

Postcolonial Popcorn: Contemporary Maghrebi-French Cinema and its Audiences

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of popular contemporary postcolonial cinema, through readings of three recent Maghrebi-French films. The research is comprised of the films *Days of Glory* (2006), *Outside the Law* (2010) and *Free Men* (2011), which narrate unfamiliar colonial stories in familiar ways. The films are a significant part of a cultural and commercial 'shift' toward more mainstream filmmaking in France, and therefore provide a fascinating and complex point of entry into the study of popular postcolonial cinema. By incorporating the popular into the postcolonial, the primary contribution of this thesis is that it extends the scope of postcolonial cultural criticism, in order to highlight how such an engagement functions to interrupt hegemonic imaginaries of colonial space, memory and gender.

Informed by a postcolonial critique, this thesis deploys textual analysis in order to investigate how the films are textually constituted across and through different cultural frameworks, questioning what this means for conceptualising postcolonialism. Primarily investigating the ways in which the films rewrite colonial histories using the genre conventions of Hollywood, this thesis attends to issues pertinent to postcolonial France. The thesis therefore identifies some of the key relationships to space that are narrated throughout the films, in which geographies of belonging and exclusion for Maghrebi-French people are articulated through popular aesthetics. An important part of articulating place is memory, and so this thesis also examines how occluded memories are mobilised and energised at the intersection with more familiar historical imaginaries, showing how this multidirectional relationship works to situate colonial histories in ways that are disruptive of World War Two imaginaries. This thesis also makes contributions to understandings of masculinity, by offering readings of Maghrebi-French male characters through which emerge popular postcolonial masculinities that draw upon masculinist Hollywood types, to produce new hybrid types of anti-colonial gangster, infantilised colonial soldier and Muslim spy.

This thesis also examines how contemporary English-speaking Western audiences engage with the films in online reception spaces, and thus what is at stake in making postcolonial film more accessible. Using discourse analysis, this thesis attends to the different ways audiences respond to, reproduce and transform the meanings of the films in particular social and political settings. In doing so, it will be seen that the films are important sites of consumption and identity contestation, particularly around issues of

geopolitics, masculinity, and whiteness, and a point of encounter through which the power relations in watching and consuming foreign-language films in 'the West' will be scrutinised. Therefore, in the course of this study, contemporary Maghrebi-French filmmaking is framed in terms of its appeal to popular audiences, and it will be seen that it is beginning to carve out new space for itself in world cinema, with audiences playing an important role in what that space will look like in the future.

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	pg.1-11
1.1 Introduction: From Beur to Blockbuster	1
1.1.1 Research Aim and Questions	2
1.1.2 Rachid Bouchareb: Days of Glory (2006) and Outside the Lo	aw (2010)3
1.1.3 Ismaël Ferroukhi: <i>Free Men</i> (2011)	4
1.1.4 English-Speaking Western Audiences	5
1.2 Toward a Popular Conception of Postcolonial Cinema	5
1.3 Thesis Structure.	9
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	pg.12-35
2.1 Introduction	12
2.2 Postcolonial France and Beur Cinema.	13
2.3 Postcolonial Studies and Cinema	20
2.4 Postcolonial Audiences.	27
2.5 Film Geographies	31
2.6 Conclusion	33
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	pg.36-55
3.1 Introduction	36
3.2 Films: Objects of Study, Approach and Analysis	36
3.2.1 Objects of Study	37
3.2.2 Approach	40
3.2.3 Methods	41
3.3 Audience Reception: Objects of Study, Approach and Analysis	43
3.3.1 Objects of Study	44
3.3.2 Sampling	45
3.3.3 Approach	52
3.3.4 Methods	52
3.4 Positionality	54
3.5 Conclusion	55

NARRATING GEOGRAPHIES OF BELONGING AND EXCLUSION	N pg.57-97
4.1 Introduction	57
4.2 Soil	
4.2.1 Establishing Topographies in <i>Days of Glory</i> (2006)	
4.2.2 The Algerian Bled in Exile	
4.2.3 (In)Fertile Soils of the Motherland.	
4.3 Dirt	
4.4 Incarceration	
4.5 Religion.	82
4.6 Home	90
4.7 Conclusion	95
CHAPTER FIVE: PROXIMATE GEOGRAPHIES OF MEMORY:	00.424
COLONIAL HAUNTING AND SPECTRAL INDEPENDENCE	pg.98-131
5.1 Introduction	98
5.2 WW2 and Ghosts of (De)Colonisation	99
5.2.1 The Haunting Absence of Colonial Violence	
in Days of Glory (2006)	102
5.2.2 The Spectre of Algerian Independence	
in Days of Glory (2006) and Free Men (2011)	106
5.3 Gestapo, Gendarmes and Resistance in <i>Outside the Law</i> (2010)	114
5.3.1 Iconographies of Colonialism and Fascism:	
The Gestapo and The Ghetto	115
5.3.2 Indochina to Algeria: Resistance Across Contexts	121
5.3.3 17 October 1961	127
5.4 Conclusion	129
CHAPTER SIX: POPULAR POSTCOLONIAL MASCULINITIES:	
GANGSTERS, SOLDIERS AND SPIES	pg.132-166
6.1 Introduction	132
6.2 Anti-Colonial Gangster	
6.3 Infantilised Colonial Soldier	
6.4 Muslim Spy	155
6.5 Conclusion	
CHAPTER SEVEN: ENCOUNTERING THE POPULAR POSTCOLO	ONIAL
FILM: RACIALISED OTHERS AND AUDIENCE IDENTITIES	pg. 167-204
7.1 Introduction	167
7.2 Mapping Muslims: Islam in the Popular Geopolitical Imagination	
7.2.1 The War on Terror and the Arab Spring	

7.2.2 Israel-Palestine	175
7.3 Racialising Masculinities:	
Deviant Muslim Men and Knowledgeable White Men	178
7.3.1 Deviant Muslim Men	179
7.3.2 Knowledgeable White Men	185
7.4 Exotic Encounters:	
Admiring the Postcolonial 'Other' and Constituting White Subjectivities	192
7.4.1 In Search of the 'Authentic' in Postcolonial Film	193
7.4.2 Moral Anxieties: White Guilt and Discomfort	197
7.5 Conclusion	203
CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION	pg.205-216
8.1 Introduction	205
8.2 Popularising Postcolonial Film,	
or Postcolonising Popular Audiences	206
8.3 Further Research: Audience Subjectivities	218
FILMOGRAPHY	pg.220-221

List of Figures

1.	UK release DVD covers for Days of Glory (2006), Outside the Law (2010) and F	'ree
	Men (2011)	
2.	IMDb user reviews for Days of Glory (2006)	
3.	Rotten Tomatoes user reviews for Days of Glory (2006)	47
4.	Metacritic user reviews for Days of Glory (2006)	47
5.	Links to critical reviews for <i>Outside the Law</i> (2010) on IMDb	49
6.	Links to critical reviews for Outside the Law (2010) on Rotten Tomatoes	50
7.	Links to critical reviews for Outside the Law (2010) on Metacritic	50
8.	IMDb messageboard thread for Free Men (2011)	51
9.	The small anonymous Algerian village of Said in Days of Glory (2006)	60
10.	Agricultural Italy in Days of Glory (2006)	61
11.	Landscape of Provence in Days of Glory (2006)	62
12.	The Souni family's ancestral Algerian land in Outside the Law (2010)	63
13.	The Souni family are dispossessed in <i>Outside the Law</i> (2010)	65
14.	Soil is taken into exile with the Souni matriarch in Outside the Law (2010)	66
15.	The soldiers arrive in France in Days of Glory (2006)	69
16.	Dirt dominates and covers the frame in Days of Glory (2006)	70
17.	North African soldiers are treated like 'dirt' by France in Days of Glory (2006)	72
18.	The soldiers are framed in a silhouette shot in Days of Glory (2006)	73
19.	The Prison de la Sante in Outside the Law (2010)	77
20.	The bidonville of Nanterre in Outside the Law (2010)	80
21.	The Paris Metro in Outside the Law (2010)	81
22.	Paris through the eyes of an immigrant in Free Men (2011)	84
23.	Power relations between Younes and his fellow North Africans in Free Men	
	(2011)	85
24.	The Grand Mosque of Paris in Free Men (2011)	88
25.	Messaoud in Irene's flat in Days of Glory (2006)	92
26.	Irene wears the colours of the French flag in Days of Glory (2006)	93
27.	Messaoud reflects in an abandoned home in Alsace in Days of Glory (2006)	95
28.	Army training camp in Setif, Algeria in Days of Glory (2006)	104
29.	Morrocan brothers Yassir and Larbi in a French Church	
in I	Days of Glory (2006)	.106
30.	A Nazi propaganda leaflet in Days of Glory (2006)	108
31	Abdelkader framed outside of history in Days of Glory (2006)	112

32. Younes lifts the Algerian flag in <i>Free Men</i> (2011)	114
33. Newsreel footage of VE celebrations in Paris in Outside the Law (2010)	117
34. VE Day celebrations bleed into Setif demonstrations in <i>Outside the Law</i> (2010)	117
35. Setif demonstrations fade into colour in <i>Outside the Law</i> (2010)	118
36. French gendarmes execute Algerian protesters in <i>Outside the Law</i> (2010)	118
37. The wintery bidonville of Nanterre in Outside the Law (2010)	120
38. French paratroopers are dropped into Vietnam in <i>Outside the Law</i> (2010)	123
39. Algerian POWs in <i>Outside the Law</i> (2010)	123
40. Abdelkader attempts to convince Faivre in <i>Outside the Law</i> (2010)	126
41. Faivre remains nostalgically loyal to the French Resistance in <i>Outside the Law</i>	
(2010)	127
42. Newsreel footage of Algerian Independence Day in <i>Outside the Law</i> (2010)	129
43. Said and his dying father in <i>Outside the Law</i> (2010)	132
44. Said's sisters are murdered and ignored in <i>Outside the Law</i> (2010)	133
45. Messaoud returns from war in Indochina in <i>Outside the Law</i> (2010)	138
46. Messaoud brings stability to the family home in <i>Outside the Law</i> (2010)	138
47. Messaoud stands at the public/private threshold of home	
in Outside the Law (2010)	140
48. Messaoud confesses to his Mother in <i>Outside the Law</i> (2010)	142
49. Messaoud fights his way out of the police station in <i>Outside the Law</i> (2010)	143
50. The final epic shootout of <i>Outside the Law</i> (2010)	144
51. The men are urged to fight in <i>Days of Glory</i> (2006)	148
52. Said is overtaken by a keener young boy in <i>Days of Glory</i> (2006)	148
53. Said is small compared to his mother in <i>Days of Glory</i> (2006)	149
54. Said is ignorant of a French woman's flirting in <i>Days of Glory</i> (2006)	151
55. Said responds violently to being feminized in <i>Days of Glory</i> (2006)	152
56. The final battle sequence of <i>Days of Glory</i> (2006)	154
57. Home is simultaneously absent and present in <i>Free Men</i> (2011)	157
58. Younes is distanced from other Muslim men in <i>Free Men</i> (2011)	157
59. Younes looks at the Muslim men from the outside in <i>Free Men</i> (2011)	158
60. Younes shoots a Gestapo agent in <i>Free Men</i> (2011)	160
61. Younes shoots the traitor Omar in <i>Free Men</i> (2011)	161
62. Younes returns to the Mosque more 'manly' <i>Free Men</i> (2011)	162
63. Salim sees Younes through the crowd in <i>Free Men</i> (2011)	163
64. Salim and Younes exchange looks at the end of <i>Free Men</i> (2011)	163

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Introduction: From Beur to Blockbuster

"When I saw Stanley Kubrick's *Paths of Glory*, I never saw African soldiers, but at the time there were 500,000 soldiers from Africa in France. In all the movies about World War II, where are the 250,000 black and Arab soldiers? There were 500,000 Americans in France and 250,000 from Africa. Where are they?"

(Director Rachid Bouchareb on his film *Days of Glory*, 2006)¹

In an interview about the release of his film *Indigenes/Days of Glory* (2006)², a film which foregrounds the contributions made by Arab soldiers to the liberation of France during World War Two, Paris-born director Rachid Bouchareb signals towards both the influences and possibilities of the film beyond the geographic contexts in which it is made and primarily consumed. The film had a huge impact in France upon its release, attracting 2,951,669 spectators³, and its ensemble cast collected a shared award for Best Actor at Cannes Film Festival. Perhaps most famously, it forced the then President Jacques Chirac to overturn a freeze on colonial soldiers' pensions, which dated back to 1959 when many French colonies began to move closer to independence from France. However, Bouchareb's reference to Kubrick's 1952 World War I film, *Paths of Glory* starring Kirk Douglas, situates the very similarly named Days of Glory (2006), as well as his own historical-cultural imaginary, within popular American film culture. Whilst it is well-established that Hollywood's cultural hegemony means that people all over the world are familiar with American films, and therefore use them as points of reference, France and French cinema have consciously resisted its reach (Buchsbaum, 2017), favouring their own unique style characterised by the auteur, art and transgression (Beugnet, 2007). Both Bouchareb's reference to Paths of Glory (1952), and his appropriation of the conventions of Hollywood within his films, as well as their relative international success, reflects an important aesthetic, commercial and cultural shift in both French, and Maghrebi-French, cinemas towards the 'mainstream' (Higbee, 2013),

¹ Interview with Ian Sinclair on ZNet. Sinclair (2007) "Interview: Days of Glory Director Rachid Bouchareb", *ZNet*. 18th April 2007.

² The original French title of the film is Indigenes, and was retitled *Days of Glory* for its international release

³ Source: *IMDb*, Days of Glory. French cinema uniquely measures commercial success of films via admissions numbers, rather than box office receipts

and the popular more broadly, which is unusual for filmmakers in France, and therefore significant for this research. What this shift further represents for postcolonial criticism and cinema will be addressed through a series of research questions aimed at interrogating three particular films and their reception.

1.1.1 Research Aim and Questions

Aim:

To further understand the social and cultural production of postcolonial geographies, to consider the ways in which previously 'minority' postcolonial films become 'popular', and to explore their reception in the English-speaking Western world.

Questions:

1. How do the spaces of contemporary popular films open up possibilities for the negotiation of postcolonial memories, masculinities and trajectories?

This raises a series of more specific questions, which will be addressed through the three films *Days of Glory* (2006), *Outside the Law* (2010) and *Free Men* (2011):

- 2. What spaces are important in the films?
- 3. What kind of memorialisation is made possible through the films?
- 4. What masculinities do these films construct and contest?
- 5. What do audiences think of these films, and what do they do with them?

In order to answer these questions, I will focus on the ways in which three recent films within this shift, made by French directors of North African descent, rewrite colonial histories by using the genre conventions of Hollywood, and how contemporary English-speaking Western audiences engage with them in online reception spaces. It will be seen that these films offer the possibility to broaden our understanding of both postcolonial film and postcolonial studies, in terms of how postcolonial politics are narrated through popular aesthetics and conventions, and the sincerity with which this approach is taken in a discipline traditionally concerned with high art. The films are *Indigenes/Days of Glory* (Bouchareb, 2006), *Hors la Loi/Outside the Law* (Bouchareb, 2010) and *Les Hommes Libres/Free Men* (Ferroukhi, 2011)⁴.

⁴ From here on, the films will be referred to by their English-language translated titles *Days of Glory*, *Outside the Law* and *Free Men*.

1.1.2 Rachid Bouchareb: Days of Glory (2006) and Outside the Law (2010)

When Rachid Bouchareb exclaimed in an interview that Arabs and blacks are absent from popular representations of history, it was against the backdrop of his career trajectory as a film director in which he has consistently pushed the geographical boundaries that have categorised and contained films made by Arabs in France⁵. In these films, characters are almost always mobile between places, fluid in terms of character identities, and construct narratives that are diverse in terms of their content and plot. For example, Baton Rouge (1985) follows three young French men, one of whom is North African, as they embark on different journeys to the USA in pursuit of jazz music, women and touristic adventure, whilst his more recent Little Senegal (2001) traces a young Senegalese man to New York as he searches for his ancestry through the transatlantic slave trade. In both of these examples, Bouchareb situates the identity of his Arab and black protagonists beyond the confines of the French banlieue, the geographical location of most 'beur' and of course banlieue films, in much wider cultural frameworks and spatial imaginaries that also transcend the national. More recently, Bouchareb has made forays into Hollywood more directly with the films Just Like a Woman (2012) starring Sienna Miller and Two Men in Town (2014) with Forest Whitaker and Harvey Keitel. His eclectic range of films clearly suggest a cultural interest with and connection to the United States, in which both his characters and aesthetic choices pivot around, and take inspiration from, the generic conventions of the world's most powerful cultural phenomenon.

Days of Glory (2006) and Outside the Law (2010) must be seen within this broader American-inflected portfolio, in which the cultural histories and conventions of Hollywood permeate the ways in which colonial histories are remembered, and possibilities for new social identities are envisaged. Set during World War Two, Days of Glory (2006) follows Algerian and Moroccan infantrymen from recruitment in North

⁵ Some of Bouchareb's earlier films include *Bâton Rouge* (1985), *Cheb* (1991) and *Little Senegal* (2001) ⁶ Coined in the 1980s, the term beur was deployed by young Arabs in France to refer their interstitial position between France and North Africa, and to foster a new generational subjectivity that demanded to be recognised (see Tarr, 2005). This fed into the creation of a body of films primarily concerned with articulating self-expression and community, whilst challenging rigid notions of French Republicanism and national identity.

⁷ Banlieue cinema is often conflated with beur, in that both cinemas generally took the geographical location of the deprived French banlieue (city suburb) as their setting, dealing with social and political issues such as unemployment and violence. But it is distinct from beur cinema in that Arabs are not necessarily the protagonists, nor are they necessarily directed or produced by Arab filmmakers (see Naficy, 2001).

Africa onto the battlefields of Italy and France, centring the contributions made to the war effort by Arabs fighting in de Gaulle's Free French Army. They fight a battle on two fronts however, combating not only the Nazi war machine, but colonial racism and discrimination within their own army. Bouchareb's 'sequel', American gangster-inspired *Outside the Law* (2010), tells the story of the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962) from the perspective of three immigrant brothers in Paris, each of whom fight and resist the French in their own way. It must also be noted here, that Bouchareb uses the same actors in both films, with actors Roschdy Zem (Messaoud), Jamel Debbouze (Said), and Sami Bouajila (Abdelkader) playing characters with the same names in *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Outside the Law* (2010).

1.1.3 Ismaël Ferroukhi: Free Men (2011)

Though not as famous and successful as Bouchareb, Moroccan-born French director Ismaël Ferroukhi achieved instant recognition for his directorial debut, *Le Grand Voyage/The Great Journey* (2004). The film follows a young French-Moroccan man and his elderly father across Europe to Mecca on pilgrimage. Travelling by car, the film utilises the aesthetics of the popular American 'road movie' genre to explore how their relationship, and identities, change as they move through different spaces in a rare foregrounding of Islam in Maghrebi-French cinema.

His more recent film *Free Men* (2011) however, whilst also centering Islam and Muslims, looks to the past to do so, and like *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Outside the Law* (2010), situates North African colonial identities and histories proximate to more familiar representations and narratives of World War Two. Set in occupied Paris, primarily around the city's Grand Mosque, the film focuses on the contribution by Muslims towards the rescue of European and North African (Sephardic) Jews. Therefore, Bouchareb and Ferroukhi's films *Days of Glory* (2006), *Outside the Law* (2010) and *Free Men* (2011) are vectors through which I will interrogate the ways in which the popular permeates the postcolonial, as films that subvert dominant histories through culturally and commercially shifting towards mainstream film production, thus affording them to reach potentially different audiences beyond France, and beyond the Western art-house.

1.1.4 English-Speaking Western Audiences

In addition to the films then, I further collect and analyse data from a series of online film reviews (see Chapter Three Methodology). The designation 'English-speaking Western' to refer to the audiences is favoured due to the imprecision of referring to them as solely 'Western', and some of the ambiguities involved in terms like 'Anglophone' which could incorporate countries from Jamaica to Ireland. Therefore, whilst I expand upon the sampling decisions in Chapter Three, 'English-speaking Western' refers to countries that both speak English as their primary language, and are geographically and culturally located in the 'West'. I set out to find out why these particular audiences understand the films the way they do, and what that might mean in terms of contemporary cinematic encounters with postcolonial foreign-language films in particular social and geographical environments. I will demonstrate the potential of using online reviews and messageboards for research into film consumption and identity contestation, as they allow for the collation of different kinds of audiences, and thus a better understanding of collective patterns of interpretation, meaning, and interaction. Research into both the professional and amateur responses to these particular films reveals a great deal about the location of postcolonial foreign-language film within the cultural imaginary of English-speaking Western film consumers, as well as about the constitution of different social identities in relation to them. Film since its inception has had the capacity to stage encounters between different cultures, an encounter that is made increasingly accessible thanks to the digital world of Video on Demand (VoD) services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime. For example, at the time of writing in 2017 Netflix has 904 foreign-language films in its 'World Cinema' section. Cinema as a medium then, is important not just as a vehicle for entertainment, but is a key platform through which perceptions of, and thus relationships with, the world, are negotiated.

1.2 Toward a Popular Conception of Postcolonial Cinema

In cinema studies, a postcolonial critique has involved bringing a 'postcolonial lens', or analysis, to films that are loosely defined by *how* they challenge regimes of colonial knowledge and power (Ponzanesi and Waller, 2012). As films that directly engage colonial histories, the films of this thesis are approached as, and through the, postcolonial. The critical questions I raise in this thesis, by incorporating a study of the popular in relation to the postcolonial, are aimed at postcolonialism as both an artistic endeavour and an academic framework of analysis, and so moving towards a popular conception of postcolonial cinema has implications not just for how scholars understand

and think about postcolonial films themselves (see Naficy, 2001; Higbee, 2007; Ponzanesi and Waller, 2012; Weaver-Hightower and Hulme, 2014), but also how we think about the discipline of postcolonial studies itself in terms of what is considered worthy of academic interest or importance. I will expand upon some of these key debates in postcolonial studies and cinema⁸ in the following chapter.

First of all, however, I want to consider two different aesthetic and political approaches to postcolonial cinema: Third Cinema, and what I speculatively refer to as 'popular postcolonial cinema', in order to think about how the films of this thesis might be culturally situated within popular circuits of taste, and what this might mean for conceptualising postcolonial cinemas. For Said (1978), 'cultural resistance' was a key weapon in the war against imperialism, and it is of interest to this research to think about how this resistance is shaped and articulated in postcolonial film using the 'imperial language', in Said's words, of popular cinema. In doing so, the popularisation of the postcolonial film involves thinking about the tensions, ambiguities and risks, but also opportunities, produced by such mimicry. This kind of cinematic appropriation of the imperial 'tools' is not the sole route to resistance and postcolonial agency, and in cinema others have historically favoured the total rejection of the globally dominant way of making films epitomised by Hollywood. The most famous and influential example is what was termed 'Third Cinema'9, a revolutionary idea for cinema formed in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, and pioneered by Argentinian filmmakers Solanas and Getino (1970) who sought to transform film and the camera from bourgeois instruments of entertainment, spectacle and consumerism into more radical political weapons (Chanan, 1997; Gabriel, 2011). The aesthetic conventions, political ideology and economic principles of the 'imperialistic' Hollywood infrastructure were outright rejected in their project, and a kind of authentic purity was sought after that would be free of its contamination, and that would therefore be able to speak for, and to, the proletarian masses who the films represented.

For Solanas and Getino (1970), any use of, or reliance on, popular cinematic conventions was not permitted in their conception of Third Cinema, and was rather dismissed as an

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⁸ A fuller definition of, and critical engagement with, postcolonial studies will be conducted in Chapter Two, where I deal with the perceived temporal ambiguities posed by the term, its understanding by geographers, and how it has been applied as a critical framework to study films.

geographers, and how it has been applied as a critical framework to study films.

9 'First' cinema was thought of as Hollywood, whilst 'Second' cinema was more ambiguously Soviet cinemas, and also the art cinema embodied by other European filmmaking (see Chanan, 1997).

'imitation' that showed weakness and dependency. However, in order to achieve wider recognition, and to speak back to power, the appropriation, command and mastery of the 'language' of the coloniser is also a potential advantage that unlocks opportunities that might previously have been closed. As I will go on to expand in Chapter Two, tools such as parody and mimicry function to help the postcolonial filmmaker re-tell stories, and rewrite their identities (Bhabha, 1984). For postcolonial cinema then, and specifically the films at the heart of this research, this means questioning what happens when postcolonial film is situated within wider cultural and commercial circulation, and ascribes, and appeals, to popular tastes? A key concept throughout this thesis, the 'popular' in relation to cinema is a difficult concept to define, but has been described as the opposite of, and inferior to, 'art' cinema; it is assumed to be focused on commercial rather than political successes; it is measured by its profits and financial achievements at the box office; and it is assumed to reach and be more accessible to the majority population (Bergfelder, 2015; Faulkner, 2016). For the purposes of this research, it is thought of as a kind of 'taste' that can be applied to both the films themselves in thinking about aesthetic choices, modes of production, and the actors in them, and to their audiences. By bringing the popular to bear on audiences as well as the films, I will consider how these particular films transgress not only what is expected of postcolonial foreign-language film, but also how in doing so they interpellate and reach larger and more diverse audiences beyond the traditional art-house spaces of film consumption.

As has been mentioned, French cinema, has since the end of the First World War endeavored to extricate itself from Hollywood's hegemony, defining itself as America's opposite (Beugnet, 2007; Buchsbaum, 2017). Popular cinema is despised by some, including cinéphiles of art cinema, and certain elements of film criticism and scholarship. Though it must be said, as I briefly touch upon in Chapter Three, that art cinema is equally as hated or regarded with suspicion by those who judge it in comparison to popular cinema, or lack the 'cultural capital' or 'competency' (Bourdieu, 1984) to engage with it. Art films are characterised by artistic expression and experimentation, aimed at more niche audience markets, and made by 'auteurs' who as film directors, are defined by their relative freedom over the artistic direction of the film, and whose 'signature' can be identified across their films (Kuhn and Westwell, 2012). In Chapters' Two and Three, I will elaborate on the place of class in conversations about the distribution and consumption of foreign-language films, and the different ways in which they are marketed and conceptualised. Popular and art cinemas however are not

necessarily mutually exclusive, as 'auteur' filmmakers may also make films that are considered popular, such as Bouchareb moving to make films in Hollywood, or French filmmaker Luc Besson, who directed films from *Nikita* (1990) to the incredibly popular Taken (2008) series of films. Take also the example of The Battle of Algiers (1966), unsurprisingly referenced at numerous points throughout this thesis for its undoubted inspiration on the historical themes at the centre of this thesis, would not be considered as 'popular' in the same sense in which this research deploys the term. This is due to a number of reasons, such as it being made in the style of neorealist Italian cinema by Gillo Pontecorvo; it was primarily aimed at re-presenting historical facts for political propaganda purposes; it involved real-life soldiers of the revolutionary war of independence, and other amateur actors; it was filmed on location in Algiers using the real-life Casbah of the city as its backdrop; and was arguably much more in line with the ethics of Third Cinema than anything else. And yet, partly thanks to academic interest from postcolonial scholars, it has remained 'popular' in the sense that it has had a long cultural and political life, being used as a pedagogical tool by scholars, activists and governments, it was nominated for three Academy Awards, and is ranked by the BFI's Sight and Sound's most recent poll in the top 100 films of all time, coming in at number 48¹⁰. Films therefore pass in and out of the 'popular' in its different definitions, and depend on different contexts of reception. Therefore, each case must be attended to in close detail, both as texts and sites of consumption.

As Faulkner (2016) has recently suggested, in looking at the spaces 'in-between' the popular and the art film, the two cinematic frameworks are often pit against one another in a dichotomy of 'high' and 'low', neglecting the 'middlebrow' which cannot necessarily be categorised as either 'popular' or 'art-house'. Curiously, the front cover of Faulkner's (2016) edited volume depicts a romantic scene from *Days of Glory* (2006), and contains a chapter by prominent scholar of Maghrebi-French cinema Will Higbee about the film, in which he negotiates its complex and possible contradictory achievements as both 'entertainingly popular' and 'earnestly political'. In this thesis, I do not aim to agree or disagree with this location of the film in the 'middlebrow', but in similarly examining it (and *Outside the Law* and *Free Men*) for the productive tensions that emerge between entertainment and politics, or its endeavour to tell wider audiences of Algerian colonial histories through popular means, I extend the argument to

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¹⁰ BFI/Sight and Sound "Critics Greatest Films of All Time 2012" (no date available).

audiences, and thus consider the wider implications for conceptualising and researching postcolonial cinemas, how it impacts what kinds of audiences the films can reach, and what this means for the broader geographies of the cultural encounter which is at the heart of watching films.

The key question, and aim, of this thesis then is to ask what happens when postcolonial politics is told through mainstream forms, and how might asking this question contribute to postcolonial studies as an academic framework commonly used to analyse 'high' art? Bringing the terms popular and postcolonial together might indeed disrupt the confidence with which we deploy them. Proposing that by examining how the appropriation of the popular propels the unfamiliar into the familiar, and in turn, how audiences (re)produce their meanings in particular social and political settings, my aim in this thesis is, through the particular analysis of these films and their reception, to further contribute to destabilising the dividing lines between the empowered and the marginalised, the centre and the periphery, as the films speak to multiple places beyond France, moving into the centre in order to do so.

1.3 Thesis Structure

The chapter that follows, Chapter Two, will outline the literature used to frame this thesis. I will expand in detail on the concept of postcolonialism, applying it in order to frame several debates that are key to this research. The first of these considers the racialised trajectories of France, and the emergence of the peripheral beur cinema as a response, employing postcolonial theory to critically frame the relationship between France and North African immigration. I will go on to specifically highlight key literatures and concepts in postcolonial studies, such as hybridity, how these are used to interrogate diasporic identities and histories, and applying this to advance literatures on postcolonial cinema. As theorising about 'popular postcolonial' cinema has important implications for spectators, I then go on to introduce the notion of postcolonial audiences, drawing primarily on scholarship from postcolonial literature where scholars have interrogated actual audiences of postcolonial novels, and applying these findings to concepts of what is referred to as 'world', 'international' or 'foreign-language' cinema. Lastly, the literature review will set out how the above will contribute to geographical research on film, thus situating this postcolonial film project in a scholarship that is underpinned by its unique insight into how film shapes perceptions of and actions in the world.

Chapter Three discusses the principle methods and approaches to the films *Days of Glory* (2006), *Outside the Law* (2010) and *Free Men* (2011) and their online audiences on IMDb, Rotten Tomatoes and Metacritic. The analytical frameworks introduced here inform the main body of the thesis, with the findings of Chapters Four, Five and Six based on textual analysis of the films; and Chapter Seven's findings based on the analysis of audience review discourses.

Chapter Four investigates the ways in which colonial spaces are reconfigured and reimagined, with particular attention to the ways the films manipulate space in order to narrate critical geographies of exclusion and belonging. In drawing on a popular spatial aesthetics derived from Hollywood, this chapter will ask questions of how the films' different postcolonial arguments are framed geographically, and therefore what this means for their geographic imaginaries to spatially situate their narratives alongside those of Hollywood.

Chapter Five builds on the previous chapter's concerns with space to consider how the films remember contentious and occluded memories of colonialism, and how these memories are mobilised and energised at the intersection with more familiar historical imaginaries. Therefore, whilst Chapter Four interrogates the appropriation of spatial conventions of Hollywood, Chapter Five will examine the ways in which seemingly disparate histories are made proximate, through the deployment of iconographies that shape the popular appreciation of dominant historical narratives.

Chapter Six further explores what social identities are made possible through the films' relationship with popular aesthetics and conventions, focusing on the emergence of popular postcolonial masculinities that draw upon Hollywood gangster, soldier and spy characteristics. These 'hegemonic' masculinities are seen to intersect with the particular production, and historical representation, of French and North African masculinities, and I will critically reflect on the disruptive potential of these films, as they continue to ignore and marginalise women, privileging the empowerment of 'hybrid' male subjectivities.

Chapter Seven poses questions about how these popularly inspired postcolonial films are engaged in different ways by English-speaking Western audiences online. Examining

professional and amateur reviews, and messageboard discussion forums on IMDb, Rotten Tomatoes and Metacritic, this chapter attends to responses to encounters with unfamiliar stories told in familiar and popular ways. In doing so, these reviews reveal the possibilities for researching the range of social positions, identities and regimes of knowledge that are discursively constituted in, often anonymised, film critiques.

In Chapter Eight, I conclude by discussing the substantive contributions this thesis makes to a range of geographical, film and cultural literatures. I tackle each of the chapters in turn, and signaling how each of them contributes to a better understanding of popular conceptions of postcolonial film and their audiences. I will also highlight possible future research opportunities, particularly the need to further investigate the questions raised in Chapter Seven about researching the subjectivities of audiences. I will argue that new mediums of watching and writing about films pose difficult questions, which I have started to answer, about the performance of whiteness and other racialised and gendered subjectivities, amongst increasingly anonymised audiences.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Framing Postcolonialism: France, Film and Audiences

2.1 Introduction

The key areas of research that have principally informed the foundations of this study largely emerge from postcolonial theory, and are organised into four areas of work: postcolonial France and beur cinema; postcolonial studies and cinema; postcolonial audiences; and lastly, considering what questions this study raises of the subfield of film geographies. Through reading the different ways in which postcolonial theory can be applied to frame different racialised environments, cinema, and audiences, I will identify in what ways postcolonial scholarship in cultural geography and film can be enriched by critical questions about how popular culture inflects the negotiation and constitution of postcolonial spaces and identities.

Firstly, I will introduce the specific geographical and historical context of France, in which key Republican debates around issues such as laïcité and assimilation are often contested at the intersection with colonial histories. For this reason, despite its relative neglect in France (Forsdick, 2005; Guénif-Souilamas, 2006; Forsdick and Murphy, 2009), I draw upon the postcolonial to critically situate France. In developing this further, I raise questions of Maghrebi-French filmmaking by thinking about what the widely identified 'shift to the mainstream' (Durmelat and Swamy, 2011; Higbee, 2013) means for its ability to shoot 'back to the centre' (Ashcroft et al, 2002).

Secondly, I will further discuss how I intend to use and advance postcolonial theory, highlighting key points of departure which primarily focus on the ways in which diaspora groups understand and produce their own identities and histories in contentious postcolonial spaces (Brah and Coombes, 2000; Blunt and McEwan, 2002). Inspired by foundational texts of the field (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1994), I will apply and develop these ideas to think through the negotiation of alternative spatial imaginaries which emerge through the appropriation of Hollywood genre conventions in Maghrebi-French films. In doing so, I ask questions of scholarship in postcolonial cinema (Ponzanesi and Waller, 2012; Weaver-Hightower and Hulme, 2014), which has largely focused on film as both thematically and stylistically opposed to Hollywood, without thinking about the more complex relationships to popular cinemas.

Thirdly, if Maghrebi-French cinema shoots back to the centre, who is listening, and where? Audiences are relatively neglected in postcolonial studies, particularly with regards to postcolonial film (exceptions include Banaji, 2012; Keown, 2012¹¹), in spite of Said's (1978) insistence on the importance of reading in the relationship to Empire. Drawing on some recent notable exceptions that focus primarily on postcolonial audiences and readers of literature (Benwell et al, 2012; Procter and Benwell, 2015), I will suggest the strength of extending and applying these approaches to cinema, through which we can interrogate the ways in which audiences respond, and position themselves in relation, to specific 'foreign' bodies of film. Not only does this raise questions about audience identities, but it crucially asks what happens to this body of foreign film, and 'world cinema' more broadly (Dennison and Lim, 2006; Nagib et al, 2012), when it is no longer reserved for highbrow audiences and interpretation, (potentially) achieved through its fusion with the popular.

Lastly, in foregrounding concerns with space, film geographers consider the manipulation of cinematic techniques in ways that produce a range of spatial aesthetics for different purposes. Films are therefore thought of as 'active agents' in processes of 'mapping and remapping' (Bunnell, 2004) and have the very power to alter space and perceptions of it (Clarke, 1997; Cresswell and Dixon, 2002). In engaging with these geographies of film, I seek to ask questions about how and where foreign-language film fits within this scholarship, which has largely focused on America and Hollywood (Craine and Aitken, 2004; Lukinbeal and Zimmerman, 2006), as well as audiences in geographic research on film which have so far neglected the reception of foreign-language film (Jancovich et al, 2003).

2.2 Postcolonial France and Beur Cinema

After the Second World War, the French government put in place a series of policies in order to bring immigrants to France from its African colonies, most of which came from the Maghreb, in order to literally reconstruct the nation, and to boost a population of young working men that had been severely depleted during the war (Hargreaves, 2007b). This phase of post-war immigration is only the most recent in France, with the

¹¹ Banaji (2012) and Keown's (2012) analysis of film audiences appears in Benwell et al's (2012) edited volume on *Postcolonial Audiences*, which otherwise privileges readers of literature.

movement of large numbers of Belgians and Italians being the first in the 19th Century, and Polish, and other eastern Europeans, after the First World War (Silverman, 2002). Policies introduced in the 19th Century to encourage Belgians and Italians to settle still resonate in contemporary debates around assimilation, particularly the *jus soli* (right of soil) legislation which granted legal citizenship status to those who were born in France, regardless of parentage (Weil, 1996). Discourses that (dis)connect notions of land (including soil) and identities are developed further in Chapter Four, in which key diegetic spaces of the films function as vectors for belonging and exclusion.

The term 'immigrant' however, is largely used in French public discourse not to simply describe the permanent settlement of people from one place to another (Gregory et al, 2009: 371), but rather as code for racially 'other' (Hargreaves and McKinney, 1997). Furthermore, the issue of 'immigration' is deployed as a catch all term for what might be referred to as 'race-relations' in the US and UK contexts (Hargreaves, 2007b). As Silverman (2002: 3) writes,

"in contemporary France, the term 'immigrant' has in turn frequently been used to signify those of non-European origin (or 'appearance'), and specifically North Africans and their children. In other words, a number of distinct categories have become conflated within the term 'immigration' so that what has become known as 'the problem of immigration' can designate specific people, irrespective of their nationality, who are defined as a threat to national unity and national identity".

As can be seen between the official policy of citizenship and the loaded term 'immigrant', it is the place of 'immigrants' and the children of immigrants in France that really matters, and their adherence to and participation in the values of the Republic, particularly assimilation and secularism (*laïcité*). The ideology of secular Republicanism, *laïcité*, with its roots in the French Revolution, is the formal separation of state and religion, with religious practice being confined to private spaces (Beckford, 2004; Fetzer and Soper, 2005). It's framing and application is largely unequal, with perceived 'oversized' or 'ostentatious' displays of religion applied largely to French Muslims, particularly Muslim women. It is quite different from the models of integration and multiculturalism that can be seen in other Western countries such as the UK, USA and Germany which (in theory) advocate the incorporation of people from different

ethnic and religious groups as equals, whilst allowing them to maintain distinct identities. France rejects this in favour of the ideology of assimilation, which insists on the full adoption of French culture by way of domesticating foreign others. These Republican values enshrine in law the refusal of difference, contributing to a broader public denial that France is multiracial (Murray, 2006). Therefore, whilst France projects to the world its unifying version of Republicanism, it simultaneously imposes a 'code of invisibility' on specific groups of its population (Guénif-Souilamas, 2006).

Anxieties around the stability of these core constitutional values came to the fore amidst the November riots of 2005, which saw mostly young men from the impoverished and largely minority-ethnic banlieues of French cities, take to the streets in clashes with police. The riots, which lasted for around three weeks (Mucchielli, 2009), exposed a deep-rooted racism at the heart of French society in which black and brown people are excluded in a variety of ways because of perceived cultural differences, that make them incompatible with the universalist values of the Republic (Hargreaves, 2007b). Furthermore, as Hargreaves (2007b) argues, the revolt in 2005 by young men of the banlieues was primarily a manifestation of frustration about the lack of access and opportunities, and a call for the media and authorities to take action. Thus, films by Maghrebi-French filmmakers play an important role in taking on the exclusion of ethnic minorities of Maghrebi origin by foregrounding their representation in film.

Deep-rooted socio-economic inequalities, in tandem with racial discrimination, are further part of and exacerbated by a deeply entrenched neglect of colonial history (Stoler, 2016). As demonstrated above in outlining the principles of the Republic, France's vision of itself is deeply ingrained in the selective framing of its past (Murray, 2006), entailing not only a romantic view of constitutional values but also, and perhaps most importantly, a whitewashing of its colonial history. France therefore neglects the roots of the frustration and racism that bubbled to the surface in 2005 (Murray, 2006; Hussey, 2014). The next section of this literature review will further unpack and justify postcolonial approaches to the memorialisation of French colonial histories, and will be later developed and evidenced in Chapter Five. The State of Emergency, legislation originally introduced in 1955 to quell pro-Algerian demonstrators, that was invoked in 2005, and seemingly indefinitely deployed again in 2015 after terrorist attacks in Paris, further demonstrates that whilst France keeps its colonial history at arms-length, it fails

to eliminate the colonial power structures that continue to police the public life of its most undesirable citizens (Guénif-Souilamas, 2006).

One of the chief aims of my thesis is to further understand and appreciate how Maghrebi-French cinema responds, resists and shoots back to some of the above issues that continue to dominate postcolonial France. To do so, I draw upon and extend Ashcroft et al's (2002) The Empire Writes Back, which considers the role of 'diaspora writing' in disrupting imaginary binaries fostered by the colonial novel, which emerge specifically from a colonial experience and foreground tension with the imperial centre and its power. The process of writing back to the centre involves appropriation and mimicry, particularly in the novel's case, of language and writing, transformed to use it in potentially transformative new ways. As Said (1994) argues, in resisting cultural imperialism the decolonising writer 're-experiences, adopts, re-uses and re-lives' in order to both self-assert and challenge the 'myth of purity' (Ashcroft et al, 2002). Whilst the novel was central to British imperialism, cinema itself was invented in France in 1895 at the height of its empire (Sherzer, 1996) and played a similar role to the British novel in fostering a sense of Frenchness. Indigenous populations of its territories were denied access to the medium, and upon independence (particularly in countries such as Algeria and Senegal which developed relatively successful new national cinemas) finally took up the camera to 'shoot back' to the Empire (Thackway, 2003). Whilst in postcolonial literatures it is language and other literary devices that are appropriated, in postcolonial film it is the power of representation and its visual authority that is mimicked and transformed. Again, these concepts are advanced further in the following section of this literature review, before which I want to give some thought to the development and theorisations of beur and Maghrebi-French cinemas, which in France has been an important site of postcolonial critique for a number of years.

The term beur was initially coined in the 1980s, at the time of earlier riots and unrest in French cities, by young descendants of North African immigrants as a way of both declining and appropriating the negative connotations attached to the racialised label 'Arabe' in French society (Tarr, 2005). As a form of Parisian backslang (*verlan*), the term beur rearranges and inverts the word 'Arabe' to produce something new from a subject position located in-between France and North Africa. Beur therefore signifies, as Naficy (2001) has noted, a form of 'creolisation' (or hybridisation) which initially symbolised a 'fractured French identity' and pointed towards a powerful 'generational

consciousness' (Bloom, 1999) of young men of North African origin, who demanded to be recognised as citizens of France.

Prior to the political and cultural mobilisation of the beurs in the 1980s, and the artistic endeavours which came with them, North African 'émigrés' (first generation) began making films in the 1970s in order to combat the French representation of the Maghreb and Maghrebis which "remained trapped in the colonial imaginary of a cinema that introduced the Maghreb through tales of love and adventure" (Higbee, 2013: 6). Émigré filmmakers, previously unable to access the means of film production, began to 'write', or shoot, back to the centre (Ashcroft et al, 2002) exploring and highlighting through low-budget documentary and feature films the racism and socio-economic hardships confronted by North African immigrants, with a particular focus on representing the 'immigrant worker' (Higbee, 2013). With limited opportunities for wider distribution and the continuing negative representation of North African immigrants in mainstream French cinema, the impact of émigré films was relatively minimal.

Mainstream French films moved from representing the first-generation immigrant worker to representing the second-generation 'criminal Other' in the 1980s (Higbee, 2013). Beur cinema therefore emerged in its predecessors' place to contest both the perceived 'miserablist' representation of the immigrant as passive victim in émigré films, and to 'decline the stereotype' (Rosello, 1998) of ethnic minorities in French film and media, giving voice specifically to the under-represented 'second-generation'. The cinema they created can be seen as part of a larger project of self-definition, sought through a small number of independently produced films (Tarr, 2005), in which it's protagonists are portrayed and produced as both French and Arab (Higbee, 2013), and its creators are established "as both social and artistic subjects" (Tarr, 2005: 11).

By the 1990s, beur cinema had established itself "as a cinema of community identification" (Bloom, 1999: 472). As Tarr (2005: 3) has argued, "films by and about beurs offer a touchstone for measuring the extent to which universalist Republican assumptions about Frenchness can be challenged and particular forms of multiculturalism envisaged and valued". Beur films are not however, solely reduced to countering dominant notions of 'Frenchness' (Tarr, 2005) but to addressing a wide-range of issues from 'exile', 'family', 'delinquency', 'colonial history', 'coming of age' and

'masculinity', all of which intersect in the specific geographies of 'urban decay' (Bloom, 1999).

Beur cinema not only emerged amidst recurrent outbreaks of violence, frustration, and political isolation, but in the specific geographical context of the urban banlieue and 'projects' (cité), as a manifestation of the state's 'logic of containment and regulation' (Bloom, 1999: 471). For this reason, beur cinema is often conflated with banlieue cinema, due to the shared experiences of unemployment by Maghrebi-French and white youths of French cities (Naficy, 2001). Early beur films such as Medhi Charef's *Tea in the harem* (1985) deal specifically with unemployment and crime (particularly car theft, perhaps symbolic of a desire for mobility) in the claustrophobic and failing projects of Paris. As scholars have pointed out, in particular Bloom (1999) and Levine (2008), there is a distinct geography to *beur* cinema that is didactically represented on screen, including through 'spatial metaphors', as the films' central questions are

"fundamentally spatial ones, questions about insiders and outsiders, about boundaries and exclusion, and they are similar to the thematic questions raised by the films about the place of immigrants and their descendants in contemporary French society" (Levine, 2008: 43).

Beur cinema began to reach a wider range of audiences, which in turn inflected its style and its politics. Departing from the protagonists and style which characterised 1970s émigré film, beur cinema further drew on comedy genre and created 'desirable and streetwise male characters' (Tarr, 2005) in order to reach a more diverse 'crossover' audience. In making commercially viable films and achieving popularity beyond minority-ethnic audiences (Naficy, 2001), one of the key challenges for beur filmmakers was the "delicate negotiation... in exposing the negative treatment of Maghrebi-French youth, without adopting an excessively hostile stance towards a French society in which, ultimately, they have a stake" (Higbee, 2013: 11). Therefore, the aim of beur cinema was not necessarily to 'empower the beur' (Tarr, 1993), but rather by the 90s served "as a sop to the liberal-critical conscience rather than as a productive category for a transgressive political cinema which would call French identity, as well as Beur identity, into question" (Tarr, 1993: 342).

A number of concerns have therefore been raised widely in the scholarship about beur cinema, particularly the potentially ghettoising term beur itself, with Tarr (2011: 84) asking, "how can beur cinema be empowering if it is grounded in an essentialist understanding of ethnic difference?" Whilst originating, as Tarr (2005) and others have noted, amongst Maghrebi-French youths themselves, it first of all fixes the filmmaker or actor's identity according to their race and ethnicity, leading to 'beur' actors themselves resisting the label and dismissing it as 'essentialist' and 'racist' (see Higbee, 2013: 19-20). Secondly, it therefore potentially restricts filmmakers and actors 'of Maghrebi origin' (Tarr, 2005) to make films that speak to that essentialist notion of who they are. In short, films about 'immigrants' for majority French (white) audiences. Higbee (2013: 2) importantly points out that this indeed

"raises the possibility of the ghettoization of Maghrebi-French and North African émigré filmmakers, in the sense that French producers and French funding bodies appeared more willing to back narratives that remained firmly focused on the experiences of the North African immigrant population and their French descendants... whose remit is, precisely, to promote projects that articulate the experiences of immigrant and ethnic minorities in France".

A 'landmark' change post-2000 has seen beur, or Maghrebi-French, filmmakers and actors gradually enter the mainstream of French filmmaking. Previously defined by their marginality, films by Maghrebi-French filmmakers have recently achieved access to funding, marketing and distribution networks that were formerly "reserved for only the most high profile French mainstream productions" (Higbee, 2013: 1). Access to larger amounts of funding has inevitably led to an increase in volume of films by Maghrebi-French directors, as well as bigger-budget films, whilst increased marketing and distribution both within and beyond France has facilitated the growth in audiences (Durmelat and Swamy, 2011), both of which further influence their thematic concerns. If the beur cinema of the 1980s and 1990s was largely restricted to making films about the claustrophobic and 'delinquent' banlieue, films released since 2000 further question the rigidity of the Republic's borders (Gott, 2013) and the safe nostalgia of its past (Higbee, 2013). For example, Gott (2013: 73) identifies the French 'road movie' as a significant element of this shift, in which films "use mobility to demonstrate that it is conceivable to be French and retain, or rediscover, a connection to another identity", as characters make 'return' journeys to North Africa on passages of self-(re)discovery. Furthermore, until

recently, the invisibility of Islam in Maghrebi-French cinema has largely gone undiscussed, with representations of religion largely limited to 'unthreatening firstgeneration immigrants in private spaces' (Tarr 2014). Films such as *The Grand Voyage* (Ferroukhi, 2004), previously mentioned in Chapter One, in which a father and son make the pilgrimage from France to Mecca, make a rare and welcome attempt at centring Muslims, though as both Higbee (2013) and Tarr (2014) note this narrative takes place safely away from Europe, and firmly outside of secular France. More broadly however, having access to central streams of funding has given filmmakers like Ismael Ferroukhi, director of this thesis' Free Men (2011), license to spark conversations about issues such as religion, and others such as Rachid Bouchareb, director of this thesis' Days of Glory (2006) and Outside the Law (2010), to confront aspects of, and memorialise, France's forgotten colonial past. The specific historical trend in what Higbee specifically refers to as 'post-beur' cinema, has been dubbed by him as 'counter-heritage' (Higbee, 2013) for the ways in which Ferroukhi and Bouchareb's films use the representational codes and iconographies of historical reconstruction commonly associated with the French heritage film, in order to challenge the dominant narratives of colonial nostalgia in French films such as *Indochine* (1992). Whilst Higbee (2013) briefly acknowledges the debts owed to Hollywood film genre in the films (particularly in *Outside the Law*), he does not take the point any further to ask questions about what work the films can do via this cultural mix of genre, which enables them to speak in a more universal language, beyond countering discourses of French nostalgia. The final section of this literature review deals specifically with postcolonial audiences of foreign-language films, and in Chapter Seven of the thesis I will further explore the impacts of the films on English-speaking Western audiences. First of all, however, in the following section I will expand upon the analytical frameworks of postcolonial theory, and its application to this body of film, in order to help further understand French postcolonial politics, and the negotiation of cultural identity that is at the heart of Maghrebi-French cinema.

