unique dans l’oasis’ (the water source is always the same in the oasis) (p. 12), highlighting the restricted access to opportunities that perpetuates the residents’ impoverishment. In an interview for *L’invité*, Begag compares his portrayal of the *Chaâba* to ‘the *favelas* of Brazil and the *barrios* in other parts of Latin America... in their poor living conditions...a way of saying: “What a slum!”’ (Begag, 2002, p. 72).

The first encounter with the *Chaâba* in the narrative establishes it as a geographically distinct space, marked by a mundane, uneventful, and arbitrary existence. It is evocative of a colonial city and a presence of the third world shantytown in the “first world”. The conditions within the *Chaâba* dramatically contrasts with those of the French urban areas, creating a colonially paired opposition that Frantz Fanon analyses in his study of the homeland as being doubly split and ‘inhabited by two different species’ (2001, p. 30). Particularly, the coloniser’s ‘strongly built (and) brightly lit’ town stands in counterpoint to the peripheral native town framed as ‘a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light’; it is ‘a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. It is a town of niggers and dirty Arabs’ (p. 30). The existence of geographical and economic disparities amongst ethnically and religiously diverse groups, in this context, reflects a postcolonial discourse shaped by French reluctance to cater for ethnic difference. The divide between the two groups is likened to a ‘dangerous rift (which) separates Orient and Occident’ (Said, 2003, p. 131-133), positioning the *Chaâba* as an isolated, anonymous space that confines its residents in a state of immobility.

Despite the neglect and marginalisation imposed by French society, the *Chaâba* is forged through a tightly knit community that deeply venerates ancestral traditions. It operates as the only hospitable space that offers refuge to immigrant minorities and their descendants. Besides, it functions as a vital and cherished foundation for their parallel community. In this respect, Mark Nabors asserts that North African identity was compelled to create ‘identity distinctions’ following the post-war immigration to France following World War Two (2014, p. 49). This process became particularly pronounced during *Les Trentes Glorieuses* (the thirty years of rapid economic growth in France, 1945-1975), a period when

many Algerian nationalist laborers, like Azouz's father, migrated to France for economic reasons and had to settle in degrading communal spaces. Likewise, in the novel, Azouz's mother, Messaouda, explains to her French neighbour Louise what the *Chaâba* has to offer them in contrast to other central regions of France. She makes the following claim, asking her daughter Zohra to translate it:

'Dans quelle autres Chaâba les hommes vont-ils pouvoir prier dans les champs ou dans le jardin sans paraître ridicule? Dans quell endroit vont-il feter l'Aid? Et pour les circoncisions, comment vont-ils faire? Et pour égorger leurs moutons'

(In what other *Chaâba* can men perform their prayers outside without appearing silly? In what other place can they celebrate *Aid*? How can they perform its rituals? How can they slaughter the sheep?) (Begag, 1986, p. 128)

In its very exile from the French centre, the *Chaâba* constitutes a key space for retaining communal comfort, freedom of religious practice and a sense of difference, all of which stand in contrast to the French mainstream. Begag justifies the *Chaâba* cocooning or isolation as a protective measure, stating that it serves to shun 'contact with western society and ensuring a certain impermeability symbolic of purity of the inherited culture and a means of preserving identity' (1990, p. 7). By and large, the *Chaâba*'s inhabitants' ghettoisation and reluctance to transcend the borderline of private spaces are stiffly erected through an insulation from the larger French secularist system, lest it contaminates the purity of its ancestral heritage. This narrative of the *Chaâba* atomisation positions French assimilation tactics in alignment with an anti-cosmopolitan discourse that 'shuts it out', hence 'dividing the world into [...] exclusive, self-contained spheres' (Schoene, 2009, p. 43). The divide between French "insiders" and Algerian "outsiders" mutually echoes the colonial situation in the Algerian mainland, where the French colonial system portrayed Algerian Muslims as regressive and excluded, while those embracing its system were privileged and deemed as

included and '*évolués*', in other words progressive in the eyes of the coloniser (Gordon, 1962, p. 4-5). Begag employs a metaphor where Algerian immigrants resemble insects, using their protective covering thread as a form of "local" shelter before venturing out into the world (Begag and Hargreaves, 2007). The shanty town in this sense becomes a locally warm ancestral and familial 'niche' safeguarding difference and providing moral security to its ethnic descents in the face of French assimilation.

The *Chaâba* is equally constructed as a space that consolidates male *Beur* empowerment and patriarchy, while simultaneously challenging discriminatory forms of French bureaucracy. Its exile is there to maintain the dynamics of generational inheritance, while evoking a sense of empowerment, patriarchy and familiarity with Algerian terrain and history. The figure of the father, Bouzid, a day labourer, demonstrates this by designating him as a '*ancienne commandante-en-chef du Chaâba*' (an ancient commander-in-chief of the *Chaâba*) (Begag, 1986, p. 128). Bouzid's powerful, self-appointed status makes him a sought-after figure for counselling and advice by '*donner son accord*' (giving his consent) and '*autorisation*' (permission) to the *Chaâba* residents (p. 45). It also enables him to monitor any form of 'cross-border' activity. Azouz observes, '*Il est en pierre. Inaccessible. Il ne veut pas entendre parler de déménagement*' (He is made of stone. Inaccessible. He does not want to hear about moving house) (Begag, 1986, p. 51). The metaphor of "stone" highlights the rigid stance of the traditional Algerian father who clings to views that limit their mobility and hinder any potential for change or progress. The refusal to consider moving also reflects the unwillingness to break free from the cosy existence within the *Chaâba*. In addition to the sense of order, solidarity and fortification of communal bonds that Bouzid's authoritative position conveys, the *Chaâba* offers voice to the subaltern and the disenfranchised by

installing a unique tribal law immune to the dominant French political and social structures. In the many ways they practise their authority and religious rites from within, however, they inflect significant disruption to the French outer authority by flouting its secularist law and order. As such, the *Chaâba*'s spatial laws emphasise how different it is from French codes of conduct in public areas, which are perceived in the narrative as being too secular to incorporate Algerian ethnic and religious heterogeneity.

In demarcating mobility as unlawful, the *Chaâba* women instil this mindset in the next generation, making education a low priority within the community. Azouz's mother, who recites a few words of French she picked up from the kids, highlights the *Chaâba*'s growing isolation. Her attempt at communication '*faisait rire tout le monde, même le laitier*' (makes everyone laugh, including the milkman) (p. 127). This moment highlights the frustration experienced by the women of the *Chaâba*, who struggle to communicate, even for basic tasks such as requesting the milk they need for their daily lives. As a result, the milkman, unable to navigate the language barrier, eventually stops knocking on the *Chaâba* doors. This reflects Begag's view that the discomfort in the diaspora is a collective fault shared to some extent by *Beur* '*derouilleurs*' (rust-removers), who are reluctant to '*deroiuller*'; in other words, 'moving [...] taking risks [...] crossing to the other side of the tracks' (p. 123). Instead, they choose to 'cocoon' or 'stay put' in private spaces (p. 124). The *Chaâba*, characterised by a lack of fluidity, is emblematic of the postcolonial condition, where communication breakdown creates 'a gap which opens between the experience of place and the language available to describe it' (Ashcroft *et al.*, 2002, p. 9). Azouz's mother, due to her lack of language skills, is doubly

confined to a traditionally submissive role. Her inability to engage with the dominant societal structures further traps the *Chaâba* community in a cycle of marginalisation.

The community of the *Chaâba* unwittingly reinforces Orientalist paradigms of hostility and inferiority. Azouz problematises their status, particularly in his constant need to translate the order for his mother, who '*lève les bras, comme si, menacée*' (elevates her hands, as if, threatened) (p. 128). This imagery of surrender parallels the loss of French language as a powerful, non-aggressive weapon and the vulnerability of immigrants' resistance. The *Chaâba* sense of fight is further emphasised through the women's protest against the French prostitutes, armed with stones. Referred to by Azouz as '*la marche*', the protest ironically earns them the title '*les guerriers du Chaâba*' (the warriors of the *Chaâba*) (p. 49). Begag alludes to the *Chaâba* approach to change, which is rooted in force and illiteracy, as passive and stagnant. The women embody what Begag refers to as the *Beurette 'derouiller'* figure. Like those 'who rust where they are' (Begag, 2007, p. 81), they are caught in a cycle of stagnation and exclusion. The 'loss of mobility' for him is also linked to the illiterate and simplistic mindset of his own father, 'who thought that the earth was flat' (Begag, 2007, p. 68). Despite their religious, cultural and political empowerment in the *Chaâba*, the novel preaches how the lack of mobility confines individuals like Azouz's mother and father to the margins, leading to their banishment from mainstream French society.

The women's inability to express themselves in proper French undermines benevolent Franco-Algerian interactions and inflicts a diasporic rift within the *Chaâba* itself. This minimalist posture towards language is further reflected by Azouz's mother's disinclination to communicate with her neighbour Louise in the *Chaâba*. Azouz notes that '*elle n'a jamais*

apprécié que l'on parle en arabe devant elle' (she never liked it when people spoke in Arabic in front of her) (p. 126). Louise's reaction, where she distances and isolates herself behind her cigarette when surrounded by the women of the *Chaâba* (Begag, 1986, p. 127), serves as a provocative symbol of the colonial Franco-Algerian separation. While the *Chaâba* women's perception of mobility is interpreted through an Orientalist lens, where the 'knowledge of subject races or Orientals' facilitates their 'management' and 'control' (Said, 2006, p.57), it highlights the cultural and social divides between the two communities. Azouz's mother, like many others in the *Chaâba*, undermines her chances of making herself "known" and appreciated. While the *Beur* subaltern "speaks" in their isolated, privatised "cocoon", they make no real effort to be properly "heard" by the French Other. The novel, therefore, exposes the *Beur* identity dilemma, represented by the *Chaâba*'s fear of the 'Other' embodied in their "insularity" and reluctance to connect. This mindset, in turn, prevents them from developing convivial Franco-Algerian diasporic bonds.

Algerian thoughts on mobility within the *Chaâba* are marked by a depoliticised understanding of religion, which is negatively associated with immobility and powerlessness. This is evident when Azouz's mother who laments Bouzid's unwillingness to move house. In a tone laced with despondency, Messaouda complains to her daughter Emma, '*Ah, mon Dieu, que t'ai-je donc fait pour mériter une telle souffrance?*' (Oh my God, what have I done to deserve such suffering?) (p. 131). While the mother's despair is closely tied to her ultimate desire to move to the *banlieue*, her awareness of seeking active agency is notably absent. Messaouda's lament mirrors her longing for a change, yet her perspective remains limited, as she neither envisions nor actively seeks the empowerment that could challenge the societal structures surrounding her. Another moment that reflects the passive use of religion occurs

when *les Bouchaoui* (the *Bouchaoui* family) decide to leave the *Chaâba* to settle in the *banlieue*. Bouzid, in disbelief, questions why they decided to leave (p. 122). In response, Abboué justifies their departure by saying, '*Eh bien parce que Allah l'a voulu ainsi. C'est tout*' (Well, it is because God wanted them to, that's all) (p. 122). This exchange illustrates how religion is invoked passively to explain life changes and decisions, removing its agency. In line with minimalist religious behaviours, Muslim scholar Mazheruddin condemns a depoliticised view of religion for 'those who resign themselves passively to their fate and do not take appropriate means to realise their objectives' (qtd. in Hali, 1970, p. 40). This minimalist use of religion implies that immigrants' reasons for seeking change outside private spaces are often driven by either complete resignation to fate or a purely economic motive, with little to no development of a sense of religious agency.

The novel frames Azouz to initially immerse himself in the pervasive North-African "minimalist" views of religion, which functions as a deterrent to his mobility. This minimalist approach shapes his understanding of the *Chaâba*'s economic deprivation, enhancing its portrait as an Algerian colony steeped in superstition. His fear of the dark when using the WC leads him to mentally implore the dark souls not to harm him (p. 14). This reflects the influence of superstition within the *Chaâba*, a belief system that shapes his actions and thoughts. At this juncture, Azouz's childish mindset transforms the inconvenience of the lack of electricity, oil lamp or flashlights into a serious preoccupation with the fight against shadows. This fixation symbolises a minimalist identity entrenched in the *Bidonville*, one that refrains from 'making any attempt to reform' and 'desiring success in this world' (Siddiqi, 1970, p. 35). In highlighting binaries of light/darkness, symbolic of education/illiteracy, *Beur* identity becomes ensnared in a historically colonial legacy, limiting their sense of agency. Azouz's

passive appropriation of '*les djoun, les esprits malins*' (the bad spirits) (p. 14) in the *Bidonville* inhibits a more active, transformative approach to religion, which Siddiqi evaluates by 'how far it leads to the progress of man' (p. 33). The *Chaâba*'s minimalism further reflects the colonial context of widespread illiteracy among Algerians, with rates reaching 90 percent, and which Malika Sahel (2017) attributes to their resistance against forging a Frenchified cultural identity. Most notably, it created ample space for superstition and regressive customs to dominate Algerian lives. While migrants view transborder interconnectedness as a threat to identity, it fortifies superstition and illiteracy and demobilises change and communal prosperity.

2-The School and the Internalisation of French Assimilation: Framing *Beur* Alienation from Roots:

Le Gone du Chaâba portrays the *Beur* schoolboy's intellectual journey from the periphery to the centre as a geographically challenging process, symbolising his struggle to reconcile Algerian heritage with the pressures of assimilation. Azouz's first public school, *Léo-Lagrange*, is divided from the *Chaâba* by the *Rhône* bridge, which serves as an external walkway. The bridge is described by Azouz as '*un passage difficile*' (a difficult passage) (p. 51), and the hardship of transcending it is conveyed through his words: '*angoisse de parvenir jusque-là! Le pont enjambe les eaux brouillonnes et nerveuses du canal!*' (an anguish to go this far! The bridge spans the messy and fierce waters of the canal!) (p. 51). Crossing the bridge is not merely a physical movement; it encapsulates the deeper tension of leaving behind the *Chaâba* and its specific identity and cultural heritage to enter the school, where different cultural codes prevail. In his *Écarts d'Identité*, Begag reflects on the setting of the novel by highlighting the implication of the *Rhône* bridge:

‘À Lyon, seul un pont sur le Rhône sépare le quartier de la place du Pont du centreville, la place Bellecoeur. Mais c’est un pont qui sépare deux mondes plus qu’il ne les relie’

(At Lyon, only the bridge over the Rhône separates the district of *Pont du centreville*, *Bellecoeur*. Yet it is a bridge separating two worlds more than it joins them) Begag (1990, p. 47).

The *Beur* children’s fear of crossing accentuates the vast disparities between two worldly spaces. This geographical positioning reinforces an Orientalist ‘gaze’ and is there to make *Beur* children ‘totally visible entities’ (Said, 2003, pp. 185-186). Particularly, the intricacy of reaching the school, implied by crossing the bridge, serves not only to intimidate them yet also makes them see themselves as ‘visitors’ to a distant, superior and ‘proper France’. The bridge, thus, solidifies the narrative of an exteriorly distanced *Beur* Other, further reinforcing the view of their inassimilable, inadequate nature and inability to integrate.

Azouz’s *Bildung* journey begins with the disciplined “march” he resolutely makes to school. The sensitivities he develops towards work and learning, however, offer an incongruity with those of the rest of the *Chaâba*. After returning from his first school, *Léo-Lagrange*, Azouz observes, ‘*le Chaâba est merveilleux. Le bidonville reprend vie après une journée de travail*’ (the *Chaâba* feels amazing. The *Bidonville* rejuvenates after a good day of work) (Begag, 1986, p. 56). This emphasis on the value of work paints a new image of the *Chaâba*, transforming it from a place of darkness, disorder and superstition into one of light and order. In the mornings, as Azouz prepares for school, he notes, ‘*tout est en ordre, je ne suis pas sorti nu. Je peux continuer à marcher sur le chemin de l’école*’ (all is in order, I am not going out naked. I can make my way to school) (p. 18). Azouz’ raw experience of education brings light, serenity, and vitality to the *Chaâba*, promoting universal morals of order and hard

work. In contrast, his peer Rabah, referred to as '*le caïd*' (the boss), who associates productivity with material gain, proudly brings rotten vegetables from the Villeurbanne market to the *Chaâba* (p. 38). While the success of Rabah is tied to physical labour, Azouz's newfound knowledge offers him a different form of power, being "armed" and "cloaked" with knowledge instead of violence. His "march" to school becomes symbolic of his journey towards freedom as he becomes free when he moves outside 'the inner walls' (Begag, 2007, p. 125) the *Chaâba* and its colonial legacies.

The heightened sense of marginalisation and discrimination felt by the *Chaâba* students leads them to physically revolt against the French established order. Moussaoui, whose name ironically means "equal" in Algerian dialect (although this is not provided in the novel's glossary), exemplifies this rebellion by defying M. Grand's authority (whose name means big or superior). In claiming that he is not his father and refusing to take instructions from him (Begag, 1986, pp. 88-89), Moussaoui challenges white authority, aligning with Fanon's concept of 'the native' as 'insensible to ethics' and embodying 'the negation of values' (2001, p. 32). Moussaoui simultaneously acknowledges Algerian paternalistic power instead. The teacher responds derogatorily, calling him *sale* (dirty), and threatening to expel him from school (p. 90). He also threatens to discredit his parents, potentially depriving them of their monthly academic allowance from the French government. Moussaoui's defiant behaviour, described as '*sautillant sur ses jambes, à la Mohamed Ali*' (jumping on his legs, in Muhammad Ali's way), ultimately leads to his expulsion from school (Begag, 1986, p. 90). His resistance can be inscribed within an Orientalist dialogue, as Said notes, 'the ways by which a lion's fierceness be handled will actually *increase* its fierceness' (2003, p. 116-119) (emphasis in the original text). Rather than empathising and identifying with the *Chaâba's* life, particularly the

poor hygienic conditions to which Moussaoui and other *Beur* kids are subjected, the teacher, focusing on Moussaoui's perceived "fierceness", activates and amplifies the stereotype of the *Beur*, enhancing his resistance and the perceived threat they pose. The teacher's exploitation of Moussaoui's economic vulnerabilities to tame him places the *Chaâba* students in direct opposition to the French teacher, reflecting governmental socio-economic and political nonchalance in relation to *Beur* concerns. By hurling them to the suburban *Chaâba* first and the rear class seats second, they are driven away from the centre to come into "touch" with the "gaze" of misrepresentation. The school, as a recognised French institution, fails to construct inclusive spaces of diasporic reconciliation. It functions as a mechanism of control over the wretched and already exploited *Beur* youth, which contradicts the Republican model that preaches morality, justice, and brotherhood.

Azouz's initial attempt to combat exclusion, however, initially takes on a pessimistic turn, distancing him from the *Chaâba*'s mode of life altogether. This shift is primarily evident in Azouz's contact in school with his first white French tutor M. Grand. His approach to teaching, which relies on comparison, fosters hostility amongst the ethnic children. A particularly crude comparison is invited between the diligent Azouz, who is already savouring the joys of success (Begag, 1986, p. 67), and the less industrious Moussaoui, who is relegated to those '*du fond de la classe*' (latest in class) (p. 68). M. Grand's strategy to demonstrate his non-racism towards the other *Beur* kids ultimately pits them against Azouz. Azouz's successful scholarly achievement and good manners do not serve to bring his ethnic friends together but sets them apart. He decides to '*changer de peau [...] à partir d'aujourd'hui, termine l'Arabe de Chaâba*' (change skin [...] From now on, the end of the Arab of the *Chaâba*) (Begag, 1986, p. 54). Azouz's pursuit of French educational attainment necessitates a detachment

from the Algerian past. This trajectory can be inscribed within what Frantz Fanon (2001) characterises as 'devaluing pre-colonial history' of the native (Fanon, 2001, p. 169). Fanon writes:

'Colonialism is not satisfied merely with... emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it' (169)

In attacking the historical identity of the colonised, which in this context is represented by Azouz's "skin", the coloniser compels them to relinquish their cultural heritage to adapt to and embrace colonial values. Later, he takes sides with French Jean-Marc Laville against Moussaoui who retorts, '*T'es pas un Arabe, toi!*' (You are not an Arab, you!) (p. 83), wondering whether he is '*avec eux ou avec nous!*' (with them or with us) (p. 84). This exchange illustrates the rift between Azouz and Moussaoui, reflecting the pressure Azouz faces to choose between his cultural identity and the desire to fit into the mainstream. This moment, once again, evokes a colonial strategy *par excellence*, rooted in the divide-to-rule ethos, where colonial powers exploit internal divisions among the natives to thwart any potential unity (Fanon, 2001, p. 10). By following in M. Grand's footsteps and disregarding and distancing himself from his *Chaâba* companions, Azouz adopts a foreign non-Arab identity that is shaped by Eurocentric French values. This identity allows him to gain access to the French system, yet it simultaneously renders him an estranged outsider amongst his own people and a perceived traitor.

The loss of Azouz' unique sense of the past is linked to the French assimilatory project, embodied by M. Grand and later Mme. Valard. Duffy offers an ironic interpretation of their

names: 'Monsieur Grand ('great') is small-minded and petty towards the Arab kids' while 'Madame Valard (*valoir*: 'to be worthy') takes a hearty dislike to Azouz from the start and never loses an opportunity to belittle or humiliate him' (2018). The discriminatory attitudes of the French teachers towards Azouz highlight an authoritative hostility that significantly affects his understanding of difference and, consequently, his coming-of-age process. When M. Grand catches Azouz selling lilacs during the holiday, Azouz feels '*rouge de honte*' (red with shame) as a result of the devaluation of his cultural practices (p. 66). His later realisation that only the Arabs of the *Chaâba* sell lilacs in the market reflects how he internalises his teacher's "gaze". A similar impression is conveyed after Mme. Valard's class, when Azouz's mother arrives at the school wearing a headscarf and a long abaya to pick him up. Unable to openly acknowledge his Muslim background to his Jewish classmates, who already suspect his North African origins, Azouz disavows his own mother and pretends to share a similar identity with them, claiming to be Jewish. Azouz ponders '*Je suis Juif*' (I am Jewish) (p. 85), which demonstrates that aligning with the Taboul brothers, who are well-assimilated and socially accepted yet maintain religious freedom, will help him gain the approval he desires. Azouz's hope is validated when the brothers express '*leur satisfaction*' (their satisfaction) (p. 65), thus embodying what Baker calls, 'the violence of assimilation' (2009, p. 109). The incident further highlights ethnic discrimination in French schools, rendered especially conspicuous after the notorious 1989 *L'affaire du foulard* (the headscarf scandal), which not only brought the struggles of Maghrebi-French women to the forefront but also 'questioned the place of Islam in French society', informing its inability to integrate immigrants (Silverstein, 2014, p. 26). The novel highlights the more pressing issue of targeting Islamic markers of difference. Azouz's desperate attempt at getting through to the white French mainstream illustrates the futility of trying to engage with difference on equal terms.

Azouz's response to his mother's attire highlights how integration homogenises religious symbols like the headscarf and other facets of religious expression. The French assimilatory paradigm, which aggressively displaces religious identities and other 'cultural features' (Skovgaard-Smith and Poulfelt, 2018, p. 129) is mirrored in his denial of his mother's public appearance in Islamic clothing. In Western conception, it often ignores its agencies while framing it as 'fixed and inflexible' in the sense that it 'limits Muslim women's capacity to dress and behave as they please' (Davies, 2018, p. 96). Azouz' mimicry of the French Other in this sense reflects a 'harmonization or repression of difference' (Bhabha, 1984, p. 131) in relation to his true identity "roots", framing them as inferior or inassimilable. His adoption of a more accepted identity becomes a survival strategy, one that simultaneously reflects a strong desire for inclusion in the French integratory system. As such, the school is a body who fails 'to engage Others in their Otherness' (Waghid, 2013, p. 336). Because the French assimilatory discourse fails to acknowledge, validate, or strengthen *Beur* identity, Azouz's mature sense of self is yet to form and instead internalises the dominant cultural norms by imitating the white French Other.

The school morals reinforce the *Beur* identity dilemma, leading the *Beur* subject to question his choices and actions. The French incapacity to reconcile the periphery to the centre reflects Azouz's conflicting sense of perceiving himself. He is treated as a '*faux frère*' (false brother) by the *Chaâba* kids, highlighting his estrangement from his cultural roots, while being excluded by his French classmates, who speak ill of him (p. 199). In another incident, Azouz's blind application of M. Grand's lesson to '*mettre fin aux activités de ces hors-la-loi*' (put an end to activities of those illegal) (p. 42) leads him to betray his uncle by disclosing his

unlawful halal butchery shop (p. 116). In this moment, Azouz functions 'as the ideal translator/interpreter [...] because of his superior French language skills and also his willingness to comply' (Reeck, 2011, p. 32). Azouz is set as a polluted *Beur*, reinforcing the assimilatory paradigms by actively distancing himself from engaging with his community's right to practise religious rituals. Azouz's dilemma can be framed as a 'guilt over separation from the old culture and desire to belong to the new (which) breeds the identity crisis, a bicultural self-image harbouring a conflict between rival cultural imperatives' (Magnan, 2004, p. 915). This internal struggle reflects the false Republican ideals of inclusion, as Azouz is unable to fully appreciate or respond to the concerns of his ancestral religious heritage.

At Mme. Valard's class, the thorns of Azouz's identity dilemma become even sharper, intensifying his passive understanding of, and thus responsibility towards, his heritage roots. His approach to education in this section of the novel reflects a misguided perception of success. When asked to write a free composition on a topic selected by the students, Azouz instantly mediates:

'Mes idées sont déjà ordonnées. Je ne peux pas lui parler du Chaâba, mais je vais faire comme si c'était la campagne, celle qu'il imagine... En conclusion, j'écris que le petit garçon est heureux à la campagne'

(My ideas are already organised. I cannot write her about the *Chaâba*, but I will pretend as though I were in the countryside, the one she imagines... In conclusion, I would write that the little child is happy in the countryside) (Begag, 1986, pp. 59-60).

Azouz is keen to meet his white French teacher's cultural "expectations" and worldview, even at the expense of his own. His plagiarised writing on '*la mer, la montagne*,

les feuilles d'automne qui tourbillonnent, le manteau de neige de l'hiver' (the sea, the mountain, the swirling autumn leaves, the blanket of winter snow) culminates in Mme. Valard giving him a mark of zero for '*très mal copié Maupassant*' (badly copying Maupassant) (p. 191). Despite his '*Manque d'originalité!*' (Lack of originality), Mme. Valard is still exhilarated to have recognised Guy de Maupassant (p. 192), highlighting her familiarity with the French culture, a contrast to Azouz, who is only keen to tailor his imagination to internalise French culture. Azouz's fierce desire to mirror the French experience reflects the colonial dynamic described by Fanon as 'the look that the native turns on the settler's (space) is a look of lust; a look of envy; it expresses his dreams of procession— all manner of possession' (2001, p. 30). Besides, Azouz's topic, which, depicts a French pleasant reality hides the *Chaâba*'s agony. This reflects a degree of confusion and misinformation he has been accumulating about his own heritage, which suggests self-denial and a lack of engagement with the racist discourse surrounding the suffering in the *Chaâba*. Begag illustrates the pitfalls of falling prey to the French assimilatory policy, which undermines cosmopolitan consciousness towards mobilising communal change.

3-Shared Histories and the mobilisation of Communal Change: Reimagining *Beur* Identity through a *Pied-noir*:

Azouz's transfer to Lycée Saint-Exupéry marks his first encounter with M. Loubon, a *Pied-noir* tutor who openly shares with Azouz that he lived through the Algerian War of Independence. The *Pied-noirs*, which are still rooted in Algerian traditional customs, speak volumes about their lasting connections. William Cohen observes how the deep 'bonds' and forms of 'colonial imprint' between *Pied-noirs* and Algerian still persist after independence (1980, p. 97). M. Loubon, '*un rapatrié d'Algérie*' (a returnee from Algeria) and a native of the

Algerian city of Tlemcen (Begag, 1986, p. 182), demonstrates extensive knowledge of Azouz's cultural background. He engages Azouz in an intimate conversation, informing his deep familiarity with Algeria. His ability to identify with Azouz, almost as if Azouz '*le connaissais d'avant*' (has known him before) (p. 184), is outstanding. This is reflected in the *Chaâba* pupils' '*bouche bee*' (bewildered) reaction, yet one of contentment, as they observe the bond and connectivity between them (p. 184). After a series of attempts to familiarise Azouz with the land and culture of Algeria, M. Loubon asks him about his understanding of Arabic in an Arabic-Algerian dialect (p. 184). For the first time in the novel, Azouz is given the opportunity to discuss his background and even his illiterate immigrant father in the classroom without feeling ashamed. In contrast to M. Grand and Mme. Valard's inability to relate to Azouz's condition of the *Chaâba*, M. Loubon forms a deep connection with him, reflecting the historical context where 'many *pieds-noirs* felt that they had been wrenched from their (Algerian) homeland and cut off from their roots' (Comtat, 2018, p. 403). As such, M. Loubon challenges the colonial discourse, defined by the oppressor's attempt to assimilate the oppressed (Laroussi, 2002). Instead, he creates an inclusive space that nurtures rootedness and supports connectivity through difference (Appiah, 2006). This reflects the *Beur* historical "*droit à la difference*" (right to difference) defined by the inclusion of the Algerian language and culture into the traditionally homogeneous, Republican-oriented school system.

M. Loubon provides ubiquitous instances of sympathetic comprehension that help resolve Azouz's previous dilemma. As he leads a debate on inheritance, a French student remarks that this matter should be settled at the solicitor's (p. 188). In contrast, Azouz explains to M. Loubon that the way his Algerian *Berber* family handles inheritance is different from the French system; it is automatically passed on to the eldest brother. Azouz's words

provoke an angry reaction from his French classmates, who accuse his family of being '*sauvages*' (savages) (p. 189). M. Loubon responds defensively, insisting that they apologise to Azouz. He shows respect for Azouz's family tradition, despite its perceived minimalism and irrationality. To begin with, Azouz's fearless engagement with his distinct cultural laws in the French classroom discussion places him outside the postcolonial discourse of the subaltern, who is 'by definition, epistemologically below the dominant culture' (Maggio, 2007, p. 427). As such, the French school is portrayed as a space that celebrates difference, conviviality and inclusivity. M. Loubon stands out as an ambassador for a model of "equality with roots", ensuring that fair treatment and respect for difference are upheld. Particularly, the role he plays in transmitting equality can be understood through sensing himself in tune with Azouz's ancestral experience, which mirrors his own position as an invisible *Pied-noir* similarly caught between France and Algeria.

The vocabulary describing Azouz's sense of inferiority in the earlier sections of the narrative, such as '*cette humiliation*' (this humiliation) (Begag, 1986, p. 18); '*humilié à l'intérieur*' (humiliated from the inside) (p. 20), '*rougi*' (becoming red) (p. 31), and '*consterné*' (distressed) (p. 45), shifts in the presence of M. Loubon. He engages Azouz in a warm, friendly conversation, speaks his own tongue, and displays benevolent demeanour, marked by terms like '*souriant*' (smiling) (p. 184), '*amuse*' (amused) (p. 185), and '*modeste*' (modest) (p. 186). This echoes Mica Nava's inclusive notions of 'sympathy', 'hospitality' and 'the allure of difference' in the face of racism (2007, p. 265), which, in this context, incentivises *Beur* mobility and active agency in reconnecting with their cultural and religious roots.

M. Loubon familiarises Azouz with the geographical position of his ancestral country (p. 184), encouraging him to publicly assert his identity without limitations. He inculcates a renewed sense of self-worth and social trust, planting the seeds for Azouz's emotional and intellectual growth. Azouz's transformed attitude in school aligns with Anne Schneider's (2016) argument for the importance of incorporating linguistic and cultural hybridity into the French educational system. Schneider observes the positive effects of embedding texts like Azouz Begag's *Un Train pour chez nous (A Train to Our Place)* (2001) into French elementary education, which helped foster a sense of pride, and resolved doubt and the identity dilemma among ethnic pupils regarding their North African ancestral heritage (2016). The hybrid spaces that begin to shape Azouz's subjectivity are rooted in his past and, notably, are deepened by the influence of the *Pied-noir*. Azouz reaches a point where he becomes eager and curious to learn more about a different, "alluring" (Nava, 2007) Algeria which he has never been aware of before.

The form of Arabic that M. Loubon is willing to exchange with Azouz is standard Arabic, referred to by M. Loubon as '*L'Arabe littéraire*' (Begag, 1986, p. 185), or formal, literary Arabic. This type of Arabic is taught and learned in the formal Algerian school system, distinct from the dialect spoken by the people of the *Chaâba*. Begag advocates for a maximalist tradition where cultural understanding and exchange are grounded in knowledge and learning, rather than being limited by illiteracy and ignorance (Waghid, 2014). Moreover, M. Loubon's tutoring and mentoring of Azouz on the principles of Arabic letters as stated in the Quran represents an effort to reclaim a sense of religious identity. Azouz refers to M. Loubon as someone who is '*en train de m'expliquer mes origines, de me prouver ma nullité sur la culture arabe*' (explaining my origins to me, proving my ignorance of Arab culture) (Begag,

1986, p. 186). In this sense, the public French school is transformed into a non-biased cosmopolitan space that preaches against both minimalism and deracination. M. Loubon introduces Azouz to the Arabic alphabet, particularly *Alif*, as key elements of Quranic verse. This engagement extends to a direct interaction with divine symbols significant in the Islamic tradition, as M. Loubon enquires about Azouz's knowledge of *Allah*' (p. 186), harnessing the Islamic faith into an instrument for momentous educational and intellectual growth. This process unfolds through M. Loubon's decision to undertake a free composition after he introduces Azouz to *Les Chevaux du Soleil* (Hair of the Sun) (1967), a work by *Pied-noir* Jules Roy, whom he refers to as '*Un Algérien comme nous*' (An Algerian like us) (p. 186). Kleppinger asserts that 'writing is [...] one significant theme in Azouz's coming-of-age tale' (2016, p. 91), where M. Loubon opens a connection to Azouz's heritage through literature. Most significantly, the shift from a previously borrowed narrative to a distinctive piece of writing on racism empowers Azouz with real agency in confronting *Beur* stigmatisation within the *Chaâba*. Now determined to '*évitais [...] le piège de l'originalité*' (avoid [...] the trap of plagiarism) (Begag, 1986, p. 192), Azouz chooses to write about a subject he had long been shunning. He now takes the risk of exposing "difference" through the *Chaâba* and the terrible prejudice that plagues it. Fuelled by a newfound, burning enthusiasm for his religious and cultural roots, Azouz reflects:

'Allah avait guidé mes pas, car j'attendais cette chance depuis de longs mois, et un Pied-noir me l'offrait sur un plateau. Le racisme. C'est du racisme qu'il fallait que je parle dans ma rédaction'

(Allah guided my steps, as I had been waiting for this opportunity for so long, and a *Pied-noir* offered it to me on a platter. Racism. It is racism which I should talk about in my writing) (Begag, 1986, p. 192)

Azouz's piece of writing embodies '*un cri de désespoir*' (a scream of despair) (Begag, 1986, p. 193) against *Beur* academic failure, which is mainly attributed to French *laïcité*. The doctrine's effort to impose barriers against religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity, however, stands in contrast to Azouz's emerging "assimilable" religious identity. Azouz largely maintains a religious stance that is engrained in a socio-political approach to a new politicised Islamic identity, one that is primarily oriented towards 'political opposition to racism' (Shah, 2006, p. 223; Murugkar, 1994, p. 2477). Moreover, this vision is positioned beyond the confines of its traditional geographical *Chaâba*. It thus serves as a catalyst for the development of Azouz's *Bildung*, through which he reimagines his sense of home by shaping an Islam that transcends geographical limits. The hyperbolic image of France, married to an Orientalist narrative of Islam, is deconstructed to host cosmopolitan rooted agendas, which for Naomi Schor, is based on 'the alliance of a universal and particular identity' (2001, p. 54). Azouz's subsequent attainment of the highest-ranking mark of 17 reflects how his schooling is redirected into a duty towards his community. At this point, Azouz's religious agency blossoms and matures:

'Par Allah! Allah Akbar! Je me sentais fier de mes doigts. J'étais enfin intelligent. La meilleure note de toute la classe. Devant tous les Français. J'étais ivre de fierté. J'allais dire à mon père'

(By Allah! Allah Akbar! I feel proud of myself. I have finally proved to be intelligent. Attaining the highest grade in the whole class. Amongst all the French. I am swelling with pride. I will tell my father) (Begag, 1986, pp.

194- 199)

The narrative's previously passive and depoliticised approach towards religion is now altered through the invocation of a revered Islamic icon, *Allah*, to convey a sense of powerful, peaceful, and intellectual agency. In this light, Azouz emerges as a cosmopolite who actively transforms his religious roots and integrates them within the school setting, thereby genuinely embodying what Schoene describes as 'stepping out of narrow self-incarcerating traditions of belonging' (2009, p. 21). Most importantly, M. Loubon's connection with Azouz through difference has ultimately borne fruit, enabling Azouz to spread his "wings" and become a voice for the *Chaâba*, the *Beur* cause and "right to difference".

4-From the *Chaâba* to the *Banlieue*: Existential Boundaries and Cultural Disconnect:

Central to the novel's sense of existentialism is the new space of the *banlieue*, which imposes a stagnant sense of being on the *Beur* identity and challenges Begag's rooted model of integration. The novel concludes with Azouz's family relocating to their new apartment in the *banlieue*, where they remain visibly excluded. Azouz describes its stifled, empty existence in the following way:

'Le quartier est mort, étouffé par la chaleur qui s'écrase contre les façades des immeubles. Quelques voitures et un autobus dérangeant de temps à autre le silence [...]

Toutes les vitrines des magasins sont closes Que faire dans ce desert ?'

(The neighbourhood is dead, stifled by the heat that crashes against the facades of its buildings. A few cars and a bus disturb the silence from time to time [...] All the shop windows are shut. What to do in this desert?) (Begag, 1986, p. 122)

In the film version (1997), the sense of the existential isolation of the *banlieue* is vividly conveyed through visual techniques. As the camera zooms out from the window of the building, Azouz is shown looking across the vast, imposing architecture of the *banlieue*. The buildings are depicted as towering and confining, visually representing how the *banlieue* is physically and metaphorically cut off from the centre (Ruggia, 1997). As Azouz gazes out of his new apartment window, he becomes acutely aware of its (literally) limited horizons. His roots, deeply tied to the past, appear to lack future agency, as the boundaries around him seem to pull him back toward the colonial past from which he and his community originated. This suggests that the *banlieue*, as a geographical space, still casts Algerian immigrants and their offspring in a colonial-oriented representation, one that continues to affect how they are perceived, particularly in the eyes of white French nationals. This discourse imagines Azouz as an Oriental who is unable to 'escape the fences placed around him' (Said, 2003, pp. 124-126) by exposing him to a second frontier and colony.

The new *banlieue* further exposes rootless dynamics and is no longer construed as 'a community niche'. Unlike the *Chaâba*, which provided a sense of connection to the past, it represents a threat to Algerian traditional heritage, and one step away from French Western immorality. For Bouzid, leaving the *Chaâba* is akin to '*aller au diable*' (going to the devil) (Begag, 1986, 205), symbolising a departure from a familiar, rooted Algerian identity toward an uncertain, potentially destructive future that jeopardises the values and traditions of his heritage. This is primarily demonstrated by the introduction of the television in the *banlieue*, symbolised as a Western evil that openly broadcasts a French kiss, which Bouzid reacts to by unplugging the TV. The incident unfolds as follows:

‘S’il n’y avait pas eu ce baiser obscène à la télévision, nous aurions sûrement passé une agréable soirée [...] ce cochon d’acteur a voulu toucher la langue de la fille, devant nous tous, et ça, Bouzid ne l’a pas supporté. Il s’est emporté à nouveau: Coupez-moi cette cochonnerie! [...] il a arraché le fil de la prise et toute l’installation électrique de la maison a sauté’

(If it hadn’t been for that obscene kiss on the television, we would have surely spent a descent evening [...] that pig of an actor wanted to touch the tongue of the girl, in front of all of us, Bouzid could not tolerate it. He went mad again: cut off that crap! [...] he ripped the wire out of the socket and the entire electrical system of the house blew up) (Begag, 1986, p. 172)

The television is portrayed as a symbol of Western influence and values that challenge traditional Algerian cultural and religious norms. The act of unplugging the TV configures a resistance to the encroachment of Western culture, which Bouzid views as a threat to his family’s heritage. The *banlieue*, symbolically acting as an internal, private portal to the other side of borders, promotes secularist codes of behaviour. Conversely, Bouzid’s occasional ‘*pèlerinage au Chaâba*’ (pilgrimage to the *Chaâba*) (Begag, 1986, p. 171) becomes his ultimate attempt to escape the beginning of the moral decay he perceives through the *banlieue*. The *Chaâba* represents a return to a more culturally and religiously rooted space, offering Bouzid a sanctuary from the secular, corrupting influences of the *banlieue* and a way to reconnect with his heritage and values. The stance of border-crossing thus still raises concerns to the *Beur* subject religious roots, and particularly for Azouz who still wishes to ‘*continuer à vivre comme au Chaâba*’ (to continue to live like in the *Chaâba*) where he feels more like home (p. 154).

5-Navigating Identity and Integration: Begag's Real-Life Approach to *Beur* Belonging in France:

This section examines Begag's memoir, focusing on his experiences as an adult, and compares them with the narrative's analysis of the impact of French assimilation on the construction of the *Beur* identity as rootless and immobile. It brings into view the writer's call for 'integration with difference', presenting it as an ideal model for *Beur* integration within public spaces. Begag's sociological work *Ethnicity and Equality: France in the Balance* translated by Hargreaves (Begag and Hargreaves, 2007) and *Un Mouton dans la Baignoire* (Begag, 2007) serve as powerful, first-hand testimonies that offer a vivid and moving portrayal of the challenges faced by the diaspora. They highlight the struggles, labour, and, most importantly, the identity crises of the *Beur* community, largely shaped by the pressures of French Republicanism. Indeed, the children of North-African descent, like the protagonist Azouz, are perceived by Begag to be 'doubly received as foreign: they are outsiders in the world they have newly entered; they are no longer accepted where they came from' (Begag and Hargreaves, 2007, p. 80). Their status echoes the painful legacy of the colonial past, when Algerians suffered both physical and cognitive marginalisation under French colonialism. The colonial legacy is reflected in long-standing, unpleasant episodes of mass *Beur* protests, mainly those of 1973, the 1980s, and 2005. Begag contends in his social account that these protests are driven by the prospect of unequal opportunities for *Beur* and other ethnically distinct minorities, warning them against revealing their names on job applications lest they be rejected. In this sense, the principles outlined in the French constitution, along with the Republican ideals of "fraternity, equality and liberty", do not appear to operate across the broad spectrum of diasporic public domains. Begag argues that

this is due to French politicians' 'unwillingness to put an end to racial discrimination' (2007, p. 47).

