

# Gender and Space in Post- Colonial French and Algerian Cinema

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## Abstract

This thesis explores representations of narrative space and gender in 1960s French and Algerian cinema; an era marked, in both countries, by the spectre of the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962). Until now, the two forms of cinema which arose out of this war have rarely been analysed in relation to each other. Doing so provides a crucial insight into how the dynamics of decolonization led to analogous patterns of cinematic representation- particularly in relation to patterns of gender and space.

This thesis will be split into four chapters. In the first chapter, I provide a general overview of my methodological approach, the specific theorists that have informed my research, and a socio-cultural overview of the period focusing in particular on issues of space and gender. The second chapter will then shift to textual analysis, illustrating how a number of French films of the period, including *Adieu Philippine* (Rozier 1962), *La Belle vie* (Enrico 1963), *Muriel ou le temps d'un retour* (Resnais 1963), and *Le Boucher* (Chabrol 1969), critique a post-colonial modernization drive predicated upon neo-colonial processes of spatial marginalization in representing the domestic sphere as 'contaminated' by the figure of a traumatised *appelé*. In this respect, patterns of narrative space will shown to be intrinsically intertwined with the politics of anti-colonial resistance. In the second half of this chapter, I will show how this desire to critique colonialism coexists with a gendered conservatism which elides or in some cases completely ignores the feminist agenda pursued by women (and men) during the 1960s. The third chapter will then discuss how the attainment of national sovereignty impacted upon Algerian cinema of the period. Within this framework, I will firstly show how *La Bataille d'Alger* (Pontecorvo 1966), *Le Vent des Aurès* (Lakhdar-Hamina 1966) and *L'Opium et le bâton* (Rachedi 1969) use representations of spatial transgression (from the private to the public realm) as a signifier for anti-colonial resistance. Nevertheless- as with the French films of the era- I will then draw attention to the ways in which these films draw from a constellation of retrograde gendered ideals in their depiction of the Revolution. The fourth chapter will then explore the few films which do not fit into this taxonomy, instead using patterns of narrative space in order to critique patriarchal ideology. In this section, I will explore films including *Cléo de 5 à 7* (Varda 1962),

*Elise ou la vraie vie* (Drach 1970), *La Bataille d'Alger* (Pontecorvo 1966), and *La Nouba des Femmes du Mont Chenoua* (Djebar 1978).

In focusing primarily upon the politics of representation, I believe that this project will facilitate a crucial methodological shift, from the largely ahistorical and apolitical approaches which have previously dominated critical discourse on this period, to an approach instead rooted in the socio-cultural and political reality of the era.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Introduction

#### 1.1.2 *From dichotomy to dialogue*

It is not an exaggeration to claim that the two forms of cinema that emerged in France and Algeria in the years of decolonization have rarely been discussed together.<sup>1</sup> As regards scholarship on French cinema of the period, French critics have generally tended to focus almost exclusively upon what has retrospectively been labelled the New Wave (1958-1962),<sup>2</sup> that is a group of films which attempted to break with cinematic conventions through an ‘improvisational (unscripted) aesthetic’ and unmannered cinematographic and editing style (Cook 1985: 40). A huge corpus of works has been dedicated to exploring the impact of the New Wave on France’s social and cinematic history (see, for example, early commentaries on the movement that appeared in the journals *Cahiers du cinéma* and *Positif*, alongside more recent works, Monaco 1977; de Baecque 2003; Neupert 2003). It is notable, however, that this scholarship rarely attempts to discuss the relationship between 1960s’ French cinema and other non-western national cinemas that emerged during this period. One of the original aspects of this thesis is thus that it aims precisely to widen this Eurocentric paradigm. By contrast, little has been written on the form of Algerian cinema that emerged in the years of decolonization. One might find this surprising, given the radical overhaul of cinematic expression that took place during this period, when colonial discourse (including cinema) was abruptly superseded by a national culture (and cinema) founded upon a process of revolutionary self-representation rather than a long genealogy of Orientalist and colonial stereotypes (notably the phantasmagoric universe of the harem [see Alloula 1986]). Crucially, the few works that have attempted to analyse post-colonial Algerian films (notably Maherzi 1980; Austin 2012), remain similarly limited by the fact that these works rarely place 1960s’ Algerian filmmaking explicitly in dialogue with other national cinemas, especially 1960s’ French cinema. Furthermore, as with scholarship on the New Wave, critical discourse on post-colonial Algerian filmmaking tends towards

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<sup>1</sup> The few theorists that have done so include Dine (1994), Stora (1998), and Austin (2007, 2009), although these works remain limited in scope.

<sup>2</sup> Scholars generally identify Claude Chabrol’s 1958 film, *Le Beau Serge* as the first New Wave film, whilst by 1962, most critics were lamenting the death of the movement (Sellier 2008: 2). Valerie Orpen has also argued that the New Wave began much earlier, with Agnès Varda’s 1955 film, *La Pointe courte* (2007).

conceptualising the period in homogenous, monolithic terms. Cinematic works made during this era are often classed under the totalizing rubric of *cinéma moudjahid* (freedom-fighter cinema), rather than analysing the complex and often contradictory constellation of formal techniques, cultural intertexts and iconographic patterns involved in the production of these films, not all of which depict explicit acts of conflict *per se*. In this respect, both French and Algerian film scholarship remains limited in conceiving decolonization, the point of rupture, in terms of a cultural splitting or dichotomy, rather than an on-going dialogue.

The reasons for this critical dichotomy are complex. On the French side, it is important to note that, from its inception, the New Wave has essentially dominated academic discourses on French film history, creating an ‘aesthetic doxa’ (Sellier 2008: 1), by which many other forms of cinema (domestic or foreign) were measured and often eclipsed. This observation is, of course, applicable to the so-called *tradition de qualité*<sup>3</sup> (which the French director François Truffaut defined condescendingly as ‘le cinéma de papa’ [1954]), but it is also evident in the ways in which critical discourse on the period appears to define 1960s’ French cinema under the totalising rubric of ‘the New Wave’, when, in reality, this period was made up of a variety of different cinematic forms, including the work of the comparatively Leftist, Left Bank (Varda, Marker, Resnais [although admittedly a great deal of scholarship has been dedicated to these directors]), comedies (de Broca), thrillers (Clément), *cinéma vérité* (Rouch/Morin, Marker), the clandestine circuit of *le cinéma parallèle* (Vautier, Clément) and a number of other filmmakers who did not fit squarely into such a rigid taxonomy (Demy, Cavalier, Melville). In drawing attention to a number of works associated with the Left Bank, *le cinéma parallèle* and *le cinéma vérité*, this thesis thus conceives of 1960s’ French cinema in heterogeneous rather than homogeneous terms. Furthermore, the uncritical dithyrambic academic reception to the New Wave seems to have particularly affected Maghrebi cinema, which was, by analogy, dismissed as France’s distant and outmoded ‘Other’. This observation is particularly evident in Serge Daney’s derisive description of Algerian cinema as ‘post-cinéma soviétique avec les cinéastes moudjahidins devenus les notables du cinéma d’Etat’ (Daney cited in Stora 1998: 253). In this respect, critical discourses of the period can thus be seen to have been complicit within the ways in which, during the years of decolonization, France embraced modernization as a way of distancing itself from a colonial past deemed increasingly