2.3 Postcolonial Studies and Cinema

Rooted in literary criticism, postcolonial theory emerged as a tool through which to challenge persistent imperial dominance over culture (Ashcroft et al, 2002) in the period after colonialism. The term for me is not simply a temporal one designating a time after colonised countries became independent, but rather deployed as a critical analytic intended to investigate and confront the role that colonial and imperial power continues to play in shaping postcolonial societies (Radcliffe, 1997; Gregory, 2004).

Postcolonialism therefore usefully presents a challenge to temporal binaries which separate time before and after colonialism, as well as spatial binaries which separate the colonised peripheries from the imperial centres. Time and space are hence crucial to postcolonial studies, particularly inspired and informed by the work of Edward Said (1978) who argued that the 'struggle over geography' is central to (post)colonial relationships, not simply materially, but also in the 'imaginative geographies' evoked in the battle for space. Broadly speaking, as Blunt and McEwan (2002: 3) have argued, "postcolonialism should be understood as a geographically dispersed contestation of colonial power and knowledge". The post-2000 shift in beur cinema (Higbee, 2013) in France then, offers a specific insight into this contestation, which concerns the conflict between self-definition and othering, and in which postcolonial spaces in both Francophone and Anglophone worlds are remade and transformed. Such a conflict occurs in tension with simultaneous identification with and refusal of the dominant society's cultures, and therefore raises key questions about postcolonial cinema as a genre or movement of film. Despite the relative rejection of the postcolonial in French society and the French academy (Forsdick, 2005), Maghrebi-French films are as demonstrated above committed to investigating postcolonial issues, through what might be called postcolonial processes of cultural borrowing which draw upon Hollywood genre conventions.

Hybridity and cultural borrowing are therefore recurrent motifs throughout this thesis, as issues of mimicry, syncrecity and (re)appropriation occupy central tensions at the heart of the films themselves. As a key concept in postcolonial studies, the notion of hybridity is generally used to describe the 'mixing' of people and cultures, which for Bhabha (1994) resists fixity, and signals to the fluidity of identity, culture and nation, producing subjectivities that are 'neither one nor the other', but 'something new' and 'in-between'. In Maghrebi-French cinemas case, using, exploring and playing with genre results in the potential deterritorialisation of French identity, avoiding definitive categorisation and resisting the demands of assimilation, using the language of the oppressor (in this case film genre) to have their voices heard. Deployed as a more positive quality in this sense, hybridity is also a racialised term to objectify (Young, 1995), invoked in colonial discourse and policy in which hybridity refers to 'assimilation' of the other through inter-racial breeding, thus eliminating 'undesirable' racial characteristics. At other times, hybridity is expressed out of fear over the 'contamination' of racial and cultural purity of the coloniser (Stoler, 1992; Stam, 2003). In the French context, the term 'métissage'

refers specifically to the 'mixed-blood children' of French men and colonised women, and is deployed to both assimilate and to segregate (Sherzer, 1998).

Furthermore, as its critics have noted (Brah and Coombes, 2000), the concept of hybrid formations between cultures often relies on the perceived pre-existence of two distinct and therefore 'essentialised' cultures, hybridised only upon encounter with one another. Rather than dismissing hybridity however, it is crucial that any engagement with it must rather be considered in its particular environment, in which the circumstances of its cultural formation, and its effects, are specifically addressed.

Maghrebi-French cinema then, takes inspiration from a variety of different places, positioning itself beside other cultural histories and traditions, for example Algerian national cinema, French cinemas (including beur), and Hollywood. In doing so, Maghrebi-French cinema is informed by the films that preceded it, and re-appropriates the dominant genre conventions and historical narratives of Hollywood in order to define and construct its own platform, and to reflect political concerns. Film genres themselves are not static, emerging at specific moments to reflect contemporary social problems. For example, the American gangster genre emerged amidst societal interest in, and fear of, organised crime in the 1930s, whilst the World War Two combat film genre materialised as America entered the war in 1943 (Bender, 2013). Whilst I develop literatures on genre in more detail in Chapters Five and Six due to their influence on shaping memorialisation and the production of masculine identities (Neale, 1991; Spicer, 2003; Donald and MacDonald, 2011), I simply want to make the point here that genre undergoes continual processes of change and revision according to social and political change. Edward Said (1994: 262) is again instructive here as he points to the fluidity of culture. Whilst talking in the context of nationalism in newly independent countries, he argues that,

"culture is never just a matter of ownership, of borrowing and lending with absolute debtors and creditors, but rather of appropriations, common experiences, and interdependencies of all kinds of among different cultures".

Notwithstanding its pitfalls then, hybridity is a useful paradigm through which to think about these Maghrebi-French films when it is expressed with consideration of the "asymmetrical power relations engendered by colonialism" (Stam, 2003: 33). Therefore,

the 'hybridity' of the films should not be solely reduced to conceding defeat to French Republicanism, nor defined by some kind of inherent postcolonial resistance, but rather as part of a 'contradictory and complex' negotiation in which local and global cultural authorities are potentially 'unsettled' and 'subverted' (Bhabha, 1994), and various claims to space are made. Therefore, the cultural 'hybridity' of postcolonial cinemas, including Maghrebi-French or 'post-beur' (Higbee, 2013), ought not to be uncritically celebrated, but critically interrogated for its emancipatory and/or exclusionary qualities (Gilroy, 1993; Brah and Coombes, 2000).

Despite this, postcolonial film scholars have persisted to try to define, and constitute, postcolonial cinemas more broadly according to a variety of criteria, such as style, conventions, ethnicity, themes and transnationality. Hamid Naficy (2001) for example identifies what he calls 'accented cinema', based primarily on modes of production that are reliant on the ethnicity and background of the filmmaker. Incorporating a wide geography of films in his analysis, including from France and North Africa, he argues that "although there is nothing common about exile and diaspora, deterritorialised peoples and their films share certain features, which in today's climate of lethal ethnic difference need to be considered, even emphasised" (Naficy, 2001: 1). Furthermore, the films in his corpus have what he refers to as a 'unique style' which represents and reflects a 'self-reflexive' and 'fragmented' narrative in which the postcolonial film refuses dominant cinematic conventions associated with Hollywood, thus inviting the viewer to participate in a more 'complex circuit of perception'. It will also be shown further on in this chapter, and in Chapter Seven, that a consideration of audiences is essential to understanding postcolonial cinema in its various formations, such as 'foreign' and 'world' cinemas. As has already been, and will continue to be, suggested throughout this chapter, reducing postcolonial film to its ability to 'resist' hegemonic culture in a straightforward way risks essentialising postcolonial cultures and therefore reproducing colonial binaries. My aim therefore, is not to redefine Maghrebi-French or post-beur, or more broadly postcolonial, cinema, but rather to utilise postcolonial theory as a critical approach to interrogate the cultural work the films do. Building upon the work of Ponzanesi and Waller (2012: 112) and Weaver-Hightower and Hulme (2014), I utilise the 'postcolonial lens' as a cinematic 'framework of analysis', that speaks to the hybrid use of genre conventions in these Maghrebi-French films and the ways in which they help to construct postcolonial spaces (Chapter Four), memories (Chapter Five) and genders (Chapter Six).

The processes through which cultural identities are formed are inextricably tied up with history and memorialisation, in which, to borrow from Robert Stam (2003: 36) "oppressed people have been obliged to recreate their past out of scraps and remnants and the debris of history". In this sense, memory-making too is a hybrid process of cultural borrowing in which minority groups draw upon multiple points of reference to recount their past, without claiming to rescue some kind of 'authentic' pre-colonial culture, but rather negotiating memory in the very language, in this case film genre, of the coloniser. One important aspect of postcolonial studies then, is its negotiation of memory and interrogation of history, which challenges the ways colonialism has written and legitimised its own past. Such work not only seeks to disrupt colonial discourses which have constructed a backward orient (Said, 1978), and justified the violence of empire, but also the very idea of 'history' as an official overarching narrative from the 'vantage point of Europe' (Said, 1978; Young, 1990). As Chakrabarty (2000: 93) writes in *Provincializing Europe*, "subaltern histories are therefore constructed within a particular kind of historicised memory, one that remembers history itself as an imperious code that accompanied the civilizing process".

What have consistently been referred to in the French context as 'forgotten' and 'lost', or as Stoler (2016) recently and more accurately clarifies, 'occluded' and 'blocked', colonial histories, are best attended to through the framework of memory. First of all, it is perhaps telling of the forbidden nature of the Algerian War that the most prominent and influential scholar on memory, Pierre Nora (1989), in his volume Les Lieux de *Memoire* (Sites of Memory) almost completely neglects to discuss French colonialism (Hargreaves, 2005). Until relatively recently, the Algerian War of Independence, or la guerre sans nom (the war without a name) has remained a 'taboo' subject in France. The declassification of military archives in the early 1990s and the later public trial of former chief of Paris Police and Vichy collaborator, Maurice Papon, both served to instigate the beginnings of a public conversation about France's unsavoury histories (Lorcin, 2006). The case of Maurice Papon, tried officially for his part in deporting over 1500 Jews from Bordeaux to Nazi concentration camps, and unofficially for his supposed part in the murder of more than 200 Algerians in Paris 1961, serves as a key turning point in the 'memory wars' (Stora, 2007) in France. For Cole (2010: 109), the period between 1945 and 1962 "bracket the crucial period of decolonisation", and so the Papon trial is significant for the ways in which we think about how repressed memories of Vichy collaboration emerge alongside, not separate from, the violence of the Algerian War.

The films at the centre of this thesis are some of the latest manifestations of that move towards memorialisation. Postcolonial representations seek to directly counteract any 'singular, homogenous past' of French national history (Higbee, 2013: 64), through engaging with a collective memory that has been obscured, retrieving neglected stories and, as Toni Morrison does, 'imaginatively recreating' them in the present (Morrison, 1984). Inspired by Maurice Halbwachs' (1992) insistence that memory is not restricted to the individual, cultural memory foregrounds the ways in which memory becomes collective through shared experiences, often through 'symbolic artefacts' such as film (Erll and Rigney, 2009). In contrast to the more static official histories constituted by the state, memory is 'alive' and 'performative', and in a process of constant reinvention through various representations (Huyssen, 2000). Open to more imaginative engagements with the past, cultural and collective memory allows for the creative constitution of alternative histories that do not rely solely on obtainable and authoritative 'facts', nor are they restricted by particular forms or genres of telling new stories. As Hargreaves (2005: 5) reminds us, the very 'politics of memory', are reliant upon and transformed by the cultural medium through which it recounts and reworks the past. As a medium, film is unique in its visual ability to draw upon, represent and bring to life various aspects of history, and with, as Ponzanesi and Waller (2012: 16) put it,

"its freedom to sculpt time and to shape space, its synesthetic appeal to multiple senses, and its privileging of movement over stasis, is particularly well-suited to subverting conventional frames and choreographing new histories".

As with the processes of hybrid cultural borrowing described above however, collective cultural memory is not an automatically progressive endeavour, nor is there a simple dichotomy between 'history' as belonging to the state and 'memory' belonging to minorities. This is clear to see in the French context, in which a whole range of collectives culturally contest the memorialisation of the Algerian War, such as pied noir and harki groups (see Eldridge, 2010). More broadly, as Huyssen (2000: 28) comments, "the turn towards memory is subliminally energised by the desire to anchor ourselves in a world characterised by an increasing instability of time and the fracturing of lived space". Huyssen (2000), echoed by Erll (2011), whilst sympathetic to this desire, warns of the nostalgic 'comfort' of memory, cautioning against the romanticised return to a 'mythicised' past without critically reflecting on the present. As has already been mentioned, and is a consistent thread of tension throughout this thesis, appending oneself

to Eurocentric cultural memory raises further considerations about the effects of what Bhabha (1984) calls 'mimicry'.

Moreover, Said (1978) somewhat neglects, in his landmark *Orientalism*, the fact that the project of empire building was an incredibly masculinist one (Jacobs, 2003), and therefore impacted colonised women in starkly different ways to men. This feminist critique of Said (Lewis, 1996; Yegenoglu, 1998) extends further to anti-colonial or postindependence movements and narratives, in which the heroic successes of national liberation privilege(d) the contribution of men, replacing the patriarchy of empire with that of the post-colonial nation (McClintock, 1995; McEwan, 2003; Boehmer, 2005). Whilst Fanon (1961) is credited by many as acknowledging the role of women in Algeria's liberation, Boehmer (2005) calls him out for reifying the 'normative position of men' at the forefront of the revolution, in what for Fanon was 'first and foremost a man's liberation', from other men. As a great deal of attention on Fanon demonstrates, this was a particularly pertinent concern in Algeria, where French desires to possess Algerian women were equated with possessing Algeria itself (Faulkner, 1996), resulting in a post-independence Fanon-inspired masculinism, in which a 'new Algerian man' (Fanon, 1961) emerged dishonoured and emasculated by colonialism, determined to reassert his masculinity.

Maghrebi-French filmmakers have done, and continue to do, nothing to combat the masculinism of (post)colonial histories, in which male protagonists remain central and their masculinity relatively unchallenged (Tarr, 2005). As implied in the nationalist discourses of post-colonial Algeria, this is not to suggest that femininity is completely absent in beur and post-beur (Higbee, 2013) filmmaking, but rather that it is often reduced to allegorical roles in which women play minor supporting roles, or are invoked as metaphor for the nation. As Boehmer (2005) argues in her book *Stories of Women*, the 'gendered configuration of the postcolonial nation' entails a process in which the nation is "embodied *as* woman *by* male leaders, artists and writers" (Boehmer, 2005: 4 original emphasis). There is a danger however, in the very work of postcolonial feminist critics, of reproducing the association of gender and the nation with women, and so careful and critical attention ought to be paid to the ways in which men and masculinities are represented, reinforced, and repositioned in relation to past and present revolution, assimilation, *and* to other women. In their mimicry of Hollywood gangster, spy and combat masculinities however, these Maghrebi-French films attest to the possibility of a

strategic mimicry of hegemonic masculinities that in Bhabha's (1984: 127) words represent both 'resemblance and menace'. The extent to which this is the case will be discussed further in Chapter Six, in which literatures on masculinity will be further developed. Furthermore, the constitution of postcolonial spaces, memories and masculinities is not solely done by the films or the researcher, but by audiences.

2.4 Postcolonial Audiences

"Studying the relationship between the 'West' and its dominated cultural 'others' is not just a way of understanding an unequal relationship between unequal interlocutors, but also a point of entry into studying the formation and meaning of Western cultural practices themselves"

(Said, 1994: 230).

Whilst I have so far demonstrated a central concern with the postcolonial work the films do, I am furthermore interested in the ways English-speaking Western audiences respond, and position themselves in relation, to a specific 'foreign' body of film. The following chapter will outline my specific methodological approach to audiences, which draws on media and cultural studies to interrogate the actual, as opposed to ideal or implied, audiences of the films (Hall, 1980; Morley, 1980; Staiger, 2000). Here, I will set up the justification for such an approach, by highlighting the relative neglect in postcolonial studies of audience reception, drawing on some recent notable exceptions that focus primarily on postcolonial literature (Benwell et al, 2012; Procter and Benwell, 2015). The inattention to observable audience reception (and readings) of postcolonial productions is a surprise, particularly considering Said's (1994) powerful words above, which call for the investigation into the unequal cultural relationships and practices between the 'centre' and its 'others'. Said foregrounded throughout his work the centrality of the written word, and although less urgently film and media also, within this relationship and yet few studies have seriously engaged their audiences, particularly those written or made by 'others', and received in imperial and metropolitan centres. Benwell et al (2012), supportive of Huggan's indictment in the preface to their edited collection, attribute the disregard for audiences in postcolonial studies to an elitist suspicion within the discipline, accusing postcolonial studies of snobbery towards popular culture, and further suggesting that for some, researching audiences risks "compromising some of the more general claims that have been made in the field around the transformative, resistant or subversive capacities of isolated postcolonial texts"

(Benwell et al, 2012: 8). Nevertheless, previous research has been conducted into the historical importance of 'reading for Empire' (see Bristow, 1991; Phillips, 1997), both at home and abroad, for the purposes of manufacturing consent, marketing the empire (McClintock, 1995), and introducing new and unknown places to the colonial imaginary. As these authors have argued, audiences in their different forms were central to Empire, and to the organisation and negotiation of power and identity.

New and emerging circuits of global culture have fostered increased access to the lives of others, circuits within which the films of my thesis have been produced, distributed and are received. What Fraser (2008) and Procter (2011) refer to as 'reading after empire' then, continues to be a central part of renegotiating and making sense of more contemporary issues of difference, migration and multiculturalism in contemporary Western centres. Benwell, Procter and Robinson (2012) and Procter and Benwell's (2015) recent works are key interventions in postcolonial studies, dedicating in-depth inquiry into audiences. In Postcolonial Audiences, Benwell et al (2012) attempt to move towards a clearer, and wider, idea of who and where audiences of postcolonial texts are, building on more specific and isolated examples (such as Newell's 2006 focus on 'ways of reading' West African literatures), to consider the publishing industry, groups of online readers in the 'West' and in the 'global south', academic and professional readers, and towards 'ethical' reading and viewing positions. The collection ultimately attempts to conceptualise and think "in the broadest possible way about the different theoretical and empirical consequences of reception, from ideal to real readers" (Benwell et al, 2012: 1). The overwhelming focus of the collection however, retains the field's attention on literary texts, in spite of their introductory acknowledgement that "until relatively recently, however (and when it has discussed audiences at all), postcolonial studies has spoken about readers alone, and in isolation from the other [film, TV and other media] audiences" (Benwell et al, 2012: 3). Contributors that do examine visual media in the collection, which focus on animated comedy in New Zealand (Keown, 2012) and the reception of Bollywood films in India (Banaji, 2012), offer empirical analyses that locate the reception of postcolonial texts in relation to the social identities and positions of the audience. Nevertheless, what is lacking in this book is the study of the reception and consumption of, what in film studies and industries has become almost interchangeably known as 'foreign', 'world', and 'international' cinemas (or 'foreign language', i.e. not in English), in English-speaking Western centres such as the UK and USA. This is a specific gap I aim to address, asking questions of this significant scholarship which

mostly attends to literature, and putting it to work on the popular narratives of Maghrebi-French cinema and its reception in English-speaking Western circuits of online criticism. In doing so, this will have further implications for the ways in which scholars of film conceptualise foreign-language film, which I will discuss further down.

Before I do so however, it is worth considering in more detail the later co-produced monograph by Procter and Benwell (2015) in which, whilst the focus is *entirely* on literature and is geographically broad, makes further breakthroughs, and offers key departure points, by focusing on amateur critics, and therefore notions of 'accessibility', and issues of race and encounters with 'difference' through reading. Through their survey of 250 members of reading groups across the world, including in the UK, the Caribbean, India and Canada, Procter and Benwell (2015) interrogate and foreground geographically dispersed readers and their transnational connectedness, and highlight the potential transformation of postcolonial novels specifically by 'lay' or 'amateur' readers. Whilst readers are transnationally connected 'across worlds', the authors also emphasise that they make meaning from the novels from specific geographical locations, in particular times, and from a range of social positions. The novels upon which they focus, which include Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003) and Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000), are explicitly concerned with issues around race, and are themes through which the authors are able to interrogate the 'postcolonial reader's' locally situated perceptions and opinions of, encounters with, and subjective positioning in relation to, difference. By comparatively monitoring diverse reading groups in different parts of the world, Procter and Benwell (2015) attend to the different regimes of value involved in reading 'ethnically diverse' texts, and the reader's various practices of identification, and positions, in relation to them. The broad geographical focus gives their argument scope to explore differentiated readings in specific reading contexts. Repeating the point made earlier, this is first of all about literature, and so my study will build upon this work in order to think about film. And whilst their focus on the constitution of identities in relation to the texts (such as anti-racist, colonised, cosmopolitan) is welcome, the broad geographical focus evades the specific power dialectics involved in the consumption of 'other' cultural products, between centres and peripheries.

As previously mentioned, taking the above scholarship forward and extending it to film, has important implications for considering the place of foreign-language film in the English-speaking Western imagination. Film plays a vital role in how people come to

understand and know the world around them, as John Berger (1972: 7) famously declared that seeing "establishes our place in the world". As an increasingly cross-border experience (Bergfelder, 2005), cinema has been described as 'transnational' by numerous scholars (Ezra and Rowden, 2006; Durovicová and Newman, 2010; Higbee and Lim, 2010), following an influential critique of the concept of 'national' cinema by Andrew Higson (2000). Higbee and Lim (2010: 8) cite this establishment of the transnational approach to cinema as being part of,

"a wider dissatisfaction expressed by scholars working across the humanities... with the paradigm of the national as a means of understanding production, consumption and representation of cultural identity... in an increasingly interconnected, multicultural and polycentric world".

Transnational film scholars have therefore been quick to problematise how a cinema or cinemas are also constructed, with the transnational allowing the examination of power relations that are present in an increasingly globalised age.

This has led to others attempting to conceptualise what is often labelled as 'world cinema' (Dennison and Lim, 2006; Nagib, Dudrah and Perriam, 2012), foregrounding its "place in the cultural imaginary" (Nagib et al, 2012: 1), in which film shapes and responds to the effects of transnationalism. However, they seek to theorise 'world cinema' in 'positive' terms, as a cinema which has the political potential to question and challenge Eurocentric visions, though to also move away from binary distinctions which position it as inherently 'reactive' to Hollywood. As Nagib (2006: 27) argues, "the result of viewing world cinema as 'alternative' and 'different' is that the American paradigm continues to prevail as a tool for its evaluation". World cinema as it is deployed as a marketing strategy to sell non-Hollywood and non-Anglophone films, has been critiqued by Dennison and Lim (2006) and Nagib et al (2012) for the ways in which it places value on exotic otherness and the consumption of difference. Scholars of transnational and world cinemas more clearly conceptualise the power dynamics of such inter-cultural relationships, than Procter and Benwell (2015) do for example. However, unlike scholars of postcolonial literatures (Benwell et al, 2012; Procter and Benwell, 2015), scholars of film neglect the place of audiences in constructing 'world' or 'foreign' cinemas, attention to which can be revealing for the ways in which a film's politics, and its identity, can be altered and transformed in different reception contexts. For me, the

interrogation of the 'transnational' in studying 'world cinema' relies on a postcolonial critique, in order to critically consider to the cross-national aesthetic influences in terms of visual style, narrative and genre, as well as the power dialectics at stake in cross-national distribution and consumption.

Therefore, I endeavour to take inspiration from Benwell et al (2012) and Procter and Benwell (2015) in considering the social identities and subjectivities that are formed in the process of 'reading' other cultures, and extending this to foreign-language cinema, bringing a much-needed audience point-of-view to studies of transnational and world cinemas (Ponzanesi, 2012; Nagib et al, 2012), and insist that we must do both in order to better understand and theorise the geographies of world cinema.

2.5 Film Geographies

As a 'subfield' that has 'come of age' (Aitken and Dixon, 2006), geographic research into film interrogates both the text itself, and the consumption of film as a cultural commodity. The scope of this geographic reach into film therefore consists of the analysis of particular shots and images within the narrative, the wider context of production and consumption of film and the ways in which they construct meaning and place (Kennedy and Lukinbeal, 1997; Lukinbeal, 2002; Jancovich et al, 2003). Film geographers have therefore asked questions of the production of film's internal meanings, investigating the cultural formation of social identities and space, and the ways in which these representations are consumed by audiences.

In researching film, space is unsurprisingly a key concern for geographers, particularly for the ways in which film visually 'constructs and deconstructs' the world around us, and the ways in which we experience it (Cresswell and Dixon, 2002). For geographers therefore, social life is not unproblematically and simply 'present', but is mediated and re-presented, produced and reproduced, in a complex play of imagery and performance in which gendered, racialised and classed identities are constituted. As film geographers have consistently pointed out, filmic space must not be limited to analysing the representation of the 'real', comparing the extent to which film 'accurately' depict space, nor to geographical settings and locations (Aitken and Zonn, 1994). Rather, critical attention has focused on the ways physical spaces are reworked and regenerated as imagined settings, expressed through the use of colour, camera-angles and depth of shot (Williams, 2013). For example, the construction of the mise-en-scene, which refers to

everything in the shot, such as the placing of actors, the different uses of lighting, the position of the camera, and the use of different props, are crucial to the production of particular film spaces (Bordwell and Thompson, 2012). Space ultimately is manipulated by a range of cinematic techniques that produce a variety of spatial aesthetics for different purposes. Films are therefore considered to be 'active agents' in 'mapping and remapping' the world as we know it (Bunnell, 2004), and have the very power to alter space and our perceptions and experiences of it (Clarke, 1997).

In foregrounding the ways in which films actively work to shape and imagine the world, geographers have tended to emphasise the role of Hollywood, and other popular film cultures. These range from the examination of race in *The Birth of a Nation* (Olund, 2013) and *Mississippi Burning* (Jansson, 2005), to national identity in *Braveheart* (Edensor, 1997), masculinity in *Lawrence of Arabia* (Kennedy, 1994) and *Fight Club* (Craine and Aitken, 2004), and the city in science fiction films (Gold, 2001). As *popular* cultural products, these kinds of films have been wide reaching and interact with the everyday lives of people that watch them (Burgess and Gold, 1985). Burgess and Gold (1985) crucially contend that popular media, and popular culture more broadly, should not be limited to what Kong (1995) more broadly refers to as 'elite culture', as they are important mediators of social knowledge, couriers of ideology and agents of hegemony. Hollywood films then are much more than just entertainment. In their case study example of *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), Lukinbeal and Zimmerman (2006: 318) resist essentialist tendencies in what they call 'dominant' or 'traditional' geography by insisting that,

"film geography is not simply a disassociated 'reading' of entertaining 'texts', but rather, are inquiries of cultural documents that reveal hegemonic tensions within meaning creation, appropriation and contestation".

In their example, the film has to be considered in the context-specific cultural politics of both the political aftermath of 9/11 and the Bush administration's stance on, and wider public debates around, climate change. Geographers explicit concern with Hollywood and popular film has also focused on the film industry itself and its political economy. Lukinbeal and Zimmerman (2006) for example, outline the ways in which Hollywood's 'hegemonic tentacles' have long promoted 'cultural commodification and homogenisation', stylistically influencing and commodifying other national cinemas, and

orientalising on-location sites, such as in North Africa. Beyond the 'reading of the text' to its 'social-spatial' processes (Lukinbeal and Zimmerman, 2006) then, geographers are also interested in film as a cultural commodity, an object of symbolic value circulating within the global economy (Scott, 1999; Lukinbeal, 2004b). As Lukinbeal and Zimmerman (2006: 321) put it:

"film is a discursive formation embedded in the cultural politics of specific areas. Content and meaning of any given film is relative and dependent on the viewer, the situation and the cultural era".

The significance of films cannot be wholly understood by focusing solely on the texts' internal meaning but must be examined in relation to the economic conditions of their production and consumption. Film is therefore an assemblage of textual and extratextual processes and actors (Kennedy and Lukinbeal, 1997; Jancovich et al, 2003).

I therefore raise questions about the burgeoning field of film geographies in thinking about the ways in which the popular (Hollywood) infiltrates and influences postcolonial film (Maghrebi-French). As previously mentioned, geographers have paid significant critical attention to popular Hollywood cinema for the ways in which it engages and shapes (geo)politics (Dittmer and Dodds, 2008), social identities (Craine and Aitken, 2004), and exerts hegemony in, and saturates, the global marketplace (Lukinbeal and Zimmerman, 2006). However, to revise and extend our appreciation of space and cinema in the contemporary world of transnational film production and consumption, requires us to think more about how other cinemas beyond Hollywood (including their audiences) respond and adapt to political, artistic and digital changes in the world of film.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have used the postcolonial as a way to understand and frame the study of film. I have highlighted key questions this thesis will ask of all of these literatures through a detailed study of three particular Maghrebi-French films, and their online English-speaking Western audiences. Broadly speaking, these questions encourage other scholars of postcolonial studies, postcolonial cinemas, postcolonial audiences and film geographies to take seriously the role of popular culture in postcolonial cultural productions.

First of all, conceptualising France as postcolonial helps to contextualise beur cinema's endeavour to shoot 'back to the centre' (Ashcroft et al, 2002), and to trace its complex shift to the mainstream of French film production. Contemporary beur cinema, labelled post-beur by Higbee (2013), has moved beyond the confines of the banlieue in terms of spatial representation, and beyond France in terms of its artistic influences and commercial production and distribution. However, these developments have important implications for the ways in which scholars understand postcolonial cinemas more broadly (Ponzanesi and Waller, 2012), as well as their audiences (Benwell et al 2012; Procter and Benwell, 2015), and so there is a need to consider and apply key postcolonial concepts in order to extend our understanding of both the local case of Maghrebi-French cinema, and broader concepts of postcolonial cinemas.

Secondly then, this chapter draws out key tenets in postcolonial studies, particularly theories around hybridity and cultural borrowing (Bhabha, 1984; Brah and Coombes, 2000), in an effort to redefine postcolonial cinema, and Maghrebi-French films place within it, and move beyond binary definitions according to ethnicity, artistic subtlety and romantic notions of resistance and opposition (Naficy, 2001). Thirdly, this chapter has argued that the audiences of these 'hybridised' postcolonial films are a crucial part of the increasingly mobile and transnational circuits of global film culture, through which they are brought closer to 'others'. As previously mentioned, this thesis addresses a gap in postcolonial film work on audiences, which whilst thinking, discussing and theorising about audiences, seldom study in any empirical way the active recipients of cultural products which postcolonialists consistently claim are so important. In order to address this, I take inspiration from postcolonial literature scholars (Benwell et al, 2012; Procter and Benwell, 2015) audience work, in order to advance debates around the place and geographies of foreign-language film in the Western imaginary (Dennison and Lim, 2006; Nagib, 2006; Nagib et al, 2012). Lastly, my geographical insights further work to complement and extend the above-mentioned scholarship in film studies that often focuses on the text. It extends the geographies of film (Aitken and Dixon, 1994; Cresswell and Dixon, 2002; Craine and Aitken, 2004; Lukinbeal and Zimmerman, 2006) to consider foreign-language cinema seriously, simultaneously applying a specific postcolonial analysis of film currently lacking in film geographies research, as well as to audiences in geographic research on film which have so far neglected the reception of foreign-language film.

The key critical questions emerging from the readings of these literatures, which will be explored through the analysis of the films *Days of Glory* (2006), *Outside the Law* (2010) and *Free Men* (2011), and their English-speaking Western audiences are:

1. How do the spaces of contemporary popular films open up possibilities for the negotiation of postcolonial memories, masculinities and trajectories?

This raises a series of more specific questions, which will be addressed through the three films *Days of Glory* (2006), *Outside the Law* (2010) and *Free Men* (2011):

- 2. What spaces are important in the films?
- 3. What kind of memorialisation is made possible through the films?
- 4. What masculinities do these films construct and contest?
- 5. What do audiences think of these films, and what do they do with them?

Chapter Three

Methodology

Researching Textual Geographies

3.1 Introduction

The main methodological contribution of this thesis is to give a richer account of the ways in which postcolonial films shift aesthetically, politically and geographically, by using both textual and audience analyses. My methodology is therefore designed to question how the films are textually constituted and put together across different cultural frameworks, as well as to discover how audiences respond in particular environments. This chapter will therefore introduce the methodological approach and procedures in undertaking a study of Maghrebi-French films and their audience reception in the English-speaking Western world, the main aim of which is to further understand the social and cultural production of postcolonial geographies, and to consider the ways in which previously 'minority' postcolonial films become 'popular'.

In doing so, I will outline the objects of study, approach and interpretative strategies for both the films *Days of Glory* (2006), *Outside the Law* (2010) and *Free Men* (2011), and the reception discourses on online review platforms IMDb, Rotten Tomatoes and Metacritic. I will draw upon analytical frameworks informed by film and media studies, namely textual and discourse analysis (Phillips, 2000; McKee, 2003; Aitken, 2005; Crang, 2010), in which the films and their reception discourses are both considered independent of authorial intentions (Barthes, 1967; Foucault, 1971), and as open-ended and socially produced sites through which meaning is made (Hall, 1980; Waitt, 2010).

3.2 Films: Objects of Study, Approach and Analysis

In order to think about the accessibility and suitability of the films *Days of Glory* (2006), *Outside the Law* (2010) and *Free Men* (2011) for the questions I ask in this thesis, I will first of all provide a brief synopsis of each film in which their postcolonial vision is described, as well as outline the cultural and commercial circuits which made them mobile outside of France. I will then go on to introduce my methodological approach to these films, in which a post-structural and postcolonial strategy critically informs a textual analysis method.

3.2.1 Objects of Study

The films *Days of Glory* (2006), *Outside the Law* (2010) and *Free Men* (2011) have been chosen as they first of all represent a significant cultural and commercial shift towards the mainstream within Maghrebi-French cinema, and French cinema more broadly, and are therefore well placed to ask questions about the negotiation of postcolonial spaces. The first of these films, *Days of Glory* (2006) by Rachid Bouchareb, is a large-scale, bigbudget historical combat film that follows a group of Algerian and Moroccan infantrymen in de Gaulle's Free French Army, from recruitment and training in North Africa to liberating European territories from German occupation, as well as racial inequalities within the army. Rachid Bouchareb's sequel, American gangster-inspired *Outside the Law* (2010), represents the Algerian War of Independence from the immigrant perspective in Paris through the eyes of three Algerian brothers. Lastly, Ismael Ferroukhi's *Free Men* (2011), also set in Paris, tells a similarly neglected aspect of World War Two as it primarily concerns the contributions made by North African immigrants to aiding European and Sephardic Jews in avoiding German concentration camps.

In addition to their consciously political outlook, these three films have travelled relatively well outside of France. Therefore, whilst there are a range of, what Higbee (2013) has termed, 'post-beur' films since the year 2000 which are part of a larger shift towards mainstream film production in France, these three films stand out as beurauthored films that have achieved wider geographical distribution. Success for Bouchareb's Days of Glory (2006) and Outside the Law (2010) in particular, with nominations for Best Foreign Language Film at the Academy Awards, secured distributions in selected cinemas, and on both DVD and VoD (Video on Demand) formats in the UK and USA. Therefore, from a practical perspective all three films were also easy to access as a researcher, purchased online from Amazon UK on DVD, with subtitles in English. It is always possible that translations and subtitles may differ in different geographic locations, and on different formats. Days of Glory (2006) was distributed within the UK by Metrodome for theatrical release at cinemas, whilst Filmbankmedia were responsible for distribution on DVD. Outside the Law (2010) was distributed by Optimum Releasing (now under the control of StudioCanal) both theatrically and on DVD in the UK, whilst Free Men's (2011) distribution was led by Artificial Eye and BFI (British Film Institute) Distribution theatrically and on DVD respectively. For the purposes of my analysis, I used only the British distributed DVD

formats for the research. Anglophone successes, distribution and subtitling not only make the films practically accessible from a research perspective, they furthermore point to the circuits through which cultures are made mobile and are encountered in new spaces. They are therefore suitable films of which to ask questions about the discursive production of meaning textually, and to ask what happens to the 'foreign' postcolonial film when it takes on more familiar cinematic aesthetics, and becomes mobile through transnational distribution and reception.





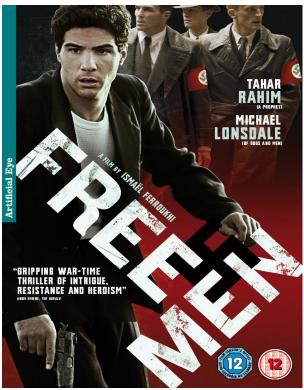


Figure 1: UK release DVD covers for *Days of Glory* (2006), *Outside the Law* (2010) and *Free Men* (2011). Courtesy of Amazon UK.

3.2.2 Approach

My methodological strategy for analysing the films is rooted in a qualitative post-structural approach, in which film is understood as 'text'. This approach requires one to consider how the films are produced upon engagement with and interpretation by audiences (including myself as researcher), as opposed to objectively separate from them (McKee, 2003). This approach therefore, further allows me to situate and centre my interpretative readings as an important aspect of the readerships of the films. With regards to film and media, this approach stems from a Derrida (1966) and Barthes (1977) inspired dissatisfaction with more structuralist methods which attempt to objectively observe the form and structure of any given film, in order to uncover its inner workings and intended messages. Rather, the film as text does not simply exist as something waiting to be read, but is produced by its audiences, and its near limitless meaning is dependent on their social positions and contexts. Phillips (2000: ix) traces the genealogy of the word 'text' and highlights its complexity, as he writes,

"the word 'text' comes from the same Latin root as the word 'textile' – that word is texere, meaning to weave. The 'weave' of a film text is complex and requires much more of its audience than is often assumed – as we rapidly process and respond to so many different sources of visual and aural information and patterning, so much sensory stimulation".

As continuously different values are brought to it in different viewing contexts, the film cannot be completely 'knowable', its meaning therefore remains unfixed, unstable and incomplete. This approach is also aligned with postcolonial studies, as post-structural theory has been a key foundation of postcolonial studies, in which national and racial (at the intersection with other) identities, are seen to be fluid and unfixed. For Said (1978), drawing on Foucauldian notions of power and knowledge, the world, its 'objects, places and times' are 'assigned roles and given meanings'. As Noxolo, Raghuram and Madge (2008: 149) argue,

"postcolonial approaches, often drawing on poststructural theory, attempt both to deconstruct the ways in which language reproduces binary power relations and to harness language as a route into imagining another world".

Space and time, rather than being naturally present, are discursively produced and shift according to different social, cultural and political contexts. Taking this post-structural, postcolonial approach has enabled me to consider and situate filmic narratives in their broader context, allowing me to analyse the films for the ways in which they engage, negotiate and produce postcolonial geographies. Furthermore, taking this approach also allows for academic rigor in considering 'data' not as accepted 'fact', but viewed critically in its historical and social context, in which its narratives are open to interpretation, and theory utilised to 'conceptually map' (Jackson, 2003) and think my way through the geographies of the films.

This approach has further implications for how we conceptualise and engage with 'the field' in the discipline of geography, in which my research process armed with DVDs, screenshot functions and a pen and paper, demonstrates the value of film as geographical objects of study and a fruitful 'spatial data set' (Aitken and Craine, 2005). No longer is the interpretation of film and its geographies a 'novel import' (DeLyser et al, 2010) from other disciplines, rather, geographical sensibilities are increasingly brought to bear on cultural artefacts such as film as serious objects of study (Dittmer and Dodds, 2008; Lukinbeal, 2014).

3.2.3 Methods

Despite the increase in interest from geographers in film, there is no standardised or set way of conducting textual analysis, on the most part due to the fact there can be no standardised way to research film. A number of scholars have however, attempted to put together handbook guides aimed at students (Phillips, 2000; McKee, 2003; Aitken, 2005), and I have therefore taken inspiration from a variety of strategies in writing and carrying out my own method. For McKee (2003), textual analysis is a 'forensic' process in which one searches for traces and clues within the text, using the codes of representation that are central to semiotics. Furthermore, Aitken (2005: 242) suggests a twelve-step process for textual analysis, a key part of which is the recursive and generative process of repeat-viewing. In tandem with DeLyser's (2010) insistence upon using 'writing as method', I continued throughout the process to develop a flexible, yet rigorous, method for interpreting and producing coherent analytical 'data' from the films. This interpretative strategy allowed me to 'make sense', as DeLyser (2010) puts it, throughout the process, in which "writing is not only our most important means of communicating our research, it is itself a way of thinking, and a way of thinking through

our research – writing (...) is a significant research method in itself" (DeLyser, 2010: 341). This furthermore works to, as Crang (2010: 337) puts it,

"challenge the notion of simple temporal stages of research – moving predictably from idea to fieldwork to findings, through a macabre set of spatial steps in a circular dance from academy to world and back to the cloisters".

Returning to Aitken's (2005) repetitive and generative instructions then, I began by watching the films once, without taking notes, keeping in mind my first impressions, reflecting upon what I already (think I) know or do not know. The follow-up viewing of the film would be a much slower process, which involved taking copious amounts of notes and details about the characters, locations, scenes, buildings, colour, and sound, taking in as much sensory information as possible and taking note with a pen and paper, regularly using pause and rewind functions in order to capture as much detail as possible. These notes were largely descriptive, though with slippages in-between in which analysis would creep in, and I kept them as reference points for detail on particular scenes, dialogue between characters, or descriptions of shots. Before storing them away as a useful bank of information, I began to write around them, 'making sense' of what these scenes, characters, and sounds were telling me, playing around with the method in order to plant analytical seeds and encourage them to germinate through speculative writing.

At this point, the analysis is of course incomplete. After this initial writing process, I returned to view the films again with more analytic lenses in order to pay more attention to what was at stake in the films, and how they could help to answer my research questions. First however, I followed Aitken's (2005) instructions to 'read the context', of which I already had some prior knowledge, and further find the analytical tools and language with which to meaningfully and visually interpret the films. This involved learning film and visual language, studying up on how to talk about films in order to ask questions and write about how the cinematic medium specifically produces and connects to 'larger geographies and societal processes' (Aitken, 2005: 242). To give some examples, key terms such as 'diegesis', which refers to the world within the fictional story, allowed me to talk about the geographies that were being represented in the narrative universe of the film. What this means is that the source of meaning (a voice, a piece of music, a place, a landmark) comes from or is presumed to exist within the narrative of the film, as opposed to non-diegetic, such as film credits, subtitles and

musical scores whose source exists outside of that narrative world (see Kuhn and Westwell, 2012: 116). Broadly, the term diegesis is a useful way to think through the geographies of the films, thinking about how representation helps constitute the world. With the analytical tools and language developed from film studies, and a keen eye for how they can be applied to interrogate the particular geographies of the films, I began writing more in-depth analyses around specific scenes and sequences that I felt were important. Iteratively and generatively I developed and honed this analytical process for all three films, connecting themes and motifs contextually, and intertextually between films.

3.3 Audience Reception: Objects of Study, Approach and Analysis

In order to further address questions about how English-speaking Western audiences discursively produce meaning in encountering this body of film, I sourced a diverse range of critical and popular reception data from review aggregator sites IMDb, Rotten Tomatoes and Metacritic. In detailing my methodological approach to audiences, I will highlight the richness of data that online reviews and messageboards offer researchers concerned with audience engagement with films, in that they firstly allow for the collection of shared and diverse responses, unprompted reactions to, and voluntary interactions with other film viewers. Specifically, researching *online* audience data in this way allows for the collation of a large amount of empirical evidence, therefore maximising the volume and diversity of data for consistent discursive framing for debate. Writing online reviews and/or in messageboard discussion threads is also starkly different from actually talking about films, in that 'lay' contributors' performance of identity is often enabled anonymously through the use of usernames and pseudonyms. The particularity of online research into audience consumption therefore reveals the ways in which film reception is a possible vector through which people occupy, produce and contest different subject positions in relation to each other, and the films. This kind of online data also affords an insight into potentially broader groups of audiences, extending beyond (although probably including) those who frequent art-house cinemas. I will first of all give some basic information about these reception platforms, their geographies and the different ways they operate, before outlining the sampling methods, and finally the strategy for analysing them.

Before I do so however, it is necessary at this point to recognise the inherent tensions in conducting textual *and* audience analysis, between which social meanings are circulated

through production to reception. Audiences are likely to differ in their readings of films, both from my interpretation and between themselves. This is due to the approach described above in which films are considered open in terms of meanings and therefore interpretable depending on different contexts (Barthes, 1967). The analysis of audience discourses, in addition to my own textual interpretation of the films, enables me to further understand how their meanings are transformed upon translation and distribution, thus revealing insights into those audience's relationships with 'other' cultures. In combining textual analysis and audience research together, one must remain critically aware of the slippages that occur in interpretation, and it is therefore important to say that my own readings do not claim objective truth in comparison to the audiences.

3.3.1 Objects of Study

All three websites are based in the USA, and provide similar functions in aggregating reviews for films and TV (and computer games, music and other cultural products), as well as providing key information about cast and crew, filming locations, trivia, box office statistics, trailers, film stills, and links to other websites. IMDb, originally founded in the UK in 1990 is now based in Seattle after being bought by Amazon in 1998. It has approximately 65 million registered users worldwide, with around 35% of those based in the US, 10% in India, and 5% in the UK (alexa.com). Users can rate individual films out of 10, and a mean score is displayed next to the film title on the home page. These scores are based on user (or 'amateur' or 'lay') reviews, rather than critical (or 'professional') reviews. Whilst user reviews are given pride of place, IMDb also provides a range of critical reviews, with links to the original source, and messageboard forums in which users engage in conversation and debate about the film, although this feature was shut down by IMDb in February 2017. Rotten Tomatoes uses a similar review aggregator system to get a mean score for films, though these are broken down by percentage and given a ranking on the 'tomatometer': 'certified fresh', 'fresh', and 'rotten'. In contrast to IMDb which gives more weight to user reviews, Rotten Tomatoes is more professional critic orientated, highlighting the 'top critics' for each film or TV show, such as Peter Travers and Roger Ebert. According to website ranker Alexa.com, Rotten Tomatoes has fairly similar global demographics to IMDb, with 52.5% of visitors from the US, 6.6% in India, and 4.5% in the UK. Owned by CBS, Metacritic uses similar review aggregator techniques to provide average scores for releases, rating films as achieving 'universal acclaim', 'generally favorable', 'mixed or average', 'generally unfavorable', and 'overwhelming dislike'. Alexa.com also finds that the majority of

users are in the US with 38.3% of the total visitors to the site based there, 5.6% in the UK, and 4.3% in Russia. It is worth noting the dominance of US visitors to these three sites, which is also seen in the quantities of American critics and users where location tags are available, reflecting continuing US media hegemony.

3.3.2 Sampling

My sampling strategy began by searching through IMDb for all available reviews. For each film in turn, I first of all selected the tab for user reviews, which also details the quantity, and saved the webpage as a series of PDFs in order to later analyse. For IMDb user reviews, a username or alias, date of publication and usually the geographical location of the reviewer are provided, and so the first task was to filter out those that were not just written in English, but that were based in English-speaking Western countries. As outlined in Chapter One, I utilise the designation English-speaking Western in order to situate the audiences linguistically, geographically and culturally, and is preferred to 'Western' or 'Anglophone' which do not account for the important intersections between language, geography and culture. 'Western', in the way that Bonnett (2004) for example, uses the term, would lead me to include in my sample continental European countries, who share less culturally, at least where cinema is concerned, with English-speaking Western countries such as the UK, USA, Canada, and Australia. For example, Figure 2 is a screenshot taken from a page of user reviews from Days of Glory (2006), and whilst the Danish reviewer writes in English, I made the decision to leave it out of the analysis, along with French, Singaporean, and Swedish (amongst others) reviews that were written in English. This allowed me to specifically examine reviews in countries where English was the main language, but also where there are closely related cultural and political discourses around topics of memorialisation, gender, and geopolitics, as well as issues such as immigration and multiculturalism (UK, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand), in order to further understand cultural encounters in English-speaking Western centres.

There is also a practicality to this process, as there are a large number of reviews on IMDb, and this geographical framework allowed me to sample in a systematic way. Rotten Tomatoes on the other hand, which gives more weight to critic reviews on the 'tomatometer', present more of a geographical headache in that their pages of user reviews do not provide the location of user reviews. I did not however, wish to discount Rotten Tomatoes because of this, and took the decision to include all of the reviews that

were written in English. Figure 3 shows a screenshot taken from reviews of *Days of Glory* (2006) on Rotten Tomatoes, one written in French which was discounted from the sample, and one written in English which I decided to include in my sample. Similarly, Metacritic user reviews also do not provide their geographical location, and so I applied the same sampling method, though there are only a small number of user reviews available on their site compared to IMDb and Rotten Tomatoes. I am not however, in this thesis, seeking to claim that these reviews are representative of English-speaking Western countries. Here I seek to find a consistent way of sampling appropriate material, written in English. Limiting IMDb reviews to those which provided location tags, the majority of which were based in the USA and the UK (with very small numbers in other predominantly English-speaking countries), provided me with a systematic method for collecting data. In total, this process yielded 114 user reviews of *Days of Glory* (2006), 49 user reviews of *Outside the Law* (2010) and 22 user reviews of *Free Men* (2011).

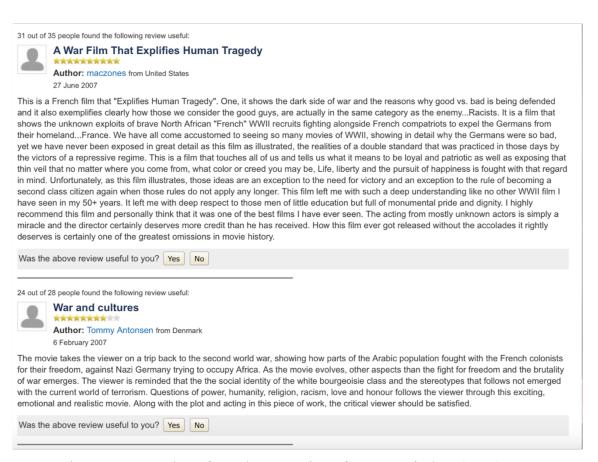


Figure 2: Screenshot of IMDb user reviews for *Days of Glory* (2006).





★★★

January 17, 2012

Well acted, if formulaic, French War Epic with a stunningly tense and tragic last half hour. I do wish Directors would just opt for elderly actors and stop using prosthetics to turn handsome young

Figure 3: Screenshot of Rotten Tomatoes user reviews for Days of Glory (2006).

actors into 'old people'/ scrotums.