Begag's real-life involvement in French transborder diasporic spaces, which serve as sites for intercultural encounter, provides a crucial foundation for assessing his perspective on *Beur* integration. The writer's involvement in governmental positions sparked controversy regarding his allegiances to the *Beur* sense of being (Reeck, 2011). This tension highlights the complex dynamics between his personal achievements and the challenges faced by the *Beur* community in maintaining a sense of cultural identity while engaging with mainstream French society. On the surface, Begag's integration seems phenomenally successful. However, upon deeper reflection, his governmental memoirs reveal significant drawbacks in the policy, particularly its failure to address the concerns of Algerian ethnic minorities. Additionally, many of his political debates, especially those with Nicolas Sarkozy, are fraught with tension. Primarily, Begag took a highly militant stance against Sarkozy's xenophobic remarks directed at *Beur* residents of *La Courneuve*, where he referred to them as '*nettoyer [...] racaille*' (clean [...] the scum of the earth). Begag's response, '*La liberté d'expression a un prix exorbitant*' (Freedom of speech comes at a high price) (Begag, 2007, p. 92), ultimately cost him his governmental position. The enormous political challenge Begag mounts against the dire reality of young ethnics who are 'French by birth but not recognized as such' (Begag and Hargreaves, 2007, p. 91) was met by the end of his political career in 2005. Sarkozy's decision to expel him from his position as a deputy led him to absent himself from the political scene altogether. Begag's transborder engagement aims at speaking out for the rights of subaltern *Beur* groups, pointing fingers to French attempts at homogenising and wiping out their difference. Akin to many *Beurs* who could exhibit a 'remarkable willingness and capacity to assimilate' (Giry, 2006, p. 93), however, his efforts went undervalued. His despondent

estrangement is inevitable, and his ethnic visibility still counts most in the media. Begag's experience mirrors Azouz's struggle with Orientalist discourse, as described by Said: 'no matter how much a single Oriental can escape the fences placed around him, he is first an Oriental, second a human being, and last again an Oriental' (2003, p. 124-126). This illustrates the difficulty minorities face in articulating self-representation, as their identities are constrained by a fixed *Beur* determinacy. This rigid framework, shaped by stereotypes and historical prejudices, hinders their ability to define themselves independently, often forcing them into predefined roles that limit their agency and self-expression.

Bagag reveals the French tendency to position *Beurs* as inevitable constituents of the *banlieue*. For instance, when he was subjected to an identity check by a French officer in the streets of Lyon, Begag is left to reflect on the 'image... in her head' that the officer might have constructed about him (Begag and Hargreaves, 2007, p. 9). This moment encapsulates how racial stereotypes shape interaction in public spaces. In a moment of self-awareness, Begag quickly reflects that to the French officer, he is clearly perceived as 'a stranger, an Arab migrant who has arrived yesterday and would be on his way again the next morning' (p. 10). This realisation mirrors the fate of his parents, as he muses, 'after half a century, nothing had changed: it was perfectly reasonable to feel bitter; in native eyes I was still an immigrant worker'. He acknowledges the emotional toll this had on him, noting that 'alone at home I found myself slipping into a mini-depression' (p. 10). Reminiscent of the novel's existential theme of non-belonging, North-African immigrants and their children are perceived as fugitives in the eyes of the French, unable to identify with or integrate into the host country and thus destined to eventually return to their country of origin. Their presence in French public spaces fails to acknowledge their ethnic and religious diversities, instead treating them

as static entities trapped in the colonial past. Pertaining to his childhood experience at the French school, Begag had a negative impression of the tradition in French textbooks that began with the line: 'Our ancestors the Gauls'. This phrase carried assimilatory overtones, seemingly erasing cultural differences. Like his protagonist, Begag reflects on how he felt compelled 'to succumb to its regulations' and 'to be a descendant of Vercingetorix in order to be accepted by it'. Despite this pressure, in *Du bidonville à l'université* (1986), Begag notes that he remained determined not to lose 'touch with (his) own community' in the *Chaâba*. This underscores his struggle to balance the expectations of assimilation with the desire to preserve his cultural identity and maintain a connection to his roots.

The desire for acceptance equally constitutes a grim reality for Begag on a deeply personal level, particularly in the context of his marital life. This is exemplified by the emotional turmoil he experiences following his separation from his white French wife after her "infidelity". Azouz grapples with a profound crisis, marked by the collapse of what he had hoped to be a harmonious cross-cultural union. This emotional displacement is further explored in Begag's later autobiographies, *Le Marteau pique-cœur* (2004) and *Salam Ouessant* (2012), where he reflects on his post-divorce heartbreak and the challenges he faces as a single father raising two daughters. Duffy explores the theme of "motifs of crossing" in Begag's works, emphasising the author's profound disillusionment, which drives him to venture beyond the French central borders, crossing various other boundaries. Duffy argues that Begag undertook 'nostalgic journeys of leaving France altogether in quest for his authentic self' (Duffy, 2017), highlighting his inability to find solace or comfort within the French diaspora. Begag's departure from the *banlieue* to the centre, the very structure that triggers his sense of exclusion, does not appear to provide a resolution to his identity crisis.

His attempts at cross-border engagement in his later texts are mainly traced through a “pilgrimage to Mecca”. The desire for these nostalgic journeys, where diasporic confidence is jeopardised, reflects an existential postcolonial struggle for integration within French society. It underscores the profound difficulty of finding a space that is truly hospitable to *Beur* communities, where the fulfilment of belonging and acceptance remains elusive.

Begag’s condonement of the term “integration” can now be seen as both sharp and well-justified. Laura Reeck argues that Begag’s association of the term with “trickery and disillusionment” highlights his later decision to renounce the title of ‘minister of integration’ in favour of *minister of l’égalité des chances* (minister for equal opportunity) (2011, p. 25). This shift reflects his critique of the concept of integration, which he perceives as a deceptive promise rather than a genuine path to inclusion. Much like the lack of institutional recognition faced by Moussaoui in the novel, Begag suggests that *Beur* minorities, in their frustration and alienation, may resort to illegal acts as a means of asserting their distinctiveness and rootedness in society. Begag illustrates this point primarily through the 2005 *Beur* riots, using them as a key example to explain the dynamics of ethnic youth political delinquency. He emphasises that the riots were not random acts of violence but rather the result of a clear cause-and-effect equation. This concept is most clearly reflected in Begag’s *Un Mouton dans la Baignoire* (A Sheep in the Bathtub). The title suggests that they are so desperate to perform the halal sheep-slaughtering ritual publicly that they are forced to do so in the privacy of their own home bathtubs. Begag also refers to the 1973 economic recession, which he links to a rise in xenophobic sentiments (Begag and Hargreaves, 2007). This toxic atmosphere, marked by increased hostility toward immigrants, contributed to the eruption of anti-social and disruptive behaviours among *Beur* youth (2007). The book serves as a social critique,

recounting the events leading up to the riots. Begag asserts that *Beur* protesters '*se l'approprient à leur manière, avec leurs moyens. Les plus méchants ne sont pas ceux que l'on croit*' (The meanest people are not what we think they are, the others are the worst) (Begag, 2007, p. 111). Begag further legitimises the revolutionary impulses of *Beur* youth, grounding them in the marginalisation they experience, and identifies them as 'simply frustrated consumers' (Hargreaves, 2010, p. 1297). He aligns their cause with a narrative of the downtrodden and marginalised.

The next area of analysis compares hybrid spaces of resistance which Begag's protagonist fashions in relation to the religious *Bildung* development in the face of minimalism. Turning to his autobiography, Begag's efforts are centered on empowering *Beurs* to find their voice and free themselves from the restrictive patterns of diasporic assimilation and acculturation that are inherent in the colonial past. This colonial subalternity is framed within the context of the French school system, where it manifests in the discourse of shame that *Beurs* develop regarding their parents' past. Begag seeks to cultivate a hybrid form of self-representation that renegotiates "roots", a deep acknowledgment of one's heritage, and embracing them as a cosmopolitan ideal that encourages engagement with others through "wings". To clarify this nature of hybridity, he claims that 'in my core identity, the religion transmitted to me by my parents occupies only a part of the whole space' (Begag and Hargreaves, 2007, p. 65). In one of his lectures, Begag clarifies that his identity 'occupied one seat, not the entire rentable space' (Begag, 2010, p. 8). This statement illustrates Begag's subjectivity, positioning him as a rooted cosmopolite who, similar to his character, is willing to renegotiate his parents' local religious practices, politicise them, and integrate them into broader structures of interaction.

Begag emphasises the importance of adopting a proactive agency within the *Chaâba*, a community that often embraces preconceived religious ideas rooted in local cultural traditions. His perspective focuses on the need to break away from religious stereotypes and narrow thinking. He explains this by saying 'My students are freer than Taliban children sitting cross-legged in madrassas holding the Koran [...] freer because I teach them the art of subversion and caution, I show them how to thwart the vice of preconceived ideas' (2007, p. 65). Begag (2010) urges his students to develop critical, rational thinking, challenging and questioning cultural minimalist ideas that foster ignorance of the world. At the core of his approach is a desire for hybridity, beginning with his students' attainment of 'freedom' (Begag, 2010, p. 13), which allows them to 'put themselves at a distance, to self-evaluate' (p. 9), distancing themselves from the prejudices and limitations imposed by their parents' fixed beliefs. The transfer of positive roots to universal models of contact (Appiah, 2006) demands a willingness to engage with the Other. In his sociological work, Begag asserts, 'many other parts of my mind are open, free, and liable to change. These are the spaces wherein reside tolerance, and respect for everything I am not. My identity is an entity in constant movement, constant motion' (2007, p. 68). This highlights the idea that openness to innovative ideas and experiences allows for growth and transformation. Looking at the novel, his ideas align with the rejection of colonial models of interaction and instead advocate for a transnational perspective, where "wings" are grounded in a strong version of religious "roots". This approach seeks to resist harmful interpretations of tradition, superstition, ignorance, and stagnation, yet also intent on incorporating it into the public frameworks.

Conclusion:

The cosmopolitan dimensions that emerge in this chapter involve a compassionate engagement with difference or roots in public spheres. Begag's focus on the *Beur* hybrid identity, rooted in Algerian heritage, underscores a sense of uniqueness that reflects both cultural pride and openness. This extends to the development of a *Bildung* process, shaping subjectivities that help Begag regain the trust of the *Beur* community after being labeled a traitor and referred to as *un Beur de service* (a *Beur* token). According to Reeck, this label suggested that Begag would 'continue the faltering project of integration within the ranks of the French government' (2011, p. 25), implying that he was seen as a figure who served the state rather than representing the interests of his community. On the contrary, Begag proved himself to defy cultural assimilation by embracing hybrid forms of interaction. These hybrid approaches aim to foster social advancement and recognition for his ethnic community within the French mainstream. In this context, the French public school system becomes a necessary yet challenging institution, offering an avenue for the *Beur* subject to navigate borders and confront dilemmas. As a form of non-violent resistance, it serves as a cosmopolitan space where education and, by extension, writing become tools for social mobility.

Classified as a post-Independence model, Begag's *Bildung* consciousness seeks to drive change for the *Beur* generation by reinterpreting and expanding upon past "roots" and extending them into present "wings". The figure of the *Pied-noir* adds an axis of "roots" which offers a less fragmented, dual-axis theoretical model of *Beur* integration exemplified through the school. This space designates the possibility of sympathetic interactions with the *Pied-noir* teacher, who acts as a deconstructive figure between seeming binaries that do not acknowledge religious and cultural difference. This root-wing axis frames Begag's integration

project as a key initial step toward the possibility of belonging. By reimagining the private *banlieue*, a space tied to the past, as an assimilable, emblematic symbol that crosses borders, Begag creates a bridge between historical identity and contemporary, fluid integration. That, in some ways, limits his ability to effectively mobilise this axis across borders. In this context, Hargreaves and McKinney anticipate that:

‘In the 1990s it seemed possible that the need for postcolonial strategies might decline in the decades that then lay ahead. An essential precondition for this lay in the opening up of genuinely equal opportunities for post-colonial minorities, paving the way towards a truly post/colonial France. That essential step has not been taken’
(1997, p. 259)

This assumption places under the microscope the limitations of twentieth-century realism. The genre appears to have reached a standstill, confined within borders, which raises questions about the potential of subsequent developments in the genre. Subsequent literary movements, armed with new genres, will be evaluated to better understand *Beur* identity representation beyond the *banlieue*, especially through border-crossing narratives. As such, the exploration of newer genres, particularly comedy, will be considered in the next chapter to interrogate new *Beur* models of integration in their quest for belonging.

CHAPTER TWO

LAUGHTER ACROSS BORDERS: COMEDY AND COSMOPOLITANISM IN DJAMEL BENSALAH’S

BEUR SUR LA VILLE AND IL ÉTAIT UNE FOIS DANS L’OUED

Introduction:

In the previous chapter, I discussed the intersection between cosmopolitanism and the religious *Bildungsroman* in Azouz Begag's realist novel *Le Gone du Chaâba* (1986). The earlier genre of realism mainly centered on the discussion of urban inequality caused by French assimilation models. The text renegotiated more assimilable *Beur* subjectivities within the context of the French school system. The vision of "integration with roots" highlighted in the novel is marked by the futility to foster change when confronted with the rigid borders of the *banlieue*. In this analysis, *Beur* subjects are often depicted as reaching an impasse, a "border", or a standstill. As a result, they withdraw to interior zones of exclusion, as the only spaces in which they can express their cultural and religious allegiances or "roots". The struggle to assert *Beur* identity within the white French mainstream is thus seen as disempowered and ineffective by the writer. This chapter adopts an intersecting approach, blending cosmopolitanism and comedy to explore the spaces of interaction that shape both historical and contemporary discourses on diasporic inequality in Maghrebi-French director and screenwriter Djamel Bensalah's comedies *Beur Sur La Ville* (2011) and *Il était une fois dans L'Oued* (2005). Bensalah's films depart from the spaces of segregation associated with the *banlieue* to focus on diasporic border-crossing. My analysis shifts its focus from the earlier *Chaâba/banlieue*-centered realist novel and film of the late twentieth century to post-*Beur* film comedy marked by a more complex relationship to and transgression of borders. In these films, the characters move fluidly between the periphery and centre, challenging the concept of borders and asserting more integrated, dynamic subjectivities. I go beyond the framework established by earlier *Beur* authors, who sought to portray inclusion through the lens of a *Bildungsroman*. This approach was accompanied by the evolution of militant activism within the *Beur* community, advocating for the recognition of their cultural roots while defying the Franco-centric assimilation and its colonial residues.

The rise of this new genre of comedy is accompanied by shifting representations of space and power within both French and Algerian diasporas, where the boundaries between private and public are variously integrated, combined, or fused. The genre is distinguished by the *Beur* characters' oscillating movement between the public and public spheres. Existing criticism has often analysed Bensalah's comedies through a single framework that focuses on how the genre contests racial stereotypes attached to *Beur* minorities in the *banlieue* (Higbee 2013; Tarr, 2005). My discussion of cosmopolitan *Beur* comedy offers a fresh perspective by expanding it to encompass a two-fold framework following the wings-and-roots model I have previously outlined. Specifically, I highlight how the films cautiously bring *Beur* disempowered differences or "roots" into the centre, rather than merely advocating "wings" which contests stereotypes from the margin. I argue that both *Il était une fois dans L'Oued* and *Beur sur la Ville* employ humour to challenge past histories associated with *Beur*/French aggression. The universal experience of comedy and its potential to unite audiences in shared laughter seeks to transcend historical and colonial divides. In *Il était une fois dans L'Oued*, humour is used to confront the ongoing effect of the French colonial threat, particularly the white secularist effort to undermine Algerian national cultural and religious distinctiveness. In *Beur sur la Ville*, I analyse how humour seeks to subvert discourses of a *Beur* Islamic threat as linked to the Islamic garment of the *burqa*, which in turn jeopardises the established status quo of the French diaspora.

To theoretically position my analysis of Bensalah's cosmopolitan comedy, I rely on Allan O'Leary's theorisation of comedy in his *Blackness and banal whiteness: Abjection and Identity in the Italian Christmas Comedy* (2018), particularly what he refers to as "banal

whiteness”, Susanne Reichl’s and Mark Stein’s critical volume *Cheeky Fictions: Laughter and the Postcolonial* (2005), and other relief theories of humour such as those developed by Ulrike Erichsen (2005). I engage these writers in dialogue with cosmopolitan theories, principally Appiah’s dynamics of roots and wings in his *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a world of strangers* (2006) and Berthold Schoene’s discussion in *The Cosmopolitan Novel* (2009). Drawing on the insights of this scholarship aids this thesis in exploring Bensalah’s reclamation of history to convey new *Beur* representations. It helps evaluate the filmmaker’s new approach to questions of integration, addressing contemporary challenges related to the *Beur* cause and the ongoing fight for equality within the French diaspora. Particularly, the cosmopolitan trajectories that undo physical boundaries and interrogate colonial discourse are somehow implicitly skewed towards less rooted models of integration. Through analysis of textual and visual filmic techniques, I discuss *Beur* subjectivities in the film in a way that I argue advance mobilities (“wings”) yet relatively downplay roots. Following the introduction, this chapter is divided into three parts focused on contextual and theoretical approaches before analysing the individual comedies.

Bensalah was born on 7th of April 1981 in the Parisien *banlieue* of Seine-Saint-Denis, which is where he typically sets his comedies. He undertook sociology and anthropology at the University of Vincennes-saint Denis (Higbee, 2013). According to Will Higbee, he is controversially classified as the most influential *Beur* filmmaker of North-African origin in France in the 2000s. His comedy films are considered to be among the most well-known, drawing in millions of viewers from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and ranking highly among French films. These include his 1999 debut, *Le Ciel, les Oiseaux et ... ta Mère!*, *Le Raid* (2001), *Il était une fois dans l'Oued* (2005), *Neuilly sa mère!* (2009), and *Beur sur la Ville* (2011)

(Higbee, 2014, p. 27). Bensalah's filmmaking career began with modest finances and surprising box office success. His first feature film deploys humour to explore themes of *Beur* growth and personal maturation in the process of leaving the neighbourhood. The film involves a diverse cast of *Beur*/white French youth who engage in border-crossing travels mainly to French beaches. Despite having a modest budget, the movie is significant because it helped launch the filmmaker's career and even paved the way for the production of other high-profile films, such as *Il était une fois dans l'Oued* (which had a budget of \$5 million) and *Beur sur la Ville* (which had a budget of 11.5 million dollars) (2014). With '412 351' and '893 437 spectators' respectively (p. 48), Bensalah's comedies gained a significantly rising popularity in France. Additionally, this led to a number of financial mainstream partnerships with top movie theatre operators, primarily 'Gaumont and UGC' (p. 49).

The feature film *Beur sur la Ville* follows the story of Khalid Belkacem, a *Beur* protagonist whose life can be described as a "joke" in the way that its series of failures are represented as humorous for the audience. He struggles with nearly every aspect of life, from failing his college brevet exam and his driver's license test, to even missing his BCG vaccination. His existence is marked by constant setbacks, which are depicted with a comedic tone throughout the film. Its first part deals with the pressure from French journalists who say that ethnic minorities of "colour" are not included in the process of French police recruitment. To dispel any suspicions of white French bigotry, the police academy manipulates the admission tests to allow minorities to pass. Despite his incompetence, Khalid enrolls in the French police academy of lieutenants as part of France's program of *discrimination positif* (positive discrimination), which purports to assist ethnic minority communities by providing equal opportunities in France. In the second half of the film, Khalid

is entrusted with a murder case that is characterised as an “ethnic” crime. His investigations are based on a series of ethnic and religious stereotypes. He is tasked with arresting a Muslim male with “fetish” attributes, disguised in a *burqa*, and is eager to stalk and decapitate French women for their heinous sins. Khalid engages in constant commute between the *banlieue* in *Villeneuve-sous-Bois* and the French centre, to investigate the rumours and speculations around this deadly burqa-clad serial killer and rapist. The location of the crime scene is prominently linked to a mosque situated in the *banlieue* and its timing is anticipated every week during Friday prayers, which are an important weekly religious observance for *Beur* Muslims. Khalid, the *Imam* of the mosque, and other ethnic minority police officers- Mamadou (a Black man) and Henry (an Asian)- collaborate with white French officer Diane to solve the so-called “Friday killer case” and defend France against any potential Islamist threat, whilst engaging in countless humorous antics. One of the challenges Khalid has as he oscillates between the periphery and centre is the interplay between Islamophobic visibility, his battle for diasporic peace, and his humorous flirtation with white French women. By the end of the movie, it is revealed that a French homeless woman named Granny has been culpable of the murders all along.

The feature film *Il était une fois dans l'Oued* entails movement between the *banlieue* and Algeria. Set in 1988, it recounts the story of young white French man Johnny Leclerc whose mobility and radical migration from *Cité Paul Éluard* in *Seine-Saint-Denis* to *Oran* in the Algerian West exemplifies a very extreme form of identity transformation. Johnny is a Muslim white Frenchman born to *Pied-noir* parents. He prefers to spend most of his time in the *banlieue*, in the company of the Sabri family, which is composed of Algerian immigrant father Mohamad, his wife Khaira and their *Beur* sons Yacine and Mehdi. Johnny embarks on a

clandestine voyage to Algeria to fast for Ramadan and experience Algerian religion and culture. The quest for his *Pied-noir* father's tomb is another factor fuelling his urge to visit Algeria. Johnny is eventually drawn to consider the most significant project in his life: settling down in Algeria and marrying Nadjat, an Algerian girl. The 'pious' story of Johnny is paradoxically interwoven with that of irreligious Yacine. Much to the dismay of his father, Yacine is disinclined to travel to Algeria, fast during Ramadan, or engage in a marriage arranged by his extended family in Oran. Earlier, in France, he is depicted as embroiled in illicit drugs and *hashish* activities with an Algerian associate named Malik and is threatened with death if he does not return the stolen goods. Yacine decides to travel with his family to escape this ordeal and yet is assaulted by Malik's gang in Algeria. Thanks to Johnny's insight, he is ultimately saved just before he organises his flight to Spain. By the end of the film, Yacine, in contrast to Johnny, is determined to go back to France and launch his business. Through humorous scenarios, Bensalah's comedies are in significant ways a contribution to multiple kinds of border-crossing. By using a combination of *mise-en-scène* and cinematography that highlight power dynamics and preconceived notions, I analyse how the films transgress and challenge the boundaries of typical roles played by *Beur*/white French subjects. This has the impact of destabilising contemporary and colonial histories in French and Algerian diasporas in terms of religious antagonisms, diasporic stability, and colonial threats. Its evolving trajectories respond to Bensalah's new representations of *Beur* subjectivities that make up the French diasporic order.

Bensalah's comedies examine the stereotypical representation of menace of the *Beur* Other and the mistrust they face from white French mainstream society. *Beur sur la Ville* centres on the unorthodox depiction of *Beur* experience through a subject oscillating between

his former location on the outskirts and the new geographic centre. The film's title is taken from Franco-Armenian director Henri Verneuil's 1975 French feature *Peur sur la Ville* (*Fear in the City/The Night Caller*) (Smith, 2011). Verneuil's thriller's central plot follows the escape of a serial killer who often murders French women constructed as 'impure'. Similarly, the killer's motive, in Bensalah's film, has a cultural dimension and draws upon stereotypes of Muslim extremism. In *Peur sur la Ville*, a police officer who is originally wrongly accused of firing a stray bullet chases the criminal. Following his release from jail and after pursuing the criminal for a long time, he manages to catch him on a roof in central Paris. The central plot of Bensalah's film draws parallels to Verneuil's film in that it portrays the police' dedication to maintaining national security and eliminating crime. Bensalah's killer, however, is allied to specific *Beur* prejudices, which make him a menace to public harmony. Through its comedic stylistics, Bensalah revisits the film to illustrate the fear of domestic terrorism as less vital than the more dangerous spectre of racial stereotype dogging minorities and instilling hatred amongst multi-ethnic groups. Unlike the serious framing of Verneuil's crime detective genre, I argue that this film creates comic relief by undermining the Islamophobic stereotypes, reflected by Bensalah in one of his interviews as, '*Qu'on entend Beur on entend peur*' (when we hear *Beur*, we hear fear) (Bensalah, 2011). Terror, in this context, is deployed interchangeably with the connotation of *Beur*. This association implies that a cross-border encounter with a *Beur* subject automatically triggers a discourse of threat. Comedy, in this context, works to break down stereotypes of fear associated with *Beur* identity. In confronting these cognitive borders, it contests the racist discourse of national disintegration fueled by the fear of the Other. As such, I will look at the intersection of space and comedy in terms of the cosmopolitan patterns produced during the process of engaging with stereotypes that equate *Beur*/Muslim subjects with threat in the film.

Bensalah's earlier *Il était une fois dans L'Oued* gives the impression that the film is set in the past, or rather, that it returns to Algeria's history. The tense of the title refers to a revisitation of Franco-Algerian colonial history that dismantles Algerian presumptions about the French colonial Other. The movie alludes to the 1968 film *Il était une fois dans L'Ouest* (Once at a time in the West/Once upon a time in America) (1968), directed by Italian filmmaker Sergio Leone (Wiel, 2005). Two plots are presented in this epic American genre: the tale of a stranger who saves a charming widow from a railway assailant, and his battle with a railway baron to steal a block of land that is essential for railway expansion. Bensalah's comedy mirrors Leone's narrative in its pursuit to dismantle colonial memories of France's annexing of Algeria, seizing its land and endangering its religious sanctity. In Bensalah's comedy, I position Algerian expectations of a white French colonial stranger, alien to the land and culture, as reversed, and instead it is the *Beur*, who is framed as a stranger in his own land, alienated from his cultural background. Through comedy, I treat the Algerian diasporic space as a stage for cosmopolitan interactions, characterised by inclusive, flexible, and transgressive tendencies and properties. Thus, the "new frontier", associated with the US Western American dream, is appropriated and relocated, depicted as a multifaceted one in the film. It corresponds with the trend towards colonial history narratives that are more inclusive of the French Other. On the other hand, I demonstrate how Bensalah's comedy's metonymic portrayal of "the Algerian dream"; success and new hopes for the future, is not tailored to fit the *Beur* subject's subjectivities. By displaying unexpectedly threatening, suspicious and hostile positions, I contend that the *Beur* likelihood to assimilate into the Western culture overlaps with steering away from Algerian structures of communal and familial ties.

Bensalah's comedies stimulate discussions around evolving tropes of *Beur* integration, particularly regarding their subtle assimilation into mainstream French culture. Film critics have paid relatively little attention to the genre trajectories developed by the new *Beur* filmmaking wave that abstains from displaying, highlighting and incorporating difference as part of *Beur* representation in the centre. Will Higbee (2013) examines Bensalah's comedies as a component of the post-*Beur cinema de banlieue*, which is thematically incongruous with the *Beur* cinema of the 1970s and 1980s. Higbee examines how Bensalah's earlier comedy has the potential to more actively challenge the stereotypical portrayals of *Beur* in the French mainstream. However, his subsequent comedies show a marked shift away from *Beur*-specific themes, primarily criticising the *banlieue* as a space fraught with media misconceptions towards a new engagement with more multicultural concerns (2013). This new cinematic preoccupation is attributed to the filmmaker's need to seek financial support from 'the largely reductive practices, structures and representational tropes employed by other mainstream, majority-ethnic-authored comedies' (Higbee, 2014, p. 60). Particularly, this shift to the mainstream marks a new objective that is accomplished by 'diffusing rather than pronouncing the difference of the Maghrebi immigrant protagonists' via 'offering alternatives to the stereotypical images of immigrants as victims, delinquents or criminals' (Higbee, 2013, p. 16). Higbee's analysis of Bensalah's films reflects the complexities of assimilation in a way that diffuses postcolonial conflicts. By crystallising the ludicrousness of the 'prejudices and stereotypes held against the North African immigrant population' (Higbee, 2014, p. 27), comedy contributes to the deconstruction of conventional binaries defined by French vs *Beur*.

Similarly, in her examination of the body of post-*Beur* filmmaking, particularly Bensalah's second comedy film *Le Raid* (2002), Carrie Tarr contends that 'whilst some filmmakers aspire to enter the mainstream, others continue to produce personal, low-budget, often semi-autobiographical films' (2005, p. 167). Tarr's and Higbee's readings of Bensalah's works as part of the *Beur* filmmaking wave of the 2000s are useful in relating the discourse of cosmopolitan "wings" to the "mainstream". This pertains to the genre's new concern for cognitive and physical mobility and the deconstruction of Islamophobic clichés and images of threat that are detrimental to *Beur* integration in the French mainstream culture. However, the films' engagement with those tropes contributes to an excruciatingly limiting construction of *Beur* subjectivities where little room is offered to explore a *Beur* sense of difference, thus offering an assimilationist model of integration. The films' gradual disengagement with a proactive and assertive relationship with *Beur* "roots" will be examined in accordance with the new cosmopolitan paradigms of identification; forging transborder communal building and coexistence with the French space.

Both comedies under discussion entail the *Beur* protagonists' literal move towards the centre, physically travelling from the *banlieue* to Algeria and eventually moving back to the French centre in *Il était une fois dans l'Oued*, and from the *banlieue* to the French centre in *Beur sur la Ville*. A slow-yet-steady break from the *banlieue* and Algeria as a site of cultural and religious ideology and mode of thinking is also congruent with this transition. This has been discussed as challenging dehumanising stereotypes by providing alternative narratives that counter the mainstream. Higbee explores how ambivalence in Bensalah's comedies generates a distance from social reality while still drawing from it. It serves as 'a mimetic of social reality yet distanced from it' (Higbee, 2013, p. 37). In producing the ambivalent effect

that destabilises whatever 'crude and problematic stereotypes' (p. 37), this approach creates new avenues for representation, encouraging both French/*Beur* viewers to better identify with and empathise with the ethnic Other. It particularly undermines colonial and religious discourses of visibility/invisibility, which typically serve to polarise and divide minority and majority groups. However, this discussion of ambivalence veers away from *Beur* particularistic affiliations which are overshadowed by the need to navigate for inclusion and equality. I argue that the comic ambivalence, which facilitates the creation of productive spaces of inclusion at the centre, fosters a cosmopolitan space of belonging. On the other hand, the construction of these spaces in the texts prioritises undermining harmful ethnic and religious stereotypes over the effort to revive or define Algerian/*Beur* religious agency, maintaining a state of ambiguity. Alongside its effort to overcome negative stereotyping tied to private spaces, I suggest that the film's cosmopolitanism is seen as merely arising from rejecting, diffusing, and deconstructing Islamophobic and colonial representations.

My chapter offers a new contribution to comedy studies in the fusion between the centre and the periphery, particularly the interactions between the dominant and marginalised groups. It tests the balance between the universal connections that humour promotes to create harmony amongst different entities and the expression of difference. Considered as the most 'popular French genre', Higbee briefly contends that the comedy adopted by Bensalah and other Maghrebi French filmmakers is praised for the effect of its humour. Filmmakers exhaust this 'consensual approach' to deconstruct racial stereotyping and ridicule the widespread Islamophobic prejudices attached to *Beur* youth (Higbee, 2014, p. 27). This reading of comedy focuses specifically on the unifying nature of laughter, highlighting its ability to bring people together. It also highlights how this unifying power of

comedy is linked to the expansion of boundaries, where the periphery moves closer to becoming integrated into the centre. However, the genre's fluctuating dynamics between the core and the periphery in the texts, I argue, continues to subtly operate based on Manichean binaries that divide groups into superior and disempowered categories. In light of this, I critique these comedies as contributing to the transformation of *Beur* identities that are less rooted and must locate their integration within the framework of *Laïcité*. I argue that the common diasporic space positioned as offering a possibility of gathering *Beur*, *Pied-noir* and white French groups is primarily sought in the films from within the centre and not the *banlieue*. These spaces work to obscure emotional ties to the past, particularly regarding *Beur/Pied-noir* relationships. I argue that whilst the cosmopolitan trajectories involved are no longer focused exclusively via an Orientalist gaze, they still respond to assimilatory paradigms in French public discourse. However, I contend that the films rely on the re-evaluation rather than the total erasure of Algerian signs of difference. Thus, the intersection between humour and a cosmopolitan version of "roots" is used to denote how *Beur* disempowerment and troubled belonging is linked ideologically to the *banlieue* and the Algerian past. In this context, *Beur* subjectivities will be discussed as either opposing or retiring from their Algerian heritage. I question the mainstream appeal of comedy, which emphasises the cosmopolitan pattern of "wings" and trivialises that of "roots", as the route to facilitating mobility and transborder engagement.

The contextualisation of threat in *Beur sur la Ville* (2011) mostly pertains to the ongoing discussions about Islam's place in France. With the *banlieue* in particular, there are interlocking motifs that drive an understanding of Bensalah's narrative. As part of the 2000s post-*Beur* or French-Maghrebi cinematic production, the texts are shaped by the historical backdrop of the 9/11 attacks, the 2005 uprisings, and the 2010 French law banning the

covering of the face. The reception of *Beur* minorities' riots in France is closely linked to the broader Islamophobic context. Dimitri Almeida (2021) argues that the *banlieues* are often misinterpreted as hotspots of Islamist extremism, reinforcing the stereotype of *Beur* alterity as a threat. Almeida describes French public perception of them as 'microstates ruled within the bigger state. In these no-go zones, there is no regular French law, there is sharia law' (2021, p. 3). This issue has also been raised by Fazia Aitel, who was born in France to an Algerian immigrant family. Aitel notes that acts of violence and criminality in France have become increasingly allied to 'the rise of Islam in the suburbs, anti-Semitism and Fundamentalism' in the private space of the *banlieue* or *cité* and particularly in the aftermaths of *Beur* uprisings of 1983, those of 2005, and the 9/11 incidents (2009, p. 296). Referencing her experience of teaching *Beur* literatures and films at Claremont McKenna College, she exposes a range of anxieties in connection to 9/11 events as well as 2005 *Beur* upheavals on the French outskirts and other pertinent *Beur* riot incidents that were extensively reported by the American and European press (2009). She argues that the media's dangerous promotion of Islamophobic beliefs and attitudes in the public sphere is a major obstacle to *Beur* integration. Aitel goes on to assert that 'discrimination at every level of French society' is not just a product of 'France's colonial past', yet the *banlieue* has itself become the very site where this discrimination manifests (2009, p. 301). The concept of threat in relation to Islam and its terrorist-victim paradigms is essential to the investigation of *Beur sur la Ville*. It will be viewed as being based on the widespread criminalisation of the broader Muslim diaspora, including the visible *Beur* minority.

The *banlieue* is configured as a space that strikes fear and horror into the hearts of white French people, disrupting French diasporic coexistence. This image is reinforced by the

Burqa, the full-body Islamic attire covering the bodies of some Muslim women. The discomfort surrounding the *Burqa*, or *Niqab*, in France is particularly highlighted by its ban in 2004 (Bruckner, 2010, p. 61), and in the year of 2010, 'the French Parliament passed a law that banned all facial coverings worn in public spaces' (Fredette, 2015 p. 585). In the wake of the 2010 legislation, the National Assembly justified the prohibition by claiming that the *Burqa* infringes on 'the freedom of others' and thus is regarded as 'a threat to national security' (Fredette, 2015, p. 607). While some view face coverings as 'a threat to "immaterial public order"', the ban, Fredette insists, also trespasses on the private lives and freedoms of minorities, which are granted by French Republicanism (p. 587). Moreover, the intertwining concepts such as 'fundamentalist Islam, criminality and the veil', for Aitel, are inextricably linked to the *banlieue* (Aitel, 2009, p. 296). The persistent framing of young *Beur* communities in the French and European media using labels such as 'French Muslims', or 'young Muslims', '*Musulmans Français*' '*Français musulmans*', or '*jeunes musulmans*' (p. 306) fosters 'an entrenched ideology, and a fantasy' (p. 296). This brings to the fore the polar distinctions between 'being French' and 'being a Muslim' (p. 306). The need to redress 'erroneous beliefs and misreading' constitutes a major target to accommodate in France (p. 297), particularly the negative associations of *Beur*, traditionally linked to a 'poor and uneducated population of Arab origin living in crime-ridden projects' (p. 300). The redefining of *Beur* identity through values like 'openness, exchange, multiculturalism, multilingualism, multi-ethnicity, inventiveness, and [...] optimism' (p. 300) highlights the significance of promoting cross-border mobility and intercultural exchange on equal terms with the Other. I draw on Aitel's view to reflect on how Bensalah's comedies challenge prevailing perceptions about *Beur* subjects associated with religious extremism, violence, criminality, and threat. However, I also address other spaces where ethnic, national and religious differences are less celebrated, and

overshadowed by the emphasis on *Beur* appetising need for equality and urge to subvert current exclusionary French policies.

The socio-political marginalisation of Muslims in Europe, particularly in France, is fueled by Islamophobic rhetoric that deepens the divide between central areas and peripheral *banlieues*, framing the latter as foreign and thus conflicting sites of religious and ethnic visibility. Yazbeck Haddad and I. Qurqmaz argue that ‘the presence of Muslims has become a political issue utilized by various European right-wing political parties such as the *Front Nationale* in France... in their bid to gain power’ (2000, p. 6). They add that ‘their rhetoric has increasingly become anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim’ (p. 6). This positioning of Muslims within the *banlieue* contributes to their portrayal as alien foreigners ‘whose presence poses an imminent risk to the survival of Western civilization’ (Chong, 2018, p. 151). The hostility and tension between the so-called ‘Muslim invaders’ and their French counterparts are often attributed to their perceived need for ‘supervision and control’ (p. 151). It is a need rooted in the fear that the Muslim ‘figure of the terrorist’ is exclusively present in outer-city spaces. The exclusionary rhetoric alludes to a ‘racist, dehumanizing claim’ (p. 153), which Maghrebi populations and their children face. Reflecting on this in a broader context, Costas Panagopoulos points out that ‘between 2002 and 2006 [...] Americans increasingly feel there are more violent extremists within Islam, compared with other religions’ (2006, p. 611). Despite President George Bush’s words of peace, the attempts to warn of the escalation of Islamophobic sentiments in American culture in the wake of the terrorist attacks were unsuccessful (p. 608). His peaceful rhetoric contrasted sharply with the subsequent “War on Terror”, which constructed the world in binary terms. My discussion of Bensalah’s comedy directly relates to the wave of hysteria about Islamic Fundamentalism, which has asserted the

antagonism between two opposing traditional dichotomies of power: Islamic terror vs America as the world's foremost peacekeeper.

As much as the decade is marked by the misrepresentation of Islam, it celebrates America and the West as initiating a war on terror. In his discussion of post-9/11 American media, Muhammad Safeer Awan (2010) alludes to the serious misrepresentation of a global Muslim community in the aftermaths of 9/11. This period is regarded as a pivotal moment in history that fundamentally shifts the concept of “‘ideological lynchpin’” (Awan, 2010, p. 522). While this narrative reinforced the concept of ‘America as a victim and a defender of freedom’, it seemed to reduce Muslims to a one-dimensional identification, reducing them to a single, stereotypical identity and tying them to fundamentalism (p. 522). This had the adverse impact of instilling xenophobic feelings, which proliferated across the American society. Many Americans inevitably fell prey to media’s manipulative weapons and deceitful tools, which were used to ‘systematically’ instil and implement “‘new fears of the other’” (p. 525). The unfavourable portrayal of ‘Islamic terrorism’ and ‘Islamic fascism’, according to Awan, is found not just in the news media, but also in a variety of post-9/11 films, TV programmes and novels (2010). For Awan, American writers like Don DeLillo, John Updike and Sherman Alexie reflect the dominant American popular discourse in which all Muslims in American cities are understood as extremists (2010). Conversely, they disengage themselves from the possibility of ordinary, humane Muslim attributes (p. 523). Islamic threat has been the focus of the alarming growth in the implementation of such Islamic stereotypes at the level of global cultural output. Thus, the massive effort to promote Islamophobic visibility through the corpus of literature, journalism, and film is a major concern on a broader global scale.

Understanding the concept of threat is equally essential to interpreting *Il était une fois dans l'Oued*, as the film highlights the ongoing French colonial influence over Algerian territory and the renewed interaction between the French and Algerians/*Beurs*. The idea of threat is not just unique to the *Beur* Muslim communities of the *banlieue*; it is also linked to a long-standing French secularist way of life and a colonial desire to replace the Algerian traditional culture. The entangled relationship between *Pied-noirs* and Algerians stems from the former's colonial status as settlers in Algeria. The film reflects how the French had been envisaged in a menacing gaze by Algerian nationalists since the Algerian revolution came to an end in 1962. On top of the French atrocities and massacres, Algerians saw French ideological imposition on their territory as largely intended to reshape their nation's social and religious fabric in a way that conformed to Christian norms and/or secular European values. A central concern and goal of French imperialism that remained deeply embedded in Algerian consciousness was the eradication of the Arab and Islamic ethnic identity. James J. Cooke illustrates the French imperial agenda and the perceived tendencies of *Pied-noirs* towards Algerian diasporic communities. He comments that:

The settlers—called both *colons* and *Pied Noir*—came to see themselves as the new frontiersmen, and the land as the outpost of French-Christian culture and civilization, staving off the warlike tendencies of the Algerian Muslims. It would be necessary to “de-Arabize” Algeria. To make Algeria less Arab it was equally important to destroy the power of Islam within Algeria. The battle lines were drawn in the 1880s... between French imperialism and Muslim Algeria. From the 1880s onwards into the next century there would be an antagonistic relationship between Muslim and French. (1990, p. 58)

Cooke (1990) attributes Franco-Algerian antagonism to the French imperial enterprise, which demanded that Algerians submit to French rule. For Algerians, however, the fight for keeping intact Algerian cultural and religious identity was just as important as fighting for land or power. To this day, the importance of Islam is ingrained within Algerian identity and according to Cooke 'mores of a population... are rooted in their religion' (1990, p. 59). Stigmatised by past French imperialistic drives to hurt their religious and ethnic identity, Algerians have long felt threatened by French presence on their land. They have grown feelings of suspicion, hostility, and aggressiveness towards the French Other. My subsequent discussion of *Il était une fois dans l'Oued* bears a direct connection to these themes. I will study the new representation of the figure of the *Pied-noir* through comedy, which has the impact of subverting the theme of threat and depicting the unconventional attempt to breach Algeria's physical boundaries and territory. In my preceding chapter, the *Pied-noir* is described as part and parcel of the colonial past contributing to *Beur* rooted cosmopolitanism through the religious *Bildungsroman*. I laid the discussion of the *Pied-noir's* sympathy for the *Beur* subject as essential in helping the latter gain a sense of knowledge and pride in Algerian heritage and roots. However, the portrayal of the *Pied-noir* in Bensalah's comedies is alternatively shaped by a nostalgic return to or crossing into the homeland, revealing complex and ambivalent agendas of identification.