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<sup>3</sup> The term *la tradition de qualité* refers to a tendency in post-war French cinema to rely on ‘literary screenplays, historical reconstruction and historical or nationalist subjects’ (Austin 2008: 11; see also Cook 1999: 442).

shameful and archaic (Ross 1995). In Algeria, the embryonic film industry bore the marks of a nation eager to – although not always successfully – rid itself of the cultural traces of a French identity inextricably intertwined with colonialism.<sup>4</sup> This desire was quite obviously evident in ways in which Algerian filmmakers of the period initially appropriated formal techniques and iconography from Soviet cinema (influenced by the nationalist socialism pioneered by Algeria's second president, Houari Boumediène) and the Hollywood war epic rather than attempting to emulate the self-reflexive cinematic modernism associated with *la nouvelle vague*.<sup>5</sup> However, it was also evident in the early works of film scholarship on the period, notably the Algerian critic, Lotfi Maherzi's pioneering monograph on post-colonial cinema *Le cinéma algérien: institutions, imaginaire, idéologie* (1980), which remains exclusively focused upon cinematic representations of Algeria and the Algerian cinema industry. In this respect, both French and Algerian film scholarship appear to have been hesitant about discussing each other's cultural output for fear of compromising the undiluted character of their own national identity. Admittedly, a number of more recent works have attempted to position post-colonial Algerian cinema in relation to other cinemas of decolonization. This approach is particularly evident in the work of Roy Armes (2005, 2006, 2010), Viola Shafik (2007), Denise Brahimi (2009) and Florence Martin (2011). Nevertheless, none of these authors consider the potential benefits of pursuing a comparative analysis of post-colonial French and Algerian cinema. Instead, the Franco-Algerian critical dichotomy persists. Finally, perhaps the most persuasive reason that these two forms of filmmaking have not been discussed in tandem is that they do, at least initially, seem to inhabit almost mutually exclusive spheres. This observation appears particularly applicable if we are to focus upon their settings (largely urban [French cinema] versus largely rural [Algerian cinema]); the social status and age of the protagonists (young bourgeois versus comparatively older proletariat); their relationship to the official stance of the state (critical versus supportive); and, finally the formal techniques employed by the directors (self-reflexive cinematic modernism versus socio-realism/naturalism). Even if the two forms of cinema did differ in their mode of cinematic expression, it is debatable whether these differences alone would constitute a valid reason for analysing the two discourses separately, given the shared history of the

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<sup>4</sup> For a detailed analysis of national culture see Frantz Fanon's chapter, 'Fondement réciproque de la culture nationale et des luttes de libération' in *Les Damnés de la terre* (2001 [1961]).

<sup>5</sup> An interesting exception to this definition is Mohamed Zinet's *Tahia ya didou* (1971), which represents the Algerian nation as a site of disillusion and dysfunction using innovative formal techniques reminiscent of those used by New Wave directors.

two countries. That said, one of the central aims of this project is to prove that these differences are, to some extent, illusory. Instead, I will attempt to show how the two forms of cinema actually share many parallels in their representation of narrative space<sup>6</sup> and gendered relations.

So, what exactly are the advantages of comparing 1960s' French and Algerian cinema? A number of answers to this deceptively simple question are possible. Perhaps the most persuasive reason for pursuing a comparative project – rather than one that remains confined to Algeria or France – is that it provides a crucial insight into how the dynamics of decolonization affected the specific cultural landscape of each country. With this in mind, this project will thus map out a number of points of convergence and difference. In terms of convergence, I will show how both forms of cinema adopted an anti-colonial stance; this stance being, on one hand, in accordance with official discourse (Algeria), and on the other, largely opposed to it (France). Furthermore, it is notable that all of the films discussed in this thesis mediate this political stance through patterns of narrative space – a form of cinematic representation that I will link to the discursive context and historical realities of the period, which, in both countries, involved a renewed emphasis upon space as a sign of national identity (in terms of popular or nationalist discourses), and profound socio-spatial shifts (for example, the large-scale rural to urban migration that characterised the post-war years in both countries). In this respect, my work challenges Will Higbee's contention that transnational approaches in film studies are 'not specific enough or sufficiently politically engaged' (2007: 85). Instead, I endorse Joseph McGonagle and Edward Welch's claim 'that the past and present of France and Algeria need to be thought through together', a process which

involves a constant shuttling back and forth across the frontiers dividing the two, as well as a mapping of those frontiers, whether they be geographical and administrative (in their most obvious manifestation) or cultural, social and generational (2013: 124).

As with McGonagle's wider work,<sup>7</sup> this project also interrogates the relationship between post-colonial Franco-Algerian identities, patterns of narrative space, and

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<sup>6</sup> In this thesis, I use the phrase 'narrative space' to refer to the geographical sites in which the narratives unfold; for example an apartment (domestic space), a city street (urban, public space), or the countryside (rural space). Within this framework, I will also analyse the ways in which the protagonists in the films engage with these spaces (by, for example, transgressing them), and the political potential of this engagement.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, McGonagle (2007) and McGonagle and Welch (2011, 2013).

representations of gendered relations. This hypothesis is especially relevant to the films' depiction of women, who emerge – in the majority of films discussed in this thesis – as largely domesticated and passive individuals drained of political agency and sexual desire (although chapter four will problematize such a hypothesis in drawing attention to the few works that critique patriarchal ideology through patterns of narrative space). As this project will show, the major difference between the two cinemas is their configuration of masculine identity, which, in Algerian cinema is celebrated in heroic and demiurgic terms, but in the French context is mediated via a carousel of traumatised antiheroes. This apparent dichotomy is at once unsurprising and deceptive: unsurprising as many of the individuals involved in active combat during the conflict were men (as such, it is men who carry the semiotic signs of defeat or victory), and deceptive, as the majority of the male protagonists in the films are associated with a violent virility irrespective of whether they appear simultaneously emasculated by defeat (as within the French films of the period). The films also differ in their relationship with nationalist ideology, which is celebrated in Algerian cinema and implicitly critiqued in French cinema. On a more general level, this thesis is important as it draws attention to the ways in which the conflict effected major changes in both countries upon gender relations and the organisation and cultural representations of social space. The films thus arguably arise out of a desire to represent, challenge, and, in some cases, manipulate the effects of these changes. This is an area of research that has remained, until this point, almost completely neglected in French and Algerian film scholarship.