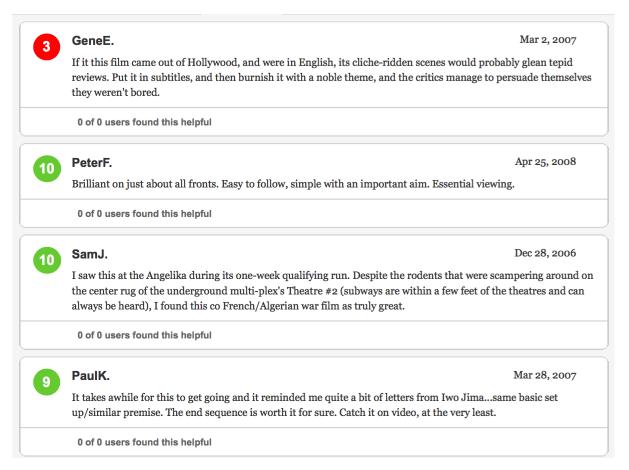


Figure 4: Screenshot of Metacritic user reviews for *Days of Glory* (2006).

In sampling the professional and critic reviews I again began with IMDb, which provides a list of links to the original sources of critical reviews, along with the author, and the language in which it is written where not in English. First of all, however, at the time of undertaking the research, a number of these reviews were no longer available when I followed the link, either because the website, company or newspaper was longer in

business, or because they ceased to archive older articles. Furthermore, whilst listed under 'critic reviews' in IMDb, it was clear just from this list that there is an overlap between professional critics (such as the late Roger Ebert, who wrote in US newspapers as well as on his own blog) and what might also be termed 'lay' critics who have their own blogs (such as 'Andy's Film Blog'). Some bloggers who appear on these 'critic' lists, also write 'user' reviews, as well as contribute to IMDb messageboard threads (such as the blogger Fr Dennis at the Movies who also goes by Dennis Kriz when writing IMDb user reviews or contributing to its messageboard discussions). In short, there is no clear distinction between so-called 'professional' critics and 'lay' or 'user' reviewers, as 'new democratic' platforms such as IMDb and blogs "potentially allow anyone to become a film critic", eroding the role of the professional as the 'gatekeeper' of film criticism, a source of anxiety for many professionals in the industry (Frey, 2015). Additionally, for the majority of these reviews, geographical locations are available, and often denoted in the publication title, such as 'local' newspapers like the San Francisco Chronicle. National publications such as the UKs The Guardian newspaper of course have offices in London and Manchester. Blogs such as rogerebert.com are not so easily 'locatable'. However, whilst having firmly locatable offices, both San Francisco Chronicle and The Guardian newspapers are increasingly published and read online, and so much like the distinction between pro and lay critics, determining geographical location appears to be increasingly difficult thanks to the internet.

Rotten Tomatoes, which focuses on professional/critic reviews, provides a similar list to IMDb, however with separate tabs for 'All Critics' and 'Top Critics', the latter of which includes prolific film reviewers such as Roger Ebert and Peter Bradshaw (*The Guardian/Observer*). Unlike IMDb, Rotten Tomatoes' list of film critics provides partial introductions to their reviews, with links for the full reviews, as well as the scores out of 5 and 10 on the 'tomatometer'. Some links were also no longer available, and so I followed the same strategy as with IMDb, taking all working links (professionals and blogs) that took me to reviews written in English into my sample. Metacritic similarly provides snippets of the professional and critic reviews, with links to the full article or website, as well as scores out of 100 listed down the side of the list of reviews. As with the other review sites, I incorporated all working links that directed me to reviews in English. Taking these three websites' lists of critical reviews enabled me to maximise the data collection process. Each website's list had some unique reviews that were unavailable on others, though many of them were available on all websites for all three

films, particularly consistent or 'top' critics such as Roger Ebert. In total, this sampling process yielded a total of 65 reviews of *Days of Glory* (2006), 49 reviews of *Outside the Law* (2010) and 36 reviews of *Free Men* (2011).

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rogerebert.com [Roger Ebert]
San Francisco Chronicle [Walter Addiego]
The Village Voice [Nick Pinkerton]
Washington Post [Stephanie Merry]
A Mighty Fine Blog [Edwin Davies]
Abus de ciné [Mathieu Payan] (French)
Andy's Film Blog [Andy Kaiser]
AVForums (Blu-ray) [Cas Harlow]
aVoir-aLire.com [Marine Bénézech] (French)
Best For Film
Bina007 Movies [Sikander]
Blu-rayDefinition.com - UK Blu-ray [Brandon A. DuHamel]
Cine Zone [Roberto Carrubba, Pietro Signorelli] (Italian)
Cine-Vue [Russell Cook]
Cine.gr [Vasilis Kagioglidis] (Greek)
CineClandestino.it [Lorenzo Leone] (Italian)
CineFile.biz [Alberto Cassani] (Italian)
Cinehouse [Paul Devine]
Cinema365 [Carlos deVillalvilla]
Cinemafrica [Leonardo De Franceschi] (Italian)
Cinemagazine [Jochem Geelen] (Dutch)
Cinemart.gr [Alexandros Tsopotos] (Greek)
Cineplayers [Emilio Franco Jr.] (Portuguese)
CineZapping [Marco Valerio] (Italian)
ComingSoon.it [Federico Gironi] (Italian)
Compuserve [Harvey Karten]
Don't Do Acid, Guys [Gaël Schmidt-Cléach]
DVDTalk.com - theatrical [Jamie S. Rich]
Electric Sheep Magazine [Mark Stafford]
Empire Magazine [Philip Wilding]
epinions DVD [Stephen O. Murray]
exclaim! [Robert Bell]
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Figure 5: Screenshot of critical review links for Outside the Law (2010) on IMDb.

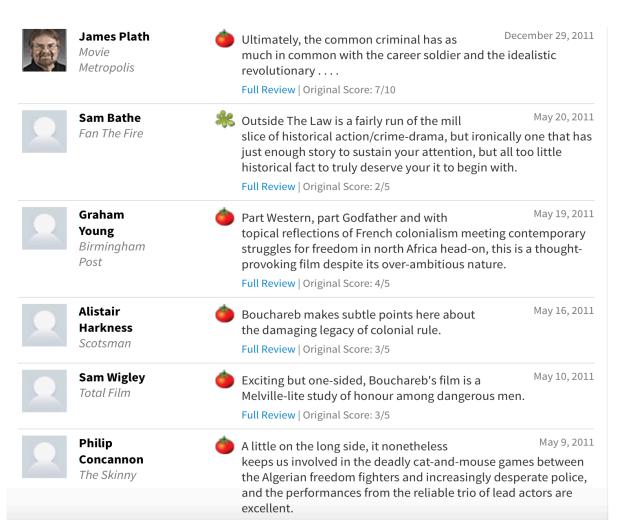


Figure 6: Screenshot of critical reviews for *Outside the Law* (2010) on Rotten Tomatoes.

75	Philadelphia Inquirer Carrie Rickey	Feb 17, 2011
	A gripping French-Algerian coproduction that makes Algeria's epic struggle for independence from France look like a gangster movie. Read full review	
75	Chicago Sun-Times Roger Ebert	Nov 23, 2010
	At the very least a superior action film, in which the action sequences are plausible and grounded in reality. Read full review	
75	New York Post Lou Lumenick	Nov 5, 2010
	A powerful, decades-spanning epic about that country's fight for independence centering on three brothers. Read full review	
70	Los Angeles Times Betsy Sharkey	Nov 11, 2010
	The filmmaker is at his best unspooling the politics of independence, which he does with such confident fervor that you always understand the fight. Read full review	
65	Movieline Michelle Orange	Nov 3, 2010
	A companion film to "Days of Glory," Rachid Bouchareb's 2006 feature about Algerian soldiers who fought for France in World War II, Outside the Law is another historical drama with a heavy heart and a knack for genre. Read full review	
60	Time Out New York David Fear	Nov 3, 2010
	Even the movie's trio of outstanding actors come off like mouthpieces from a creaky Group Theater play, spiced with an occasional Cagneyism or two. Read full review	

Figure 7: Screenshot of critical reviews of *Outside the Law* (2010) on Metacritic.

Lastly, IMDb's messageboard feature, which in February 2017 was shut down by the company¹², provided a platform in which users could directly engage with each other. Whilst Rotten Tomatoes also provides a messageboard function, no threads were available for these particular films, and so threads were sampled only from IMDb. As with critic and user reviews, a very small minority of these threads were not written in English, and additionally, geographical location is unavailable. Therefore, following the same strategy for critic and user reviews, I sampled all available English-language threads. For *Days of Glory* (2006), a total of 53 separate messageboard threads were available, ranging from 1 to 35 contributions. Messageboard threads were considerably less for both *Outside the Law* (2010) and *Free Men* (2011), with 7 and 5 messageboard threads available respectively.

◄ Message Boards

Les hommes libres (2011): Enjoyed the film - SPOILERS

View: thread | flat | inline | nest



Flag ▼ | Reply | Go

Figure 8: Screenshot of an IMDb messageboard thread for *Free Men* (2011).

-

by PoppyTransfusion » Fri Oct 26 2012 00:40:29

IMDb member since February 2011

¹² Pulver, A. (2017) "IMDb shuts down its message boards", *The Guardian*, 6th Feb 2017

3.3.3 Approach

Unlike film studies' dominant approach to audiences, this thesis does not take the 'spectator' as its primary object – that is the 'theoretical' audience based on inferred meanings and interpretive cues in the text that invite particular readings according to positionality (particularly feminist/psychoanalytic accounts of audiences inspired by Laura Mulvey, 1975). Rather, it follows in the footsteps of the likes of David Morley (1980), Janet Staiger (2000) and Stuart Hall (1980), by arguing that filmic texts are read differently by a range of different audiences (as opposed to 'the audience' as a generalised and identifiable public). Gillian Rose (2016: 38), drawing on Fiske (1992), defines the process of 'audiencing' as "the process by which a visual image has its meanings renegotiated, or even rejected, by particular audiences watching in specific circumstances". In order to understand and interrogate this process, I deploy discourse analysis in order to address key questions about the discursive audience productions of what Said (1978) famously refers to as 'imaginative geographies'.

Well-established as a methodology within the social sciences, discourse analysis as an interpretative strategy is rooted in post-structuralist theory, and is implemented here with a particular focus on the production of knowledge and power by audiences. Furthermore, like textual analysis it also lacks a set strategy or framework for the same reason that it is not a formulaic method (Dittmer, 2010). Drawing on Waitt (2010: 238), the aim of discourse analysis is not to establish the 'truth' or 'falsity' of audience's statements about the films, but rather as a way into further understanding the contexts and power relations that privilege and validate their particular views and categorisations of the world. In short and simple terms, as Dittmer (2010: 275) puts it, "if a researcher is interested in the ways in which knowledge is formulated and validated as truth, then discourse analysis is likely an excellent methodology to use".

3.3.4 Methods

Much like the textual analysis undertaken on the films, there is also an element of 'learning by doing' (Waitt, 2010) with discourse analysis. In order to find and produce themes from the range of reception data, I first of all read through hard copies of critical reviews, user reviews and messageboard threads, using thematic coding in order to manually colour-code particular identifiable themes. This initial analysis yielded some interesting though broad and exhaustive list of themes that would be rewarded by a recursive approach in order to narrow down and focus the emerging discourses of

audience reception. The interpretative process was applied for all three different reception platforms (critic and user reviews, and messageboard threads) and all films, though with some differences. For example, in analysing professional/critical reviews which were much less forthcoming in terms of opinion, and more focused on summarising and describing the films, I was critically aware of Rose's (2016) advice that 'silence is discourse', in that what is absent from their review of the film may tell me something important. Furthermore, messageboard threads are unique in that the production of discourse by audiences is collective, and so analysis must take into account the conversational way meaning is made from the films. It is worth noting that for Dodds (2006), one of few geographers to utilise IMDb as a research site, messageboards were utilised in a participatory way as he engaged directly in conversations with other IMDb visitors to answer specific questions he had about the reading of geopolitics in James Bond movies. As I am interested in the broader ways in which audiences construct a view of the world via these films, letting the reception data lead in this analytical process produced a more open set of results.

Working with the broad themes that I had identified, and to some extent replicating the process of filmic textual analysis, I began to make sense of them by writing analytically (DeLyser, 2010), and bringing together cross-cutting themes that I thought had mileage and were interesting. Whilst the initial analysis examined each film's sets of reviews individually, by writing thematically I was able to analyse in an unrestricted way, thinking about how these themes connected the films in unexpected ways. Similar to Aitken's (2005) guide on textual analysis, Rose's (2016) steps towards discourse analysis also encouraged me to further familiarise myself with the context of reception, in which to a large extent I was already embedded, as a model consumer of these films (young, white, educated, male), and already critically aware of the (racial, cultural) politics in the UK at the time of their release. Returning to both analyse the data and write generatively about them, I consistently asked myself what I had missed the last time round? Can themes be merged? Can themes become more focused or narrow? In doing so, like taking screenshots of important scenes in textual analysis, I also noted interesting quotes by reviewers, organised them into relevant groups, and continued with the analytical writing process.

3.4 Positionality

Rose (1997) asserts that post-structuralist approaches in research must not apply exclusively to the researched, but importantly also to the researcher. In reflecting on this methodological approach and analytical strategies, it is necessary to consider and comment upon my subjective social position(s) as a researcher, and how this inflects the ways in which I interpret the research materials throughout this study. Perhaps the most important of these is my position as a model or typical consumer of foreign or perceived 'art-house' films such as the ones this thesis interrogates. It is a fair assumption to make that white educated men and women frequent art house cinemas, where despite their popularly-influenced narratives these films were primarily distributed, and are the target of distributors of foreign language films (see Bergfelder, 2005). Though my class position is somewhat ambiguous, coming from a white-working class family in innercity Manchester, and being lucky enough to successfully progress through the highest levels of education, acquiring various forms of cultural capital along the way. Therefore, in approaching and interpreting the films, I bring certain sensibilities informed by a working-class position which treats 'bourgeois' films and film watching with some suspicion, even what might be termed inverted snobbery, and perceived lack of access, but also with a certain intellectual curiosity, equipped with a (perceived) level of cultural competence influenced by my education and upward social mobility, and no doubt my whiteness. Reflecting on what I perceive as ambiguity around my class position, is important with regards to the selection of these particular films as suitable for research and the research questions. As foreign-language films that draw on popular Hollywood conventions, they potentially transgress my perception of the art-house film and their 'bourgeois' audiences, and thus make postcolonial themes and issues more broadly accessible. In thinking about this question, I often had my parents in mind, asking myself: "could Mum and Dad watch this?" Considering the aims of this thesis, this selfreflexive question is actually quite important, and one to which I will return, in different ways, throughout the thesis.

Furthermore, I come to these films as a critical geographer, informed and motivated by Edward Said, and postcolonial theory more broadly. My analysis is therefore predisposed towards a particular political standpoint, the fruits of which are partial, yet rooted in a rigorous critical training. Along my PhD journey, these positions have undoubtedly been influenced by fellow students who have helped me to challenge, alter and develop as a critical geographer, and have therefore influenced in a positive way the

ways in which I have approached and interpreted the films and their reception. Clearly, in situating these geographical knowledges (Rose, 1997), we can see how my interpretation of and writing about these particular films and their discourses is informed by my social positon(s) and background, as 'insider' and perceived or felt 'outsider', and that their analysis is always partial and subjective.

Lastly, visual methods were (and remain) central to the practice of 'observing' others in (post)colonial disciplines such as Geography. One of the key questions, or anxieties, for me has been then how to conduct a PhD project using foreign visual materials without reproducing those colonial discourses that Said (1978) warns us about, in which the 'other' is observed safely at a distance via a 'sanitised voyeurism' (Aitken, 2010) and masculinist 'God-trick' (Haraway, 1991). This thesis is in itself involved deeply in the relations of power which it claims to interrogate, in which my own processes of making-meaning of the film narratives and reception discourses cannot be neatly detached from the ways in which the researched have constructed and read their worlds (Dowling, 2010; Howitt and Stevens, 2010). My interpretative analyses are simply one possible reading of the films and their discourses, from a particular perspective, giving one possible set of answers to the research questions.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has set out the methodological approach and research design that have informed this study. Taking a post-structural approach to the films and their online reception discourses allows me to conduct research that considers the open-ended and socially dependent production of meaning, in which it is possible to situate myself as a researcher as an important part of the production of meaning and knowledge. Textual and discourse analysis have been demonstrated to be the most appropriate way to answer the research questions, via a particular body of films and their reception. The films' innovative and popular approach to the constitution of postcolonial spaces, histories and identities are suited to a textual approach which treats and reveals the filmic text as fluid and unfixed, and thus further allows me to consider the possibilities they offer for the negotiation of these meanings amongst diverse audiences.

The methodology detailed here has further demonstrated the rewards for geographers in taking cinematic texts seriously. Taking film and audience analysis together, this methodological approach traces the ways in which cinematic meanings shift across, and

transgress, geographic and cultural boundaries. Examining both the text itself and its reception therefore addresses some of the insufficiencies across disciplines outlined in the previous chapter, and demonstrates that researchers who wish to fully comprehend the complex cultural circuits in which cinematic meaning is constituted and negotiated transnationally, must not ignore the audience as part of the geographical imaginary of film. The following chapters then, present the key themes and findings from my textual analysis of the films, followed finally by the ways in which other audiences have interpreted the films, in ways that both intersect and diverge from my own readings.

Chapter Four

(Un)Familiar Spaces: Narrating Geographies of Belonging and Exclusion

4.1 Introduction

The conventionally stylised and Hollywood-inspired spaces of the films narrate geographies of exclusion and belonging. In appropriating popular cinematic conventions, they employ space and spatial metaphors to articulate and insist on the place of Maghrebi-French people in France. Through reading some of these key spaces, this chapter primarily interrogates the ways in which the films map geographies of (post)colonial France, through which Maghrebi-French identities and notions of belonging are forged and contested. These spaces are diverse, and overlap with one another, ranging from visual representations of landscapes and cityscapes to symbolic tropes of soil and dirt. The spatial nature and language of cinema itself is key to revealing these spatial politics of exclusion and belonging, as France, Paris, and the other key vectors for the constitution of place in the films are creatively reconfigured and reimagined in ways that potentially alter these spaces and our perceptions of them.

In foregrounding the spatiality of the films, the first section of this chapter explores the trope of soil. I first of all argue that the establishing shots of North African and European landscapes in *Days of Glory* (2006) produce a topography that works to highlight their geographical and ecological differences, whilst also signifying the desire for a 'detached' and 'truthful' position fostered by the birds-eye-view (Boehmer, 2005). Furthermore, the soil of these lands and their disparity in 'quality' serves as an additional commentary on the opportunity provided by, and claims to, national soils (Malkki, 2012) in both Days of Glory (2006) and Outside the Law (2010). Conversely, the second section interrogates soil's 'other': dirt, and the ways in which this is mobilised in Days of Glory (2006) to create a visual crescendo of 'disorder', 'impurity' and 'contamination' (Douglas, 1966; Cresswell, 1997), and therefore a gateway for thinking about its characters racialised as 'matter out of place'. The third section of this chapter develops this to interrogate spaces of incarceration. Here I argue that the spaces at the centre of *Outside the Law* (2010) represent the 'containment' of the aforementioned 'dirt' in Paris, through a series of carceral spaces that reflect the coloniser's desire for 'hygiene' and 'removal' (McClintock, 1995; Cresswell, 1997). Following on from this, section four investigates religious spaces in *Free Men* (2011). Here Paris is further reimagined through the Algerian immigrant point-of-view, and with the Grand Mosque of Paris situated at the

centre of the city. The fifth and final section of this chapter focuses on the spaces of 'home' that run throughout *Days of Glory* (2006), and goes some way to threading the above spaces together as spaces of desired and contested belonging (Ahmed, 1999; Naficy, 2001). This chapter therefore aims to investigate the imaginative reconfiguration of postcolonial spaces through popular film aesthetics, in which the possibilities for belonging and return, inclusion and exclusion, home and homeland are foregrounded in new ways.

4.2 Soil

"For a colonised people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity" (Fanon, 1961: 34).

The original French language title of Rachid Bouchareb's Days of Glory (2006), *Indigenes*, translated into English as 'natives', addresses directly the tenuous relationship between the colonised North African, and home lands in the Maghreb and France. In doing so, the film's title playfully casts light onto the racialised term indigenes, used in France to locate those 'originating' in the former colonies, to consider their place in society. As Malkki (1992: 29) observes, "terms like 'native', 'indigenous', and 'autochthonous' have all served to root cultures in soils", meaning that the indigenes' 'natural' place is in the colonies, and therefore the 'native' uprooted from their land and culture, is out of place in France. In the following section, I will further explore how soil and earth functions in *Days of Glory* (2006) when 'out of place' as dirt. Here however, soil, and by extension the land and its fruits, can be seen as an important vector through which experiences of space and place are conveyed, and narratives of belonging and exclusion told in both Days of Glory (2006) and Outside the Law (2010). Soil serves to simultaneously signal the fertile opportunities offered by the French 'Motherland' in Days of Glory (2006), and land dispossession and exile for Algerians forcibly displaced in Outside the Law (2010). Whilst mobilised for different, though connected, reasons, in both cases soil signifies contested citizenship and fraught relationships with the nation, as well as a desire to assimilate and a hope of return. Drawing on work in postcolonial ecocriticism (Smilowitz, 1990; Malkki, 1992; Spencer, 2010), I will think about the role of earthly and botanical symbolism in 'indicting ongoing forms of colonialism' and exploring 'more inclusive forms of attachment' (Spencer, 2010: 34).

4.2.1 Establishing Topographies in *Days of Glory* (2006)

The series of establishing shots that temporally and spatially structure World War Two combat epic Days of Glory (2006) first of all function to introduce the different geographies of the lands through, and for, which the soldier protagonists fight in each chapter or sequence. The Algerian and Moroccan troops, and their white superiors, steadily move north to Europe from Morocco and Algeria, specifically to Italy and finally France. In doing so, the open and dry sea of beige North Africa contrasts sharply with the green, fertile groves and woods of Europe. The majority of establishing shots used throughout the film are high-angled, or assume the 'birds-eye-view', capturing images of tranquil landscapes from an elevated position. Not only do these shots function to set the scene, and clearly capture the geographical and ecological differences between North Africa and Europe, and the various connotations that come with them, but they also reflect the sought-after narrative position of the film itself. As Boehmer (2005: 99) has argued, situating oneself in the position of the birds-eye-view works to claim positions of 'cartographic and metaphoric authority'. That is to say, in drawing and relying heavily on dominant genre conventions, particularly from Hollywood, the film re-appropriates them in order to insist that this representation of the war is also 'detached' and therefore as equally 'truthful' as those that have preceded it. This is further aided by each of the shots gradually transforming from black-and-white to colour, facilitated by the shadow of cloud moving over the land, signalling a creative departure from official accounts of the war. Of course, this subject position not only occupies one of historical authority (explored further through memorialisation in Chapter Five), but by extension the patriarchal and the masculinist (explored further through examining masculinities in Chapter Six) command of vision that comes with it (Nash, 1996). In doing so, Days of Glory (2006) seeks a position of equality alongside the canon of combat films predominantly from the USA, and furthermore, acceptance and possibly assimilation in France.

The first character to whom the audience are introduced is Said, as a birds-eye-view shot captures an anonymous rural Algerian town, overlaid with intertitles that simply read "Algeria 1943" (see Figure 9). Whilst using popular or familiar cinematographic conventions to frame the location, the very presence of Algeria as the first geographical encounter in a World War Two combat film works to displace and disorientate the English-speaking Western viewer, who are generally used to seeing war films begin in Europe. The 'total poverty' from which Said (in his own words) hails is small, dry and

dominated by the browns and beiges of the surrounding sand, with a small amount of greenery and possible hints of grape vines. In addition to this, by starting the narrative here, *Days of Glory* (2006) is rooted in rural poverty, and signals towards the origins of Algerian anti-colonialism, the feelings for which were sparked in such locations by drought and land expropriation (see Stora, 2004). For Said however, abject poverty motivates him to fight *for* France, not against it, as a way of making money and proving his maturity (raising questions of masculinity which are further investigated in Chapter Six), whilst as I demonstrate further down this is at odds with relationships to the land in *Outside the Law* (2010). Scores of Algerian men, including the young, eager and naïve Said are recruited here by the local caïd, encouraged to rescue their 'Motherland', and to 'wash the French flag' in their blood, and thus establish loyalty to 'their' country.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 9: The small anonymous Algerian village of Said in *Days of Glory* (2006) is shown to be dry and poor, differing with the following establishing images of French abundance. Courtesy of Filmbankmedia.

As the men move through these spaces, to their first battle in the Italian hills, the land becomes greener. The shot which establishes "Italy 1944" similarly gives a birds-eyeview of neatly organised agricultural farmlands, green and dotted with trees. Europe then, in comparison with North Africa, is fertile and productive. However, the first shot of the Italy sequence also shows the men being marched down a dirt road, with snow

covered mountains in the background, and they fight on a dry, treacherous hillside in a scene described in more detail further on in this chapter. Therefore, whilst Europe is seen to be green and fertile, and full of opportunity, it is simultaneously dangerous. This of course also reflects the geographical and historical reality in which the North African troops of the Free French Army¹³ fought, particularly for the Moroccan Goumier¹⁴ troops, the "Ait Tserouchen, the mountain men" as their Sergeant refers to them, who were recruited specifically to fight on terrain perceived to be more familiar to them.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 10: Italy here is shown to agricultural, though the following shots show dangerous hilly terrain suitable for Moroccan Goumiers. Courtesy of Filmbankmedia.

This visual symbolism continues to evoke the paradox of Europe, and particularly France, for non-Europeans as a place of both perceived opportunity and danger. After victory in Italy, the men travel by ship across the Mediterranean to "Provence – August 1944". This is the soldiers first sight and experience of France, and where Said revels in the quality of the soil and its fruits (discussed further down). Through another birds-eye-view shot, the Provence countryside is, like Italy, established as full of life and fertility, an alluring bait used to trap those attracted to it, with lush olive groves and greenery

¹⁴ see Maghraoui (2014) for a detailed history of auxiliary Moroccan colonial soldiers

61

¹³ After defeat and invasion by Germany, the French Army were depleted, most of which were imprisoned. de Gaulle's new Free French Army therefore had a recruitment problem, and looked to its Empire in order to be able to re-enter the war. I will explore this further in the following chapter, Chapter Five.

lying in the shadow of the mountains in the background. As the black-and-white shadow fades the landscape into colour, the scene further comes to life with the sounds of insects and birds. Provence, home to the city of Marseille and birthplace of the French national anthem¹⁵, establishes and symbolises an expectation of life in France, as maternal provider for Said, and as ideal marital home for Messaoud, as will be explored in the final section of this chapter. Earthly and botanical metaphors are pulled from their romantic national roots which connote attachment to territory (Malkki, 1992), and rather convey ambiguities about belonging, exclusion and place for North African (men) in France.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 11: The first glimpse of France in *Days of Glory* (2006). Provence's green landscape, with mountains in the background and olive groves in the foreground. Courtesy of Filmbankmedia.

4.2.2 The Algerian Bled in Exile

The establishing shot of *Outside the Law* (2010) exposes a dry and rural setting in "Algeria 1925", intertextually at play with the lush greenery of the establishing shots that guide us through France in *Days of Glory* (2006). Further akin to Said's Algerian hometown which opens *Days of Glory* (2006), the Souni family home in *Outside the*

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¹⁵ Written in 1792 under the name of 'The Army of the Rhine', the song came to be known as 'le Marseillaise' after it was later sung by volunteers of the Marseille Battalion during the French Revolution, and was adopted as the French national anthem in 1795.

Law (2010) is also geographically anonymous. To some extent, the specific location of the home is unimportant, as it chimes with the collective geographical imaginary of the bled, a term used to broadly refer to the ancestral homeland which remains an important part of the Algerian diasporic identity. Despite this, unlike the majority of establishing shots that structure Outside the Law (2010), this shot is also absent of a specific month or season. In this sense, the Algeria to which we are introduced at the beginning of the film is also not as temporally specific as other settings, which are more precise both geographically and temporally. The wide-angled shot of a young Messaoud ridding a small patch of agricultural land of rocks, captures the vast monochromatic space that lies behind him, and by extension the harshness of the Souni family's life under colonialism. There is thus a tension here between the representation of an environmentally degraded Algerian landscape, decimated by almost one hundred years of French colonialism (Davis, 2004), and a representation of a temporally ambiguous, geographically anonymous, dry and desolate Algeria that potentially reproduces orientalist imaginaries of the dangerous, yet exotic, desert of Arab lands.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 12: A young Messaoud Souni in *Outside the Law* (2010) tends to the family land, in a dry, harsh and seemingly infertile landscape. Courtesy of StudioCanal.

In thinking about this tension, with one eye on *Outside the Law's* (2010) interpretation by its English-speaking Western audiences (explored in Chapter Seven), I am reminded

of Mohamed Lakhdar Hamina's 1975 Algerian epic *Chronicle of the Years of Fire*, in which an Algerian man and his son are driven from their home, forced out by environmental destruction, drought and famine in 1920s Algeria, with the father exclaiming as he leaves: "this land will always be barren". This dispossession is the driver of his later embroilment in the Algerian War of Independence, in the same way that the land serves as a vector for resistance and for hope of return in *Outside the Law* (2010). However, Hamina's film is much more didactic about this, and therefore there is much less ambiguity that the French are directly to blame for the drought and famine that devastated the Algerian countryside, driving thousands of people to live in poor conditions in towns and cities such as Setif, where the family in *Outside the Law* (2010) are later forced to move. Similarly, American and British audiences may further be reminded of John Ford's film adaptation of *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940) in which a poor farming family are forced from their Oklahoma land during the Great Depression.

Echoing these films, *Outside the Law's* (2010) opening sequence depicts the Souni family being physically dispossessed of their land by the local Algerian caïd, flanked by two French gendarmes. Such dispossession was widespread at the time in Algeria, with land being expropriated all over the country as punishment for dissidence, and for profit, handed to French pied-noirs¹⁶ to settle for themselves. The French therefore introduced private property laws and commodity production to the country, in place of subsistence farming and ancestral land rights (Lorcin, 2006; Evans and Phillips, 2007). When the father of the Souni family protests his ancestral claim to the land, and is unable to produce the legal deeds for the property, the family are forcibly evicted from their home. Laws brought in by the French were supported by racist mythical claims that constructed a pre-Arab invasion narrative of a 'fertile, forested landscape' (Ford, 2008) that blossomed under the Roman Empire, and blamed Muslim rule for large-scale deforestation and desertification. The land needed to be saved from its 'destructive natives' and restored to the former glory of antiquity (Davis, 2004).

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¹⁶ The French term 'pied-noir' translates into English as 'black foot', and refers to French people who settled and lived in Algeria during the years of colonisation from 1830 until their expulsion in 1962.

Figure 13: The Souni family await their fate in *Outside the Law* (2010), the dispossession of their land anticipated in a collapsed shot, which fosters a relationship between the Algerian, the colonisers and the land. Courtesy of StudioCanal.

In departing their ancestral land, destined for the colonial violence of the Algerian city of Setif, a recurring and contested site of resistance and memory in Algerian history (explored in Chapter Five), the nameless Souni matriarch collects a handful of dry soil from the ground. An extreme close-up of her hands shows her placing a part of her home into a bag for future protection, weeping as she does so in mourning for her land, her roots and the place of sustenance for her family and future. "Not uncommon for a person going into exile", Malkki (1992: 27) writes, the painful act of taking a handful of 'national soil' symbolises the deep-rooted connection to nation through its lands, and further signals their hope for return. In a later conversation with her eldest son Messaoud on her deathbed in Paris, she tells him to plant a tree in the soil if they are to return to an independent Algeria, or place it under her cheek if she were to die in France (opening up questions of gender and the nation which are expanded upon in Chapter Six). The somewhat ambiguous representation of colonial Algeria roots the War of Independence in its colonial history of rural poverty and land expropriation, whilst furthermore setting up different relationships to soil. Carried by the Souni matriarch into exile, it functions as the primary spark for the Algerian revolution, and as the key site of belonging and home, through the notion of return, for Algerians living in France.

Figure 14: The Souni matriarch collects a bag of soil of their land to take with her into exile. As the Mother of the family, and the Algerian nation, she protects the land and holds hope for return. Courtesy of StudioCanal.

As demonstrated so far, the spaces introduced work to pose questions through 'territorialising metaphors' of the nation (Malkki, 2012) and contest the exclusionary politics of national landscapes (Tolia-Kelly, 2010), therefore commenting on those whose "claims on, and ties to, national soils are regarded as tenuous, spurious, or non-existent" (Malkki, 1992: 27). *Outside the Law* (2010) has thus shown to foster a narrative of exile and return through the metaphor of national soil, setting up a quite different relationship to the land as seen in *Days of Glory* (2006). The following draws out the particular relationship between *Days of Glory's* (2006) soldiers, and the soil and 'fruits' of France, and therefore further interrogates this as a recurring theme throughout the film that prompts questions about access and ownership to opportunities promised by the Motherland

4.2.3 (In)Fertile Soils of the Motherland

First of all, tomatoes function as a prop to explore inequality and racism, in which protagonist Abdelkader emerges as a resistant voice for the oppressed soldiers. Whilst en route to France aboard a ship carrying colonial soldiers, a black African soldier of the

Free French Army is denied tomatoes by the army's chef. He is permitted to eat the other food that is on offer, but is told that the "tomatoes are not for you", prompting Algerian Corporal Abdelkader to intervene, stamping on the tomatoes in front of his immediate superior, the pied-noir Sergeant Martinez, declaring that until everybody can enjoy them, nobody will. The discriminatory and hierarchical racial practices inside the French army, which occupy the central theme of the film, are didactically exposed here as the bounty of France is accessible only to a few. The further connotations of the tomato may well point to a range of other meanings, such as its nickname in Europe as the 'love apple' due to its supposed aphrodisiac qualities, and therefore a fear about the over-sexed black male. Or, older fears in Europe, before the tomatoes domestication, as a poisonous fruit and therefore 'forbidden'. However, the tomatoes simple freshness is what is important here. Tomatoes, as with other fruits, are perishable and so are likely to have been relatively scarce and therefore rationed according to a racialised logic of those who are most deserving. Frantz Fanon (1961: 308), in *The Wretched of the Earth*, points to the significance of food in subjugating and controlling colonised countries, as "the relations of man with matter, with the world outside, and with history are in the colonial period simply relations with food". However, there is a disparity here that is not fully developed in the film, as it somewhat neglects the deeper roots of racial discrimination in favour of valorising the specifically North African plight.

The quality of the food provided to colonial soldiers is further invoked later on in the film, after soldiers disobediently walk out of a ballet performance whilst on leave. Enthusiastically expecting "dancers tonight", the men are confused and disappointed when they sit down in front of a performance of Pyotr Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*, rather than an Algerian 'Ouled Nail' (what has become commonly known as 'belly dancing') performance, reflecting their present disconnectedness from French and European elite culture, and prompting the majority to walk out and leave the show, with Algerian marksman Messaoud grunting, "what is this shit?". Outside, both black and Arab African soldiers loudly chant and mock France's 'rotten' treatment of them, jovially singing "...with her potatoes and mouldy beans, France is our mother, she feeds us". Food is therefore figuratively and literally important, as a basic part of survival for the hungry soldiers aboard ships, but also as a tool with which to rebel about their 'rotten' treatment. France is furthermore a poor and neglectful mother, unwilling to provide them with proper sustenance, and so they inevitably must become independent of her.

Whilst the mobilisation of fruits, and the soils from which they are harvested, works to comment on their unequal distribution and access, the somewhat naïve Said continues to believe in the possibilities of reaping their bounties. After successfully battling against Germans in Italy, and after the voyage by sea described earlier, the African troops land in Provence. As already discussed, the establishing shots of Provence help situate France more broadly as a place of fertile opportunity. On the ground, Said comes to his knees in his first encounter with the French mainland. The mise-en-scene, as the establishing shot suggests, is in stark contrast to the dry and bare harshness of the Algerian town which is home to Said, and where he has left his own worried Mother behind, to whom he assuredly proclaimed, "I can manage". The trees through which the men walk are olive trees, which Said reaches up and tastes, before picking up a handful of soil and holding it to his nose, and then passing it to marksman Messaoud, who kneels beside him taking a drink of water. "Smell it", Said encourages him, "it's not like at home". Messaoud smiles in reply, "no, French soil is better". Despite having witnessed the racism on board the ship, and the literal unequal distribution of the fruits of those soils, both Said and Messaoud for now remain optimistic about a future in the Republic. As the camera cuts from the close-up shot of the pair to French war planes flying over their heads, they respond and greet them with enthusiasm: "Vive la France". Said and his fellow soldiers' later disillusionment is rooted here, as this scene anticipates the central theme of disappointment and unfulfilled promises which become more apparent as the narrative develops.

Figure 15: Hopeful and naive young Said smells opportunity in the soil of Provence. 'France is better'. Courtesy of Filmbankmedia.

To summarise, this chapter has so far brought together differing forms of exile, highlighted various relationships to soil, and narrated the desires and attachments to both France and Algeria. In doing so, I have foregrounded the importance of the relationships between soil (the land and its fruits) and racialised bodies in exile, as the French title of the film *Indigenes* works to ironically comment on the 'native' North African soldier's mobility beyond his 'natural' roots in the Maghreb. The series of establishing shots that map their journey to Europe give a sense of the geographies of exile for the 'indigenes', and carve out contrasting spaces of both possibility and peril that such a journey entails. For Outside the Law's (2010) exiled Souni family, the Algerian bled and their eviction from it is both the root of the Algerian revolution, and the vector through which belonging is yearned, and therefore the relationship to soil in *Outside the Law* (2010) is one that articulates a desire for return. In contrast, Days of Glory's (2006) protagonists' relationship to soil reveals an attachment to France, and a desire to remain in the metropole, as they consistently resist exclusion and racial hierarchies to assert claims to belong via the land. The following section develops these threads of racialised narratives of belonging and exclusion to consider, in spite of various desires, what it means when these bodies are 'out of place'.

4.3 Dirt

"Where there is dirt there is a system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements" (Douglas, 1966: 44).

Whilst soil gives life, dirt is the excess of death. It covers and smothers *Days of Glory's* (2006) North African soldiers as they make their way through the battlefields in handheld-style close-ups, it darkens the frame of landscape shots obscuring everything from view, and plumes up from the ground in long shots from the point-of-view of lofty, anonymous generals as soldiers' scramble like ants amongst it. Whilst soil, and its fruits, trees, and roots conjure images of fertility, place, attachment and return, dirt has more negative associations of being 'out of place', of 'impurity', 'disorder' and desire for 'removal' (Douglas, 1966; Cresswell, 1997). One of the most striking visual aspects of the battle sequences in *Days of Glory* (2006), is not the blood and gore that one might expect of a World War Two combat film inspired by Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), but the sheer amount of dirt that explodes out of the earth.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 16: Amidst the first battle in Italy, it is the sheer amount of dirt that dominates and darkens the frame, covering the North African men. Courtesy of Filmbankmedia.

I use the term 'dirt' to describe the result of these explosions and battles, in order to make clear the difference between the 'purity' of the soil with its associations of pure blood, fertility, though these are contested, and the 'impurity' of dirt, its dirtiness defined by its being 'out of place'. In doing so, I draw upon the work of Douglas (1966), and that of Douglas-inspired scholars such as Cresswell (1997) and McClintock (1995) to think about the role that the excessive presence of dirt plays in the film, and highlight its function as a departure point to discuss the racialisation of North Africans in the French colonial imaginary.

French discourses of race have historically revolved largely around debates about assimilation and laïcité (secularism), in which distinct categories of people have been designated as both 'threats' and as 'incompatible' (Silverman, 2002; Guenif-Soulimas, 2006; Hargreaves, 2007b). Laws which disproportionately target Muslims (particularly Muslim women) in French society, Tarr (2014: 517) writes,

"are symptomatic of postcolonial France's difficulty in adjusting to the presence of a substantial Muslim community and in integrating Muslims into its concept of citizenship, when the visible practice of Islam is widely perceived to run counter to the values of the French Republic".

The French constitution, and culture more broadly, demand the full adoption of the language and culture of France, in order to preserve the 'purity' of the nation (Silverman, 2002), and to demarcate and contain those seen to be and situated 'out of place' (Guenif-Soulimas, 2006). In what follows, I will demonstrate the ways in which dirt in the film speaks to debates about this contentious racialised French politics.

Figure 17: Dirt explodes from the ground in the first battle sequence, in Italy, of *Days of Glory* (2006), as generals watch from on high. The generals, and by extension France, treat the soldiers like 'dirt', as cannon fodder, as they seek out the German forces.

Courtesy of Filmbankmedia.

As described earlier, the North African soldiers' first experience of the war takes place in Italy on a treacherous hillside. Before battle, one of the soldiers prepares himself to lead a small congregation of men in prayer as dawn breaks, washing his head, hands and feet in a stream. It is not a remarkable scene, but a significant one. Firstly, for the reason that the cleansing method through which the Imam goes prepares the men for violence and death, and therefore is somewhat at odds with the filth of the earth that drowns the men in the following sequence. Secondly, his prayers accompany the iconographic silhouette images of the soldiers (see Figure 18) as they make their way to the battlefield, disrupting, even 'dirtying' or de-sanitising, the classical portrait of the anonymous young soldier heroes. The battle itself is explosive with the earth which bursts from the hillside as a result of shell-fire, covering those sent to do the 'dirty work' of being cannon-fodder, filling their mouths, and cloaking the frame in dark, muddy close-ups.

Figure 18: A long shot iconographically depicts the anonymous silhouetted North African soldiers as they make their way to battle. Courtesy of Filmbankmedia.

Whilst blood and gore are almost entirely absent from the Italy battle sequence, death follows as bodies wrapped in soiled white sheets are carried down the hillside and laid at the side of the road, where a young French photojournalist documents them with his camera. Inquiring about the death toll, he is instructed sternly by his Colonel to write that it was simply "a great victory", refusing to acknowledge the sacrifice of men who were sent as bait to their deaths, and therefore contributing to a fantasy narrative of a 'clean' war, whilst the overpowering visuality of the material battlefield as it is blown to pieces in *Days of Glory* (2006), signals to the exclusion of Arabs from its history. I will develop this further in the following chapter in considering memorialisation in more detail, as the amount of dirt, and the resulting deaths, is a powerful metaphor for the occlusion of memory, and points to the ways in which *Days of Glory* (2006) interrupts colonial 'regimes of cleanliness' (McClintock, 1995), in this case manifested as a sanitised white history of World War Two.

Furthermore, the much shorter battle sequences throughout the film follow a similar format, as the platoon move into and through France. The short battle in The Vosges mountains, for example, is almost entirely filmed using a static camera shot, which focuses on the grove of pine trees through which the men run, shout, shoot and are subjected to explosions around them. The dirt again takes over the screen, before quickly

settling amongst the trees, leaving dead bodies in its wake as the battle comes to a close. The use of the static shot, centring the very materiality of the French landscape for which the soldiers fight and die, and to which many of them long to call home, functions to expose the hazardous nature of France for bodies that are out of place. As highlighted in the previous section of this chapter, the French soil safely in the ground and under their feet represents opportunity and nourishment. As they move further into that land however, it is revealed to have offered false hope of safety, shown here to be hostile, destructive and violent, rejecting them in a place they do not, and cannot, belong.

If cleanliness and hygiene are associated with 'whiteness and civilisation' as McClintock (1995) has noted, then dirtiness, and by extension 'blackness', is its antithesis. Dirt has so far been shown to function as a commentary on France's whitewashing of history and hostility towards foreigners. It also, as already gestured, connotes the 'dirty work' to which inferior people are suited. The words of Fanon (1968: 146) highlight this binary, as he says,

"when one is dirty one is black – whether one is thinking of physical dirtiness or of moral dirtiness... Blackness, darkness, shadow, shades, night, the labyrinths of the earth, abysmal depths, blacken someone's reputation; and, on the other side, the bright look of innocence, the white dove of peace, magical, heavenly light".

Whilst chiefly drawing on examples of black Antilleans, and writing from his own personal experiences, Fanon more broadly recognised the plight of the 'colonised man', and later reached across different colonial contexts to promote a comparative endeavour between anti-Black, anti-Semitic and anti-Arab racisms (with a particular emphasis on the Algerian case). This does not mean to say that he did not recognise the differences in the French racial colonial hierarchy, but that he came to be motivated to uncover the broader racist colonial system. And so, whilst blackness in the specific Fanonian sense of the quote is not at stake here in the film, the ways in which he understands black people racialised as dirt resonates here, as it connotes a similarly racially subservient status, reflected in the dirty work the colonised troops do on behalf of their white superiors. Nowhere is this binary more apparent than in the relationship between the pied-noir Sergeant Martinez and his servant, Said. Martinez is quite a complex character, fiercely loyal to his Algerian battalion, particularly when defending them to others. For example, he calls out his own superior who refers to the soldiers as 'the Muslims' and 'the

natives', urging him to simply refer to them as 'the men'. He also attacks a white French soldier who racially abuses the Algerians, grabbing him by his shirt and screaming 'the wog¹⁷ fucks you!'. Whilst on leave, the same night in which the soldiers mock France's 'mouldy beans' (described above), Martinez invites his obedient servant, Said, to share a glass of whisky and a cigar with him, telling him "you deserve a promotion. The whole unit does. But they can't see that", privately allying himself with the Algerians, and with Abdelkader's fight for equality. The solidarity ends here however, as Said smiles and tells him "you're like us too... An Arab", after seeing a picture of Martinez's Arab Mother in his shirt pocket, exclaiming both of their Mothers "could be sisters". Martinez's whiteness is therefore questioned, the purity that sets the pied-noirs apart from the colonised Algerian is at risk from hybridisation, and so Martinez reacts angrily, attacking Said and calling him 'scum'. Translated from the French term 'racaille', which has specific connotations with beur youths in French cities, particularly after the then Minister of the Interior, and later President, Nicolas Sarkozy labelled the 2005 rioters as 'racaille', the translation of the word to scum in Days of Glory (2006) chimes with the broader theme of dirtiness conjured by the presence of dirt in the battle sequences, and works to situate Said as out of place. "Never talk about that again or I'll kill you", Martinez warns. Threatened by Said and his Arabness, Martinez purges himself of it by throwing Said out of his private quarters. Prompting 'fear and revulsion' (Cresswell, 1997) amongst the pure, Said and his dirtiness must be cleansed, removed, killed, or contained.

To conclude, the excessive presence of dirt throughout the battle scenes of the film works to highlight the more general treatment of the soldiers 'like dirt'. Once seen as dirt, the soldiers can be treated like dirt, and as the final sequence described in this section exemplifies, thus resulting in removal. The following section further explores what the consequences of treating and racialising Algerians as dirt are, as Algerians are contained and incarcerated in Paris in *Outside the Law* (2010).

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¹⁷ The word 'wog' is translated in the English subtitles of the film from the French word 'bougnoule', used as a racial slur in France to broadly refer to non-white people, though most commonly reserved for those of North African descent

4.4 Incarceration

As argued in the previous section, dirt represents 'matter out of place', classified as so through processes of 'systematic ordering' (Douglas, 1966). The excessive presence of dirt throughout *Days of Glory* (2006) functions as a critical commentary on this ordering, and the coloniser's desire for clean spaces (McClintock, 1995). The racaille (scum), and cannon-fodder, the 'dirty' Arabs useful only for fighting and dying, kept at arm's length by the French Army in the previous section, must be contained and ordered when it is found to be out of place. In order to build on this argument, the carceral spaces of *Outside the Law* (2010), that is the Prison de la Santé and the Nanterre bidonville, as well as the Paris Metro, will be thought of as this ordering being put into practice. These spaces represent Paris not as a city of liberty and freedom, but one of exclusion and containment.

Although largely set in the French capital, *Outside the Law* (2010) is almost completely absent of any iconic images of the city, such as the Eiffel Tower or the Arc de Triomphe. This is because much of the film is set in and around the bidonville, roughly equated to 'shantytown' in English (Rosello, 1997), of Nanterre where many Algerian immigrants were informally housed after the Second World War. The first image that introduces the audience to Paris, relying on intertitles to do so, however, is that of the Prison de la Santé, where Abdelkader Souni is incarcerated along with other Algerian dissidents for his role in the demonstrations that resulted in the Setif massacre of 1945 at the beginning of the film (the representation of this massacre will be discussed at length in the following the chapter). Whilst not an iconographic feature of the Parisian skyline, Prison de la Santé is a nationally infamous prison. It was used to incarcerate Algerians during the Algerian War of Independence including Ahmed Ben Bella, the first, and short-lived, President of Algeria (1963-1965). More recently, the former chief of Paris Police and Vichy collaborator Maurice Papon, briefly referenced in, though absent from, *Outside* the Law (2010), was imprisoned here for 'crimes against humanity' in 1998, at the same time as Maghrebi-French actor Samy Naceri, who plays Yassir in *Days of Glory* (2006), for substance abuse. This site of detention, and execution, anchors the films narrative in an exclusionary geography of containment (Martin and Mitchelson, 2009), not simply as a representation of a historical space of imprisonment but one which serves as a symbol of continued and contemporary spatial containment and marginalisation in French cities.

What Agamben (2005) refers to as the 'state of exception' is often used to discuss such spaces, particularly when law and order is suspended and military authority is extended into civil life in times of 'crisis' or emergency. This allows the state, Agamben (2005) argues, to create 'zones of indistinction' in which people perceived and racialised as threats can be placed at the limits of the law, yet are simultaneously targeted by the sovereign power of the state. However, whilst the prison seemingly serves as an archetypal example of Agamben's exception, in which perceived threats to national security are housed and executed, it is also a crucial space in the film's narrative for the political empowerment and radicalisation of its chief protagonist, Abdelkader, as it is here he is recruited and educated as an FLN combatant and commander. That is to say, there is room for resistance within the state of exception.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 19: The first glimpse of *Outside the Law's* (2010) Paris is the infamous Prison de la Santé, a literal space of incarceration, though one that represents a larger feeling of confinement for North Africans in France. Courtesy of StudioCanal.