Bensalah's film underscores the peril of compromising a conventional Islamic Algerian identity and land through foreign influence. This theme is central to defining borderlands and drawing bold lines between Algeria and France, emphasising the importance of safeguarding the country from any potential threat to the pillars of its nationhood. In critically revisiting Dr. Cooke's article, Asma Rashid emphasises Algerian discomfort about the ongoing French

presence. She particularly stresses that 'in fact, the battlelines drawn *against* the Muslim Algeria' are still drawn by Algerians against secularist France and the malicious intentions of its previous imperial policies towards Algerian being (1990, p. 203). In addition to the despicable acts of murder exercised by French imperial forces against the Algerian people, the French sought to obliterate Muslim-Arab landmarks through demolishing and ruining Muslim-related sites. This involved the 'destruction and desecration of the Muslim places of worship and burial' (Rachid, 1990, p. 204). Such acts demonstrate the antagonistic, hostile, and confrontational relationships that are still being cultivated today. It is evident that the atmosphere of distrust and suspicion that existed between French and Algerian people grew during and continued after colonialism. In summary, power and authority are not to be retained in French hands again. The discussion of the film will explore Algerian attitudes towards the *Pied-noir*, particularly engaging the diasporic space with 'visibility' and 'threat', as well as in relation to shared historical trajectories.

1-Cosmopolitan Comedy: Humour, Roots and Wings in Bensalah's Films:

This chapter builds on the intersection between cosmopolitanism and comedy to analyse *Beur* border-crossing movement from the periphery to the centre. I draw upon Susanne Reichl's and Mark Stein's *Cheeky Fictions: Laughter and the Postcolonial* (2005) to theorise the function of laughter in relation to cosmopolitan "wings" to explore the texts' sense of community-building. In the introduction to their edited collection, Reichl and Stein explore the concept of laughter in different Anglophone postcolonial contexts: American, Carribean, and Asian. They argue that the relationship between the centre (coloniser) and the periphery (colonised) is intrinsically seen as aggressive and hostile within the diaspora. The concept of postcolonial laughter comes to embody a form of resistance that 'thrive(s) in a

situation of power imbalance and even oppression' (2005, p. 12); it arises as a means of mocking, or momentarily subverting dominant power structures and colonial stereotypes. Humour in a postcolonial context 'can release some of the tension and relieve some of the potential aggression' inherent in the experience of colonisation (2005, p. 10). Besides, it 'contribute(s) to the empowerment of the (post)colonised' (2005, p. 11). For Bensalah's films, this is helpful to analyse the way humor transforms potentially hostile environments into spaces where the power imbalance is challenged. Humour further contributes to the psychic release from perceptions of threat of the foreigner by moving beyond Franco-Algerian colonial legacies and challenging post-9/11 tensions. In this context, the release/relief function of humour permits subjects to break free from the oppressive narratives of fear and marginalisation that arise from these historical and contemporary conflicts. However, this one-dimensional and narrow "postcolonial" framework is limited to focusing on the legacy of colonialism in understanding diasporic experiences. It fails to capture how the broader cosmopolitan dynamics that define diasporic commonality and shared experiences function within diasporic communities, particularly those grounded in moral values like the collective responsibility to uphold national security and solidarity.

In analysing these comedies as cosmopolitan rather than postcolonial, I focus both on "roots" and "wings" to illustrate the films' negotiations of the dynamics of diasporic equality and integration. As such, where postcolonial comedy "laughs back" (Reichl and Stein, 2005), implicitly recentring the colonial power, cosmopolitan comedy will use humour to contest colonial power relations, yet also to forge new cosmopolitan alliances related to notions of "roots" and "wings". Alongside the theorisation of comedy as 'a need, a desire, for release' (Reichl and Stein, 2005, p. 9), my analysis critically centres on "wings" to discuss the impact

of humour in inducing mobilities, by bringing the past and present and the private and the public into harmony. As such, the shift from a postcolonial to a cosmopolitan framework for interpreting these comedies will address 'the recognition of [...] responsibility for every human being' (Appiah, 2006, p. 15). This introduces a degree of empowerment for the *Beur* subject who is portrayed as being part of maintaining diasporic peace and thus guaranteed inclusion in the French centre. On the other hand, I explore how humour intersects with *Beur* cosmopolitan "roots" to foreground trajectories of disempowerment faced by the *Beur* subject who is, using Appiah's framing, 'lacking in the warmth and power that comes from shared identity' (2006, p. 49). The intersections between comedy and cosmopolitanism, in this sense, adopt "wings" to surpass adversity inherent in private spaces yet ventures a gallantly cosmopolitan stance of "roots" delegating affiliations with the Algerian past. These cosmopolitan dual agendas and their relationship with the universal trait of humour in imagining diasporic inclusion will be discussed further in later paragraphs.

The theoretical framework of this chapter engages with the concept of universalism, which arises from the need to decrease *Beur* visibility and achieve diasporic equality. In terms of *Beur* stereotypes, the idea of the universal will be examined in relation to the cosmopolitan nature of comedy, which is used to empower stigmatised individuals in the French mainstream. The act of laughter is provoked by the gap between reality and expectation, often referred to as 'incompatibility or some incongruity' (Reichl and Stein, 2005 p. 9). This impression of incongruity is embedded in the particularities of cultural contexts in relation to 'cultural background and identity, our politics and aesthetics, and our location and current state of mind' (p. 5). Primarily, Reichl and Stein analyse the impact of comedy through a double-fold dynamic of "universalism and specificity" as key in deconstructing the process of

laughter. According to their argument, humour operates by first undermining “specificities”, which are inherent in historical and cultural differences that can occasionally cause chaos and disorder in society (2005). Accordingly, the comic subversion of “specificities” is essential for achieving the universalising objective of belonging to a unified diasporic community, which cannot be realised without ‘a group, without a community’ (Vizenor, 1993, p. 72). This subversion is crucial for lending the act of laughter ‘its vibrancies of universality and commonality’ (Reichl and Stein, 2005, p. 8). Reichl’s and Stein’s understanding of humour resonates with Ulrike Erichsen’s (2005) analysis of laughter as a blend encompassing universal patterns and particular cultural specificities. According to Erichsen, the subversion of these specificities and the potential to bring everyone together through community-building ‘can function as a means to alert the reader to cultural barriers that need to be overcome in order to fully understand the text and thus can encourage intercultural communication and understanding’ (2005, p. 30). I build on the dynamic in which laughter is encoded- the interaction with the “universal” through the subversion of the “specific”- to analyse the films’ cosmopolitan discourse of “wings” feeding the current imagination of colonial, ethnic and religious visibilities. This process helps alleviate diasporic tensions stemming from the perceived threat of *Beur* identity, thereby facilitating the possibility of border-crossing. Comedy’s crucial role in this is spelled out by reducing, easing, and harmonising diasporic tensions, particularly in the cross-border interactions between *Beurs* and the French majority population.

To understand how humor helps alleviate the historical ‘pain’ of navigating public spaces and promotes diasporic peace in Bensalah’s texts, it is essential to explore how the release or relief theories of comedy function in this context. They are identified by Erichsen

as ‘focus[ing] on the recipient of the comic stimulus and his or her social and psychological context and explain laughter as some kind of release helping the person to regain his or her social and emotional equilibrium’ (2005, pp. 28-29). As such the comic stimulus in Bensalah’s texts emerges as pivotal in the “release” or transgression of imposed borders on both the literal and figurative levels. By encouraging *Beur* transborder fluidity and to-and-fro movement, the use of humour as a form of psychic release to alleviate the tension associated with perceived transgression helps to redraw the dynamics of space. Additionally, it addresses their intense diasporic rigidity and threat-laden clichés framing them as foreign or Other. Essentially, the texts’ relieving comic effect of subverting ‘an official ideology’ (Erichsen, 2005, p. 30) will be interpreted as a means of transforming current diasporic conflicts. The humorous relief that is, in Erichsen’s phrasing, ‘transgressive’ and ‘productive’ (2005, p. 30), has, I argue, a cosmopolitan dimension in foregrounding the potential for *Beur* subjects to inhabit alternate spaces outside the *banlieues*. It subverts what Edward Said refers to as the gap and divide between the coloniser and colonised that arises from the act of commuting through diasporic spaces (Said, 2003, pp. 18-20). In this context, humour represents a discontinuation and break from earlier postcolonial concerns pertaining to the ‘habitation of boundaries’ where geographical private spaces are held in states of ‘unhousedness’, ‘dislocation’ and ‘displacement’ (Ashcroft *et al*, 2002, p. 218). I analyse how comic relief creates a space for inclusion by offering the Other the opportunity to transcend, actively identify with, and integrate into the public space. I show how the use of humour helps to move past histories of hostility by establishing new spaces characterised by sympathetic affinities, acceptance, and easy communication.

To comprehend how *Beur* specificities are inverted in the centre, I foreground in my analysis the workings of comedy. This chapter relies on the discussion of comedy by drawing on the concept of “banal whiteness” developed by Allan O’Leary. He expatiates upon the Italian Christmas comedies named *Cinepanettoni* in order to critique societal norms and mundane practices that uphold racial inequalities. The expression “banal whiteness” signifies ‘the way whiteness is typically rendered as the unmarked racial identity and reproduced in mundane ways rather than in explicitly racist discourse’ (O’Leary, 2018, p. 100). Comedy in this sense renders whiteness ‘refused’, ‘de-naturalised’ and ‘visible’ (p. 100). Expanding on this in the context of *Beur sur la Ville*’s presentation of *Beur* and white French status, I employ the concept of ‘banal whiteness’ to highlight how the rhetoric of white French victimhood functions as an unchallenged, invisible norm. This simultaneously marks the societal outcome of the visible Islamic symbol of the *Burqa*, which is recognised by an Islamophobic discourse that constructs the *Burqa* in terms of menace. The hypervisibility conventionally experienced by immigrants and their offspring is exposed and contested through the revelation of ‘the fragility of the normative identity’ (Davies and Ilott, 2018, p. 18). Stereotypes that construct *Beurs* as bloodthirsty terrorists are questioned via inverting the normality or “banality” of white French entities as peacekeeping forces. This inversion also restores a fresh portrayal of *Beur* figures while simultaneously undermining the undeniable dominance of white French racial identity in the mainstream.

The concept of “banal whiteness” will also inform my analysis of *Il était une fois dans l’Oued* to reveal the comedy’s challenge to the Algerian mainstream perceptions of French whiteness as corrupting national and religious sanctity. However, in the process of challenging binary oppositions, I also highlight how comedy creates ambivalent paradigms of *Beur*

representation, which also undermines access to religious particularism or “roots”. In *Beur sur la Ville*, I assess how the denaturalisation of Frenchness and the equal inclusion of *Beurness* into the mainstream are done at the expense of exploring *Beur* uniqueness. In *Il était une fois dans l’Oued*, I reveal that the subversion of French ‘banality’ functions to present the *Beur* as culturally and religiously alienated from Algerian roots. Thus, the discourse of assimilation for *Beurs*, for their entrance to the mainstream to be understood as feasible and unmarked, is ritualised through the productive subversion of what is constructed as banal yet also functions to downplay *Beur* rootedness.

Although instances of laughter are embedded in cultural, historical, and socio-political contexts, the comedic element of the “specific” does not correlate directly with cosmopolitan notions of “roots” (Appiah, 2006). While the “specific” elements of *Beur* will relate to the productive subversion of *Beur* “perceived negative difference”, mainly Islamophobic stereotyping, “roots” will be interpreted as having been devised through the emphasis upon, open display of and the negotiation of *Beur* active agency embedded in the Algerian past. Whereas the texts concentrate on downplaying *Beur* specificities, I contend that they fail to establish a sense of empowered roots. This pertains to how *Beurs* develop their public persona more deeply than their just combative stance *against* stereotypes by also serving allegiances to forms of cultural belonging associated with Algeria. It pertains to the way *Beurs* self-define while navigating a space of integration, which highlights the importance of and gives value to their internal ties. As Appiah suggests, ‘loyalties and local allegiances determine more than what we want; they determine who we are’ (Appiah, 2006, p. 9). This understanding of “roots” is instrumental and relates to how *Beurs* value positive representations of difference and how they truly connect to their ancestral history. I explore

how the universalising function of comedy in Bensalah's films implicitly functions to repress aspects of a unique *Beur* identity. Through textual and visual techniques, I explore how it retreats from positive articulation of roots in favour of speaking against specificities. Apart from the use of laughter to release tensions, harmonise pressure and provide spaces of integration in diasporic settings, the effect of laughter in Bensalah's works will be examined considering the subtle impact of assimilation. I discuss how cosmopolitan comedy serves to blur the lines of hostilities between public and private domains, much like it blurs *Beur* religious, cultural, and national roots. *Beur* characters are not entirely 'rootless cosmopolitans' with 'no strong sense of national or local identity' (2006, p. 14), but they are strategically represented as less rooted in comparison to the representations explored in the previous chapter's analysis of realist texts. I interrogate the films' failure to highlight the richness and complexity of Maghrebi identities that flows, in part, from the more pertinent concern to imaginatively escape the restrictions of the *banlieue*.

The attempt to establish a connection between minority and majority groups reflects the texts' ambivalence. This ambivalence relies on a new sociopolitical framework that completely confuses ethnic, religious, and classed vectors of power. The discussion of spatiality, in trans-colonial terms, pertains to the disruption of norms of inferiority, threat and Islamic fundamentalism in the centre. The new empowerment of the Other to resist diasporic inequalities recalls Homi Bhabha's ambivalence as 'a desire that, through the repetition of partial presence, which is the basis of mimicry, articulates those disturbances of cultural, racial, and historical difference that menace the narcissist demand of colonial authority' (Bhabha, 1984, p. 129). The notion of ambivalence is useful to obscure superior/inferior; colonised/coloniser norms of power in relation to the mainstream. Particularly, the

Beur/Pied-noir, who hail from a space as colonially and stereotypically menacing as the suburbs/France respectively, now holds an authoritative position. Ambivalence in the texts thus is used to foreground characters who are unconventionally linked to the centre and associated with the majority mainstream. In relation to cosmopolitan “wings”, they are represented as desirable subjects ensuring diasporic safety. The ambivalent stance created through cosmopolitan comedy thus recognises colonial subjects as entities undefined by stereotypical traits in the centre. Ambivalent settings are positioned as key for the spectators, be they North-African ethnic population or white French majorities, who act as mediators occupying egalitarian standpoints of power. However, ambivalence highlights a distinct position that obscures the joint suffering and legacy of *Pied-noirs* and *Beurs*. I argue that a well-asserted sense of diversity addressing a well-known shared heritage is not directly acknowledged within this community-building.

2-Les 7 Batignolles: Bensalah’s Ambivalent Vision of Diasporic Inclusiveness and Universalism in Cinema:

Bensalah’s ambivalent approach to diasporic inclusiveness challenges Begag’s cosmopolitan vision, which is rooted in religious identity within the *banlieue* and shaped by his real-life experience of an unfulfilled integration. The ideals behind Bensalah’s comedies mirror his life-long project of a cinema named *les 7 Batignolles*, which embodies his clearest drive towards the French mainstream. In contrast to reactions of the French mainstream to Begag’s project of integration, Bensalah’s Parisian *7 Batignolles* has been well-received by the white French majority. The cultural significance of his choice to ‘*ouvrir le cinéma de ses rêves d’enfant*’ (open the cinema of his childhood dreams) (2019) reflects seven large theatres included in the architectural design of the venue. The block’s unique physical location in

central Paris, overlooking the new court, permits interethnic cultural interaction. As a site of cultural intersection, it brings the *banlieusards* to connect with the French Whites, breaking down spatial and temporal barriers between the groups. Bensalah declared:

‘Il se situe aussi géographiquement entre ma vie d'aujourd'hui et celle d'avant. J'habite Paris et j'ai grandi à Saint-Denis. On voit d'ici la tour Pleyel et ce cinéma s'inscrit dans la configuration du Grand Paris qui gomme les frontières entre la capitale et la banlieue’.

(It is also geographically located between my life today and the one before. I live in Paris, and I grew up in Saint-Denis. We can see the Pleyel Tower from here and this cinema is part of the configuration of Greater Paris which erases the borders between the capital and the suburbs) (2019).

Bensalah’s project raises questions about the shifting dynamics between the periphery and the center, positioning the private *banlieue* as part of the past. The filmmaker, now based in the French capital of Paris, where he runs his filmmaking business, focuses on cross-border dynamics that direct attention to the French center. His ambitious project aims to reflect the diversity of the diaspora by creating multi-ethnic films from this central location. His comedies, thus, can be seen as narratives of transborder cinema, depicting the humorous experiences of characters navigating the mainstream French center. His vision of ambivalent spaces of inclusion for *Beurs* seeks to leave behind the Algerian past, focusing instead on a diaspora shaped by new spaces that lean toward the mainstream.

Bensalah’s promotion of his comedies at the transnational urban space of *Les 7 Batignolles* creates a strong connection between “cinema” and “home”. While his comedies are rooted in his personal ‘experiences as a Maghrebi-French youth from the suburbs of St. Denis’ (Higbee, 2014, p 49), his approach focuses on drawing the private into the public realm,

rather than the reverse. The concept of removing one's shoes at the cinema entrance and watching films while reclining comfortably creates a home-like atmosphere for the audience, capturing Bensalah's own expression '*comme à la maison*' (just like home) (Bensalah, 2019). This stands in sharp contrast to late twentieth-century *Beurtte* author Farida Belghoul's concept of "*école familiale*" (homeschooling/family school) in her realist novel *Georgette* (1986). Belghoul's militant call for schooling inside the private space of the home is an attempt to draw the public into private frameworks. Her project goes against the spirit of public *Laïcité* and its resistance to Algerian religious markers of difference. The innovation of this system calls on people to 'participate in monthly public-school boycotts – and even call for unenrolling children' (Ponnou-Delaffon, 2020, p. 197). This reflects a disconnection from the French public space, fueled by a desire to resist the growing alienation *Beur* minorities feel towards their roots. In this regard, Bensalah's cross-cultural cinema site introduces the public space as a domesticated place motivating intimate homely comfort, multicultural community and prioritisation of the comic over the more existential bent of Belghoul's work. However, through his works, I question the utopianism of his project, that '*faire vivre ce cinema*' (brings this cinema to life) (Bensalah, 2019) in terms of pronouncing, asserting, or identifying with past cultural, religious, and national affiliations.

Bensalah's philosophy of universalism is amply demonstrated by the varied audience of *Les 7 Batignolles*, which reflects his ambivalence towards rooted notions of identity in filmmaking. Will Higbee emphasises Bensalah's appeal as demonstrated by his film accolades, pointing out that, in contrast to many French-Maghrebi directors, Bensalah embraces a mainstream cinema that is 'welcomed by both majority and minority French spectators' (Higbee, 2013, p. 17). However, this vision relates to the contestation of territorial boundaries

which is strikingly consistent with obscuring *Beur* differences originating from the *banlieue* and by extension the Algerian past. Bensalah seeks to build his concept of universalism around *Les 7 Batignolles*, a project that involves a 'reconsideration of [...] difference' (p. 170). If Begag's advocacy *for* difference cost him his governmental position, *Les 7 Batignolles* as a comedy cinema and multicultural venue embraces all ethnic groups. It transcends conflicting trajectories while also reflecting a set of *Beur* subjectivities that are deliberately non-identifiable. As a shared, ambivalent experience, comedy in Bensalah's films serves to create comfort in the face of colonial manifestations, which are seen as barriers to multi-ethnic interaction. *Les 7 Batignolles* embodies Bensalah's universal vision of comedy, primarily focused on speaking *against* the perceived threat of *Beur* religiosity and colonial criminality.

3-*Beur sur la Ville*:

The beginning of *Beur sur La Ville* highlights the racial dynamics of 'banal Whiteness', by connecting the perceived threat of Muslim *Beurs* in the *banlieue* to a narrative of Western/French victimhood. These racial dynamics also connect to broader themes of religion. The initial scene engages with an intimidating incident on Friday, with an ethnically unidentified taxi driver. His physical traits are hidden by the camera, focusing instead on a close-up of his hands, which serves to create mystery and ambiguity about his identity. The driver has a white French woman on board on their highway drive in the *banlieue* of *Vileneuve-sous bois*, in south-eastern France. The camera, in a pan, lingers on the woman's legs, sexualising her. The scene coincides with an Islamophobic comment on the taxi's radio concerning '*deux jeunes femme decapitées*' (two young women beheaded), '*près de la mosquée*' (close to the mosque) (*Beur sur la Ville*, 2011, 00:01:05). The woman's freaked-out reaction to the news leads her to change the radio broadcast. A close-up shot of the woman

portrays her as perplexed when the driver passes by a mosque, which serves to link the current scene to the recent news bulletin (00:01:23). The camera cuts to the car moving in the distance with the diegetic screams of the woman (00:01:40). Bensalah's POV shot creates the impression that the French woman is meeting a doomed fate, tantamount to that of the woman on the radio, by the Muslim driver, constructing the Muslim driver in *Orientalist* ways as a menacing figure. Particularly, in Said's phrasing, he is 'associated (...) with lechery' (2003, pp. 306-307) and accordingly narratively linked to the "Friday Killer". By choosing to conceal the driver's facial contours, audiences are positioned to doubt the ethnic identity of the criminal, but the visual and textual representation has implied that it is likely a male extremist *Beur* whose location is closely linked to the mosque, and the *banlieue*. Indeed, the film's opening sequence is implicitly set against the socio-political backdrop of 9/11. It creates a visual depiction of the widespread stereotypes about Islamic extremism. The initial scene's lack of humour highlights the actual mindset of the white French layman developed through the media's 'banal' victimisation of French Whiteness while equating Muslim *Beur* ethnics with terrorists.

The film's comedy introduces the idea of ethnic groups crossing boundaries and moving toward the centre, using this shift to promote a counter-political narrative that supports France's Republican image of inclusivity. This is demonstrated by the pressure that the media exerts to include officers of colour into the French police academy to solve the Muslim case. An establishing shot of the press conference reveals one of the French journalists condemning the fact that there seems to be no trace of 'colour' within the French academy (00:04:40). He pronounces the need to appoint some ethnic minority personnel to take charge of the 'Friday killer case' (*Beur sur la Ville*, 2011). The governor, who seems

agitated when negating the accusation of minority exclusion in public domains, naively states that '*l'état est ouvert a tous*' (the state is open for all) and absolutely '*sans aucune discrimination*' (without any discrimination) (00:04:29). Humour is worked into this scene as the camera alternates between officer Picolini and the governor as they discuss this serious scandal in the bathroom, whilst urinating next to each other. The governor urges him to start reconsidering his own concept of 'national identity theories', suggesting that these abstract ideals are disconnected from lived realities and fail to account for the presence of a single Arab or black individual within the national narrative. The scene reflects the double-standards of French Republicanism, as articulated within French activist and writer Rokhaya Diallo's *À nous la France* (2017). Diallo explores the racial phenomenon permeating French media which seeks to centre the 'Whiteness' and exclude the 'colour' in the representation of its population, an issue which puts the concept of '*l'identité nationale Française*' (French national identity) under question (2017, p. 134). Indeed, the vocabulary of 'colour and symbol' employed by the Academy Governor to address ethnic minorities in *Beur sur La Ville* constitutes one of the main contentious issues in the diaspora. Known for their visibility, the influence of such a designation only works to separate places as well as ethnicities rather than to unify them. The comedy subverting the Orientalist notion of 'keeping the coloureds at bay' (Said, 2003, pp. 247-249) lies behind the urge to normalise the inclusion of "colour and symbol" officers. The undermining of a racialised discourse of power, however, becomes only a necessary evil to fight a criminal who is assumed also to be a Muslim, thus serving a stereotyping objective.

The comedy in *Beur sur la Ville* denaturalises media narratives that link race and religious extremism to threat, particularly in relation to the public appearance of the *Burqa*.

This also overlaps with mocking religious symbols associated with Muslim figures and places of worship. Khalid's and the *Imam*'s complete naivety, stupidity, and failure to grasp or act upon almost anything is what mainly evokes laughter in the film. For instance, a scene in the car is shot from a low angle, depicting two French lieutenants mocking Khalid whose answer on the academy exam question regarding the definition of xenophobia is recorded as 'the fear of insects' (2011, 00:14:42). In the presence of French officer Diane, a similarly considerable irony involves the many uncertain guesses Khalid and the *Imam*, primarily recruited as Khalid's driver, make over the definition of the concept 'fetishist' (00:30:04). On their way to chase the Friday killer in the burqa, their thoughts, which range from spaghetti to other absurd theories, have nothing to do with the actual meaning of the word 'fetish' (2011). As such, the humour embedded in the scene works to subvert "specificities" related to *Beur* sexism and fetishism, particularly 'what divides individual societies' (Reichl and Stein, 2005, p. 8). It deconstructs the religious discourse of the media around the *Imam* as a figure often stereotypically associated in the mainstream media with 'justifying links to al Qaeda, ISIS or other terrorist organizations' (Acim, 2019, p. 32). By bribing spectators into being warned against the normality of attaching threat and extremism to *Beur* religious symbols, the car scene functions to 'release some of the tension and relieve some of the potential aggression' (Reichl and Stein, 2005, p. 10). Simultaneously, however, the comedy trivialises the significance of "roots". The spiritual significance of the *Imam* as a knowledgeable, wise preacher in the mosque is equally repressed and overlooked in favour of the broader objective of bringing white French and *Beur* people together in the name of national unity.

The transmission of comic effect in relation to the mosque itself relies on the cosmopolitan relief engendered via the subversion of extremist configurations, but this also

entails destabilising its conventional connotations. The scene described below aims to dispel the specific perception of the mosque as a dangerous site of terrorism where serial rapes and slaughters occur on a weekly basis. A medium close-up of Khalid's humorous declaration that he has his shoes robbed every time he attends his Friday prayer serves as evidence of this. A subsequent scene frames the police break into the mosque and their failure to arrest the man in the *burqa*. As the criminal escapes, he leaves behind chaos generated by fights between *Beur* minorities and white French civilians. A later extreme wide shot of an explosion offers a symbolic glimpse of the mediatised 9/11 attacks. It is screened at the back of the mosque and functions as a crucial moment of epiphany that highlights the true predicament of the insidious impact of misrepresentation responsible for setting the diasporic community apart (2011, 00:38:40). The scene carries symbolism which overlaps with Richard Dyer's statement that 'it is not stereotypes, as an aspect of human thought and representation, that are wrong, but who controls and defines them, what interests they serve' (2000, p. 12). In effect, the real issue in France does not lie in the explosion itself but in the attempts carried out by other extremist parties whose goal is to instil suspicion and impair diasporic unity. All the same, while comedy subverts the menace surrounding the mosque, it is reduced symbolically to no more than a trivial site for shoe-stealing rather than a place of worship. Humour is used as a way to counterbalance or repress the mosque's positive significance, for instance, as a holy place where Muslim families gather to perform prayers for the *Eid* celebration. Thus, its designation as a spiritual site of worship is decentred in terms of its religious significance for *Beur*/Algerian communal belonging.

Beur crossing and diasporic inclusion is managed through the subversion of *Beur* visibilities which equally defines them as disempowered categories. Khalid's introduction into

the police academy is initially broadcast with his mother on a French channel, where she stresses the fact that he had missed everything in life: his BEPC school certificate (*Brevet d'études du premier cycle*) (undergraduate study requirements), his driver's license, his BAFA (*Brevet d'Aptitude aux Fonctions d'Animateur*) (childcare aptitude certificate), and even his BCG vaccination, and still becomes '*le premier discriminé positif de la police*' (the first positively discriminated policeman) (2011, 00:21:10). The humour allowing Khalid to access the centre and gain a job of authority normally granted to white French persons is mainly supported through his '*nulle*' (zero; hopeless) (*Beur sur la Ville*, 2011) capacities in life. This proves immensely influential in unveiling minorities' new identification, using Khalid's expression, 'who they truly are' (2011); particularly as unthreatening, yet also as a bunch of naive, ineffective minorities lacking agency. This new identification undermines *Beur* 'specificities' via conveying to the spectator a different perspective of the naive Other. While it subverts their stereotypical representations as extremists and terrorists, it also depicts them as disempowered, which is key to their inclusion.

This also recalls the hilarious bet Khalid raises with Mamadou and Henry on whether the Frenchman passing his car is travelling at 300 or 600 miles per hour (00:02:43). While debating whether to purchase a samurai sauce or a kebab for the winner, the incredibly unsophisticated and unprofessional trio realises by the end that they have missed the driver. At the same moment, the scene portrays white French *SDF* granny (*Sans domicile fixe*/with no fixed abode) passing by the group and riding her bicycle with no helmet (00:03:23). The humour surfaces again as the trio feel too lazy to pursue her, claiming that she has already gone too far, and it would be pointless to chase after her. The presence of comedy in these scenes serves to condemn ethnic specificities of threat. As such, the ethnic group's inclusion

is facilitated through the role of comedy which lies ‘in “subverting, softening, accepting and appreciating” the value of transgression of authority and power roles within the French public space via the reversed stereotypical norms of visibility/invisibility’ (Pierce qtd in Rime, 2019, p. 37). Simultaneously, however, the disempowerment engendered through humour that situates the officers at the butts of various jokes is the price paid for the hope of increased presence of ethnic minorities in public community-building.

The ambivalent workings of comedy subtly obscure how the French centre is too narrow to accommodate Algerian rooted differences. A medium close-up reveals the ethnic trio Khalid, Mamadou and Henry crammed into a small police car while on duty. The scene’s visual as well as textual connotations reflect the discomfort and the claustrophobic existence that the open demonstration of origin or difference brings about in the centre. The close-up of Khalid’s ugly performance, where he sings the line ‘you can never choose your Algerian ethnic background’ (*Beur sur la Ville*, 2011, 00:01:48), intensifies this feeling of claustrophobia. The humour felt in the trio’s disempowerment, and particularly Khalid’s, undoes the workings of the threat stereotypically associated with them.

This is similar to the previous scene where Khalid seems reluctant to identify himself through his Arab origins on TV while opting to tailor his C.V. according to public French criteria of education. The discourse of French assimilation is subtly echoed through Khalid’s mother’s last words ‘France offers equality for all’ (2011). To a certain degree, this discourse is rendered tangible through the disregard of ethnic roots. The function of comedy in this context coincides with Diallo’s (2012) denunciation of French Republicanism as supporting the concealing of difference. Diallo believes France’s attitude to diversity forces minorities not to

speak out or confront their real differences and nominations as *Beurs* in the media and public in general. She contends in an interview that '*on évite soigneusement de parler d'Arabes, de Noirs, d'Asiatiques ou de non-Blancs parce qu'on refuse d'être mis face à des réalités qui dérangent*' (we carefully avoid talking about Arab, black, Asian or non-White because we refuse facing annoying realities) (2012). A peculiar sensation of transborder belonging is added by the comedy that highlights *Beur* gullibility and inexperience, presenting a *Beur* as a subject who has nothing in common with the stereotypically manipulative and cynical stereotype. At the same time, he is disinclined to showcase difference.

In normalising their presence in spaces typically reserved for the French Other, comedy destabilises the routine public roles that elevate the white French as superior. It simultaneously suppresses the traditional religiosity of the *Beur* subject. This is indicated through a comic scene set at the French lieutenant's house where Khalid, a potential suitor for the French lieutenant's daughter, is invited for supper. After a kiss between Khalid and the lieutenant's daughter, Bensalah's camera frames medium close-ups of Khalid who is not merely questioned by his would-be-father-in-law about his 'compatibility' as a suitor to his daughter but also his 'eligibility' to pass the academy's officers' exam (*Beur sur la Ville*, 2011). Khalid jokingly responds to the lieutenant that he is competent enough for such a position, yet he would be only too concerned to '*prendre vos place*', (take your place) (2011, 00:08:20). Khalid's audacity is constructed as humorous and leads the lieutenant to an agitated coughing (2011). By poking fun at the lieutenant, Khalid's sense of inclusion into the French space is beginning to advance, displaying what Davies and Illott have referred to in a different context as 'the fragility of the normative identity' (2018, p. 18). His intimate public kiss, a gesture that

is typically frowned upon according to Algerian cultural standards, is symbolic of Khalid's integration and cultural blending, which downplays Algerian cultural distinctions

The dinner scene extends to facilitating *Beur* mobility by challenging perceptions on *Beur* extremism, cultural superiority, and *Beur* rootedness. Following Khalid's promotion to a lieutenant, his future father-in-law is deeply distressed by the dramatic decline in his own status, leading him to experience profound humiliation, embarrassment, and despair. Khalid, who is not pleased with the lieutenant's demotion, comically but fruitlessly persuades his pals that his father-in-law will always be '*le vrai boss*' (the real boss) (*Beur sur la Ville*, 2011, 00:22:12). Khalid's joke, originating from 'the margins, challenging and subverting the established orthodoxies, authorities, and hierarchies' (Pfister, 2002, pp. vi-vii), helps ease the tension and discomfort between the two ethnic minority coworkers. Khalid is framed as a man who feels gratitude towards his father-in-law. Despite being given more authority in decision-making, he ultimately compromises his position for the sake of his father-in-law (2011). The incident does not only eliminate the inferior/superior binaries. It also keeps Khalid and his father-in-law within cosmopolitan dynamics by fostering empathetic feelings of equality, peace, goodwill, unconditional love, and altruism towards the Other. This reflects on the softened 'wing' dynamics that are conveyed through the comic relief. In a delicate setting like this, comedy functions as a stabilising force for diasporic relationships operating under conditions of unequal power and tensions between minority and majority populations.

The film portrays the disfigurement of the traditional role of the *Imam* as a moral preacher typically and irrevocably linked to the mosque and by extension the private *banlieue*. It is eclipsed by the new concern to protect the welfare of the community in the

centre. The breaking news of '*Le tueur du vendredi était une sdf!*' (The Friday killer was a homeless person!) is represented as a surprise (2011, 01:27:46). It is a follow-up to *Le Soir*'s long-standing description of '*Le tueur Musulman du vendredi*' (the Muslim Friday Killer) (00:29:11), intentionally reinforcing stereotypes of Muslim extremism throughout the film. In fact, the newspaper discloses "the Friday Killer" to be the *SDF* Mamie Nova, a sixty-year-old granny. Her arrest is the result of cooperative efforts between the French and *Beur* officers. Most importantly, it is the *Imam*'s well-intentioned though clumsy attempt to shoot her that led to her capture (01:27:35). The news marks the film's climax, which completely defies the expectations of the characters' visibility and the spectators alike, being completely misdirected from suspecting her. Mamie Nova is a white, French woman and above all an elderly vagabond, described in the film's introductory clip as '*pas un jour sans qu'elle vous demand un euro ou un sandwich*' (not a day passing by without asking for a coin or a sandwich) (2011). She is cast in the film as a minor character who embodies the least stereotypically visible, suspicious, and seemingly powerful traits. Richard Dyer (1997) asserts that 'denaturalisation of white as the unmarked race (as) a political imperative for the egalitarian' (qtd in O'Leary, 2018, p. 109). In this context, *SDF* Granny's visibility is denaturalised; i.e. she is revealed as a White subject marked for her potential threat. This narrative is placed in counterpoint to that of the *Imam*, whose ineptitude both dismantles the banality of his threat and reinforces his portrayal as the film's peace advocate. Within this framework, the passive discourse of *Beur* contribution to the well-being of the center negates their hindsight scenario of a case once labeled 'a Muslim thing' (2011, 00:09:22).

The denouement of *Beur sur la Ville* alludes to *Beur* settlement in the centre. The film's conclusive cosmopolitanism reinforces a less-rooted diasporic model of integration. Following

an establishing shot of the celebration at the French academy of lieutenants, Khalid is honoured as the captain of the national police, while the *Imam* is awarded a medal for courage (2011, 01:29:00). Alongside other French officers, they are shown standing in a row on an equal platform, in an atmosphere of joviality, while singing the French national anthem. This final shot symbolically presents a fresh picture of the *Beur* identity within the centre and a sense of power balance. The centre appears to be a space no longer saturated with racial hierarchies. On the surface, the act of hailing the laughing, overjoyed Khalid standing in the middle of lieutenants signifies the acceptance of *Beurs* into the public space. As such, the centre holds open the possibility of *Beur* minorities to overcome the colonial visibility of the *banlieue* as a landscape of exclusion and suspicion. However, upon closer inspection, the film introduces a form of *Beur* integration that is characterised by withered roots and weakened agencies of the past. The *Beurs'* newly won transborder settlement, which shapes their future survival and acceptance as part of the centre, is managed through an ambivalence which does well to subvert stereotyping yet gives birth to a loose identification of who the *Beurs really are*.

4-Il était une fois dans l'Oued:

Il était une fois dans l'Oued equally contests models of banality in relation to identity roles and the theme of threat attached to white French subjects by Algerian citizens. The film's opening scene adopts a form of postcolonial discourse and is remarkably similar in temperament to *Beur sur la Ville*, in particular the kidnapping of the young French woman. It frames the white French male subject as problematic or dangerous in his move from the *banlieue* to the Algerian mainland. The scene jumps forward in time in the Algerian mainland and produces a parallel misinterpretation to *Beur sur la Ville*, pinning a sense of threat on

white French outsider Johnny. A scene depicts *Beur* Yacine's desperate fleeing from an unidentified gang while causing chaos in an Algerian market, knocking over goods in the process. Accentuated by non-diegetic music that creates an atmosphere of danger and suspicion, the camera displays a slow, methodical zoom into Yacine's terrified face as he falls to the ground. This coincides with Johnny's statement in a voice-over: '*Si on m'avait dit que ça se finirait comme ça pour Yacine, je n'y aurais jamais cru*' (if I had been told that it would end like this for Yacine, I would have never believed it) (*Il était une fois dans l'Oued*, 2005, 00:00:48). The viewer is positioned to anticipate a gloomy end for Yacine. We fall under the misconception that white French betrayal is roaming in the Algerian air. It is implied that Johnny himself has a hand in Yacine's imminent tragic end, evoking a postcolonial discourse of threatening *Beur* identity and territory by a white French settler whose identity is being, to use O'Leary's expression 'reproduced in mundane ways' (2018, p. 100). The scene suggests that the events evoke the colonial narrative, positioning *Beurs*/Algerians as victims, while also recalling the historical violence and oppression France imposed on Algeria during colonial rule. It is only by the end of the film that the viewer gets the full image of the scene when Johnny emerges as Yacine's saviour from a gang headed by Algerian Malik.

The film illustrates the religiosity of the white French Johnny, who does not threaten Algerian territorial and cultural possession. This revelation is in line with the subversion of Yacine's "banality" through his apparent dislocation from his ancestral religious, cultural and familial milieu. The film unfolds two distinct storylines involving Yacine's perceived threat to Algerian conventions and culture alongside Johnny's assimilation into said culture. The tragic scene with which the film is introduced; the dreadful attack on Yacine in the heart of Algerian grocery stores, is built on the French/*Beur* rivalry coded through a colonial history of hostility.

As the film resumes its chronological plot, the camera pans to the French *banlieue* and tilts down to show a dialogue between Johnny, Yacine and other *Beur* lads. Johnny is irritated by the blasphemous words the *Beur* boys use to disrespect Algerian women which, for him, inveighs against the sanctity of the month of Ramadan (*Il était une fois dans l'Oued*, 2005, 00:01:32). By contrast, Johnny rejects the '*choucroute*', a typical French dish served by his French Christian adoptive mother. Feeling disgusted, he explains that eating pork is strictly prohibited by Islamic law (2005). The film's humour is essentially drawn from the apparent incongruity of Johnny's religiosity, as he symbolically acts as a Muslim preacher or *Imam*. The Algerian discourse of banal threat coming from white French secularism is inverted, and comedy is employed, to use Karnick and Jenkins's expression (1995, p. 12), as a means to allow 'a culture to negotiate [...] the possibility of change' (Qtd in O'Leary, 2018, p. 110) in which the stereotypes allocated to imperialistic French secularists aiming to displace Algerian religious creed are undermined. Concurrently, the aspect of "roots" framing *Beurs* as incarnating Algerian heritage and culture is also undermined, creating an ambivalent space based on the dislocation of *Beur* sacred narratives of pride.

The film comedy centres on the father-and-son relationship to address concerns about patrilineal identity and racial politics. The figure of the Algerian father (Mohamed) is present in the film, yet is rebelled against by the *Beur* son whose attitude is unaccepted in wider Algerian society. Mohamed's moral rebukes of Yacine, who seems to be caught between tradition and the pressures of assimilation, are the source of comedy at every turn in the film. Mohamed's primary role draws in part from its connection to the prophetic figure of the Muslims, seeking Johnny's help in preventing his son from morally going off course. Thus, Johnny's allegiance to the Sabris comes as the antithesis to the irreligious Yacine. Unlike Azouz

who is idolised by his father Bouzid for being a diligent schoolboy, Yacine is a disgrace to Mohamed, who in turn refers to Johnny (whose *Pied-noir* parents are deceased) as ‘fils’ (son) (2005). He is constantly reprimanded for not emulating Johnny, who ‘*respecte*’ (respects) Algerian customs and culture (00:21:50). This is demonstrated by the humour when Mohamed and Johnny are engaged in prayer. Yacine is seen in the background, afflicted by the previous night’s hangover (00:34:51). Comedy in this sense emphasises Yacine as a marginalised subject, positioning himself in opposition to the dominant cultural narrative, and thus, as O’Leary suggests, subverting his ‘centrality of the normative identity and of assuring its hegemony’ (2018, p. 108). Using funny body language, Johnny later displays the desire to marry ‘*une vraie rebeue, une fille romantique, vierge, une fille comme moi, une fille bien* (a real Arab, a romantic girl, a virgin, a girl like me, a good girl) (*Il était une fois dans l’Oued*, 2005). Yacine, who is intent on marrying a non-Algerian non-virgin, angrily responds to Johnny in a close-up taken from a high angle ‘*si tu veux ma place, prends-la, je me tire*’ (if you want my place, take it, I give it up) (00:43:05). Reminiscent of the subversion of power hierarchies between Khalid and his father-in-law in *Beur sur la Ville*, comedy in this sense reflects the beginning of a shift in power dynamics. Yacine occupies an ambivalent space that surpasses, almost relinquishes, Algerian cultural subjectivities in favour of interacting with typically French ones. Concurrently, Johnny violates the historical identity space of a white French *colon*, perceived as “corrupted”, “bad”, and “immoral”, by associating himself with the virtues of Algerian righteousness, purity, and morality. In this sense, Johnny’s “space taking” is evocative of an ambivalence that is consistent with *Beur* religious uprootedness. As Johnny’s secular visibility is undermined, Yacine’s normality as religious is compromised, rendering him disempowered in the larger Algerian traditional context.