### **1.1.3 *Specific limitations in existing scholarship***

I have so far illustrated how existing historiography on French and Algerian post-colonial filmmaking remains limited in its scope. However, this is not the only problem involved in critical writing on the period. One of the problems associated with French scholarship is a pervasive tendency to privilege aesthetic and formalist concerns at the expense of questions of meaning, textual analysis and representation (Hayward 2005: 204; Sellier 2008: 220). This tendency is quite obviously applicable to the large amount of work dedicated to exploring Jean-Luc Godard's formal techniques (especially his use of the 'jump-cut' in *A bout de souffle* [1960]), whilst, for example, largely ignoring his arguably conservative configurations of gendered identities (see, for example, Moullet 1960; Borde 1962). This approach also has the effect of muting the politics of the films – although this observation does not apply to more recent trends that define film form as

a potentially radical, political praxis (see, for example, Alyssa O'Brien's 2000 study of Alain Resnais's *Muriel*). Existing French scholarship is also limited in that it often approaches the period via biographical analysis of particular figures (see for example, de Baecque's 1996 monograph *Truffaut*), or, alternatively, by focusing upon the climate of cinephilia that emerged during this period and, in particular the notion of *la politique des auteurs*, which positioned the director as the unequivocal master of his work. All of these approaches have the effect of disregarding the wider ideological, economic, social, historical, political, cultural and discursive context in which the films were produced: as such they are largely apolitical and ahistorical.<sup>8</sup> That said, it is important to note the few theorists who have attempted to position post-colonial French cinema in relation to the wider context(s), notably Philip Dine (1994), Kristin Ross (1995), Benjamin Stora (1998), Naomi Greene (1999), Ginette Vincendeau (2002) and Geneviève Sellier (2008). As with these authors, one aspect of this thesis thus proposes to examine decolonization from the perspective of cultural history and the history of representations. It is also important to note that only Vincendeau (2002) and Sellier (2008) have attempted to analyse gender relations in French cinema of the period, whilst, as yet, no theorist has produced a substantial study exploring the significance of narrative space in these films.

In direct contrast, very few critics have discussed post-colonial Algerian cinema in formalist terms, with Teshome Gabriel's influential 1989 chapter 'Towards a Critical Theory of Third World Films' proving the exception to the rule. Instead, the rare chapters, articles and monographs dedicated to the subject involve a rather limited tendency towards framing the films within their historical, political and cinematic context without offering any sustained textual analysis of individual films.<sup>9</sup> This tendency is particularly evident in the work of Benjamin Stora (1998), Roy Armes (2005, 2011), Kamal Salhi (2008), and Denise Brahimi (2009). Only Lotfi Maherzi (1980) and Guy Austin (2007, 2009, 2011, 2012) have offered any kind of sustained analysis of individual post-colonial Algerian films.

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<sup>8</sup> See also how Christian Metz's 1974 syntagmatic analysis of *Adieu Phillipine* completely drains the film of all political merit.

<sup>9</sup> One possible reason for this trend is that many works of 1960s Algerian cinema have, until very recently, been difficult to source or screen outside Algeria.

#### 1.1.4 *Advantages of focusing upon representations of narrative space and gender*

This thesis has taken many forms. Earlier chapters discussed a number of diverse topics, including; the politics of the ‘gaze’, spectatorship, on and off-screen (filmic) space and trauma. Indeed, until relatively late in this project, the thesis was comprised of three main chapters: space, gender and trauma. Given the multiple avenues of enquiry that this project could potentially have pursued, why then, do I feel that focusing exclusively upon representations of narrative space and gender is a viable and productive method of approaching French and Algerian films produced during the years of decolonization? In order to respond to this complex question, the following few paragraphs will be split into two parts: space and gender.

This introduction has illustrated how French scholarship systematically ignored the wider historical context in which the films were produced in its insistent focus upon aesthetics and film form. By contrast, in exploring the film’s representation of narrative space (public, private; centre, periphery), this thesis aims to locate the cinematic narratives in relation to what Kristin Ross has defined as the wider ‘dismantling of all earlier spatial arrangements’ (1995: 23) that characterised this era in France. In particular, this process of dismantling took two forms. As Ross (1995) has persuasively shown, this period witnessed the discursive reconceptualisation of the private realm, which took place largely on the pages of women’s magazines and the popular press. According to the proscriptive discourse of these magazines, one of the primary concerns of post-colonial France should be to redefine the ideal home as a modern (in other words technocentric) space, cleansed of all traces of its past. Quite obviously, this process of modernization was evident in the sudden arrival of consumer durables into the private interior of the domestic domain (including washing machines and electric appliances), but it was equally applicable to the ways in which women’s magazines represented the home as a reassuringly apolitical space cleansed of all the traces of France’s colonial legacy. Hence, the complete absence of any kind of reference to the waves of *appelés* who returned to France – and indeed to domestic reality – during this period, alongside the vast number of Algerian immigrants exiled from their homeland for supporting the colonial regime (see, for example, *les harkis*).<sup>10</sup> If only in this respect, the popular press can thus be seen to have revolved around a neo-colonial logic, predicated on valorising a ‘hygienic’ French center at the expense of other ‘unhygienic’,

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<sup>10</sup> The terms ‘harkis’ refers to Algerian nationals who fought for the French army during the conflict. The phrase is sometimes used derogatorily to describe all Algerian Muslims who supported colonial ideology.

elements metonymically linked to France's colonial past. One of the advantages of analysing representations of narrative space in post-colonial French films is thus that it unearths a major difference between these films and the popular culture of the period. In particular, chapter two, section one of this thesis will attempt to locate the anti-colonial potential of these films in the way in which they instead dramatise the often painful reinsertion of *les appelés* into the 'domestic topography' of the home (Vincendeau 2002: 126).