Furthermore, whilst the Prison de la Santé is Abdelkader's, and the audience's, first experience of Paris, the north-western bidonville of Nanterre is the first for Said and his Mother, who have moved to escape the war and poverty of the Algerian city of Setif. The establishing shot of the sprawling shantytown depicts a densely populated and chaotically organised array of informal huts, made harsher by the layers of snow and ice

that smother them (the iconography of the bidonville in terms of memory will be developed in the following chapter). Though it might be mistaken for a pylon at first sight, the Eiffel Tower can be made out in the distance of the shot, some seven miles east of Nanterre. "Made by everyone and for everyone", as Gustave Eiffel envisioned it, the symbol of French modernity and achievement is not within the grasp of the Algerian refugees and exiles who dwell in the furthest corners of the Parisian suburbs. And so, in keeping with the work the establishing shot of the prison does, the bidonville further serves as a space through which to disrupt the geographical imagination of Paris, by omitting or at least limiting the famous landmarks of the Parisian skyline, whilst also working to comment on the exclusivity of those spaces.

The French word 'bidon' literally translates to container, and Rosello (1997) traces the earliest use of the term bidonville to 1950s Morocco, where makeshift houses, constructed from metal fuel containers, began to emerge amidst increasing poverty in Moroccan cities, and later across France. The urgent need for workers after the Second World War meant that France accepted and indeed encouraged thousands of immigrants, mainly from North Africa, though without being able to provide appropriate accommodation, thus bidonvilles sprung up on the edges of French cities close to factories and plants. Rosello (1997) describes the appalling conditions of the French bidonville, as they lacked sanitation, running water, and electricity, and had an overall poor hygiene. This is reflected to some extent in *Outside the Law* (2010), emphasised in a close-up eyeline-match shot of Said and his Mother as they sleep on pieces of cardboard on the floor of their hut, with Said promising her "don't worry, it's temporary". However, based on Rosello (1997) and McDonnell's (2013) descriptions of Nanterre, the film offers a somewhat restrained representation. Characterised by a severe lack of clean water, disease (particularly TB, which the Souni matriarch eventually contracts), and mud, the French bidonville was commonly associated with a 'filth' that invited "moral condemnation" in society (Rosello, 1997: 254). Echoing the powerful mobilisation of dirt in *Days of Glory* (2006), Nanterre was seen "as a pathological urban disease", its people "treated as a sort of natural emanation of the mud", for which "the only solution was total destruction" (Rosello, 1997: 249-254). Whilst Outside the Law (2010) clearly falls short of commenting on this level of spatial violence and containment committed by the French state, the inhabitants of Nanterre are represented as expendable.

Officially, the Nanterre bidonville was not on the map, and therefore its people lived in a state of 'inexistence' (Rosello, 1997). In Outside the Law (2010), the FLN's increasing attacks on French soil, and the Souni brothers' successful organisation inside the bidonville, results in the formation of the 'Red Hand', the covert terrorist group organised by chief antagonist Colonel Faivre and authorised by the state, tasked with eradicating and terrorising the FLN, striking at the heart of its support in the bidonville. To return to Agamben (2005), the 'inexistence', or 'zone of indistinction' in which the Souni family live, places the racialised Algerians outside the protection of the law whether they have committed crime or not, allowing the police to act with 'unlimited authority' (Ticktin, 2005) and in an extra-judicial way. In theory, they can be 'killed without trial or punishment' (Tuastad, 2017). In line with Tuastad's (2017) critique of Agamben, through their example of Palestinian refugee camps, the bidonville further demonstrates that within apparent spaces of exception there are internal power dynamics and opportunities for political empowerment. At the centre of the film's narrative of resistance and revolution, the bidonville is a space from which the FLN actually draws its political support and power. In refusing to represent the miserable and historical reality of life in the bidonville, and denying the victim status associated with *homo sacer*, the film produces a space that allows for the local political agency of the Algerian immigrant (through the three brothers) to emerge in place of the victim, in which racialised spatial segregation and violent tactics deployed by the French actually helped the nationalist cause.

Figure 20: A wintery Nanterre is the first experience of Paris for Said and his Mother in *Outside the Law* (2010), another carceral space of containment. Courtesy of StudioCanal.

Lastly, the final sequence of the film sees Abdelkader and Said pursued by Colonel Faivre of the Red Hand, from Said's boxing match and onto the Paris Metro (this sequence will be developed in terms of memory in the following chapter). A shot of the boxing ring at the beginning of the sequence is accompanied by intertitles that inform the audience of the date: 17 October 1961. This date refers to the 'massacre' of what historians claim to be hundreds of Algerian demonstrators in the centre of Paris by the police acting on the orders of Maurice Papon (see House and MacMaster, 2006; Cole, 2010). The demonstration was organised in defiance of a strict curfew imposed on Algerians by Papon, designed to determine not just who *lives* where, as seen with the spatial segregation associated with the bidonville, but who can go where (House, 2017). The demonstration was therefore also in protest of this spatial segregation. In response, the police attempted to deny entry to the city for many Algerians in order to contain the numbers joining the demonstration in Paris. Over 30,000 Algerians took to the streets to 'invade' various parts of the city (House and MacMaster, 2006), their very visibility in these spaces a direct affront to those who sought to contain them, resulting in what House and MacMaster (2006: 1) claim was "the bloodiest act of state repression of street protest in Western Europe in modern history". As demonstrated throughout this chapter so far, the ordering of space is central to France's colonial power. Jacques Ranciere's

(1998: 29) thoughts on the 17 October massacre are illuminating in this sense, as he argues that

"the point is that its policemen once more underlined it heavily on that day in October 1961 by meeting out a repression that differentiated between some 'French people' and others, and by distinguishing between those who did and did not have the right to appear within the French public space".

Whilst I will expand on the representation of 17 October 1961 in more depth in the following chapter, the final dialogue of the film at the end of this sequence further demonstrates the room for resistance and the ways in which it is seen as working towards the larger goal of Algerian independence. Abdelkader is eventually shot and killed on the Metro station platform, after which The Red Hand's Faivre, standing over a dying Abdelkader, utters: "you've won".

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 21: Whilst the Setif massacre that starts *Outside the Law* (2010) is open, didactic, and violent, the 1961 police massacre of Paris is mute, hidden, and literally underground on the Paris metro, a space of mobility in which Algerians are suspended. Courtesy of StudioCanal.

To conclude, the three Parisian carceral spaces of the prison, the bidonville and the metro station collectively serve as spaces through which 'dirty' Algerian bodies out of place in

the metropole, are contained and systematically ordered by the French state. In suspending the law, exemplified by the creation of The Red Hand to terrorise the FLN's Algerian support network, the French produce what Agamben (2005) calls 'zones of indistinction', in which Algerians can be dealt with 'outside the law', or outside of the democratic political process. As I have tried to demonstrate however, in line with other critics of Agamben's (2005) state of exception (namely Tuastad, 2017), the carceral spaces in Outside the Law (2010) must not solely be reduced to or explained by the 'exception', in which Algerians might be simplified as victims of France's attempts to contain and conceal them. Rather, these spaces (particularly the bidonville of Nanterre) have been shown to function as vessels of local political power and resistance, from which the FLN can be seen to successfully draw support and evade capture in the film. Whilst doing so, these spaces, captured and produced via landscape and establishing shots, as well as some claustrophobic medium to close-ups, go some way to challenge the dominant geographical imaginary of Paris, in foregrounding spaces of exclusion and marginalisation, and their transgression, in the Parisian skyline. The following section will develop this line of inquiry further through the example of *Free Men* (2011).

4.5 Religion

So far, I have shown that through combat film *Days of Glory* (2006) beginning its narrative in Algeria, rather than Europe, the Western audience's geographical imaginary of the war film is displaced and disoriented. Furthermore, the film's soldiers, through the powerful spatial metaphor of dirt, are positioned as out of place in the French metropole and in Europe. In *Outside the Law* (2010) Paris has been established as a space of exclusion of 'dirty' bodies out of place, though where resistance is possible, again challenging the audiences sense of place of Paris by centring sites of containment such as the prison and bidonville in the city. In *Free Men* (2011), through the point-of-view of Algerian immigrant Younes, and the foregrounding of its Grand Mosque at the centre of the narrative, Paris is further reimagined and reconfigured. As I will question however, rendering the Mosque visible by representing it centrally risks reproducing French colonial discourses that sought to domesticate Islam in France, in order to make it both safe and exotic. It is this tension that I will explore in order to further investigate the ways in which these films challenge (or potentially reproduce) ideas of France's imagined geographic identity.

The opening shot of *Free Men* (2011) depicts a small group of middle-aged to elderly North African men sitting around a fire, clearly impoverished, perhaps homeless, in a small enclosed space at the side of a building. Framed through a small skewed gap in a fence from the point-of-view of protagonist Younes, this shot functions to establish the story of occupied Second World War Paris from the immigrant perspective, and a window onto the world of the under-represented history of the 'first-generation' of North Africans in France. A reverse shot finally reveals the eyes of Younes peering through the gap, further establishing the level of narration from his point in space and literally through his eyes. This intimate close-up functions to furthermore foster a connection between the protagonist and the audience, encouraging us to see his world.

What it also does however, through reversing the point-of-view shot and through the presence of a physical barrier between Younes and the other men, is establish a distance. This distance between them is asymmetrical, as Younes is situated in a position of relative power, able to survey his surroundings undetected, whilst they are unable to return his gaze, unaware that he is looking. In some ways, this reflects a common thread throughout the history of beur cinema from the 1980s, in which the younger 'second generation' are alienated from the older 'first generation', their traditions, religion and connection to home. Younes, aided by the popularity of actor Maghrebi-French actor Tahar Rahim¹⁸, works to bridge a gap between the first-generation of North African immigrants which *Free Men* (2011) importantly seeks to represent, and contemporary audiences, including second, third and fourth generations of Maghrebi-French. The distance between Younes and the group is further demonstrated as he actually enters their world, suitcase in hand, to sell clandestine goods such as cigarettes and tea. One of the men however, who is separated from the group to the right of the shot, is unable to afford to buy the cigarettes he so desperately wants, offering Younes his darbouka in exchange. A darbouka is a chalice-shaped Arabic hand-drum, intricately designed, to which this elderly North African immigrant is clearly attached as the last of his possessions. He is upset and distressed about what Younes gives him in return for it, a couple of packets of cigarettes, as Younes does not appreciate the value of the old instrument. Like the fence which creates a physical barrier between them, Younes' lack of appreciation for the darbouka functions to put further distance between the older and the younger generations of North African immigrants. This opening scene then poses

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¹⁸ Tahar Rahim shot to fame in France for his role in Jacques Audiard's successful film *A Prophet* (2009).

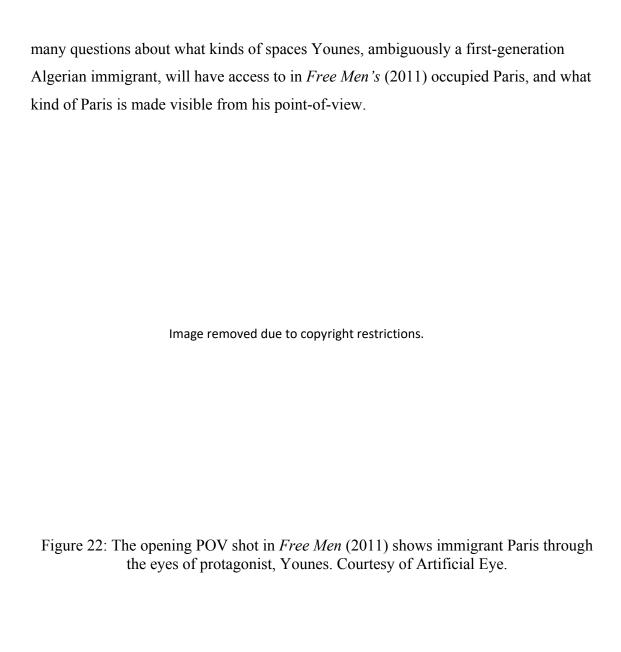


Figure 23: The reverse-POV shot reveals the power relations between Younes and his fellow North Africans. Courtesy of Artificial Eye.

In relation to the Grand Mosque of Paris, as mentioned earlier, Younes' relative isolation and detachment from the cultural sphere of his fellow immigrants, is important with regards to his relationship and access to the Mosque as a double-agent coerced into spying on its director for the French police. Caught red-handed by the authorities at his apartment, Younes is faced with either losing his business, or working undercover for the police. Whilst coerced, his distance from the cultural traditions of Algeria, including religion, in tandem with his racialised identity as a Muslim (the police chief asks, 'are you practising?'), Younes is able to go undercover at the Mosque, as an outsider, with relative ease without the guilt of compromising himself. As will become clearer in both of the following chapters on memory (Chapter Five) and masculinity (Chapter Six), the Grand Mosque of Paris plays a key role historically and narratively in the rescue of Jews from deportation and execution. Here, I want to first explore the questions it poses about the (in)visibility of Islam and Muslims in France, and the politics of the film as an endeavour to challenge or comply with France's regulatory power over Islam in France.

Completed in 1926, the Grand Mosque of Paris, located close to the botanical gardens, and the Pantheon, south of the Seine in the 5th arrondissement, was commissioned as a

gesture of appreciation to the Muslims that fought for France in the First World War (Bayoumi, 2000; Maussen, 2007). In contradiction of the laws which separated state from religion, the French government and the city of Paris largely funded the building of the Mosque, contracting two French architects, Robert Fournez and Maurice Mantout who had significant travel and work experience of Morocco, to design it. Designed in the Andalusian style of architecture commonly found in southern Spain and Morocco, as well as following the architectural fashion of the early nineteenth and late twentieth century that saw a Moorish revival across Europe as well as in the USA, the Mosque stood out from its Parisian surroundings (Maussen, 2007). In this sense, rather than a simply altruistic movement, the Mosque represented 'colonialism coming home' (Bayoumi, 2000; McDougall, 2010), and in the spirit of colonial exhibitions which had taken place in Paris for decades, invited and allowed the French middle and upper classes to experience the Mosque's hammams, Moorish cafes and gardens without having to actually visit North Africa (Maussen, 2007). Furthermore, despite claiming to be a "direct payment of a debt for loyal service performed during the war" (Bayoumi, 2000: 279), the Mosque's construction relied on the imported labour of North Africans and the 'application of force' (Bayoumi, 2000). Many of the city's ordinary Algerian workforce, some of whom helped build the Mosque, were often prevented or discouraged from visiting, for many reasons including their 'shabby clothing' (Maussen, 2007). With the help of the Mosque's appointed director, Si Kaddour Ben Ghabrit¹⁹ who is played by Michael Lonsdale in *Free Men* (2011), the Mosque served as a means through which to control the cultural and religious difference that their (at this time 'temporary') presence in France presented. By incorporating that difference into the very fabric of the city, the Mosque,

"would serve a function of keeping the idea of Muslim in Paris colonial in essence, since here was a site from which Islam could be produced and appropriated for a colonial project that was more powerful than ever – and at the edge of decline" (Bayoumi, 2000: 272).

'Official Islam' was managed and enshrined in the city's 'spatial and symbolic centre' (McDougall, 2010), in order to both 'define and contain' the 'foreign' religion (Bayoumi, 2000). If this is the case, how is the Mosque's centring in the mise-en-scene

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¹⁹ Ben Ghabrit himself ironically declared the Mosque be free of 'political agitation' when it opened, something which he would later renege on during the city's occupation as represented in the film.

of Free Men (2011) disruptive? At the very least, I would argue the recurring birds-eyeview shots that work to centre the Mosque give a different view of Paris to what the English-speaking Western viewer is accustomed, whilst at best they directly disrupt and decentre their sense of place (this raises some key questions about the audiences of the films more broadly, which are investigated further in Chapter Seven). As the Prison de la Santé in *Outside the Law* (2010) works to disturb the iconographic and romantic representation of Paris that (particularly non-French) audiences are familiar with, the Grand Mosque appears to be the centre of Paris throughout the film, as establishing birds-eye-view shots regularly situate the central narrative in a space of perceived alterity in France. Furthermore, Paris throughout the film is very bright, and even sunny, in stark contrast to other French occupation films such as Army of Shadows (1969), which is famed and celebrated for its dark portrayal of a life of fear under Nazi occupation. Paris throughout the film never feels claustrophobic, as it does in *Army of Shadows* (1969), and even in *Outside the Law* (2010) with its gangster-noir settings, but rather open and well-lit. Whilst this may indeed be down to the fact that the majority of on-location shooting was conducted in Morocco, along with the scenes set in the grounds of the Mosque being filmed in an abandoned Moroccan Palace, the effect of this is to further represent an alternative, an 'other', side to Paris. The city which is universally seen and known via images of the Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe and classical architecture, is absent from the film until one of the final sequences, the effects of which will be further explored in Chapter Six.

Figure 24: The Moorish design of the Grand Mosque of Paris takes centre-stage in occupied France. Courtesy of Artificial Eye.

However, in doing so, it produces an ambiguous tension. The Mosque's real-life director Si Kaddour Ben Ghabrit during World War Two works hard throughout the film to use this position to his and his agenda's advantage. Ben Ghabrit regularly hosts German occupiers, and Vichy collaborators, at the Mosque in order to convince them of his loyalty, whilst the Germans seek to fashion themselves as friends and liberators of Muslims around the world. In entertaining elite guests at the Mosque, the film opens the doors of the building to its audience, in shots that capture the Mosque's beauty in ways that could be seen to echo the colonial exhibitions of the late nineteenth Century, in which,

"a European audience could both admire the accomplishments of French colonialism, and enjoy displays of Islamic architecture and of Muslim religious practice staged as a *tableau vivant*"

(Maussen, 2007: 998-999).

Also figuring prominently in the film through its evocation in the architectural design of the Mosque, the style of music sung by Salim, and in the name of the nightclub where Salim and Younes hang out, is Andalusia. Andalusia in southern Spain, or al-Andalus as it was known under Muslim rule, has regularly been conjured in the colonial and orientalist imaginary since its 'rediscovery' in the late nineteenth century as a historically perfect and romantic space of harmony and civilisation in which Christians, Jews and Muslims thrived on the medieval peninsula under 'the Moors' (Calderwood, 2014). In the film, the nightclub named 'The Andalusia' in particular functions as a kind of mirrorimage space of the Mosque, in that it offers a hedonistic, even profane, space in which Algerian exiles and resistance combatants drink, dance, sing and meet lovers (not unlike 'Rick's Café Américain' in *Casablanca*), whilst also largely remaining safe from the prying eyes of the German and French authorities, unlike at the more visible Mosque. It is also particularly key for the development of a somewhat ambiguous relationship between Younes and Salim, which is explored in detail in Chapter Six. In centralising another such place as Andalusia in the film however, as a space that as Calderwood (2014) identifies has been part of the orientalist imagination, what work does it do in the film?

One possibility is that it first of all speaks to the in-betweenness of the 'temporary' immigrant, exemplified by Younes, in France. And lusia is imagined as a cultural and geographical bridge between worlds, connecting Africa to Europe, and offering a melancholic retreat to a place where difference was celebrated, and so in a film which centres on the relationship between Muslims and Jews, the Iberian haven imaginary captures and symbolises the respect for difference. The effect of the relationship between Younes and Salim, one a Muslim and one a Jew, and the overarching narrative of Jewish rescue by the Mosque, is to correct the omission from history of this real-life story, and to improve both the image of Muslims in France, and the broader perceived relationship between Muslims and Jews. Retreating to the nostalgia of Andalusia, works to facilitate this narrative of harmony and conciliation. That is not to say however, that in similar ways to the Mosque, the incorporation of Andalusia does not also reproduce and offer a safer and more digestible version of Islam, based on the romanticised history of Al-Andalus, in which Islam meets Europe and is tamed by hybridisation. As with the Mosque's ambiguous and tense position between its ability to displace Paris' geographic imaginary and reproduce its orientalist spatial ordering, the presence of Andalusia in Paris similarly sits at the thresholds of inclusion and exclusion, by simultaneously inviting audiences of the film into an exoticised and nostalgic exhibition (Maussen, 2007).

To summarise, *Free Men* (2011) represents and foregrounds an atypical image of Paris, adding yet another layer to the geography of the city that is collectively imagined by the films. Whilst established as a space of exclusion and incarceration where resistance is made possible in *Outside the Law* (2010), *Free Men* (2011) further reveals Paris from the point-of-view of an Algerian immigrant, and from the point in space of its Grand Mosque. Extending the narrative that displaces the dominant Parisian sense of place in *Outside the Law* (2010), the centring of the Mosque, and the inclusion of Andalusia, opens up other questions about exclusion and the historical regulation of Islam in France. Whilst both the Mosque and Andalusia function as vectors through which a narrative of conciliation between Muslims, Jews and Christians, and between Africa and Europe, is made possible, the histories of both spaces prompt caution. As I have demonstrated, the history of the Grand Mosque's incorporation into the French colonial project, and the place of Andalusia in the orientalist imaginary, reveal the potential for the film to reproduce colonial fantasies of a safe, domesticated and digestible Islam.

4.6 Home

The spaces of soil, dirt, incarceration and religion have thus far signalled to a tension at the heart of the films between inclusion and exclusion. For example, relationships to soil in *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Outside the Law* (2010) open up possibilities for both yearning to belong in France, and as a root/route to return and remain attached to an Algerian homeland. Irrespective of the desire however, spaces of dirt and incarceration demonstrate the power of racialised categories and processes of exclusion in containing and regulating those perceived to be and situated out of place. Furthermore, as shown through interrogating the religious spaces of *Free Men* (2011), it is possible to get a sense of the role Islam has historically played for North African immigrants in fashioning new spaces of home in France. The final section of this chapter then, foregrounds the elusive and yet pervasive feeling of home, through the example of Messaoud's relationship with Frenchwoman Irene in *Days of Glory* (2006).

Before I go any further however, I want to briefly clarify what I mean by 'home'. First of all, Hamid Naficy's (2001: 152) distinction in his work on diaspora film between the home as "bound to horizons of reach", and "homeland to exile" is a crucial one, as it distinguishes between what Ahmed (1999) further refers to as the 'destination' of home, and the place of origin. As many scholars have also demonstrated (Blunt and Varley, 2004; Ehrkamp and Leitner, 2006; Ralph and Staeheli, 2011), home is not circumscribed

by a fixed location in the space where one resides, but exists in multiple locations across different national, domestic and diasporic scales (Blunt, 1999; 2007). That is to say, as Tolia-Kelly's (2004) work highlights, that 'other homes' are connected to one another through "geographical nodes of identification" (Tolia-Kelly, 2004: 317), through which the singularity of home is challenged. As will be argued through the example of Messaoud's aspiration to make the French city of Marseilles home, through a romantic relationship with a Frenchwoman, home is also idealised and imagined, and often never achieved.

Aboard ships after fighting in Italy, the North African soldiers make their way to Provence, France. Immediately after Abdelkader's successful challenge to the French army's racist policy on the distribution of tomatoes, as described in the first section of this chapter, the Colonel announces over loudspeaker that the men are 'going home'. For the majority of the colonial soldiers, many of which have been impoverished by French colonialism in Algeria, this will be their first time on French soil. Despite witnessing at first-hand the unequal distribution of resources aboard the ship, they respond passionately, rejoicing in the reward of 'going home' with a resounding rendition of Le Marseillaise, ironically a national anthem that ends with the call for the spilling of an 'impure blood' (sang impur) on French soil. Their destination: Marseille, where they are welcomed by its predominantly female residents, celebrating not only their own liberation from the Nazis, but perhaps more importantly the 'homecoming' of their victorious soldiers. As a historical and contemporary 'microcosm of French Empire' (Crane, 2008), due to history of colonial exhibitions, proximity to North Africa, and ethnic diversity and racial tension, Marseille emerges in Days of Glory (2006) as a key site for the imagination and contestation of 'home'.

In tandem with the idea of Marseille, Messaoud's desire to belong is channelled primarily through his relationship with white Frenchwoman, Irene, whom he meets for the first time on the streets of Marseille amidst the homecoming celebrations. With her white skin, bright-red lipstick and dressed in blue, Irene wears the colours of the French tricolor and embodies the French nation which Messaoud longs for. Later, he waits for her in the bedroom of her flat, stood in the window looking out into the night. Framed from the outside looking in, Messaoud is in darkness contrasting with the light, bright and decorative space of the home behind him, cast out from it and excluded. Turning around, walking deeper into the room and towards the bed, Messaoud feels the sheets

and puts his head into its pillows, longing for their comfort and consolation, before Irene walks in wearing nothing but her nightwear. Undressing him, she reads the tattoo on his chest, 'pas de chance' (unlucky), asking him "why unlucky?" "I didn't know you", he replies. His chances in life, he perceives, have and will change thanks to her opening her arms and home to him. Offering not only opportunity, Irene further provides a safe space where "the Germans can't get you now". The woman, Irene, as nation and the national home which her flat represents, is a space of 'haven and refuge' (Mallett, 2004; Silva, 2009), in which not only can he become French and belong, but in which his masculinity will be safe and secure.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 25: *Days of Glory's* (2006) Messaoud stands in the shadows of Irene's flat, darkened in contrast to the bright, decorative room behind him. Courtesy of Filmbankmedia.

As demonstrated above, Messaoud's future place in France, despite his hopes, is insecure and unstable. This is further developed as the men leave Provence. Standing in the same window in which Messaoud is reflecting earlier, Irene is dressed in a blue cardigan and flanked either side by pots of red flowers, again symbolising the colours of France as she waves goodbye to Messaoud. The camerawork in their final scene together puts further distance between them, between the North African immigrant and France, as the lowangled shot of Irene elevates her above Messaoud on the ground. The distance between

the pair is further asymmetrical, as the shot of Irene is medium to close and is therefore not from the direct point of view of Messaoud, who is much further away than the shot suggests. Combined, the angle and distance of the shots emphasise the unequal social power relations, and demonstrates the lofty, unreachable heights of a French home for Messaoud.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 26: Irene waves Messaoud off to war, symbolising France through a tricolor motif, and distance between that space and her North African lover, Messaoud. Courtesy of Filmbankmedia.

Messaoud maintains his hopes to integrate and assimilate, and shares his ambitions for a future in France with his brothers in arms, Abdelkader and Said. He tells them,

"I want to marry her, have kids and make a family... Marseilles is Paradise. Here, Corporal, they respect me. I'm not a wog. I swear! I make my life in France".

Somewhat out of character, the normally naïve Said, who after this conversation is mocked for heeding the commands of Sergeant Martinez, tells Messaoud "you'll always be a wog". As demonstrated above, the camerawork that structures the unequal relationship between Messaoud and Irene already casts doubt onto it, and Said goes some to way to explicitly confirming, and even accepting, the subservient nature of the

colonised in French eyes. Dismissing Said however, Messaoud consistently writes to Irene, and she to him. The army however, censor their correspondence, preventing the letters from reaching their destination, resulting in Irene fearing that Messaoud has been killed in action, and Messaoud believing Irene has rejected him. Whilst he maintains a strong desire to settle in France and call it home, he is dependent on the power of others to 'recognise' him (Ahmed, 2000). As Ralph and Staeheli (2011: 11) put it, "it is not sufficient to claim membership of a particular home; membership must be validated by the wider community or group to which one aspires to belong".

As Messaoud and company move to liberate and defend a small Alsatian town, described and discussed in more detail in the following chapter, Messaoud visits an abandoned house in the town. Decorated colourfully like Irene's flat, he walks through the house observing the photograph and pictures on the walls quietly, before sitting solitarily on the sofa. The numerous pictures on the walls feature female nudes, a black and white photo of a young married couple, and a portrait of a young woman. Whilst the work of Ahmed (1999) and Tolia-Kelly (2004) find that photographs and other artefacts help people in diaspora groups or in exile construct new home spaces, whilst maintaining a connection to homelands, for Messaoud they serve as a reminder that this is not his home. The camera positioned low, and remaining static, frames the empty room before Messaoud enters it, sitting down, giving the appearance of a hidden camera in the corner of the room observing him as he reflects. His face somewhat anguished as he examines a picture of his beloved Irene kept in his helmet. His brown skin, his dirty uniform, do not belong in the neatly decorated French family home.

Figure 27: Messaoud reflects in an empty Alsatian family home at the end of *Days of Glory* (2006), on failed domesticity, the distance of love, family, and a French 'home'. Courtesy of Filmbankmedia.

Messaoud's relationship with Irene exposes the ambiguous space of France as home for North African migrants. Irene cuts across the scales of the domestic, local and national scales of home and belonging, symbolising the domestic comfort and fertile opportunities perceived to be obtainable in France. The idea of France as home is however revealed to be out of reach for Messaoud. Whilst he attempts to make sense of France as home, the ability to actually do so is dependent on the socially defined boundaries of who does and does not belong, producing a tension between the 'lived' and the 'longed-for' (Varley, 2008). As Ralph and Staeheli (2011: 12) argue, "belonging to home emerges out of entwined social processes of incorporation and exclusion that are partly self-defined, partly other-defined". For Messaoud, who so desperately wants to be loved and accepted, his place in France is rejected by the racialised categories imposed on him by his colonisers.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter began by describing the ways in which spatial aesthetics conventional to Hollywood cinema are deployed throughout the films, arguing that in doing so they alter geographical and historical imaginaries, and are able to relocate Maghrebi-French

identities and reconfigure the different spaces in which they desire to belong. This has been demonstrated through the ways in which establishing shots of *Days of Glory* (2006) work to situate Algeria at the beginning of the World War Two narrative, and the use of birds-eye-view shots elevate the historical and spatial authority of the film. Iconographies of the land also link to other representations of dispossession, and are used to juxtapose the geographies of North Africa and Europe, in which soils are simultaneously vehicles for a desired rootedness to a new French home in *Days of Glory* (2006), and as a node of connection to an Algerian homeland in *Outside the Law* (2010). Furthermore, spaces of dirt have been revealed and are shown to depart from the canon of Hollywood combat films, in order to comment on the historic racialisation of France's colonised others. In Outside the Law (2010) and Free Men (2011) we see the ways in which 'dirty' bodies are regulated and incarcerated in the city of Paris, which is remapped as a space of unequal and racialised containment, and ambiguously of Islam through the centring of the Grand Mosque, thus challenging and displacing Englishspeaking Western imaginaries of the city, whilst also revealing the possibilities for resistance as Paris is seen from the point-of-view of Muslim immigrants.

Lastly, the contested desire for home demonstrates the ways in which all of these spaces intersect, and the deeply gendered and racialised relationship with France for North Africans is revealed through Messaoud's relationship with Irene in *Days of Glory* (2006). Like spaces of soil, dirt, incarceration and religion, the elusive idea of home attests to the power in defining the place of others according to particular racialised spatial codes and categories. That is to say, that whilst these films weave together narratives of longing and inclusion through popular cinematic conventions, Messaoud's relationship with Irene reveals that the achievement of home rests on the social processes of 'incorporation and exclusion' (Ralph and Staeheli, 2011) that control the boundaries of the French nation. Home for North African immigrants to France thus remains tenuous, and that relationship is historicised and spatialised throughout the films.

The findings of this chapter provide insights for the investigation of spatial politics in Maghrebi-French film. The ways in which these films locate anxieties over the space and place of Maghrebi-French people in the earliest days of North African immigration to France, and within the context of colonial histories, demonstrates a key spatial shift in beur cinema. Space has been a key theme for scholars of beur and Maghrebi-French film (Bloom, 1999; Levine, 2008; Gott, 2013), who have thus far focused on the

representation of the banlieue, and the more recent 'transnational' and 'mobile' transgression of national borders. This chapter therefore builds on and extends these spatial concerns by foregrounding the hybrid constitution of space in *Days of Glory* (2006), *Outside the Law* (2010) and *Free Men* (2011), in which Maghrebi-French identity is deterritorialised, and the spaces of the French nation are reimagined at the intersections of colonialism, beur cinema, and Hollywood. The geographical imaginaries constituted in the films are therefore the product of a stylistic aesthetic that helps to locate Maghrebi-French identity beyond the confines of the French banlieue. In historicising the anxious spatial power dynamics of race in France, this chapter has also provoked questions of memory, specifically the ways in which belonging can be achieved through the memorialisation of contentious histories. What Nora (1989) refers to as 'sites of memory', which refer to the ways in which memory is inscribed in place, are a key aspect of the negotiation of place and space in the films. It is to this interconnected and intersectional production of memory that I now turn.

Chapter Five

Proximate Geographies of Memory: Colonial Haunting and Spectral Independence

5.1 Introduction

In conversing with and borrowing from more familiar frames of historical reference, the films develop interconnecting narratives about decolonisation, which contain an "overlapping vocabulary, imagery, and history of racism and violence" (Silverman, 2008: 417). Memories of the French Empire, particularly the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962), have been relatively 'occluded' and 'blocked' (Stoler, 2016: 128) in both French society and cinemas. These films contribute to energising these memories at the intersection with American film genre, thus making unfamiliar postcolonial stories familiar through proximity to the popular.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the excessive and explosive presence of 'dirt' on the battlefields of *Days of Glory* (2006), and the French Colonels' desire to construct a sanitised memory of the war, work as powerful metaphors for the cleansing of North Africans from the history of World War Two, and more broadly from the history of France. Furthermore, spaces of incarceration in *Outside the Law* (2010) serve to 'contain' memories of the Algerian War of Independence in space. This chapter develops the emergence of memory in these spaces, in thinking about how the (re)imaginative work of the films weaves together narratives of North African, particularly Algerian, colonial histories with those of fascism in Europe, Vichy France, and the Holocaust.

First of all, I will argue, despite criticism from some (Cooper, 2007; Hargreaves, 2007a) that *Days of Glory* (2006) is simply assimilationist, the film's narrative of World War Two is spectrally haunted by the presence of unresolved and violent histories of French colonialism. I use the term 'spectre' (Derrida, 1994) for the ways in which it refers to both the ghostly disruption of the hallowed narrative of the war, as acts of historical violence are recollected by otherwise loyal characters, as well its indication towards the looming and inevitable future of independence, in this case the Algerian War. This is also evident in Ferroukhi's *Free Men* (2011), in which the near future of Algerian independence looms throughout the narrative. The trope of haunting indicates the ways in which forms of colonial violence that appear to be absent, or hidden, are brought to the fore, with the 'ghostly' in Gordon's (1997: 17) words involving a "constant negotiation between what can be seen and what is in the shadows".

Secondly, I will further develop Rothberg's (2006) 'multidirectional memory' to discuss the ways in which *Outside the Law* (2010), by drawing on the American gangster genre, appeals for sympathy through comparison with the French Resistance, in which the plight of the FLN in the Algerian War of Independence is didactically framed as analogous to the clandestine, yet 'just', Resistance. This chapter therefore highlights the dialectic relationship between intertwined memories of colonialism and fascism, through which the films produce a postcolonial memory that feeds into and disrupts dominant geographical and historical imaginaries.

5.2 WW2 and Ghosts of (De)Colonisation in *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Free Men* (2011)

The French experience of the Second World War was very different to that of the other Allied nations, characterised by German occupation, surrender, and collaboration, with three fifths of the country under German control, and Pétain's Vichy regime left to govern the remaining unoccupied parts of France. French cinematic representation of the war has therefore paid significant attention to resistance against the occupying Germans and Petain's Vichy regime, largely in noir and thriller genre (for example *Army of Shadows*, 1969), for the most part avoiding uncomfortable questions about the extent of collaboration with the Nazis.

This is of course in contrast to films from Britain and Hollywood, which have overwhelmingly depicted combat on the battlefield in films such as Sam Fuller's *The Big Red One* (1980) and Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* (1998). One particular fear about the potential resonances of the Second World War for the French is that France will be seen as victim, Occident turned Orient, dependent as an occupied territory on a foreign army to liberate it, relying not only on its western allies of Britain and the USA, but its overseas colonies. Particularly, the Algerian volunteers, who "with mainland France under occupation, made up 90 per cent of the Free French forces" (Evans and Phillips, 2007: 50). *Days of Glory's* (2006) chief theme concerns and memorialises these contributions made to the war effort by France's colonies, whilst simultaneously drawing attention to the unfair, unequal and racist treatment of the soldiers, culminating in the final fast-forward sequence in which the audience are told of the present-day injustices regarding colonial soldier's pensions, which reads:

"In 1959, a law was passed to freeze the pensions of infantrymen from former French colonies about to become independent. In 2002, after endless hearings, the French government was ordered to pay the pensions in full. But successive governments have pushed back this payment".

The film therefore foregrounds a narrative of exclusion, in claiming the rightful place of France's former colonies in the metropole. Its success in forcing President Jacques Chirac's government to finally overturn the 1959 policy, after he and his wife attended a private screening, attracted a great deal of attention in France, making an impression too on other neglected groups such as the Ghurkhas in the UK²⁰. *Days of Glory's* (2006) desire for assimilation via the story of a unified French Empire, despite its political achievements, has led some to critique the film for its potential discourses of 'colonial nostalgia' (Cooper, 2007: 98) and warn that it might invite readings through a 'procolonial optic' (Hargreaves, 2007a: 209) in which the very utility of Empire could be celebrated. In the final chapter of this thesis, I will turn to discuss a range of interpretations by English-speaking Western audiences, however here I will go some way to challenge Cooper (2007) and Hargreaves' (2007a) positions on the film, in highlighting the ways in which French colonialism and the future Algerian War of Independence 'haunt' *Days of Glory* (2006), unsettling not only dominant accounts of the war, but also the film's apparent assimilationist politics.

To do so, I will also draw on examples from World War Two occupation film, *Free Men* (2011). Set during the Vichy years of World War Two Paris, *Free Men* (2011) primarily weaves a narrative of Jewish rescue, in which Algerian protagonist Younes is reluctantly drawn into and eventually becomes actively embroiled in the (Maghrebi)French Resistance against German occupation. In similar ways to *Days of Glory* (2006), *Free Men* (2011) seeks to position itself and its Muslim protagonists alongside the western allies through its condemnation of Nazi Germany, achieving this by tapping into the heroic narrative of the 'justes', the 'righteous among nations'. It is a well-rehearsed narrative in post-war cinema, not just in France but in Hollywood and British film, in which the heroic allies free and rescue Jewish prisoners from concentration camps and occupied territories of Europe. Lee (2015) outlines the political deployment of this discourse, through which the justes have 'become an important category of historical

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²⁰ See Campbell (2007) "Gurkhas hope film will aid their pensions battle", *The Guardian*, 29th March 2007

inquiry in France'. He claims that this group of people are at the 'centre of the nation's collective memory of Vichy', in order to improve a national wartime image tarnished by collaboration and surrender. Since the immediate post-war mythologising of the Resistance in France, the justes have become 'institutionalised as central figures in the nations collective memory of the occupation' (Lee, 2015), with days reserved to celebrate their heroism, and various other museums and commemorations, such as the 'Mur des Justes' which bears the names of justes recognised by Israel's institution for Holocaust commemoration. The mythologising narrative perpetuated in French culture and politics excludes the important contribution made by North Africans. Even Lee's (2015) article comments on a number of recent films have represented the justes, 'often portrayed as an ordinary French man or woman', critically pointing out how whitewashed the history is, yet neglecting to mention Ferroukhi's *Free Men* (2011), which with stars like Tahar Rahim and Michael Lonsdale, should certainly have been on their radar. Lee (2015: 143) goes on to cite President Jacques Chirac, who in 2007 said in a speech,

"you [the justes] embody France's universalism, in the fidelity to the principles that constitute it. Thanks to you, thanks to other heroes across the centuries, we can look at France searchingly and our history in the face".

France has fostered this heroic mythology of Jewish rescue in order for the nation to look itself in the eye, to be at peace with itself, but by reaching beyond this 'across the centuries', as President Chirac articulated, situating the rescue of the Jews in a mythical French past of revolution, of the constitution, and the values of the Republic founded on justice and freedom. As we shall see however, the justes discourse at the heart of *Free Men* (2011) serves as an opportunity not only to improve the image of French Muslims historically, but also as a platform to open up space for the looming spectre of Algerian resistance and independence in France.

Histories of World War Two and Algerian independence are inseparable, as in the lead up to the Second World War support for independence was put on hold in favour of a unified opposition to the fascist threat. In fact, support for Algerian independence by the likes of both the French and Algerian Communist parties was replaced by a more colonial apologist rhetoric, which claimed that Algeria was safer under the protection of the Motherland during the war, and arguments developed within these political circles

that the Algerian nation would gradually form under the guidance, values and ideas of the French Republic (Evans and Phillips, 2007). In reality, this masked a real fear that the sheer man-power of the French Empire more broadly would have to be utilised in order to liberate metropolitan France. By 1937, the Algerian Muslim Congress, born from the merging of the intellectual Islamic Algerian Ulema and the Algerian Communist party, called for "unity pure and simple with France" (Evans and Phillips, 2007: 47) provoking angry and eventually militant responses from the brewing anticolonial revolutionaries, such as the Algerian Peoples Party's (PPA) Messali Hadi²¹, a key but physically absent figure of *Free Men* (2011), and his largely impoverished rural Algerian supporters. By the time the war eventually broke out in 1939, 'a blanket of repression' was brought upon Algerian dissidents by the French, with Messali Hadi sentenced to 16 years' hard labour. This enforced silence, and the relative disunity amongst the Algerian Independence movement, therefore contributed to the war efforts of the Free French Army led by an exiled General Charles de Gaulle, to liberate Metropolitan France. As I will demonstrate, these deeply intertwined sagas of French colonialism, German fascism and Algerian independence manifest themselves spectrally in the film, threatening to expose the ghosts of France's colonial histories.

5.2.1 The Haunting Absence of Colonial Violence in *Days of Glory* (2006)

One of the earliest scenes in *Days of Glory* (2006) takes us to the city of Setif in eastern Algeria, in 1943. Setif has been immortalised in Algerian national collective memory for the massacre of peaceful protesters by French settlers and police in May 1945, on the day the end of World War Two was declared across Europe. Whilst the massacre of Setif has remained relatively unknown in France, the very name of the town in Algeria continues to serve as "a kind of shorthand for evoking the violence of the colonial period...[and] as the true beginning of the war for Algerian independence" (Cole, 2010: 107-109). A reconstruction of the massacre serves as the starting point for *Outside the Law* (2010), to which I will turn later in the chapter. The city of Setif serves in *Days of Glory* (2006), two years earlier in 1943, as a training camp for France's colonial soldiers. Here it is a space of loyalty, patriotism and the pervasiveness of French colonial power to recruit and train an army, as the defeated and occupied nation, via its Gaullist Free French Army, continues to demonstrate extraordinary power over its colonial subjects. Therefore, whilst Setif is where the Algerian War of Independence is rooted, here it is where the

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²¹ Messali Hadj formed several political organisations, including the Algerian National Movement (MNA) once the Algerian War of Independence was underway

Second World War begins for the Algerian troops of *Days of Glory* (2006), and where they loyally pledge to wash the French flag in their blood. The opening shot that introduces us to Setif sees Abdelkader training for his Corporal exam with a group of other men, he looks out at the other obedient African soldiers who are lined up in formation to sing the 'Chants des Africains' (the Song of the Africans) underneath the tricolor of the French flag:

"We're the men of Africa, Come here from afar.

We've come from the colonies, To save the fatherland.

We've left behind, Our families and home,

And our hearts are full, Of invincible fervor.

For we wish to bear high and proud, The cherished flag of sweet France.

Should someone try to part us, We're here to die at her feet.

Drums roll to mark our love, For our country and land.

We've come from afar to die, We're the men of Africa"

Colonial violence is absent from *Days of Glory* (2006), yet it hauntingly manifests itself here through the violent connotations and symbolic significance of Setif. Therefore, whilst critics have noted the potential 'pro-colonial' (Hargreaves, 2007a) reading of the film, this space of military training is disrupted and interrupted by a sense of colonial subservience that clearly disturbs the independence-minded Abdelkader who looks up and begins to observe as he hears the lyrics of the song, as well as by a key site of violence that is yet to happen diegetically. The ghost of Setif appears at this moment to lay claim to the colonial spaces of the war, and to disturb the perceived security of western temporalities, including the 'nostalgia' that Cooper (2007) warns of, exemplified by the narrative of the Second World War. World War Two Setif is haunted by a violent colonial history that remains unresolved and which refuses to be put to rest (Derrida, 1994).

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 28: The training ground of Setif 1943 is haunted by the colonial violence of Setif 1945. Courtesy of Filmbankmedia.

This haunting interruption of the combat narrative continues at various points throughout the film, including on French soil itself, as personal experience of colonial brutality disrupts Moroccan Goumier brothers Yassir and Larbi, whose motivation for enlisting is explicitly for financial survival. After liberating Provence, the brothers enter a Christian Church where older brother Yassir comments that 'their God suffered', pointing towards the figure of Jesus crucified to the cross. His younger brother Larbi's responds dismissively, ignoring the suffering of Christ to hint towards the deployment of the Christian religion by the French Empire to justify their 'civilising missions' in the colonies:

Larbi: "Tell me Yassir... When I was little, the French soldiers killed our whole family. Did they massacre them? What did they call it?"

Yassir: "They called it... Pacification".

Whilst the majority of the memorialisation of French colonialism focuses on the Algerian case, including in film and scholarly work, the rarely told violence of the conquering of Morocco emerges momentarily through this personal recollection. French

colonisation in Algeria lasted from 1830 until the end of the bloody war of independence in 1962, whilst France did not conquer Morocco until 1911. In a period of what the French commonly referred to as 'pacification' lasting until 1934, they attempted to supress sections of the country that continued to rebel despite the general collaboration of Morocco's political leaders (see Gershovich, 2000). The brothers' personal suffering at the hands of the French then, has been neglected and forgotten, and so this traumatic flashback, for Larbi at least, fleetingly interrupts not only French narratives of the war but also Algeria's dominant claim over memories of colonialism.

Whilst the town and military training camp of Setif is haunted by the violence of a future massacre, the Christian Church above triggers a memory of colonial violence disguised as a civilising mission for Moroccan Larbi, and is therefore haunted by Yassir and Larbi's personal traumatic past. Postcolonial haunting therefore works to disrupt the compartmentalisation of seemingly separate geographies and time-periods, attesting to the numerous influences that constitute postcolonial memories. In what follows, I will further develop the ways in which the spectro-geographies of colonialism continue to weave together past, present and future spaces of World War Two and colonialism, and how the looming threat of Algerian independence haunts both *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Free Men* (2011).

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 29: Moroccan brothers, Yassir and Larbi, are haunted by colonial violence in a French Church. Courtesy of Filmbankmedia.

5.2.2 The Spectre of Algerian Independence in *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Free Men* (2011)

The haunting presence of France's colonial power can further be seen through the more radically and independently thinking Corporal Abdelkader, through whom the spectre of the Algerian War of Independence gradually becomes more apparent. As the town of Setif demonstrates for Abdelkader in *Days of Glory* (2006), a space in which his character of the same name in *Outside the Law* (2010) demonstrates in 1945, both colonial violence and anti-colonial resistance spectrally emerge as the narrative develops. However, Sami Bouajila's protagonist Abdelkader consistently and fiercely attempts to demonstrate both his loyalty to his motherland and his utility to his superiors throughout the film, despite his clear awareness and discomfort at the imposing control of his superiors.

The common enemy of fascism seemingly serves as a barrier, for Abdelkader, to independence in *Days of Glory* (2006), and as Cooper (2007: 95) has similarly argued in her critique of the film, "the universal condemnation of Nazism allows for an easier inclusion of the indigenous Other into the history of an embattled France". This of course also applies to *Free Men* (2011) and its narrative of the justes, as described

earlier. In *Days of Glory* (2006), this is most poignant in a scene in which Nazi Germany attempts to recruit 'Muslim soldiers' into fighting on their side, encouraging them to do so with the promise of freedom from French 'slavery'. Whilst on patrol after a victory against German forces, an explosion overhead brings down a flurry of Nazi propaganda leaflets on top of Sergeant Martinez, Corporal Abdelkader and Said, which Abdelkader is encouraged to read aloud by Martinez:

"Muslim soldier, know that you can cross to the German side where you will be warmly welcomed and your life saved. Your leaders send you to die rather than the French. Muslim soldier, you weren't born into slavery. Germany will give you your freedom. The day of independence has come for Africa".

The Germans extensively attempted to persuade Muslim soldiers of the Free French Army to switch sides during World War Two, not only promising them their freedom but also reaching out by claiming that there were similarities between Nazism and Islam (the success of these propaganda campaigns is much discussed amongst audiences, and will be further developed in Chapter Seven). Furthermore, the Germans also attempted to fuel already present tensions between Muslims and Jews in North Africa, initially fostered by the French Cremieux Decree of 1870 which 'naturalised' Algerian Jews, whilst maintaining inferior status for Muslims (see Scheck, 2012).

The pied-noir Sergeant Martinez, concerned that his 'trouble-causing' Corporal, Abdelkader, might be considering the German offer of 'independence', asks him "what would you do without us, Abdelkader?" Abdelkader dismisses independence however, or at least disguises his ambition for it, demonstrating his faith and loyalty to the Republic, replying to his Sergeant that "de Gaulle said we're fighting for liberty. I'm fighting with France against Nazism." He rejects independence, or Germany's apparent offer of it, refusing to collaborate with fascism against a colonial enemy, and he screws up the leaflet and throws it to the ground. Whilst Abdelkader's pledge of allegiance to his Sergeant, and to France, is clearly part of the *Days of Glory's* (2006) trope of assimilation and solidifies the North African positioning on the allied side of the war, it simultaneously begins to open the door to the ominous prospect of an independent future, which becomes more apparent as his character develops.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 30: Corporal Abdelkader reads a Nazi propaganda leaflet, encouraging African soldiers to switch sides and win their independence. Courtesy of Filmbankmedia.

Free Men's (2011) Younes, embarks on a similar journey of self-discovery in which he is drawn into a fight for freedom on two fronts. The justes narrative of *Free Men* (2011), which as explained above works as a tool to integrate Muslims into French history and society is, in similar ways to Days of Glory's (2006) politics of assimilation, haunted by the future prospect of an independent Algeria, manifested in the politicisation of its protagonist Younes, from a petty crook to freedom fighter (a transition which will be drawn out further in the following chapter, Chapter Six, on masculinities). The primary driver of this transition is a furtive revolutionary Algerian woman named Leila, whom he befriends at the Grand Mosque of Paris after being coerced into going undercover there by the French police as a spy. Previously apathetic, Younes makes his living selling goods on the black market, as described in the previous chapter. Seemingly disinterested in taking his spying job at the Mosque seriously, Younes undergoes something of a political and moral awakening through his romantic pursuit of Leila, who is in hiding at the Mosque disguised as a serving woman. She finally, and nervously, reaches out to him with a pamphlet containing words from the Algerian revolutionary, Messali Hadi, which he reads in front of her via an internal monologue:

"We are a people. We have a common language, the rich language that is Arabic. We have a glorious past. We have all it takes to be a people. When we say 'the Algerian people', we make no distinction of race. When we demand universal suffrage, we demand it for every member of the Algerian people. Messali Hadj".