Comedy in the film facilitates French physical “crossing” to the Algerian mainland, while also overlapping with moments of *Beur* moral dislocation. The second part of the film involves the voyage of the Sabri family to Algeria to arrange for Yacine’s wedding to his previously unknown Algerian cousin. The comedy portrays Mohamed’s agitated, yet ineffectual attempts at keeping Johnny at bay, as he eventually accompanies the family on the ship for their big voyage to Algeria (*Il était une fois dans l’Oued*, 2005, 00:12:03). Later, when Yacine discovers him on the ship, it creates tension in Mohamad, since Johnny is traveling without a passport (00:12:31). As Mohamed prepares to slap him, Johnny, in a static shot, interrupts: ‘*c’est le dernier jour du Ramadan, on se fait la bise*’ (it is the last day of Ramadan, let’s kiss on the cheeks) (00:13:14). Johnny’s illegal, clandestine “entrance” to its national territory without ‘un passport’ or even ‘billet’ (a ticket) is the source of humour. His new authority and powerful presence within the *banlieue* and the *Beur* family develops into crossing the Algerian physical borders. It symbolically normalises the destruction of a colonial border historically installed to prevent foreign intrusion into its sacred mainland. Comedy in this context works to interrupt the tension and strained atmosphere resulting from Johnny’s illegal entrance and overstepping of boundaries. In referencing the Muslim tradition of Eid, Johnny’s sense of humour normalises his foreign entrance to Algeria through creating an alternative form of affiliation that constructs him as an insider via his Muslimness. Like Khalid who is ‘*le premier discriminé positif*’ (2011), Johnny is also ‘*le premier passager clandestin pour d’Algérie*’ (the first illegal passenger to Algeria) (2005). A later scene demonstrates Johnny’s comfortable roaming on the ship, declaring that ‘*c’est l’Algérie qui se rapproche*’ (Algeria is approaching) (*Il était une fois dans l’Oued*, 2005, 00:15:57). The camera cuts to Mohamed as he grabs Johnny by the hand, to which Johnny replies ‘*personne m’a vue*’ (nobody has seen me) (00:16:06), and a medium close-up at the background of the scene

captures the sensational looks exchanged between Yacine and *Beurette* Nadia after planning their romantic dates in Algeria (00:16:09). The scenes convey that Mohamed's repeated comic reactions to Johnny's presence within Algerian sight is only subversive of his suspicious 'visibility' normally posing a menace to the Algerian territory. Simultaneously, Johnny's challenging reappearance in public view reverses the normative dynamic of *Beur* hypervisibility.

The endeavour at border-crossing mutually bespeaks *Beur* betrayal to nationalist roots. A particularly suspenseful scene in the film reveals the difficulty of border-crossing. Mohamed engages in a deceptive dialogue with the Algerian security at the airport to convince him of the pointlessness of performing any inspection of the car boot where Johnny is hiding. Mohamed acts upon a series of tricks. For instance, in a humorously agitated manner, Mohamed justifies that he is already in a hurry and that '*qui va venir ici, a part nous!*' (who else would come to this country apart from us!) (2005, 00:17:45), emphasising how clandestine movement is perceived to be one way. He finally rounds off the misleading conversation with a moment of affection conveyed in the blessing '*Saha Eidek!*' (happy feast!) to distract from the clandestine crossing (00:17:05). A high angle shot, paired with non-diegetic music of suspicion, gives the impression of impending danger as the police officer calls the name of Mohamed, who had been heading to his car (00:18:05). However, the tension built earlier is broken. Mohamed, initially fearful and agitated, turns around to find that the police officer's concern is not about anything sinister, but simply that he forgot his passport (00:18:08). Indeed, Khalid's passing joke asserting his police ranking and transfer into the French centre in *Beur sur la Ville* is similar to Johnny's humour affirming his transcendence of the Algerian borders. The comedic moment involving Mohamed's

departure from the police officer with a salutation particular to *Eid al-Fitr*, is rich with symbolism. It marks the end of Ramadan, and it is a time of celebration and peace. By incorporating this salutation, the narrative connects Johnny's crossing to these values, creating space for the suggestion of healing and reconciliation with the colonial past. The completion of Johnny's escape can be framed within humour's capacity to renegotiate colonial dynamics. It shows 'the adaptability of comedy to conflicting agendas, embodying the power to make [...] communities' (Davies and Ilott, 2018, p. 9). While Johnny's comedic escape symbolises the freedom from Franco-Algerian colonial aggression and threat, it challenges the very national allegiances expected from Mohamed. His embedded sense of Algerian treason reveals the contradictions inherent in the comic element.

The film develops a counter-heritage discourse that is compellingly communicated through Yacine. Johnny's acceptance into the Algerian world expands his concern for maintaining its ancestral legacy, which has been distorted by Algerians themselves. Comedy lies in Johnny's exaggerated, romanticised passion for the *Chorba*, an Algerian traditional soup mainly served in Ramadan. At a restaurant in Oran, he is framed as irritated by the way the original recipe has been distorted by the chef, which results in a physical comedy, his face being contorted with rage as he attempts to voice his dissatisfaction to the manager about its despicable taste (*Il était une fois dans l'Oued*, 2005, 01:06:46). His ability to identify with the missing ingredients of the dish stands in contrast to Yacine's cynical views related to its taste, and the overall life in Algeria and the *banlieue* which he describes as a village full of dirty cockroaches (00:52:34). As such, Yacine reveals a disconnection between him and his heritage in contrast to Johnny who displays a sincere desire to embrace all that is Algerian. In parallel to Italian *cinapanettoni* in which O'Leary argues that 'Whiteness is de-naturalised and

rendered visible' (2018), Bensalah's comedy works to destabilise the colonial discourse typically marked by the French attempt to "displace" Algerian difference (Laroussi, 2003), attempting instead to protect its heritage. Simultaneously, however, it portrays *Beur* reluctance to safeguard Algerian cultural heritage that gives value to their past, instead causing its disintegration and corruption. The cosmopolitan nature of the film that constructs Johnny as a preacher against corruption thus contrasts with *Beur* unconcern towards their roots, to use Appiah's words, 'an identity they care about and want to sustain' (Appiah, 2006, p. 52). The film contests mainstream colonial discourse in a way that subverts the notion of the *Beur* as a proud devotee to the Algerian national cause.

The film's comedy highlights a new cosmopolitan discourse marked by Johnny's politicised fight and symbolic celebration of Algerian nationalism. A scene frames Johnny at a football match where he chooses to wear the green Algerian national football shirt. A wide shot displays him hailed by the audience via the diegetic '*hymne Algerien national*' (the Algerian national anthem) as a fighter who '*pourrait sauver l'Algerie*' (could save Algeria) (*Il était une fois dans l'Oued*, 2005, 00:56:50). At first, we get a high angle shot of his dramatic response to the loss through the match, kneeling on his knees and screaming in the rain. However, Johnny later makes it up by saving Yacine from the gang headed by Algerian Malik. At the point of learning about Malik's attempt to track Yacine's whereabouts on his wedding day, Johnny discloses the truth of his innocence to his father, lest he flees to Spain with the dowry he was supposed to pay for the bride. This sequence reframes the comedy's opening colonial discourse, wherein Johnny is erroneously perceived as a threat to Yacine's life, Mohamad's family, and the wider Algerian diasporic community, in a way that might lead to its devastation and disunity. In retrospect, however, Johnny's symbolic role as a national icon

and peace advocate aligns with, to borrow Schoene's expression, 'the development of a strong sense of global community' to bridge misunderstandings and prevent conflict (2009, p. 10). In halting Malik's planned murder on Yacine and resolving the ensuing conflict, Johnny is positioned as a unifying figure.

Johnny's physical and figurative border-crossing is further complicated by *Beur* female patterns of religious displacement, with comedy serving as a means of highlighting the complexities of cultural differences. On the Algerian *Balade en Mer* beach in Oran, humour surfaces in Johnny's extravagant use of olive oil to conceal the effect of the sun on his sensitive white skin. Kahina is shown sitting next to Johnny, attired in a bikini, and advises against applying excessive amounts of Algerian olive oil, which is known to cause sunburn (*Il était une fois dans l'Oued*, 00:22:12). Johnny challenges Kahina's claim by reassuring her that he also has sun-resistant skin; that he has: '*du vrai cuir d'Arabe, ça craint pas le soleil*' (the real skin of an Arab, who does not fear the sun) (00:22:18). A previous static shot of the same beach contradicts this, showing a half-naked Algerian man resting on top of a Muslim woman wearing a full black *Burqa*, which contrasts Johnny and Kahina (00:21:33). Johnny's overuse of olive oil, a traditional Algerian patrimony, reflects his sense of crossing into Algerian national spaces. The subsequent comedy entailing his severe sunburns reverses his banality as 'white', constructing him in terms of racial and religious difference and indicating his yearning for inclusion. His change of "skin" through symbolically covering himself with olive oil, and his new identification as an Arab symbolically subverts the colonial discourse attaching his white Frenchness to threat. In a cultural context where modesty and "covering" is linked to female Islamic etiquettes, Kahina's immodest bikini represents a break from traditional codes of behaviour. It also frames the tension between religious and secularist

dynamics. The comedy centred on Johnny's symbolic "covering" and endeavour to assimilate at whatever cost is tacitly articulated in contrast to Kahina's nonchalance when it comes to covering her skin. Johnny and Kahina reject culturally normative behaviours. The discourse undermining the cultural banality of Johnny's threat is consistent with Kahina's non-adherence to Islamic gendered standards of attire, thus giving in to a subversion of what O'Leary describes as 'normative masculinities and sexualities' (2018, p. 100). If Azouz symbolically restores "the real skin of an Arab" in *Le Gone du Chaâba*, Kahina sheds her "skin" and hands it over to Johnny.

The comedy behind Johnny's new "skin" and the reversal of his assigned visibility in Algerian public spaces also intersects with Yacine's visibility and exclusion. This is demonstrated during a scene in a bar, where Yacine warns Johnny about the 'Frenchness' of his looks, which he claims risky enough to deny them access. As the camera zooms into his face at eye level, emphasising his gaze, he warily admits to Johnny, '*t'es au bled. Ils aiment pas les blonds*' (you are in Algeria. They don't like the blond) (*Il était une fois dans l'Oued*, 2005, 00:26:40). While implying that Johnny's skin colour is undesired, Yacine in a funny, assured gesture adds that he will enter first and then find someone else to get Johnny inside. Despite evidence to the contrary, Johnny is admitted into the bar as an 'amie' (friend) of the bar tender (2005), whereas Yacine, whose "gaze" is redirected on him, emerges as the foreigner who is requested to '*dégage ailleurs*' (get lost) (00:27:09). Yacine is only eventually allowed entrance thanks to the bar tender's knowledge of Johnny. As such, the cosmopolitan form of inclusion that humour activates is predicated on the subversion of the banality of Johnny, as he suddenly manifests as, using O'Leary's words, 'a desiring subject' and 'a source of potential power' (2018, p. 104). Yacine's banal belonging to the Algerian space is made

abnormal due to his looks which shockingly go “unfamiliar” by the Algerian bartender, thus configuring him as an outsider in Algerian eyes. Johnny’s subsequent performance of *musique Orientale* (Oriental music), which receives an intense round of applause, highlights a moment of empowerment for him, as he is celebrated and positioned as the star of the show (00:28:10). His success in this moment can be seen as a symbol of his ability to transcend his colonial past, taking ownership of a cultural form that links him to Algeria. On the other hand, the pejorative nickname of ‘immigrant’ (2005) that Yacine receives contrasts sharply with Johnny’s position. Bensalah’s comedy thus works in cosmopolitan ways as *Beur* cultural displacement and marginalisation is offset by white French *Pied-noir* inclusion.

The film’s subversion of French menacing banality is represented through the contrast between French religious morality and the secular values of the *Beur* subject. The symbolic visual motifs of crossing, entrance and initiation into the Algerian moral doctrine are crucial to communicate the tension experienced by Johnny and Yacine. An initial high angle shot reveals the Algerian in-laws pushing Yacine hard to step forward into his new in-laws' big yard, suggesting a feeling of compulsion (*Il était une fois dans l'Oued*, 2005, 00:36:22). With its antique architecture of arcades and domes, the spacious yard is reflective of a courtroom trial. On the other hand, the visual representation of Johnny’s confident stride into the yard with a smile, wearing his wide-open *Abaya*, as a symbol of traditional Islamic identity, displays a sense of grandeur in him as a regal figure, almost an Arab king. In contrast to Yacine’s symbolically reluctant entry, Johnny is successfully admitted into the traditions of the Algerian world. He is later met with ‘*une réception magnifique*’ (magnificent reception) (2005) by the family, who were happy to see him, offered for him to marry their daughter, and admired his

jokes of *'Eljini'* as legends rooted in Arabian storytelling. Yacine's eligibility to marry his anonymous bride, the daughter of Mohamed's Algerian cousin, is doubted by his Algerian in-laws. In a situation that forms the basis of comedy, they are deferred to as judges of his morality. Indeed, the respect and companionship Johnny earns from both young and elderly members of the family are contrasted by their concerned thoughts about Yacine as a homosexual and perverted man, particularly questioning his masculine ability 'to please their daughter' (00:35:43). The bride's grandfather El-hadj (a title given to an old man who has completed the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca) embodies a blend of humour and traditionalism. He confides in Mohamad how Yacine *'n'a pas l'air en bonne santé'* (does not seem to be healthy) (2005). El-hadj, displaying the urge to see his teeth while also questioning his virginity and moral piousness, further questions that *'J'espère qu'il n'a pas une maladie de Français, comme le sida ou l'hépatite'* (I hope he does not have a French disease, like HIV and Hepatitis) (00:36:46). El-hadj's doubts about Yacine's alcohol consumption and fornication do not align with what he expects from a young man in a traditional sense. Comedy in this sense highlights Algerian perception of Western secular values as morally and physically corrupting, in contrast to their own, which are perceived as healthier and more pious. Comedy's de-naturalisation of *Beur* norms and conventions relating to gender thus contributes to the central theme of white French crossing and *Beur* disempowerment within the broad Algerian moral codes.

The romance between Khalid and his French girlfriend Alicounette (Alice) in *Beur sur la Ville*, and Johnny and Nadjat respectively, showcases *Beur/Beurette* navigation of subjectivities against the backdrop of Algerian cultural heritage. Johnny's adherence to Muslim traditional etiquettes such as marrying 'a virgin' and other family laws indicates his

pursuit of a pious life in its traditional Algerian sense. He regards the act of dating Nadjat as '*haram*' (religiously impermissible) (2005), after the failed attempt she makes to kiss him. He makes a clumsy proposal to ask for her hand, and to give it a religious ancestral depth, a shot taken from a hand-held camera summarises his authentic adoption of the Algerian way. In a low-pitched voice, he proposes '*J'ai besoin d'une histoire à l'ancienne, rencontrer tes parents, et payer une dot*' (I want an old-fashioned story, meeting your parents, and paying a dowery) (00:30:03). By framing Johnny's proposal in this way, the comedy woven throughout the scene reflects Johnny's preference for a story "*à l'ancienne*" (old-fashioned) which is consistent with the initiation of a relationship built on Algerian cultural rites. Rootlessness, on the other hand, is pinned to Yacine and Khalid in return, through the choice they make to live "*à la Française*" by asking their girlfriends out and kissing them in public. Within this framework, Sarah Iltott (2018) argues that the romcom functions as a genre in which the romantic relationship performs the role of synthesising and connecting between multi-ethnic individuals. The romantic leads must strive to resist the xenophobic chaos and turmoil incurred by political institutions. With particular attention to the British multicultural context as well as aspects of race and the surrounding culture posing menace to the success of such relationships, she asserts that:

'it is possible to read the romantic comedy set in multicultural Britain as a vehicle for minimising the sense of threat posed by significant social changes, such as that instigated in the imagining of Britishness when confronted by a surge in immigration from the former colonies in the post-war period, or that evident during the period of heightened Islamophobia in the post 9/11 period' (pp. 62-63).

As far as the Franco-Algerian context is concerned, comedy challenges the dynamics of visibility within French/Algerian diasporic spaces. The romcom in this case contests normative

histories of Islamic extremism as well as colonial inheritance in the diaspora. Simultaneously, however, it maintains *Beur* rootless attitudes towards romance and love, through representing relationships conducted “à la Française”, in either space.

5-Between Roots and Ruins: Ambivalence in the Shared Histories of Algerians and Pieds-Noirs:

The film’s cosmopolitan exchange is marked by *Beur* cultural withdrawal from *Pied-noir* filtered nostalgia. Johnny expresses his feelings of belonging, which relates not only to the *banlieue* but also the Algerian diaspora. Upon setting foot on Algeria, the first few words he utters are ‘*Je suis chez moi*’ (I am home) (*Il était une fois dans l’Oued*, 2005, 00:18:35), marking a symbolic shift in his relationship to Algeria as a *colon*. His sympathetic exchange with Mohamad’s Algerian relatives is later framed in a wide shot, as they heartily welcome him with ‘*soupirent*’ (affectionate) hugs (00:19:18). However, despite it being his first visit to Algeria, the Sabri extended family demonstrate a lack of concern about his origins and status of foreignness as the son of colonisers. Rather, they are inquisitive about the gifts he has brought, in a comical moment, greedily enquiring about the shoes and possessions of their guests as they arrive (00:20:02). The camera pans out to reveal Johnny sitting at the centre of the house’s open lounge, wearing his Algerian *Abaya*, and telling jokes surrounded by the family. This is followed by a shallow focus shot of Yacine, giving stares of discontent to Johnny, from behind a dimly lit external wall, which conveys a sense of exclusion (00:20:30). As such, while the Algerian family is presented as a close-knit unit open to cosmopolitan interaction with Johnny, it obscures his inclusion and affiliation on the basis of shared historical trajectories. Just like the Algerian family’s indifference towards Johnny’s origins, whether ‘German or ...it doesn’t matter’ (00:36:15), and his lack of concern for Johnny’s search for his lost village, the Sabri’s extended family skips enquiring about his real name and assigns him

the name of Abdul Bashir instead, meaning 'good hopes or mercy'. Despite the presence of the *Pied-noir*, the film's promotion of cosmopolitan hope, peace, tranquillity and inclusiveness towards the French Other is distinct from the cosmopolitanism evoked in *le Gone du Chaâba*. While they both address the complex relationships between *Beurs* and *Pied-noirs*, Begag's text is emphatic on the commonality of suffering and shared past identified as unifying factors between *Pied-noirs* and *Beurs*. Bensalah's film offers a more utopian vision of coexistence that is less rooted in past histories.

A scene in which Mohamed and his family are travelling to their new in-laws and their car breaks down serves as a pivotal moment in the film. Johnny recognises his long-sought ancient village as soon as he glances to the right-hand side of the road (*Il était une fois dans l'Oued*, 2005, 01:08:44). The Sabris, who are more worried about their car, do not share his frantic love and eagerness upon finally learning about his abandoned, dilapidated village, which ties to his personal nostalgia. Johnny, singlehandedly, descends the village's hill, which presents his new engagement with his past. The non-functioning of the car, as a symbol of mobility and connectivity, can be metaphorically interpreted as a breakdown of connections to reclaim shared roots. The scene bespeaks a multi-ethnic unity that is, to paraphrase Appiah, incapable of validating unique empathy with the Other or emotionally fostering shared experience based on roots (2005). A later scene frames Johnny's quest at the graveyard for the tomb of his deceased *Pied-noir* father Abdul Bashir Moussaoui, meaning "equal". Only then is it possible for the spectator to understand Johnny's *Pied-noir* origins. A series of medium close-ups of Johnny convey to the viewer the deep turmoil and hopelessness he feels to find answers to his past. He finally strikes up a discussion with an inebriated Algerian man who allegedly knew his father. To his astonishment, he confides that his late

father's preoccupation was 'a clown' instead of a 'miner' as Johnny had thought (2005, 01:11:58). The image of the drunk man, unreliable and disoriented, as the only link to Johnny's past is deeply symbolic, representing the blurred and disturbed nature of *Pied-noir* memory. It turns Johnny's solemn quest for his father's tomb, and the symbolic attempt to "dig" into his past to a mere joke. Indeed, the core element of the comic is grounded in this particular scene, where naive Johnny forgets about his father and rounds off their conversation by stating that drinking is '*haram*'. This is followed by a camera pan across the graveyard eventually zooming into Abdul Bashir's tomb, which has the epigraph in Arabic 'an anonymous grave' (01:14:20), reinforcing the atmosphere of mystery. It becomes one of the intriguing episodes in the film. Despite finding his father's grave, Johnny's origins remain hidden and symbolically buried in the past.

Echoing the denouement of *Beur sur la Ville*, the film highlights the cosmopolitan politics of inclusion by featuring trans-colonial subjectivities that overlap with *Beur* spatial dislocation from the past. The end of the film informs the characters' eventual diasporic settlements. A pan moves down to reveal a shop named '*Il était une fois en Algérie*', which is owned by elderly Johnny in Algeria (2005, 01:27:02), and which signals a moment of return and deep re-connection with Algeria. Johnny's choice to settle and start a family in Algeria is indicative of a trans-colonial posture of reconciliation with the past. His wife's name '*Nadjat*', which translates to "survival" in Arabic, is deeply symbolic. It does not only convey the survival of Johnny as an individual, but also introduces a new lease of life which matches new trans-colonial prospects of mobility, belonging and hope amid the turbulence of colonial memory. This new diasporic balance is underscored by Johnny's voice-over declaration of '*tout est rentré dans l'ordre*' (all is back to normal) (*Il était une fois dans l'Oued*, 2005). Yacine's storyline

contrasts Johnny's journey of return. Together with his wife Nadia, they find happiness in Paris, where they run their telemarketing company far from the Algerian mainland or the *banlieue*, which reflects an alternative form of belonging. Like Khalid and the *Imam* in *Beur sur la Ville*, their ultimate vocation is to be found in the French mainstream, alluding to a form of integration that seems promising and unproblematic. New *Beur* settlement attests to the function of humour in 'bridge(ing) gaps by diffusing the opposition between self and other' (Reichl and Stein, 2005, p. 14). Yacine's successful integration into the French public centre, however, is equally summed up by the correspondence to an ambivalent identity of rootlessness. The comedy deployed to facilitate *Beur* border-crossing and inclusion in both the Algerian and French mainstream is symbolically conveyed through permanent settlement, which summarises Bensalah's rootless vision of universality.

Conclusion:

The incorporation of humour in the films analysed in this chapter not only bolsters the new *Beur* financial production and distribution that "go mainstream" (Higbee, 2014); it also aligns with the manifestations of less anchored *Beur* identities that are more consistent with assimilationist agendas during the border-crossing process. Bensalah's films construct ambivalence through humour as a manner to challenge conventional cultural and religious identity spaces. The easing of the diasporic tension, however, reveals another layer. It is connected to Bouchareb's universal representation that is somewhat in line with the French national narrative. I read the intersection of cosmopolitanism and comedy in the contemporary Maghrebi-French cinema, highlighting a form of integration that tends to trivialise or challenge the *Beur* connection to "roots" and well-defined histories. In this chapter, I have argued that the films primarily focus on the *Beur's* ability to maintain a sense

of “wings”, representing a cosmopolitan ideal. However, I have also pointed out that these films overlook and even reject a *Beur* identity anchored in the past. By shifting the *Beur* spatial dynamics away from the *banlieue* and towards the French centre, Bensalah’s comedies are more concerned with *Beur* penetration of borders, and the dismantling of the Islamophobic and colonial stereotypes attached to private spaces. The narratives in this sense work to dismantle an *Orientalist* discourse that frames the *Beur* as Other in the context of Islamophobic visibility. However, the growing emphasis on cosmopolitan dynamics of inclusivity and equality often overlaps with more mainstream, centre-oriented settlements. This concern for inclusion in the films emerges as too overriding that it has the impact of diminishing the proactive assertion of *Beur* differences.

The following chapter shifts focus to Rachid Bouchareb's 2006 film *Indigènes* (Days of Glory) to further investigate integration agendas marked by border crossings. Just as comedy plays with spatial dynamics and identity politics, I will examine the genre of war cinema to explore the tension between private and public realms, especially when visible means of identification are dismantled. I will delve into how Bouchareb’s film constructs cosmopolitan environments that incorporate Algerian and French veterans, while aiming to deconstruct colonial memories and embrace the Algerian Other as an integrated member of the centre. The chapter explores the ways in which the film introduces a vision for overcoming postcolonial barriers, addressing the ways in which the memory of war duties, shared solidarities, heroism, and sacrifice between French and Algerian veterans are portrayed, particularly in relation to the roots of Algerian nationalism.

CHAPTER THREE

A COUNTER-MEMORY OF WAR: COSMOPOLITANISM IN RACHID BOUCHAREB'S *INDIGÈNES*

Introduction:

In the previous chapter, I discussed the intersection between cosmopolitanism and comedy to deconstruct notions of threat in Bensalah's films *Beur sur la Ville* and *Il était une fois dans l'Oued*. This chapter presents a new cosmopolitan reading where I evaluate

memories of the Second World War in Rachid Bouchareb's epic war film *Indigènes (Days of Glory)* (2006). I interrogate the tropes of remembrance that the film experiments with, as it seeks to renegotiate a new place in public memory and representation for Algerian veterans and diasporians alike. Previous scholarship has discussed the film within a broader postcolonial context, mainly centering on the exploitation and marginalisation of North-African troops who served in the French army yet were denied proper national recognition after the war. More recent readings of the film incorporate a transcultural framework to explore positive interactive imaginaries of the war's memory, particularly focusing on overlooked histories to disrupt more conventional trajectories of memorialising the war. My analysis offers a different cosmopolitan framework that challenges these narratives by highlighting the film's negotiation of Algerian "roots" that are still subject to hegemonic imaginaries of memory.

By looking at these suppressed parts of the Franco-Algerian past as narratives of submission, the film's move from the private to the public dynamics maps a shift in contemporary Algerian/*Beur* representation from being subjected to colonial exclusionary dynamics to the advancement of a counter-nationalist position on their part. I analyse the ways in which the film represents forms of egalitarianism that are conditioned by French national uniformity and the exclusion of Algerian nationalist particularities. To present these fresh readings, I draw on a rich selection of cosmopolitan theorisation, critical conceptualisations of war memory and other reflections on Algerian colonial discourses. Some of the key scholarship that I draw on incorporates Vincent Crapanzano's (2011) "*Harki story*" to foreground the film's reliance on colonially passive and static narratives of national loyalties.

Indigènes was produced by Rachid Bouchareb, a *Beur* filmmaker of Algerian descent with a budget of an estimated 15 million euros (Hargreaves, 2007, p. 205). The film achieved commercial success, earning its recognition at both the Cannes Film Festival in 2010 and through nomination as North-African Oscar prize. Co-produced by Jean Brehat and Jamel Debbouze, Bouchareb's *Indigènes* relates the historical collaboration of 300,000 colonial veterans of Maghrebi origin, with Algerians officially making up '90 per cent of the Free French Forces' (Evans and Phillips, 2007, p. 50), who fought side by side with Allied French soldiers during the Second World War. The film focuses on distinct 1943-1944 war campaigns set in different cross-border spaces ranging from Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Italy, Provence, Valle du Rhone, to Vosges and Alsace. Its ensemble cast offers distinctive registers of affectionately loyalist experiences to four North African indigenous men namely Algerian Said (Jamel Debbouze), Moroccan siblings Yassir (Samy Nacery) and Messaoud (Roschdy Zem), and Algerian Abdelkader (Sami Bouajila), in tandem with *Pied-noir* Sergeant Martinez (Bernard Blancan). In using these characters, the film challenges the traditional narratives of heroism attached to the nationalist cause. Rather, the veterans possess multiple personal aims behind embarking on the war and fighting with the allies against the Nazi German occupation.

The story of these veterans primarily negotiates tensions between the French authorities' promises of equality and justice in the face of colonial marginalisation, and loyalty expected from Algerian soldiers. Bouchareb presents his characters differently. Algerian illiterate Said is an orphaned shepherd who, despite his strong attachment to his mother and due to his impoverished situation, joins the French armed forces. His deep affection for the Algerian land subtly attests to his patriotic and anti-colonial convictions. As such, he vows to secure financial stability in his homeland and plans to rescue his widowed mother from the

abyss of misery upon his return. However, he heroically dies in a cottage in Alsace by the end of the film in his attempt to rescue Sergeant Martinez from German bombardment. Messaoud's voluntary act to join the French army is attributed to his long-awaited dream to finally re-unite with his love Erine, a white French woman, marrying her and building a life together in France. His hopes are similarly undermined by his death in a German raid in an Alsatian village. The only surviving character in the film is Abdelkader. Throughout his military position as a corporal, he expresses a heartfelt ambition to fulfill and guarantee equality between Algerian indigenous soldiers and their French counterparts. Abdelkader is more ready to show servitude to French officers of a higher rank, particularly Martinez. His moral creed originates from the desire to realise Republican ideals of equality and its French civilising mission demonstrated by his meticulous references to orders as dictated in the military handbook. Following the end of war, Abdelkader settles in France, as an integrated subject in the diaspora.

The film explores tropes of Algerian potential for inclusion, intersecting with their specific loyalties to France. Indeed, the titular *Indigènes*, translated as *beldiyoun* or 'natives', refers to the initial settlers of a particular region or country, often connoting the first peoples or their ancestors (Stoddard et al., 2014, p. 10). The choice of the term for the film not only suggests an opening up towards the French social and political order but also repositions new veterans' motives as integral to the process of diasporic community-building. The plot demonstrates how Algerian conscripts join the French forces under Charles de Gaulle's command for a number of personal reasons. However, the characters are depicted as being driven by reasons other than a nationalist urge for Algerian Independence, reflecting the historically attuned promise made by the French authorities to join the Allies. The plot

foregrounds an Algerian counter-nationalist perspective defined by the participation of Algerian non-nationalists, historically known as *Harkis* or *Goumiers*. The film's personal narratives reflect individual military experiences, but the film essentially operates to unify via opposition to Algerian nationalism. Hargreaves considers the treatment of Maghrebi indigenous troops to constitute *Indigènes'* most distinguishing trait (2006, p. 205). Its distinctiveness, I argue in this chapter, relates to the veterans' appropriation as *Harkis*, displaying allegiances to France as a means to gain equality with the French Other. Existing literary accounts of the film have primarily highlighted the representation of characters as underrepresented and oppressed figures within the broader Republican context delivering abstract notions of equality (Hargreaves, 2007; Scott, 2006; Huddleston, 2006). I shift from this postcolonial discourse framing 'their status as second-class citizens (if that) of a republic consecrated to liberty, equality and fraternity' (Scott, 2006, p. 1) and instead focus on a more nuanced discussion of their ties to the Algerian past, which reflect the impact of assimilationist agendas.

I address the frailties of the Republican model through its difference-blind approach wherein, for Chengxi Li, inclusivity and equality presupposes the absolutist abrogation of 'any particular affiliation except for republican French citizenship'; in other words marks of difference in minorities are viewed as a 'menace' to its unity (2022, p. 3). The use of *Harkis* in Bouchareb's text in this sense coincides with Republican ideals as it serves to evade and undermine the Algerian impulse to reassert their nation state. This stands in counterpoint to the politicised representation of Algerian indigenous soldiers through what is known as *FNACA* (*La Federation Nationale des Anciens Combattants en Algerie*), created in 1952. In accounting for this significant body, Hugh McDonnell (2018) raises a discussion about its significant role

in validating the experiences of Algerian veterans. For him, the association was aimed at restating the collective trauma and memory shared by Algerian veterans during the Second World War. It officially transmitted the memory of Algerian conscripts as victims of the war, in that they were compelled to serve in the French army with the ultimate goal of pursuing the long-awaited Algerian liberty upon their return to the mainland. By contrast, McDonnell refers to the usage of personal post-World-War-Two narratives to frame Algerian experiences in relation to their loyalties to France to challenge the French official memory. I argue that Bouchareb's *Indigènes* follows a similar path to that of *FNACA*, in transmitting veterans' memory, specifically opting for a narrative of victimhood asserting their servitude in the French army. Conversely, it conflicts with the Algerian official memories of soldiers being recruited under conscription, instead displaying characters who fight for the French nationalist cause.

Bouchareb's portrayal of *Harkis* reflects on Algerian allegiances towards French Republicanism that expands to the veterans' voluntary settlement on the French diasporic mainland. His film reflects a critical engagement with the *Harkis* favouring French dominance and resenting Algerian Independence. They are historically known for their willingness to fight under the French flag and operate according to its assimilatory, nationalist motives. Hamoumou and Moumen (2004) state that the term denotes those who '*servi ou continué à servir la France durant les 'événements' en Algérie*' (served or continue to serve for the benefit of France throughout the lived colonial 'events' taking place in Algeria) (p. 31). The plot of the film emphasises the need to redress the marginalised status of *Harkis* by the French authorities and by extension in the diaspora, far from the Algerian land. This initiative stems from their harsh colonial reception in post-Independence Algeria, which as in France, is framed by a disgraceful destiny. Susan Ireland comments that 'Although the war of

independence officially ended on 19 March 1962, with the signing of the *Accords d'Evian*, an estimated 100,000 *Harkis* were killed in the following months by angry compatriots who viewed them as traitors' (1997, p. 1231). The category is configured as traitors and social outcasts, particularly by Algerian revolutionary group *FLN* (*Front de Libération Nationale*) (National Liberation Front) whose nationalist anti-colonial expectations of martyrdom was high. In France, they are depicted as 'an embarrassing reminder of the failed colonial war as well a distinct counter to any characterization of immigrants as "anti-French"' (Lejman, 2014, p. 251). Bouchareb's narrative of victimhood will therefore be explored in terms of the dramatic combination between indigenous anti-colonial remembrances and anti-Algerian dynamics to restore *Harki* dignity in France.

The film develops cultural sites of memory to seek a more sympathetic or complex representation of *Harki* Indigenous veterans and their children in France. Anne Donadey (2014) focuses on the critical reception of *Indigènes* in France, particularly in the regional newspaper *La Provence*, which emphasises the indigenous troops' aspiration for fair treatment and inclusion within the systems of French colonial empire. Donadey contends that *Indigènes* presents colonial troops who want to be included equitably within the French military and social structure' (2014, p. 16). The urge for inclusion reflects testimonial stories of *Harki* descent such as that of Fatima Becnaci-Lancou, a *Harki* as daughter reflecting upon post-independence narratives of *Harkis* in her memoir (2005). Becnaci-Lancou negotiates the complexities of *Harki* memory and the dilemma of their historical allegiances to France. Her reclamation of their memory mainly centres on the urge to protect *Harki* children, which was prioritised over their defense of the land. In addition to this, her childhood accounts at the age of eight years old return to the terrible post-independence experiences in concentration

camps, mainly *le camp de Rivesaltes* in south-west France. She declares that '*c'était terrible, surtout lors de l'hiver 1962-1963. C'était une véritable épreuve. Les gens étaient logés dans des tentes sans chauffage*' (it was terrible, especially throughout winter 1962-1963. It was a hard trial. People were housed in tents without any heating) (Desorgues, 2021). Ireland reports that 'those who managed to flee to France, or who were finally repatriated after many of the massacres had already taken place, found themselves isolated in temporary housing camps and felt abandoned by the French' (1997, p. 1231). The memory of *Harkis* as Algerians construct their image in the aftermath of the Algerian liberation as marginalised entities who chose to settle in France. The subversion of exclusionary colonial memory of *Harki* neglect in concentration camps, followed by the unequal financial remuneration by the French government at the time, constitutes the film's main preoccupation. The film's attempt to displace the memory attached to exclusion of *Harkis* in France in the aftermath of French colonialism, I argue, intersects with representations of Algerian counter-nationalist narratives of allegiance to the French Republic.

Through the designation of *Harki*, the film introduces an implicitly utopian vision of diasporic equality to engage with themes of cross-border sympathetic connectivity and tolerance. *Indigènes* implies a future for indigenous veterans and their children marked by a sense of parity in diasporic society, an imaginative projection that stems from a broader fear of collective governmental neglect and unacknowledged sacrifice. The film emphasises the loyalty of the *Harkis* and validates their collective memory, positioning their experiences within the framework of French national history.

It is important to consider Bouchareb's concerns regarding the post-war and contemporary status of *Beur* minorities in French diasporic spaces as part of his broader effort

to address the long-term repressive effects of colonial memory and their ongoing impact on the current *Beur* generation. He articulates a vision of integration that stems from the harsh and often unpleasant experiences endured by Maghrebi indigenous groups, stating that: 'I don't consider *Indigènes* to be a communitarian film for the community. Neither I nor the actors! It is a general act of affirmation of our French identity, for all the sons of immigration' (2006). Bouchareb's project to craft a universal collective perception of *Beur* contemporary integration is shaped by the historical realities of colonial memory. Given that Bouchareb believes that '*Faire un voyage dans le passé colonial, c'est aussi comprendre la société d'aujourd'hui*' (travelling into the colonial past also helps us understand today's society' (Bouchareb, 2010, p. 1), his emphasis on fostering a sense of belonging in his film is closely tied to the affirmation of French nationalism. By foregrounding the wasted lives and the absence of recognition for Maghrebi indigenous troops, Bouchareb through his film points to a parallel erasure of Algerian heritage, nationalism, and difference while also overturning the French government's failure to honor its promises to *Harkis*.

My analysis in this chapter reflects the gendering of post-colonial relations, positioning the film as being easily absorbed into the national story of France. The film intertwines themes of masculinity and gendered politics to disturb Algerian pro-Independence narratives of nationalism and emphasise narratives tied to *Harki* understandings of integration. This critique resonates with Mani Sharpe's influential reading of the film in the post-Independence Algerian context. Particularly, these narratives situate Algerian nationalists as 'fearless warriors and martyrs', while simultaneously embodying patriarchal traits as a manner to distance themselves from the sexual vulnerabilities associated with colonial rule (Sharpe, 2015, p. 450). This discourse, for Sharpe, reflects highly politicised, anti-colonial forms of empowerment. Most importantly, it feeds into the current Algerian political atmosphere,

particularly the ‘reinstatement of patriarchal values that characterised the country’s nascent independence, partially due to a tenacious association “between secular law and women’s rights and colonial imposition”’ (p. 452). Sharpe’s insightful discussion reflects interconnected perspectives on Algerian masculinities. In the *Beur* context, I argue that *Indigènes* means to disturb the emerging narrative associating masculinity with Algerian nationalism, instead repositioning masculinity in accordance with French assimilationist ideology. Bouchareb’s text operates according to the colonial binary around which Algerian nationalism is ordered in an effeminate or secular vein, stripping nationalists of their empowerment, thereby reviving what Sharpe refers to as colonial “anxieties”. This discourse is alternatively juxtaposed and displaced by the predominantly politicised, and idealised masculine *Harki* narratives of victory and heroism, which necessarily align with the French nationalist project of Republicanism. As such, Sharpe’s discussion and my own offer two sides of the same coin. While Sharpe’s discussion shows that post-Independence narratives mythologise a heroic Algerian nationalist figure, often reinforcing androcentrism, my discussion shows how *Indigènes* feminises Algerian nationalists at the same time? as granting *Harkis* access to masculinity via assimilation to the French cause. In both cases, the access to ideals of masculinity is tied to a nationalist cause.

Not only is the *Harki* subject required to assimilate in order to gain access to masculinity, but also to assimilate to secular ideals. This is demonstrated during the 2005 riots, which provide a key context to the film, as the riots contributed to the emergence of *Les Indigènes de la République* (Native Subjects of the Republic), an activist *Beur* organisation focused on combating racial discrimination in France. Hargreaves (2007) notes that the group’s name was ‘deliberately chosen to suggest a parallel between the subaltern status of those officially classified as “*Indigènes*, natives” during the colonial period and that accorded

to postcolonial minorities in contemporary France' (p. 211). While the 2005 *Beur* riots primarily called for integration while preserving national, religious, and cultural differences (Celik, 2011), *Les Indigènes de la République*, according to Itay Lotem (2019), reflects "intersectional" motives of belonging, especially concerning the relationship between race and sexuality. The group's 'intersectionality' particularly reflects an engagement with LGBT issues, emphasising their support for *Laïcité* through their identification with 'a Western homosexual identity' (Lotem, 2019, p. 206). I draw on the trajectories associated with the organisation to highlight the discourse at the intersection of male disempowerment, emasculation, and Algerian veterans' nationalism. In addition to *Harkis*, the relationship between Algerian nationalists and *Pied-noirs* in *Indigènes* has been explored through colonial trajectories. These dynamics reflect colonial binaries of injustice, where 'European colonists [...] obtained French citizenship and received legal rights that Arabs did not' (O'Riley, 2007, p. 282). Like *Il était une fois dans l'Oued* and unlike *Le Gone du Chaâba*, the focus in this chapter shifts to how these historical dynamics impact rooted interactions, where the reclaiming of shared past trajectories between Algerians and *Pied-noirs* is often obscured and rejected, producing politics of racial exclusion. I argue that *Indigènes* seeks to frame rootless narratives of inclusion, either by relinquishing Algerian nationalist differences, embodied through the *Harkis*, or through encouraging resistant attitudes towards shared heritage.

1-Universalising the Colonial Past: From Nationalist Silences to Diasporic Heroism:

In recasting the colonial memory of the *Harkis*, the film shifts away from depicting pro-Independence narratives of the Algerian War to dramatising representations of French national heroism. In an interview with *L'Express*, Bouchareb justifies the film's divergence

from official historical memory, stating, '*Je n'ai pas réalisé un film documentaire. Il s'agit d'une œuvre de fiction, dégagée des contraintes supposées du documentaire (rigueur, réalisme voire sobriété)*' (I have not produced a documentary film. It is a work of fiction, detached from any supposed constraints of a documentary (rigor, realism and even sobriety)) (Bouchareb, 2010, p. 1). He explains that his film is not bound by historical fidelity, remarking '*Croyez-vous que le public regardant Apocalypse Now se demande si le film est fidèle à la vérité historique? Jamis*' (Do you believe that the audience who watch *Apocalypse Now* wonder if the movie is faithful enough to historical truth? Never) (p. 2). Instead, Bouchareb aligns his film with American war epics such as Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) and Edward Twick's *Glory* (1987), using them as models to prioritise the rehabilitation of Algerian veterans' status in the French diaspora. Similar to the overriding themes of *Indigènes*, Twick's *Glory* traces the interplay between bravery, and the individual physical hardships and discriminatory challenges faced by African American soldiers in the military during the American Civil War. In this respect, Hargreaves comments that 'Bouchareb has frequently cited as a model Edward Twick's *Glory* (1987), which rescued from historical neglect the role of African American troops' (2007, p. 205). Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan*, on the other hand, presents soldiers with a range of emotional responses to the D-Day invasion, focusing on the mission to rescue a paratrooper named Captain Ryan, during World War Two (Spielberg, 1998). Like these narratives, *Indigènes* is rooted in dramatising themes of sacrifice, brotherhood, and duty within a World War Two context. Bouchareb's primary concern of defending veterans from historical amnesia is embedded in his venturing into artistic liberty, enabling him to support *Harkis*. In this way, the reactivation of memory is filtered towards a more accepted Eurocentric filmic model, particularly in its treatment of diasporic heroism and duty.