A number of theorists have also drawn attention to the large-scale socio-spatial shifts that characterised the years of decolonization, principally in relation to the structure of urban spaces (Marchand 1993; Ross 1995: 145-157; Stora 1998: 213; Kipfer 2007:19). Of particular note are the ways in which, during this period, France witnessed a massive influx of Algerian immigrants fleeing a country torn apart by conflict and ideological rifts linked to accusations of support for the colonial apparatus (see the fate of the *les harkis*). Yet the everyday reality of post-colonial (urban) France proved strangely reminiscent of life in the colonies, which Frantz Fanon described as an existence 'cut in two' in his 1961 monograph *Les Damnés de la terre* (2001 [1961]: 37). This hypothesis is supported by an analysis of the socio-spatial shifts enacted by civil servants and town planners, who, often after returning from working in the colonies themselves, set about expelling potentially unhygienic and dangerous elements from central urban areas. As Algerian immigrants were implicitly associated with France's so-called 'dirty war' in the colonies (Bourdet 1956 cited in Ross 1995: 215), they thus became one of the primary targets of what was, in many ways, a neo-colonial process of ethno-cultural and racial expulsion: from the centre to the margins. The eventual result of this process of spatial modernization and suburbanization was the large-scale modernist housing developments which now dominate the peripheries of many French cities, populated by a mixture of working-class communities and the descendants of Maghrebi immigrants (known as *beurs*). Analysing how films produced during this period represent this process is an integral part of the fourth chapter of this thesis. In particular, this part of my project will assess the political (anti-colonial) potential of certain narratives in focusing upon how a select few directors represent protagonists in motion; from the powerful white centres of the city to the dispossessed, racialized margins (or vice versa). This trope is especially evident in Agnès Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1962) and Michel Drach's *Elise ou la vraie vie* (1970). In this respect, investigating representations of narrative space in certain films of the period allows us to simultaneously calibrate the radical political potential of post-colonial French cinema



whilst again relating this cinema to the wider context in which these films were produced (although in this case this context is based on the historical, everyday reality rather than the contours of cultural discourse).

I have so far shown how French cinema of the period stood in counterpoint to contemporaneous discourses of domesticity in depicting the modern home as a politicised space, symbolically ‘polluted’ by the traces of a conflict embodied in the figure of a returning *appelé*. By contrast, post-colonial Algeria did not witness the emergence of a popular discourse fixated upon preserving the hygienic purity of the domestic realm, and, by analogy, the ‘body politic’ through a process of modernization (Goldberg 1993: 187). Instead, dominant discourses of the period represented the home as a sacred space, associated with moral value, tradition and the past (MacMaster 2012: 4). To this trend, we may also add another spatial trope found in the discourse of post-colonial nationalism, which revolved around mythologizing the country’s rural resistance to colonial rule via the mutually supportive notions of the *bled el makhzen* (‘the [urban] lands of the government’) and the *bled es siba* (‘the [rural] lands of dissidence’), a myth bolstered by the theories of Frantz Fanon, whose notion of a revolutionary rural peasantry was popularised by his status as a cult figure in the official discourse of the FLN (that is, at least until Algeria’s second president, Boumediène, who appropriated Fanon’s theories while denying his legacy). As regards Algerian cinema of the period, this discourse is reflected in a number of works, notably *L’Opium et le bâton* (Rachedi 1969), and *Les Hors-la-loi* (Farès 1969), both of which represent the rural peasantry in monolithic terms; as a homogenous entity unequivocally committed to the nationalist cause. On a more general level, this approach allows us to see how 1960s’ Algerian cinema differs from its French counterpart in supporting rather than subverting official discourses of the period. Furthermore, this thesis also examines the ways in which certain Algerian films of this era form a subtle, retrospective critique of colonial discourse in focusing upon women who are able to transcend the confines of the domestic realm rather than being symbolically confined within it (see Lakhdar-Hamina’s 1966 *Le Vent des Aurès* [chapter three] and Gillo Pontecorvo’s 1966 *La Bataille d’Alger* [chapter four, section two]). On a similar note, chapters three and four of this thesis also investigate a number of narratives that interrogate the socio-spatial reality of colonization, itself predicated upon the manipulation, fragmentation and splitting of social space along cultural, ethnic and racial lines. This observation is especially applicable to Pontecorvo’s 1966 Algero-French co-production *La Bataille d’Alger*, which forms a potent critique of colonial ideology in dramatising (and

mythologizing) the successful transgression of three *moudjahidat* through a tense and divided Algiers. Finally, I will show how certain films of the period use Berber<sup>11</sup> notions of social space as a way of critiquing colonial legacy (see *Le Vent des Aurès* and *Les Hors-la-loi*). If only in this respect, analysing Algeria's cinema of decolonization via representations of narrative space allows us to link the films again to the cultural (colonial, nationalist, Berber) and everyday spatial reality in which the films were produced. In chapter three of this thesis, I also relate configurations of narrative space to the ways in which certain directors appropriate cinematographic and iconographic patterns from 'western' cinema (Hollywood) – or even colonial discourse.

This introduction has briefly detailed how, during the years of decolonization, France witnessed the emergence of a discourse of domesticity, which redefined the semiotic significance of the modern home. On the one hand, in representing the domestic sphere as contaminated by a returning conscript, the French films discussed in this thesis arguably stand in counterpoint to the (neo-colonial) imaginary of the popular press. As such, they can be considered as propagating an anti-colonial ideology. On the other hand, these films also share certain parallels with this discourse. These parallels are especially evident in the ways in which many films discussed in this thesis represent women as sexually 'contained' figures associated with the domestic realm (although this claim is somewhat problematized by the first scenes in *La Belle vie* and the second half of *Le Boucher*). It is notable that male war veterans were almost completely absent from popular discourses of the period.<sup>12</sup> Instead, normative masculine ideals were mediated via the political discourse of the state, which commemorated male martyrs of the French Resistance (such as Jean Moulin) in a discourse known as *résistancialisme* (Rouso 1990: 109), whilst locating sacrifice to *l'Algérie française* in the virile, macho and heroic figure of the paratrooper (Dine 1994: 32). Quite obviously, the majority of the films discussed in this thesis stand in counterpoint to this discourse in focusing upon masculine antiheroes traumatised and ashamed by their pasts in the colonies. However, this observation also proves somewhat problematic, in that many of these antiheroes continue to embody a number of traits associated with patriarchal configurations of masculine identity; notably a tendency towards virile and aggressive behaviour that is often explained and even legitimized by their role in Algeria (whether this is past or

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<sup>11</sup> Berbers (Imazighen) represent around 20 to 30 percent of the Algerian population, and have their own cultural traditions, religion (a blend of Islam with Jewish and Christian elements), and languages (Kabyle, Chaouia, Mozabite).