Initially taking an interest in what Leila was reading as an excuse to talk to her, Younes is clearly moved by the words of the political manifesto, as the pair share a glance of recognition as he silently reads it. The film cuts to Younes, sat solemnly drinking coffee and reflecting on the words of Messali Hadj back in the café above which he lives, telling the owner Maryvonne, who asks him to get her some groceries, that he is "done with the black market". His interest piqued, Younes later attends an underground resistance meeting with his cousin Ali shortly after, where a young Algerian man addresses a small group of people:

"Messali Hadj got 16 years hard labour for refusing to collaborate. He refused the bait, because he rejects every form of fascism. Like him, we believe we will never be free unless we wage war on colonialism and fascism. Long live freedom! Down with colonialism, and fascism!

The anti-colonial politics of the imprisoned Algerian leader, Messali Hadj, can be seen frequently interrupting the justes narrative of Jewish rescue, insisting, as the man giving the speech does, that anti-colonialism and anti-fascism be seen as intertwined and interdependent. Messali Hadj, encountered initially via Leila, is the key vector for Younes' conversion, after which he abandons his life as a black-market trader and becomes fully committed to the Mosque's endeavour to save European Jews from deportation and certain death, and later and somewhat ambiguously, as we shall see, the Algerian independence movement. The dialectic relationship between German fascism and French colonialism is developed further in the following section, in which *Outside the Law* (2010) relies on drawing parallels between the Gestapo and the French police in order to draw sympathy for the Algerian cause. It is important to note however, the crucial political differences between *Free Men* (2011) and *Outside the Law* (2010), as the latter foregrounds the National Liberation Front (FLN), who were embroiled in a violent internal warfare for control over the resistance, and the future of Algeria, with Messali Hadj's MNA by 1954.

Whilst Younes' political awakening is achieved through his engagement with the anticolonial thoughts of Messali Hadj, Abdelkader's initially unwavering loyalty to the
Republic, and insistence that the 'army means equality', is gradually eroded throughout
Days of Glory (2006) as he bears witness to continual abuse and racism. Eventually, this
culminates in Abdelkader calling out these inequalities, as he begins to demonstrate not
loyalty to, but independence from, France. After being snubbed for promotion to
Sergeant, crushed by the unfairness of his white counterpart getting the promotion ahead
of him, Abdelkader's rhetoric shifts, hinting more towards the independence of the
colonies. Listening to his fellow soldiers mockingly sing about France's failure to
provide for them, as described in the previous chapter, Corporal Abdelkader seizes the
opportunity to rally them to his side, in a speech that echoes the one Younes listens to
above, and recollects further down:

"Listen to me, my brothers! When I enlisted, I listened to De Gaulle. He said France was fighting for freedom around the world. I thought the war would give us the rights of our French brothers. We're all fighting against Hitler for liberty, equality and fraternity. It's high time they gave us some of that liberty, that equality and, above all, that fraternity! [...] We're changing the destiny of France! Things must change for us too!"

Previously of the opinion that if they fought for France in the army, that the soldiers would be granted the freedoms and rights of other French citizens, Abdelkader has come to the realisation that the endeavour for true freedom must be fought not just against the Nazis, but also the French. This is solidified as Sergeant Martinez confronts Abdelkader as he finishes his speech, and the uncomfortable possibility of an independent Algeria surfaces:

- S. Martinez: "You can't understand, so shut up and step down!"
- C. Abdelkader: "Why can't I understand? A wog has less of a brain than you?"
- S. Martinez: "Wogs are not cut out to lead men".
- C. Abdelkader: "That day will come, Sergeant".

The threat of independence causes Martinez to physically attack Abdelkader, and the pair scrap on the floor in the middle of the other jeering soldiers, a somewhat meek yet significant intimation of future conflict between pied-noir settlers and Algerian anticolonialists, and demonstrating the ways in which the Second World War for France is "haunted by the anxieties of colonialism" (Langford, 2013: 355). It is worth further noting, that Corporal Abdelkader, the reluctant embodiment of the spectre of Algerian independence, shares his name with one of Algeria's most celebrated nineteenth-century anti-colonial leaders, the Emir Abd-El-Kader. One of the first military and religious leaders to mount an organised resistance to the French in the mid-1800s, Abd-El-Kader created a huge regular army, and was able to unite a fragmented and diverse Algeria in a common cause against the French invaders and settlers. Days of Glory (2006) and Free Men (2011), both of which are centred on representing the struggles of the Second World War, and therefore united in their resistance to the Nazis, are haunted by revolutionary figures of Algeria's anti-colonial history, with the key figure of Messali Hadi functioning to politicise the apathetic Younes, and Corporal Abdelkader channelling his famous and celebrated historical namesake.

The final scenes of Days of Glory (2006) see Abdelkader take command of the small number of surviving members of his unit, after Sergeant Martinez is near-fatally injured in a booby-trap. In appropriating the final sequence of Saving Private Ryan (1998), the film shows Abdelkader, the lone survivor of his unit by the end, successfully hold the Alsatian position until reinforcements arrive. Whilst the prospect of Algerian independence does indeed haunt and interrupt various spaces throughout the film, as has been demonstrated, the final sequence of the film confirms the film's chief aim, which is to centre the North African contribution to the liberation of France, doing so by situating their heroics alongside the canonised heroes of Spielberg's (1998) Hollywood combat epic. Unlike the war heroes represented in Saving Private Ryan (1998), and countless other World War Two films, however, Bouchareb's protagonists are of course forgotten. Despite his epic, miraculous, and not-so-believable heroics of the final battle, Abdelkader is ignored by the Colonel who promised him recognition, the same Colonel who attempted to write a clean narrative of the war described in the previous chapter. Echoing that particular scene in which the Colonel tells the unit's photojournalist to omit the death toll from his account of the Italian battle, a cameraman takes the picture of local survivors of the liberated Alsatian town as they emerge from their homes, alongside white French soldiers (see Figure 31), declaring "the French forces Free Alsace". This

powerful shot depicts Abdelkader behind the cameraman, positioned out of the frame of his camera, and therefore cleansed from the collective memory of the war. Abdelkader is forgotten, the fast-forward sequence which shows him aged and living alone in a small flat, suggesting that he has led a solitary life in the shadows in France.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 31: Corporal Abdelkader is diegetically framed outside of history, officially forgotten, as he is cleansed from the whitewashed image of victory. Courtesy of Filmbankmedia.

Whilst *Days of Glory* (2006) skips the Algerian War of Independence, to reflect on the exclusion of North African soldiers in France sixty-years on, *Free Men* (2011) contemplates the more immediate future of Algerian immigrants living in France. On VE Day at the end of *Free Men* (2011), Younes first of all hands his gun to his friend telling him to "keep this for me", indicating that the fight for him, despite victory for Europe, is not over, after which he revisits the underground hiding space which functioned as the informal headquarters of the Mosque's resistance. Entering the room silently, Younes internally recollects a speech given by the same Algerian man described earlier, which can be heard as he examines the remnants that lie cluttered around the room:

"Dear brothers, we walk the road to glory with confidence. We want to fight for our freedom but there's no freedom without sacrifice. Brothers, let us act! We're ready to give our blood to free our country. So let's join forces with the French Resistance! If we give the same blood, we'll have the same rights on victory day.

Long live the freedom of peoples! Long live brotherhood! Down with

colonialism! Down with fascism! Long live freedom!"

Paralleled with the somewhat naïve rhetoric of *Days of Glory's* (2006) Abdelkader, Younes reflects on the political speech as he lifts and dusts down an abandoned and dirty Algerian flag from the floor, and its insignificance now that many of the people he fought with have died fighting for the French.

The sole appearance of the Algerian flag at the end of *Free Men* (2011) in either of the Second World War films discussed here, is emblematic of the haunting absence of Algeria. Primarily concerned with memorialising the role of North African Muslims in liberating France, and rescuing Jews from the clutches of Nazi Germany, *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Free Men* (2011) situate the Maghrebi-French community at the heart of the nation's historical image of itself, in an endeavour to integrate and assimilate them into France's present. As has been demonstrated however, these narratives are haunted by equally neglected histories of colonial violence, as well as by futures of independence.

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Figure 32: *Free Men's* (2011) Younes lifts the Algerian flag from the darkness underground, reminiscing about his resistance friends, and speculating about the future of the Algerian nation. Courtesy of Artificial Eye.

5.3 Gestapo, Gendarmes and Resistance in *Outside the Law* (2010)

The previous section explored the ways in which Algeria haunts the narratives of *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Free Men* (2011), as ghosts of colonial violence and the spectre of Algerian independence loom throughout the films. However, through the final fast-forward sequence of *Days of Glory* (2006) to '60 years later', which shows an aged and forgotten Abdelkader, Algeria is, to a certain extent, sidestepped in favour of a political point about pensions and exclusion within France. Bouchareb answers some of the more underdeveloped questions of colonialism in the 'sequel' to *Days of Glory* (2006), *Outside the Law* (2010), further situating the Algerian War of Independence in the context of the Second World War. In contrast to the spectral way parallels between colonialism and fascism are drawn in *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Free Men* (2011), *Outside the Law* (2010) didactically puts Nazi occupation in direct dialogue with French colonialism, extending this to compare the FLN (a 'terrorist' organisation) to the French Resistance. In doing so, the film facilitates remembering 'across cultural boundaries' (Craps and Rothberg, 2011), and destabilises the memory of a French nation that rests somewhat upon myths of Resistance and an organised forgetting of Algeria.

Whilst the combat genre of *Days of Glory* (2006) positions the North African soldiers alongside the canon of Hollywood war films, as well as serving to tap into French anxieties about reliance on the colonies, *Outside the Law* (2010) draws upon the American gangster genre, centring on political violence and signifying a departure from *Days of Glory's* (2006) more conciliatory approach, towards a more confrontational memorialisation of French colonialism.

5.3.1 Iconographies of Colonialism and Fascism: The Gestapo and The Ghetto

Outside the Law (2010) begins with the controversial reconstruction of the Setif massacre on 8th May, 1945, the brutal suppression of a demonstration for independence at the end of World War Two that "created a new generation of Algerian nationalists" (Evans and Phillips, 2007: 52) vehemently committed to armed struggle. Thousands of demonstrators, driven to Algerian towns and cities from rural parts of the country that had been hit by a combination of bad harvests, and land expropriation, organised several marches to coincide with VE Day in Europe. Debates around who fired the first shot, the number of fatalities on both sides, and the duration of the violent conflict remain hotly contested amongst different groups. The general consensus amongst historians however, (Stora 2004; Cole, 2010), is that first of all the 'massacre' in reality occurred over a sustained number of weeks, as the police, the army and French settlers cracked down on the rebellion, whilst Outside the Law (2010) condenses it in a sequence lasting for around seven minutes. Furthermore, whilst French military, settler and government authorities claimed 1,340 people died (Cole, 2010), and Algerians and Algerian sympathisers advance the figure of around 45,000, the number is thought to be around 20,000 (Cole, 2010). In developing the thread that links WW2 with French colonialism in Days of Glory (2006), the Setif massacre represented in Outside the Law (2010) leads directly on from celebratory scenes of VE Day in Paris on 'the same day', situating the genesis of the Algerian War of Independence at the very threshold of the Second World War.

After the prologue of the film, which sees the Souni family dispossessed from their rural land in 1925, which has been described in Chapter Four, a montage of newsreel footage of Allied troops and French civilians celebrating victory in Europe is overlaid with the opening credits, which features the largely North African and Algerian names of the film's actors. The names function to interrupt the whitewashed 'official' memories of the war, contrasting with the white faces of rejoicing Europeans on the screen. This footage

bleeds into the representation of the Setif massacre 'the same day', as the grainy black and white editing technique follows the newsreel documentary footage, matching the 'authentic' history of France's liberation. This works to further demonstrate the ironic similarities between German occupation, from which France has just been freed, and the violence of the occupying French in Algeria.

In a continuation of cinematic techniques used in *Days of Glory* (2006), also described in Chapter Four, the transition from black and white to colour further signals a departure from the 'official' and incomplete memories, to a more imaginative historical narrative made possible through the spectacle of cinema, whilst also claiming the authenticity and authority of this new account. Hand-held camera shots capture the demonstrators up close, moving amongst the crowd fostering a feeling of closeness, solidarity and empathy with the Algerians, whilst police and settlers remain distant and detached, encouraging identification with one side from the beginning of the film. This particular sequence, unsurprisingly considering the contestation of the 'facts' described above, caused outrage in France at Outside the Law's (2010) premiere in at Cannes, and was accused by groups representing military veterans, as well as French politicians, for being 'anti-French' and a "falsification of history" (Higbee, 2013: 86). During the reconstruction of the massacre, the largely plain-clothed French police, settlers, and army, fire with impunity at the demonstrators, beginning with a young boy holding the Algerian flag at the front of the march. The Algerian flag, commonly associated at the time with 19th Century resistance leader Abd-El-Kader, and later the banner for the FLN, was banned from the march, as were any other inflammatory banners alluding to Algerian independence (Horne, 1977). Represented as unarmed, whilst the French instigate the violence, the Algerian demonstrators are killed at random by the authorities and settlers alike, responding only to save their lives by attacking armed settlers in their homes. Meanwhile, the French police and the army are likened to the German Gestapo as they march into houses and execute families. French firing squads are also depicted lining up and executing Algerian men against walls, in scenes that again parallel popular World War Two movies, in which impersonal aggressors exterminate an 'inferior' enemy. The iconography deployed throughout the sequence explicitly demarcates the villains and the victims, and articulates a partisan collective memory of the Algerian War of Independence at what Rothberg (2011: 525) calls the 'axis of comparison' and the 'axis of political affect', in which political imaginaries are transculturally produced through borrowing and adaption.

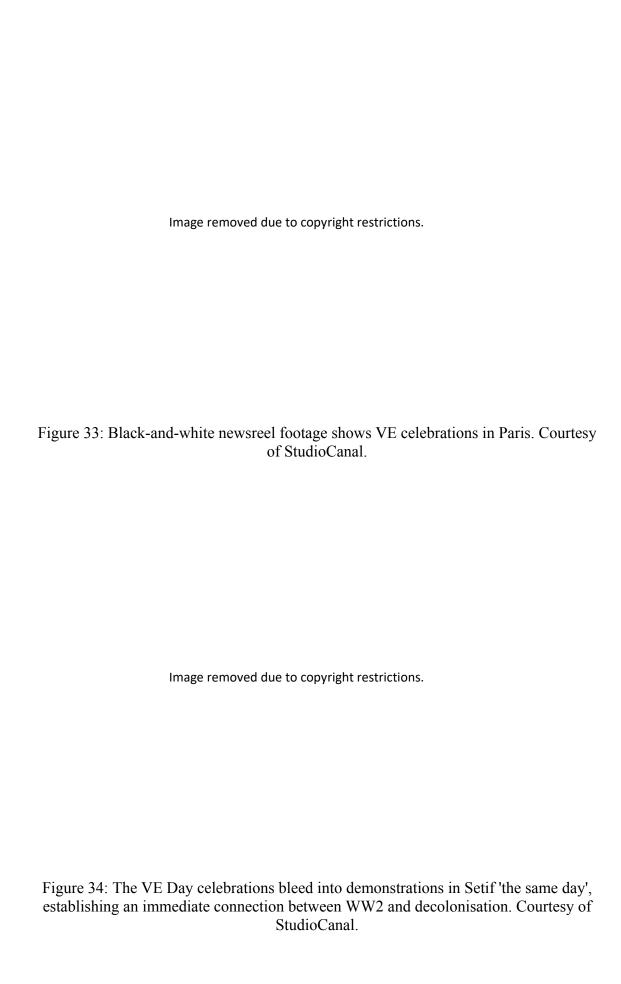


Image removed due to copyright restrictions.
Figure 35: Black-and-white images of Setif fade to colour, functioning to disrupt official memory in favour of an imaginative intervention. Courtesy of StudioCanal.
Image removed due to copyright restrictions.
Figure 36: French gendarmes executing Algerian protesters demonstrates iconographic intersections with the German gestapo. Courtesy of StudioCanal. Ultimately, the massacre sequence sets the context for the different trajectories of the film's main characters, the three Souni brothers Messaoud, Abdelkader and Said.

Youngest brother Said flees with his mother to Paris, after his father and two sisters are murdered in Setif; the eldest brother Messaoud goes to fight for the French in Indochina;²² and Abdelkader is arrested, and later recruited by the FLN in the famous La Santé prison in Paris. These spaces intersect to produce a collective, and what Rothberg (2006) refers to as 'multidirectional', memory of the Algerian War that to borrow Rothberg's (2009: 211) words mobilise "remembrance in the service of political responsibility without relativizing or negating historical specificity". That is to say, in drawing on iconographies of the Second World War, in film and other media, *Outside the Law* (2010) is able to draw sympathy by connecting the French military and police with the Nazi Gestapo, and the Algerian object of colonialism with the Jewish victims of the Germany, without denying the unique experience of the Holocaust.

This is further exemplified in bidonville of Nanterre, described and analysed in the previous chapter as a space of containment and incarceration, developed here for the ways in which it feeds into the iconography of the Jewish ghettos of Nazi Germany, and therefore as a crucial space for the memorialisation of the Algerian War at the intersection with regimes of violence that preceded it. Said and his mother flee the ensuing war in Algeria to the Parisian bidonville in 'winter 1955', a year into the Algerian War of Independence. The establishing shot of the bidonville shows a poorly built and dense settlement, exacerbated by the harsh winter climate, which contrasts sharply with the arid landscape of Algeria presented in the previous scenes, as the camera pans from right to left to show the extent and conditions of the settlement. The conditions of bidonvilles in cities across France more broadly, as Rothberg (2009: 237) remarks, "could easily be mistaken for a Nazi ghetto". Discussing the writing of Marguerite Duras', in which she interviews both Algerian workers and Jewish survivors of Warsaw, Rothberg writes that she "draws on a persistent analogy that links Jews with other racialised groups through the figure of the ghetto's segregated social space" (Rothberg, 2009: 237). In similar ways to the binary iconography of perpetrator and victim discussed above, the comparison of the bidonville and Nazi-era ghettos acts as a framework through which the representation of lesser-known political violence, during a lesser-known war, can be told. As Rothberg further claims, "the Warsaw Ghetto has proven to be an enduring focus of multidirectional acts of memory that engage with the transnational legacies of colonial and racial violence" (Rothberg, 2011: 525).

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²² The French-Indochina War lasted from 1946-1954. The French lost the war, a great humiliation, and set a precedent for other independence movements, including in Algeria.

In situating the Setif massacre of 1945 alongside VE Day, using black-and-white editing techniques to blend the under-represented and neglected with the dominant and celebrated, the origins of the Algerian War are rooted not only at the threshold of World War Two, but in a colonial violence akin to the that perpetrated by the Nazis. This framing is confirmed in throughout *Outside the Law's* (2010) iconography, which positions the French as anonymous and merciless aggressors, incarcerating and exterminating the victimised Algerian. However, whilst Rothberg (2006) largely focuses on discourses of the victim in theorising his multidirectional memory theory, it can also be utilised in the service of resistance across different contexts, which manifests importantly in *Outside the Law* (2010).

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Figure 37: The bidonville of Nanterre, just outside of Paris, serves as a base for the Souni family and as an iconographic connection to other spaces of containment. Courtesy of StudioCanal.

5.3.2 Indochina to Algeria: Resistance Across Contexts

Whilst the iconographies of World War Two function as frameworks through which to situate the Algerian War in its multiple contexts, the presence of the French-Indochina war functions to further frame the Algerian War of Independence in a broader circuit of a cultural memory of anti-colonialism and resistance that reaches across and connects different contexts. Similarly to the Algerian mobilisation at the end of the Second World War described above, movements in Indochina led mainly by Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnamese independence in 1945 when the French Empire was at its weakest, and the Japanese had annexed much of its territory in South East Asia (Cooper, 2001). Vastly underestimating the resolve of Ho Chi Minh's guerrilla forces, the French lost after a brutal and bloody eight-year long war that effectively marked the beginning the Algerian War of Independence (Cooper, 2001). As Stora (2004: 27) writes, "May 7, 1954, saw the fall of Dien Bien Phu in Indochina, a defeat that sounded the death knell of an entire era. So began the disintegration of the French colonial empire." It is this moment that is represented in *Outside the Law* (2010).

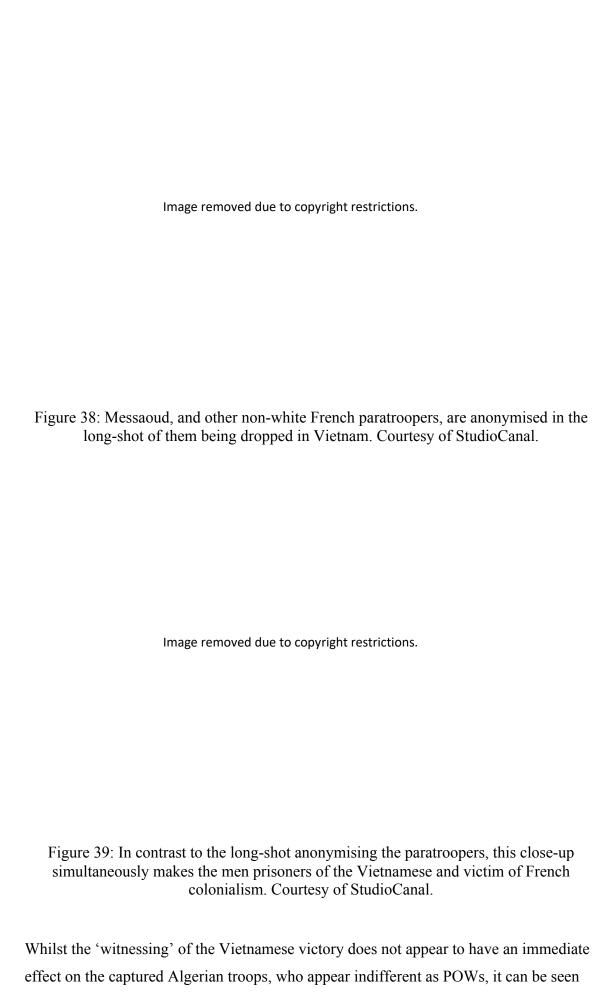
After the Setif massacre, the audience are taken to Vietnam one year before the start of the Algerian War, where they are introduced to Messaoud and the 3rd Algerian Infantry, as he reads a letter from his mother. Messaoud and his fellow troops, aboard a French military aircraft, are parachuted onto the Vietnamese landscape in a long-shot amidst the sound of gunfire, ambiguously shifting the representation of Messaoud via a close-up, lovingly reading a letter from his mother, to anonymised and violent invader of Vietnamese territory. The Algerian troops, unlike those in *Days of Glory* (2006) who mobilise to fight a universally condemned enemy in the Nazis, are impersonalised as aggressors complicit in the colonial oppression of Vietnamese independence, thus somewhat complicating the simplistic heroic narrative of the Algerian freedom fighter, implicating them in the perpetuation of France's violent post-war struggle for the retention of its territory.

Two years on from Messaoud's introduction as an Algerian paratrooper however, the French have been defeated in Indochina and the Algerian War has been underway for a year, as the camera focuses on an injured group of Algerian POWs, including Messaoud, being led into a makeshift prison in a trench in the ground. In contrast to the distance put between the audience and the soldiers in the parachute scene, in defeat and in pain they are close again. Whilst the camera pans across the defeated men sat looking

disillusioned, and passive, Ho Chi Minh's forces attempt to galvanise Third Worldist solidarity, as they declare:

"All over the world, oppressed nations must harness their spiritual and material energies. They must prepare to lay down their lives to seize the right to freedom and independence from the colonial powers. You, the colonised Africans, you must follow the example of the Vietnamese people. Your brothers, wives and children have a right to justice and freedom! Fighters, do not be the colonists slaves any longer. Witness the Vietnamese victory and break free of your chains!"

Echoing the German plea for Muslim in the Free French Army to switch sides in *Days of Glory* (2006), the presence of successful Vietnamese anti-colonial victory, despite the complicity suggested by the Algerian paratroopers, functions as a framework to establish the foundations of Algerian independence. Much like the Algerian War, French colonialism and its humiliating defeat in Indochina has been similarly suppressed in public and cinematic discourse and national memory, with only a handful of films dealing with the representation of French colonialism in the region, most of which are 'exoticist' (see Rollet, 1999), exemplified by films such as *Indochine* (1992). The presence of Indochina in *Outside the Law* (2010) further demonstrates that multidirectional need not only be utilised in the service of claiming victimhood, but also in remembering anti-colonial resistance across different spatial contexts, reinvigorating and giving life to other similarly neglected and suppressed memories, whilst importantly also situating Algerian War in its broader circuit of Third World anti-colonialism.



permeating the Algerian's fight, as a point of reference for Abdelkader's and the FLN's anti-colonial training whilst in French prison, as a seemingly more senior FLN figure uses the Vietnamese success as a framework for the Algerians. He tells Abdelkader:

"Did you know Ho Chi Minh won the war against France thanks to two principles? The first principle is that repression always benefits the people seeking freedom. The second principle is to never, never abandon a mission. Nothing is insurmountable. All the Algerians, you hear me, all of them must pay the revolutionary tax. In two days, you'll be free".

His command reflects the successful atmosphere of violence and insecurity that was fostered by the Vietnamese to make victory impossible for the French, and Ho Chi Minh's confidence in "for every nine of us killed we will kill one – in the end you will leave" (quoted in Evans and Phillips, 2007: 46). These Vietnamese principles can be seen as important throughout the film as Abdelkader and the FLN continually provoke violent responses from the police, which manifests most notably in the final sequence which partially represents the 17 October massacre in Paris 1961 (which will be developed later on in this chapter), and Abdelkader's unwavering commitment to the cause, which culminates in his sacrifice and eventual martyrdom.

Furthermore, rather than making villains of the French Resistance, many of whom are now in government and police positions, *Outside the Law* (2010) positions the FLN alongside them, as allies in different temporalities. Whilst I will come to the absence of Prefect of Paris Police, Maurice Papon, from the film when discussing the 17 October 1961 massacre, I want to say something here about Colonel Faivre who effectively stands in as a more palatable and morally incorrupt version of the disgraced Papon. Colonel Faivre, who served in both the Resistance and the Army, is represented as an honorable former French Resistance fighter and veteran of Indochina. His history in the Resistance functions to further situate the film and the Algerian war in its appropriate historical context, and serves as a framework against which to compare the clandestine movement against Nazi occupation to Abdelkader's FLN. The appropriation of the gangster genre contributes importantly to a more sympathetic disposition towards the FLN, as it fosters a tense atmosphere of espionage and occupation that parallels the two seemingly separate eras, and further disrupts dominant French collective memories of World War Two. This theme of resistance is central to forming links between different

eras and wars, and what Rothberg (2006: 170) refers to as "presence of a differentiated collective memory" can hold together "similarity and difference" in the mobilisation of meaningful remembrance.

The most poignant scene in which this link is didactically made comes as Abdelkader and Colonel Faivre meet face to face. Whilst Faivre largely attempts to distance himself from the comparisons to the Nazis, and to the FLN, Abdelkader attempts to establish a connection, to give Faivre a 'chance to redeem himself', claiming implicitly that the apparatus of French colonialism is to blame, and that Faivre has a choice whether or not to be complicit within it. He appeals to his clandestine experiences, asking him "are you ashamed of what you did in the Resistance?" Abdelkader claims, tacitly comparing the FLN to the Resistance, to "serve a just cause", as does Faivre who, as he argues, fights "for the grandeur of France [whose] Empire counterbalances the USA and the USSR. de Gaulle says so". Dismissing Faivre's attempts to justify colonial oppression, Abdelkader resorts to likening the French to the occupying Germans, telling Faivre:

"replace Algerians and French by French and Germans to get De Gaulles speech on Radio London in 1941. You're on the wrong side now. Unlike 10 years ago".

Faivre makes a similar attempt to bring Abdelkader on the 'right' side of history, telling him "you'd have made a good fighter. Pity you weren't in the Resistance", making a distinction between the 'terrorism' of the FLN and the justified 'defiance' of the Resistance. Ignoring Abdelkader's offer to work as an informant for the FLN, who is playing on his history, and perhaps even nostalgia, of the activism and heroism of the Resistance during Vichy, Faivre claims that "this war's different. France and Algeria have a common past", claiming that Algeria will 'progress to independence' peacefully. Abdelkader however, continues to lure him, encouraging Faivre with a final warning to "be a hero or you'll be one of the vanquished". Faivre again ignores him however, and despite distancing the two wars as 'different', acknowledges the similarities between them as individuals, telling Abdelkader "you and I are alike", to which Abdelkader replies, "yes, we've sacrificed ourselves, Faivre. You to the past". As the below figures demonstrate, there is a fundamental difference established cinematographically as the pair are shot and framed separately, pitted against one another and unable to find true common ground, signalling to the inability to reconcile despite the films' efforts, memories of the Resistance with those of the Algerian FLN.

Outside the Law (2010) situates the origins of Messaoud's politicisation, and to an extent the Algerian War itself, in Indochina, complicating his back story as FLN militant (the consequences of which will be discussed in the following chapter on masculinities). The inclusion of Indochina, whilst contextualising the motivations and inspirations for the Algerian War historically, further endeavours to shed light onto other neglected parts of French national memory, allying itself with the Indochinese plight and its suppression in France, without taking on the full responsibility of representing it. Rather, Outside the Law (2010) opens the door to it, providing space for the emergence of memories of Indochina within the film and beyond. However, whilst the character of Colonel Faivre, as a veteran of both the French Resistance and Indochina, functions as a way to compare and contrast the efforts of the FLN with the Resistance, he stands in for Maurice Papon as the more delicate and comfortable face of French colonialism.

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Figure 40: Abdelkader attempts to convince Faivre to join his cause. Courtesy of StudioCanal.

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Figure 41: Faivre, disconnected from his adversary by separate shots, remains nostalgically attached to the French Resistance. Courtesy of StudioCanal.

5.3.3. 17 October 1961

The final sequence of *Outside the Law* (2010) takes place on 17 October 1961, the date of the 'massacre' of hundreds of peaceful Algerian demonstrators in the centre of Paris by the police, acting on the orders of Maurice Papon (House and MacMaster, 2006; Cole, 2010). The violence that is commonly associated with one date, 17 October 1961, much like the Setif massacre in 1945, actually took place over a number of days at least and is more symbolic of a general increase in state violence and racism towards the growing presence of Algerians in French cities (House and MacMaster, 2006). Despite this, the memory of the massacre has been much debated publicly since the 1980s in France, particularly due to the fact that the death-toll has been contested, with most suggesting more than 200 protesters were killed and thrown into the Seine, whilst others including Papon prior to his trial, insisting that just two Algerians died trying to attack the Elysee Palace. The violent descriptions of the massacre, which involve beatings from police on women and old people, bodies floating in the River Seine, and protesters being penned in, suffocated and shot, are relatively absent from *Outside the Law's* (2010) representation at the end of the film. Rather, much like in the brief reconstruction of it in the much earlier and less commercially successful Living in Paradise (1998), on which Bouchareb worked as a producer, and the fleeting mention of it in Haneke's *Hidden*

(2005), there is no sense of a 'massacre' in Paris by the Police. Whilst Bouchareb does not pull his punches in representing the Setif massacre in 1945 at the beginning of the film, condensing weeks of violence into a short, brutal and bloody seven-minute sequence, 17 October 1961 is forced underground, to the Paris Metro, rather than reconstructed openly on the streets of Paris. Unlike Setif, Paris is not bloody nor brutal. Successfully eluding Faivre on a train, the brothers alight at Porte de Lilas where scores of Algerian men are being held back by the Police on their way to demonstrate. As House and MacMaster (2006) have noted, Papon was aware of the influx of Algerians making their way in to the center of Paris to demonstrate via the underground Metro, and so had police stationed outside in order to prevent them from participating. Hidden from public view, underground and out of sight, some of the worst violence occurred here (House and MacMaster, 2006), and yet Bouchareb refrains from fully representing it. The only character to be killed is Abdelkader, shot at point-blank range for resisting the police and inciting dissent amongst the crowd.

To some extent, the representation of 17 October 1961 underground, is symbolic of the suppression and occlusion of its memory and Bouchareb's response to public censorship, also indicating the importance of space and mobility in the French state's endeavour to control and contain its Algerian population. However, the massacre's mild representation in comparison to the visual brutality displayed at the start of the film in Setif, is much closer and more uncomfortable for French audiences, and is perhaps something of a compromise for Bouchareb, as the film was angrily received, particularly by pied-noir groups, for the way he represented Setif. Depicting the highly contested Paris massacre might have been a step too far. This is in tandem with the absence of Maurice Papon, who prior to holding the post of prefect of Paris police, served in the Vichy administration in which he was complicit in sending thousands of Jews to concentration camps, something for which he was later found guilty in 1998. He was not however, convicted of crimes against humanity for his role in the 17 October massacre, rather he was awarded the 'Légion d'honneur' by de Gaulle in the same year (which was later stripped from him). Papon who himself ordered and coordinated the repression of the demonstrations (House and MacMaster, 2006), is replaced by Bernard Blancan's Colonel Faivre who cleanses from the national memory Papon's crimes against humanity and his role in Vichy, which are too politically delicate and painful for Bouchareb to represent.

The film is bookended by 'Algerian Independence, July 5, 1962', cutting from the close-up of the lifeless face of the martyred Abdelkader on 17 October 1961, to newsreel footage of Algerian celebrations of independence, paralleling the footage of VE Day at the beginning of the film, seventeen years earlier. *Outside the Law* (2010) therefore insists didactically and iconographically on the situation of the Algerian War of Independence at the intersection with the dominant memorialisation of World War Two, drawing direct parallels between Europe's liberation from Nazi Germany and Algeria's Independence Day, putting into dialogue different regimes of power, violence and resistance, exposing the interwoven threads of French, European and Algerian history (Rothberg, 2006).

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Figure 42: Paralleling the opening newsreel footage of French liberation from Nazi Germany, *Outside the Law* (2010) establishes a final connection between the end of WW2 and Algerian Independence. Courtesy of StudioCanal.

5.4 Conclusion

Memories of colonial histories are enlivened by more popular representations of World War Two, as they are imaginatively reconstituted at the intersection with iconographies of Nazism and the Holocaust, Vichy France, and Allied combat, working to make peripheral histories of colonial North Africa uncomfortably proximate and accessible to Western centres. In drawing upon Rothberg's (2006) established theory of

multidirectional memory, and Derridean (1994) concepts of haunting, this chapter contributes to and advances conversations around memorialisation of French colonial history (Stora, 2001; Cole, 2010; Higbee, 2013; Stoler, 2016), by foregrounding the ways in which the popular postcolonial, exemplified by these particular films, opens up new and different ways of communicating minority histories. Durmelat and Swamy (2011: 5) write that "recounting, shaping, and circulating that [first] generation's stories and memories play a crucial role in contemporary negotiations and conflicts over the place and role of their descendants within France." As outlined in the previous chapter, exclusion and belonging are central to these films, and this chapter has further demonstrated, in line with Durmelat and Swamy (2011), that memory is key to narrating the desire for place, emerging 'multidirectionally' and 'hauntingly' within and beyond the boundaries of France in various national and global processes and events.

This can be seen in *Days of Glory* (2006), in which the (re)appropriation of the Hollywood combat genre results in the French experience of the Second World War being haunted by ghostly traces of colonial violence, whilst Algerian independence spectrally looms throughout *Free Men* (2011). Furthermore, *Outside the Law* (2010) draws explicit parallels between German fascism and French colonialism, as well as between the French resistance and the FLN. In doing so, all three films open up alternative histories by insisting that memories of Algeria be seen and produced through 'multiple forms of cross-referencing' (Silverman, 2008: 417). This kind of memorialisation approaches these events as 'proximate histories of violence', as opposed to separate and competing memory claims.

The cinematic imagination therefore empowers memory-making in its endeavour to contest forms of national amnesia, in drawing together strands of history that had previously been considered separate. The films hybrid engagement with multiple histories and cinematic conventions function, to borrow from Ashcroft et al (2002), to shoot back to the coloniser in their own language, making claims to history and space by subverting and unsettling them. The circulation of these memories is therefore part of a larger claim to belong in a Republic that does not fully recognise its Maghrebi-French subjects as full citizens. The films question and decentre the fixity and universality of French national identity, and contest rigid notions of French citizenship in order to create space for new forms of belonging that transcend and transgress national boundaries. With these claims to belong come ghosts, spectral traces of violent histories that refuse

to be put to rest, and which, if postcolonial belonging is to be achieved, must be 'learned to live with' (Derrida, 1994: xviii). These films therefore represent the sacrifice for a future that has yet to be realised, encouraging further consideration of the postcolonial present, and demonstrate the power of incorporating the popular into postcolonial cinema to not just re-present colonial pasts, but to imagine and re-constitute postcolonial futures. However, in appropriating and relying on popular gangster, soldier and spy genres to reinvigorate Algerian memory, the films inevitably privilege men in the endeavour to memorialise colonial histories and assert the North African immigrant's place in France. This tension is the focus of the following chapter.

Chapter Six

Popular Postcolonial Masculinities: Gangsters, Soldiers and Spies

6.1 Introduction

The mourning of the Souni family patriarch, killed at the hands of French soldiers in Setif 1945, by youngest son Said is a salient message about who is important in *Outside the Law* (2011). As Said rushes home amidst the chaos of the Setif massacre, he finds his father lying dead at the door to the family home. In a short but intimate scene, framed in a close-up shot, Said cradles his father's head pleading with him not to die. This contrasts sharply with the way in which Said neglects to grieve for the lifeless and bloodied bodies of his nameless and silent sisters who lie dead inside the house. The first sister lies slumped against a wall at the top of the stairs, her face darkened and anonymised by the lack of light, with the red of blood at the centre of the image as evidence of the brutality, whilst the second lies on the carpet in the next room. He passes them with no more than a glance, to find his distraught mother on the balcony at the back of the house. In contrast to her daughters, she *does* matter and is important to the film, though not as a character with agency but reduced to one of national allegory: she is the Mother of the nation, and serves solely to protect her sons, guard Algerian tradition, and keep the nation safe in exile.

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Figure 43: Intimately close camerawork shows *Outside the Law's* (2010) Said Souni grieving for his dead Father, cradling his head in his hands. Courtesy of StudioCanal.

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Figure 44: The anonymous daughter of *Outside the Law's* (2010) Souni family lies brutally murdered and ignored, her face darkened by the lack of light in the hallway whilst the blood on the wall behind her attracts the eye at the centre of the shot. Courtesy of StudioCanal.

The sidelined Algerian women are representative, as Donadey (2016) has recently argued, of the masculinist narrative of *Outside the Law* (2010), and I would argue by extension, *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Free Men* (2011) which ignore and marginalise women in similar ways. However, whilst Donadey (2016) provides a good account of how women are silenced with the help of masculinist film genre in *Outside the Law* (2010), she does not attend in more detail to what *kinds* of masculinities are at play. Therefore, this chapter builds upon the arguments made in Chapter Five, where it was argued that the films position memories of Algeria in close proximity to popular Anglo-American histories of World War Two, in order to think here about how they also draw upon and combine Hollywood masculine genre 'types' with the specific production of masculinities in (post)colonial France and Algeria. Before I go any further, I will define what I mean by masculinity, and how I intend to use it in the chapter, and secondly, contextualise the representation of these masculinities within their release between the years 2006 and 2011.

Masculinities are unfixed, unstable and contested across different spaces and temporalities. This has been well established within studies that consider gendered identities as socially and culturally constituted (Connell, 1995; Kimmel, 1996; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Horschelmann and van Hoven, 2005; Gorman-Murray and

Hopkins, 2016). Connell's (1995) concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' has been a key inspiration for this work, and places emphasis on the actual patterns of practices amongst men that foster sustained male dominance over women. Meanwhile, hegemonic masculinity relies not only on its subordination of women, but on a hierarchical relationship with other men and other marginalised masculinities (such as homosexual men, and men of colour). The 'global normative' (Connell, 1995) was considered to be white, middle class and heterosexual. Gorman-Murray (2008: 368) neatly articulates the heart of the term:

"While varying with geographical and historical contingencies, hegemonic masculinity is the ideal style of masculine identity which legitimizes patriarchal relations between men and women. At the same time, hegemonic masculinity defines a range of subordinate and marginalized masculine identities".

Responding to a range of criticisms of 'hegemonic masculinity', such as it's a-spatiality which Gorman-Murray (2008) alludes to above by introducing the dependence of masculinities on geography, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) recognise the need to consider hegemonic masculinity's continual state of change, and of particular interest to me, the ways in which subordinated or marginalised masculinities can 'influence and challenge dominant forms' (Connell and Messerschmit, 2005).

In relation to this self-reflexive critique, a number of scholars of masculinity identify the ways in which hegemonic masculinities are being transformed through the 'selective incorporation' of elements from subordinated and marginalised masculinities, what Bridges and Pascoe (2014) have referred to as 'hybrid masculinities'. Whilst useful in terms of further highlighting the gendered, sexualised, and racialised power dynamics between men, this body of work does not pay significant attention to the cultural *re*-appropriation, in which typically marginalised masculinities draw upon and adapt traits and codes associated with hegemonic masculinities. Therefore, in developing the argument of the previous chapter, here I will contend that Maghrebi-French masculinities are articulated and constituted with race, colonial spaces, and hegemonic white masculinities, exemplified cinematically by some Hollywood male genre 'types' (Dawson, 1994; Krutnik, 2006; Eberwein, 2007), namely the soldier, the gangster and the spy.

In order to contextualise these approaches to male characters in the films, it is important to consider that the films were released amidst growing tensions in the French banlieues. As mentioned in Chapter Four, language used by Nicolas Sarkozy around the 2005 riots, just prior to the release of Days of Glory (2006), was used to refer to rioters as 'racaille' (scum), and called for the banlieues to be 'cleaned with a power hose' to rid them of the 'gangrene' that was mostly non-white and 'violent' young men (bbc.co.uk Timeline: French Riots 2005). In October 2005, the death of two young boys in a Parisian suburb after being chased by police, sparked these riots across French cities. The boys hid in an electricity substation after 'instinctively' fleeing police on the way home from a football match, and were accidentally electrocuted to death (The Guardian, May 2015). Three weeks of violence (Mucchielli, 2009) ensued in protest at the deaths, in which images of burning cars and buildings, and young men of the banlieue clashing with police, consistently rolled on television screens in France and beyond. Dubbed the 'French Intifada' (Hussey, 2014), media narratives intersected with Islamophobic discourse, conflating young male anger with Islamic 'uprising'. Tarr's (1995; 2004; 2005) work on beur masculinities in cinema, has highlighted the perceived need to 'tread carefully' in representing "disempowered masculinity", that seeks to make beur men more 'culturally visible' in French society. In situating these men in their historical contexts, the films Days of Glory (2006), Outside the Law (2010) and Free Men (2011) historicise the aforementioned troubled relationship between the French Republic and its male beur youth, and in drawing on Hollywood masculine types to do so, they represent a shift in cinematic approach to make beur men more visible. The point of highlighting this is not to justify or celebrate masculinist violence, nor to apologise for or centre men any further by minimalising or silencing Maghrebi-French women, but to situate these films and their masculinist narratives in context. Furthermore, it is important to consider that the films draw upon a temporally complex array of masculinist histories, codes and iconographies. And whilst historical Hollywood representations work to provide an alternative lens on recent conflicts in French cities, there remain temporal ambiguities in bringing together these seemingly disparate paradigms of gender. That is to say, whilst it is clear who or what is being disrupted and empowered through the films, it is less clear when.

As Donadey (2016) has further pointed out, despite there being a significant amount of work (for example Higbee, 2013; Segarra, 2014) on *Outside the Law* (2010), as well as on *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Free Men* (2011), little to no attention has been paid to their

gender politics despite the important change of approach described above, and the volatile societal contexts in which this change has taken place. This chapter contributes to and extends Donadey's (2016) intervention, to provide a more detailed, nuanced and much needed conversation about the masculinities constituted in the films. Maghrebi-French masculinities will be shown to be multiple: damaged and violent; infantilised and boyish; transitional and curious. Through detailed insights into three particular characters, one from each film, this chapter will demonstrate that Maghrebi-French men variously embody and reject hegemonic masculinities within the colonial and anti-colonial spaces of the films, attaining masculinities that ultimately refuse simplistic classification as either hegemonic (Hollywood) or marginalised (Algerian/Muslim).

6.2 Anti-Colonial Gangster

"Violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect"

(Fanon, 1961: 94).

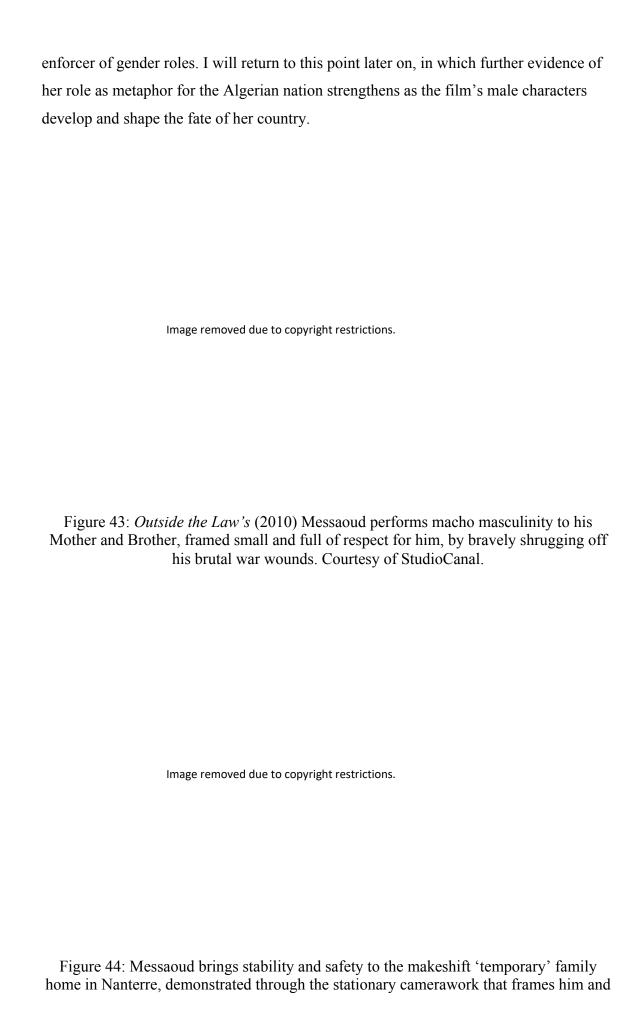
"You know, I've often thought that the gangster and the artist are the same in the eyes of the masses. They are admired and hero-worshipped, but there is always present underlying wish to see them destroyed at the peak of their glory."

(Maurice in *The Killing* 1956, dir. Stanley Kubrick).

As demonstrated in Chapter Four, spaces of incarceration are key vectors through which *Outside the Law's* (2010) male protagonists are transformed. Abdelkader, according to his little brother Said, has become 'tough in prison'; Said, according to older brother Messaoud is 'a man now' in the Nanterre bidonville; whilst Messaoud returns from war in Indochina a commander in the French army, complete with a brutal-looking missing eye. Whilst Chapter Four investigated the imaginative reconstitution of space in the films, which worked to insist on the place of Maghrebi-French people in France, Chapter Five developed this argument to consider the ways in which memories of Algeria, through the appropriation of combat and gangster film genres, are interwoven with popular and dominant narratives of European history. These connections are further established and identified here, as for *Outside the Law's* (2010) Messaoud, a commander in the French Army in Indochina, and a central figure in the FLN's war against France, his masculine identity lies at, and rests on, these productive and tense intersections between soldier, anti-colonial combatant, and gangster. Both the gangster and the anti-

colonialist, in contrast to the 'controlled' and 'heroic' soldier (Dawson, 1994), are defined by their positions within contested social environments where criminal activity and violence are crucial to the pursuit of transgressive and empowering versions of masculinity (Fanon, 1961; Gardaphé, 2006). Key to the constitution of Messaoud's masculinity in *Outside the Law* (2010) is the reframing and resignification of racialised colonial masculinities and anti-colonialist violence, through the lens of the American gangster genre, a combination which cuts through potentially negative discourses around the former, through popular cultural nostalgia for the latter (the reception of which I deal with in Chapter Seven).

Prior to becoming an FLN 'gangster' however, Messaoud serves as a soldier in the French Army in its war to retain Indochina, rising to the rank of Commander. A humiliating defeat for the French, Vietnamese independence in 1954 signalled the beginning of the end for the French Empire (Stora, 2004), and in the film, forces Messaoud to return to his family, not in Algeria but to their new home in the Nanterre bidonville in France. Injured and captured by the Viet Cong, Messaoud is reunited with his mother and brothers, arriving at the family home in his military uniform, and brandishing a severe wound where his left eye once was. Said is impressed by his uniform, medals and the phallic insignia indicating his military rank, and asks after his eye, to which Messaoud responds casually exclaiming, "just the war", maintaining a tough persona in public, framed large and strong in relation to his much smaller brother and mother. His mother, feeling insecure and unprotected by her youngest son, the 'bandit' Said from whom she refuses to accept money, his presence back in her life refortifies the family unit. Inside the 'temporary' hut the family call home, Messaoud and his mother are framed sitting at the table in a static shot, in which the camera does not move around or cut away, remaining continuously on mother and son, reflecting the stability and security brought to the domestic space by Messaoud. She tells him, "you're the oldest brother. I'd like to have grandchildren. There's a girl here, a nice, charming, kind girl. If you like her, we'll let God decide", gently instructing him to fulfil his masculine role as a father and husband, and retain the expected gender norms through the social disruption and displacement brought by war and exile. In addition to commenting on the masculine roles be fashioned out for the Algerian man, it is also important to highlight, in line with Donadey's (2016) critique of the film, in that instead of representing the many Algerian women who fought and participated in the war of independence (see Vince, 2015), she is reduced to the upholder of traditions, and



his Mother, as they discuss Messaoud's duty to fulfil his role as eldest son through marriage to a woman. Courtesy of StudioCanal.