The construction of a less desirable approach to memory in Bouchareb's film, one that adheres to official historical remembrance, is affirmed by his sequel *Hors La Loi* (*Outside the Law*) (2010). Donadey notes that the film centers on 'Algerians seeking their national independence and political sovereignty from the French' (2014, p. 16), marking a more active construction of official memory and Algerian politicised discourse. Particularly, its central thrust highlights the Algerian nationalist discourse, notably through Bouchareb's inclusion of the 1945 massacres, as events which document the French war crimes committed against Algerians striving for their sovereignty in the wake of World War Two, and which are notably absent in *Indigènes*. However, the film's portrayal of these nationalist episodes encountered significant opposition in comparison to *Indigènes*. Despite being selected for the Cannes Film Festival, it 'received none of the awards' (Donadey, 2014, p. 15). In this regard, Nedjib Sidi Moussa comments that '*le fait que le film n'ait pas rencontré le succès s'explique par "le rejet français des pages sombres de son histoire"*' (the fact that the film did not meet with the desired success then is justified by "the French rejection of the darker pages of its history") (2012, p. 121). Unlike *Hors la Loi*, *Indigènes* seeks to present a more depoliticised perspective on memory, aiming to be recognised within the French cinematic landscape, and by extension the framework of French Republicanism. Despite Bouchareb's efforts to overcome Franco-Algerian colonial antagonisms, I argue that he still positions the text's memories within a neo-assimilationist spectrum that effectively suppresses Algerian nationalist agencies.

Bouchareb's anti-communitarian approach to identity met by cinematic appraisal can be further explored in relation to Ousmane Sembene's combat film *Camp de Thiaroye* (1988), which chronicles the harsh experiences endured by Senegalese *tirailleurs* following their repatriation to the Thiaroye camp in Senegal. The film highlights the official memories of colonial violence towards 'unruly natives' (Norindr, 2009, p. 139), capturing the historical

realities of segregation and the mass slaughter of Senegalese and other West African veterans by the French army. Not only was it negatively received in France, being banned due to its triggering of the colonial grievances of Senegalese bloodshed (Hargreaves, 2007), but also criticised for its lack of a clear hero, denying the audience the opportunity to place their hopes and sympathies on a single character (Ngugy, 2003, p. 58). As such, the film's historical remembrance opens a space for reflection on the tension between communitarianism and individual experience. Despite Bouchareb's anti-communitarian and singular approach, I argue that it still traces uniform designs of identity expression shared by *Harki* experience. Besides, albeit his reticence to display the colonial grievances of Algerian Massacres, his film still adheres to a form of epistemic violence practised on Algerian rooted identities. The positive publicity surrounding the film (Hargreaves, 2007) in these terms testifies to the French incapacity to both negotiate sympathetic Franco-Algerian memories while also empowering the specific experiences of Algerian nationalist veterans.

The film's expectations of acknowledgement and recognition centre on France's failure to acknowledge and honour the past grievances of Algerian *Harkis* during their service with the French army. Particularly, it provides a commentary on the systematic neglect of North African *Harkis* who fought for France during the Second World War. A key point underscoring the background of the film is the issue of pensions. The French authorities froze foreign infantrymen's pensions in 1959, which contradicted the continued financial compensations for French soldiers. Particularly, this breach of the promise made by the French government, to preserve 'the material and moral rights of rank-and-file veterans and to contribute to a peaceful end to the (Second World) war' (McDonnell, 2018, p. 212), forms the backdrop of the historical injustice presented in *Indigènes*. The film focuses on the first part of the agreement,

which relates to the retaining of equal financial promises for *Harki* soldiers fighting against Germany. However, it stands in counterpart to the second part of the agreement, dictating a heavily politicised diegesis of Algerian nationalist conscripts who were promised national autonomy in exchange for their service. Particularly, the attempt to restore their wasted years of forgotten service, that they participated in the French army through conscription and under duress, was tied to the promise of attaining Algerian national sovereignty, which was unfulfilled by French authorities. In January 1962 in *L'Ancien d'Algérie*, Algerian veterans expressed their anguish:

We, veterans of Algeria, have had the experience of the war carried out on the other side of the Mediterranean. We know what we have suffered in body and mind. It is the very future of our country which is in question (McDonnel, 2018, p. 206).

The way out of the veterans' desperate situation, however, only emerges after the release of Bouchareb's *Indigènes*, specified by its counter-nationalist agendas. The film's new representation of World War Two apparently melted the heart of former French President Jacques Chirac and his wife, Bernadette, leaving her ultimately imbued with compassion and pity for Algerian *Harki* veterans' unjust lot (O'Riley, 2007; Hargreaves, 2007; Norindr, 2009). The film advocates a model of Algerian integration that is limited to this form of difference-blind universalism, given that 'the French government had agreed to a *décristallisation* (unfreezing) of indigenous veterans' pay' where 'these new measures will have a bearing on 75,000 veterans' pensions and 27,000 invalidity pensions, affecting former troops from twenty different countries' (Cooper, 2007, p. 91). The film's reception, however, sparked controversy, especially among the far-right. Algerian critic Ali Jaafar reports that 'hundreds of protestors, some from France's far-right National front, gathered [...] to decry the film for its

portrayal of the Algerian war' (qtd in Donadey, 2014, p. 23-24). In dissatisfaction, Donadey comments that 'given Bouchareb's multiple efforts at presenting a non-Manichean vision of the Algerian war, the film might have been a way to bring the fragmented memories of the war' (2014, p. 23-24). Donadey's counterargument to the far-right is attuned to the film's evasion of simplistic binary portrayals of Franco-Algerian conflict in an attempt to reshape public discourse on colonial legacy. However, the defamiliarisation of Franco-Algerian colonial aggressions subscribes to biased sites of memory. These are produced through an alteration of Algerian disillusioned fate to meet the dramatic Franco-centric "days of glory", for which the fight proceeds via glorifying and mythologising the French cause.

As well as Chirac and his wife Bernadette, Nickolas Sarkozy also proclaimed his sympathy for Bouchareb's film. Then serving as Minister of the Interior and Regional Development, Sarkozy delivered a speech on the BBC News, where he expressed his pains and sorrows towards French negligence to and debarment of *Harkis*' long-forgotten fate in the diaspora since their repatriation in 1962. Sung Choi reports that Sarkozy 'acknowledged the nation's 'indebtedness', and 'remarked that the Republic must now "right its mistakes" to help these veterans integrate into French society' (2011, p. 24). Sarkozy outlined a distinctly inclusive vision for *Harkis* wherein he made concessions to set a halt to anti-colonial injustice. However, Bouchareb's diasporic vision of inclusion and equality, as championed by Sarkozy, is intertwined with the norms of the Republicanism and secularism. This position is juxtaposed by Sarkozy's earlier condemnation of Begag's stance of "integration *with* difference", reflecting the acceptance of diversity within French society.

Bouchareb's narrative risks positioning the long-established *Beur* cause and its politically charged movements on the margins. Ozge Celik affirms that the acknowledgement

of difference constitutes the main cause for the *Beur* diasporic activism inasmuch as it probes the effectiveness of the Republican model of integration (2011). Particularly, *Beur* riots were not just a reaction to diasporic socio-economic exclusion, yet also to the unaddressed historical traumas of colonialism and failure to acknowledge the distinct identities of Algerian descendants nowadays (2011). Thus, the pro-assimilatory prospect of addressing Algerian “victimhood” positions veterans in *Indigènes* as, using Norindr’s words, ‘ideal candidates for a full and uncomplicated assimilation into French society’ (2009, p. 128). In this context, the film imposes a narrative of assimilation that is reliant on a monocultural version of national identity. As Algerian veterans are depicted as entangled within this Euro-centric model, they automatically come out as universally accepted, recognised, and remembered on the part of their respective (colonial) governments. Bouchareb’s film thus testifies to a continuity of French colonial discourse where the *Beur* Other and distinct markers of difference are systematically erased.

Bouchareb’s film feeds into the broader tendency to overlook the particularistic Algerian experience, framing it within the narrative of universalism and humanity. This attitude is echoed in the 2017 incident involving the Third Algerian war memorial. In an interview with an Algerian News channel, Emmanuel Macron designated colonisation as ‘*un crime contre l’humanité*’ (a crime against humanity) (Macron, 2017). The memorial was meant to commemorate those who fought in the Algerian War of Independence yet became the centre of political tension due to Macron’s evasiveness to fully acknowledge the brutal experience of the Algerians. In this respect, Brazzoduro draws on an argument developed by Ann Laura Stoler (2016) who designates Macron’s commemoration of Algerian Independence, ‘and in particular of the Algerian sequence, as colonial aphasia’ (p. 128). This expression is

deployed to describe ‘a difficulty in generating a vocabulary that associates appropriate words and concepts to appropriate things’ (Brazzoduro, 2022, p. 2). Macron’s gesture of recognition is driven by the instinct of the “universal”, which functioned to obscure and deny specific Algerian suffering. Thus, he demonstrated a failure to adequately resolve the colonial past, inconsiderate to the recognition of Algerian victimhood in relation to their history of torture, violence and criminality. In the context of evading the moral guilt of 132 years of French imperial horror, Algerian memory in *Indigènes* is conveyed through de-contextualised narratives that could apply to any oppressed group. I argue that the film’s portrayal of Algerian indigenous victims is universalised, stripping away the specific historical and political elements that could unite their past with the present, the private and the public, the local and the universal.

2-Assimilation and the Duty of Memory: Franco-Algerian Subjectivity in the Cosmopolitan Frame:

This chapter is the intersectional framework between cosmopolitanism and counter-nationalism. The diasporic space will be mainly configured by theoretical intervention to position Algerian individualistic heroism as directed in Franco-centric ways of identification. Particularly, I condone the cosmopolitan discourse signifying Algerian passive victimhood and sacrifice *The Harkis: The Wounds that Never Heal* (2011) as the first ethnographic study of this marginalised category in English. Crapanzano relies on the testimonies of *Harkis* and their offspring to delve into the memories they construct in relation to their displaced experiences following their settlement in France. Building on his interviews with them, his approach takes into consideration not only historical, cultural, and social influences, but also internal and psychological factors shaping their cognitive understanding of their diasporic situation. As hybrid subjects caught between French exploitation and violence and the burden of joining

French auxiliary forces, they introduce a discourse of victimhood. Crapanzano reports that ‘they had become victims of a stigmatized identity they had no choice but to accept’ (2011, p. 177). He reflects on their passive reclamation of history as inherent in the very collective identification they hold of themselves as *H* which evokes ‘generalization and stereotype’, serving to enhance their victimhood (p. 177). The dilemma they were caught in is summed up as: ‘to cease being a victim, they had to be a victim’ (p. 166). In other words, by transcending and distancing themselves from the personal narratives that confront the past of shame, ‘the loss of dignity (*mahaba*) and honor (*ird*)’, as significant concepts in North African tradition, they embrace submissive narratives of loyalty (p. 73). These stories frame their allegiance to France as a manner to reclaim their honour and restore their dignity (p. 73). For the treatment of *Indigènes*, I argue that despite the complexities of individual narratives, the film’s validation of collective indigenous sacrifice is deeply entrenched in the memories of the *Harki* cause, reducing its diversity into a singular story of passive loyalties of Algerian counter-nationalism. I appropriate Crapanzano’s concept of the “duty of memory” to memories of forgiveness and thus inclusion as shaped by an Algerian counter-nationalist posture, intersecting in the film with the notion of “rootless cosmopolitanism”. I discuss the *Harki* demand for recognition, inclusion and equality as spelled out within a framework that promotes French uniformity and discourages deep engagement with and acknowledgement of the Other’s differences (Appiah, 2006). In fact, the film implies that ‘conversation across (nationalist) differences is exactly what is to be shunned’ (2006, p. 65). I highlight this cosmopolitan axis as engendering neo-assimilatory paradigms defining Algerian responsibilities towards the reconstruction of the French nation.

Crapanzano’s theory of the “duty of memory” has been built on by many critics. Clíona Hensey (2019) draws on Crapanzano’s discourse of victimhood to develop the concept of

"*Harki* story" and characterise the experiences of victimhood by post-*Harki* generations. Particularly, in displaying loyalty to French occupation, they advocate the duty of French authorities to own their gratitude for their victimhood. For Hensey, such framing 'reinforces stereotypes without targeting the colonial structures which oversaw and perpetuate systems of discrimination' (2019, p. 29). To that, Hensey proposes ulterior structures of voicing traumatic memories which challenge Vincent's "*Harki* story" such as those represented in Zahia Rahmani's *Moze* (2003) and Saliha Telali's *Les Enfants des Harkis: Entre Silence et Assimilation* (2009). These 'post-generational' female-authored *Harkis*' works present multidirectional and multi-vocal styles which are seen directly to challenge colonial structures of fixed and passive narratives. In adopting alternative narratives of freedom and female empowerment, the hybrid postures that they adopt work to subvert stigmas of shame in relation to bearing witness to the past (2019).

Hensey's contestation of "*Harki* story" echoes in her later book *Reconstructive Memory Work* (2023). Here, she explores a number of first- and second-generation female writers of *Harki* descent who challenge the inadequacies of memory framed through the passive discourses of justice and reparation. For this chapter, however, I draw on Hensey's "*Harki* story" to highlight the film's attempts to instigate passive narratives of male disempowerment and fragile agencies of Algerian nationalist belonging. Bouchareb's text will be discussed as neither challenging colonial binaries of identification, nor instilling a sense of pride about Algerian national roots. The cosmopolitan reception of Algerian veterans in this sense is inextricably associated with the exclusive treatment of *Harkis* who, while being guilty of their Algerian anti-patriotism, they appropriate it as a means to claim recognition for their victimhood. This passive discourse will reflect the assimilationist agendas that suppress

Algerian expression of national difference. It will be defined through the new cosmopolitan axis of identification that runs between the Algerian fierce demand for equality and the urge to relinquish Algerian roots. I highlight the shortcomings of this framing, which reduces veterans to figures who submissively serve under the mercy of the Republican state. While the discourse of their victimhood is recognised owing to the injustices they confront as colonised subjects, this narrative of suffering is ultimately employed to position them as tools for the reconstruction of the French nation. The veterans' sense of rooted agencies, masculinities, and empowerment is highlighted as weakened, positioning them as rootless cosmopolites.

The body of theory that I primarily aim to challenge concerns the recent readings of the film developed by Alex Hastie (2019) in his analysis of Bouchareb's features *Indigènes* and *Hors la Loi*. Hastie draws on Michael Rothberg's framework of multi-directional memory (2006, 2009) to engage with the ongoing discourse surrounding France's colonial past, particularly in relation to Algerian indigenous soldiers. His appropriation of cross-referential styles, blurring and confronting the memory of the Franco-Algerian war with that of the Franco-Nazi threat, aims to highlight the commonalities between people's struggle for liberty. He draws on the poetics of "proximate spaces" (Hastie, 2019) to position veterans as purportedly active colonial participants, whose memories interact, without one erasing the other (Hastie, 2019). Rothberg originally fashions the term multidirectionality to demonstrate the positive interactivity between distinct colonial and traumatic histories, including those of the suffering of the Jewish people during the Holocaust and the Algerian War. His theoretical and philosophical model proposes that these memories tracing colonial legacies of the past do not have to compete or conflict with one another. Rather, they could be productively

engaged and interwoven, generating a dialogue that ‘cut (s) across and bind (s) together diverse spatial, temporal, and cultural sites’ (2009, p. 11). By intertwining these histories, Rothberg suggests that narratives of resistance and sacrifice can be linked, emphasising a shared fight for freedom against oppressive forces. In the context of *Indigènes*, Hastie’s application of Rothberg’s multidirectional memory seeks to articulate the proactivity of *Harki* Indigenous veterans by examining how they are positioned within the broader framework of Franco-Algerian memory in the face of Nazi threat. He argues that the multi-directional style underpins a new memory of the Franco-Algerian war, one that fosters a ‘productive’ axis of co-existence between the conflicting legacies of colonialism and post-colonial identity (Hastie, 2019, p. 257). This axis, as Hastie puts it, is dynamic, oscillating between the demand for equality and the desire for a mutual sense of solidarity between the colonised and coloniser (2019). Hastie’s discussion of Bouchareb’s film appears useful in terms of demystifying the historical injustices to *Harkis* whose sacrifices were often underestimated by the French authorities. As such, the memory of Franco-Algerian suffering under fascism becomes a unifying factor, bringing French and *Beur* subjects to identify with a common enemy.

However, Hastie’s discussion of the politics of indigenous interaction in the film remains highly challenging and lacking in-depth analysis. Although it highlights diasporic spaces as sites of human proximities, it overlooks the more nuanced intersections between Algerian recognition and assimilation. Hastie’s anti-colonial rhetoric, which reflects the endeavor to subvert the colonial past and bring closer histories of violence, still cuts across Franco-centric power dynamics, where one identity continues to dominate the other. Hastie’s application of Rothberg’s multi-directional idea of ‘productive proximity’ is seen insufficient in addressing *Harki* narratives of recognition. The discourse promotes Algerian passive

loyalties that are complicit with French assimilationist agendas. Most importantly, I argue that the film reactivates the very colonial fight waged against the French civilising mission and its assimilatory ideologies aiming to displace Algerian difference.

As such, the cosmopolitan dynamics of the film do not only concern the twisting of official memory, yet also the affirmation of a right to difference in spaces of proximity (Appiah, 2006), which are questioned by lingering colonial legacies. As such, *Indigènes* within the passive framework of “*Harki* story”, which excludes the rectifiable dimension pertaining to *Beur* new representation in diasporic spaces. Particularly, as Clóna Hense notes, the memory eliminates the narrative’s ‘rhetorical and reparative potential’ so as to evade contemporary ‘community’s futile or even destructive anger’ (2019, p. 29). The film risks falling into a *Beur* “passive” representation that fails to engage with the potential for deeper social and political repair in relation to the complexity of contemporary *Beur* dilemma. In lacking confrontational and honest representation of memory within the broader lived experiences of the diaspora, the film fails to recognise the significance of the contemporary *Beur* generation’s continuum to connect to and assert their Algerian nationalist roots.

I draw on a rootless cosmopolitan lens to foreground *Indigènes* in relation to the tensions between nationalism, memory and assimilation. The film’s productive sites of Franco-Algerian interaction and attempt at what Rothberg refers to as ‘public experimentation with construction of a new public sphere’ (2006, p. 162) risks reinforcing ideas of uniformity and homogeneity. In a context where national heterogeneity is often viewed to contest French unity and internal harmony (Celik, 2011), the narrative’s emphasis on personal agency and dramatic heroism seeks to ‘reconstitute post-colonial futures’

(Hastie, 2019, p. 257). The earlier multidirectional understanding of the role of North African veterans, separate from conflicting colonial fabrication (Rothberg, 2009, 2006), I argue, becomes entangled in passive dynamics that keep the Algerian associations to “roots” at a distance. Specifically, these veterans do not fully engage with the interactive platform that ‘strengthens and renews our sense of rootedness by requiring us to define who we are, or what we strive to be, within an ever-broadening spectrum of contexts’ (Schoene, 2009, p. 13). Bouchareb’s attempt to construct a “new *Beur* man” within diasporic spaces, one that fosters national unity and equality, does not seek to reconcile distinct Algerian nationalist aspirations. Rather, it counteracts and thus fails to integrate historical memory (roots) with the responsibility one has for the preservation of the nation against the Nazi threat (wings). In so doing, it risks depoliticising the validity of the *Beur* cause underlying the tenacious Franco-Algerian status quo and represented by the contemporary *Beur* riots underlying the “*avec-nos-différences*” posture. Thus, I critique the new post-*Harki* memory as prioritising a rootless cosmopolitan narrative that leans towards assimilation. I consider Bouchareb’s film as incapable to ‘live in a harmony *without* disagreement on underlying values’ (Appiah, 2006, p. 78) (my emphasis). The next section will argue how the new memory reproduced by Bouchareb neglects the tension between private identities tied to Algerian nationalism, and public solidarities related to the responsibility to maintain French national safety.

3-*Indigènes* (2006):

The film’s exposition serves as an indirect prelude to a “*Harki* story”, establishing the film’s cosmopolitan nature and offering an alternative to the official memory that stretches to the contemporary diaspora. It sets the stage for a fresh perspective on Franco-Algerian connection and unity in the colonial era via sowing the seeds of France’s colonial project.

Indigènes opens with a historical black-and-white montage, which evokes an impression of nostalgic and harmonious memories of Algeria under French administrative ruling. This is reinforced by the non-diegetic song of *El Bahia* by Algerian Cheb Khalid, an ode to the beauty of Algerian people and land (*Indigènes*, 2006, 00:00:50). The camera alternates between wide and extreme long shots emphasising the tranquility and stillness of the Algerian landscape, being calm and undisturbed in the omnipresent authority of the French officers alongside Algerian *Harkis*. This is illustrated through various wide shots: Algerian subjects celebrating; a French officer and an Algerian *Gayed* (a title for an Algerian officer appointed by the French) riding together on horseback while overseeing commercial activities; Algerians engaged in their daily routines; peasants working the land; a young Algerian girl dressed in traditional attire and jewelry, dancing at a wedding; and a peaceful stroll through a bustling market by a group of *Harkis*, *pieds-noirs*, and French settlers. The attention Bouchareb devotes to pre-Independence archives of Franco-*Harki* unity, as the only ‘historical information’ (Bouchareb, 2006, *CineEuropa*), mainly juxtaposes the narrative of fierce confrontations between nationalists and French colonial forces. In rekindling a cross-referencing memory in which ‘more memories are produced from interaction’ (Rothberg, 2018), Bouchareb depicts a so-called “peace” and “progress” in Algeria as being primarily attributed to the memory of the *Harkis* or *Al-giyed*. The film’s opening footage, therefore, establishes the film’s identity politics as centred on the counter-nationalism of *Harkis*, whose presence is crucial in creating a peaceful mood and subverting French colonial agendas.

Indeed, the images evoking Franco-*Harki* cooperation are embedded in the role played by the *Giyed* in counteracting the open display of nationalist roots. Historically, according to Bilal Boukhadra (2017), this group was instrumental in revealing the plans of Algerian

nationalists' resistance. As a result, they were rewarded with ranks within the French army, positions in the homeland administration, land, financial compensation, and French protection (2017). The cosmopolitanism here does not exactly endorse "stories of connection" (Schoene, 2009, p. 176) where cultural fusion is celebrated, yet rather a backdrop for the struggle for acceptance and survival within the French imperial system. Particularly, the representation of Franco-Algerian stability on the Algerian soil is shaped and sustained by a rootless posture symbolised by *Harkis*. Bouchareb's inclusion of these archives thus alludes to a cosmopolitan axis that runs between uprooted Algerian nationalism and diasporic egalitarianism. It results in forms of passive loyalties whereby Algerian/*Beur* conformity to French homogeneity, or rather submissiveness to it, is a requirement for diasporic harmony. The opening sequence, thus, establishes the nature of the background and cosmopolitanism of the film, where sympathetic connectivity is modelled by the passive "*Harki* stories".

The film's *mise-en-scène* depicts heroic sacrifices through a Franco-centric lens, undermining the Algerian pro-Independence perspective. Following the black-and-white footage, the camera transitions to more vivid and colorful vignettes of Western Algeria in 1943. A medium shot depicts an Algerian *G* who, under French governmental orders, summons the local villagers to join the military fight against Nazi Germany. Speaking in Algerian dialect, he urgently proclaims, 'We must save France from the German occupation! Come and follow me! We must wash the French flag with our blood!' (*Indigènes*, 2006, 00:02:38). Enthusiastically responding to his appeal, a significant number of non-nationalist *Harkis* demonstrate a voluntary willingness to serve, despite their personal motives. Among them are Said, Messaoud, Yassir, and Larbi. The multidirectionality of the scene, which for

Hastie, swings between sacrifice and liberty (2019), is deeply rooted in the support for the French cause, framing Algerian initiative of joining the French army through a French-sided narrative. The cross-border dynamics at play convey cosmopolitan adventures that hinge on the repudiation of nationalist roots, entirely negating the cause of Algerian independence which is supported by state-mandated enlistment. In line with Crapanzano's concept of 'a shoddy escape from memory' (2011, p. 196), the scene explores how the Algerian nationalist experience is dismissed, buried, and rewritten in both French and Algerian national memories. Crapanzano's idea refers to the process by which *harkis* attempt to escape from painful or inconvenient colonial histories by reshaping or erasing them. The validation of their *Harki* loyalties is hence highlighted as a coping mechanism for dealing with the trauma or guilt associated with their involvement. Appiah's cosmopolitan notion of 'obligations [...] incurred' (Appiah, 2006, p. 74) reflects the four veterans' sense of duty, despite their unique experiences. Their pursuit of a better life, justice, and love is driven by their common devotion to the French cause, at the expense of the Algerian one.

At every turn, the film captures trans-colonial moments in which Algerian veterans attempt to reach out to the French Other. These overlap with the tragic irony of their loyalty to the French cause characterised by their vehement recognition of French nationalism, despite the exclusion, discrimination, and second-class status imposed upon them by French officials. This tension is captured poignantly through the cinematographic techniques Bouchareb employs, particularly the high-angle shots that emphasise the submission of the Algerian veterans in the face of French authority. The camera shows indigenous veterans thrust into a raid, maliciously embedded at the front lines as cannon fodder. From a distance, the French officials, who stand as detached observers, watch indifferently as the Algerians

are relentlessly slaughtered by the Germans. They are framed as indifferent to the fate of Algerian soldiers who are substituted for French veterans, preserving costly artillery at the expense of their lives. The scene culminates with the veteran heroes rising above the dust and devastation, hoisting the French flag high into the sky while shouting '*Vive la France!*' in a moment of hollow victory (*Indigènes*, 2006, 00:04:21). The displacement of the Algerian flag, through the high angle shot of the exalted, more superior French flag, however, becomes central in providing a resolution to the narrative of segregation, and bridging the gap between French and Algerian soldiers. As such, the attempt to undermine of the postcolonial discourse, as seen in the soldiers' 'confrontations with the varieties of French racism' (Scott, 2006, p. 1), is articulated through a narrative of submission where 'the static, passive re-enactment of a past that has not been effectively introjected' (Hensie, 2019, p. 31). Like the French flag, Algerian struggle for to justice is implied through rising above Algerian particularistic agencies.

The film generates sites of Algerian victimhood to engage with French inhumane collective governmental legislation against humanity. Immediately following the first raid in 1944, an informing shot shows a French soldier inquiring about the number of indigenous casualties to be included in official French records. In response, the French colonel, hastening his military van, ignores the question and appears inconsiderate when articulating the soldiers' efforts that they put in for the sake of liberty. In a wide shot, he proclaims '*c'est une magnifique victoire! Et c'est pour la première fois depuis 1940 [...] La France a retrouvé sa place et la confiance des allies [...] écrivez ça!*' (This is a glorious victory, and for the first time since 1940 [...] France has regained its status and the confidence of the allies... write this!) (*Indigènes*, 2006, 00:24:08). The French colonial disregard for the sacrifices of the Maghrebi

soldiers, however, is reinforced by non-diegetic somber music and a high angle shot that zooms in on the face of Said. The shot then widens to reveal the weary North-African survivors trudging heavily with their heads bowed. This is contrasted by the smiling, rejuvenated French colonel, whose head tilts high as he drives past, leaving behind exhausted nationalist Said staring in dismay. The colonel's proud posture not only portrays a narrative of Algerian exclusion but also serves as a visual metaphor for how France's nationalist identity "overcomes" that of Algerians symbolised by Said (00:25:19). As such, the film's engagement with colonial memory embodies a form of resistance that, to quote Schoene, aims to 'ward off rather than embrace or integrate the world, inimical to rather than generative of' (2009, p. 44) rooted forms of connections capable of nurturing and empowering Algerian nationalist identities. In this context, the characters' sacrifice and thus demand for French recognition symbolically aligns with the silent, almost subdued nationalism of Algerian pride.

The film's portrayal of cosmopolitan aspirations which triumph over French ethnic segregation and marginalisation stands at odds with Algerian nationalistic allegiances. It disconnects the hopes for Algerian inclusion within French narrative of sacrifice from a deeper, specific connection to the Algerian motherland. This tension is exemplified through Messaoud's efforts to reach out to Erine, his Franco-French girlfriend from Marseille, whose dedication to their love is contingent upon his victory and settlement in France (*Indigènes*, 2006). To his dismay, Messaoud encounters opposition from the French authorities, who repeatedly censor the letters exchanged between him and his beloved. Filled with excitement, he confides in Corporal Abdelkader, saying: '*Je veux marier avec elle, et avoir des enfants avec elle [...] ici c'est le paradis [...] corporel [...] ici ils me respectent*' (I want to marry her and have children with her [...] here it is a paradise [...] corporal [...] here they respect me)

(00:43:40). In response, Abdelkader affirms that he will always remain the son of the coloniser (2006). Michael O’Riley suggests that French administrative antagonism towards the relationship between Erine and Messaoud reflects ‘the impossibility of the couple’s multicultural union’ (2007, p. 281). However, Messaoud’s attempt at resisting the disintegration of their relationship, fulfilling transborder romantic union and diasporic settlement aligns with his “censoring” of his attachment to the Algerian soil, prioritising instead his connection to France. By passively engaging with their roots, Messaoud and Abdelkader reinforce a narrative of *Harkis*, who, in identifying solely as sons and daughters of France, convey, to use Appiah’s framing, ‘no strong sense of national or local identity’ (2006, p. 12).

The film’s remapping of colonial memories and convivial proximities between French and Algerian subjects is approached within a one-sided framework of equality: *à la Française*. This discourse reflects umbrella values of French Republicanism under which Franco-Algerian collective fight is embraced. Bouchareb depicts Algerian veterans’ being placed as lowest in the French racial hierarchy, being denied privileges of food, promotion, and vacation, which are reserved for white French soldiers. Infuriated by the rotten tomatoes served to Algerian soldiers, Abdelkader fearlessly spoils them and demands the same proper food offered to white French veterans. Abdelkader, who in condemning French injustices, refers to French republicanism as a model through which equality with their Franco-French brothers should be sought. He testifies that:

‘Pendant la guerre on ne gagnerait pas les mêmes droits que nos frères d’armes Français. On se bat tous ensemble contre Hitler, pour la liberté, l’égalité et la fraternité. Mais c’est le temps maintenant de nous donner cette liberté, cette égalité, surtout cette fraternité’

(During the war we did not enjoy the same rights as our French fighting brothers. We all fight together against Hitler, for freedom, equality and fraternity. But now is the time to give us this freedom, this equality, above all this fraternity) (*Indigènes*, 2006, 01:07:57).

In an interview with Ange-Dominique Bouzet, Bouchareb describes the sequence involving the tomatoes as ‘a truly lived anecdote’ (Bouchareb, 2006). However, Abdelkader’s anti-racial discourse, calling on French authorities to turn to Algerian suffering, is framed through the ideals of Republicanism, “equality and fraternity”. This is later reinforced in the military vigil scene, where Corporal Abdelkader interrogates Said about his origin. In a close-up shot capturing his trusting yet vacant expression, Said replies that he comes from the depths of dark misery (*Indigènes*, 2006, 00:12:33). Smiling in reassurance and in an extreme close-up shot, he returns ‘you see! With this uniform you resemble me, you resemble all of us. We are one family. the army. It is equality’ (00:12:45). This sequence mirrors the debates on France’s “immigration crisis” and integration policies discussed by Fargues et al. (2023), which link national values to citizenship, often through assimilation and acculturation. Particularly, the new employment of ‘Republican values’ is handled through the advocacy of egalitarianism based on the so-called French common or ‘uniform’ values (2023, p. 2). *Indigènes* operates on a similar approach appealing to uniform discourses of belonging and homogeneity. If origin is blurred by the nationalist Said, it is displaced by Abdelkader, who is keen to promote the Republican idea that uniformity breeds equality. As a high-ranking Corporal seeking “prefectural” promotion to a *Sargeant*, *Harki* Abdelkader speaks to the strategical attempts of the French state to ‘homogenise prefectural practices’ (Fargues et al, 2023, p. 5) as a means for integration. Under the military uniform, soldiers are seen as equals,

not just through shared duty and the fear of death, but through adherence to French Republicanism.

A similar perspective applies to the Maghrebi veterans' struggle to eliminate French injustices, which often go unnoticed by their white French counterparts. However, their resistance to feelings of inferiority comes at a significant cost: their loyalty to Algeria is persistently undermined. Moments of reassurance in the film are tied to a form of shared suffering that ultimately connects the veterans to French national unity. This is illustrated by a scene in which the Maghrebi infantrymen sing in unison: '*Avec ses pommes de terre et ses haricots pourris, La France est notre mère, C'est bien qu'elle nous nourrisse*' (With its rotten potatoes and kidney beans, France is our mother, we are grateful that it is feeding us) (*Indigènes*, 2006, 01:07:26). The lyrics of the song reflect the Algerian veterans' position at the bottom of the racial hierarchy, while simultaneously portraying them as passive loyalists who perceive their attachment and sense of belonging to colonial France as unavoidable. It underscores a victimised narrative surrounding the *Harkis*, which, as Hensey explains, mirrors 'competitive discourses framed by references to fidelity to the French nation and the notion that the *Harkis* deserve recognition for their victimhood' (2019, p. 29). The pro-assimilatory view held by the *Harkis*, is focused on a submissive, unquestioning loyalty to the mother country, sought in an attempt to address the degrading and painful suffering it inflicts upon them.

The discourse of submission is further affirmed by a scene set in Vosges, 1944, where Abdelkader discovers a German propaganda leaflet in Arabic titled 'Muslim Soldiers' (*Indigènes*, 2006). A medium shot captures him and Sergeant Martinez facing one another,

with Said standing between them. As Abdelkader reads the leaflet, he is met with the stern gaze of Martinez and the fearful expression of Said:

*'Soldat Musulman, tu n'est pas née pour être esclave. L'Allemagne te donnera ta liberté.
L'heure de l'indépendance à sonner pour l'Afrique'*

(Muslim soldier, you were not born to be slaves. Germany will grant you your liberty.
The hour for independence is ringing for Africa) (00:57:22)

The German propaganda highlights the tensions between veterans' loyalty to France and their roots in Algerian Muslim nationalism. Notably, the pro-independence narrative in the film prominently and emphatically introduces the concept of Algerian "roots" through the figure of "Muslim Soldier" for the first time. However, this identity is associated with the enemy, Germany, which ideologically places Algerian nationalism in direct opposition to the veterans' duty to France. Abdelkader's position is assimilationist, pro-French and counter-nationalist, akin to that of Martinez. Abdelkader declares, *'De Gaulle a dit qu'on se battait pour le culte de la liberté. Moi, je me bats aux cultes de la France contre le Nazisme'* (De Gaulle has said that we are fighting on the side of liberty. Me, I am fighting on the side of France against Nazism) (00:58:11). Framed in multiple close-ups, reticent and silent Said is caught in a state of confusion, unable to articulate his mid-way position. After the two men depart, however, Said conceals the leaflet in his military boots, reinforcing the suppression of his nationalist temptation (00:59:45). Indeed, the film's cosmopolitan endeavour at mutual responsibility and duty works to dismiss, conceal and repress 'the recognition that human beings are different' (p. 14). To demonstrate fidelity, allegiance and patriotism to France is to distance oneself from their Algerian, Muslim, and nationalist roots, even antagonising them by associating them with the enemy. The fact that Abdelkader's "passive loyalty" provides

relief to Martinez, fulfills what Fargues et al. describe as the 'cultural requirements for membership in the national community' (2023, p. 13). This narrative of inclusion underscores the expectation of 'behaving' as the 'good citizen' (Fargues et al, 2023, p. 14) within the colonial framework.

Unlike Abdelkader and Messaoud, Said is portrayed in the film as the only veteran who, in a highly reserved and fearful manner, harbours a desire to reconcile his Islamic Algerian roots *with* French identity. In *Le Gone du Chaâba*, Azouz's strong and proud roots prevent him from crossing the *banlieue* and entering the public sphere, whereas in *Indigènes*, Said's rootedness is depicted as weak, hesitant, and ineffective in spaces where Franco-Algerian identities intersect. This is symbolised by his low-status position among the four indigenous veterans, making it nearly impossible for him to assert himself. Particularly, he is framed in the film as illiterate, untrained, and lacking the courage or authority to command; as somebody who has 'never given orders in his life' (*Indigènes*, 2006, 00:40:34). This reinforces the idea that nationalist ties to Algeria do not empower him in the French military hierarchy. Said's disillusionment with the French land further exemplifies this tension. In a medium shot set in 1944 Provence, he expresses his dismay at the taste of the olive tree leaves and the smell of the French soil, which does not bear resemblance to the Algerian land. However, his connection to the homeland is disrupted by Messaoud who, in a disparaging tone, asserts that the French soil is better (*Indigènes*, 2006, 00:32:20). This interaction highlights the deep rift between Said's rootedness in Algeria and the assimilatory dynamics he is expected to adopt as a colonised in France. The fact that Messaoud, a more integrated and "powerful" soldier, dismisses Said's sentiments speaks to a broader colonial dynamic of assimilation. It reinforces the fact that the film 'seek(s) to impose a vision of (loyalty)' (Appiah, 2006, p. 23) rooted in French identity. While Said's identity remains firmly attached to Algeria,

Messaoud has embraced the French colonial project to some extent. Despite having similar ranks in the army, Messaoud asserts his authority over him, ordering him to 'shut up' now and then (2006). This power imbalance highlights the tension between Algerian nationalism (represented by Said) and the *Harki* identity (embodied by Messaoud), where Said's refusal to assimilate fully into the French colonial order renders him "weak". Said's character, therefore, becomes a symbol of the failure to reconcile the dual identities of Algerian Muslim roots and French allegiance.

The film juxtaposes empowered masculinities that align with assimilatory models of French nationalism with the disempowered paradigms of Algerian "war heroism," which are subtly linked to effeminacy. Said's character embodies this disempowered masculinity, which is contrasted with Messaoud's more powerful and confident charisma. Said's masculinity is depicted as fragile, intimately associated with Algerian perceptions of emasculation and homosexuality, even though he does not willingly engage in such practices (*Indigènes*, 2006, 00:36:22). The nickname, '*Awisha*', given to him by the other veterans, is particularly telling as it denotes a eunuch or castrated male in the Algerian dialect, highlighting the perception of Said as 'unmanly'. This emasculation is further reinforced upon his 1944 return to the French Province when he tries to present his story of heroism to an Alsatian French woman, only to be met with indifference and rejection. In a high angle shot, he rounds off his grandiose statement: '*Je libère un pays, C'est mon pays, même si je l'ai jamais vus a l'avant... c'est mon pays*' (I am liberating a country, it is my own country, even if I have never seen it before... it is my country) (*Indigènes*, 2006, 00:34:24). His heroic speech symbolically illustrates his desire to integrate his Algerian nationalist subjectivities within the French framework, but it rings hollow. This is undermined by his role as Martinez's servant and his

subsequent failure to approach an Alsatian woman who turns him down as he attempts to kiss her good-bye. The viewer can infer that Said is not manly or sexually desirable enough to earn her admiration, following their previous night's romantic encounter. Thereby, he is portrayed as impotent in both his masculine and Algerian nationalist identities.

The politics of sexuality surrounding Said contrasts sharply with those of Messaoud, whose masculinity is portrayed as confident, sexually assertive, yet also tied to French assimilation. O'Riley reflects on Messaoud as being captivated by 'as much by his physical prowess as by his exploits in previous battles' (2007, p. 281). Notably, While Messaoud's romantic encounter with Erine takes place in a modern French hotel room, Said's occurs in a dark, bleak animal barn (*Indigènes*, 2006, 00:53:22). Most importantly, his empowered, erotic masculinity is framed as aligned with French nationalism. This is displayed through the medium close-up when Erine, content, gazes out of their bedroom window, eagerly awaiting his return to France (00:46:11). Messaoud's sexual prowess and French loyalties are intertwined, positioning him as the embodiment of the colonial soldier who has successfully integrated into the French secularist model.

The film represents a blurred identification of the figure of the *Pied-noir* marked by a reluctance to confront and acknowledge a shared past with Algerians. This portrayal unfolds through sympathetically human exchanges that prompt a subversion of colonial hierarchies within the French army. The scene following a battle at *Vogesen* *Notonly* records Algerian casualties, mainly attributed to flouting Martinez's instructions. Lamenting the body of an Algerian soldier, Martinez shouts '*Le patron est ici, Je t'ai demander de vous regrouper... C'est moi qui donne les orders, le patron ici c'est moi*' (The boss is here, I ordered you to regroup...

I am the one who gives orders, the boss here is me) (*Indigènes*, 2006, 00:51:17). As much as he is keen to incorporate human suffering displayed through his dark expression once realising that '*on a perdu un humain*' (we have lost a human being) (00:51:25), Martinez's identification with the suffering of the Algerians is conditional, marked by his desire to maintain a distance from a heritage that unites them. *Pied-noir* reluctance to acknowledge shared historical trajectories is further demonstrated in his defence of Corporal Abdelkader, who is condemned by the French colonel as being 'Algerian' and 'Muslim'. Martinez claims instead that: '*tous mes hommes sont patriotes*' (all my men are (French) patriots) (*Indigènes*, 2006, 01:11:40). In redefining indigenous soldiers as 'men', Martinez obscures Algerian indigenous origins. He therefore subscribes to the French discourse of the "human", where Algerian indigenous troops are secured the same rights as their French counterparts.

Bouchareb's film illustrates a rejection of the typical Algerian-*Pied-noir* deeper connection to his Algerian roots. In a close-up of his first encounter with Abdelkader, Martinez prevents the latter from getting too close to him, citing his desire 'to save his skin for the fight' (*Indigènes*, 2006, 00:34:22). Martinez's symbolic rejection of his *Pied-noir* skin reflected by his defensive posture towards confronting the past echoes Kahina's mutual disavowal of her "skin" in *Il était une fois dans l'Oued*, symbolising her uprootedness in the *banlieue* and detachment from the Algerian past. Martinez's attitude towards the Franco-Algerian shared past is unapproachable. This is further supported by Said's cheerful response when he happens to learn of Martinez's long-kept darkest secret, that he had a photograph of his mother from North Africa in his pocket. However, Martinez erupts violently towards Said, forcibly ejecting him from his cabin and dismissing him from his quarters (01:03:58). Martinez's need to keep the photograph hidden from sight emphasises his internal struggle, as O'Riley suggests, 'a multi-cultural connection, mediated by both reason (the head) and

emotion (the heart)' which is 'ultimately impossible' (2007, p. 282). Most importantly, this rootless narrative eliminates the possibility of a hybrid Algerian-*Pied-noir* unity, which contrasts with *Le Gone du Chaâba*, and particularly M. Loubon's identification with Azouz through their shared past.