<sup>12</sup> Although I do not have space to do so here, one possible future avenue of study could explore why *appelés* are so absent from popular publications of the period, and the political and social implications of this.

future). Jacques Rozier's *Adieu Philippe* (1962) also shares specific parallels with political discourse of the period in its focus upon a masculine martyr (named Michel), who stoically sacrifices himself to the 'nation' at the end of the film. Finally, many of the French films discussed in this thesis appear to mirror the inherently conservative sexual politics of late 1950s' and 1960s' film culture, which, as Geneviève Sellier has persuasively shown, was based on a fundamentally androcentric concept of cinephilia and the notion of *la politique des auteurs* (the masculine author as the ultimate arbiter of his work [2008: 29]). The influence of this *politique* is evident, not only in the fact that the majority of the films in this thesis focus principally on a male character (who often functions as the director's alter-ego), but also in that the spectator is often led to empathise with this character, even when they commit arguably morally abhorrent acts. Finally, it is important to acknowledge that focusing upon representations of gender in the films allows us to explore how they deviate from what might be termed the gendered reality of this period; firstly in eliding the progressive sexual agenda pursued by women (and men) from the late 1960s onwards (this is especially applicable to *Le Boucher*), but also in largely ignoring the large-scale sexual anxieties experienced by returning *appelés* in the immediate aftermath of the war (as seen in the god-like powers of seduction attributed to many of the men in the films).

Somewhat surprisingly, a number of the gendered discourses that emerged in France during the post-independence years were also mirrored in Algeria. These parallels were especially evident in the ways in which male Algerian *moudjahiddine* were mythologized and lionized in the discourse of post-independence nationalism, a trend reflected in the films discussed in chapter three, which depict nationalist fighters as brave and fearless martyrs committed to sacrificing themselves to the 'nation' and the Algerian Revolution. On a similar note, we will also see how, in their representations of masculinity, these films echo Frantz Fanon's notion of the 'New Algerian Man', 'the cult of the martyr' (a 'cult' largely disseminated through political discourse), and, perhaps most importantly, Berber notions of masculine identity, including, notably, the ethics and aesthetics of the *nif* (an honour code associated with strength, honour and virility). Only Assia Djebar's 1978 film *La Noubia des femmes du Mont Chenoua* represents Algerian masculinity in anything other than highly patriarchal terms (see chapter four, section two). In direct contrast to men, Algerian women were often relegated to a state of domesticated passivity within the discourse of post-independence nationalism, despite the frequently active role they had played in the war (see for example, the largely urban *évoluées* who travelled to the rural maquis in order to

participate in the struggle and the urban guerrilla fighters known as *fidayate* [fire-carriers]). In the third chapter of this thesis, I illustrate how Algerian films of this period again collude with this discourse in representing women as largely veiled mothers and wives, excluded from the homosocial space of the battleground, and, by analogy, the country's narrative of national becoming (although this observation does not apply to the films discussed in chapter four, section one, which instead critique patriarchal ideology through patterns of narrative space). The third chapter of my project will also explore the ways in which 1960s' Algerian cinema reflected Berber notions of femininity, including the concept of the *hurma-haram*<sup>13</sup> (Bourdieu 2000: 46-49) and 'la mère-avant-tout' (Lacoste-Dujardin 1985: 57). To summarise, analysing post-colonial Algerian and French filmmaking via representations of narrative space and gender allows us to relate the narratives to the wider cultural and historical context which characterises the era. As such, this approach stands in contrast to previous scholarship on the period, which remained, on the French side, dominated by an ahistorical and apolitical formalism, and, on the Algerian side, by rather general summaries lacking in sustained textual analysis.

### 1.1.5 *Corpus*

In terms of corpus, this project analyses a combination of well known and more obscure works. On one hand, a large amount of scholarship has been dedicated to Alain Resnais's *Muriel ou le temps d'un retour* (1963) and Agnès Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1962) – a trend arguably associated with both directors' sustained and celebrated output (see, for example, Resnais's *Nuit et brouillard* [1955] and *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* [1961]) and Varda's *La Pointe courte* [1955]), their shared propensity towards experimental formal techniques and complex screenplays (which invite a critical reading of the works), and the fact that both films have been widely available since their release. That said, scholarship on both films remains limited in focusing almost exclusively upon representations of trauma in *Muriel* and the politics of the female gaze in *Cléo de 5 à 7* (see, for example, Greene [1999], Wilson [2006] and Flitterman-Lewis [1990] and Sellier [2008] respectively). Critics have rarely explored the political value of either film or their complex structuring of narrative space (Britton [1990] being the exception in relation to *Muriel* and Forbes [2002] being the exception

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<sup>13</sup> Bourdieu defines the *hurma-haram* as sacred, passive and feminine realm of the domestic sphere traditionally governed by the masculine honour code known as the *nif* (2000: 46-49).

in relation to *Cléo de 5 à 7*). On the other hand, apart from a select few chapters (see, for example Wood and Walker [1970] and Austin [1999]), Claude Chabrol's 1969 film *Le Boucher* remains largely underanalysed in critical discourse. One potential reason for this could be the ways in which Chabrol was systematically ostracized from the auteurist critics following an inclination towards shooting "low-brow" genre cinema, including comedy-thrillers, spy movies and polars. In this respect, this thesis contributes to Chabrol's resurrection from critical oblivion in analyzing the political value of what is perhaps his most famous film, whilst including *Le Boucher* (released in 1969) in this corpus also allows us to assess the long term legacy of decolonization alongside the profound socio-cultural shifts that characterized 1960s' France. Finally, a number of French films in this thesis have been almost completely ignored in film scholarship. This observation is particularly applicable to Jacques Rozier's 1962 work, *Adieu Philippine* (Metz [1974] and Neupert [2011] being the exceptions), Robert Enrico's *La Belle vie* (1963), and Michel Drach's Franco-Algerian co-production *Elise ou la vraie vie* (1970). With this in mind, I chose this corpus for two main reasons. Firstly, and quite obviously, in analyzing these works, this thesis hopes to address a critical blind-spot in existing scholarship on the period. However, as chapters two and four illustrate, all of these films involve a subtle although significant emphasis upon the role of social space in the post-colonial years (whether this is public/private or centre/periphery), and the ways in which gendered relations and identities are tied up with these spatial patterns. It is true that, apart from the works discussed in this thesis, a number of other French films produced during or in the immediate aftermath of the conflict attempt to interrogate the consequences of France's colonial legacy. These narratives include Louis Malle's *L'Ascenseur pour l'échafaud* (1958), Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Petit soldat* (1960/1963)<sup>14</sup> and Alain Cavalier's *Le Combat dans l'île* (1962). The main reason that I have not discussed these films at any length in this thesis is that, unlike the works discussed in chapters two and four, they do not use patterns of narrative space as an anti-colonial political praxis.