However, in spite of his mother's efforts to preserve the traditional family unit, and thus maintain Messaoud's normative position as masculine provider and protector of a wife and child, their displacement and the deepening and violent conflict with the French threatens this particular route to securing his masculine identity. MacMaster (2012: 36) highlights this 'crisis for Algerian male virility', caused by the 'temporary' destabilisation of traditional gender roles brought on by the scale and ferocity of the violence. These challenges do not prevent Messaoud from marrying Zohra, the woman of which his mother spoke so highly, nor do they prevent from having children, as Zohra bears him a son shortly after their marriage. His commitment to the FLN and his brother Abdelkader, who leads the fight in France, does however impede on his abilities to maintain a relationship with his wife and new born son. The first intrusion of the violence of the war can be seen at their wedding, in which the police raid the bidonville, prompting an angry outburst from Messaoud. Most telling with regards to the tension between family and masculine virility however, is Abdelkader's rallying of male support for his cause after the police attack them. He appeals directly to the men, deliberately tapping into their anxieties about being able to 'defend their women and children' from the French. He succeeds, and the following day scores of men sign up to the FLN pledging to pay the 'revolutionary tax' and to fight.

Fighting is not simply a way of defending and restoring the conservative values of the family, and the masculine role of protector that is dependent on its stability, but for Fanon (1961) it is fundamental to recovering the male identity lost to colonialism. Violent resistance is inevitable, and it does not simply emerge due to a rationale desire for nationhood, but from the male body itself, from 'the tonicity of the muscles' (Seshadri-Crooks, 2002: 91). In order to maintain focus on this Fanon-inspired cause, Messaoud's brother Abdelkader emotionlessly dictates to him that there is no room for family in this war, contradicting his earlier rallying cry to the fragile virility of impoverished Algerian men. The tense relationship between Messaoud's seemingly incongruous roles as fighter and father can be seen as he reflects deeply on this incompatibility, returning home to see his son, who is beginning to walk. Figure 47 frames Messaoud, Zohra, and his son outside from inside the doorway of their home, in which Messaoud stands tall, partially out of shot due to his sheer size. The shot collapses

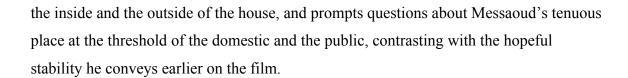


Figure 45: Messaoud stands at the threshold of the public/private space in a rare interaction with his family, reflecting on his failure as the traditional male provider, the collapsed shot of inside and outside creating tension in the gendered binary and demonstrating the fraught relationship Messaoud maintains in-between those spaces.

Courtesy of StudioCanal.

As a gangster genre film, or one that heavily draws on its classic style, iconography and conventions, this tension is important for the 'identity-challenging loss' (Gardaphé, 2006) Messaoud suffers. This sense of loss, specifically emasculation or as Fanon (1961) interprets it, castration, is recognised as an important force that propels both the anticolonialist's transformation from 'victim to sheer force of power' (Seshadri-Crooks, 2002), and the gangsters' strive to exert power and control over his life. Due to this 'temporary' barrier to Messaoud's virile role as masculine protector, he must, by the conventions of the gangster genre and Fanonian conceptions of the 'new Algerian man', seek to rectify this. As one of the earliest lines from the ultimate cinema gangster, Don Vito Corleone, in *The Godfather* (1972) stipulates:

"A man who doesn't spend time with his family can never be a real man".

The gendered concerns that characterise Messaoud situate him, and *Outside the Law* (2010) more generally, within a broader cultural paradigm of masculinities, working to disavow persistent sexual anxieties that are pronounced in colonial Algeria, and one that finds parallels in the real-world context of the contemporary banlieue described earlier. What Fanon (1961) describes as the 'muscular tension' fostered by the 'native man's' emasculation and masculinised humiliation, must be 'released' via 'expressive action' (Seshadri-Crooks, 2002), and to resist this call to arms would result in further 'cowardice and dishonour' (Nagel, 1998). The 'libidinal core' of anti-colonial violence and resistance thus breaks down the conventional codes of morality, legitimated by colonialisms assault on the 'gendered norms of the body' (Seshadri-Crooks, 2002). Returning to Messaoud then, if as Don Corleone suggests, he 'can't be a real man', how is he to overcome this? As an anti-colonialist, Algerian 'gangster', 'of humble origins and stylish dress', wielding his power with 'sexuality and guns', and situated in a 'racially charged context' (Gardaphé, 2006), the second half of the film is overwhelmed by hyper-masculine and spectacular displays of violence to the point of excess.

However, Messaoud's public displays of violence are not only motivated by a libidinal charge to assuage internal angst about his male identity, but rather it is motivated by a basic loyalty to his brother Abdelakder, by desires to avenge the violence done to his family, and perhaps in his most important departure from the gangster, to achieve independence for his country and therefore secure the future of his young son. The saturation of his sequences of gun fights with gangster iconography then, in this particular postcolonial context of Algeria, is inseparable from the power dynamics of the relationship between coloniser and colonised. Crucially in this case, the French police in *Outside the Law* (2010) are not typical American cops, but are specifically empowered by the right-wing-influenced and government sanctioned terrorist organisation The Red Hand (discussed in Chapter Five), who are charged with eliminating the FLN in Paris.

Figure 46: Messaoud confesses his brutally violent killing spree to Mother Algeria on her deathbed, revealing his fragility in intimate scenes which show him close-up, contrasting with the huge size of his hands, his brutal side, demonstrated through his missing eye, hidden and darkened by the lighting of the shot. Courtesy of StudioCanal.

It is the combination of these multiple justifications for violence that drags Messaoud into a spiral of violence and which leads him to confess his guilt to his mother. As previously mentioned, the Souni matriarch serves solely to support her sons, and in the sequence in which Messaoud confesses to her, as a silent repository to both forgive and justify his efforts on her behalf. Kneeling at her deathbed, where she lies dying of tuberculosis, he cries:

"I've killed people. A lot of people. With these hands. I strangled them. Mother... I strangled them. I was forced to do it. God is my witness. To give my son a better life. I did it all for him. I did it all for him. And, since then, I only know death. I only know death, Mother. Forgive me, Mother".

The close-up of Messaoud's increasingly emotional face, the brutality of his missing eye hidden by the darkness on one side of the shot, encourages audience empathy with him, with both the dark and the light, the handsome and the ugly, sides of his face that complicate his violence. The fairly simple contrast of dark and light feeds into the ways in which he is framed in the spectacular gun fights. It first of all contrasts the 'light' in which Messaoud is shrouded in the earlier scenes in his military uniform, and the

darkness of the sequences of gangster violence described below. Not only is the sparse use of light common in the gangster genre film, particularly when representing violence, but it also signals Messaoud's own transformation: from respected soldier in the light, to troubled gangster in the dark.

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.

Figure 47: Messaoud excessively fights his way out of the police station with a gun in both hands, in an over-the-top performance of masculinity, and disavowal of any anxieties about it. Courtesy of StudioCanal.

Seen in Figure 49, Messaoud wields a pistol in each hand as he shoots his way out of the police station, after killing the chief of police. The over-the-top and excessive performance, in which he is able to single-handedly take on the police station, is made possible through the gangster narrative and conventions. Nowhere is this more the case than in the final shootout of the film. After smuggling automatic weapons into France from Germany, the police are informed of their location and move to ambush Messaoud and the other FLN fighters. Overwhelmed by their numbers and gunpower, many of them are killed or forced to retreat, leaving Messaoud to face down the police largely by himself with nothing but a handgun. Standing in-between two period cars pockmarked by bullet holes, framed again in the dark of night, yet faintly illuminated by the glow of car headlights, Messaoud looks stylishly like a Hollywood gangster, and typically strong and brave, traits associated with both gangster masculinities and anti-colonial masculinities. Again, in remaining true to the gangster narrative, this proves to be Messaoud's downfall, as he is shot as he eventually retreats with Abdelkader, dying in

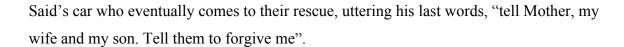


Figure 48: Messaoud's final epic shootout with Faivre's police results in his death, in scenes that too resemble the American gangster. Lighting and props further add to the iconographic masculinity that informs Messaoud's performative disavowal of the fragility of his masculinity. Courtesy of StudioCanal.

As Maurice in Stanley Kubrick's *The Killing* (1956) suggests in the epigraph at the beginning of this section, the gangster inevitably meets his downfall in living a violent life, both his heroic and anti-heroic traits central to the gangster character. Messaoud's death however, unlike the gangsters which is typically a result of his self-indulgent and individualistic rise to power, is an act of unselfish sacrifice to protect his brother, and as he himself alludes to at several points, to create a free Algeria for his only son. We can therefore locate *Outside the Law's* (2010 representation of violence, through the particular character of Messaoud, at the nexus of anti-colonialism and Algerian nationalism, and their relation to a masculinist identity formation that is inspired by the American gangster genre. Whilst such a framing of violence in the film works to contextualise and empower the beur youth of the contemporary French banlieues, it further functions to situate both that contemporary unrest and French-Algerian colonial history within a popular genre that has historically reflected anxieties about, and transformations of, masculinities (Gardaphé, 2006).

6.3 Infantilised Colonial Soldier

"The soldier hero has proved to be one of the most durable and powerful forms of idealised masculinity within Western cultural traditions since the time of the Ancient Greeks"

(Dawson, 1994: 1).

Whereas *Outside the Law's* (2010) Messaoud's 'macho' masculinity is never really in question, supported and aided by its anti-colonialist and gangster framing, *Days of Glory's* (2006) Said must set out to prove himself as a man from the very start. For Jamel Debbouze's small and boyish character, the army and the battlefield function as spaces of transition for his masculinity, a process of initiation in which he hopes to go from being a boy of "total poverty" (as Said himself claims) in Algeria to a man of France. The transformative possibilities of the army as a 'rite of passage' however, are not realised for Said, and his journey is in fact one largely of a failure of passage, of not-yet becoming a man. In his failed transformation, Said occupies an ambiguous role in the films' narrative, situated between colonial discourses of the feminised and infantilised Algerian, and those of the innocent and boyish soldier of World War Two.

Work on soldier masculinities (Dawson, 1994; Eberwein, 2007; Donald and McDonald, 2011) has suggested that various kinds of war films represent 'manly and unmanly behaviours', codes and values that serve to both instruct and influence masculinities. For Dawson (1994), for example, soldier 'heroes' are formed and imagined through what he refers to as 'adventures' of war, in which 'military virtues' such as aggression, strength, courage and endurance can be attained. Boys 'fascinated' with and 'excited' by war have for long consumed and shared stories and images of war "through which their own masculinity could be imaginatively secured" (Dawson, 1994: 4). Gendered types that are socially constructed, not just in film, are variously produced to encourage emulation whilst others are to be avoided, or perhaps more accurately are presented as the opposite to the 'ideal'. For men at war, the army serves as an 'initiation rite' (Mahdi et al, 1987), in which men can learn to lead and be 'manly' or fail and be 'unmanly' (Donald and McDonald, 2011), resulting in a 'failed' masculinity which is subsequently equated with femininity.

However, as will be interrogated here, systems of gendering that are at stake in the films are inflected with racialised regimes of power. For example, Sinha (1995) examines the

'multiple axes of domination and subordination', in which gender was a key site of power where colonial rule was established in British India, arguing that white-British masculinity was tied to and dependent on the 'provincial representation' of an 'effeminate' Indian masculinity. Nevertheless, popular and academic discourses around war and war films suggest that war serves to define manhood itself (Dawson, 1994), and thus investigate the role of military institutions and their cultural representation in shaping Western masculine behaviours and identities. Situated in a specific colonial context however, and released in France at a time of perceived 'crisis' for beur masculinities, Days of Glory (2006), particularly through the character of Said, opens up possibilities to interrogate more closely the constitution of contemporary beur and Maghrebi-French masculinities at the intersection of colonialism and World War Two, and how this is received by English-speaking Western audiences online (see Chapter Seven). In so doing, this contributes to and extends scholarship on colonial soldiers (Levine, 1998; Smith, 2004; Streets, 2004) to consider what the cinematic synthesis of gendered colonial discourses and popular combat genre in Days of Glory (2006), does for the framing of beur and Maghrebi-French masculinities in France and beyond.

The opening scene of Days of Glory (2006) sets up the narrative as one of masculine opportunity, as the local caïd walks through Said's small Algerian hometown encouraging 'the men out' to enlist in the Free French Army to come to the aid of France and 'liberate her'. The army, and the war, is an opportunity for the boys of the village to become men, via the saviour and protection of a mother in distress, France. Some have noted the film's representation of the soldiers voluntary enlisting, rather than being conscripted (Hargreaves, 2007a; Coly, 2008; Higbee, 2013), critiquing the film for its omission of "the forced and often violent mobilisation of colonial African troops" (Coly, 2008: 98). That is not to say soldiers did not enlist, but that Bouchareb chooses, for a variety of reasons, to focus on the handful of personal stories and men who wanted to fight for France. Nevertheless, it is surprising that scholarly critiques have not further explored this decision, and its impact on the narratives of masculinity. Having the colonial soldiers enlist, rather than being coercively conscripted, eschews the narrative of the Algerian soldier as emasculated victim, thus potentially providing more empowered or alternative historical role models, whilst displacing historical (and contemporary) discourses of Arab masculinity (see Sinha, 1995, and Shaheen, 2001).

Responding to the call-to-arms is Said, framed solitarily in a darkened alleyway separate to the long line of eager men that follow the caïd, demonstrating his isolation from the male group. He walks slowly without any real conviction, towards the off-screen group of men who can be heard in the distance, when he is overtaken by a young eager boy, rushing keenly to join the commotion. Here, already, there is a question asked not just of his masculinity and his 'manliness', which might have been expressed through a macho performance of brave and enthusiastic enlistment, but of his maturity and adulthood as the young boy sweeps past him. This sense of infantilisation is further emphasised as his mother calls him back, pleading with him not to go to war, concerned that he will not return safely to her like his grandfather, who presumably fought for France in World War One. Figure 53 shows Said and his mother facing one another, his small stature and boyish face overshadowed by his larger and imposing mother. His response to her, "don't worry about me, mother. I can manage", signals his conscious desire to 'become a man' by going to war, to prove not just his manliness but his successful transition to adulthood, to independence from his mother as a man of France. This introduction to the character sets up the expectation that Said is going to struggle in the theatre of war, resonating with many First and Second World War narratives that audiences are accustomed with in western film about the plight of young, boyish and untrained men being sent off to die on the battlefields of Europe. However, the tragic futility of young men fighting wars abroad takes on different meanings here, as the transition from childhood to adulthood is inflected by French colonialism and its emasculation of the Algerian man, and his determination to reclaim and reassert his masculinity.

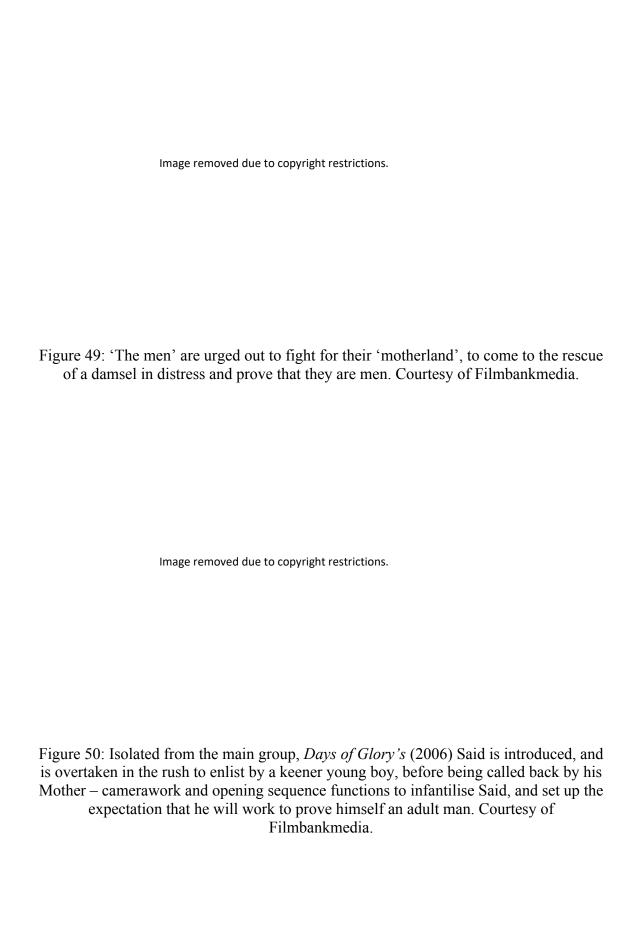


Figure 51: Said is small and boyish looking, and nowhere is that more evident than in this shot of his large, stern and imposing Mother facing him. He tells her to let him leave, to prove himself. Courtesy of Filmbankmedia.

The first stage of Said's 'transition' from the mummy's boy to soldier man is a test of his 'manliness' at the training camp in Italy, in which the protagonists are first brought together. Whilst the groups' marksman, Messaoud, demonstrates his phallic strength with the expert use of a rifle, Said makes a calamitous attempt to take the grenade from his shirt as instructed by Sergeant Martinez, detonating it in the process. Said has a naïve and boyish look on his face, as Martinez throws the grenade away before it explodes at a safe distance, and then follows up by hitting Said in the groin with the butt of his gun. His failure to simply take a small grenade is juxtaposed with the calm and controlled handling of the huge weapon that Messaoud fires, and whilst Messaoud effortlessly passes the test of his soldier masculinity with flying colours, Said fails miserably. The 'test of masculine endurance' (Donald and MacDonald, 2011) for Said, and the soldiers in general, comes not in training but in their first battle. Taking cover from machine-gun fire, the platoon led by pied-noir Sergeant Martinez are pinned down behind a rock. After exchanging a look with his Sergeant, Said takes the weapon that threatened his masculinity in training, the grenade, bites the pin out and successfully kills the German machine-gunner, enabling the men to progress and eventually win the battle. Under the watchful eye of his new father-figure Martinez, Said begins to overcome that particular threat to his soldier masculinity: the inability to wield a weapon. His demonstration of masculine endurance leads to him replacing Ali, killed in the same battle whilst shielding his pied-noir superior, as Sergeant Martinez's man-servant. I will come back to the importance of this relationship, between colonised man Said and pied-noir Sergeant Martinez, in how Said (and Martinez) negotiates his masculinity.

However, I first of all want to examine how Said responds to his heroics on the battlefield. The soldiers' reward for their victory in Italy is to 'go home', to France, as discussed in Chapter Four, where the men aboard the ship passionately sing the national anthem. In Provence, the men celebrate with the local population, where Messaoud meets Irene, as also discussed in Chapter Four, and Said boasts of his part in their victorious battle to a young white French woman. The film continues to play Messaoud and Said off each other, as earlier their differing abilities to handle weaponry were highlighted, whilst in this sequence juxtaposing Messaoud's virility as he strikes up a relationship with Irene, with Said's obliviousness to the advances of another woman. Said and the woman's brief conversation is framed in a series of reverse high and low angle shots that position the French woman above Said, perched on the back of a truck, whilst the high angled shot frames Said as small and lower than the white woman, emphasising his relatively small size and accentuating the power relations between the two of them. Said boyishly boasts of the way he single-handedly killed the machinegunning Germans, after which she grabs his hand looking into his eyes with a smile on her face as he tells her "I free a country, it's my country". She responds flirtatiously, "your country's all you like?", leaning in towards him. He completely misses it however, responding formally, "Inch' Allah, we'll beat Germany. Thank you very much". She is left looking disappointed and rejected as he leaves her. Thus, as Sinha (1995) and Puar (2007) highlight, we can see through Said that racialised hierarchies and power in the colonial system are constructed along axes of gender, as well as sexuality. It is expected in the combat film that men, particularly when liberating a place or coming 'home', will be seen eagerly chasing women. Said's awkward exchange with the woman however, in revealing the racial power dynamics at play, works beyond and denies historical and contemporary orientalist discourses in which Arab and Muslim masculinities are represented as sexually deviant and which prey on white women. The 'failed' encounter does however, pose a further threat to the masculine soldier hero to which Said aspires, with all of its virility, strength and heterosexuality, not because he *cannot* win a woman, but that he lacks the *desire* to do so.

Figure 52: Said, framed small by the high angle shot, is naively ignorant of the French woman's flirtatious behaviour in *Days of Glory* (2006). This scene functions to further represent Said boyishly, but also works against Orientalist stereotypes of the sexually deviant Arab. Courtesy of Filmbankmedia.

This therefore brings me back to the way in which Said's masculinity is forged primarily in relation to Sergeant Martinez, as opposed to women. Sedgwick's (1985) work on what she calls 'homosocial desire' influentially posits that men develop supportive and masculine reinforcing relationships with one another through the shared desire for a woman. Whilst there is an absence of a woman in the two men's triangle, their close relationship earns Said the nickname 'Aicha' from his peers, as they mock him for being the Sergeant's pet. Said therefore himself represents the feminised object in this relationship.

Said is feminised and infantilised by his fellow soldiers, as Messaoud taunts him as he enters their sleeping quarters. "Here's Aicha! How is she?", Messaoud mocks, cheered on by the rest of the group, whilst Said responds telling him that an 'American's probably banging' his 'Marseille girl', deflecting his own feminisation onto Messaoud's subordination to the white hegemonic masculinity of the American soldier, further feeding into the films tense relationship with Hollywood combat genre. However, Messaoud responds telling him "it doesn't matter. You know why? Here... you're the one we want, Aicha. Our beautiful Aicha. She takes care of us", whilst stroking his neck and attempting to grope him. Said reacts violently by putting a knife to his throat (see

Figure 55), threatening to kill him if people keep calling him Aicha, declaring to them he is 'not a child'. The shot mirrors that of the one above, in which Said is unaware of the French woman's romantic advances, as he is positioned below Messaoud looking up. The response that he is 'not a child', rather than 'not a girl', reflects his feelings of insecurity about being infantilised, and his anxieties about being able to fend for himself as an independent man. His violent reaction to the physically imposing Messaoud is explosive and impulsive, and a way of proving that he can behave like a 'man' despite his small size, boyish looks and supposed reliance on his white superior.

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Figure 53: Said's infantilisation and feminisation pose threats to the development or 'transition' of his masculinity, and responds violently to Messaoud's mocking advances, the low-angled camerawork here functioning ironically to frame Said much smaller than the physically imposing Messaoud. Courtesy of Filmbankmedia.

Despite the taunts, Said remains close to Martinez. And, as discussed in Chapter Four, his relationship with the Sergeant reveals the 'fear' and 'revulsion' of being 'contaminated' by Said the Arab. The scene further reveals the ways in which Martinez's white settler, or pied noir, masculinity is implicated in and dependent on the subordination of other masculinities, built on a differentiation from the Arab man, a dichotomy which Said threatens and destabilises by questioning his whiteness. Martinez is not only made vulnerable by his racialised 'dirtiness', but this at the intersection with his masculinity, demonstrated as Said strikes a homosocial bond via both of their Arab Mothers, forcing Martinez to violently reject him, promising to kill him the next time he

mentions it. Said has not only failed, according to the genre, in an encounter with a woman, now he has failed to find a successful homosocial bonding arrangement through which he can make his masculinity more secure.

Martinez's reaction to anxieties about his white settler masculinity may also be an ominous sign of its decline. As has been demonstrated in Chapter Five, Days of Glory (2006) is haunted by the spectre of the Algerian War of Independence, after which hundreds of thousands of pied-noirs left Algeria for France (see Eldridge, 2010). Whilst there is not the scope in this thesis to fully explore pied-noir masculinities, it is clear that Martinez holds some importance for Said and his independence. The regiment are later ambushed in The Vosges mountains in north-east France, with Sergeant Martinez being critically injured in the process, and carried to the final battle by the other men, after Corporal Abdelkader assumes command. Said visits him in what is to be his deathbed, telling him: "I hope you die". After their previously mentioned disagreement in which Martinez rejected Said's attempt to connect via their shared ethnic heritage, Said is now able to break free of his master due to his injuries, and he is able to take his place alongside his brothers-in-arms in the final spectacle of the film. In doing so, he wields weaponry along with the other men in a series of close-up shots (see Figure 56) that excessively draw upon combat genre iconography, showing soldiers clutching and aiming their guns, disavowing any threats that may have endangered their soldier masculinity throughout the film, their phallic weaponry attesting to their manliness. Specifically at stake are Abdelkader's rejection by the French Army and therefore his need to prove himself (as discussed in Chapter Five), Messaoud's loss of Irene (as discussed in Chapter Four) and his supposed subordination to American men, and of course Said's feminisation and infantilisation by both his Algerian peers and French superiors.

Figure 54: Combat genre iconography is excessively used in final battle sequence of *Days of Glory* (2006), and for the small, infantile Said shots such as this function to disavow, temporarily, threats to his development as an adult man. Courtesy of Filmbankmedia.

In spite of this, in the end, Said's final framing is alongside Sergeant Martinez after he rushes to his bedside during the firefight with the German army. Concerned for his welfare, and in fear for his own life, Said dodges bullets and bombs to reach the house where Sergeant Martinez is lay dying in a bid to rescue him. In a futile attempt to carry him from the building, a rocket-launcher is fired at the room from close-range, killing them both. After trying to save his life, the pair are left dead side-by-side, their hands almost touching. 'Proving' himself during the final battle, Said's return to his racist Sergeant undoes the iconographic work above that begins to make his masculinity comply with what is expected of him at war, and in a combat genre film. At the same time, he shows a tenderness towards another man, which is permitted in the realms of war (Sedgwick, 1985), and it is this affection for him that effectively binds pied-noir and Algerian masculinity, and at this point in history, the infantilised Algerian man, represented by Said, fails to break free of his reliance on his master.

Thus, through Said, the film appropriates the masculine tropes of the combat genre in order to comment upon the central importance of the ways in which colonialism is gendered, the colonised man unable to break free of his dependence on the coloniser, unable to disavow threats to his masculinity and sexuality. Said's is a story about 'failed'

masculinity according to these codes, representing the 'unmanly' man that fails to lead, fails to become independent, fails to become a man, and therefore codes and values that are to be avoided rather than emulated (Donald and MacDonald, 2011). However, as has been demonstrated, Said's masculinity is distinct from the conventional combat film, as tied up in its (post)colonial context it represents a masculinity chained to its 'master', dependent on the white settler for approval.

6.4 Muslim Spy

"... during the intervening 'liminal' period, the state of the ritual subject (the 'passenger') is ambiguous; he passes through a realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state..."

(Turner, 1969: 94).

So far, the fusion of popular Hollywood genre with Algerian colonial histories has been seen to frame anti-colonial and colonised masculinities within the commonly recognised settings of the gangster and the combat film cultures, working to reframe beur and banlieue masculinities in the present, and as will be shown in Chapter Seven, disrupt existing popular masculinist representations of history. Whilst Messaoud's masculinity in *Outside the Law* (2010) revolves around and is supported by American gangster iconography, and *Days of Glory's* (2006) Said sets out to prove that he is worthy of being a man of France in the context of the army, *Free Men's* (2011) Younes inhabits a more ambiguous space of liminality, characterised by his location at the crossroads of conflicting cultural and political alternatives.

As outlined in Chapter Four, Younes' position in Paris as a young immigrant and apolitical trader functions to detach him from other Algerian men, from his connection to home, and from spaces of religion and tradition. His claim to be in the city only temporarily before 'going home' speaks to the initial 'in-betweenness' of the provisional wartime Algerian migrant, and the eventual permanence of these journeys. It is this in-betweenness of Younes' journey that I will develop here, in order to think about his masculine transition from naïve and immature hustler to committed and self-confident resistance fighter. In doing so, I will draw upon Turner's (1969) concept of liminality to conceptualise Younes' journey as one of masculine 'rite of passage', framed by curious relationships and spaces, and one that traverses different paths to those of the anti-

colonial gangster and colonised soldier to open up potential alternatives for the historicised beur masculinity at stake in these films.

After losing his job at a factory due to illness with tuberculosis, and therefore unable to carry out the manual labour associated with North African men on temporary work and residence permits in France (see Silverman, 2002), Younes resorts to selling clandestine goods on the black market. Writing home to his family in Algeria, narrated through an internal monologue, Younes sends money which he tells his parents was earned through his work at the factory. As he narrates the letter, the camera pans across family photographs on the wall around his flat. This short scene then functions to isolate Younes from both the 'traditional' masculine spaces of manual labour and the family unit, from the 'known' (Bonner, 2011), separating him from roles which might make his masculinity more stable and secure. He is still able to provide for his family through his informal employment, however this is interrupted by his arrest by the French police, which as has been described already in Chapter's Four and Five, thrusts him reluctantly into the world of the French Resistance and forces him to negotiate alternative routes to construct his identity. Unlike other masculine 'rites of passage' in which the liminal space is one of 'middle-class adventure' and associated with leisure (Phillips, 1997), Younes is involuntarily plunged into the unknown world of Vichy and resistance politics. Here a flexibility is demanded of him in order to both survive, and successfully 'transition' from a youthful boyishness characterised by naivety and immaturity to a manhood exemplified by a calm determination.

After his arrest and new role as double-agent, Younes returns to the café above which he lives, and sits quietly reflecting on his situation. He looks to an off-screen space to his right, where in a separate room a small group of Muslim men pray (see Figures 58 and 59). The camera cuts between them as he looks, working to separate Younes from them, in contradiction with his being racialised as a 'practising' Muslim by the police, and therefore positioned as an insider and native informer. Similarly to the ways in which he is separated from the North African men in Chapter Four, it is the spatial work of cinema that functions to detach Younes from the group of men through separate shots. Younes is positioned as an outsider looking in. Hopkins' (2006) work on Muslim masculinities in the UK has sought to contest dominant narratives of the Muslim man caught 'in-between cultures', in which they are defined by a conflict between the religious tradition of their

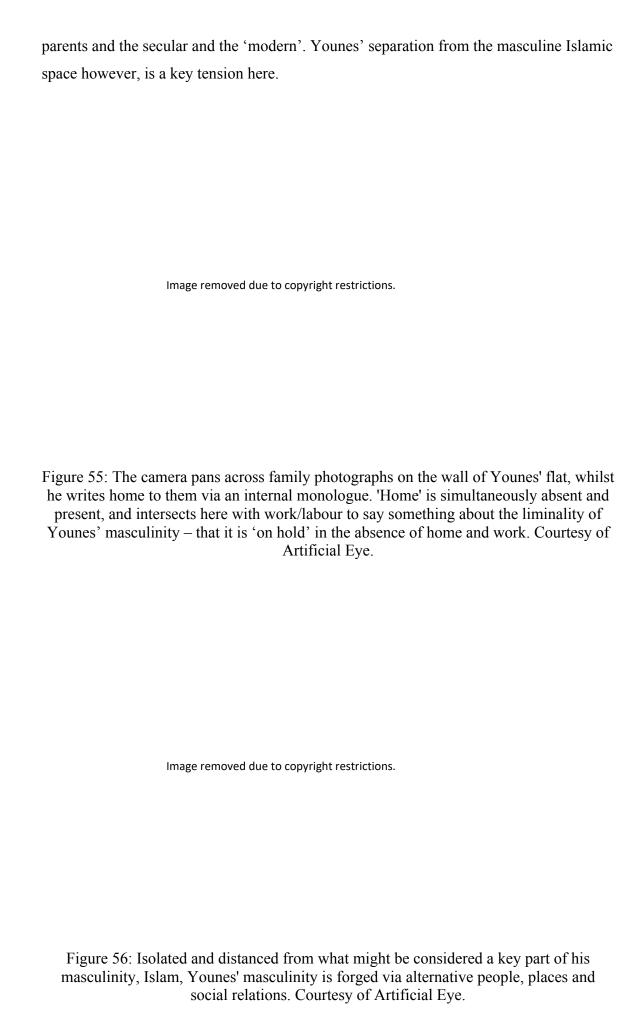


Figure 57: This close-up shot shows Younes looking at the Muslim men praying to his right, separated and isolated from them through the cuts which show what he is looking at - an outsider looking in. Courtesy of Artificial Eye.

Earlier declaring to his cousin Ali that his place in France is temporary, stating his intention to make his 'cash and go home', Younes goes to the Mosque for the first time, quietly and curiously walking around observing, watching, but never participating. He spies on the Director of the Mosque, Ben Ghabrit, at a distance, and voyeuristically gazes upon one of the Mosque's serving girls Leila as she washes, as well as the Mosque's singer Salim. The Mosque itself, described in Chapter Four as a space at the threshold of visibility and invisibility, and in Chapter Five as a space of resistance, is here a further space of liminality and curiosity for Younes, where he begins to find himself upon entry to a different world, and where he encounters the three characters mentioned above, his relationships with whom are negotiated alongside his masculinity. As described in Chapter Five, Leila is the primary driver of Younes' politicisation, as she introduces him to the political ideas of anti-fascism and anti-colonialism. He is however, lured into her political world by a desire for 'domestic conformity' (McDowell, 2002), something which has been disrupted by his separation from spheres of home and work. Unlike Days of Glory's (2006) Said then, who actively and consciously tries to prove his adult masculinity by being a good soldier in the army, Younes unwittingly becomes embroiled in a violent environment due to first of all being coerced by the police, but secondly through his pursuit of a heterosexual relationship. After her true identity as an

Algerian Communist in hiding named Wardi Slimane is revealed, and her eventual detention and execution, Younes must seek out and rely on other relationships in order to both simply survive and to construct his masculinity.

As is well established, men's construction of masculinity is not solely reliant on women but shaped importantly by other men (Sedgwick, 1985; Kimmel, 1996; Connell, 2005 and Messerschmidt, 2005; Hopkins, 2006; Nayak and Kehily, 2013). Whilst Said's masculinity, described previously, is constructed in relation to, and rests on approval by, the hegemonic masculinity represented by Sergeant Martinez, in a 'triangle' including Algerian Mothers and the French Motherland, Younes' relationship with a gay Jewish singer, Salim, is pivotal. Initially approaching the singer to sell him a musical instrument for his band, Younes later meets with Salim at the Andalusia Club where he performs. The nightclub works in parallel with the Mosque, in that the latter is the space where he pursues a heterosexual version of masculinity through Leila, and the former a meeting place where he is able to develop his platonic relationship with Salim more freely. Symbolically, the Andalusia is important as it feeds into the historical and geographical imaginary of the space 'in-between' Africa and Europe, Muslim, Jewish and Christian where peaceful existence between several cultures apparently flourished. Here, Younes is able to drink whisky for the first time, he sees Salim sing and dance, and watches on as he kisses and flirts with other women. To emphasise the point, whilst the other male characters explored in this chapter construct their masculine identities in more 'macho' settings such as the army, through acts of violence, and in relation to other heterosexual men, Younes' masculinity and sense of self is produced in relation to a homosexual Jewish man, to whom he looks for guidance in a strange new environment. As many scholars have noted, hegemonic conceptions of heterosexual masculinity have often been perceived to be organised around and constituted against homosexuality. That is to say, homophobia plays a role, or as Sedgwick (1985) argues is 'required', in producing heterosexual masculinities (Sedgwick, 1985; Connell, 1995; Flood, 2008; Barrett, 2016). Younes and Salim's relationship thus potentially transgresses the imprecise boundary between homosocial and homosexual, the 'platonic' and the 'sexual' (Sedgwick, 1985; Barrett, 2016).

Figure 58: This shot shows a nervous and reluctant Younes after shooting a Gestapo agent in the back to save another man, and is set between the spectacular car chase which sees his cousin Ali die bravely, and his more confident shooting of Omar. Courtesy of Artificial Eye.

Politicised by Leila at the Mosque, and transgressing boundaries in the nightclub, it is outside in 'public' where Younes is 'initiated' into the masculine world of the resistance. After rescuing an injured resistance fighter from the hospital, Younes, his cousin Ali and others who are fighting against the Nazis are pursued by the Gestapo in a car chase and shootout that would be more at home in a gangster film like *Outside the Law* (2010). As argued earlier in discussing *Outside the Law's* (2010) Messaoud, the 'spectacle' of masculinity exemplified in hypermasculine instances of violence are meant to challenge threats and anxieties, and in relation to colonialism make the colonised man 'fearless' and 'free' (Fanon, 1961). As Figure 60 suggests however, Younes can be seen reluctantly holding the gun with both hands at the climax of the car chase, looking nervous and uncomfortable as he shoots at the Gestapo officer from behind, killing him to save a fellow resistance fighter, shortly after his cousin Ali gave up his own life to protect him.

The anxious and clumsy, yet ultimately successful, way in which Younes kills the Gestapo officer admits him into the masculine world of the freedom fighter. On VE Day, in the penultimate sequence of the film, Younes emerges transformed, looking more confident as close-ups show off his newly acquired moustache which symbolises his

transition; a way of distinguishing his individuality, and perhaps most importantly as an indicator of his adult masculinity. The individual responsible for the car chase described above, the traitor Omar, is targeted by the new and improved Younes. As argued in Chapter Four, the Paris represented by *Free Men* (2011) centres the Mosque and thus disrupts Anglo-American imaginations of the city. In this sequence, Younes confidently and assuredly steps out of a car and up to the traitor Omar, shooting him at point blank range next to the Pont Neuf bridge, the 'centre' of Paris, with the Eiffel Tower looming dominantly in the background. Significantly, he looks his victim in the face rather than from behind as with the Gestapo officer earlier, thus signifying his successful initiation (Turner, 1969) from reluctant crook to confident fighter, in the most public of spaces. His boyish immaturity is shown to be temporary, as he accomplishes, or 'consummates' (Turner, 1969) the 'final phase' of his 'rite of passage'.

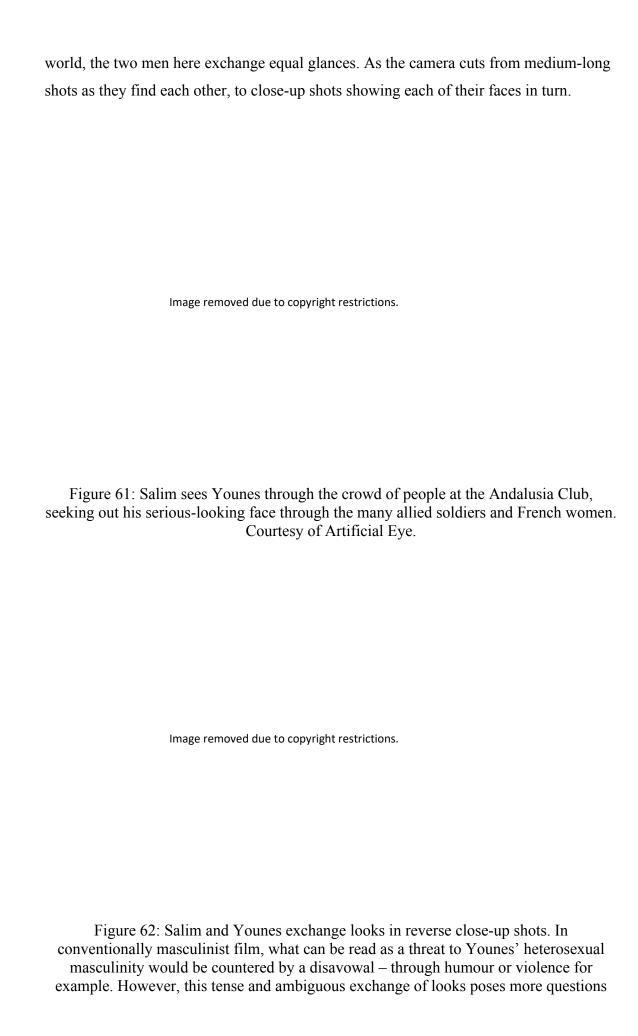
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Figure 59: In contrast to figure 24, here Younes confidently and assuredly shoots the trait Omar face on, firing the gun with one hand in broad daylight, and in the centre of Paris with iconographic Parisian sites Pont Neuf and the Eiffel Tower setting the scene.

Courtesy of Artificial Eye.

Figure 60: Younes returns to the Mosque after Paris' liberation, sporting a moustache and slick hair, more controlled and calm, and looking more stereotypically 'manly'. Courtesy of Artificial Eye.

The choice of the word, by Turner (1969), 'consummated' to refer to the completion of the ritual rite of passage through the phases of detachment, liminality, and stability is of course most commonly associated with finalising the marriage ritual with sexual intercourse. If we take this literal meaning of the term in its religious and/or legal context, though Turner (1969) uses many examples including death, it has implications for determining the 'success' of Younes' masculine transition, and the productive openness for beur and Maghrebi-French masculinities in the present at the end of *Free* Men (2011). In the final sequence of the film, Younes is seen holding the Algerian flag aloft (as described in Chapter Five), and deeply connected to the struggle for Algerian independence which looms here is the Algerian's reclamation of his manhood from the coloniser (Fanon, 1961). This tells us that Younes' journey is not yet 'complete', and this particular shot is haunted by the masculine violence that characterises *Outside the Law* (2010). What is most interesting however, is the cut from this scene to the final one inside the Andalusia Club where Salim stands on stage preparing to sing. There are a large number of people in the room waiting to hear him perform, including American and British soldiers. It is Younes' face that Salim finds in the crowd however, gazing back at him. In contrast to the opening sequence of the film in which the asymmetrical gaze between Younes and the older Algerian workers works to separate him from their



his sexuality, and ultimately leaves a more open reading of Younes' masculinity.

Courtesy of Artificial Eye.

The exchange of gazes between the two men, emphasised by the camerawork as the frame pauses on Younes before cutting to the end credits, leaves questions unanswered about Younes and Salim's potential relationship and its homoerotic undertones. Conventionally, in different action films concerning men including the gangster and combat genres previously explored, spectacular scenes of hypermasculine violence such as the car chase and shooting sequences described above, follow anxieties around gender and sexuality in order to dispel any ambiguities or doubts. However, the spectacle here is inverted, coming *before* the final gaze between the pair which raises questions about Younes' sexuality, and masculinity.

As the end credits of the film clarify, Younes is a fictional character and a composite of the many real and yet unknown Algerian 'free men' who contributed to the French Resistance, and the rescue of European and North African Jews. This is in contrast to Salim and Director Ben Ghabrit's characters who are based on real people. The fact that he is a representative of a generation of 'brave' Algerian men is important, in terms of the films efforts to imaginatively historicise, and offer alternatives to, the racialised beur men described previously that saturated news media during the banlieue riots in 2005, and that more generally are positioned as hypervisible threats and invisible subjects in contemporary global discourses. Whilst coerced and lured into the world of the resistance, Younes eschews victimhood in spite of his estrangement from what he knows, and in spite of his targeting by the French police and German gestapo, asserting a level of agency in liminal spaces and periods. In doing so, Younes fashions his masculine identity in relation to multiple spaces and people, including the juxtaposed spaces of religion and hedonism represented by the Mosque and the Andalusia nightclub, and the people associated with them in Ben Ghabrit and Salim. The 'completion' of his masculine 'rite of passage' however, represented by his journey through the resistance, is haunted by the future of another war, for Algeria and thus a sense of security and stability, and ultimately home (an elusive and yet constant concept throughout this thesis so far). Younes is at the threshold, thus preventing him from a successful rite of passage. Whilst he achieves adulthood, demonstrated symbolically by his moustache, full independence is not yet realised. This is symbolised by his equally ambiguous relationship with Salim, which he is yet to resolve. The ending of the film is therefore

deliberately ambiguous, and thus Younes' sexuality and masculinity are open-ended and up for further interpretation, as will be demonstrated in the following chapter.

6.5 Conclusion

Fanon (1961: 35) writes that "decolonization is quite simply the replacing of a certain 'species' of men by another 'species' of men". In drawing so heavily on particular Hollywood film genres, which have since their inception been repositories for post-war angst about the 'crisis of masculinity', the films foreground the place of Maghrebi-French men in France by mimicking more popular versions of masculinity. In doing so, as outlined at the beginning of this chapter, the films ultimately marginalise and effectively ignore women in the histories of Algeria and France, largely functioning to strengthen the narrative development of the male protagonists.

The Algerian and North African men that are marginalised and subordinated in historical colonial environments, and in contemporary racialised contexts described in the introduction, are empowered by incorporating traits of dominant and hegemonic masculinities exemplified by the Hollywood gangster, combat, and spy genres, thus attempting to endow themselves with power, at the expense of women. Messaoud's masculine identity in Outside the Law (2010) is formed at the intersection of an anticolonialism inspired by Fanon's concern with violence and the rehabilitation of Algerian masculinity, and the American gangster's pursuit of transgressive versions of masculinity. Similarly, Said's masculine identity in Days of Glory (2006) is situated within World War Two and the combat genre, spaces of transition where boys become men, and yet as a colonised (and infantilised and feminised) man, the 'rite of passage' of the army becomes not simply one from boyhood to adulthood, but one from emasculated colonial dependence to independence. Unlike Messaoud and Said, Younes' masculine identity is more ambiguous and is perhaps somewhere in-between the other two characters. This is particularly characterised by his ambiguous and open-ended relationship with a homosexual Jewish man, and the haunting future of the Algerian War, both of which prevent him from completing his masculine 'rite of passage'. Younes' masculinity, whilst less-reliant on explicit masculinist Hollywood genre, is positioned alongside the spy, resistance, rescue masculinities which France has also championed (see Chapter Five), and which tie into universal tropes of white saviour men in colonial spaces, such as the film Casablanca (1942).

These masculine formations which infuse the marginalised and emasculated Algerian man with the virility and strength associated with white hegemonic men of gangs, armies, and resistance networks, are however potentially disruptive, in spite of their omission of women. In reframing them in recognisable ways, the postcolonial masculinity moves closer to the centre, discomforting the white man's monopoly on hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995; Bridges and Pascoe, 2014). Their stories differ in significant and important ways, as gendered relationships signify racialised power relations, Algerian women that are present in the films embody the postcolonial nation in-waiting, and violence throughout the films has different politically-motivated undertones. The fusion that makes these new masculinities possible contributes to conceptions of hegemonic and postcolonial, including hybrid, masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Newell, 2009; Bridges and Pascoe, 2014) by further insisting that we avoid the incessant reinforcement of racialised gender divisions constituted in methods of othering. Therefore, this chapter has argued that these films' negotiations of seemingly conflicting and interrelated paradigms of masculinity from different colonial, postcolonial and popular cultures reveal the subversive possibilities for more fluid manifestations of male identities. However, the various possible readings made available by these intersecting models of masculinity, signal towards the importance of reception, in which boundaries are shaped and contested by English-speaking Western viewers, where masculinities are tied to racialised perceptions of Muslim men, and further, and perhaps more importantly, reveal much more about 'western' and 'white' masculine subjectivities.

Chapter Seven

Encountering the Popular Postcolonial Film: Racialised Others and Audience Identities

7.1 Introduction

"How to win a battle against terrorism and lose the war of ideas. Children shoot soldiers at point-blank range. Women plant bombs in cafes. Soon the entire Arab population builds to a mad fervor. Sound familiar? The French have a plan. It succeeds tactically, but fails strategically. To understand why, come to a rare showing of this film" (Pentagon Advert for *The Battle of Algiers* screening, in Kaufman, 2003²³).

The flyer for the famous Pentagon screening of *The Battle of Algiers* (1966) in 2003, is a striking example of how films travel. This Marxist-inspired, anti-colonial epic piqued the interest of the US military as an inspiring tale of tactical counter-insurgency and urban warfare (MacMaster, 2004). The Battle of Algiers (1966) also had subsequent DVD rereleases around the world, tagged in the US advertisement as "the most explosive film of the 1960s is now the most important film of 2004" (Harrison, 2007: 337). The elasticity of the film is seen in the ways in which it has inspired political goals or movements, not just the US government's guerrilla warfare in Baghdad and the War on Terror, but also The Black Panther Party and the IRA. In contrast to the US government, the interest in The Battle of Algiers for opposition groups, which was 'required viewing' (Harrison, 2007) for members of The Black Panthers, was to conduct rather than resist 'terrorist' insurgency. In juxtaposition to the Pentagon advert, a very different US poster for the film in the 1970s read "Eldridge Cleaver has seen it – have you?" (Harrison, 2007: 338). The film has therefore been used by different people, different organisations, at different times and in different places, and demonstrates that a film's meaning is not fixed but reliant on the audiences' abilities to produce and reproduce it in new locations and according to different agendas.

These readings of *The Battle of Algiers* (1966) find parallels in the English-speaking Western audience discourses of the films *Days of Glory* (2006), *Outside the Law* (2010)

²³ Kaufman (2003) "The World: Film Studies; What Does the Pentagon See in 'Battle of Algiers'?" *The New York Times*. 7th September 2003

and Free Men (2011) which, as has been shown in the previous three chapters, constitute postcolonial geographies of belonging and exclusion (Chapter Four), memory (Chapter Five) and masculinities (Chapter Six). So far, through each of these chapters, this thesis has raised questions about the films' (re)appropriation of popular Hollywood cinematic genre, and the ways in which this helps to situate Franco-Algerian colonial histories in broader cultural circuits, telling unfamiliar stories in familiar ways. Therefore, this chapter interrogates the online reception of the films amongst English-speaking Western audiences (predominantly in the UK and US) where filmgoers are well-accustomed with combat, war and gangster film genres. These audiences are situated in environments where anxieties about immigration, multiculturalism and terrorism, particularly surrounding Muslims in the UK and the USA, dominate social and political life. Recent scholarship has highlighted how racism and racialisation 'intersect and coalesce' (Rattansi, 2005: 296) with Islamophobia (and Islamophilia), and emphasises the importance of talking about the Muslim experience as 'racial', using the tools and language of racialisation (Modood, 2005; Selod and Embrick, 2013). A central concern for this chapter then, is to investigate these audiences encounters with stories and places that are generally outside of the UK-US colonial imaginary, and yet are brought closer to them through popular narrative conventions.

Therefore, a key theme which connects the different readings of the films is race, as it shapes the three main ways in which audiences position themselves in relation to the films, at the intersection with global geopolitics, masculinity and racialised paradigms of knowledge and power. What I mean by racialisation is "the sociohistorical processes by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed" (Omi and Winant, 1994: 55-56), and which "ascribe physical and cultural differences to individuals and groups" (Barot and Bird, 2001: 601). The majority of audience discourses racialise implicitly, drawing on, reproducing and ultimately benefiting from pre-existing power relations that situate these western audiences "in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand" (Said, 1978: 75).