The denouement of *Indigènes* illustrates the trans-religious and trans-national affiliations of the Algerian soldiers, aligned with Christian notions of sacrifice and reconciliation. This is particularly shown in a scene in which Said and Sergeant Martinez face death together inside an Alsatian house, where Martinez is left alone and severely injured in bed with a band wrapped up around his head. Struggling to get him out of bed, Said's visual scene of holding Martinez in his arms forms a cross-like silhouette. As they attempt to escape German bombardment, they evoke a powerful imagery that aligns with Christian iconography. Failing to escape in time, the German soldier aiming at the room shoots them both dead (*Indigènes*, 2006, 01:47:22). Later, Corporal Abdelkader stares at both men lying side by side, imbued with sorrow and agony that his timing had not been good enough to rescue them. Indeed, what is essential to this scene is the special manner of death that comes to resemble the Christian narrative of the death of Jesus. Said's sacrifice for Martinez mirrors the narrative of Christ's crucifixion, and the death of both men resonates deeply with the Christian idea of sacrifice and suffering. It also re-contextualises the possibility of a shared Algerian-*Pied-noir* symbolic "skin" and reconciliation in alignment with the French Christian model. Indeed, the scene echoes the introductory black-and-white footage in which the memory of co-existent Algerian *Giyed*, French and *Pied-noirs* is re-visited under the scope of displaced loyalties. Besides, the death of Said's symbolically alludes to the impotent articulation of roots now buried in the past altogether. The cosmopolitan dialogue of unity in

this sense becomes less about mutual recognition and more about the imposition of one identity over another.

Beur inclusion and survival is framed within French nationalist and assimilatory narratives. A tracking shot following corporal Abdelkader in the wintry streets of Alsace, as he deliberately moves away from a French cameraman, highlights a division between French official memory and the suffering of Algerian troops. Taking pictures of surviving Alsatian civilians, the cameraman calls '*soldats Francais libirait l'Alsace... souriez!*' (French soldiers liberated Alsace... smile!) (*Indigènes*, 2006, 01:48:17). Estranged from the cameramen, Abdelkader conveys the impression of a far-away hope and struggle for admitting Algerian indigenous merits (O'Riley, 2007). Indeed, this scene highlighting French disregard for indigenous veterans' effort is seen as 'perhaps the strongest card', legitimising their discourse of historical marginalisation in French official memory (Cooper, 2007, p. 99). However, as the only *Harki* survivor, he becomes a symbol of the passive formula for diasporic public survival conditioned by *Beur* adherence to Republicanism and thus *Harki*-led. Abdelkader's symbolic durability represents the endurance of *Republican* values as "alive" within the contemporary diaspora. This is contrasted by Said's death, symbolising the disintegration of the broader Algerian struggle for independence. Thus, the new historical memory is resolved through passive loyalties, and the urge to give up the fight for nationalist difference. The role of the French media, as highlighted in the scene, is central to this process of re-framing Algerian and *Beur* identities. It transforms the image of the Algerian soldier from one of rebellion to one of inclusion and submission to the French assimilatory agendas of identifications. Hence, the bitter post-war disillusionment attributed to the French authorities' systematic racism and unfulfilled promises is revisited through the lens of the "*Harki* story".

The film intentionally disconnects the traumatic narrative of the post-World-War-Two Algeria from Abdelkader's personal fate. Simultaneously, however, it emphasises a shift from the violent colonial realities of the past to a narrative of assimilation in the diasporic French context. The narrative leaps forward 60 years to communicate to the viewer the fate of aging ex-corporal Abdelkader, on his way to visit his deceased war veteran fellows in the Christian/Muslim Alsatian military graveyards (*Indigènes*, 2006, 01:48:58). After his visit, a shallow-focused shot portrays him peacefully walking in the streets of France, as a well-integrated, invisible subject amongst other pedestrians. He finally reaches his simple house in an *HLM*. Following the conclusion of Abdelkader's story, a screen displays information about the non-payment of indigenous pensions. In this respect, Bouchareb chose 'to end the film just before' the bloody Sétif and Guelma massacres, encouraging a kind of 'going forward with its past' (Bouchareb, 2007, *Socialist Worker Online*). Hargreaves comments on his decision that 'Bouchareb's insistence on including that final scene lost him several potential sponsors' (2007, p. 208). The film continues to exclude Algerian particularist experiences, thus speaks to the criteria of Algerian settlement in the diaspora as reflecting a set of passively 'pervasive societal [...] silences' (Hensey, 2019, p. 28). The symbolic invisibility of Abdelkader in the French mob, walking peacefully among pedestrians highlights *Harki* assimilationism, which equally evokes the introductory black-and-white scenes. The film rejects the possibility of Algerian homecoming for nationalists and substitutes it with the framework of the "*Harki* story", which chooses to support uniform and peaceful diasporic settlements.

Conclusion:

This chapter dealt with Bouchareb's *Indigènes* as a film characterised by a transitional, cross-border cosmopolitan conception of belonging, aligning with counter-nationalist, rootless trajectories. While many filmic productions addressing French torture during the colonial period were swiftly withdrawn from cinema, Bouchareb's more commercially successful *Indigènes* avoids confronting some of the darkest chapters of colonial history (Stora, 2007). The film's success in France can largely be attributed to its fresh portrayal of *Beur* subjectivities, which do not necessarily promote 'the process of working out the next step for living together in times when the perplexity of difference is almost overwhelming' (Schoene, 2009, p. 183). *Indigènes* deliberately distances itself from the historically situated hostile and strained relations, avoiding the development of sympathetic forms of heterogeneous connection in public spaces. It avoids exploring the intersection between "wings" and "roots", universalism and difference, as well as the present and the past. In this respect, Bouchareb, through the characters of the *Harkis*, constructs an assimilatory representation of diaspora situated within structures of socio-political justice. Ethnic, religious, and particularly nationalistic identities are entirely excluded from the French republican framework, and these legacies are overcome in much the same way as the traumatic memories of colonialism. The representation of post-*Beur* memories of indigenous soldiers subtly addresses the evolving subjectivities of the contemporary *Beur* generation, which is involved in various forms of social unrest. While Begag's diasporic vision negotiates an assimilable conception of "roots" beyond the *banlieue*, Bouchareb, although not entirely dismissing it, downplays the potential for 'a community amongst communities' (Appiah, 2006, p. xiv). In doing so, Bouchareb emphasises passive *Harki* loyalties, reinforcing an impotent vision of diasporic inclusion for the contemporary *Beur* experience.

Bouchareb's approach seeks to subvert the tension within the French diaspora, where the notions of imperial and post-imperial, as well as private and public lines, are yet to be "cured" in multidirectional terms. The concept of the universal, in this context, becomes a setback to the private agencies and is often perceived as 'another shapeshifter, which so often designates the disease it purports to cure' (Appiah, 2006, p. xi). Bouchareb's endeavour at tackling the contemporary *Beur* identity dilemma and struggle for recognition is done by introducing another form of "disease", one that reactivates the very assimilationist polarities they attempt to undermine. Indeed, the film's critique of the failures of the discriminatory French regime redirects *Beur* subjectivities, aligning them with the mainstream Republican imagination. Thus, it presents both French and Algerian sufferers as part of a universal narrative predicated upon the elimination of their roots. Similar to Bensalah's comedic subversion of "specificities" without revisiting roots, Bouchareb's format encourages the viewer to engage with deep, human emotional experiences, but in a way that denies a connection to rooted identities. The film not only eliminates the possibility of engaging with *Beur* particularistic spaces of belonging, but it also displaces their rootedness. The transpatial motif of suffering fails to emphasise an active agency that supports rooted forms of identification, belonging, and remembrance. Furthermore, it does not fulfill a fully realised cosmopolitanism that successfully negotiates between roots and wings.

The next chapter compares the cosmopolitan register in Rachid Djaïdani's *La Haine* (1999), *Boumkoeur* (1996) and *Tour de France* (2016) to assess his project of *Beur* diasporic integration. Like the war genre, I will examine Franco-*Beur* diasporic proximities as they shift from violent and aggressive to empathetic encounters. This analysis will equally consider how this discourse is equally impacted by the presence of assimilationist dynamics, which might

reflect the period's complex social and political climate. The latter will be discussed as fraught with tensions around diasporic inclusion, potentially leading to the displacement of cultural and religious heritage. In *Tour de France*, I will investigate whether universalism aligns with the French principle of *Laïcité*, or secularism, which contrasts with Begag's model of "*Beur* integration without roots". I analyse how the texts seek to create a new, de-stereotyped, and homogeneous French identity, bypassing the cultural and religious values of Algerian heritage for a younger, diasporic generation of *Beur*. In Djaïdani's works, I explore a form of 'rootless cosmopolitanism' that mitigates the significance of the *Banlieue* and its tropes of difference. The following discussion thus considers the binary of ethnic inferiority and superiority that has historically plagued the *Beur* cinematic and fictional representation, identified by the inclusive yet culturally homogeneous vision of belonging.

CHAPTER FOUR

VOYAGE FROM THE SUBURBS TO THE CENTRE: COSMOPOLITANISM IN MATHIEU KASSOVITZ'S *LA HAINE*, AND RACHID DJAÏDANI'S *BOUMKOEUR* AND *TOUR DE FRANCE*

Introduction:

In the previous chapter, I have examined the intersection of cosmopolitanism and the evolving memory of Algerian veterans, or *Harkis*, as portrayed in Rachid Bouchareb's war epic *Indigènes* (2006). This chapter introduces a new cosmopolitan analysis of three texts, in which I explore and compare the representations of *Beur* identities in Rachid Djaïdani's *Boumkoeur* (1999), Mathieu Kassovitz's *La Haine* (1995), and Djaïdani's *Tour de France* (2016). While *La Haine* has received extensive critical attention as a key example of the new *Cinéma de Banlieue*, focusing on the portrayal of the *banlieue* as a peripheral, multi-ethnic space marked by stigmatisation, my analysis offers a novel perspective by comparing this work with Djaïdani's lesser-known but realist novel *Boumkoeur* and the road-movie *Tour de France*. These texts allow for an exploration of new spatial and cosmopolitan *Beur* subjectivities as they transition from the *banlieue* to the French centre. Though I find that *Tour de France* is the least celebrated, I argue that the road-movie pushes for more progressive cosmopolitan dynamics based on the complete erasure of the *banlieue* and the removal of traditionally binary postcolonial conflicts, presented by the more celebrated *Boumkoeur* and *La Haine*. Simultaneously, however, *Tour de France* engages with the French centre in a way that foregrounds a complex narrative of Franco-*Beur* interactions. This narrative is shaped by

marked by a paradoxical process of integration—one that resolves the condition of marginality by reinforcing the sense of uprootedness experienced by the *Beur* subject. The chapter extends the cosmopolitan reading of *Beur* scholarship by analysing works either produced or co-produced (as in the case of *La Haine*) by Rachid Djaïdani. These works follow critical cosmopolitan models, with the cosmopolitanism from below in *La Haine*, and the internal voyaging in *Boumkoeur*. In *Tour de France*, I critique a progressive model of cosmopolitanism as arguably characterised by a homogeneous, difference-blind representation of *Beur* identities ‘on the road’ as well as accepted in the French centre. My study thus contributes to *Beur* scholarship by offering an analysis that positions these texts on the complementary spectrum of French universality. This concept will be discussed in terms of perpetuating a cosmopolitan sequence that oscillates between the “wings” of cosmopolitanism, which centered on the impact of borders and their colonial legacies that foster hostility between *Beur* and French subjects, and the “roots” that signal *Beur*’s deep-layered connections to Algerian religious and cultural heritage. In contrast to the singular framework applied to existing works that focus on Franco-Algerian hostility within the *banlieue*, this dual pattern countersigns a cosmopolitan ideology defined by French assimilationist agendas. By integrating these critical cosmopolitan ideas into Djaïdani’s earlier and more recent works, I examine the attempt to move beyond the postcolonial frameworks traditionally associated with the *banlieues*. This exploration involves both cognitive and physical crossings of the colonial trajectories that continue to influence the Franco-Algerian relationship and its historical context. I argue that Djaïdani’s texts offer new representations that are transformative, conveying more inclusive, hospitable, and open spatial dynamics for the *Beur*, yet tainted by French secularist and Christian models of integration.

For earlier works, the *banlieue*, detached from the centre, will be perceived as an antagonistic space, characterised by rampant French violence and oppression, where minorities of African descent are unwelcome. I extend these observations to focus on alternatively internal, multi-ethnic strategies of resistance that mark the *banlieue* as a diverse space, one that is not restricted by the traditional colonial dynamics of identity it has inherited. Simultaneously, I will highlight how the *banlieue* functions as a cultural space that blurs the traditional *Beur* “roots” associated with Algerian heritage and markers of difference. This discussion also deviates from the traditional model of the *Chaâba*, which has been portrayed as a niche community, nurturing Algerian cultural and religious heritage in works like *Le Gone du Chaâba*. In Djaïdani’s latest work, the portrayal of *Beur* subjectivities in connection with the French central village and ports in *Tour de France* establishes an intriguing dialogue on the shift in cosmopolitan frameworks and *Beur* attitude towards their Algerian heritage. This shift is intricately tied to the exploration of the trope of exterior journeying, emphasising the *Beur* movement from peripheral sites, emblematic of degradation and cultural isolation, towards more expansive and homogeneous realms. While this analysis of new proximities addresses the absence of traditional dynamics of violent confrontation or oppression, which are often present in the depiction of the *banlieue*, it also considers the complexities of *Beur* uprootedness and dislocated heritage. Through these narratives, I aim to illustrate the universality of *Beur* characters, presenting them as deeply woven into the French societal fabric and transcending the spectre of stereotyping. This dynamic, however, often involves the implicit demand to assimilate into mainstream French cultural, national, and religious doctrine, potentially necessitating the abandonment of the very cultural differences that define the *Beur* identity as unique. To frame these discussions,

I draw on theoretical concepts from Katharyne Mitchell's and Fuyuki Kurasawa's "cosmopolitanism from below" (2004, 2006), Mica Nava's notions on visceral and domestic cosmopolitanism (2006, 2008), and Debbie Lisle's (2010) notions of critical and progressive cosmopolitanism. These scholars provide a foundation for understanding the broader interplay of Kwame Appiah's "wings", which depict centre-periphery relations between various ethnic *Beur* minorities and the majority French population, while also tracking *Beur* negotiation of "roots" in their interactions with the French subject.

In a work filled with internal introspections on the "universe" of the *banlieue*, best-seller novel *Boumkoeur* recounts the story of protagonist Yazad (known as Yaz), a 21-year-old unemployed male *Beur* living in the stifling poverty of the Parisian *HLM*. Yaz resides in a small two-bedroom apartment in the suburbs of *Résistant-Failevic*. He hails from a dysfunctional Algerian family consisting of his parents and siblings: Aziz, a drug dealer; his sister; and his late brother Hamel, who dies from a drug overdose. As a way out of his grim economic and social conditions, Yaz yearns for 'un nouveau depart' (a new beginning) (Djaïdani, 1999, p. 8) through writing, envisioning a future where he can share the stories of the *banlieue*. Yaz's notebook, which outlines the subject of his writing, presents a detailed depiction of *le quartier* (the neighbourhood), recounting and uncovering all its mishaps and delinquencies. To aid in this endeavour, Yaz seeks the help of Grézi, a fellow male *Beur* youth in his twenties, with the assumption that he possesses sufficient knowledge and deep understanding of the area. Yaz declares the subject of his writing: '*Le sujet, c'est mon quartier...la banlieue, les jeunes délinquants, le rap et tous les faits divers qui font les gros titres des journaux*' (The subject is my neighborhood...the suburbs, delinquent youth, rap and all the things which would make the headlines in the newspapers) (p. 13). As the novel unfolds, however, Yaz comes to realise

that his friendship with Grézi has been deceptive. He has been labouring under the impression that Grézi's knowledge and companionship would further his writing career. Rather, Yaz finds himself entrapped in a cellar, with Grézi demanding custody from his parents. In the novel's conclusion, the police intervene, freeing Yaz from Grézi's grip, who is subsequently arrested. While recovering in the hospital, Yaz writes a letter to Grézi, acknowledging that the *cité* is indeed a multi-faceted universe that can only be truly grasped through a first-hand experience, requiring a visit for oneself to understand its intricacies.

Rachid Djaïdani worked as an assistant director on Mathieu Kassovitz's 1995 *La Haine* (*Hate*), a widely acclaimed film that won the Best Director Award and the César for Best Film. The black-and-white feature tells interlocking clash stories of three young men from minority backgrounds over the course of twenty-four hours. The protagonists, Saïd (Saïd Taghmaoui), a Muslim Arab; Vinz (Vincent Cassel), a Jewish man; and Hubert (Hubert Kundé), a black Christian, grapple with racial tension and police brutality in the aftermath of violent clashes in the French *banlieue*. The film portrays their collective solidarity and resistance against escalating racial oppression, particularly at the hands of French police. *La Haine* begins with media coverage of the *Beur* riots in the *cité* of *Chanteloup-les-Vignes* in northern France. In the aftermath, the trio's friend, Abdel Ichaha, is hospitalised after being severely beaten by a French officer during the riots. Fuelled by anger and a desire for justice, Saïd, Hubert, and Vinz decide to participate in further riots, determined to stand up for their friend's rights. When Vinz discovers a gun cartridge abandoned by a French officer during the unrest (00:27:23), he becomes fixated on avenging Abdel's assault, and later death, by killing a police officer. Despite several confrontations with the police, Vinz's plan is thwarted when, after more violence, he passes the gun to Hubert, who continues to advocate against the use of violence.

The film reaches a breaking point when, in a tense encounter, a police officer in disguise confronts Vinz and recalls the latter's earlier provocations on a rooftop. In a moment of confusion, the officer accidentally shoots Vinz in the head, murdering him. The film ends with a final standoff between Hubert and the policeman; both have their guns pointed at each other while Saïd watches from the background. As a shot is fired, the film's screen blackens, leaving the outcome ambiguous and forcing the audience to speculate on who survives and who dies.

The focus on the spatial dynamics of the *banlieue* as a marginalised and exploited terrain in Djaïdani's *La Haine* and *Boumkoeur* undergoes a notable transformation in his latest film, *Tour de France*. Screened at the Cannes Film Festival in 2016, the film features the unexpected pairing of actor *Beur* Sadek and Gérard Depardieu, with the latter potentially regarded as "a national treasure"³, embodying the quintessential figure of the traditional white French hero. Set primarily in the French ports, the film recounts the story of Far'Hook Ben Saïd (Sadek), an orphaned *Beur* rapper, who is asked by his French manager and music producer Matthias (Nicolas Marétheu), a recent Muslim convert, to accompany his father, Serge Guevara (Gérard Depardieu), a 60-year-old man from the Hauts-de-France, on an artistic journey. The journey revolves around the reproduction of the paintings of ten French ports by 18th Century painter Joseph Vernet, from 250 years earlier. Vernet was commanded to make the paintings by Louis XV, and Serge is similarly driven by a promise he made to his deceased wife to paint the ports. The initial interactions between Far'Hook and Serge are shaped by stereotypical views of Muslim and *Beur* identity, which also allude to past tensions

³ Depardieu's public image has recently undergone dramatic shift after his sexual assaults (Chrisafis, 2025).

between Serge and his son Matthias, who adopts the name Bilal following his conversion to Islam. After being compelled to leave his father's home, Matthias assigns Far'Hook to the role of being his father's driver and companion on his "pilgrimage". Far'Hook, who is under threat from a *Beur* rap gang determined to stop him from performing at a Marseille concert, agrees to the task. As a result, he leaves the *banlieue*, first relocating to Paris and subsequently to Pas-de-Calais, where Serge dwells. At the outset, Serge embodies the typical subject of the majority French population, holding discriminatory views and an enclosed mindset. He initially expresses no tolerance for Far'Hook, whom he prejudices as delinquent, violent, and criminal. However, as the narrative unfolds, Serge's hostility shifts towards empathy, and his initial prejudice gives way to a different understanding of Far'Hook, who appears to be ideologically 'no different from him' (2016). Their increasing proximity and direct ethnic encounters play a key role in reshaping Serge's perspective and gradually presenting for him a new discovery of Far'Hook's identity, echoing what I refer to as "the New *Beur* Man". As the narrative develops, the two engage on a road trip across France, exploring diasporic spaces inhabited by different French cultures. These include particularly French villages and key ports mainly Marseille, Rochefort (*La Corderie Royale*) and Bourdeaux, which serve as sites of postcolonial difference representing Caribbean and Basque language and culture and are more hospitable for Far'Hook.

The diasporic issues I aim to explore in Djaïdani's earlier works focus on the forms of internal resistance that the *Beur* protagonists develop within the confined space of the *banlieue*, along with the colonial agendas these spaces embody. I will discuss these forms of resistance in relation to the notion of "internal exclusion" as articulated by Étienne Balibar (2007). Balibar uses this term to describe the traditional framework of violence and

delinquency associated with *Beur* communities, particularly in relation to the 2005 riots, where North African immigrants and their descendants were depicted as ‘young, car-burning demonstrators defying and being chased by police...*rebelles...casseurs* [hoodlums] and “dealers”’ (2007, p. 47). He further notes that ostracism in the *banlieue* is often marked by a sense of ‘nihilism and depersonalization’, where its minority residents, instead of being treated as citizens, are objectified and regarded as mere ‘things’ (2007, p. 51). Building on Balibar's analysis, I will frame the *banlieue* in *Boumkoeur* and *La Haine* as spaces rampant with stereotyping, cognitive and physical violence. These films reflect spatial hierarchies, which form the basis of territorial construction. Specifically, the French centre evolves into a space of authority, dominated by the French upper class, while the peripheral *banlieue* becomes a locality inhabited by underclass residents. The uneven development of both areas risks establishing a centre-periphery model (Balibar, 2007; Angélil and Siress, 2012). These concepts are valuable for discussing the concerns surrounding the absence of proximity and the lack of connections between the suburbs and the French center, where borders create unequal power dynamics. Thus, the texts’ attempt to steer clear of “internal” objectification and, to use Balibar’s word, “depersonalization” of the *banlieue* in public spaces is so persistent. It is highlighted by a set of agencies emerging within these spaces, offering a counter-narrative to the alienating forces of stereotyping and marginalisation.

In Djaïdani’s earlier works, the dismantling of the *banlieue*’s borders emerges as a central theme, offering a critique of spatial inequality. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre’s (1991) theory that ‘space does not just happen, rather it is generated, as each society, state, or economic system, produces its own social space’, James F. Austin argues that the *banlieue* has not emerged as a mere spatial accident or a necessary outcome (2009, p. 82). Instead, it

is produced as 'a spatial function of some larger system' (p. 82). Lefebvre's conceptualisation will be used in *La Haine* to emphasise how space is deliberately constructed to segregate certain communities and exclude them from the French center. Historically, in service of the capitalist system, ethnic laborers have been systematically exploited. At the same time, they have been displaced from the more affluent, centralised areas of the city, where economic and political power are concentrated. Instead, they are relegated to the subordinate periphery, where access to power remains severely restricted (Austin, 2009, pp. 83). The film constructs the *banlieue* through inhumane, materialistic methods intended to control and dominate what Lefebvre terms the "dangerous classes" (pp. 82-83), whose ultimate aspiration is to break through these imposed boundaries. Austin suggests that the recurrent uprisings and acts of violence in the *banlieue* are not merely spontaneous reactions but reflect a deeper desire to transcend its boundaries and ultimately 'destroy it altogether' (p. 81), thereby rejecting the imposed peripheral status. In *La Haine* and *Boumkoeur* the *banlieue* is portrayed as a peripheral space constructed to separate minority ethnic groups. The resistance to the stereotypes and the marginalised identity associated with the *banlieue* becomes a means of indirectly attempting to, in Austin's words, 'destroy' the spatial and cognitive divisions that define the *banlieue*.

In *La Haine*, the *banlieue* is closely associated with its North African immigrant population, who face extreme poverty, unemployment, delinquency, and violence. It is not only orchestrated as a site of economic exploitation but also a product of French imperialistic control, designed to regulate minority populations. In her reading of *La Haine*, Annie Fourcaut projects the image of the *banlieue* to '*grand désordre cités, zone et fortifs, délinquance et drogue, immigration et blousons noirs, quartiers défavorisés - objet des attentions de la*

puissance publique - rai, hip-hop et quelques films' (big messy cities, zones and fortifications, delinquency and drugs, immigration and black jackets, disadvantaged neighbourhoods- a subject of attention for public authorities, -rai, hip-hop and other films) (2000, p. 101). She traces the history of the suburbs to the post-World War II era, when immigrants were brought to France to fill labor shortages but were subjected to poor housing conditions, low-wage work, and limited opportunities. Mark McKinney (2004) further compares the *banlieue* to American ghettos, highlighting shared issues of 'endemic poverty and joblessness; public visibility of oppressed, neo-colonized minorities' (2004, p. 113). Unfortunately, the invisible border lines resulting from this division speak volumes for the frustrating visibility that the *Beur* ethnicities are suffering from in *La Haine*. The film is thus a testimony of the politics of borders highlighting the restrictive nature of the *banlieue* as a geographically divided entity where its residents are made to inhabit such areas. As they are further distanced from the polis, their sense of exclusion and marginality are intensified.

One of the central themes in *La Haine* concerns multi-ethnic solidarities as a new approach to reframing difference. Carrie Tarr's critique of *cinéma de banlieue*, with particular emphasis on *La Haine*, underscores the film's representation of 'the voices and subjectivities of ethnic Others and thereby reframing the way in which difference is conceptualized' (Tarr, 2005, p. 74). She examines the multi-ethnic community's commitment to the subaltern cause, which shapes their sense of postcolonial difference in post-bidonville spaces. Essentially, Tarr argues that the film's strength lies in its representation of the *banlieue* on a broader scale, fostering a universal perspective embraced by immigrants nationwide (Tarr, 2005). This postcolonial recognition of minorities, viewed through a multi-ethnic scope of shared solidarities, contributes to a larger, universal narrative of resistance that cognitively

transcends postcolonial boundaries. However, this discourse overlooks how the new postcolonial dynamics takes precedence over the sociological depiction of specific *Beur* realities. In contrast to Tarr, Will Higbee (2013) critiques the portrayal of the multi-ethnic pact in *La Haine* as reductive. He argues that the three central characters are burdened with representing, and thus limiting, the ethnic diversity of the *banlieue* community they aim to depict. Higbee's critique highlights the potential risks of consolidating the multi-ethnic experience into a trio of characters, which may inadvertently reinforce stereotypes. However, this critique does not fully capture the complexity of the *Beur* identity and experience, which is in itself overshadowed by an emphasis on the other two characters. Both Higbee and Tarr offer valuable insights into the film's depiction of the *banlieue*, a space that remains impactful in conveying the real struggles of *banlieue* residents. However, despite their focus on the film's multi-ethnic empowerment, their analyses lack a deeper exploration of the unique, degraded experience of *Beur* identity as a central theme in the film.

This chapter examines the intersections of space and cosmopolitanism, focusing on two distinct phases of cosmopolitan theory evident in Djaïdani's earlier and more recent works. The two different phases of cosmopolitan theory that will surface in Djaïdani's earlier and latest works can be inscribed within critical and progressive forms of cosmopolitanism respectively. They are inspired by Debbie Lisle's (2010) illustration of both models in her investigation on the intersections between tourism and cosmopolitanism. According to Margaret Byrne Swain, Lisle's models are defined as follows: 'Progressive Cosmopolitanism equates to universal ethical norms (what drives ethical tourism) while Critical Cosmopolitanism questions accounts, notices power relations, assesses how they are silenced and uncovers prevailing problems' (Swain, 2009, p. 512). Drawing on Lisle's models, I will

consider Djaïdani's *Boumkoeur* and *La Haine* through the lens of the earlier, critical mode of cosmopolitanism, while *Tour de France* will be explored in the context of the more recent, progressive mode. The critical cosmopolitan approach will be employed to critique the *banlieue* as a physically marginalised space that appears disconnected from cosmopolitan ties with the rest of France. This model will specifically target the *banlieue*'s physical separation from the central Parisian districts (*arrondissements*), which are often associated with poorly planned urban environments that require social adjustments and control (Baudoui, 1989). The architectural features of the *banlieue* evoke Edward Said's concept of marginalised ethnic subjects who are positioned at a distance from the European White (Said, 2006), yet the critical cosmopolitan model also reveals the cosmopolitan agencies that exist in relation to *Beur* particularities.

Existing theoretical analysis of *Boumkoeur* is mainly explored through Matt Reeck's (2018) concept of "ethnographic informant". Reeck argues that *Boumkoeur* functions 'as an experimental literary ethnography, conceived as a new form of translation' (2018, p. 149). He further asserts that this approach reframes translation not merely as a linguistic transfer, but as an active, dynamic process that involves the translator as a key agent. Reeck's interpretation is directed toward a broader form of cultural translation aimed at comprehending 'the full extent of humanity', primarily through the concept of arbitrariness, which imbues translation with 'a dynamic, multi-tiered literary creation' (2018, p. 151). It is this positioning of the translator within the text that emphasises the inherent arbitrariness and creativity of the translation process. This concept of human arbitrariness is useful to underscore the universal nature of the *banlieue*, which serves as a form of resistance to multi-ethnic marginalisation. Specifically, this internal-based narration will be analysed in the

context of “wings”, reflecting the text’s impulse to dismantle the objectification of the *banlieue* and the harmful *clichés* that sustain the binary of unequal power imposed upon this space. Consequently, critical cosmopolitanism deploys internal narration to condemn the negative stereotyping of the *banlieue* and its racialised representation. I appropriate Reeck’s reading to uncover the text’s narrative as institutionalised in Western French thought, it undermines the postcolonial discourse of Orientalism which casts “the East” as a threat to “the West”, thus framing the *Bidonvilles* as exotic, colonial, malicious, and inferior. By resisting such reductive portrayals, the novel creates a space for alternative subjectivities that move beyond the limitations imposed by both the colonial past and the contemporary representations in Western media. However, I also expand on Reeck’s theorisation to examine *Beur* subjectivities themselves as they operate in the *banlieue*, particularly being framed as either disconnected from, or in opposition to Algerian traditional “roots”. The discourse of the universal, therefore, is framed as being necessarily shaped by a less rooted stance towards cultural or “ethnographic” particularities. The critical cosmopolitanism in the text, thus, will be considered in relation to the double framework of “wings”, which involves *Beur* resistance to French stigmatising localities inducing their immobility; as well as “roots”, expressed through *Beur* internal agencies as disconnected from the symbolic motifs of Algerian legacies from the past.

The critical cosmopolitanism in *La Haine* is centered on the potential dynamism of multi-ethnic resistance, which challenges the static and marginalised narratives surrounding the *banlieue*. I draw on Katharyne Mitchell to explore the postcolonial conception of “the subaltern” in the film, particularly indicating how marginalised groups, despite their exclusion, develop agencies to voice their concerns and take action. Mitchell critiques the common

'identification of the subaltern as one who "cannot speak"' (2007, p. 712), proposing instead a new concept of "subaltern cosmopolitanism". This approach envisions a cosmopolitanism from below, centered on 'long-distance action, and a transnational, counter-hegemonic sphere of politics' (2007, p. 713). Similarly, Fuyuki Kurasawa's version of "cosmopolitanism from below" seeks to unite minorities not through national ties but through shared socio-political struggles against injustice (2004). Within this theoretical framework, I position the multi-ethnic alliances forged in the text on the spectrum of "wings," which reflect web-like structures that can be collectively embraced and globally shared by diverse ethnic groups advocating for human rights. Linking these forms of cosmopolitanism from below to a critical framework, I argue that *La Haine* exemplifies a form of "cosmopolitanism from below" fostering 'a sense of solidarity without bounds' (Kurasawa, 2004, p. 234), though not completely disrupting the hegemonic narratives of power (Mitchell, 2007, p. 713). I explore how *La Haine* critiques the *banlieue* as a site of resistance against the systemic establishment of French criminality and exclusion, particularly as embodied by the authorities' "right and urge to kill". Kurasawa's and Mitchell's models prove useful in conceptualising universal strategies of resistance, which are initiated "from below" by the multi-ethnic trio in opposition to the dominant French authoritative regime. This approach contributes to deconstructing conventional postcolonial binaries of identity, particularly the cognitive immobility and stagnation often associated with the *Beur* subject. However, I discuss these transnational webs of belonging against hegemony (Kurasawa, 2004; Mitchell, 2007) as unable to address the text's representation of *Beur* cultural particularities. I argue that the film partially yields to assimilationist agendas, seeking alternative connections while simultaneously eradicating others. As such, Kurasawa's assertion that this cosmopolitanism does not necessitate 'togetherness' rooted in 'difference-blind cultural assimilation'

(Kurasawa, 2004, p. 235) overlooks the discussion of *Beur* ambivalence. This ambivalence manifests itself as the neutralisation of cultural and religious roots, undermining the possibility of a coherent, culturally grounded *Beur* identity. The subversion of *Beur* stereotyping in the *banlieue*, while effective in challenging dominant cultural narratives, may also overlap with less knitted and cohesive networks and connections to the Algerian past, thus decentralising the articulation of distinct *Beur* particularities.

The discourse of progressive cosmopolitan is primarily emphasised in the chapter through cross-border proximity, which facilitates the generation of Franco-*Beur* interactions in central diasporic spaces. The narrative evolves from confrontational to a more relaxed dynamic between Serge and Far'Hook, largely due to the experimentation with the innovative genre of the road movie. The film's mobility towards the centre celebrates Franco-*Beur* ethnic encounters as sites of cultural exchange and connection. This shift reveals a more optimistic vision of French and *Beur* coexistence represented by the interplay between the centre and periphery. Bouchareb deviates from his earlier focus on *Beur* marginalisation in spaces of exclusion, as seen in *La Haine* and *Boumkoeur*, and progresses towards a more intimate, prosaic and anti-violent approach, emphasising the actual dismantling of the *banlieue* borders. The analysis of *Tour de France* will draw on the intersections of the roots-wings framework and Debbie Lisle's understanding of progressive cosmopolitanism. In her work *Joyless Cosmopolitans: The Moral Economy of Ethical Tourism* (2010), Lisle critiques the limitations of cosmopolitan agendas by destabilising them, particularly in the context of "ethical" tourism. She traces the origins of this concept to nineteenth-century Britain, where it was promoted as a response to the economic, political, and environmental inequalities exacerbated by 'mass tourism'. Lisle argues that ethical tourism, as conceived by British

preacher Thomas Cook, represents a set of “emancipating” practices. However, this idealised form of tourism needs to be critically examined, as it sought to ‘construct [...], discipline [...], and moralize [...] the new subject position of the mass tourist’ (Lisle, 2010, p. 140), ultimately reinforcing certain power dynamics under the guise of ethical engagement.

Lisle’s mobilisation of virtue as the only form of self-designation where pleasure is condemned and controlled provides concepts of feeling ‘*good about*’ oneself (p. 148) (emphasis in the original text). The subject’s universally embedded ‘virtue’ remains generative of new power relations that, as Lisle argues, set ‘a false notion of equality’ (p. 147). This concept inherently contributes to the negation of asymmetries among tourists by making such inequalities conditionally rewarding. Consequently, it does not necessarily promote ‘*innocent and unscripted* cultural encounters’ (p. 154) with the Other. Drawing on Lisle’s theoretical framework, I argue that the optimistic and seductive mobilisation of *Beur* diasporic inclusiveness in *Tour de France* is only realised through the embedded French secularist and assimilatory practices of the time. These practices are reflected in the regulation and “disciplining” of *Beur* subjectivities in their negotiation of difference, pushing them to align with French notions of citizenship. Lisle’s progressive cosmopolitan model is utilised in this film to examine emerging notions of abstract egalitarianism within the French diaspora.

The properties of journeying in *Tour de France* will further be compared and contrasted with the contribution of Mica Nava’s domestic or vernacular cosmopolitanism (1998, 2006, 2007), which necessarily arises from the proximity of multicultural communities. Nava’s work *Visceral Cosmopolitanism: Gender, Culture and the Normalisation of Difference*

(2007) is crucial as it explores the complexities of racism by examining the “vernacular”; the everyday, intimate experiences of individuals within a city, specifically London. Most notably, Nava highlights that the cosmopolitan sense of familiarity emerging in post-war London stemmed from ‘intimate proximity’, where foreigners and natives lived in close quarters, worked alongside one another, and were educated together (Nava, 2007, p. 13). In her *domestic cosmopolitanism and structures of feeling: the specificity of London* (2006), she distinguishes between a twentieth-century cosmopolitanism and twenty-first-century urban multiculturalism, suggesting that in the former, diverse ethnic and religious groups coexist without genuine empathy. Nava characterises this as an antagonistically distanced multicultural space where differences are ‘consolidated rather than diffused’ (Nava, 2006, p. 2). In contrast, she highlights a new form of cosmopolitanism in the twenty-first century, marked by ‘mixed relations’ that no longer adhere to conventional norms but instead ‘flout’ them (Nava, 2006, p. 4). According to Nava, the development of these relationships, now commonplace, is founded on principles of ‘empathy’, hospitality, inclusivity, conviviality and the allure of difference’ (2007, p. 7). The allure, as she explains, refers to ‘the fascination that it exercises for certain people [...] is inextricably linked to the fact of its construction as difference’ (2007, p. 21). Nava’s ideas of the “domestic” or “visceral” cosmopolitan engagement with the Other will be examined in the context of *Tour de France*, where the *Beur* subject’s experience is characterised by ‘mixed relations’ (2006, p. 4) that challenge traditional relations of violence. I argue, however, that the interactions between *Beur* and French subjects in the film are marked by a narrative of empathy and intimacy yet unbound by foregrounding *Beur* “allure of difference”. I contend that the new, more open geographies, particularly the French countryside and ports, that become accessible to the *Beur* subject are framed as spaces of adventure. However, they emphasise what I call ‘homogeneous

proximities', where *Beur* cultural "roots" are neither openly acknowledged nor deeply engaged with.

I investigate how the sympathetic relationships that develop between *Beur* and white French characters in *Tour de France* unfold along an unpaired axis of "roots" and "wings". This interaction flouts conventional notions of hostility between the two, while simultaneously undermining markers of difference associated with Algerian, religious, and cultural heritage. The visual and textual absence of the more specific layers of the Algerian culture or "roots" is particularly evident in the symbolic erasure of key elements like the *banlieue*, the absence of the *Pied-noir*, Islam, the concept of pilgrimage, the absence of the Algerian biological father, and other markers of difference. the sense of the "vernacular" and the "progressive" thus will be analysed as part of an anemic cosmopolitanism that celebrates inclusivity yet still displaces Algerian cultural and religious roots. As proximity between these two groups forms new dynamics of unity, this framework disrupts the double standard of connectivity that is central to Kwame Anthony Appiah's concept of "rooted cosmopolitanism". Djaïdani's conception of universalism will be examined in contrast to Appiah's idea of proximate spaces, in which he asserts that 'anywhere you travel in the world [...] you can find ceremonies rooted in centuries-old traditions [...] you will also find everywhere [...] many intimate connections with places far away' (Appiah, 2006, p. 8). This exploration will focus on the paradox inherent in *Beur* dynamics of integration: how, in the process of detaching from the *banlieue* and the North African heritage that defines it, *Beur* individuals are increasingly embraced in public spaces as equals to their French counterparts. The analysis will probe how the "wings" of interaction in the centre which are performed through French unconventional "alliances" with the *Beur* Other remain subject to unequal polarities. The concept of "rootless

cosmopolitanism” will be applied to examine how the titular *tour* or voyage to the French center in the film reflects an extreme severance from the Algerian past, positioning the *Beur* subject's future as one of inclusivity and belonging in the mainstream French society.

1-Djaïdani's Rootless Cosmopolitanism: Real-life Integration and Equality beyond the *Banlieue*:

The transition from the *Chaâba* to the *banlieue* marks a shift from the *Beur* realism of the 1980s to a more radical and intense form of realism in the late 20th century. The 1980s generation of *Beur* writers, mainly Azouz Begag, faced the challenge of reconciling their Algerian heritage with the demands of French society. The narrative was one of integration, but this was often tied to maintaining a rooted sense of cultural identity. Particularly, it consisted in a rootedness that was both a source of strength and a source of conflict as the French state pushed for assimilation. Djaïdani's portrayal of the restrictive nature of the *banlieue* is still framed in postcolonial terms; however, his work also questions its representation as a comprehensive depiction of Algerian collective identity and shared origins. Annie Fourcaut's analysis of *Beur* integration in mainstream spaces underscores the ongoing evolution of the term *banlieue* itself. She contends that the term has undergone several transformations over time. Drawing on Lucien Febvre's notion of a word evolving through history (1930, p. 10), she argues that the word *banlieue* does not '*cesse d'évoluer sous la poussée des expériences humaines, nous arrivent grossis, pour ainsi dire, de toute l'histoire qu'ils ont traversé*' (cease to evolve under pressures of human experiences, we have come to grow up, so to speak, with all the history that we have gone through) (Fourcaut, 2000, p. 101). Besides, Fourcaut notes that, from the perspective of the central regions, the rapid geographical expansion of French slums throughout the twentieth century is often

misinterpreted as a troubling development, overlooking the innovative and transformative experiences emerging from these spaces. Extending this argument, I propose that the late twentieth-century *banlieue* texts also witnessed diverse modes of *Beur* subjectivity, reflecting a reimagined approach to integration, distinct from the *Chaâba* of the 1980s. This marks a significant shift, as the 1990s saw the emergence of writings driven by the failure of the 'integration with roots' model, which was challenged by the realities of French assimilation. An examination of Djaïdani's real-life artistic journey will illustrate how a redefined, universal *Beur* identity space is cultivated within the *banlieue*, one that is less concerned with preserving rootedness and more focused on establishing a shared, collective identity with other marginalised groups within these urban spaces.