As for the Algerian corpus, it is not an exaggeration to claim that very little has been written on the narratives analysed in this thesis (Maherzi 1980 and Austin 2012 being the exceptions). Perhaps the most historically important Algerian film in this project is Mohamed Lakhdar-Hamina's 1966 film, *Le Vent des Aurès*, if only as it is technically the very first fictional Algerian film to be produced by the independent

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<sup>14</sup> Godard's film was banned in 1960 before being eventually released in 1963.

nation-state<sup>15</sup> (despite the fact that historiography on the period often erroneously positions Gillo Pontecorvo's 1966 Italo-Algerian co-production *La Bataille d'Alger* first [see chapter four, section two]). *Le Vent des Aurès* is also a significant film in that it helps to expose the limitations in using the phrase *le cinéma moudjahid* in order to describe Algerian filmmaking of the period, seeing as Lakhdar-Hamina's film involves very few images of combat or battle, but instead focuses almost exclusively upon the strained suffering of a mother-figure attempting to locate her son in the hinterlands of the Aurès region. Admittedly, both Tewfik Farès's film *Les Hors-la-loi* and Ahmed Rachedi's *L'Opium et le bâton* (both 1969) feature bombastic scenes of combat, although these narratives also appropriate formal techniques and iconography from Soviet cinema, the classic Western and Hollywood "spectacle" in order to chronicle the country's inexorable march towards national sovereignty. As such, analyzing both films again allows us to appreciate post-colonial Algerian cinema in heterogeneous rather than homogenous terms. Despite the fact that Gillo Pontecorvo's *La Bataille d'Alger* is an Italo-Algerian co-production, I have included this film in the thesis, predominantly due to its historical value (it is undoubtedly the most famous cinematic account of the conflict), but also as it forms an interesting example of a film that appears to go against the grain of the majority of Algerian films produced during the period in its urban setting and apparently egalitarian representation of gendered revolution. Finally, in chapter four, section two, I have chosen to include a somewhat later addition to Algeria's cinematic history in the form of Assia Djebar's 1978 film, *La Noubia des femmes du Mont Chenoua*. While a considerable amount of writing has been dedicated to exploring Djebar's narrative (see, for example Bensmaïa 1996; Khanna 2008; Austin 2012), including this film in my corpus also allows this thesis to assess how filmmakers responded to the long term legacy of decolonization and colonization (in this respect, Djebar's narrative, *Le Boucher* and Drach's *Elise ou la vraie vie* [1970] are perhaps comparable). Finally, as with the French films discussed in chapters two and four of this thesis, all of these films provide a fertile platform from which we can analyse how cinematic tropes reflect the landscape of contemporaneous culture (popular and official) and socio-spatial reality.

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<sup>15</sup> It is true that, before *Le Vent des Aurès*, the French FLN activist Jacques Charby had made *Une si jeune paix* (1965), whilst Ahmed Rachedi had, before filming *L'Opium et le bâton*, produced *L'Aube des damnés*, a compilation of documentary footage of the conflict.

### 1.1.6 *Methodology*

In this thesis, my methodological approach has varied according to subject matter. As of yet, no film critic has attempted to analyse patterns of narrative space in 1960s' French cinema in the same way as, for example, the archetypal melodrama (Elsaesser 1987). Given this lack of scholarship, I therefore draw largely from the work of cultural historians in order to analyse representations of narrative space in post-colonial French cinema. To be more precise, in chapter two, section one, I interrogate the relationship between films of the era and representations of domesticity in the 1960s' popular press. For this point of comparison, I draw largely from the work of cultural historians, including Henri Lefebvre (1961), Claire Duchen (1994), and Kristin Ross (1995). In part four, section one, I then compare the representations of space in a number of French films to the socio-spatial shifts that characterised the era, for example rural to urban migration and urban suburbanization. For this part of the thesis, I draw from the work of spatial historians, including Henri Lefebvre<sup>16</sup> (1976, 1977, 1978), Bernard Marchand (1993) and Stephan Kipfer (2007). As regards Algeria, a number of film theorists have previously discussed representations of narrative space in cinema of the period (Maherzi 1980; Austin 2007, 2011). As little scholarship exists on the significance of space in official discourses of the period,<sup>17</sup> this section of the thesis will expand upon Maherzi and Austin's observations in drawing primarily from the work of historians, including Frantz Fanon (1956, 1961), Zeynep Çelik (2008) and Martin Evans (2007); cultural historians, including Benjamin Stora (1998) and Joseph McGonagle and Edward Welch (2013); alongside the ethnographic and sociological studies of Berber (Kabyle) society pursued by Pierre Bourdieu (1972, 1998).

I have used a similar interdisciplinary methodological approach to analyse representations of gender in the films. As for French cinema of the period, chapters two and four draw from a methodological genealogy inherited from star studies rather than the psychoanalytic approach pioneered by film theorists in the 1970s (for example Laura Mulvey and Christian Metz). As such, the work of Geneviève Sellier (2008, 2010) and Ginette Vincendeau (2002) will prove central to my argument. I will also combine this strand of film theory with the work of cultural historians in order to again calibrate the extent to which post-colonial French cinema engages with the wider discourses of the era. With this in mind, I draw from the work of Philip Dine (1994) to

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<sup>16</sup> The main reason that I have drawn so much from Lefebvre in this thesis is that his work transcends the gap between culture and lived reality.