Having defined what is meant by racialisation, the first section of this chapter will argue that the specific temporal and spatial narratives of colonial France and Algeria are transformed and read as allegories of contemporary conflict, namely the War on Terror, the Arab Spring and Israel-Palestine. For Miles (1989), many social and political issues,

such as conflict, are 'conceived along racial lines' and 'imbued with racial meaning'. Therefore, drawing on the previously mentioned theories of racialisation, and extending this to scholarship on popular geopolitics (Dittmer and Dodds, 2008), I will first of all examine how a racialised logic allows the films to be transposed onto more contemporary and familiar geopolitical maps, in ways that reflect anxieties about the 'Arab world' in the 'West'. This unveils ways in which audiences are able to incorporate unfamiliar stories into the Anglophone postcolonial imagination.

Another significant aspect of these racialised readings is the ways in which the films are further transformed according to audience expectations of men in World War Two genre and histories. In expanding on the first section which foregrounds racialised geopolitical mapping, and the white male authority over space that it suggests, here I will develop this argument to focus on the ways in which audiences further draw on prior knowledge and expectations of national war histories, as well as prevalent stereotypes of Muslim men, to co-constitute both Muslim and white masculinities. Therefore, whilst racialised discourses work to define, and produce knowledge of, the 'other', they simultaneously function to construct white subjectivities in relation. I do not mean 'white' in a necessarily empirical sense, as demographic information is largely unavailable in the online sources used. Rather, in line with many critical race scholars (Dyer, 1997; Moreton-Robinson, 2004; Ahmed, 2007), I refer to white as a subject position, as "not reducible to white skin" (Ahmed, 2007: 159), and what Bhabha (1998: 21) refers to as a "strategy of authority rather than an authentic or essential identity". This reveals the ways in which 'whiteness' intersects with gender to constitute and reinforce power relations in response to political challenges by the films, which attempt to disrupt the white masculine authority over histories of the war.

Finally, whilst whiteness is shown to be strengthened in expressions of masculinist authority over space and history, it is also refashioned and constituted in endeavours to discover and 'surrender to' (Huggan, 2001) the exotic. As critical race scholars have argued, the strength of whiteness is in its ability to go unmarked and invisible (Omi and Winant, 1994; Dyer, 1997; Lipsitz, 2006), and so its power is 'disguised' in its curious pursuit of the 'other' (Said, 1978; Huggan, 2001). In celebrating the ethnic diversity and forms of cultural knowledge in the films, audiences' emotive responses of responsibility, discomfort and ultimately, guilt (Dyer, 1997; Ahmed, 2004), pertain to the flexible power of white western consumers of postcolonial film.

7.2 Mapping Muslims: Islam in the Popular Geopolitical Imagination

Audiences generalise the spatial and historical politics of postcolonial Algeria and France narrated and constituted by the films, transposing them onto the more familiar terrains of the War on Terror, the Arab Spring and Israel-Palestine. In so doing, audiences racialise the films, their characters and their spaces according to Western preoccupations with Islam and the 'Arab World'. Thus, the films are emptied of their particular postcolonial Francophone politics, and homogenised and incorporated into a geopolitical imaginary which allows some to see, for example, anti-French Algerian protests in 1945 as 'the exact same' as the Arab Spring.

Scholarship on popular geopolitics and film, much of it coming from geographers, has thus far focused primarily on readings of films with more explicit and current geopolitical issues, mainly from Hollywood, such as *The Kingdom* (Carter and Dodds, 2011), *Black Hawk Down* (Carter and McCormack, 2006) and the *James Bond* film series (Dittmer and Dodds, 2013). Such work argues that these films both reflect and produce geopolitical discourse (Crampton and Power, 2005), and are further 'animated' in relation to audience power (Dittmer and Dodds, 2013). My findings contribute to and extend this line of work, as audiences of *Days of Glory* (2006), *Outside the Law* (2010) and *Free Men* (2011) come to understand the War on Terror, the Arab Spring and Israel-Palestine through racial lenses, in which the films are essentialised and fixed into certain parts of that geopolitical map.

7.2.1 The War on Terror and the Arab Spring

Like the subjects about whom they speak, the reviews are not homogenous, and geopolitical responses to the films range from critical commentaries comparing the French Empire with the 'new' American one, to open support for the War on Terror. Nevertheless, geopolitical discourses on both sides of the argument largely rely on the same racialising assumptions, and thus conflate geographies of terror (the War on Terror), resistance (the Arab Spring) and colonialism (French Algeria). Carter and Dodds (2011: 99) highlight this as a key feature of popular geopolitics, which seeks to,

²⁴ See Lardossan_Wavejumper (IMDb messageboard, 1st September 2011)

"simplify the complexities of global geopolitics to a comprehensive set of binary divisions that then lead to identifiable problems that necessitate clear-cut and at times dramatic solutions".

As a film centred around 'terrorist tactics' on both sides, *Outside the Law* (2010) has been compared to *The Battle of Algiers* (1966) by several film critics and viewers. It is, however, reprimanded for its 'simplified' and 'less analytical' (Philip French, The Guardian, 8th May 2011) version of the Algerian War, and its lack of 'explanation' (Roger Ebert, 23rd November 2010) regarding the insurmountable tactics of the FLN. Unlike The Battle of Algiers' (1966) enduring influence to frame contemporary conflict, Outside the Law (2010) is seen as less powerful in resonating with current geopolitics by the professional film critics. Despite its apparent shortcomings, the film is reproduced and transformed in similar ways to *The Battle of Algiers* (1966) amongst lay critics, for whom Outside the Law (2010) becomes a lens through which to discuss the War on Terror. For example, in an IMDb messageboard thread entitled "Algerian Conflict – War on Terror – What's the message for today?" (denniskriz, DATE), other reviewers are drawn into broader debates about America's hegemonic place in the world and the morals of terrorism. Denniskriz's question is met with varied, and some heated, responses in the ensuing discussion. There is a general consensus on the thread however, that the American-led War on Terror is an extension of imperial oppression, a position which *Outside the Law* (2010) has helped to foster, as one participant answers:

"basically, this film highlights the colonialist aspect of the conflict, whereas today the War on Terror is a highly neo-colonialist adventure. In the same patronising colonial-style rhetoric, Donald Rumsfeld has compared America bringing 'democracy' to Iraq as a parent teaching a child to ride a bike...

... we hear French radio reports about the attacks that it is a threat of 'radical Muslim terrorists' and it just resonates that this is the same rhetoric which is being employed for the War on Terror"

(Lardossan_Wavejumper, 1st September 2011, IMDb messageboard).

Lardossan_Wavejumper's response demonstrates that *Outside the Law* (2010) is a vector for critically observing comparisons and historical connections, in this case between the old French Empire and the 'new' American one. This is made clear in a further response

to 'denniskriz's' messageboard thread, as 'xpanther2005' (IMDb messageboard – 26th January 2012) makes comparisons between the FLN and 21st Century 'terrorists' who seek 'justifiable revenge' on their western oppressors:

"there wouldn't be a revolt/hatred against the French if the French weren't conquering Algerian. There wouldn't be any terrorist acts around the world unless somebody been terrorised first. It's called revenge. I'd say 90% of it justifiable.

We can stop the cycle of revenge by admitting guilt, making ammends, paying back what was taking (material stuff), pledging not to repeat what had happened, etc. But adding insult to injury by saying: I did it for your own good, or to civilise you, or to teach you about democracy, etc. That only increase hatred and diminish any chance for reconciliation".

In contrast to Lardossan_Wavejumper, xpanther2005's comments reflect a more overt anti-establishment standpoint that whilst expressing a general sense of sympathy for the FLN cause, actually conflates explanations for both the Algerian 'revolt' and post-2000 Islamist terrorism. Not only does this commentary equate Muslims with violence, and define the Muslim 'other' in relation to his inherent opposition to the 'West' (Said, 1978), but it further suggests that Islamist terrorism is something that effects only the West as acts of 'revenge' for centuries of imperialism. Therefore, both Lardossan_Wavejumper and xpanther2005 rely on the same racialised assumptions as more obviously Islamophobic commentaries, claiming prior geopolitical knowledge and contributing to an imaginative geography that further dichotomises Orient and Occident.

Turning now to those discourses which express much more recognisable Islamophobia, it becomes clear that messageboard discussion threads are a unique space of conversation and debates on IMDb, in which views do not go unchallenged. In a direct response to xpanther2005, one participant reminds them of the 'real' reason for terrorist acts against the west, as they say, "90%?? You're forgetting the large percent of all terrorist acts that's due to religion" (LinusW, IMDb messageboard, 8th April 2015). Similarly, 'bryanmillsfist', aptly named after the brutally efficient ex-CIA agent played by Liam Neeson in the film *Taken* (2008), strongly objects to the 'flawed geopolitics' and 'Marxist rubbish' of Lardossan Wavejumper's viewpoint, claiming that,

"the War on Terror is a legitimate war on persons who stand in direct contrast to what Guevara stood. To assail Americans for attacking the Islamic version of Nazism makes me question your ethics..."

(bryanmillsfist, IMDb messageboard, 24th October 2012).

In contrast to those who relate the 'virtuous' plight of the FLN with that of contemporary terrorism, and America's War on Terror with France's imperial struggle for Algeria, 'bryanmillsfist' inverts this comparison, in doing so reproducing, or reflecting, a "series of geographical imaginations and traditions, which help to sustain particular national visions of states and territories" (Dodds, 2006: 127). Such discourses further pose questions about what audience already know, as well as what they expect from familiar genre films (gangster and combat), and from 'foreign' film. For Michael Booth, writing in the American newspaper *The Denver Post* (not dated), their explicitly claimed prior knowledge of 'Islam' at the intersection with the expectations of both World War Two and its representation on film, results in this response to *Days of Glory* (2006):

"Knowing what we know now about the abuses of occupation and fundamentalist Muslim hatred of the West, the mind reels to see turbaned men jumping on jeeps to fight passionately for the French against Nazi Germany".

One review in particular exemplifies the dominance of geopolitical frameworks, and anxieties about Islamist terrorism, to structure readings of the films. This is in 'somf's' (IMDb user review, 14th July 2007, USA) response to combat film *Days of Glory* (2006), in which they openly convey their Islamophobic stance on the film, admitting that,

"All I could think about during this entire film was Muslim fanaticism. I have developed such a hatred towards the Muslim community that it shames me. I would not have had this feeling had I watched the film before 9/11/2001 I suppose".

Somf explicitly confirms the direct link between the ways in which post-9/11 Islam has been framed culturally and politically, and Westerners' relationships with Muslims in wider society.

Whilst these discourses around the War on Terror are dominant in the geopolitical discourses of the films, audiences further discuss the potential of *Outside the Law* (2010) specifically, to make connections with what became known as the Arab Spring²⁵, which was underway across large parts of the Middle East and North Africa, including Algeria, at the time the film was released in the UK and US in 2011. *The Georgia Straight's* Mark Harris (15th June 2011) comments that *Outside the Law* (2010) "is the perfect film for this year of the so-called 'Arab Spring'", as his review's title reads '...a tribute to difficult times'. As Fr Dennis calls for *Outside the Law* (2010) to be read as allegory for the War on Terror, Harris argues that it can simultaneously be read as part of the longer history of recent revolts in the 'Arab world'. Andrew Latimer's review for online Scottish magazine, TV Bomb, similarly argues that,

"as the uprisings in the Arab world continue to escalate, our ignorance of individual plights and suffering have only mystified our perceptions further... And with the timing of this film's release coinciding with the revolutions occurring in Algeria itself, as well as neighbouring Libya, Morocco and other nations, it's perhaps the most relevant and germane film we will see for some time"

(Andrew Latimer - TV Bomb – 29th April 2011).

In establishing connections between the Algerian War of Independence in *Outside the Law* (2010) and the Arab Spring, audiences further conflate geographies of recent civil resistance across North Africa and the Middle East, with geographies of specific anticolonial violence against the French Empire. In doing so, audience discourses assume a universality about the Algerian experience. This is particularly demonstrated in the continuation of Lardossan_Wavejumper's previously mentioned IMDb messageboard comment (1st September 2011), in which they foregrounded the films power in framing the War on Terror. Here, they further extend this to frame the Arab Spring, tying it into a criticism of American 'neo-colonialism':

"the opening scene of the demonstration of Algerians in 1945 was reminiscent of the exact same type of street insurrections that we see lately in Tunisia, Egypt, Bahrain AND Algeria again! Just like the national flag has been the rallying point

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²⁵ See Willis (2014) for a detailed insight into historical trajectory of Arab Spring in the Maghreb.

in the 2011 'Arab Spring' demonstrations, we see in the movie the symbolic importance of the Algerian flag... Arab people are still out mass-protesting because of neo-colonialism. One of the things that was highly publicised about Mubarak's repression of the protests in Egypt was the fact that tear gas canisters were made in Pennsylvania'

(Lardossan_Wavejumper – IMDb messageboard – 1st September 2011).

As part of Fr Dennis' thread on the relevance of *Outside the Law* (2010) to the War on Terror, Lardossan_Wavejumper transfers the message about the ambiguities of terror to the resistance movements of the Arab Spring. Whilst it is possible to find productive connections between different spatial and temporal contexts, Lardossan_Wavejumper ignores specific reasons for, and outcomes of, the various different 'uprisings' from Algeria to Yemen in 2011. The attempt to understand both the War on Terror *and* Arab Spring through readings of *Outside the Law* (2010), and indeed vice versa, therefore rests on relatively simplistic and orientalist fantasies of the world, which ultimately homogenise the 'Arab' and 'Muslim' spaces and histories, and conflate geographies to understand, and produce, a 'big picture'.

7.2.2 Israel-Palestine

Whilst *Outside the Law* (2010) is seen as a commentary on the War on Terror and the Arab Spring, *Free Men* (2011) is read as an allegory for Israel-Palestine. Centring around the history of Jewish rescue facilitated by the Paris Mosque during World War Two, *Free Men* (2011) positions itself as an intervention into the white-washed history of the French Resistance, and in doing so also presents a positive image of Muslims in the twenty-first century characterised by some of the Islamophobic discourses above. The historical specificity of its Muslim-Jewish relations narrative however, is Algerian. The French Cremieux Decree of 1870 (see Stein, 2012) granted French citizenship to thousands of Algerian Jews, whilst withholding such rights from the majority Muslim population of Algeria. The policy was overturned by the Nazi collaborating French Vichy government during World War Two, and had the effect of intensifying animosity between Muslims and Jews (Schreier, 2007). It is against this specific French colonial backdrop that the relationship between the films' protagonists, Younes and Salim (a Muslim and a Jew, both Algerian), is set.

For the majority of English-speaking Western audiences however, this historical specificity is likely unknown, and so they largely make sense of the Muslim-Jewish relationship at the centre of the film through the lens of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Debates about the historical accuracy of *Free Men* (2011) rage amongst audiences, mostly in one particular IMDb messageboard thread which will be drawn out further in the following section. However, I want to pick it up briefly here, as *Free Men* (2011) challenges audience expectations and claimed knowledge of historical relations between Jews and Muslims, which rests on Israel-Palestine.

The conversation shifts between the celebration of a peaceful past of Arab-Jewish harmony, and therefore hope for the present and future, and those who call out that vision as a 'myth'. First of all, Chale Nafus' review for the *Austin Film Society*, in the context of a screening by the society in March 2015, provides a somewhat romantic reading of *Free Men* (2011) that frames it as evidence of the possibility of peace between Muslims and Jews:

"21st century news reports, especially about the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, give the impression that Muslims and Jews have been eternal enemies, but a careful examination of history provides numerous examples to the contrary".

The power of the film, they argue, is that it can be read against the continuous negative media about the conflict in Israel-Palestine, in favour of a more positive story of unity. Complimenting their hopeful view of the relationships in *Free Men* (2011), they further pick up on the symbolic importance of Andalusia throughout the film, as

"the creation of the Andalussia nightclub, where Salim performs, was very important for its reference to the many centuries of Muslim rule in Andalusia, Spain where Arabic, Jewish, and Christian people lived in harmony much of the time. Together they created a magnificent culture while much of the rest of Europe wallowed in the ignorance of the Dark Ages".

This romantic historical imaginary of a harmonious Arab Empire that united Europe and Africa, and Muslims, Jews and Christians, extends the author's hope of a peaceful middle east and Israel by looking to a mythicised past. This view however, is challenged,

indirectly, by others. One American viewer in particular, who fails to see Salim as a Jew, argues that,

"the actor who plays Salim is an Arab, not a Jew. Trying to see the character as a Jew is practically impossible, but his Jewishness is key to the movie. If their [Younes and Salim's] friendship is supposed to exemplify some sort of grand utopian harmony between Arabs and Jews, it fails" $(jm10701 - IMDb \text{ user review} - USA - 20^{th} \text{ October 2012}).$

This review vehemently rejects the possibility of Israeli-Palestinian harmony based on an anti-Semitic, and Islamophobic, reading of the film, and exemplifies my argument that geopolitical issues amongst audiences are constituted racially (Miles, 1989). For Americans, the very history of the racialisation of Jews and Arabs is geopolitical, as racial classifications in the USA began to change after World War Two, and the Palestinian nakba of 1948 (Little, 2008). Historically, Jews in the United States have been racially positioned as both white and non-white. A key turning point, Brodkin (1998) identifies, is the shift in government policy post-World War Two to "reconfigure the category of whiteness to include European immigrants", including Jews (Brodkin, 1998: 27). In this context, it is not entirely surprising that an American viewer struggles to see Salim, played by Arab-Israeli actor Mahmud Shalaby, as Jewish as he is simultaneously 'an Arab', and therefore outside of the geopolitical imaginary of Israel-Palestine in which Jews are predominantly racialised as white (Little, 2008).

Similarly, whilst much more reflexive about the politics of the film, IMDb user 'jakob13' (IMDb user review, 25th March 2012, USA) comments that "among the current climate of fear created since 9/11 and growing criticism of Israel, the very idea of a picture about Muslim saving Jews might seem aberrant if not perverse". This comment reflects much more critically on the ways in which fear of Muslims in the West after 9/11 intersects with Israeli-Palestinian politics, and how this influences the way the American public perceive the future of the conflict.

To summarise, the historical and geographical specificity of anti-colonial resistance to the French Empire in *Outside the Law* (2010), and of Algerian Jewish-Muslim relations in *Free Men* (2011), are transposed and mapped onto Western or specifically Anglophone concerns with the War on Terror, the Arab Spring and Israel-Palestine. In

doing so, audiences overlook the precise postcolonial politics of the films, to produce a discursive geopolitics that imagines and divides the world along racialised axes, and a manageable and knowable 'Muslim' or 'Arab' world. In bringing the language of racialisation (Miles, 1989; Brodkin, 1998) to popular geopolitics, it has been demonstrated that audiences work actively to constitute meanings from seemingly disparate histories and geographies, reading the films according to particular expectations and within dominant regimes of knowledge, that work to transform the films into new geopolitical texts, and which reflect desires and claims to *know* 'Arabs' and 'Muslims'.

7.3 Racialising Masculinities: Deviant Muslim Men and Knowledgeable White Men

"Muslims, like most other former colonial peoples, are incapable of telling the truth or even of seeing it. According to Lewis, they are addicted to mythology..."

(Said, 1978: 318 on 'Islam Expert' Bernard Lewis, in *Orientalism*).

Audiences further draw upon well-established orientalisms of the 'lying Arab' (Said, 1978; Shaheen, 2001), in order to reject the historical authority of the films *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Free Men* (2011), and in ways that reinforce the racialised conflation of space discussed previously. In rejecting the claims of Muslim men to a place in history, audience discourses also work to (re)position and therefore strengthen the position of the white man as gatekeepers of historical knowledge (Dyer, 1997). In interrogating these discourses, I extend recent work which emphasises how the racialisation of Muslims is deeply gendered (Selod, 2015).

These readings of the films focus on historical accuracy and authenticity, drawing on expectations based on the idealised, strong, courageous and white 'soldier heroes' (Dawson, 1994) of canonical combat films such as *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), and racialised expectations of Muslim men, to deny them access, not just to history, but to white versions of masculinity (Selod, 2015). Therefore, the Muslim soldiers and spies of the films are framed as factually disingenuous and sexually deviant, and in subordinating Muslim men audiences occupy and constitute white male subjectivities of authority and knowledge.

7.3.1 Deviant Muslim Men

"There's obviously a far more complex, tragic, and adult tale to be told than the earnest,

PC propaganda offered up in *Days of Glory*"

(Grady Hendrix, *The New York Sun*, 6th December 2006).

The underlying current of *The New York Sun's* review of *Days of Glory* (2006) is one of suspicion: a suspicion rooted in orientalist assumptions that "Muslims... are incapable of telling the truth..." (Said, 1978: 318). Whilst Grady Hendrix's review is relatively generous about the film as a film, of which the "battle scenes are actually far more coherent than those in 'Saving Private Ryan'", they essentially desire more than just mimicry from a combat genre film that "focuses on ethnic minorities". What they mean by this is explicitly clear in the review, as more 'complexity' is needed to tell "the actual history of France's colonial soldiers... a rape-and-murder spree conducted against the civilian population" (Grady Hendrix, *The New York Sun*, 6th December 2006). However, it also reveals what English-speaking western audiences expect from a 'foreign' film, that is a subtler exposé in the art-house style, and ultimately a desire for something different (this exotic desire for difference is developed later on in the chapter). The central tone and language of the review however, reflects a condescending colonial discourse that infantilises the colonised man ('more adult tale'), and signals towards a white masculinist reading of the film that rejects the representation of 'controlled' and 'heroic' Muslim soldiers, imagining and producing an image of the hyper-sexual and barbarically violent Arab man in its place (Said, 1978; Bernstein and Studlar, 1997). An Arab that in Shaheen's (2001: 172) words, are in Hollywood representations "...brute murderers, sleazy rapists, religious fanatics, oil-rich dimwits, and abusers of women".

As Dawson (1994), Gibson (1994) and Donald and McDonald (2011) have argued, and has been explored already in Chapter Six, 'soldier heroes' have for centuries been key measures against which men learn to be men, and war a space in which soldier masculinities, epitomised by strength, virility and courage, are formed. Audiences in Britain and the US have a wealth of combat films from which to choose stretching from the end of World War Two to the present-day, from *Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949) to *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), in which white men demonstrate their 'manliness'. It is against this catalogue of white male heroism, and the wealth of racist Hollywood stereotypes about

which Shaheen (2001) extensively writes, that *Days of Glory* (2006), and *Free Men* (2011) are read by Grady Hendrix, and others.

One common trope of the combat film is soldiers attempting to court local women at war²⁶, and is indeed central to Roshdy Zem's character Messaoud in *Days of Glory* (2006), as he falls in love with Frenchwoman Irene. However, he is the only character in the film that has such love interests. Jamel Debbouze's Said in contrast, is infantilised and feminised by his comrades and superiors. As the men liberate Provence, the first time in France for most, Said tells of his bravery to a young Frenchwoman. The scene between Said and the Frenchwoman in *Days of Glory* (2006) invokes the racial and gendered power dynamics between the pair, in a series of reverse high and low angled shots, positioning Said below the white woman, unable to perform a 'successful' virile heterosexual masculinity, and ignorant to her sexual advances. However, Jim Emerson's review for *Roger Ebert's* film blog reads something completely different:

"as he proudly recounts his battlefield exploits to a young Frenchwoman, Said's tale of heroism climaxes in a passionate declaration: "I free a country and it's my country. Even if I've never seen it before. It's my country." This speech is doubly touching because it's not only an expression of Said's hopes for himself as a Frenchman, but a somewhat awkward and overzealous attempt at seduction. The women of France, he fought for them and they should be his, too" (Jim Emerson, *Roger Ebert*, 22nd February 2007).

Like Grady Hendrix's review in *The New York Sun*, Jim Emerson overlooks the racial and gendered poignancy of this scene, which works to frame a boyish, innocent and naïve Said who stands in contrast to the sexually confident white woman. Said is rather interpreted by Emerson through Orientalist lenses that position him not as a subject within *Days of Glory* (2006), but as a reflection of the critic's implicit standpoints on Arabs as patriarchal ('they should be his too') and sexually driven ('overzealous attempt at seduction').

These discourses of suspicion about historical accuracy, rooted in the racist stereotype of the sexually-deviant Muslim man, are more explicit amongst user reviewers, particularly

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²⁶ These tropes have been explored, and the scenes here interpreted, in Chapters Four and Six of this thesis, and are developed here in relation to popular audience readings of them.

in a number of IMDb messageboard discussions, in which the default position is to question the 'truth' of the film, by asking questions like, "were the north-africans feared by civilians?" ('fellibylur', 27th September 2008, IMDb messageboard). These threads do not centre around *Days of Glory* (2006) as a film, but rather its historical and political currency. Contributors provide different sorts of 'evidence' to back up their claims, such as anecdotes, videos, and links to articles or websites, whilst some tell others to 'google it'. 'Fellibylur's' inherent suspicion is reflected in their comment on the film, which states:

"there have been many stories about the brutality of North-african soldiers, especially during the Italy campaign. They were known to be ferocious soldiers who never took prisoners but the stories about them raping women they had just liberated from the Germans is truly unsettling. This text is from Wikipedia, which I'm certainly aware of not being the most reliable of sources... I will pass no judgement here but I'm curious about if some maybe knows more about this" ('fellibylur', IMDb messageboard, 27th September 2008).

Relying solely on user-generated website *Wikipedia*, they begin a debate based on misgivings that the heroic narrative of *Days of Glory* (2006) may be false. They get their answers, as several contributors respond to the (loaded) question with a variety of sources to support. A number of responses are anecdotal and family related, as the first response recalls that,

"my grandfather and grandmother were forced to work in Germany... They were freed by Moroccan troops. They once told me the Moroccans acted like savages and raped a lot of German women. That's all I know about this subject".

Others more assuredly, but with no more evidence, reply "it is very well documented that the North African troops did rape on a huge scale in Italy and Germany" (Mcs-21, 2nd December 2008). One of the most common sources of evidence however, is the 1960 film starring Sophia Loren entitled *Two Women*. The film tells the story of an Italian mother and her twelve-year-old daughter, who are gang-raped by a group of Moroccan soldiers. For some, this film is the only reference they have for North African soldiers:

"...the only films I can remember North African troops was 'Two Women' and the Moroccan soldiers who raped the two ladies in the film! So, fortunately, these brave men get their due in 'Days of Glory'" ('Planktonrules', 3rd January 2012, IMDb user review).

Whilst 'Planktonrules' only reference point is the Sophia Loren film, they recognise that it might skew what the English-speaking Western filmgoer understands of the history of North African soldiers, and acknowledge that *Days of Glory* (2006) provides another story, rather than necessarily a 'true' or 'false' one. The vague and general language however ('very well documented', 'many stories'), and lack of evidence presented by contributors to the discussion, provokes others into countering their arguments, particularly regarding the scale of alleged crimes, with some even hinting towards the

ways in which they are racialised. To give some examples:

"... one rape of white woman by a Moroccan would be perceived as much more scandalous than a 1,000 raped by other soldiers. It's the whole 'they' come to take our women fear that instills a lot of rumour" ('moffieboi', 16th November 2008).

"I'd just like to point out that what the 'indigenes' may have done in Italy (rape and pillaging) is not really all that different from just about any other conquering army that I have heard of" ('pogostiks', 1st October 2008).

"What I find disturbing is that this war was waged mostly by European troops, yet somehow Moroccan troops are used as scapegoats for the rapes" ('syphaxilicious', 27th July 2015).

As reflected upon in the previous section, whilst professional critics such as Grady Hendrix (*The New York Sun*) and Jim Emerson (*Roger Ebert*) publish widely distributed reviews with some authority, IMDb messageboards present opportunities for debate and checks. The contributors above directly respond to some of the simplistic, ill-informed and Islamophobic readings of *Days of Glory* (2006), that achieve recognition of its protagonists via well-worn Orientalist stereotypes of the Arab's sexual violence. They point directly to the hypocrisy of those focusing exclusively on this discourse, which

implies World War Two for the West was clean, pure, moral and conducted by heroic, controlled men: in short, sanitised, in comparison to the impurity, 'dirt', and deviance brought by the 'other' to despoil their history, and their women.

Whilst Days of Glory's (2006) protagonists are assumed to be rapists, and therefore positioned outside of the white heroic narrative of 'the good war', Free Men's (2011) Muslim characters are discursively constructed as Nazi sympathisers and anti-Semites, and therefore not admissible into the 'justes' narrative of the French Resistance in which the film tries to situate itself. Whilst one contributor to discussions about Days of Glory (2006) asks 'were the north Africans feared by civilians?', the only lengthy IMDb messageboard thread about *Free Men* (2011) asks as its title, 'did this really happen?' (chuck-526, 22nd March 2012). Whilst 'chuck-526' claims to be "pleased whenever shining light into a previously dark corner provides a chance to 'revise' the picture into something fuller and more nuanced", the starting point for their review reflects an inherent cynicism about the films' 'facts', and in asking the question, invites others to do the same. That is not to say audiences should automatically accept historical narratives as 'truth', but that in Staiger's (2000) words reviewers are 'perverse' in what they deem worthy for discussion, in this case a cynicism which stems from Islamophobia. 'PapMihel's' (26th September 2012, IMDb messageboard) response to chuck-526's question is a reflection of this:

"considering the fact that the Muslims largely sided with the Nazis (there were 500,000 Muslim volunteers in Waffen SS alone) I find the premise very hard to believe"

(PapMihel, 26th September 2012 – IMDb messageboard).

'PapMihel' is rebuked by others however, and other users challenge them for evidence, sources, and question their 'plain stupid' and 'Jewish' point of view (taseron, 3rd November 2012), whilst others uncritically declare that "this film is based on fact" (ib011f9545i, 29th September 2012). PapMihel does find agreement in other places however, as professional film critic Dennis Schwartz, takes as his starting point Muslim's inherent hatred for Jews, as he says:

"it would make for an inspirational human interest story if true, but the historical facts are that the Muslim community on the contrary was known to be hostile to the Jews and aided the Nazis in sending many Jews to the death camps" (Dennis Schwartz, *Dennis Schwartz Movie Reviews*, 19th February 2012).

Like the language used about *Days of Glory's* (2006) violent Muslim protagonists, Dennis Schwartz with confidence tells his readership of the 'historical facts', which he does not provide evidence for, rather relying on a more 'common-sense' point of view. Whilst in updated version of his original review piece, he admits that he was wrong after somebody informed him the film was based on fact, Dennis Schwartz's default position was that the Muslims were lying. Conversely, others celebrate the inclusion of Muslims into white western histories, particularly official memorials and popular culture, in an attempt at championing multiculturalism. Jakob13, who also makes connections between post-9/11 Islamophobia and Israel, argues that,

"among the Righteous Among Nations at Yad Vasham, Israel's official memorial of Ha Shoah or Holocaust, the names of Arabs who saved Jews are absent... In his own way, Ismael Ferroukhi is trying to correct this historical omission" (jakob13, 25th March 2012, IMDb user – USA).

Similarly, professional film critic Eric Lundegaard makes historical, and indeed cultural, comparisons between the story of the Paris Mosque and Oskar Schindler, made famous by the Steven Spielberg film *Schindler's List* (1994). Not only do the film's Muslims deserve to be considered as justes, but *Free Men* (2011) also implicitly deserves a place amongst the canon of Hollywood war films:

"the number of Jews Ben Ghabrit's Mosque saved is debated these days, but both sides agree it's somewhere between 500 and 1600. That's Oskar Schindler territory"

(Eric Lundergaard, 23rd April 2012, *ErikLundergaard.com*).

So far, I have demonstrated that a number of viewers read both *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Free Men* (2011) for their historical (in)accuracies, often from the position of distrust and suspicion that racialises their characters as rapists, murderers, Nazi collaborators and anti-Semites, rejecting the 'heroic' soldier and resistance narratives of the films. Others

contest these views in IMDb messageboard debates, rather attempting to celebrate the inclusion of Muslims into the popular cultural archive of World War Two. These discourses which discursively constitute deviant Muslim masculinities, are done so in relation to knowledgeable white masculinities. As Said (1978) famously argued, the production of the 'other' is dependent on the production of the 'self', or more specifically in this instance, the production of whiteness (associated with hegemonic masculinity, privileged access to and shaping of knowledge) is dependent on the Muslim other (Moreton-Robinson, 2004). What follows develops the analysis so far, in interrogating the specific ways in which audiences produce, negotiate and inhabit white masculine subjectivities in relation to the films and their characters.

7.3.2 Knowledgeable White Men

In making explicit claims to, and homosocial approval of, World War Two knowledges, audience discourses around Days of Glory (2006) produce and inhabit notions of white masculinity. Knowledge has been central so far throughout this chapter, as audiences have made knowledge claims about the geopolitics of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and the Muslim claims to history of the Second World War. Here, access to knowledge is further seen to be shaped and regulated by both whiteness and masculinity (Moreton-Robinson, 2004). 'White masculinities' (Dyer, 1997; Carroll, 2011) have been defined by their expression in relation to subordinated others, and in response to the perceived threats of multiculturalism and globalisation. In focusing particularly on the constitution of white masculinities in a series of lengthy IMDb messageboard threads, it will be argued here that these subjectivities are negotiated as audiences fixate on the banal materiality of war, particularly the historical 'accuracy' of the weapons used, and how this intersects with abelist questions aimed at the actor Jamel Debbouze (who plays Said in *Days of Glory*, 2006) to perform the role of the soldier. Together, these discourses do not innocently draw attention to the perceived 'inauthenticity' of the film as a failure to 'accurately' represent war, but rather they importantly demonstrate the anxious need to maintain dominance over the boundaries of history and the production of knowledge.

Scholars have argued that guns themselves are symbolic of masculinity (Gibson, 1994; Connell, 1995; Stroud, 2012). Whilst Stroud's (2012) work considers in-depth the reasons for men both carrying and using firearms in the US, I want to draw more on and extend Gibson's (1994) notion of the 'warrior fantasy' to consider the ways in which

men (re)imagine and (re)construct, or 'desire' (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), masculine identities in relation to the military and firearms. Gibson's (1994) central argument is that this cultural relationship to war and guns emerged in America after the military humiliation in the Vietnam War, in which a series of Hollywood films such as *Rambo* (1982) sought to explore, and ultimately overcome, the threats posed by military defeat. In the case of the audience discourses here, men demonstrate and seek to prove their superior knowledge of, and affinity to, weapons of war, at the same time as subordinating other less-abled and non-white men (Dyer, 1997).

'Guanche's' initial observation about the inaccuracy of guns used in *Days of Glory* (2006), begins a protracted IMDb messageboard thread in which other men lament the lack of attention to historical detail in the film, and congratulate one another on their superior knowledge:

"The rifles carried by the French North African troops in this movie are incorrect for the period. Many of the men are carrying the French MAS model 1936, others 8mm German Mausers, a few have M-1 Garands, a few others Lee Enfields, and a couple even have older Lebel-Berthier rifles. A small number even have US Model 1917 Eddystone Enfields which were indeed widely issued to these troops. Let's see, that's a total of 5 different types of ammunition!!" ('guanche', 20th August 2007, IMDb messageboard).

Whilst claiming to be innocent in their desire to simply question the inconsistency of props in the film, guanche's intimate knowledge of World War Two weaponry first of all privileges a concern for an 'accurate' representation, over the broader political message the film attempts to convey. In terms of masculinity, this privileging of the 'real' also deflects anxieties that white men might have over claims by 'others' to 'their' history. Others agree, as the discussion thread develops into a homosocial approval of superior historical knowledge, with 'Johannesdr2' (30th September 2007) replying with further details, that "...only the 1st Paratroop Regiment of France was issued the M1 Garand, of which they received a tad over 700. The rest of the re-armed French Army was, however, issued many M1 Carbines". In response, 'guanche' commends their contribution:

"My compliments. Your knowledge is impressive... Do you know how many 1932 Levels were produced?"

(Guanche, 8th October 2007, IMDb messageboard).

"...I'm a history major after all" (johannesdr2, 2nd April 2008, IMDb messageboard).

"wow!! The breadth of your knowledge is most impressive and far surpasses mine!"

(Guanche, 11th April 2008, IMDb messageboard).

This male homosocial support network in which contributors congratulate each other on their 'impressive knowledge' attempts to consolidate and identify with forms of knowledgeable masculinity. Their lengthy discussions, of which the above is just a fragment, seeks to reinforce the sanctity of World War Two, threatened by *Days of Glory's* (2006) perceived carelessness in obtaining accurate props.

Not all discourses which compete for authority over the films attempting to do so by boasting of their historical knowledge. Whilst Guanche and johannesdr2 have detailed knowledge of weaponry, other directly challenge their mere 'fantasist' *discussion* of guns, as opposed to actually *using* guns:

"I bore easily of such things. I am a bit of a gun geek, but I find so many armchair warriors who obsess over the tiniest thing, from grains of bullets (funny how few call them rounds) down to the finish on the inside of a barrel, yet few have ever used a weapon for real and actually get much of their info from watching movies"

(ttaskmaster, 24th July 2013, IMDb messageboard).

Ttaskmaster's direct complaint about the 'armchair warrior', or what Dawson (1994) might call 'warrior fantasists', implies that they are not 'real men', and therefore reveals that the negotiation of white masculinity takes place within the dominant group as a competition for hegemony, and not solely between white and Muslim men.

Ttaskmaster's dismissal then, is another kind of 'elaborate fantasy', that allows them to "claim dominance and assert hegemonic masculinity" by claiming, sometimes

demonstrating, they are "able and ready to defend themselves" (Stroud, 2012: 229-230). In spite of Ttaskmaster's criticisms, Guanche further reflects a related anger that resonates with them, and that chimes with Stroud's (2012) definition of rifle masculinity as they go on to lament the 'blunting' regulation of guns in the UK and the US:

"the reason for the lack of machine guns is probably related to cost and the ridiculously strict firearms laws of modern times. I understand that in England the government is starting to harass historical re-enactors about *muzzle* loading weapons and even *blunted swords* and spears! Even in the U.S. the National Parks no longer allow *blank firing* of muzzleloaders by American Revolution Civil War re-enactors"

(Guanche, 11th April 2008, IMDb messageboard, emphasis added).

This comment is laden with sexual and phallic metaphors ('blunted swords and spears' and 'blank firing'), and reflects a fear that not only does *Days of Glory* (2006) threaten the historical purity of World War Two, but that the State may make them impotent via a regulation that threatens a version of masculinity enhanced by the power and domination afforded by guns (Meltzer, 2009; Stroud, 2012).

Despite the dominance of this 'warrior fantasy' discourse on the thread, it must be noted that others challenge their 'sad' conversation:

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"Thank you all for this pointless debate" (lempea, 26<sup>th</sup> May 2008).
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"You all remind me of the comic-book store guy in The Simpsons. Are you all trainspotters too? No-one cares that the rifles were 'wrong'. Yes, I'd care if I saw an uzi or even an ipod but come on guys. This is the saddest post I've read for ages"

(mike-h, 30th December 2008).

However, lempea and mike-h's challenges to the 'warriors' emanates from a desire to further compete, as they have first of all gone out of their way to click into a thread specifically about the inaccuracy of weaponry in the film in order to berate its contributors, and in an attempt to marginalise the 'comic-book-guy' masculinities on

display. I do not intend to go far down this rabbit hole of competitive masculinity, but I do want to tie up this conversation, as 'didierfort' defends their historical debate, arguing that "this thread is not pretending to be THE one about the film; it's dealing with some (not minor) details, that count in historical war movie, in this case, weaponry" (didierfort, 21st May, 2009, IMDb messageboard). The back-and-forth conversations across these threads about weaponry epitomise the homosocial support networks that shore up male authority over knowledge (Sedgwick, 1985), and simultaneously the competition between men and versions of masculinities through different relationships with weapons (Stroud, 2012).

To further understand the negotiative processes through which white masculinities are constituted and contested, three additional IMDb messageboard threads which debate the physical disability of Jamel Debbouze are analysed in parallel to the above conversations. Whilst the above discourses debate the inaccuracy of the rifles, and further the inauthenticity of the films, discussions around Debbouze's (in)ability to perform as a soldier, and by extension a man, further challenges the historicity of *Days of Glory* (2006). As some of the above comments demonstrate, the ability not just to 'fantasise' about firearms but to actually be capable of handling them is an important attribute of 'manliness' (Meltzer, 2009; Stroud, 2012).

In 1989, Jamel Debbouze lost the use of his left arm in an accident, prompting him from then on to place his hand in his pocket when acting in an attempt to conceal his disability on screen. In France, his huge fame and 'stardom' (Vanderschelden, 2005) somewhat overcomes this, particularly his role in a number of comedy films and as a popular standup comedian. Playing a soldier in a film like *Days of Glory* (2006) however, for English-speaking Western audiences at least, causes problems and poses what are perceived to be important questions, as 'jgroub' (6th July 2008, IMDb messageboard) asks, "explain why a one-handed man would carry a bolt-action rifle, please", positing that,

"this made no sense and was a constant distraction in the movie. Can someone explain why Said would be carrying a bolt-action rifle if there was no way in hell he could possibly fire it?"

Concerns about historical inauthenticity are therefore extended from the gun to the body itself, and interrupt the 'believability' (luvspud, 13th March 2007, IMDb messageboard)

of the film's narrative. Whilst I suspect that if pressed on these comments, contributors would claim that it is common sense ('how could he possibly fire a weapon?'), these discourses reflect a common trope that disability and masculinity are in direct conflict (see Shuttleworth et al, 2012). Said, primarily due to his physical disability, is seen as being incapable of firing a weapon, and is therefore perceived as dependent and helpless, in relation to the virile and independent, able and ideal forms of masculinity demonstrated by contributors to these discussions. 'Ttaskmaster', who in the previous mentioned threads about inauthentic weapons boasted of his more hands-on experience with weapons, compared to the 'armchair warriors', exemplifies this performative ablebodied masculinity, reappearing here to reflect on their own real-world experiences:

"it can be done one-handed. Not very easy (I also tried it to see) or accurate without a LOT of practice, but still possible. I'd not likely put him in the front line myself, but then I'm not a French Officer in WW2, so can't comment further"

(ttaskmaster, 26th August 2011, IMDb messageboard).

If he is not seen as a 'man', because he cannot fight on the front line, then what does Said's marginalised masculinity look like? This is partially answered by others in the messageboards, as tropes of dependence and helplessness suggest infantilisation which, as explored in Chapter Six, is a key theme in *Days of Glory* (2006). Therefore, for some, Jamel Debbouze functions well in his role as Said, as a 'kid', a 'little innocent soldier'. Vanderschelden (2005: 63) in her work on Debbouze's stardom in France, also comments that his "physical features hardly evoke the male French star stereotype. He is small, of slim build, and dark-skinned, and has a physical disability". In terms of this film then, audiences attempt to rationalise the casting of Debbouze in the role based on the desperate reality of the French army at the time, as 'camposbadilla' argues,

"...the French would have taken any African who wanted to die for them, especially since African soldiers were always in the front lines. As the first battle scene shows, they are sent ahead to be fired at by the Germans, so the French artillery can identify German positions. Who cares if the guy getting shot only has one arm? Certainly not the French officers" (camposbadilla, 1st April 2007, IMDb messageboard).

Others make similar observations, arguing that it was common for young, 'green' boys to volunteer or be conscripted into the army during the two World Wars, and that Jamel's boyish looks make him perfect for the role:

"...why don't you just imagine that he's a kid from North Africa fighting in the Italian mountains, snowy France and freezing Alsace – and so might have cold hands. Do you often have problems telling the difference between reality and films?"

(d90yqv, 7th September 2009).

"...he is the perfect size and has the perfect face for the little innocent soldier, not-made-for-combat, Sergent's favourite servant, should-have-listened-to-mother-and-stayed-out-of-this guy" (kythem, 9th July 2009).

Some therefore see a place for Debbouze in the film. Vanderschelden (2005: 68), though speaking in the context of French audiences, further argues that his 'vulnerable side' characterised by his small stature and physical disability, works to 'reassure' audiences used to violent and threatening non-white men in beur cinema, and so creates "an acceptable, non-threatening image of Beur masculinity". For English-speaking Western audiences, Jamel/Said sits on a continuum of Arab-Muslim masculinities in which some versions of masculinity are rejected as too 'threatening', in this case to the historicity of World War Two and therefore an affront to the white masculinities which depend on it, and in which some are accepted and incorporated into 'desired' forms of Muslim masculinity (Massad, 2007).

To summarise, the inherent suspicion of Muslims displayed in discourses which challenge *Days of Glory's* (2006) and *Free Men's* (2011) claims to a place history, works in tandem with complaints about the believability of a disabled soldier, to reveal anxieties amongst audiences about their own authority over World War Two. The masculinist readings of the films intersect with race to position and secure the dominance of white knowledge in shaping and producing histories (Moreton-Robinson, 2004). That is to say, in objectifying and racialising the films and their characters, audience discourses reject their adoption of popular Hollywood genre, deny their access to whiteness (Selod, 2015), and therefore actively (re)produce hegemonic white

masculinities and secure their monopoly over knowledge. In what follows, the centrality of knowledge production in relation to the films is further developed, as audiences in their 'encounter' with the 'foreign' idealise the Muslim 'other', in ways that render them 'exotic' (Huggan, 2001), and in ways that cloak their own colonial curiosity.

7.4 Exotic Encounters: Admiring the Postcolonial 'Other' and Constituting White Subjectivities

"To us, the man who adores the Negro is as 'sick' as the man who abominates him" (Fanon, 1968: 2).

This chapter has so far traced the ways in which audiences draw upon racialised expectations of Muslims, and of Hollywood genre film, in order to reject the films Days of Glory (2006), Outside the Law (2010) and Free Men's (2011) popularly influenced political claims. In doing so, the dominant discursive threads have generalised and transposed (post)colonial France and Algeria onto contemporary geopolitical topographies, crudely mapping and conflating 'Muslim' geographies in a will to know, contain and therefore exert authority over them. In ways that reinforce these racialised geopolitical imaginaries, audiences have further questioned the reliability of the films' historical claims based on Islamophobic and orientalist stereotypes. These discourses demonstrate that the racialisation of the films and their characters as 'Muslim' intersects with gender, as audiences' express anxieties about threats to white masculinist authority over historical knowledge. These readings therefore raise larger questions about the production of knowledge that occurs in the encounter with foreign film, and the whole range of subject positions of power and privilege the audiences hold that allows them to simultaneously discuss, dissect, dismiss and delight at postcolonial others. As previously mentioned, these subject positions are white. Whilst some reviewers explicitly identify as white, the majority do not and so I make no empirical claims as to the 'whiteness' of the audiences. Rather, whiteness is considered not as a biological category but as one that is socially constructed (Nakayama and Krizek, 1995; Ahmed, 2007), its power and dominance drawing strength from its invisibility (Dyer, 1997). The discursive framing of the debates emerging amongst English-speaking Western audiences then, proceed from and intersect with rhetorical strategies of authority that centre whiteness as the norm. This may include those who are *not* white (those who are considered 'white' by other whites, those who 'pass' as white), who adopt and/or suppress these norms, thus

profiting from and contributing to established forms of whiteness. However, as Ahmed (2007) points out, whilst non-whites can participate in whiteness, it does not 'extend their shape' in white spaces, and rather always privileges the white body. At risk of repeating the point, I want to again make the distinction clear between discursive and empirical identities associated with whiteness, and that in focusing on the former, I will argue that the framing, language and the rhetorical meaning within audience debates and discourses, constitute and reinforce white subjectivities in relation to racialised 'exotic' others.

Therefore, by first of all drawing upon postcolonial scholarship on the 'exotic' (Said, 1978; Huggan, 2001), prevalent tropes of racialised knowledge so far highlighted in this chapter will be expanded upon in order to interrogate audience desires for 'authentic' and 'exotic' relationships with others. In doing so, audiences are able to fashion white subjectivities that are morally progressive and anti-racist, and that secondly express and perform feelings of 'white guilt'.

7.4.1. In Search of the 'Authentic' in Postcolonial Film

In Chapter Four, it was argued that the spaces of Paris and France are reimagined and reconstituted by the films, in ways that both potentially disrupt English-speaking Western audiences' dominant sense of place, whilst also potentially reproducing colonial and exotic discourses which feed into orientalist imaginaries of Muslim spaces. Graham Huggan's (2001) work on what he calls the 'postcolonial exotic' highlights the placing and creation of value in cultural commodities, in his case literature, and has been an important work in understanding cultural relationships mediated by postcolonial writing. He crucially defines exoticisation as a *process*,

"not, as is often supposed, an inherent *quality* to be found 'in' certain people, distinctive objects, or specific places; exoticism describes, rather, a particular mode of aesthetic *perception* – one which renders people, objects and places strange even as it domesticates them, and which effectively manufactures otherness even as it claims to surrender to its immanent mystery" (Huggan, 2001: 13, emphasis original).

The reproduction of exoticist imaginaries was a central ambiguity in *Free Men* (2011), as its centring of the Paris Grand Mosque and 'Andalusian' spaces potentially invites

orientalist interpretations that allow people to more easily consume a safe and digestible version of Islam. Free Men (2011) is the least directly Hollywood genre-influenced film of the three, and whilst there are aspects of spy and resistance thriller conventions that loosely guide its narrative structure, there is more room for the audience to explore its spaces independently of the relative genre restrictions and expectations that are much more explicitly central to Days of Glory (2006) and Outside the Law (2010). However, there is another sub-genre at play here, and whilst audiences do not make reference to it, Free Men (2011) can be seen as inverting the white rescue in colonial spaces narrative of films such as Casablanca (1942), in which Americans emerge as saviours in Nazioccupied French territory. In other words, whilst *Free Men* (2011) potentially disrupts dominant geographies of Paris, its representation of somewhat idealised Muslim spaces also invites audiences into a differently familiar, in terms of its appeal to the Western colonial imaginary in which Casablanca (1942) sits, world of exoticised and orientalised Islam. Peter Keogh's review for *The Boston Phoenix* (22nd March 2012), describes the various key spaces of Free Men (2011), using adjectives excessively to emphasise their alluring difference:

"It's a tense world of both solidarity and mistrust, where people hang out at murky cafés and restaurants, at exotic nightclubs with rousing musicians, and in the paradisal-seeming grounds of the mosque"

(Peter Keogh, *The Boston Phoenix*, 22nd March 2012).