Djaïdani is keenly aware of the identity dilemmas faced by the previous generation inside the *banlieue*, where the concept of rootedness played a central role in their sense of self. Kleppinger draws a comparison between the writers of Medhi Charef's generation and those of today, noting that Charef's exploration of the *Beur* condition involved the often-futile attempt to renegotiate and recreate "roots" within the diasporic context of integration (2016, p. 14). In contrast, Djaïdani's work is conceptualised around the idea of "branches" rather than "roots". This shift signifies a fundamental change in the concerns of the ethnic writer: the struggle to adapt to French society with a dual identity, balancing both roots and wings, has dissolved with the diminishing importance of rootedness. Djaïdani advocates for a more universal understanding of the *banlieue* author, one who should be defined by the "branches" he develops over time; by the art, skills, and talents he contributes to the world rather than by ethnic ties. In this sense, Djaïdani's approach in his texts marks a significant departure from previous generational concerns with cultural and ethnic origins identified in the *banlieue*. In

his analysis of *Beur* literary and cinematic output up to 2000, Farid Laroussi observes the emergence of a new narrative plot for twenty-first-century *Beur* novels and films. These works illustrate how ‘the stability of aesthetics and ideologies is achieved in their fluid relationships, and they are set in motion by the writer as well as the reader’ (Laroussi, 2002, p. 711). Notably, this “progression” is marked by a shift ‘outside the merely socio-political sphere’ of diasporic concerns. In contrast to the works of the twentieth century, which were often linked to collective history and socio-political activism, these *Beur* narratives focus on ‘individuals and not to history’ (Laroussi, 2002, p. 711). The representation of the *banlieue*, historically portrayed as a separate and isolated space, has often framed the desire to reach other public spaces, particularly central France, as unattainable. However, this more open, fluid approach to *Beur* identity challenges the rigid boundaries that have traditionally defined it as a postcolonial experience tied to Algerian past and its specificities.

Djaïdani’s vision of inclusiveness and integration moves beyond traditional cultural ties to the *banlieue*, surpassing both its ethnic and colonial legacies as well as national and cultural distinctions. By embracing a broader, more fluid understanding of identity, his work transcends the rooted narratives historically tied to *Beur* authorship and film. Laroussi attributes the French tendency to distinguish *Beur* authors from their French counterparts of non-Gallic descent to the lingering effects of France’s colonial history. He contends that this distinction is rooted in the inherited legacy of colonialism, which continues to shape perceptions of identity. However, he further argues that this process results in the ‘cultural inheritance’ from the colonial past being inevitably wiped out (pp. 712-713). He adds that this phenomenon is both ‘a response to the Republican myth of integration’ and ‘is concerned with an unsettling Maghrebi heritage’ (p. 713). Laroussi observes that this situation is marked

by a 'withdrawal into a yet non-identified self (Arab, *Berber*, French, or all three) and an outward impulse toward a referential language (French)' (p. 710). This underscores a literary disconnection from contemporary debates surrounding identity and belonging. The notion of *Beur* existence for Djaïdani in this chapter will be highlighted in many ways as intertwined with the haunting presence of colonial legacies, which hinder individuals' ability to simply exist as equals. His vision of the human condition aims to foster a paradigm of assimilation that conceals "cultural inheritance" from the public eye. In this light, Djaïdani's desire to "exist" as a "human being" and to resist "otherness" constructs his universalism around an essentialist sense of the Republican centre.

Djaïdani's entry into the film industry began with a production assistant position on Kassovitz's *La Haine*, where he '*découvre le cinéma*' (discovers cinema) (<https://cineuropa.org>, 2016). This formative experience shaped his depiction of the *banlieue* as a claustrophobic and dislocated space. Such representations are not only evident in his early works *Boumkoeur* and *Tour de France* but also depicted in his TV interviews and real-life career as an accomplished author. In *Boumkoeur*, the protagonist Yaz is Djaïdani's alter ego who represents resistance to the systemic exclusion and invisibility that defines life in the *banlieue*. However, Yaz's family, while central to his identity, seems to weigh him down with misery, pain, and sorrow. Djaïdani highlights this struggle in his interview with Bernard Pivot where he explains that *Boumkoeur* is meant to be "a cry of frustration" (Djaïdani, 1999). This is a symbolic expression of the isolation and repression experienced by those living in the *banlieue*. He articulates the sense of silent suffering in his words: '*écrire pour moi, c'est un peu comme verser une larme en public*' (writing for me is somehow like weeping in public) (Reeck, 2011, p. 123). In this statement, Djaïdani conveys the sense of a stifled existence, where his life is rendered silent, trapped, distorted, and kept out of the public's view. In

contrast to Azouz Begag, whose protagonist finds some order and “life” in the *Chaâba*, Djaïdani’s works reflect a desire to escape the *banlieue*, a space defined by silence, closure, and a lack of hope. In his latest novel *Visceral* (2008), Djaïdani describes the *banlieue* as a nightmarish environment where ‘the rats wear Teflon boiler suits. Cockroaches breakdance on gobs of spit. Pitbulls snort lines of coke before mauling kids’ heads’ (Djaïdani, 2007, p. 54). *Boumkoeur* emerges as a direct response to Djaïdani’s despair, aimed at extricating *Beur* from the ethnic stereotyping perpetuated by the French media, as well as from the cultural and religious ties that continually tether them to the private and marginalised space of the *banlieue*. The novel reflects the prioritisation of public engagement through the act of writing, signaling a departure from the suffocating legacies of the private, insular world of the *banlieue*.

The concept of universalism, advocating for a fluid and borderless sense of belonging that transcends Algerian traditional ideas of ethnicity, religion, and heritage, is prominently reflected in both the interviews and works of Djaïdani. Born in Carrière-sous-Poissy (Yvelines) to an Algerian immigrant father, Djaïdani’s background often subjects him to the stereotypes associated with being a *Beur*. His motivation to write stems, in part, from a negative reaction he received from a family friend after watching him play the role of a delinquent drug dealer in one of his films (Reeck, 2011). This led to criticism from his father, who felt that it reinforced a damaging image of people from the *banlieue*. Djaïdani became acutely aware of the power of the media, particularly television and literature, in perpetuating stereotypes about life in the *banlieue* (Reeck, 2011). Motivated by this awareness, he wrote his debut novel *Boumkoeur* (1999) as a counter-response to such negative portrayals. Djaïdani views his work as a form of universal art and strongly rejects the label *Beur*, which he associates with colonial-

era stereotypes and negative connotations. This sentiment was evident when he appeared on the French TV program *Ce Soir (Ou Jamais)* (2007), where presenter Frédéric Taddei referred to him as '*un jeune Beur vivant en banlieue*' (a young *Beur* living in the *banlieue*) (Reeck, 2011, p. 128). Djaïdani sarcastically shook his head in disagreement, muttering '*Beur, Beur*' to express his discontent with the label (p. 128). His unwillingness to be recognised as part of the *banlieue* is also manifested in a separate interview with TV presenter Pivot, featured on *Ce Soir* in 1999. During the encounter, Djaïdani was notably recognised for his exceptional charisma, stage presence, and acting abilities, qualities that are evident in the wide range of roles he has portrayed on screen, including those in *Osmose* (2004) and *L'Âge d'Homme* (2007). However, the conversation takes an uneasy turn when Pivot begins the interview by addressing Djaïdani's ancestral background, a topic that visibly unsettles him. Laura Reeck offers a thoughtful commentary on how the dynamics of the interview prioritises the background of the accomplished author over his artistic achievements (2011, p. 130). It places the ethnic writer at a significant disadvantage, forcing him to disavow his parents' history entirely. In this context, Christina Horvath (2018) reflects on how French writers of North African descent are often preoccupied with the negative perceptions that the French literary canon holds of them. As individuals positioned on the periphery, they are compelled to downplay their talents as writers or creators. It then follows that Djaïdani's ultimate and only goal in life is to redefine himself as a renowned artist who is anything but influenced by his ancestry or differences.

For Djaïdani, contemporary *Beur* identity is no longer tied to the history of their immigrant parents or the militant struggle to preserve it. Djaïdani's troubled attempt at extricating himself from it justifies the mood behind his earlier works. This desire to break

away from the past is further underscored during an interview on *Ce Soir (Ou Jamais)*, when the conversation shifts to Nicolas Sarkozy's presidential proposal to establish a Ministry of National Identity and Immigration. In response, Djaïdani reflects, '*j'ai l'impression que je suis là pour parler de ce qu'on vécu mes parents et [...] moi je dois revenir pour dire pourquoi*' (I have the impression that I am invited to speak about what my parents lived and while [...] I have to go back and say why) (Reeck, 2011, p. 162). This statement contrasts sharply with Begag's approach, whose interviews and sociological works strive not only to reconcile his parents' past with the present-day French reality but also to honor and acknowledge his cultural roots. For example, in his PhD acknowledgments, Begag references his parents, saying, '*a Bouzid et Messaouda, mes parents, même s'ils ne savent pas lire*' (To Bouzid and Messaouda, my parents, even though they cannot read) (1984, p. 7). This attests to his approach of bridging his parents' past with modern French society. By contrast, when Taddei suggests that Djaïdani's presence in the interview is tied to the perception of identity as a product of the past, Djaïdani responds that he is happy to leave that past behind (Djaïdani, *Ce Soir*, 1999). On this occasion, Kleppinger notes that Djaïdani intentionally refrains from engaging in discussions about his parents' integration, observing that he presents their experience as something stagnant, 'as if there has been no movement, no change, and as though he must justify his presence in France' (2016, p. 192). Djaïdani's perceptions of integration advocates for a redefinition of identity that does not only move beyond the confines of past struggles and ethnic labels yet aims for a future in which his presence in France is no longer defined by heterogeneity and difference.

Based on the interviews mentioned above, Djaïdani seeks to resist associations with the past that define the *Beur* ethnic identity and history, which he views as limiting his

potential for individual artistic success in France. This is evident in another interview with Aminata Aidara (2013), in which Djaïdani expresses frustration at being labeled as “*an écrivain de banlieue*” (a writer of the suburbs), despite establishing a significant artistic presence in Paris. For him, the artistic and profound nature of his works, such as *Boumkoeur*, should not be underestimated or monopolised by the intelligentsia. Simultaneously, however, it can be argued that in Djaïdani’s pursuit of recognition within the French literary canon and his desire to sustain his artistic success, the Algerian cultural ‘heritage’ is intentionally displaced to make way for an ‘art’ that is acknowledged in French terms. In relation to the challenge of achieving artistic recognition as a *Beur* author within diasporic contexts, Djaïdani advocates for a universal definition in which ‘*Beurness*’ is redefined, shifting from ‘a cultural archetype’ to ‘an artistic identity’ (Laroussi, 2002, p. 714). Djaïdani prioritises French “art” over Algerian “culture” in his works as a means of articulating his subjectivities as they relate to the suffering that he endures in the *banlieue*. His endeavour to overcome territorial and ethnic constraints imposed upon him in his texts overlaps with the depiction of *Beur* characters as part of an uprooted “kosmopolis”, symbolising their dislocation from past legacies. This resistance to the limitations of immobility, through the pursuit of artistic recognition, reflects Djaïdani’s broader call for equality among minority groups, advocating for a departure from past identities.

2-Boumkoeur:

The beginning of *Boumkoeur* exhibits *Beur* resistance to spatial dynamics that primarily emphasise their geographical confinement, containment, and immobility within the *banlieue*. The novel portrays the setting of the *cité* as a suburban territory representing the subordinate Other, whose Otherness cannot be contained. Critical cosmopolitanism begins

to take root through the internal narration of Yaz, with the figure of Grézi supporting his writing by initially informing him about the region's state of deprivation. Yaz's and Grézi's ascent of the tower becomes symbolic of the beginning of a journey, one projected onto the *banlieue* to uncover its depths and reveal its mysteries to the world. Yaz affirms that Grézi's '*observations seront essentielles à mes oreilles*' (observations are essential to my ears) (Djaïdani, 1999, p. 17). Yaz's aspiration to "exist" (p. 17) through his writing echoes a broader desire to have the realities of the *banlieue* acknowledged and understood by the world beyond the confines of the suburbs. His statement '*l'idée me vint de noircir le papier qui racontera l'univers du quartier*' (the idea came to me to blacken the paper which will tell the universe of the neighbourhood) (p. 16) emphasises the transformative power of narration. By putting pen to paper, Yaz aims to record and communicate the realities of the suburb, including its contradictions, complexities, and invisible struggles. The process of writing in this sense stands as a key medium in recording and transmitting the *banlieue* new realities. However, the setting of Tower 123, where Yaz and Grézi convene in a dimly lit, discarded room, underscores their continued marginality despite the intellectual project they appear to be engaged in. As a refuge from external French interference, their hiding place evokes the image of the "colonised", despised and marginalised by the "coloniser", which, as Laroussi notes, recalls 'a situation identical to their parents' or grandparents' predicament during colonial times' (2002, p. 710). This emphasises how the legacies of colonialism continue to shape their experiences of diasporic life.

In *Boumkoeur*, the setting of the Parisien suburbs, particularly the 123 Tower, is presented as a listless, isolated territory. Yaz and Grézi appear to be locked out and confined within the depths of this exoticised space. This narrative is imbued with a suffocating sense

of being “imprisoned” and “trapped” within the “cold” and “deadly” *cité* of the *banlieue*. It reactivates an Orientalist binary, East versus West, which typically frames the East as backward, exotic, and inherently inferior to the modern, progressive West. Within this framework, the *banlieue* is portrayed as a space characterised by Otherness and cultural alienation, set apart from the shrouded central Paris. The high-rise towers and blocks that characterise the design of the *banlieue*, which Julia Dobson (2017) identifies as emblematic of the dehumanising and often inhumane qualities of such stigmatised spheres, are most prominently showcased in the opening page of *Boumkoeur*. Here, Djaïdani delivers a direct critique of the *banlieue* and its troubled existence, as seen through Yaz’s perspective:

‘Une galère de plus comme tant d’autres jours dans ce quartier où les tours sont tellement hautes que le ciel semble avoir disparu. Les arbres n’ont plus de feuilles, tout est gris autour de moi’

(Another hell like the other days in this neighborhood where the tours are so high that the sky appears to have disappeared. The trees have no more leaves, and all is gray around me) (p. 9).

The *banlieue* is pictured as a geographically disenfranchised, overlooked, and distorted territory. This portrayal further emphasises its exploitative nature by white French authorities, positioning the *banlieue* as a profitable space that deprives its minority residents of any opportunities for fulfilling lives. After recounting his experience of being dismissed from the French 'national education' system and later being rejected for work due to a lack of experience, Yaz considers football as a potential alternative. To his disappointment, however, he recalls that the mayor had removed the football field on the grounds that it was ‘*un lieu de deal*’ (a place of business) (p. 10), metaphorically illustrating the illegal activities occurring in the *banlieue*. This also laments the shallow nature of exchanges within the *banlieue*, presenting it as a subordinate, leisure-free space, where any opportunity for

recreation or cultural exchange is reduced to a materialistic project. In contrast, Yaz reflects on a childhood memory of a French village, losing his way amid its '*riche des hauteurs de la ville*' (the wealthy on the city's heights) (p. 14). This statement underscores the concentration of wealth in the centre, while the periphery remains deprived. In his analysis of Paris's historical division, David Harvey (2003) notes that the peripheral location and class-based structures of the *banlieues* contribute to their physical and cultural marginalisation and exclusion. This critical commentary on the socio-economic inequalities within the *HLM* echoes Djaïdani's focus on its physical construction, which positions it as a marginal space in relation to the French center.

The discourse surrounding the stereotypical portrayal of the *banlieue* in *Boumkoeur* is largely framed by the biased views presented by the French media regarding the *banlieue*. A notable illustration of this in *Boumkoeur* is the portrayal of a French cameraman, reporting on the suburbs. As he approaches a group of young *banlieuesards* for an interview, he poses his questions with a tone of assurance:

'Qui parmi vous possède des armes? Qui vend de la drogue? Qui a son bac? Qui fait régulièrement ses prières dans les mosquées clandestines où régnent les membres du FIS et du GIA? » Et enfin: « Quels sont ceux qui ont fait de la prison? Je vous écoute'

(Who amongst you has weapons? Who sells drugs? Who has his baccalaureate? Who regularly prays in the clandestine mosques where members of the FIS and the GIA reign? And finally: "Who are those who have been in prison?" I'm listening to you) (pp. 20-21).

This quotation illustrates how the media serves to tarnish the physical world of the *banlieue* by reducing it to a negative stereotype, highlighting issues such as drug use and violence among its residents. By referring to “clandestine mosques”, it also reinforces its rigid and visible boundaries by downplaying the region’s cultural and religious particularities, even attaching them to religious extremism. This grim reality is further conveyed by the narrator’s statement: ‘*Moi, Yaz, les quatre coins du monde, je ne les ai vus qu’à travers les quatre angles de ma télévision*’ (Me, Yaz, I have only seen the four angles of the world through the four angles of television) (p. 93). Yaz’s perception of himself and the outside world is literally confined and shaped by the media. In her thorough analysis of *La Haine*, Ginette Vincendeau asserts that the *banlieusards* ‘speak from a pre-existing representation, which they find in the media’ (2005, p. 24). Through the creation of a predetermined representation, the media assumes the role of an external authority, imposing a negative, stereotypical identity on the *banlieue*’s inhabitants. This narrative of exclusion mutually evokes R. D. Grillo’s (1985) critical examination of the voices of immigrants within the French diaspora, particularly Algerian immigrants and their children. Grillo discusses how the French media addresses these groups without consulting their views, underscoring the institutional animosity they face. Similarly, George Packer (2015), through several historical records, further displays how French public and media choose to turn a blind eye on minorities’ stigmatised reality instead of investigating on their state of suffering. Particularly, he reports how it takes advantage of the *Beur* vulnerabilities and psychological frailties to draw their image as anti-French, anti-social, and terrorist. In this context, the *Beur* population in the *banlieue* is spoken about rather than offered a voice, leading to their physical isolation and disenfranchisement.

The harmful role of the media not only accentuates the exclusionary borders of the *banlieue* and restricts the life ambitions of its minority populations but also perpetuates an unequal distribution of power. The dominance of the white French population on screen is reflected in Yaz's observation that the portrayal of enjoyable television sitcoms is exclusively linked to '*la blondeur et la blancheur*' (fairness and whiteness) (p. 24). By exclusively casting 'light' on the white French majority, this representation aligns with an Orientalist discourse, defined by the unequal power dynamics in French metropolitan spaces. In stark contrast, Yaz anticipates a grotesque media representation of ethnic, curly-haired youth, who are portrayed either as criminals or as engaging in self-destructive behaviours. This instance is reminiscent of Rokhaya Diallo's critique of the dominance of whiteness in the French media, which consistently depicts Franco-French identities while excluding minorities of colour (2017). This exclusion is particularly damaging to its Republican principles, as it constructs a narrow and misleading narrative about French society, erasing the lived realities of its diverse ethnicities. By presenting the *banlieusards* as exclusively delinquent, Djaïdani offers an omniscient perspective that reveals the pitfalls of media representation, which isolates the periphery from the French centre and exacerbates its marginalised status.

Simultaneously, the novel expresses a desire to break free from media appropriation, symbolised through the metaphor where the waves on the TV screen fade away. As Grézi futilely attempts to adjust them, Yaz reflects, '*je le trouve beau et c'est ça qui me fait Plaisir*' (I find it beautiful, and this is what makes me happy) (p. 23). Yaz's relief from the white French media and its stigmatising gaze brings to focus Foucault's Orientalist discourse of '*le double regard contraignant des médias*' (the coercive double look of the media) (2000, p. 103). The *banlieue*, in Foucault's terms, is addressed as either '*objet d'un traitement alarmiste, avec des*

amalgames entre drogue, jeunesse, immigration, ghetto et violence; elles sont alors présentées dans la temporalité brutale et rapide des faits-divers, avec des images d'émeutes' (an object of alarming treatment, ranging from drug, youth, immigration, ghetto and violence; or depicted in brutal and rapid stories, with images of riots) (p. 103). As the images on the television fade away, the stereotypes dissipate as well, signifying a moment of escape. However, Yaz's sentiments of ease and exultation, which emerge for the first time in the novel, are only fleeting, as they get interrupted by the painful memory of his impoverished, alcoholic father, who is responsible for his mother's premature death. Thus, the sense of existence in the *banlieue* remains tragic and miserable, even at the very brim of its happiness.

The novel reveals an ambivalence within *Beur* subjectivities, simultaneously reflecting a double alienation: from both the *banlieue* and French communities. In *Boumkoeur*, Yaz displays an emotional state of oppression, to which he cannot find a resolution. He declares that: '*j'ai la haine, ma cité va craquer et ce n'est pas sur un air de raï que je ferai mon état des lieux*' (I'm furious, my neighborhood is going to crack, and it's not to a raï tune that I'll do my inventory) (p. 18). Yaz seems to confront the raw and harsh realities of his environment, recognising that change cannot come through cultural expression symbolised by *raï*, an Algerian traditional folk music. Reeck (2018) characterises Yaz as a neutral ethnographer attempting to register the realities of the *banlieue*. He observes that 'in the postcolonial ethnographic zone of the *banlieue*, there is then a displacement: if the writing of the marabout is incomprehensible for Yaz, it is in his role as a "traveller" in the *banlieue*—as an ethnographic outsider' (pp. 158-159). Building on Reeck's interpretation, Yaz's "travelling" role, as both a critique and social informant, involves revealing and deploring the socioeconomic inadequacies of the *banlieue*, a space both physically and emotionally

relegated. This serves as a form of protest against the escalating tensions within the neighbourhood, which appear to be reaching a breaking point. Crucially, this role as a ‘traveller’ extends to the reader, who must approach the *banlieue* with minimal prior knowledge, resisting the media’s appropriations of it. As such, the first-hand exploration and account of Yaz’s life appropriates the *banlieue* as a space proliferating with static and destructive forms of legacies and social connections.

After the French police arrest the young men from Yaz’s neighborhood for petty crime, he illustrates the emotional torture they endure during their detention: ‘*La punition ne s’arrêta pas là [...] Des jeunes du quartier y étaient stockés depuis quelques jours. Interdiction de leur parler, même de les regarder*’ (The punishment did not cease there [...] Young people from the neighborhood had been in detention for a few days. Forbidden to talk to or even look at them) (Djaïdani, 1999, p. 14). Yaz’ flashbacks illuminate the extent of police hostility directed at the *banlieusards*, as well as the attempts to confiscate their freedom. However, Yaz’s thoughts are contradicted as he reflects on his own past betrayal of disclosing information about *Beur* delinquents to the French police. He confesses, ‘*l’encre de mes cinq cents lignes avait servi à balancer...cette sale réputation me gratte à la peau*’ (the ink of my five hundred lines had been used for a laundering ...this dirty reputation tarnished my skin) (p. 15). As such, the incident stigmatising Yaz ‘s symbolic “skin”, tied to his sense of Algerian treason as a police informant, intersects with his disillusionment with French systematic racism, hence experiencing a dual layer of antagonism. Laura Reeck analyses how Djaïdani’s protagonist occupies an unusual position in the *banlieue*, embodying a type of “authorial persona” by acting as an external commentator on its realities (Reeck, 2011). Yaz’s dual role,

both as an embodiment of malice and a critic of it, is what reflects his status as a “traveler” within the *banlieue*, presented as both culturally and racially thwarted.

Yaz’s wretched existence within the *banlieue* is marked by a profound Algerian patrilineal dysfunctionality and a sense of excommunication from his *Beur* community. His alienation stretches to the core of his daily activities as well as family bonds. Ironically questioning the reasons behind his social rejection, Yaz wonders why he is excluded from both French and *Beur* nightclubs. He divines: ‘*devant les boîtes de nuit on se fait recaler, pas assez sapé ou pas bien accompagné?*’ (in front of the nightclubs, not sufficiently dressed or maybe not well accompanied?) (p. 10). As well as being rejected by his unnamed *Beur* ethnic friends, Yaz seems to have no social connections to rely on for support. He comes from a fragmented family that had dispersed when he was a child. Particularly, the form of knowledge he develops of his father is rooted in physical violence and psychological abuse. Yaz reflects, ‘*à la maison, nous le savons tous: ce n’est l’âge ni la fin de son alcoolisme qui a stoppé les violences du Daron*’ (at home, we all know: it wasn’t age nor the end of his alcoholism that stopped the violence of Daron) (p. 25). Yaz reflects that the only way his father, *Le Daron*, describes him to others is by complaining about his ‘*malheurs à l’étranger*’ (mishaps to strangers) (p. 121). The narrative offers unconventional views on *Beur* paternal kinship which symbolically challenges empathetic connections to *Beur*/Algerian heritage. In critiquing spatial ghettoisation, Boumkoeur traces “rootless” ways of imagining *Beur* cultural and familial bonds.

Besides, while Grézi and Yaz share the same *Beur* generation and geographical background, they experience significant miscommunication. Yaz struggles to understand the

complex dialect employed by Grézi acknowledging that '*La génération de Grézi a inventé un dialecte si complexe qu'il m'est pratiquement impossible de le comprendre*' (Grézi's generation invented a dialect so complex that it is almost impossible for me to understand) (Djaïdani, 1999, p. 45). This gap extends to the subsequent accusation of Grézi for his past murders and subsequent captivation of Yaz. Horvath (2018) highlights the diverse extremes that define the cultural productions of *banlieues*. She explains that while some writers use their critical stance to address the socioeconomic indicators of the *banlieue*'s depredatory status, others detach themselves from social realities, instead embracing a desire to fly above its constraints by adopting individual artistic creativity (2018). Yaz's "artistic" disposition develops in extremes: it reflects both a hostile relationship with French society and a sense of irrelevance and fragmentation and rejection within his own family and local *HLM* community.

The *banlieue*, as a realm of confinement and detachment from the French centre, is reinforced by the double inner layer of coolness. The underground cellar or bunker of Tower 123, where both Grézi and Yaz are trapped, is physically and emotionally devoid of warmth. A variety of metaphors illustrate Yaz's perspective on the bunker, conceptualising it as a space of devaluation. In one instance, Yaz remarks that the items in Tower 123 are rarely visited by the tenants, as '*ne valent même pas l'effort d'être présentées sur des étalages aux puces*' (not even worth the effort of being presented on flea market displays) (Djaïdani, 1999, pp. 32-33). The market display symbolically represents the dual isolation experienced by the *banlieue* inhabitants, who receive no communal visits and are externally subjected to ethnic stereotyping. Besides, in describing his double confinement, Yaz writes to Grézi that in the *banlieue*, he was often regarded as an insect. In his cell, he is merely a mosquito in need of strength (Djaïdani, 1999). The absence of solace or strength in Grézi's company, despite their

shared *Beur* background, is further emphasised by the colorless and unvivid scenery of the bunker. The interplay between the bunker and the *banlieue* positions *Beur* subjectivities as disconnected from a cosmopolitan concern, one that both values 'those near to us' and 'prize(s) conversations across cultures' (Appiah, 2019, p. 2). This existentially ethnic and cultural discourse shapes the *banlieue* as a place of regression, both in terms of colonial *Beur* stereotyping and an erosion of cultural roots.

In addition to the French media's portrayal of the *banlieue* as a space of delinquency and danger, *Boumkoeur* maintains a stance that challenges the idea of *Beur* local or ethnic identity as inherently unifying. This is symbolised by Yaz's reference to the French cameraman as an astronaut filming him in slow motion as he sails into the universe of the *banlieue*. At the same time, Yaz remains mindful not to lose sight of his fellow *Beur* passengers on the same metaphorical spaceship with him, conveying an air of suspicion (Djaïdani, 1999, p. 23). This is further followed by Grézi's malevolent smile, which represents his deceitful and malicious intentions towards Yaz, whom he thought to be his closest ally in the *banlieue*. This smile later foreshadows the discovery of the hostile plot that Grézi has devised against Yaz. Contrary to his expectations of solidarity from his ethnic pal, Yaz finds himself betrayed and trapped by his own fellow *Beur*, Grézi, inside a bunker in Tower 123. Thus, the narrator's "internal journey" becomes an introspective exploration of the *banlieue*, revealing its complex interplay of French and *Beur*-related struggles alike. Like the camera, the plot of the film, as Laroussi suggests, is 'set in motion' (2002, p. 711), illustrating the *Beur* experience of rootless internal mobility. Specifically, the use of slow-motion filming serves as a call for careful, thoughtful reconsideration of the *banlieue*'s notions of warmth and ethnic solidarity; concepts to which Grézi remains disconnected from.

In *Boumkoeur*, Djaïdani cultivates a distinctive writing style that blends ambivalent linguistic forms, deviating from French linguistic conventions. This technique aims to challenge both traditional Algerian religiosity and the colonial structures entrenched in the *banlieue*. A notable instance of this subversion is observed in the passage:

‘Nos parents sont très heureux d’avoir des tours aux couleurs bonbons. Pour nous, le goût est toujours le même, ‘amer’, comme si c’était en changer le mal de vivre en cité. C’est bien connu, c’est pas l’habit qui fait le moine. C’est le proverbe qui colle mieux à la situation. Mais Zoubir, le barbu, le résume de la façon suivante: “C’est pas l’habit qui fait l’imam”. Ça fonctionne aussi’.

(Our parents are very pleased to have candy-coloured towers. For us, it always tastes the same, bitter, as if it will change the plight of living in the suburbs. It is well known, clothes do not make the monk. This is the proverb that best fits the situation. But Zoubir, the bearded man sums it up in this way: clothes do not make the *Imam*) (Djaïdani, 1999, p. 29).

Here, Yaz reflects on the symbolic “bitterness” of the *banlieue* towers, which also intertwines with the false piety of the *banlieue Imam*, Zoubir. Despite his outwardly virtuous appearance, marked by his beard, his true nature is deceptive. Reek indicates how Djaïdani’s transformation of French linguistic legacy reflects how ‘formal features of colonial anthropology can be altered, or translated, to fit the postcolonial situation in which Yaz lives’ (2018, p. 164). This avoidance of using the original French expression underscores the broader shift in late twentieth-century *Beur* literature, which, as Laroussi (2002) suggests, develops a new language and literary devices to contest imperial legacies. However, the use of innovative literary techniques, viewed as an act of academic postcolonial defiance and a conscious effort

to chart 'a new course for literature' (p. 711), pushes back against the *banlieue* both as a postcolonial legacy and as an embodiment of Algerian religious legacies.

Boumkoeur shapes Djaïdani's perception of the "universal", a diasporic vision that is intricately tied to *Beur* ambivalence towards their "roots". After injuring his finger in the bunker of Tower 123, Yaz describes his blood as '*rouge universel*' (universal red), and its taste in his mouth as '*identique à celui de la terre mère*' (identical to that of mother earth) (Djaïdani, 1999, p. 78). On the surface, the intertwining dynamic of blood and mother earth seems to signify healing and connection. However, its taste is later deconstructed as symbolically "bitter", when Yazad's thoughts drift to his hospital stay, reflecting on his mother's behaviour during evening visits. One moment stands out when she, in her emotional turmoil, mistakenly calls him by the name of his deceased brother. Yaz reflects, '*le soir, elle me borde, m'appelle Hamel et embrasse mon front d'un bisou sec qui me déchire en deux*' (In the evening, she tucks me in, calls me Hamel, and kisses my forehead with a dry kiss that tears me into two) (p. 119). This moment reveals the rupture between Yaz and his mother, destabilising the earlier symbolic connection to "mother earth" and highlighting the pain of misidentification. As such, the novel's universal sense of belonging is shaped by a return to static histories and narratives of the past. It reflects an emotional fragmentation that contests the existence of a commonly warm, sympathetic connection between mother and son.

The ending of *Boumkoeur* summons a direct, cross-border confrontation of the reader with the *banlieue*, presenting it as a space wholly immersed in disillusionment. Now that Grézi is caught by the French authorities and Yaz is in hospital, the final lines of *Boumkoeur* reveal

Yaz's decision to dismiss all Grézi's testimonies and notes on the life of the *banlieue* as irrelevant, choosing instead to keep them for himself. Yaz encourages the reader to witness the *banlieue* firsthand, stating, '*Faites l'effort de nous rendre visite*' (make the effort to pay us a visit) (Djaïdani, 1999, p. 156). Through this invitation, Yaz seeks to convey the deceptive nature of the *banlieue*, urging the global reader to recognise its underlying complexities. The purpose of the visit is to establish a sense of equality and proximity between the *banlieue* and the outside world. Yaz's final assertion thus serves as a critical invitation: it is only by physically "crossing" into the *banlieue* that the reader can fully understand its mishaps, from postcolonial visibility and inferiority to cultural alienation and detachment. However, this invitation remains a mere suggestion, a wish within the confines of the *banlieue*'s isolated towers, only made possible in Djaïdani's *Tour de France*.

3-La Haine:

La Haine portrays networks of universalism within the *banlieue*, but these networks are neither achieved by dismantling colonial barriers nor through the attainment of peaceful coexistence and justice. Instead, the characters' solidarity is tied to their shared struggle for survival through violence in a periphery that refuses to recognise their humanity. The conversations shared amongst the trio, as members of a disadvantaged minority, are those of survival within a space that systematically oppresses them. As Vinz articulates, the way to gain respect in the suburbs is not through peaceful dialogue, but through aggression (*La Haine*, 1995, 00:27:39). He states that the only way to save their *Beur* friend Abdul and be '*égale avec les autres*' (be equal with the others) is through the gun he acquired from a French policeman (00:28:00). Vinz's intention to rescue Abdul is framed as a pursuit of "equality". However, this equality can only be achieved through the violent exercise of power, reflecting

Fanon's assertion that 'decolonization' is inherently 'a violent phenomenon' (2001, p. 27). On this account, Laroussi insists on the term 'revolution' to describe late twentieth-century *Beur* literature (2002, p. 709). This term highlights the desperate attempt to create transitional and unique multicultural modes of existence as a means of resisting the French totalitarian regime, thus creating ties "from below" to revolt against those above. In his reference to subaltern cosmopolitanism, Mitchell suggests that such a cosmopolitanism does not contest 'these abstract ideals, but rather manifests, through practice, the multiple ways that political passion and action for the cause of subaltern groups worldwide creates forms of solidarity' (2007, p. 713). These are able to endow them with significance and a sense of existence (Mitchell, 2007). Within the racial tensions prevalent in the *banlieue*, the ideals of solidarity and sacrifice are highly cherished, although they are expressed through hostility and aggression.

The initial footage of *La Haine* perpetuates a colonial cycle of oppression and injustice. It captures a range of real-life instances of *Beur* rioters who target French police stations in response to police misconduct. The film alludes to the historical context of the 1960s riots in Paris, where confrontations between police and North African youth resulted in numerous tragic events, including the deaths of Tawfik Ouanes, just 9 years old in La Corneuve, Djamal Itim, 19, and the injury of Kader Layachi, 24, in Tourcoing (Silverstein, 2004, p. 160). These incidents serve as significant symbols in the film, representing the violence and systemic racism faced by the *Beur* youth. The graffiti in the film, with phrases like 'don't forget, the police kill' and 'fight for justice', reflects the despair and resistance within these youth communities (*La Haine*, 1995, 00:11:07). The *banlieue* is portrayed as a site which endorses fear, pain, violence, injustice and murder. On this occasion, Mark McKinney declares that

although the suburbs have been portrayed by French mass media as localities replete with delinquency and criminality, many French works and fiction have opted for displaying these anti-social acts as a direct reaction to the exclusion, injustices and marginality that the *banlieuesards* are subject to. Besides, he notes that most *banlieue* films depict French authorities' attempt at containing the *banlieue* criminality through the abuse of power or 'vigilante violence' as a means of penalising its ethnic minority residents (2004, p. 117). *La Haine* thus features multi-ethnic narratives of justice and inclusion predicated upon emphasising, as Katharyne Mitchell puts it, 'the constraints' that abstain them from 'voic(ing) their agency' (2007, p. 712). Its central themes of resisting murder and violence not only reflect pervasively unequal dynamics within the *banlieue*, but also a neo-colonial reminder of the brutal realities of bloodshed and emotional torment.

The collaborative efforts of minorities are depicted in the film as powerful, yet ineffective in the face of French dominant power, emphasising the existential status quo of the French diasporic experience. This is manifested through an overhead shot, which captures the *Beur* youth aimlessly wandering through the empty, desolate blocks of the *banlieue* with the diegetic rap music playing in the background (*La Haine*, 1995, 00:41:28). The scene creates a stark visual portrayal of the *Beur* community's sense of aimlessness and frustration. Their slow, repetitive movements in random circles evoke the image of prisoners trapped within a labyrinth of walls. In this context, Susan Ireland criticises the urban planning of the *banlieue*, which creates a claustrophobic existence for its residents. She states, '*les murs de la cité, comme les murs d'une prison bouchaient l'horizon*' (the walls of the *banlieue*, like the walls of a prison, block the horizon) (1997, p. 178). This imagery underscores the profound sense of hopelessness felt by minority groups, suggesting that their condition is one of inevitable

stagnation and imprisonment. It also evokes a sealed existence in the periphery, which brings forth Packer's illustration (2015) of the trouble involved in 'crossing' the *banlieue*, particularly through his metaphor of 'crossing the *Périphérique*'. For Packer, this boundary is so fraught that it seems to function as a 'frontier,' one that demands a visa for access. This metaphor evokes the rigid, almost impermeable separation between the marginalised lives in the *banlieue* and the centre. In *La Haine*, proximities, if any, between minority and majority groups within the *banlieue* are imbued with hostility, as marginalised subjects fiercely struggle for equality and recognition within their own private territory.

The spatial estrangement invoked in *La Haine* underscores the brutal and antagonistic social realism of the period. This is particularly featured through the titular trope of *haine* (hatred) and the brutality between minorities and the white French police. The film's stark black-and-white visuals align with the genre of *Beur Cinema* which Laroussi attributes to 'the social reality of the *banlieue*, police, drug..., unemployment, racism, or failing schools' (2002, p. 712). In his analysis of the socio-economic conditions depicted in *La Haine*, American film critic Roger Ebert also emphasises the broader context of these challenges. He states that:

'What underlines everything they do is the inescapable fact that they have nothing to do. They have no jobs, no prospects, no serious hopes of economic independence, no money, few ways to amuse themselves except by hanging out. They are not bad kids, not criminals, not particularly violent... but they have been singled out by age, ethnicity and appearances probable troublemakers' (Ebert, 1996).

The trio's prevalent feelings of antagonism intermingle with the harsh political and social realities of the period, which they attempt to resist. Their ancestors' history of exclusion, humiliation, and violence is reflected in the *banlieue*, fuelling their *haine* (hatred)

towards the diasporic society. Like Said's Algerian colonial history, Vinz's holocaust history tracks his ancestral Jewish suffering in concentration camps, and Hubert's attempts at equality traces back the Black history of his parents and their struggle against apartheid. Ebert further remarks on the sociopolitical context of the era, stating that 'The French neo-Nazi right lurks in the shadows of "hate", providing it with unspoken subtext for its French audiences' (1996). Instances of resistance to French totalitarian harassment and blackmail are also related to police custody. For example, when Hubert and Said are taken to the police station, their anger intensifies as they are subjected to kicks and slaps, with no means of escaping the mistreatment (*La Haine*, 1995). In association to this, Étienne Balibar expatiates upon the issue of '*soulevement*' or uprising, a characteristic inherent to the geographical marginalisation of the *banlieue*, especially in connection to the 2005 riots (2007). In *La Haine*, the trio's tensions, to use Balibar's terminology, are never 'spontaneous', but rather 'provoked' (2007, p. 49), as a response to oppression. In this sense, the spatial marginalisation of the *banlieue* is closely tied to its structural boundaries, which in turn exacerbates acts of diasporic incivility.

The police incivility inside the *banlieue* mirrors an entrenched, institutionalised governmental racism that promotes a disregard for the lives of minorities. These imperialistic dynamics situate the marginalised as controlled, and power as misused. Following the imprisonment of Said and Hubert, Vinz, seeking retaliation, provokes a police officer and subsequently seizes his weapon. The officer's intention now is to exact vengeance on the trio, even if it means 'taking their lives' (*La Haine*, 1995). Balibar considers the brutally uncivilised cycles of violence in *La Haine*, which are instigated by the police and include 'insults, beatings, shootings, arrests, detentions, (and) threats' (2007, p. 50). *La Haine* strongly reflects how the

actions carried out by both the police and the youth create a scenario that resembles ‘a clash between gangs’, where police squads behave like gangs engaged in conflict with other gangs (p. 47). The unethical manipulation ‘of the values of order and legality, this tendential substitution of law and order for the social and the economic, this perversion of the notion of the “rule of law”’ (p. 50) underscores a crucial issue in the film. The disorder denotes abstract notions of Republican ideals of harmony and equality and testifies to French inability to realise an inclusive environment for its minorities.

Like *Boumkoeur*, *La Haine* engages with tropes of universality, expressed through the attempt to subvert minority stereotypes. However, the film’s use of multiple stereotyping tends to place more emphasis on the Black and Jewish ethnic subjectivities. For instance, although Hubert is a boxer, he is framed as the most soft-hearted, least violent, and least trouble-seeking character, whose primary desire is to ‘*partir*’ (leave) the estate and its problems (*La Haine*, 1995, 01:30:02). Rather than embracing violence or aggression, Hubert exhibits a more sensible, sagacious, and thoughtful demeanor, focusing on preaching peace and pursuing his dream of becoming a successful boxer. This portrayal challenges typical stereotypes of aggression and criminality often ascribed to individuals from the *banlieue*. For example, in his effort to persuade Vinz against shooting the police officer in retaliation for Abdel’s murder, Hubert in close-up shot delivers the film’s standout expression: ‘*la haine attire la haine*’ (Hatred breeds hatred) (00:52:58). This contrasts with the commonly held, purely negative view of the *banlieue*, which is often depicted as a space devoted solely to materialistic, non-spiritual, and non-intimate pursuits. This stereotype has been widely propagated by mainstream French figures, such as Blaise Cendrars who paints a grim picture of the *banlieue*. He describes it as ‘*un monde truqué, un monde matérialiste, injuste, dur*,

méchant... un monde dégoûtant (a fake world, a materialistic, unjust, harsh, nasty world... a filthy world) (1949, p. 11). In this context, *La Haine* challenges French judgement of the *banlieue* as merely built for materialistic purposes. Using juxtaposing features within the ethnic individuals, the film encourages viewers to reconsider the *banlieue* not as a static, isolated space, but as a home for ethnically diverse minorities whose identities are not confined to stereotypes.

Simultaneously, however, the film's universal perspective effectively denies the *Beur* character his unique expression of home and heritage, reducing him to a shared collective minority experience. Said's visual introduction in the film reflects a powerful visual statement of his alienation from both the French mainstream and a lack of a defined, intimate domestic space. He is first seen standing up at a distance staring at a police station, and then framed through a zoomed-in shot of his face from the streets (00:05:55). This visual composition implies a separation not only from the centre of French society, but also from any meaningful domestic or personal space. This contrasts with the more established and intimate homes of Vinz and Hubert, whose bedrooms offer glimpses into their personal and cultural histories. Vinz's home provides him with a sense of nestling bonding with his Jewish past. Most importantly, it stretches to his unfearful, determined resistance against the abusive skinhead (acted by Kassovitz himself). Along with performing his Jewish dance, which symbolically reflects a strong sense of Jewish community and solidarity (00:07:42), Vinz's Jewish grandmother, aware of their religious heritage, cautions him about the violent actions he and his peers are involved in. She implies that such behaviours will result in the erosion of cultural sanctity, ultimately driving them away from the synagogues (00:09:23).