<sup>17</sup> This is an area of investigation that could hypothetically be pursued in other work.

analyse the figure of the paratrooper, Benjamin Stora (1998) to analyse *l'appelé*, and Henri Rousso (1990) to analyse the World War Two 'resistant' (especially in relation to the emergence of the myth of *résistancialisme* that arose in the years of decolonization). In relation to French women, Claire Duchon (1994) and Kristin Ross's (1995) work on the status of the 1950s' and 1960s' housewife within popular discourses prove key. As for representations of gender in Algerian cinema, the work of film theorists such as Guy Austin (2007, 2011, 2012) and Lotfi Maherzi (1980) will be central to the development of my argument in chapters three and four. That said, for this part of my thesis, I will also draw from the work of cultural theorists, including Frantz Fanon (1959, 1961) and Ranjana Khanna (2008), and historians, Alice Cherki (2006), Natalya Vince (2009) and Neil MacMaster (2012).

### **1.1.7 Structure**

This thesis is organised into four broad chapters. In this first chapter, I have explained the theoretical and methodological approach that I have adopted in the writing of this project. I also provide; firstly, a summary of existing literature on France and Algerian filmmaking of the period, and secondly, an overview of the historical and cultural context which frames the films. Chapter two of this thesis focuses specifically and exclusively on a number of French films produced in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, including *Adieu Philippine* (1962), *La Belle vie* (1963) and *Muriel* (1963), alongside Claude Chabrol's *Le Boucher*, released in 1969. This chapter will be split into two sections. In the first section, I illustrate how all of these films stand in counterpoint to popular discourses of the period in representing the modern home as a politicised space, symbolically polluted by traces of the Algerian War. It is in this process of pollution or contamination that I will locate the anti-colonial potential of the films. In the second section of this chapter, I will then show how this desire to critique colonialism also coexists with a gendered conservatism which elides or in some cases completely ignores the feminist agenda pursued by women (and men) during the 1960s.

The third chapter of this thesis then shifts attention in order to focus specifically upon a number of Algerian films released during this period, namely *Le Vent des Aurès* (1966), *Les Hors-la-loi* (1969), and *L'Opium et le bâton* (1969). This chapter will be split into two broad sections. In the first section, I will again focus on how these films mediate anti-colonial ideology characteristic of the period through patterns of narrative space. However, whilst French cinema focuses primarily upon the domestic sphere as



the site of narrative action, Algerian filmmaking will be shown to represent (masculine) figures who often transgress and transcend the private threshold of the home in order to inhabit the ‘revolutionary’ vistas of *bled es siba*. In this section, I will link this act of transgression to the anti-colonial politics of the films. In the second section of this chapter, I will then investigate how gendered relations and identities are constructed in post-colonial Algerian cinema. In this analysis, I will illustrate how these narratives collude with the dominant politics of the period in representing men as fearless warriors (located in public space), and women as veiled wives and mothers (located in the domestic space of the home).

The fourth chapter of this thesis examines the few films of the period (French and Algerian) which do not fit into this taxonomy. In the first section of this chapter, I will show how both Agnès Varda’s *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1962) and Michel Drach’s *Elise ou la vraie vie* (1970) use patterns of narrative space (private, public; centre, periphery), not only as anti-colonial praxis, but also to challenge patriarchal ideology. This section will focus specifically upon how the female characters in these narratives occupy a number of spaces traditionally associated with masculine identity, including the street and the factory line. In the second part of this chapter, we will then see how a similar observation is also applicable to a number of post-colonial Algerian films, including *La Bataille d’Alger* (1966) and *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua* (1978). As such, I will argue that both of these works challenge the reinstatement of patriarchal values that characterised the years of independence.

## 1.2 Literature Review

I will now provide a summary of the existing literature on post-colonial Algerian and French filmmaking, before focusing specifically upon a number of works which have informed the development of this project. Apart from Lotfi Maherzi’s ground-breaking monograph *Le cinéma algérien: institutions, imaginaire, idéologie* (1980 [see below]), one of the earliest contributions to scholarship on 1960s’ Algerian filmmaking was Robert Stam and Louise Spence’s 1983 article in *Screen*, ‘Colonialism, Racism and Representation’. In this article, Stam and Spence explore the racist stereotypes which have often characterised western representations of Africa and the Maghreb, before shifting emphasis to discuss Gillo Pontecorvo’s *La Bataille d’Alger*, which, in their words, ‘exploits the identificatory mechanism of cinema on behalf of the colonised rather than the coloniser’ (1983: 12-13). Stam and Spence’s article is obviously a

product of its time; a claim firstly supported by the ways they conceptualise spectatorship as a radical political praxis (a vestige of 1970s' apparatus theory, for example Mulvey [1975] and Metz [1982]), but also in their dithyrambic reception of *La Bataille d'Alger*, which stands in contrast to more recent, critical readings of Pontecorvo's representation of women (for example Khanna [2008], see below). Nevertheless, Stam and Spence's article is historically important, as an early attempt at breaking with the Eurocentrism which had, until then, dominated western film theory.

Apart from Stam and Spence's article, one of the most important early pieces of scholarship on post-colonial Maghrebi cinema was by Teshome Gabriel, whose 1989 chapter, 'Towards a Critical Theory of Third World Films' was – and remains – highly influential in the field. According to Gabriel, post-colonial cinematic history can be divided into a number of phases: firstly, the assimilation phase in which cinematic narratives often unknowingly draw from the colonist culture; secondly a remembrance phase characterised by nostalgia and a desire to return to a pre-colonial idealized idyll; and, thirdly, a combative phase which, according to Gabriel, signifies maturation and the attainment of cultural sovereignty (1989: 37). Gabriel's chapter is also important – especially for this project – in its emphasis upon the significance of the space within the post-colonial imaginary. In particular, Gabriel argues that many non-western films reflect the 'unrestricted natural landscape' of the Third World in 'emphasising "space" over "time"' rather than the western tradition of privileging time over space (1989: 44). My own work draws from this argument in exploring the ways in which post-colonial Algerian cinema uses patterns of narrative space as an anti-colonial, political praxis (see chapter three, section one).