Casablanca (1942) however, is not a paradise, and Moroccan characters are mere background to the narrative, and this is the key difference. In articulately narrating the 'exotic', 'paradisal' and yet simultaneously 'murky' spaces of *Free Men* (2011), Peter Keogh concludes by arguing that it is these very ambiguities that make various interpretations possible, and therefore affords the audience relative freedom to find what they desire in the film. One of these identifiable desires is for 'authenticity', particularly in this case through the music of the film, and specifically that of the character Salim who entertains guests at the Mosque and the Andalusia Club throughout. 'Mesmerising' and 'enjoyable'²⁷, the 'authentic' sounds throughout the resistance thriller heighten, for some, the specific cultural encounter with a racialised 'Arab film', and therefore feed

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²⁷ Larry Silverstein, IMDb user review, 26th October 2012, USA.

into an Arabian Nights oriental imaginary. For American reviewer, Grady Harp, it is the Arab-Jewish singer's voice that functions to lend legitimacy to the narrative:

"the score is filled with the singing of Salim/Mahmud Shalaby that adds a definite feeling of authenticity to the film"

(Grady Harp, IMDb user review, 26th October, 2012, USA).

Placing a high value on the films perceived 'authenticity' returns us to the aforementioned tension that the relative absence of popular genre may provide. Defined as something "genuine, true and original", authenticity "often refers to an 'unspoilt' past in people's imagination" (Korpela, 2010: 1302). Whilst Free Men (2011) does to an extent 'spoil', consciously or otherwise, the white saviour narrative central to Casablanca (1942), it simultaneously provides similarly exotic spaces, most notably the 'Andalusia Club' where Salim sings, which can be seen in parallel with 'Ricks Café Américain' in Casablanca (1942). In watching a 'foreign' film then, Grady Harp's individual expectations and desires are, at least partially, fulfilled, as the singer's voice throughout Free Men (2011) transports them outside of France and into an 'Arab World' that Peter Keogh above refers to as 'exotic' and 'paradisal', and therefore satisfies a colonial desire for, and fascination with imperial spaces and histories. Whilst Huggan's (2001) central argument is that postcolonial authors themselves are primarily responsible for producing and marketing exotic stories for global consumption, the case here demonstrates that it is a negotiative process in which active audiences enter into a relationship with the film, with each other, and with their own individual expectations to (re)produce it in different political and cultural environments. As has been the case throughout this chapter, whilst questions of what the films may or may not invite the reader to do are present, the subjective readings of audiences are privileged in my analysis. The key question is then, if audiences have relative power over the films' meanings, what do they do with that power and knowledge, and how does it help to constitute their different subjectivities?

As with previously discussed readings which have foregrounded the geopolitical and historical axes along which knowledge has been produced, the exotic discourses of place described here similarly produce knowledge of the 'other' (in making the other the object of knowledge), and also, to borrow from Said (1978: 94), "the very reality that they appear to describe". That is to say, in exoticising the films, and producing particular

kinds of knowledge from this process, audiences' discursive authority over the 'orient' translates to their experiences of, and position in, different 'material' spaces. So far in this chapter, it has been argued that in objectifying, racialising and producing knowledge of the films, audiences simultaneously constitute and inhabit subjectivities from which the authoritative and moral power of 'whiteness' can be further made secure. In addressing the celebratory discourses that claim to champion 'difference' here, we will also see the ways in which whiteness also gains meaning in more 'multicultural' or 'cosmopolitan' relationships that rejoice at, as opposed to outright reject, difference in the encounter.

Therefore, to address my own question above that asks what are audiences able to do with the knowledge gained from watching the films, I turn to think about how their perceptions of these spaces might change, and with that, their place and behaviour in them. Recent work by Corbin (2014), building upon the work of John Urry (1990) and other tourism studies scholarship, argues that in encountering 'foreign' film, 'Western' audiences' 'tourist instincts' are ignited, and so are able to imaginatively inhabit and visit other spaces, though at a safe distance through virtual space. Like the conventional tourist visiting material spaces, Corbin (2014) argues that the 'tourist spectator' searches for an enriching and 'original' experience in watching foreign film, through which they further constitute knowledge about the other, and so elevate their own cultural status. For Said (1978: 32), "to have such knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it", and for him this is further "reinforced by the colonial encounter as well as by the widespread interest in the alien and unusual" (Said, 1978: 39-40).

For two reviewers in particular, the first of *Outside the Law* (2010) and the second about *Free Men* (2011), the virtual encounter with these films has transformed the way they will think about and interact with France as a postcolonial and unequal space within the specific historical context of its relationship with Algeria. Their relationship with these spaces is not just virtual, but potentially actual:

"I spend a lot of time in the South of France so I think this helped me to understand the history of some the people I know" (lishalinski, IMDb user review, 3rd April 2012, London, UK).

"I will never be able to visit Paris again without thinking about thi[s] film"

'Lishalinki's' review of *Outside the Law* (2010) first of all, in contrast to some of the discourses explored earlier on in the chapter which conflated Algeria with a range of other 'Muslim' spaces, shows a critical awareness and appreciation of the historical and spatial specificity of the film, and its resonances in contemporary French society. However, for 'Lishalinski', through watching the film, there is also a clear sense that they have increased their access to what Rovisco (2012) refers to as 'suffering others' through a knowledge of their history obtained via a fiction film. For Rovisco (2012), and other advocates of 'cosmopolitan cinema' (Deleyto, 2017), there is an *affective* potential, that is feelings of empathy and compassion, in watching certain foreign films in western metropolitan centres. 'Cosmopolitan cinema', she argues, can be defined by,

"1) its ability to generate serious public dialogue and cosmopolitan engagements with the perils of distant others; and 2) the concern with film as both an aesthetic and ethico-political enterprise" (Rovisco, 2012: 2).

My findings that support and extend Corbin's (2014) understanding of the 'spectator as tourist' however, are only speculative, as the explicit endeavour to take this knowledge into the 'real world' is not extensive enough across audience debates to make larger claims. I do however maintain, that these tentative results feed into a critique of the cosmopolitan cinema scholarship, discourses around which are potentially 'naïve' and 'romanticised' (Ahmed, 2000; Valentine, 2008). Relationships in which knowledge, understanding, compassion and empathy are developed of and for distant ethnic minorities through film, whether this is transferred to the real world or not, maintain the focus on the person doing the watching. In other words, it reflects the moral responsibility and superiority of the *white* subject, helping to reconceptualise and strengthen its moral fibre in relation to a compassion for others (Ahmed, 2000; 2007). Whiteness is able to declare in this encounter: I am not racist!

7.4.2 Moral Anxieties: White Guilt and Discomfort

But are they racist? The historical plights of racialised others suffering at the hands of an authoritative colonial regime elicits particular responses. In the above debates, this is an implicit 'fetish' and 'adoration' (Fanon, 1968). On the other side of this same coin, are

feelings of 'guilt'. That is to say, the motivations of audiences to support and celebrate the diversification of white histories to include others, emerges from a sense of 'white guilt' for past and present racial injustices, and an admission of the privileges gained from this oppression (Steele, 2006). Feelings of guilt, and other emotional responses to the films such as sadness, are expressed in a number of reviews. What is central to the expression of these feelings of guilt, is the conscious and purposeful practice or performance (Sullivan, 2014) of writing these emotive responses down in an online public forum. In line with the critique of cosmopolitan discourses above, audience expressions of guilt and sadness at watching the films point towards a centring of white subjectivities, and the performance of a moral authority that acknowledges its own racial privileges, and is therefore 'self-focused' (Ahmed, 2006).

'Positive' audience responses to the moral and political messages of the films (as opposed to *the film as a film*) emerges from complex and anxious feelings of responsibility, and ultimately, guilt. Richard Dyer (1997: 11) is illuminating here for the ways in which affective responses to 'others' reflect and reveal *our* own sensitive and white moral authority, with guilt functioning as a shield against it:

"We may lacerate ourselves with admission of our guilt, but that bears witness to the fineness of a moral spirit that can feel such guilt – the display of our guilt is our calvary".

Whilst Steele (2006)²⁸ argues that white guilt, in the US, emerges from a 'vacuum of moral authority', in line with Dyer (1997) I would rather argue that it reflects anxieties about it, and that in expressing guilt in different ways, as Dyer suggests, audiences are able to (re)position themselves in ways that help to inform and shape their own antiracist approaches to the encounter with difference. For Ahmed (2004: 28), emotive responses to others are 'collective', and not the sole property of individuals. It is this collectivity of emotions, such as guilt, that works to distinguish between what Ahmed (2004) refers to as the 'inside' and 'outside': in this case, a particular version of whiteness as anti-racist, constituted by emotive responses of guilt, and feelings of discomfort.

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²⁸ Influential author of *White Guilt*.

What Dyer (1997) refers to as 'self-laceration', inflicting pain on oneself due to feelings of responsibility for others, is conveyed in some reviews of Days of Glory (2006), in which reviewers talk about their affective responses to the film and its political message. Richard Bowen (IMDb user review, 30th May 2007, UK) for example, who explicitly identifies himself as a 'white European' as part of his review, writes that Days of Glory (2006) "twiddles with your emotions, and it gets a strong message across". He does not regard it as a particularly original film, like many other reviewers, but that in spite of its failings as a film "you really do end up getting very involved". And he puts this down to the perceived didactic way in which the politics of the film is delivered, through which "the moralising is handled very heavily". Unpicking Richard's short review in this way, reveals that he enjoyed the film primarily because, as he puts it, "as a white European viewer, it was a bit like being hit repeatedly with a tagine pot". The pain of being 'hit' with the didacticism of the film, for which the North African cooking pot clearly stands as metaphor, is a source of enjoyment, and he is able to withstand and absorb the discomfort the film accomplishes, as Dyer (1997) would argue, because of his whiteness. Others however, admit crying at Days of Glory (2006), as British reviewer 'max-vernon' (12th October 2006, IMDb user reviewer, UK) writes, "viewing this film in a French cinema left much of the audience in tears, including myself". Similarly, Melissa Rand (1st March 2007, IMDb user reviewer, USA) claims that "I laughed, I cried. I want more...". Not only in responding, perhaps unintentionally, in an emotive way when actually viewing the film either at the cinema or at home, but in taking the decision to write about this emotive experience after the fact, audiences publicly constitute themselves as moral subjects, reacting in a way that befits the compassionate white viewer, and sets them apart from the 'real' racists.

Whilst largely at odds with other reviews here, and rather chiming with the threads explored in other parts of this chapter, 'mmunier' (IMDb user review, 22nd May 2013, Australia) similarly comments on their emotional reaction to *Days of Glory* (2006), specifically the 'pain' felt upon watching the film, as they argue that the educational and 'provocative' messages "had the effect of someone twisting a knife in my body". However, unlike Richard Bowen who felt guilt upon watching the film, 'mmunier' further writes that the pain of the 'knife' is felt "perhaps more acutely as I feel a little affected with current and frequent events that sees increasing unrest from extreme Islam activity". Richard Bowen's guilt at not enjoying *Days of Glory* (2006) is testament to the strength of his whiteness. 'Mmunier' however, "born in France in 1942" and feeling "a

lot about 'foreigners' Jews, Arabs and Negroes", reveals anxieties about the presence of 'others', determined by their upbringing in colonial France and life amidst the 'increasing' threat of terrorism, and therefore feels more threatened by the film than Richard Bowen.

With this in mind, it is worth noting that emotive responses to *Outside the Law* (2010) were not as strong as those of *Days of Glory* (2006), and that mmunier's admission perhaps chimes with discourses around the former. In contrast to *Days of Glory* (2006) responses then, a number of reviewers actively pointed out that *Outside the Law* (2010) failed to create characters with which they could empathise and become emotionally attached to:

"On the level of character development and audience empathy it stumbles – but doesn't fall"

(gradyharp, IMDb user reviewer, 23rd July 2011).

"Outside the Law didn't share that movie's [Days of Glory] sympathetic characters"

(Red-Barricuda, IMDb user reviewer, 26th November 2010, Scotland).

"The movie [Outside the Law] never convinced me to empathise with the brothers situation"

(paudie, IMDb user reviewer, 10th December 2011, Ireland).

These responses demonstrate a distinct absence of emotive connection to *Outside the Law* (2010), and contrast sharply with some of the outpourings of guilt and responsibility that we see in discourses around *Days of Glory* (2006). Reasons for this may bring us back to key questions around genre, as *Days of Glory* (2006) explicitly situates itself in close proximity to notions of British and American nationality tied up with the Second World War, and therefore disturbs and discomforts white senses of self that are deeply embedded within that relationship. As demonstrated in previous mentioned discourses around *Outside the Law* (2010) however, we see that audiences connect that film with contemporary wars and conflicts, and do not see it directly discomforting more central narratives associated with national memories. That is to say, in responding with a historical responsibility, emerging from a sense of white guilt, audiences of *Days of*

Glory (2006) are more readily willing to open their arms and accept the film into already established emotional and nostalgic discourses of the war.

So far, it has been shown that audiences fetishise and express emotions about the films, coming from a sense of moral responsibility, and in a performative way that distances them from more overtly racist responses. In doing so, it has been argued that different versions of whiteness surface as audiences explicitly avow feelings of guilt, that assert their anti-racist alliance with people of colour.

In direct juxtaposition with the expressions of moral solidarity with the films political and historical claims, particularly with regards to *Days of Glory* (2006), a number of reviewers actively call out those recitals of guilt as 'politically correct' and 'liberal'. In criticising those that proclaim their love for the film, and whilst doing so for different political motivations to my own, these discourses are revealing in terms of the place of these particular films within the postcolonial entertainment complex, and the different responses and subject positions that are fashioned in the situated-ness of their consumption. The overarching critique of the previously mentioned guilt-ridden responses to *Days of Glory* (2006) is that 'liberals' congratulate themselves for watching, and that this is typified by the films Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Language Film:

"the movie industry has been falling over themselves to be seen to do the politically correct thing in supporting the film" (Noel Megahey, *The Digital Fix*, 27th March 2007).

Whilst Noel Megahey's review for *The Digital Fix* comments that the positivity surrounding the film is down its 'moral message', others are more forthright in what this really means, particularly in user reviews. User reviews across the film reception platforms suggest a combination of political correctness and a fetish for 'others' as the reasons for the international success of *Days of Glory* (2006). 'Ben G' (no date available) for example, on *Rotten Tomatoes*, argues that "if it wasn't for the ethnic background, the flick would have gone totally unremarked". They go on to suggest that the film simply repeats and mimics the American combat genre without adding anything other than a non-white perspective. 'Coolaree' (IMDb messageboard, 28th December 2008) similarly argues that whilst they are "glad it's a topic that's been filmed", its "barely passable action scenes" are excused and the film celebrated purely because of its

"Arab Muslim issues and stuff". One Metacritic user, 'Gene E' (Metacritic user reviews, 2nd March 2007), further begins to suggest reasons beyond the 'ethnicity' of the film as to why it achieved commercial and artistic successes:

"if this film came out of Hollywood, and were in English, its cliché-ridden scenes would probably glean tepid reviews. Put it in subtitles, and then burnish it with a noble theme, and the critics manage to convince themselves they weren't bored".

In direct conflict with some of the exoticist readings described previously, it is suggested by these vocal critics of *Days of Glory* (2006) that those who celebrate the film, including the American Academy, do so for non-artistic reasons. Whilst labelling these motives as 'liberal' and 'politically correct', they implicitly suggest that audiences rejoice at the film out of feelings of (white) guilt.

To summarise, in desiring and producing 'authentic' and 'enriching' experiences through watching this specific body of 'foreign' film, audiences make the 'other' the object of knowledge. In doing so, they exert a discursive authority over them. For some, this potentially translates into real world actual encounters, in which newly obtained knowledge and compassion is taken out into the world. However, in so doing, the focus on white subjectivities is 'retained' (Ahmed, 2006), and it is much more about the constitution and inhabitation of white identities that are anti-racist and progressive, in contrast to the Islamophobic and racist discourses previously discussed in this chapter. Whiteness, in acknowledging its privilege, power and complicity in relation to the cinematic plight of others, is strengthened in its relation also to other versions of whiteness. These films, by positioning themselves proximate to white histories, discomfort, displace and threaten whiteness in various ways. One response to this has been to racialise according to generalised conceptions of Muslim space and identities, whilst for others it is to declare and position oneself as anti-racist by celebrating the film's ethnic diversity. What has been seen here then, is that the films allow for different versions of whiteness to emerge and develop, and that the moral authority of whiteness of representations of others utilises both 'liberal and racist discourses' (Moreton-Robinson, 2004) in order to maintain its dominance.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter began by discussing the multiple afterlives of Pontecorvo's infamous *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), in order to contextualise the reception of politically-motivated films about colonialism, and to demonstrate the ways in which geographically and socially situated audiences use and consume films in a variety of ways. Whilst MacMaster (2004) and Harrison (2007) foreground the juxtaposed political mobilisation of the film in the decades since its release, this chapter has, through interrogating the actual audiences of *Days of Glory* (2006), *Outside the Law* (2010) and *Free Men* (2011), come to further understand the diverse expectations of and attitudes towards postcolonial film, and perhaps most importantly, the production and occupation of social identities in relation to them. It has been seen that these postcolonial films constitute sites of consumption whereby audiences simultaneously negotiate learning, consuming and self-identity. The films therefore work as reference points, archives and sources of information through which audiences reject and accept historical and political claims of postcolonial others, whilst constructing and negotiating their own gendered, sexualised and racialised identities.

In interrogating the public discourses across online reception platforms, in both professional and amateur film criticism, it has been observed that a great many Englishspeaking Western audiences are generally discomforted by the films' appropriation of genres that are familiar to them, combined with their going against what these audiences expect of Muslims in cinematic representation. There are different responses to the films and their attempts to 'write back'. Firstly, it was argued that audiences transpose specific Francophone colonialisms onto racialised spaces of Islam in relation to contemporary geopolitics, generalising the unknown politics of the films and incorporating them into the more familiar geopolitical terrain of geopolitical Islam. In doing so, this extends work on popular geopolitics (Crampton and Power, 2005; Dittmer and Dodds, 2013) by bringing theories of racialisation to consider how audiences racially map a specific body of 'foreign-language' films. Secondly, in building upon these racialised mapping practices that attempt to bring spatial order and understanding, it was found that audiences reject the versions of Muslim masculinity presented in the films, replacing them with ones that fit their maps, and in doing so, refashion and reassert white masculinist authority over historical knowledge. This endeavour to reposition the white male at the centre of World War Two histories was shown to reveal broader anxieties about the production of knowledge in the cultural encounter.

Therefore, lastly the spatial and historical claims to knowledge and authority are considered in more depth, in order to more closely examine the regimes of value through which audiences engage and consume the foreign-language films, particularly the different white subjectivities that are at stake in this process. In bringing the focus to whiteness (Dyer, 1997; Ahmed, 2007), this chapter finally contributes to concepts of the 'exotic' (Huggan, 2001), in postcolonial studies, by emphasising the ways in which antiracist identities are forged, negotiated and performed through exoticising the foreign, disguising and shielding anxieties with the 'blandishment' of curiosity, in contrast to the more explicitly racist discourses analysed previously. In short, audiences ultimately negotiate, constitute and perform different, sometimes conflicting, versions of whiteness which reclaim authority from the films over space, flex muscles in masculine competition, and fashion a whiteness that attempts to ally itself with the progressive postcolonial endeavour of the films.

This collective sense of discomfort, manifesting in variously defensive exclamations and practices of whiteness, forces one to reflect on the potential for the popular postcolonial to effectively disrupt dominant paradigms of knowledge, the possibilities for which have been suggested through textual analysis in Chapters Four, Five and Six. Unlike the majority of postcolonial films (often referred to and marketed as foreign-language, world and art-house), *Days of Glory* (2006), *Outside the Law* (2010) and *Free Men* (2011) attempt to reach wider audiences beyond the niche, thus making other cultural histories more accessible. Audiences are able to connect with things in the films that are familiar, namely the World War Two battlefield, the gangster tragedy, and the French resistance, but in doing so are more sensitive to the differences that appear in the cracks. Such an approach to postcolonial politics has demonstrated, through audience reception, the tense possibilities for a more commercialised and accessible postcolonial cinema to both disrupt and reinforce hegemonic and racialised power relations in the cultural encounter.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

Throughout the course of this thesis, I have framed popular Maghrebi-French filmmaking, exemplified by the films Days of Glory (2006), Outside the Law (2010) and Free Men (2011), in terms of its appeal to wider audiences through its Hollywoodinspired approach to colonial histories. What, therefore, I have primarily analysed is the ways in which popular culture, in the form of Hollywood film aesthetics, conventions and iconographies, is inflected in the postcolonial narratives of the films, constituting (un)familiar spaces (Chapter Four), proximate memories (Chapter Five), and popular masculinities (Chapter Six). Furthermore, insights into the films' online reception by English-speaking Western audiences (Chapter Seven) reveal them to be important sites of consumption and identity contestation. Informed by literatures on postcolonial theory, film studies, critical race and cultural geography, I have investigated the stories of French colonialism, and resistance to it, which these particular films tell, and ultimately the different encounters with and discussions about those stories online, through discursive in-depth analyses of both the films and their reviews. These ways of producing and consuming postcolonial cinema are understood in terms of popularity, and how an engagement with the popular works to disrupt dominant historical, racialised and gendered imaginaries.

Through this research, I have made significant contributions to conceptions of postcolonial cinema, as well as on cultural encounters more generally, by arguing that popular modes of storytelling in postcolonial film be taken seriously. Research on Maghrebi-French cinema, and on these films specifically, has thus far acknowledged the influence of Hollywood (Hargreaves, 2007a; Higbee, 2013). This thesis has built on these insights, by engaging more directly with existing research into postcolonial cinema (Ponzanesi and Waller, 2012; Weaver-Hightower and Hulme, 2014), and through extending the analysis to their reception (Procter and Benwell, 2015), contributing to an expansive and critical understanding of postcolonial film and criticism that is inclusive of popular culture. In doing so, I have found that one of the prevailing conclusions to be drawn from this research is that the resulting tensions and contradictions that emerge from synthesising the popular and the postcolonial prove to be productive and insightful

to a number of a key debates in postcolonial studies and cultural geography. For example, analysis of these films and their reception have shed light onto important debates around cultural hybridity and (re)appropriation, particularly the crucial contestation between cultural exercises of self-definition and processes of othering (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1994). In doing so, it has been shown that fixed boundaries of national spaces, histories and identities are destabilised within and beyond France, through which new postcolonial relationships can be forged and challenged. Whilst scholars have researched the liberal narrative of inclusion in these films, achieved through challenging the whitewashing of French histories of World War Two and the Resistance (Higbee, 2013; Stoler, 2016), I have demonstrated how these films speak to and find parallels in the Anglosphere, where similar whitening of national histories exists. Therefore, this thesis has gone beyond scholarship that examines processes of cultural resistance in France, to argue that new postcolonial relationships between Francophone and Anglophone worlds, exemplified by these films and their reception, are productive in terms of better understanding the intertwined nature of (post)colonial histories and power.

In these concluding thoughts, I discuss and synthesise the key contributions emerging from each of the substantive chapters, drawing out how the popular constitution of spaces, memories, and masculinities, and their reception, speak back to different postcolonial relationships. I will then speculate about possible future avenues of research on postcolonial cinemas, suggesting that the increasing access to foreign-language film in a range of different viewing environments, such as Netflix, alongside the proliferation of online platforms through which to write about them, raise questions about researching hidden or invisible subjectivities such as 'whiteness', which I have already started to answer in this thesis.

8.2 Popularising Postcolonial Film, or Postcolonising Popular Audiences

The key themes and findings of this thesis, as discussed in Chapters' Four, Five, Six and Seven, will be further explored here. It will be demonstrated that through investigating the production of postcolonial Maghrebi-French spaces, memories and masculinities, and through audiencing the films, that this thesis advances the understanding of postcolonial foreign-language film in the popular cultural imaginary. Throughout this thesis, I have drawn on an interdisciplinary body of literature from across cultural geography,

postcolonial studies and film studies. By grounding this study of postcolonial cinema within a focus on three specific Maghrebi-French films, and their audiences in the English-speaking West, I have made contributions to scholarship that seeks to conceptualise the constantly shifting landscapes of postcolonial (Ponzanesi and Waller, 2012; Weaver-Hightower and Hulme, 2014), transnational (Ezra and Rowden, 2006), and world (Nagib, Dudrah and Perriam, 2012) cinemas. Furthermore, through the detailed analysis of audience discourses, this thesis makes significant contributions to scholarship around encountering 'others' (Ahmed, 2000; Valentine, 2008), and in doing so, extends recent work on postcolonial audiences (Benwell, Procter and Robinson, 2012; Procter and Benwell, 2015) in order to pay closer attention to the power relations, specifically the production of whiteness and masculinity, at play in watching and consuming foreign-language films in 'the West'.

A key contribution of this study has also been to have a better understanding of the geographies of film, as by situating the cultural intermediation between different places and people, this thesis has called on geographers interested in issues of representation, racialised encounters, and the social construction of identities to extend their focus beyond Hollywood, and beyond the text. Overall, the main contribution of this thesis has been to better understand the relationship between postcolonial and popular film, and as highlighted in the subheading above, addressing the potential and pitfalls more broadly of popularising postcolonial film and postcolonising popular audiences. These findings go some way to addressing the chief aims and research questions, which are:

Aim:

To further understand the social and cultural production of postcolonial geographies, and to consider the ways in which previously 'minority' postcolonial films become 'popular'.

Ouestions:

1. How do the spaces of contemporary popular films open up possibilities for the negotiation of postcolonial memories, masculinities and trajectories?

This question raised a series of more specific questions, which have been addressed through the three films *Days of Glory* (2006), *Outside the Law* (2010) and *Free Men* (2011):

- 2. What spaces are important in the films?
- 3. What kind of memorialisation is made possible through the films?
- 4. What masculinities do these films construct and contest?
- 5. What do audiences think of these films, and what do they do with them?

Through answering these questions, I have made a good case for the need to explore the different ways in which postcolonial politics is approached and achieved through film. Far from dismissing popular culture, close and detailed analyses of its aesthetic and commercial influences in postcolonial cinema has generated interesting results that allow for an insight into postcolonial geographies of space, memory, masculinity and reception.

(Un)Familiar Spaces

In foregrounding the ways in which *Days of Glory* (2006), *Outside the Law* (2010) and *Free Men* (2011) approach the tasks of representing spaces through the aesthetic conventions of Hollywood, Chapter Four contributes to understanding France as postcolonial (Forsdick 2005; Guénif-Souilamas, 2006): through racialised relationships to land and soil, resisting containment of space, orientalising of religious spaces, the reconstitution of 'home' in these spaces, as well as the remapping of Anglo-centric expectations of these spaces.

Considered in the context of France's historical racialisation of and power over (post)colonial space, the films inherit a concern with space from beur and banlieue cinemas, and from the more general politicisation of space in France. Having previously been categorised by the geographies of the French banlieue, and ghettoised by the ethnic category of the beur (Tarr, 2011), Chapter Four reveals the ways in which these films break through the spatial boundaries of exclusion by appropriating Hollywood spatial aesthetics and spatial metaphors, and reimagining geographies of belonging beyond previously defined limits. The films do not abandon the goals of beur and banlieue cinemas to shed light onto the state's 'logic of containment and regulation' (Bloom, 1999: 471), but rather historicise these racialised geographies in ways that speak to present and future concerns.

In drawing on postcolonial ecocriticism scholarship (Malkki, 1992; Spencer, 2010), I first of all argue in Chapter Four that in deploying different spatial metaphors of soil, land and food, the films *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Outside the Law* (2010) narrate the spatial relationship between France and North Africa as one of different desires and differing forms of exile. Through the mobilisation of soil and fruits, the 'native' soldiers of *Days of Glory* (2006) are 'uprooted' from their homes in North Africa and attempt to put down new roots in France. Conversely, soil is also a vector for return to Algeria in *Outside the Law* (2010), as a node of connection to ancestral beginnings and an independent future, protected by Mother Algeria in the form of the Souni family matriarch. In using Hollywood conventions, such as the birds-eye-view, the films' aesthetically re-exert control over these colonial spaces and histories.

Exploding from the earth, I argued that this soil becomes 'dirt', the excessive and overwhelming presence of which signals towards the varying ways in which the North African men are racialised and therefore situated 'out of place' (Douglas, 1966). Doing the 'dirty work' for the Free French Army, and the resulting 'removal' (Cresswell, 1997) of such bodies from the clean historical landscape of the Second World War, speaks to the more contemporary ways in which marginalised beur youths in France are spatially contained and isolated. Again, this particularly resonates in the film's relationship with Hollywood combat films like *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), as *Days of Glory* (2006) imposes a visual spectacle of dirt over its battle sequences, in a departure from the 'realist' depiction of blood and pain for which the former was celebrated.

I further considered the ways in which these 'dirty' Algerian bodies in France are incarcerated in *Outside the Law* (2010), as the film historicises some of the earliest migratory movements to France from Algeria during the war of independence, and reveals the varying degrees to which they were contained by the state in spaces of the Prison de la Sante, the bidonville of Nanterre, and the Parisian metro. Drawing on Agamben's (2005) 'zones of indistinction', and in line with Tuastad's (2017) recent critique, it was argued that these spaces of incarceration are narrated not to foster discourses of victimhood, but rather as vectors of local instances of political power and resistance, in which spaces of containment are transgressed by empowered male characters. Perhaps most importantly however, is the ways in which these spaces alter geographical perceptions of Paris itself. Thus, the film potentially disrupts particular

geographical imaginaries of Paris, replacing a skyline often saturated in Hollywood with iconic Parisian landmarks, with ones of violence and control.

Contributing further to the historicisation of North African immigrants' geographical relationship with France is *Free Men's* (2011) narration of occupied Paris during World War Two from the point of view of an Algerian man, and from the point in space of the Grand Mosque. Using similar birds-eye-view and landscape shots to the other films, *Free Men* (2011) also demonstrates a command over space, also potentially displacing Paris by foregrounding the role of its Muslim spaces in its history of liberation and resistance, and by representing the most contested and anguished era of French history from the point-of-view of an Algerian Muslim immigrant. However, it is a tense and ambiguous political geography between challenging representations of Paris and reproducing colonial fantasies, potentially reinvigorating the orientalist discourses of a safe and digestible Islam to be safely consumed and incorporated into the colonial imagination.

The final part of Chapter Four foregrounds the notion of 'home' in *Days of Glory* (2006), manifesting at the domestic, local and national scales for Messaoud in his unfulfilled desire to belong in France. In synthesising some of the previously discussed spaces of soil, dirt, incarceration and religion, this elusive and contested desire for home highlights the racialised power dynamics of the North African relationship to France, as the authority to define ownership of space rests on the categories through which state and social processes constitute the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion.

In appropriating and deploying popular Hollywood spatial aesthetics to critically situate and comment upon the racialised logics of French colonialism, and resistances to it, the films resonate beyond the geographies of this specific political intervention in France. Audiences are invited to engage with unfamiliar histories, guided by familiar spatial conventions, where Maghrebi-French identities are relocated, and the spaces in which they (desire to) belong are reconfigured, and their identities deterritorialised. In doing so, the spaces of the French nation are reimagined at the intersections of colonialism, beur and banlieue cinemas, and popular Hollywood frameworks and thus, the expectations of English-speaking Western audiences are (potentially) remapped.

Proximate Memories

By interrogating the negotiation of contested memories through popular and universal frameworks of history, Chapter Five contributes to contentious contemporary debates about memory in France (Stora, 2001; Stoler, 2016), and to conceptual understandings of postcolonial and 'multidirectional' memory (Rothberg, 2006; Silverman, 2008; Craps and Rothberg, 2011) through: interrogating the haunting of World War Two by colonialism, the aesthetic intersections between colonialism and fascism, and temporal and spatial resonances of resistance to colonialism across different contexts.

As I outlined in Chapter Two when framing this research, the French nation's contemporary image of itself is to some extent dependent on the obstruction of open debates about its colonial history (Stoler, 2016), though simmering frustrations about this neglect regularly surface publicly, such as in the banlieue riots of 2005 (Murray, 2006). Apprehending forgotten or occluded histories is key to the postcolonial project (Said, 1978), and for these films, this is achieved through the 'imaginative recreation' (Morrison, 1984) of these pasts, memorialising them in inventive ways that lay them bare, and relatively accessible.

Therefore, in similar ways to the spatial trajectory of Maghrebi-French cinemas, these films also inherit a concern with memory, approaching forgotten colonial histories not as 'singular' or 'homogenous' (Higbee, 2013) but as deeply intertwined with histories of World War Two, and other regimes of power and violence. In articulating this relationship, the films rejuvenate collective memories of French colonialism 'multidirectionally' (Rothberg, 2006), in ways that 'haunt' (Derrida, 1994; Gordon, 1997) popular versions of World War Two, as well as postcolonial futures. Thus, whilst Higbee (2013) refers to films including *Days of Glory* (2006) and *Outside the Law* (2010) as 'counter-heritage', in light of their challenge to the romanticisation of history in French films such as *Indochine* (1992) (see Rollet, 1999), I attend to the ways in which the films move beyond that, to both challenge and speak from Hollywood's popular framing of history, therefore maximising the films' geographic and political reach.

For *Days of Glory* (2006), the film's rewriting of France's World War Two experience, situating North Africans at the centre of Charles de Gaulle's Free French Army, works to challenge dominant or 'official' narratives of the war that is perpetuated in cultural

discourses in France, as well as the UK and the USA. I argued that this challenge works to 'haunt' those histories, as 'ghosts' of colonial violence discomfort the certainty with which we think about the Second World War, and the ways in which narratives of it are central to our national imaginaries. French narratives of a heroic Resistance, stories that are also popular with English and American audiences, are similarly displaced, as *Outside the Law* (2010) makes uncomfortable comparisons between the Algerian FLN, recognised as a terrorist organisation by the French, and the French Resistance, whilst *Free Men* (2011) situates the previously mentioned Grand Mosque of Paris, and Muslim protagonists, at the heart of the 'justes' narrative of Jewish rescue in occupied Paris.

It is through this chapter then, that I make some of my most compelling arguments for a conceptualisation of the popular in postcolonial cinema. By situating unfamiliar stories (to English-speaking audiences) in close proximity to more dominant versions of World War Two, neglected stories of colonised and anti-colonial Algerians are made to be heard and seen, and, in short, they are made more accessible to audiences who would otherwise remain unacquainted with them. I demonstrate that the films' desire for and claims to place, to which memorialisation is key (Durmelat and Swamy, 2011), transgresses the local politics of 'counter-heritage' posed by Higbee (2013), situating these claims across borders and in wider circuits of recognition, thus realising postcolonial futures both within and beyond France.

Popular Masculinities

In constructing masculinities through the traits and codes of gangster and war genre types, the films further reveal the ways in which subordinated masculinities can be both empowered by and disruptive of hegemonic versions of masculinity. Therefore, Chapter Six contributes to existing scholarship around postcolonial and 'hybrid' masculinities (Sinha, 1995; Seshadri-Crooks, 2002; Bridges and Pascoe, 2014), specifically through the construction in the films of the anti-colonial gangster, the infantilised colonial soldier and the Muslim spy. Whilst popular audiences are likely to be familiar with these Hollywood male types, I have demonstrated how they are politicised along the axes of resistance, colonial infantilisation, and religion, through which they are reshaped in ways that challenge the authority of hegemonic masculinity.

Bridges and Pascoe (2014) conceive hybrid masculinities as something made by hegemonic masculinities ability to 'selectively incorporate' traits and values associated

with marginalised masculinities, or even femininities, such as 'grooming' or 'sensitivity', whilst "reproducing existing systems of power and authority" (Bridges and Pascoe, 2014: 251). In the case of these films, I have analysed the ways in which the reverse is also possible, as through the incorporation of Hollywood genre 'types', the films construct postcolonial masculinities that combine 'gangster' and 'anti-colonialist', 'soldier' and 'colonised', and 'spy' and 'Muslim'. I do not use these terms to reinforce racialised gender divisions, but to emphasise the fluidity of masculinities, and as a way of interrogating, and blurring, seemingly conflicting gender distinctions.

For Outside the Law's (2010) Messaoud Souni, his damaged, and violent, masculinity has been located somewhere in-between the anti-colonial resistance fighter, or 'new Algerian man', that Fanon (1961) appeals to towards the end of the end of the Algerian War of Independence, and the gangster genre 'type' of Hollywood films such as *The* Godfather (1972) or Once Upon a Time in America (1984). The first of these traits, the Fanon-inspired anti-colonialist, is characterised by a violence that works to 'cleanse' (Fanon, 1961) the colonised man of his dependency on and emasculation by the coloniser, whilst the gangster seeks transgressive versions of masculinity that help him shed dependence on the state, and a violence that is less about national sovereignty or political motivations, but about himself. The result of Messaoud, as a fusion of these two masculinist trajectories, is one that helps to contextualise contemporary masculinist frustrations in-between these two different, but related, rationales for violence, and secondly, a stylisation of the broader nefarious stereotype of the racialised Muslim man (Said, 1978; Shaheen, 2001), making him more complex, likeable and identifiable. Messaoud works as a vector through which it is possible to more easily understand and access some of the key issues that are both explicitly and implicitly at stake in the film, but also one which offers new possibilities for the construction of postcolonial masculinities moving forward.

Said's boyish and innocent soldier masculinity, in *Days of Glory* (2006), is put to the test in the Free French Army and on the battlefields of World War Two Europe. His is a process of initiation, a common narrative in films such as *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), and discourses of war more generally (Dawson, 1994) of young, green boys going off to 'become men'. And yet, like Messaoud's anti-colonial gangster trajectory, Said's story departs from the conventions of the combat film when situated in its colonial context, in which Said's naïve youth intersects with the specific colonial discourses of the feminised

and infantilised Algerian man (Fanon, 1961). That is to say, the systems of gendering in the films are deeply intertwined, through Said, with racialised colonial regimes of power that subordinate particular men. Therefore, through the familiar and popular narrative of futile adventures of young, innocent men, the specific histories and colonial processes of emasculation, and therefore a futility of a different kind, are brought to light. There is not much hope for Said, whilst initially declaring his independence of Sergeant Martinez, he is in the end unable to break free of his paternal dependence on the white man.

Unlike Messaoud and Said, who can be more clearly situated alongside and recognised through gangster and soldier, anti-colonial and colonised codes of masculinity, I have found that the character of Younes in *Free Men* (2011) is much more ambiguous. Representing a whole generation of 'brave men', he is a composite of North African men who fought against German occupation and the deportation of Jews. And so, in this sense, his character speaks to the hybridity of postcolonial identities that has been discussed throughout this thesis. His character is at the threshold of colonialism and independence, released from his emasculation as a failed migrant worker and bootlegger, into a more political environment where he begins a rite of passage to freedom, though importantly stopping short of 'consummation' of his journey, in Turner's (1969) words, due to the foreboding sense of wars yet to come, where he must still prove himself, and through which he can set himself free. Whilst he does eschew victimhood, unlike Said in Days of Glory (2006) who dies at the side of his master, the open-endedness of his character, exemplified by the uncertainties about his sexuality at the end of the film, invites the imagination to offer alternatives and possibilities for him, and for Maghrebi-French masculinity.

Generally, the films continue to 'tread carefully' as Tarr (2005) suggested beur cinema has always done, in terms of making beur men 'more visible', avoiding the construction of masculinities that are perceived to be threatening. Though largely departing from the disempowered and victimised men of the banlieue, the films cloak their Muslim men in the white dress of Hollywood genre types, with important differences that stand out in the specifically colonial contexts in which they are framed. In these environments, the gangster is violent not for his own selfish needs and ego, but for the future of his country and his son; the soldier seeks independence not just as an adult man, but as one free from the parental clutches of France; and the spy, saviour, and French resistance fighter negotiates his masculinity in-between colonialism and independence, Muslims and Jews,

homosexual men and heterosexual women, still trying to find out who he is, his masculinity unfixed and unfinished. The men therefore both embody and reject elements of hegemonic masculinity, and Maghrebi-French masculinity is forged in-between hegemonic and marginalised men, eschewing and challenging simplistic categorisation. My findings, through subjective textual analysis, suggest that the postcolonial, specifically Muslim and Algerian, man becomes more recognisable, seen through the lenses of masculinist genre codes, and therefore, for me, becomes more easily identified with, discomforting the white man's authority over history.

Popular Postcolonial Encounters

The films however, are read and reviewed by audiences other than me, and the analysis of these reception discourses found that, in spite of the possibilities I suggest the films offer in terms of their construction of spaces, memories and masculinities, English-speaking Western audiences read them in ways that transform their meanings. In doing so, Chapter Seven further contributes to debates in cultural geography and sociology about the power relations in cultural encounters (Ahmed, 2000; Valentine, 2008), to conceptions of postcolonial cinema (Ponzanesi and Waller, 2012; Weaver-Hightower and Hulme, 2014), and extends the scholarship on postcolonial audiences (Benwell et al, 2012; Procter and Benwell, 2015) by critically engaging the unequal power relations at stake in consuming 'otherness' in foreign-language films. Specifically, I have gone beyond this literature through arguing that particular white and masculine subject positions are produced through these consumption practices, demonstrating how online platforms allow for the active constitution of identities, as opposed to spectators who are constructed and controlled by the films.

The social and political environments in the UK and the US at the time these films were released between 2006 and 2011 were permeated by media discourses of the 'war on terror' and islamophobia. The three main ways in which the films are read, are along geopolitical and gendered axes, and from exoticist and anti-racist standpoints. Linking these readings are efforts by audiences to make sense of the films' geographies and histories, simplifying and categorising them according to pre-existing codes and expectations, and secondly, the ways in which audiences perform and negotiate their own subjectivities in watching and writing about the films.

First of all, in reviewing the films *Outside the Law* (2010) and *Free Men* (2011), I found that audiences relocate the films' stories of colonialism within contemporary geopolitical anxieties about Muslims, racialising their unfamiliar spaces in order to better comprehend and situate them in the present. Specifically, *Outside the Law* (2010) is first of all measured against what it says about the war on terror and the Arab Spring, reflecting the extent to which popular audiences are fearful over contemporary conflicts, and their desire to better understand the world around them through the films. In doing so however, audiences were seen to equate Algerian insurgence with acts of terrorism, as well as insurrections across the Arab world, in spite of the film's endeavour to make comparisons between the FLN and the French Resistance. The specific political reasons for the Algerian War of Independence are thus overlooked, and are instead framed through orientalist imaginaries which seek to homogenise, conflate and simplify. Similarly, *Free Men's* (2011) narrative of Muslim-Jewish relations is seen to help audiences think about Israel-Palestine, rather than the specific histories of racial and religious tensions in Algeria, fostered by French colonial policies of division.

In addition to audiences making the films about geopolitics, they are also shown to be sensitive to the hybrid masculine formations that I discuss in Chapter Six, rejecting their play on popular masculinist genre as an affront to the sanctity of World War Two histories, and as a diversion from the perceived reality of Muslim men. In discussing the films' accuracy and authenticity, comparing them with iconic combat films and with their own expectations of Muslims, audiences frame Muslims as both factually dishonest and sexually depraved. However, in replacing the men of the films with versions of Muslim masculinity that suit the islamicised geopolitical maps described above, audiences also reimagine and reassert white masculinities, in ways that reflect white masculine angst about their authoritative hold on history and knowledge.

Lastly, in Chapter Seven I also found that whilst some audiences racialise quite explicitly, others do it in ways that are more implicit, disguised by a curiosity that is aligned with the political efforts of the films. Discourses of exoticism and anti-racism reveal some of the regimes of value and taste that permeate audience consumption of foreign-language or postcolonial films. What is particularly revealing about these readings is what they say about the constitution and performance of whiteness, achieved in declaring allegiance with the films, a version of whiteness quite distinct from others identified in audience analysis.

Therefore, whilst there are differing explicit and implicit discourses of race, this chapter ultimately reveals that audiences do not simply review films, but that writing about films is a kind of performance that reveals more about them than it does the films themselves. Audiences exert spatial authority over the films by mapping them geopolitically, they exert masculinist and white authority over the films by regulating what counts as history or not, and lastly, they inhabit an anti-racist position, in expressing a range of emotions, such as guilt, discomfort, and pleasure that situate them against the 'real racists', and thus as 'good white people', who endeavour to take positive things from the films regardless of how 'good' the films are, prioritising their own subjectivities above all else.

As I have demonstrated in discussing the key findings of each chapter, this study has made significant contributions to, and asked further questions of, what scholars mean when we describe and theorise postcolonial cinema. This involves not discounting films that are commercially produced, using mainstream aesthetics, and reaching possibly new and different audiences. By highlighting the key tensions between political impact, commercial success and popular entertainment, in the films' representation of space, memory and masculinity, I provided important insights into what exactly postcolonial cinema can or should do, and suggested through textual and audience analysis both the opportunities and dangers of sacrificing more nuanced political arguments in order to achieve wider distribution and increased access to mass markets.

As films that textually transgress cultural limits, they do not only represent a 'shift to the mainstream' (Higbee, 2013) in Maghrebi-French cinema, but reveal the potential future of postcolonial film as one that undertakes new creative collaborations in order to tell stories across different contexts. As a body of literature, postcolonial cinema scholarship has largely focused on postcolonial film as defined by its thematic, stylistic and commercial opposition to, and independence of, Hollywood (Naficy, 2001; Ponzanesi and Waller, 2012). However, as this thesis has demonstrated, cinemas that can be conceived as postcolonial, must not be restricted to such limited classification, otherwise they will fall short in their reach, and remain exclusively available only to those with the cultural capital with which to access them. As I wrote in Chapter Three in reflecting on my own positionality, there is a simultaneous suspicion of popular culture in postcolonial studies, and a feeling of mistrust of postcolonial (or world, or foreign-language) cinema

for those audiences without the necessary cultural and financial means to engage. And so, the films analysed in detail in this thesis begin to provide the opportunity to move forward, to make 'other' stories more accessible to wider audiences, and to begin to bridge the gap.

Therefore, audience research conducted in this thesis has also provided insights into the achievability of future access to postcolonial films, revealing the different ways in which audiences play a part in constructing and conceptualising the cinema themselves. In this respect, the films and their audiences cannot be considered as independent of each other, constructed in isolation, rather they are both powerfully imbricated into commercial, political and cultural international circuits. Thus, I extend recent work by scholars on postcolonial audiences (Benwell, Procter and Robinson, 2012; Procter and Benwell, 2015), which has a general focus on literature, in order to reframe audiences of the postcolonial in terms of their encounter with others, the power relations and identity contestations at stake, and their implications for accessibility. Furthermore, whilst we can celebrate the fact that Days of Glory (2006) and Outside the Law (2010) were both nominated for Best Foreign Language film at the Oscars, the question unavoidably poses itself as to what audiences actually do with them. The same can be said of the recent successes of Iranian film The Salesman (2016) which won Best Foreign Language film, and the powerful Moonlight (2016) which won Best Motion Picture, as their popular accomplishments surely amplify and showcase minority stories, both 'domestic' and 'foreign'. The question is, to what end, and for whom? Therefore, a key outcome of this thesis, which I am going to expand upon further down, is the difficult task of researching the subjectivities of largely anonymised audiences, for the ways in which they produce discourses of gender, sexuality and race, not just of the films but of their own lives and worlds, and stress the need to not only ask what reviews say about films, but what they say about the people writing them.

8.3. Further Research: Audience Subjectivities

Thinking about the possibilities of a postcolonial cinema that circulates in wider popular circuits, summarised in this concluding chapter, prompts avenues for further inquiry. For instance, the opportunities for people to write reviews of films, and communicate other views or opinions more generally, anonymously and online, presents both difficulties and opportunities for researchers interested in the social construction of identities. In Chapter Seven, I demonstrated that the construction of whiteness and masculinity

specifically are articulated through reviews of the films, and through discourses of authenticity, accuracy, and anti-racism. In doing so, this thesis has raised the need for geographers to further explore how already 'unmarked' and 'invisible' (Dyer, 1997; Ahmed, 2007) social identities, often anonymised by the use of pseudonyms in online spaces, are constituted by and performed through both explicit and implicit racialised rhetoric. I have shown that film reviews are but one platform through which to interrogate the ways in which these subjectivities are formed and reproduced in the cultural encounter. Therefore, researching other social media such as Facebook and Twitter, would allow for the exploration of the possibilities they offer for researching social relations and subject constitution, particularly with regards to encountering difference.

The findings yielded from analysing audience discourses, which reveal the ways in which audiences strengthen their own positions in relation to others, have not weakened my opinion on making postcolonial film more accessible to the masses as outlined throughout this thesis. Rather, they have demonstrated the need to do further work in not just unveiling the ways in which normative racialised and gendered positions are reproduced, but in challenging them, and thus carving out spaces through which to progress in making the increased accessibility to postcolonial foreign-language film a more productive encounter.

Filmography

These films have all been referenced in this thesis. Directors' names and years of release have been sourced from IMDb.

Army of Shadows (Jean-Pierre Melville, 1969).

Baton Rouge (Rachid Bouchareb, 1985).

The Battle of Algiers (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966).

The Big Red One (Sam Fuller, 1980).

Casablanca (Michael Curtiz, 1942).

Cheb (Rachid Bouchareb, 1991).

Chronicle of the Years of Fire (Mohamed Lakhdar Hamina, 1975).

Days of Glory (Rachid Bouchareb, 2006).

Free Men (Ismaël Ferroukhi, 2011).

The Godfather (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972).

The Grapes of Wrath (John Ford, 1940).

The Great Journey (Ismaël Ferroukhi, 2004).

Hidden (Michael Haneke, 2005).

Indochine (Regis Wargnier, 1992).

Just Like a Woman (Rachid Bouchareb, 2012).

The Killing (Stanley Kubrick, 1956).

Little Senegal (Rachid Bouchareb, 2001).

Living in Paradise (Bourlem Guerdjou, 1998).

Moonlight (Barry Jenkins, 2016).

Nikita (Luc Besson, 1990).

Once Upon a Time in America (Sergio Leone, 1984).

Outside the Law (Rachid Bouchareb, 2010).

Paths of Glory (Stanley Kubrick, 1952).

Rambo: First Blood (Ted Kotcheff, 1982).

The Salesman (Asghar Farhadi, 2016).

Sands of Iwo Jima (Allan Dwan, 1949).

Saving Private Ryan (Steven Spielberg, 1998).

Schindler's List (Steven Spielberg, 1994).

Taken (Luc Besson, 2008).

Two Men in Town (Rachid Bouchareb, 2014).

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