On the other hand, Hubert's bedroom, infused with boxing memorabilia and images of Muhammad Ali, serves as a powerful space that inspires his fight for the black cause against racism (00:39:10). The way the film depicts these domestic realms, through static shots, reflects their value as reminders of the legacies that they carry. In contrast, Said's intimate atmosphere remains anonymous and out of focus. His frequent presence in Vinz's house, where he makes himself at home and engages in familial banter with Vinz's sister, underscores his lack of a personal, rooted space. If the viewer gets to know both Hubert's and Vinz's young sisters at home, Said's sister is mentioned but rarely screened, mainly as a subject of insult in the streets. Carrie Tarr conceptualises North-African difference as gradually disappearing in the movie through the mutilation of *Beur* cultural spaces from view (Tarr, 1999). Vincendeau equally raises the question of how, unlike Hubert's and Vinz's intense yet nurturing relationships with their respective black and Jewish families, Said's 'family environment remains off-screen' (2005, p. 59). Their familial connections provide them 'one layer of depth' (p. 60). By denying the *Beur* this "more specific" layer of identity, Djaïdani highlights a form of multi-ethnic resistance that does not focus on reclaiming or reasserting Algerian roots.

The conclusion of *La Haine* carries a profound existential message, offering no hope or resolution for multi-ethnic minorities and highlighting a specific *Beur* disempowerment. The camera captures the tragic murder of Vinz, who is shot by a disguised French police officer after he anticipates his escape on the roof (*La Haine*, 1995, 01:36:07). As Vinz collapses, his face covered in blood, the camera shifts focus to the final sequence of the film. A zoom-in reveals an intense standoff between Hubert and the officer, both aiming their guns at each other. Simultaneously, the camera frames Said standing behind the police car, powerless and

detached from the escalating confrontation. The screen abruptly fades to black, followed by the sound of a gunshot, leaving the identity of the shooter unrecognised (01:36:51). Accompanied by the non-diegetic sound of a ticking clock, a voice-over intones, '*c'est une histoire d'une société qui tombe*' (it is a story of a society that falls), but '*se répète sans cesse pour rassurer [...] J'usqu'ici tout va bien*' (keeps repeating to reassure itself [...] so far so good) (01:36:42). In emphasises the precariousness of the ethnic minority characters' lives in the film, Kassovitz declares, 'I knew the ending before the storyline, a tragedy. Everything is about the end, the last five seconds' (Ciment and Herpe, 1999, p. 184). The film's open-ended tragedy highlights the ongoing ethnic denial that pervades French social system, falsely reassuring the *banlieue* residents of stability even as their situation is clearly deteriorating. Within this framework, *La Haine* critiques French society's reluctance to engage meaningfully with its ethnic minorities, who are relegated to the margins. Moura points out that the film works out as a 'colonial expedition' (2013, p. 512). Particularly, it offers insight or a degree of 'exploration' into the lives of the disenfranchised through a narrative that might be unfamiliar or inaccessible to the average metropolitan French viewer (p. 512). This 'expedition' works to deconstruct the *Orientalist* discourse of the *banlieue* as 'threatening', 'distant', and merely 'a recourse to one's previous experience', or 'what one has read about' (Said, 2003, pp. 116-117). However, the "colonial exploration" orchestrates in an existential vein. Vinz's and Hubert's confrontational experience highlights the futility of the multi-ethnic struggle to create a just, accommodating and inclusive diasporic social reality. On a deeper level, by choosing not to resolve or take part in the standoff, Said's agency is doubly constrained. Unlike Vinz and Hubert who actively participate in the confrontation, his position at the back affirms his role as a bystander, trapped in the systematic violence that defines his existence. Despite the film's critical tone, *La Haine* presents a vision of internal Franco-*Beur* proximity in the

segregated *banlieue* that is suffocating and far from empathetic. It lacks the aspect of external proximities, which are marked by the sociospatial erasure of borders, as seen in *Tour de France*, a contrast we will now explore.

4-Tour de France:

Tour de France highlights the tensions between the private and the public sphere, particularly through the experiences of Far'Hook. The film's opening scenes illustrate his interactions within the *banlieue*, reflecting a breakdown of familial and communal bonds that ultimately leads to his departure from the area. The first close-up shot of Far'Hook presents him as a disruptive figure in his neighborhood due to his music. His rapping is interrupted by an Algerian lady, who repeatedly curses his deceased father while demanding that he leaves the neighbourhood (2016, 00:02:28). The subsequent *mise-en-scène* spots a confrontational exchange between Far'Hook and a *Beur* gang. Ironically, they remark, '*Far'Hook [...] la famille*' (Far'Hook [...] the family) (00:03:08), attempting to provoke him by asking for a photograph. In a close-up, Far'Hook dismisses their request with the phrase, '*pas de selfie avec moi*' (no selfie with me) (00:03:14). The conversation culminates in a struggle, with the gang threatening Far'Hook that: '*le rap, c'est mort pour toi*' (the rap, it is dead for you) (2016), prompting his escape to the city. Indeed, the early moments in the film, mainly the hostile encounter with the Algerian woman, and the threatening exchange with the *Beur* gang, underscore Far'Hook's symbolic alienation and growing estrangement from his roots. The declaration that rap is dead for him signifies that his only mode of self-expression in the *banlieue* is now obsolete. Far'Hook's refusal to participate in the selfie captures his resistance to being framed within the sociospatial context within the *banlieue*, positioning himself as an outsider. His subsequent departure from this space symbolises more than just a physical move. It paves

the way to his journey towards a progressive cosmopolitan identity, one that moves beyond both its confines and legacies. As Appiah's rootless notion of 'the clash' with 'those near to us' (Appiah, 2019, p. 2) suggests, Far'Hook's sense of self is increasingly detached from the neighbourhood. Far'Hook, given his status as an orphan, lacks a sense of family, safety, and paternal security in the periphery. This absence is later contrasted by his statement to a vagabond, '*je vais voir une famille*' (I am going to see family), as he sets out to locate Serge's house for the first time (2016, 00:07:55). His mobility across borders and through the centre reflects his quest for a new proximity, and a more fluid, less constrained, though also rootless, sense of self.

In the French ports, where much of the film unfolds, the concept of *Beur* alterity is shaped by geographical distance from the French mainstream. It becomes more pronounced, particularly through the lens of French media. After being shot at by *Beur* rapper Sphynx, Far'Hook accompanies Matthias's father on their tour. As he travels by train to Serge's place, the viewer is presented with a clear, bright and unobstructed view of Far'Hook's face for the first time (2016, 00:06:45). This marks a pivotal moment, as Far'Hook's face is no longer concealed behind his baseball cap, personalised with the letter "F", a distinctive symbol of his initial that he is recognised by in the *banlieue*. His removal of his cap symbolically suggests his readiness to engage with the French mainstream and implies an attempt to "shed" his perceived Otherness as well as uniqueness. Upon his arrival at Serge's house, the camera draws attention to a security gate installed at the entrance, a visual cue that signifies the French suspicion towards *Beur* threat (00:08:25). This sentiment is later reinforced when Serge and Far'Hook listen to a radio report on a 1995 train line attack involving *Beur* youth from Lyon to Paris (00:29:47). Far'Hook responds angrily to the media's portrayal of the

incident, highlighting its role in fostering hostility within the diaspora. Unlike in *Boumkoeur*, where such racist tensions are privately reserved in the periphery, here in public spaces, they are made negotiable, confrontational, and more accessible to public discourse. However, the conversation takes a turn when Serge asks Far'Hook if he is Muslim, to which Far'Hook responds, '*Je suis Français*' (I am French). Serge's fears of the foreign Other are alleviated to a certain extent within a context where Far'Hook's religious identity is deliberately displaced. The alleviation of French hostility, which is provoked by a postcolonial discourse of Otherness, as described by Silverstein in terms of 'France's lack of immunity in the postcolonial struggles over the future of its former colony' (2004, p. 1), is ultimately undermined by both the assertion of a distinct French identity and inclination to eradicate *Beur* religious roots.

The discourse of proximity between Far'Hook and Serge presents challenges to prevailing perceptions of cultural and religious legacies inherent in the *banlieue*. The scene in which Far'Hook removes his shoes at Serge's doorstep marks a symbolic moment of assimilation into the French mainstream. The camera adopts a panoramic movement, accenting the faintly illuminated expanse within Serge's room, adorned with images of harbours. The silhouettes of the two men, both dressed in navy blue shirts, are framed as standing opposite one another, and a close-up captures Serge's suspicious gaze hurled at Far'Hook as he removes his shoes, which indicates a common practice in Islamic culture before entering a mosque. Far'Hook's action is met with Serge's harsh comment, '*ce n'est pas une mosquée ici*' (it is not a mosque here), reflecting the objectionable position of Islam in the French predominant societal framework (00:09:30). Far'Hook's entrance into Serge's house symbolically suggests a ritualistic crossing from the Islamic space of the *banlieue* into a secular, Christian-dominated French household, marking his cultural transition. This divide

between Islam and French identity is highlighted by Serge's subsequent query about the type of music Far'Hook performs with his son, whom he refuses to call Bilal. Physically approximating him, Far'Hook responds, '*c'est pas de la musique Islamique, c'est du rap*' (it is not Islamic music, it is rap) (00:10:20). In this context, Horvath suggests that cosmopolitanism entails 'a certain openness, eagerness, and ability to engage with different cultural traditions and orientations that are strange in their origin' (2018, p. 88). As such, the proximity between the city and the suburbs, symbolised by Serge and Far'Hook, illustrates how Far'Hook distances himself from the Islamic legacy of the *banlieue*, indicating his desire to be understood within Serge's cosmopolitan terms and the space he represents.

However, the symbolic journey to gain French acceptance, exemplified by their shared trials, is driven by assimilationist agendas. emphasised when both men work together to secure the house windows, followed by their close proximity in the van. As they sit side by side, a medium close-up of the two men captures the Christian cross dangling in Serge's vehicle, which foreshadows a significant visual motif (00:11:10). The cross signals the upcoming spiritual incarnations that Far'Hook must navigate to be integrated as an equal subject in the French mainstream. In this sense, the journey reflecting equal cosmopolitan dynamics aligns with the effort, as Lisle puts it, 'to negate the difficult asymmetries that saturate [...] encounters' (Lisle, 2010, p. 147). The sequence reveals underlying power imbalances in a journey where the two men are seemingly positioned on equal terms, yet it also underscores Far'Hook's spiritual journey, where he is initiated into Serge's world, adopting the values and norms of the French center. Serge's room and van, thus function as symbols of white internal spaces of integration, highlighting the *Beur's* "passage" through private spaces as part of their assimilation into the center.

The voyage or “pilgrimage” undertaken by Far'Hook and Serge is not only framed as an opportunity for *Beurs* to cross borders of exclusion and reach out to the French mainstream. It also represents an expansive yet uniform perspective on *Beur* subjectivities. In this regard, it demands aesthetic reflection on the current social realities in diasporic France. In this section of the chapter, I explore how the film presents the road trip to a tour of regions as a means of promoting cosmopolitan uprootedness, sustained through *Beur* disconnection from their Algerian heritage. Such a vision aligns with Debbie Lisle's progressive perspective on travel, which emphasises the importance of “respect” and “recognition” (2010, p. 147) as universal principles. However, these ideals do not inherently ensure a fair distribution of power dynamics in moments of cultural encounters. Drawing from Lisle's ideas, I aim to challenge the “easy championing” (2010) of the film's cosmopolitan Franco-*Beur* transformation, exposing the limitations of their sympathetically egalitarian interactions. I consider the film's utopian dimensions, illustrating a form of diasporic inclusion that competes with the public expression of Algerian cultural and religious difference. Its contribution to muffling contemporary diasporic social realities and concerns of *Beur* integration introduces a type of travel that influences a *Beur* subject position aligned with ‘homogeneous proximity’ in the process of interacting with the white French Other. This type of travel predicated upon the subversion of Algerian roots equally contributes to rerouting white French identity into accepting the Other as similar.

Bouchareb's film initially frames Far'Hook and Serge as opposites. As *Beur* ‘more specific’ and deeper cultural and religious layers of difference are uprooted, however, other forms of diversity as well as cultural fusion between the two characters form. Initially,

Far'Hook and Serge undergo a series of estrangements, largely centered around food, language and music, holding divergent preferences. Far'Hook favours modern music, particularly hip-hop culture, while Serge is critical of it, remarking that '*même un marteau-piqueur casse moins les oreilles*' (even a jackhammer breaks your ears less) (2016, 00:20:00). Over time, their mutual curiosity leads them to explore each other's cultural tastes. Far'Hook comes to appreciate French cuisine, art, the Northern French accent, and the traditional songs of Serge Lama, whom Serge idolises (00:15:01). Similarly, Serge begins to show an interest in Far'Hook's dialect and, in turn, explains regional linguistic variations in France. He eventually realises that Far'Hook's dialect is indeed part of the French language, much like other regional forms of speech. However, Farouk's cultural expressions appear more like isolated artifacts, disconnected from a broader Algerian cultural context. This contrasts with the other cultural minorities who are more pronounced in the film, particularly the *Basque* community, whom Serge observes with admiration, remarking in a medium close-up, '*Ils chantent bien*' (they sing well) (00:41:55). When Farouk questions whether they understand the songs, Serge responds emphatically that they are passed down '*de génération en génération; c'est une culture*' (from generation to generation; it is culture) (00:42:07). This sentiment is also echoed through the visual language of the film, particularly when Far'Hook's interacts with African music: feeling the rhythm in his head, taking photographs of African women in traditional attire, and eventually stepping into the middle, where the women dance in circles around him (00:36:50). This scene highlights Bouchareb's conception of diversity, where the *Beur* experience is overshadowed by and framed within the larger narrative of minority struggles for inclusion, rather than being isolated as a distinctly *Beur* cause.

While the cultural exchange between Serge and Far'Hook envelops sensations of 'empathy, attraction and hospitality towards others and the foreign' (Nava, 2006, p. 5), Serge's cultural and national identity holds more significance and value than Far'Hook's understanding of his own past. Appiah distinguishes between 'cultural artifacts' or 'patrimony', such as 'works of art, religious relics, manuscripts, crafts, musical instruments', and 'preserving cultures', which are defined by the value they carry for the past (Appiah, 2006, p. 56). Serge's painting, in this sense, preserves the memory, past, and "patrimony" of his deceased wife, symbolically reviving her memory and fulfilling her posthumous wish. For Serge, the reproduction of Vernet's art is a means to 'make and invest with significance through the exercise of their human creativity' (Appiah, 2006, p. 56). Most importantly, when Serge arranges his chevalier at the correct angle and place, there, a French flag is reflected in a windowpane behind him. This visual motif is crucial in symbolising French national unity, an idealised vision that becomes evident as Serge begins his first painting.

In contrast to Serge, Far'Hook's tastes appear disconnected from his cultural and national past, and his sense of history and roots seems dormant. This is evident in a scene when Serge offers Far'Hook a drink and the latter hesitates, prompting Serge to ask, '*C'est à cause de ta religion?*' (Is it because of your religion?) (2016, 00:32:10). Far'Hook refrains from referencing the Muslim intolerance of wine or other alcoholic beverages. Instead, he offers a more personal response, captured in a shallow focus shot with an out-of-focus port background: '*non, seulement c'est que j'aime pas ça*' (no, I just do not like it) (00:32:12). By neutralising the concept of "taste", the film decouples universal notions of respect and recognition from *Beur* cultural or religious roots, reducing them to matters of personal preferences. Far'Hook's cultural expression, which does not appear to value his Algerian

heterogeneity and attachment to the past, can be inferred as to what Appiah refers to as an “artifact” (Appiah, 2006). Although their proximity fosters new artistic spaces for mutual exchange that are inclusive of both, it still highlights a form of progressive cosmopolitanism that does not depict *Beur* value of cultures, which hold significance in relation to Algerian heritage. In essence, mobility tends to obscure cultural differences, reinforcing a displaced form of cultural difference rooted in homogeneity.

This shift is further exemplified by Serge’s more assertive and devout Christian posture towards religion symbolised by the high angle shot of Far’Hook daydreams, envisioning himself kneeling before a figure of Jesus Christ, while Serge remains focused on his painting. This visual motif recalls Lisle’s critique of ‘respectful distance,’ which risks ‘neutraliz(ing)’ — or even forgett(ing) — cultural, religious and historical difference as a means to cross barriers in multicultural settings’ (2010, p. 147). Djaïdani aims to establish a desirable image for *Beur* minorities in shared spaces, characterised by a subjugated, inferior stance towards Algerian religious norms. Instead, it situates *Beur* self-designation along the spectrum of Christian or secularist codes. The *Beur* subject is framed as an uprooted cosmopolitan and a ‘friend of uniformity’ in a discourse that implicitly creates friction between ‘cosmopolitans’ and ‘provincials’ (Appiah, 2019, p. 1). Serge’s later observation that ‘*rien n’a changé*’ (nothing has changed) (Djaïdani, 2016, 00:24:03) about the angle of his paintings in comparison to the past is significantly symbolic. It reflects on the static nature of his perception of Far’Hook who does not embody an exoticised notion of “difference”. This is later validated by Farouk’s rap line in Marseille: ‘*À nos enfants de la patrie, le jour de gloire est arrivé, la tyrannie est finie ; en réalité, on n’est pas différents, on est juste divisés*’ (To our children of the homeland, the day of glory has arrived, tyranny is over; in reality, we are not different, we are just divided) (50:19:22).

This sequence underscores the rejection of *Beur* 'allure of difference', as 'the fascination that it exercises for certain people' (Nava, 2007, p. 21), in favour of conformity. The cosmopolitan human dynamics resisting *Beur* injustice are less about genuine engagement with difference, and more about fostering a sense of universal commonality.

The potential for bonding between the *Beur* and white French subject involves transformational dynamics of kinship and fatherhood. The *Chaâba*, often associated with *Beur* immigrants' biological father, signals strong attachment to Algerian traditional heritage and a resistance to French assimilation. In *Boumkoeur*, Yaz's father who is depicted as an alcoholic in the *banlieue* suggests a gradual disintegration of the Algerian father's role. In contrast, the death of Far'Hook's biological father, whose absence is marked both in mention and in scene symbolises a complete disconnection of the *Beur* identity from roots. Crucially, Far'Hook's biological father is deceased and symbolically replaced by Serge, who steps into the paternal role. Far'Hook, who has grown up fatherless, refers to Serge as '*le Daron*', a term for father in *Beur* slang (2016). Serge thus becomes Far'Hook's godfather who in showing him directions on the road introduces him to the secularist French lifestyle symbolically centred in the ports. This shift is not just geographical but also values-based, representing a move from the *banlieue* to the French mainstream while also resulting in a transformative father-and-son affection. However, Far'Hook's new becoming involves a yearning for uprootedness, constantly asking Serge to cease referring back to '*mes origines*' (my origins) (00:40:54). As such, Far'Hook becomes the embodiment of a new secularist *Beur* subject, prompting Serge to recognise his past misjudgments of his Muslim son. Serge, who denies his son in earlier scenes, asserting, '*je connais pas de Bilal*' (I do not know any Bilal) (00:08:32), now addresses him by name and admits to having been '*un peu dur avec lui*' (a bit harsh on him) (00:35:22).

This realisation is further underscored in a scene where Far'Hook is suspected by the police and Serge tells them, '*Je le connais*' (I know him) (00:43:45). This recognition not only dismantles the stereotypical portrayal of *Beurs* as a threat but symbolically fosters a solidarity with the *Beur* Other based on familiarity. It is through Far'Hook's secularised identity that Serge can truly embrace his role as a father and acknowledge him as part of his "family". While Serge is initially frustrated by Mathias' refusal to accompany him on the journey to the French ports due to his religious conversion, his newfound kinship with Far'Hook becomes equated to a bond of loyalty and allegiance to universality: that of *Laïcité*.

Djaïdani's spiritual approach to painting and art as universal subjects depicts uniform objects that are affiliated with the universal setting of the sea. The tour that the two men undertake represents a spiritual voyage that Serge attempts to involve Far'Hook in, with the latter identifying himself as '*l'assistant de l'artiste*' (the artist's assistant) (2006, 00:27:57). Far'Hook, previously indifferent to the classical eighteenth-century paintings of Vernet, now regards their collective artistic journey as '*pèlerinage*' (a pilgrimage) (2016, 00:14:15). This concept presents a fascinating contrast to the traditional pilgrimage of Algerian Muslims to Mecca, and to Bouzid's '*pèlerinage au Chaâba*' (pilgrimage to the *Chaâba*) (Begag, 1986, p. 171), which serves to familiarise him with the Algerian past. Within this journey, the selection of Vernet, whom Serge describes as '*avait le talent de peindre la mer*' (has the talent to draw the sea) (00:46:05) is especially significant. In an extreme close-up, Serge shares with Far'Hook how the sea as the centre of their sought-after "pilgrimage" conveys the impression of '*continuer sans mouvement*' (continuing without movement) (*Tour de France*, 2016, 00:46:15). At that, Far'Hook reflects on Baudelaire's *Albatros* which tells of a limp Albatross or seabird who is mistreated by sailors in the depths of the sea (00:47:35). The poets' symbolic plight and limp future in France is akin to the *Beur* youth's plight of discrimination and

exclusion. As such, the metaphor of the sea is employed to seek mutually equal grounds and spaces of inclusion where both parties approximate, get intimate with each other and regard one another as equal. However, the journey across the sea, for the *Beur*, is a journey of assimilation, serving as a crucial part of their quest for diasporic inclusion. Far'Hook's envisioned equality would incorporate the assimilation of homogeneous subjectivities, indistinguishable from those of Serge. Freed from the restrictive boundaries of stereotyping, Far'Hook is framed within a narrative of assimilation that, as Lisle suggests, 'is saturated with the existing power relations endemic to cultural difference and are continually generating new subject positions that enact new power relations' (2010, p. 153).

The film represents secular identity politics reflecting the threshold that the *Beur* ultimately crosses to be initiated into the Western modes of belonging. By the end of the film, Far'Hook is introduced to his first sexual encounter with the French girl Maude (Louise Grinberg) at Serge's insistence. Initially, Far'Hook hesitates, stating '*c'est pas mon truc*' (it's not my thing) (2016, 00:55:41), but eventually, he complies (00:59:14). Maude, who also defends the sea '*contre l'homme*' (against mankind) (00:54:20), embodies the sea motif while is also self-positioned as Far'Hook's '*Bohemienne*' (Bohemian girl) (00:59:29), acting as both a symbol of resistance to human control and a paragon of female non-convention and secularism. Later, during their cruise to Marseille, Serge places a sailor's hat on Far'Hook, stating that he has earned his '*premier galon*' (first uniform badge) after surviving sea sickness (01:04:35). Symbolically, the sea represents a trial that testifies to Far'Hook's rite of passage. His personalised hat, with the letter "F", is now replaced by a sailor's hat, symbolising that of secular uniformity and inclusion into the centre. This is confirmed by the visual image of running water trespassing the road in the static shot, which serves as a powerful visual

metaphor for the uniform fusion of boundaries (00:25:10). Moreover, Far'Hook's symbolic initiation into the Western ethos is further reinforced by the news that Serge's son, Mathias, has named his daughter 'Noura', implying "light" in the Algerian dialect (01:08:34). The next shot shows a static shot of Jesus in the church, accompanied by Serge's non-diegetic internal monologue, in which he declares his intent to care for his granddaughter '*Lumiere*' (light) (01:08:46). The camera then cuts to Far'Hook's silhouette, framed in a cross-like shape, as he dives into the sea in his navy-blue shirt, symbolising spiritual enlightenment and rebirth (01:09:00). It represents his Christian baptism and the symbolic death of his former identity, yet also a rebirth of the "New *Beur* Man" in the diaspora, a secularised one. Upon reaching Marseille, Far'Hook is ridiculed by *Beur* lads for becoming '*un marin*' (a sailor). In response, he raps: '*J'ai quitté la cité pour les coquillages et les galets*' (I left the neighbourhood for the seashells and stones) (01:06:03), symbolising a return to the sea where his rebirth and baptism come to pass. It also marks a space where he finds a new kind of stability with Maude (01:11:00). As they finally live together in her vehicle, a transient home that, much like the sea, embodies constant fluidity and rootlessness, suggesting a life unanchored to tradition.

Conclusion:

In *La Haine* and *Boumkoeur*, Djaïdani acknowledges the inadequacy of internal narration to dispel *Beur* perceptions within the *banlieue*. *Tour de France* represents Djaïdani's utopian project of universality. The vision of a new inclusive France, where multicultural people can coexist peacefully and empathetically, is motivated by border-crossing posture of homogeneity. Djaïdani's works follow a different but consecutively cosmopolitan path that ultimately completes his debut projects. As demonstrated by *La Haine* and *Boumkoeur*, critical cosmopolitanism dramatically exposes colonial agendas of violence and stereotyping.

Nonetheless, the portrayal of the *banlieue* as a multifaceted realm of dynamic diversity and heterogeneity is increasingly distanced from the specificities of *Beur* identity. The portrayal of the *banlieue* as a universal space in Djaïdani's terms witnesses an ambivalent *Beur* identity on the verge of relinquishing its cultural moorings. Although Hubert asserts that '*Il faut que je part d'ici*' (I should leave this estate) (*La Haine*, 1995), he never leaves the *banlieue* in the film. Despite the invitation extended by Yaz in *Boumkoeur* for the reader to visit and understand the *banlieue*, it is the *Beur* subject who enters the white French spaces, leaving behind all his legacies, and not vice versa. *Tour de France* involves a more open approach to mobility where boundaries are erased, and the very seeds of ethnic stereotyping and colonial legacies of violence are uprooted. Nonetheless, the new homogeneous agendas contrast with the conventional definition of the *Chaâba* as a niche of Algerian heritage, which remains neither reinvented nor integrated into the external sphere. Instead, the spectator is introduced to a utopian public space that is known for secularist norms that the *Beur* subject readily embraces. Djaïdani's final long-thought project *Tour de France* proves the possibility for *Beur* integration. However, in many respects, it envisions a rootless cosmopolitan *Beur*, who is no longer keen to struggle for the old wave's 'integration with roots' in public spaces.

Djaïdani's earlier works, which present ambivalent ethnic stereotyping, downplay and trivialise a sense of *Beur* communal bonding. *Tour de France* aims to promote inclusion within the central diasporic community, unrestricted by geographical boundaries of the *banlieue* as the final emblem of the Algerian colonial past. However, Djaïdani's new version of equality beyond the *banlieue* presents, to use Debbie Lisle's phrase, 'the problem with solutions' (2010, p. 145). This version confines and superimposes the *Beur* subject on French secularist model of identity. Similar to how the boundaries that once separated the *banlieue* from the

French metropolis and the rest of the world are pushed back, the Algerian cultural and religious legacies are neutralised; they recede and slowly perish in the texts. Djaïdani's outlook satisfies a position of cosmopolitan "wings" that emerged from amicable interactions and the rejection of colonial borders. In Mica Nava's interpretation, such cosmopolitanism does not require a violent intrusion from the authorities but is dependent upon human interactions transmitting a feeling of 'self-serving', 'sentimental' and 'facile interaction' (Nava, 2006, p. 5). *Tour de France*, nonetheless, is still designated as a jaundiced cosmopolitan film in which journeying, in Lisle's words, 'became one more set of stipulations about "How to Behave"' (2010, p. 140). The film envisions a neo-assimilatory France that erases the pride of the Algerian past by creating a homogeneous community that supports a Republican model. Djaïdani's final project evolved into a recognition and respect for the *Beur* based on specific norms of conduct, particularly their acculturation. Djaïdani, through *Tour de France*, seeks to imprint an impression on the global viewer about a narrative of potential French diasporic coexistence, empathy and non-governmental intervention that overlaps with content secularist ethnic groups, suffering no identity dilemmas.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored late twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century *Beur* writings and cinema published and screened between 1986 and 2016 that respond to a period characterised by urgent diasporic concerns related to *Beur* identity, inclusion and integration in France. Over the course of the four chapters, I have discussed the innovative ways in which *Beur* literary and cinematic output engage with themes belonging, identity, legacies of Algerian heritage, racism, the navigation of private or marginalised spaces, border-crossing. By closely examining earlier and more recent narratives and cinematic productions, spanning genres of realism, comedy, war, and the road-movie, I have identified the various ways that the selected works both shape and are shaped by French diasporic spaces, where they express their central endeavour at scrambling “to exist”. The chapters pursue an intersectional study of identity, as well as questions of genre and space to deconstruct complacencies within the cosmopolitan register that have emerged in criticism and in the society under which *Beur* identity has been constructed so far.

The thesis explores the critical cosmopolitan dynamics in which *Beur* subjectivities, that were previously confined to the *banlieue*, produce different representational logistics of *Beur* identity in other cross-border spaces. It reflects on the expanding visions of space, and more mobile focus of the more recent works in which the *Chaâba/banlieue* proved too dominating and limiting to how Algerian imaginary representations are mobilised. As the contemporary writers and filmmakers are steadily leaving behind the borders of the *banlieue*, they also leave behind restrictive models of cosmopolitan rootedness as an imagined model of *Beur* integration. The thesis presents a contribution to *Beur* literary and cinematic studies by reflecting on a number of genres, cosmopolitan patterns and geographical relocations in both private and public spheres. It makes a substantial contribution in terms of tracing the erasure of private or ghettoised representational spaces, in texts that seek to enter and/or address the mainstream. I have offered critical interpretations of these texts to contend that the authors and filmmakers seek to transcend geography and genre limitations to redefine notions of “the centre”. Applying an intersectional cosmopolitan analysis, I have argued that the majority of these texts deploy agendas of assimilation to revisit Franco-Algerian colonial histories at a time when *Beur* youth are still coping with belonging and struggling against marginalisation.

This thesis opens with a discussion of the genre of realism as developed in Azouz Begag’s *Le Gone du Chaâba* (1986) to explore the writer’s representation of *Beur* subjectivities focusing on the Western institution of the French school. The exploration of the journey between the *Chaâba* and this cross-border space for a *Beur* child born of Algerian immigrants provides insight into the different psychological conflicts and identity crises he suffers from.

The problem of assimilation is explored through the way it initially inhibits a *Beur* sense of “roots” and affiliations towards traditional Algerian heritage. The *Beur* child ultimately fosters a rooted cosmopolitan consciousness. I argue that the separation between the private world of the *Chaâba* and the French institutional and formal body of the school is resolved through the child’s *Bildung* development. This is driven by the construction of an ambivalent space featured through the incorporation of a uniquely Algerian sense of cultural and religious identity, the proactive refusal of Algerian tradition in the *Chaâba* and the reluctance to blindly assimilate into the French mainstream. My analysis demonstrates that in a multitude of ways, the writer sought a rooted cosmopolitan discourse, both resistant of French agendas and legitimising of his own political, social and economic aspirations.

The beginning of the analysis focuses on Azouz’s non-maturing, pro-assimilationist identity formation in which his cosmopolitanism is presented as incomplete and rootless. In his transcendence to the French public school, he gets caught in the French assimilatory trap, as he demonstrates self-denial and conceals his identity. I maintain that *Beur* blind imitation of the dominant, superior French culture at the price of acknowledging one’s differences overshadows his proactive attitude towards the larger Algerian community. The final stage of the *Bildungsroman* involves a more developed, rooted version of Azouz, who now appears as a fully-fledged cosmopolite. His identity matures into a hybrid state of consciousness that signifies the reconciliation of the private and the public; the individual and the communal. I argue that Begag’s narrative nonetheless concludes with an existential discussion, given the shift from the *Chaâba* to the *banlieue*, which still hampers *Beur* aspirations for white French cross-border interaction. Begag’s celebration of rooted cosmopolitan endeavour exclusively relies on the icon of the *Pied-noir*, and notions of a shared cultural heritage and historical

continuity. His ability to reframe the school as a public space that fosters sympathetic exchange and curiosity towards the culture of the *Beur* arguably represents a limited view of the promotion for universal understanding and cultural and linguistic diversity. I thus contend that Begag's vision of realising a rooted cosmopolitan future for *Beurs* in the white French mainstream proves untenable when confronted with the persistent realities of borders. This tension invokes the central dilemma of the *Beur* generation at the heart of this thesis: the challenge of preserving *Beur* identity and culture in the face of Republican laicity.

In the second chapter, I examine the genre of comedy in Djamel Bensalah's films, *Beur sur la Ville* and *Il était une fois dans l'Oued*. In adding a new diasporic public setting in his works, Bensalah offers a sense of relief from the constraints of borders. In oscillating between the periphery and the centre, a secondary space emerges; one that enables the articulation of an identity not bound by the expectations and limitations tied to being a *Beur*. Particularly, my discussion comes to redefine and subvert concepts of visibility related to colonial histories and religious extremism, a state which is mostly concentrated inside the private spaces and seems as absent out of it. I offer a reflection on comedy's limitations in terms of the resultant Franco-*Beur* proximities. The new discourse places French subjects in solidarity with *Beur* subjects yet locates the latter distantly from empowering Algerian men in relation to their roots. I argue that the role of comedy in Bensalah's texts inspires cosmopolitan sentiments via revealing the "absurdity" and "stupidity" of *Beur* subjectivities, thus undermining ethnic-based stereotyping apropos of Islamic extremism. As such, Bensalah's comedies are placed within a dual cosmopolitan framework of "wings" and "roots", oscillating between the mutual responsibility towards the preservation of French national unity that overlaps with *Beur*

abstinence from affiliating with Algerian difference. My analysis concludes that the films end on the subversion of Algerian religiosity and conventional spaces of belonging for a mutual space of cosmopolitan belonging.

In Bensalah's comedies, the operation of cosmopolitan "wings" in the texts is seen through the collective inclusion of French, *Beur* and other multi-ethnic solidarities of diasporic sharing. This also indicates the state of being trans-spatially sheltered by a motive of fulfilling a desire for diasporic peace and harmony. This shared posture overtakes hostile attitudes signified by ethnicity-based authority and French supremacy. My analysis of "wings" focuses on the three ethnic minority men's humour and conviviality. The tone of these films stands notably in contrast to the realistically tragic aura, tension and psychological distress undergone by the multi-ethnic trio in *La Haine* and *Boumkeour*. The intersection between humour and cosmopolitan "wings" is obtained through trespassing dominant stereotypical models produced within French culture. I thus refer to comedy as a strategy for destabilising the conventional standards of power. One key method is the deployment of "banal Whiteness" explored via the facilitation of *Beur* inclusion within the central visual framework of the films. This is implemented through the reversal of ethnic visibility and marked by granting minority groups spatial and cognitive authority. I explore how the *Beur*/French Other confidently occupies central public spheres and accordingly subverts postcolonial positions of power conventionally perceived to belong to white French/Algerian individuals. Unlike Begag's text, however, Bensalah's model of integration establishes a less assured posture towards reconfiguring *Beur* rootedness. Instead, the undermining of *Beur* visibility in these texts is more aligned with obscuring Algerian traditional dynamics and spaces of belonging, and more focused on fostering assimilationist models of multiculturalism.

The third chapter relates to my discussion of Rachid Bouchareb's war epic film *Indigènes* (2006) and the attempt to recast the memory of Algerian veterans within the framework of what Hensey terms "*Harki* story". The significance of my analysis lies in contesting the simple multidirectional framing of indigenous Algerians as subjects seeking heroism and compassionate war-time experience as a manner to resist French inequality. I discuss how the role of *Harkis* as sufferers bearing similar war hardships is necessarily overlapped with a counter-roots posture that stands in opposition to Algerian nationalist loyalties. I argue that nation-building is communicated by inescapably biased forms of identity politics. The discussion also involves the examination of how the masculinity of the *Harkis* is premised upon a rejection of Algerian nationalism, while Algerian nationalist agencies are in turn shaped by emasculation and a sense of Algerian disempowerment. I contend that this depiction contributes to a reimagining of Algerian diasporic integration via a reinvestment in assimilation to Republicanism and French *Laïcité*.

The film's presentation of a rootless cosmopolitan model is analysed as an attempt to defamiliarise colonial hostilities, while simultaneously counteracting the notion of shared historical trajectories between *Pied-noirs* and Algerians. *Indigènes* is finally approached through the veterans' final settlement in the public diasporic spaces. In demonstrating this, I argue that Bouchareb's model of integration emphasises rootless cosmopolitan modes of belonging and equality that feed into homogenising Republican ideologies. Consequently, I bring into focus the importance of the genre in reproducing the colonial legacy of assimilation persisting in France nowadays. This observation raises concerns as to the neo-assimilationist

dynamics used by the filmmaker to resolve contemporary the inequality, neglect, violence and demarcation of *Beur* subjects in public spheres.

In the concluding chapter, I focus on reading the limitations of cosmopolitanism in Rachid Djaïdani's earliest realistic works *La Haine* (1995) and *Boumkoeur* (1999) and latest road-movie *Tour de France* (2016). In the first section of the chapter, the application of critical cosmopolitan approaches in Djaïdani's earlier works has shown that the *banlieue*, as an architecturally colonial model, founded on the perseverance of racial divisions, recaptures the colonial relics of the Franco-Algerian past. This configures the *HLM* as a centre of harsh and melancholic realism where the logistics of the private space are tightly intertwined with the stereotyping of the *Beur* subject. Simultaneously, it emerges as a space bound up by identity politics that are different from those produced in the *Chaâba*. Particularly, the portrayal of the *Beur* subjectivities is fenced off from the rest of France, yet also witnesses a friction with and a dissociation from traditional Algerian communal bonding and affiliation. Despite its critical cosmopolitan agendas, I argue that the realist genre solidifies themes of *Beur* physical and cognitive distress towards both French and Algerian legacies, rather than bringing about change.

In the second part of the chapter, I examine Djaïdani's transition from focusing on the realistic struggles undergone by dispossessed minorities in the *banlieue* to embracing a utopian and optimistic vision of border-crossing. I argue that his *Tour de France*, which is both the most daring and surprisingly under-explored road-movie in the thesis, proposes an unconventional approach to *Beur* identity politics. I have deployed the expression "homogeneous proximities" to interrogate and deconstruct these geographically facile,

unrestricted mobilities as plainly inclusive, convivial and proactive. I argue that Djaïdani's latest text is grounded in the idea of fully engaging with the centre and embracing its expansive properties. However, the willingness to peacefully engage with the white French subject through proximity is fostered by a connection that is mediated through French universal concepts of art. The film's approach to the artistic experience appropriates the Christian and secularist codes of value, while assuming a spiritually rootless model of *Beur* integration based on displacing and erasing the Algerian Muslim trajectories. Thus, I deploy the progressive cosmopolitan approach to my reading of Djaïdani's film to contest the seemingly innocent adjustments in the colonial agendas underlying Franco-*Beur* peaceful interactions, and which arguably rises above spatial constraints of the *banlieue*. My analysis concludes that the proximity depicted in *Tour de France* serves both to bridge the divide between subordinate minority groups and the French majority, as well as a tool for redefining, secularising, and bringing "progress" to "the New *Beur* Man", thereby reinforcing neo-assimilationist agendas of integration.

The significance of the study that I have undertaken has arisen within a period signalled by a renewed interest in the theoretical terrains offered by Algerian literary and cinematic productions. I have critically examined mainstream models of cosmopolitanism, particularly in narratives where *Beur* subjectivities are framed and contained by French assimilationist agendas. In so doing, I have demonstrated how the various cross-border genres discussed in the study are designed to appeal to a broader audience, while also revealing the limitations in terms of what they can offer as cosmopolitan integration models for the *Beurs*. I have argued that the rise in diasporic *Beur* cinema and literature, which is gaining widespread reading, scholarly attention, and popular acknowledgement, is the consequence of several

geo-political factors that are influencing perceptions of these *Beur* literary and cinematic output. As previously stated in the introduction, *Beur* readership and film hitting major sales and box office success were impacted by key colonial and national events such as the Franco-Algerian war of Independence (1962), which reignited Franco-*Beur* violence as well as questions related to Algerian nationalism; immigration, which renegotiated Algerian heritage culture and that of the host country, *La Marche des Beurs* (1993) and the 2005 *Beur* riots, which sparked controversies surrounding *Beur* equality with difference; the 9/11 incidents, which raised questions as to *Beur* Islamic identity; and the pressure from mainstream filmic productions affiliated with assimilation and Republicanism.

While many of the texts under scrutiny have garnered considerable scholarly attention in recent years, especially with their complex and groundbreaking experimentation with the representation of male *Beur* subjectivities, several of these works have remained underexplored, despite their significant contribution to discourses on integration, identity and cosmopolitanism. However, all these texts offer a limited representation of gender, particularly in relation to the female experience. While they perpetuate narratives that focus on *Beur* male protagonists, the depiction of both *Beur* and white French female characters is notably constrained. These female characters are often relegated to minor roles or portrayed as the romantic interests of the lead characters. By overlooking the experiences of *Beur* women and prioritising male-dominated subjectivities, the texts fail to respond to collective *Beurette* agencies and provide an exploration of how *Beur* women navigate their own intersections of identity, gender, and cultural heritage.

In this thesis, I analysed *Tour de France*—the final project—as a film that veers into assimilationist egalitarian narratives, *en route* transforming, if not burying the identity politics connected to the *banlieue* as the remaining thread to the Algerian past. However, the introduction of more recent works, particularly post-Covid male-produced *Beur* film might challenge us to rethink about the ability of the genre to “enliven” the exploration of the *banlieue*-type material or even venture into the centre without succumbing to the erosion or blurring of Algerian religious and cultural markers of difference. Hassan Guerrar’s dramatic comedy film, *Barbès, little Algérie* (Paris, little Algeria) (2024), for instance, explores the reconnection to the long-lost roots of *Beur* male identity in the *banlieue* through the arrival of an Algerian man. The narrative centres on the evolving relationship between the two men, particularly focusing on the experiences of the *Beur* man at the age of 40, a symbolic milestone in Muslim tradition associated with male spiritual maturity and self-awareness. The return to a setting grounded in the *banlieue* raises critical questions about the potential of the *Beur* film to reassert and reclaim a “more specific” and deeply rooted *Beur* identity politics. In so doing, the film might present a challenge to the dominant French national paradigms of belonging, particularly in the light of the rising right-wing sentiment across Europe, and the homogenising pressures of the difference-blind Republicanism in France, as an increasingly embattled site of diversity.

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