A number of more recent works have attempted to provide a contextual overview of Algerian cinema, including Mouny Berrah's 'Histoire et idéologie du cinéma algérien sur la guerre' (1996), Kamal Salhi's 'From state cinema to cinéma d'auteur' (2008), and Roy Armes's similarly named 'From state production to cinéma d'auteur' (2011). If only as they each contribute to the relatively scant historiography on post-colonial Algerian cinema, these pieces of analysis are important. However, although these works frame the films within their historical, political and cinematic context, they do not offer any sustained textual analysis of individual films. This observation is also applicable to Benjamin Stora's wide ranging thesis on the conflict, *La Gangrène et l'oubli* (1998). One of the most interesting accounts of the period has been proposed by Viola Shafik, whose monograph *Arab Cinema* (2007) includes a number of sections dedicated to post-colonial Algerian filmmaking. Perhaps the most

significant aspects of Shafik's work is the way she eschews discussions of film form or industry in order to instead focus on such diverse topics as 'Mythological History', 'Image and Symbolic Arrangement', 'Realism' and '*cinéma d'auteur*'. The result is an intellectually stimulating and wide ranging study, which bears some similarities to Guy Austin's equally successful work, *Algerian National Cinema* (2012 [see below]). Finally, it is important to note the surprisingly wide range of scholarship that has been published on the work of Assia Djebar, and, in particular, her 1978 film *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua*. Early writing on Djebar's film tended towards isolated analysis. This trend was exemplified in the work of Anne Donadey (1996) and Reda Bensmaïa (1996), whose astute examination of Djebar's use of narrative space has influenced much of the analysis in chapter four, section two. More recently, scholars have begun to locate Djebar's work in the wider context of Maghrebi women's cinema, analyzing filmmakers from Tunisia, Morocco, France and Algeria together in an approach, which, like my own, tends to use textual analysis rather than rigid formalism. Critics who have adopted such an approach include Ranjana Khanna (2008), Stacy Weber-Fève (2010) and Florence Martin (2011).

On the French side, early scholarship on 1960s' French cinema tended towards producing short reviews of New Wave (and Left Bank) titles, rather than offering any kind of sustained, textual analysis of the films. These reviews featured in a number of journals, including *Télérama*, the Left leaning *Positif*, and, perhaps most influentially, *Cahiers du cinéma*, the journal established by André Bazin and run by an number of now famous cinephiles, including François Truffaut, Claude Chabrol, Jean-Luc Godard, Eric Rohmer and Jacques Rivette. One of the most significant films to emerge during this period was Jean-Luc Godard's 1963 work, *Le Petit soldat*, which produced a mixed reaction from critics perplexed by Godard's ambiguous political stance on the Algerian War (see, for example, Philippe 1963). By contrast, in a 1963 review of *Muriel* (in the journal *Film Review*), Susan Sontag celebrated Resnais's narrative as a potent anti-colonial statement, describing it as a film which deliberately attempts to alienate the spectator through formal technique. It is important to note that many of these reviews remained limited in their brevity alongside a pervasive tendency to privilege aesthetic and formalist concerns at the expense of questions of politics, textual analysis and representation. It was only in the 1970s that critics began to produce monograph-length works analysing the period, including, *Claude Chabrol* (Wood and Walker 1970), *The New Wave: Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rohmer, Rivette* (Monaco 1977) and *Alain*

*Resnais: the role of imagination* (Monaco 1978). However, none of these titles offer a sustained critique of the anti-colonial politics characteristic of the period, nor the gendered/spatial dimension of these works.

More recent scholarship has tended towards discussing the period via a variety of different themes, fraternities or formal techniques. With this in mind, Philip Dine's 1994 monograph *Images of the Algerian War: French Fiction and Film, 1954-1992* has proven especially useful in the development of this project, if only as it focuses upon a number of often short, militant films associated with the clandestine circuit of *le cinéma parallèle* (see, for example, René Vautier's 1957 film *Algérie en flammes*) rather than the New Wave, whilst Michael Rothberg's *Multidirectional Memory* (2009) includes a short but significant discussion regarding the anti-colonial politics of Edgar Morin and Jean Rouch's pioneering work of *cinéma vérité*, *Chronique d'un été* (1960). One of the most influential pieces of scholarship on this era is Naomi Greene's *Landscapes of Loss* (1999), which adopts an interdisciplinary methodology in drawing from the work of cultural historians, historians, trauma theory and theorists of memory. The result is a persuasive and culturally sensitive study which explores the complex relationship between memories of the Occupation and the Algerian War (see Rothberg 2009 [above] and Silverman 2013). However, Greene's work also remains limited in scope seeing as she again analyses Resnais's *Muriel* (as an anti-colonial text), rather than attempting to tackle some of the more obscure films that I deal with in this thesis (for example, *Adieu Philippine* and *La Belle vie*).

Film scholars have only recently begun to question the sexual politics involved in 1960s' French cinema: the two authors of this academic vanguard being Ginette Vincendeau (2001, 2002 [see below] and Geneviève Sellier (2008 [see below], 2011). Of particular note is Vincendeau's 2001 chapter 'Autistic Masculinity in Jean-Pierre Melville's Crime Thrillers', and Sellier's 2011 article 'French New Wave Cinema and the Legacy of Male Libertinage', both of which aim to investigate the often neglected area of 1960s' masculine subjectivity through close textual analysis (which this thesis also aims to do with reference to the Algerian War). Vincendeau and Sellier's work is especially innovative given the critical tendency towards discussing gender in almost exclusively feminine terms. This observation is supported by the huge amount of scholarship on Agnès Varda's critically acclaimed 'Left Bank' film, *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1962 [see chapter four, section one]), which largely focuses upon Varda's construction of feminine identity. Undoubtedly the most influential of these works is Sandy Flitterman-Lewis's 1990 reading, which analyses the film from a loosely psychoanalytic

perspective, focusing specifically upon issues of spectatorship and ‘the gaze’. Fewer theorists have attempted to address Varda’s highly significant representation of narrative space.

### 1.2.1 *Gender*

Neil MacMaster’s *Burning the Veil: the Algerian War and the ‘emancipation’ of Muslim women, 1954 – 62* (2012) is a detailed and comprehensive exploration of how French colonial authorities and army officials deployed a so-called programme of liberation during the conflict in order to ostensibly liberate Algerian women from the perceived patriarchal barbarity of traditional Algerian society. In terms of methodology, the first half of MacMaster’s largely historical work draws from a previously unreleased archive of materials in order to explore the multifaceted nature of this modernization project, including; the ‘reform of the personal status law, granting of franchise, health and security programmes, educational provision and unveiling’ (2012: 3). In relation to my own work, this section of *Burning the Veil* is especially relevant as it helps potentially explain why certain strata of Algerian society (notably the puritanical fraternity of influential Algerian-Islamic scholars known as the *Ulemas*), explicitly called for the reinforcement of the veil (and by extension the symbolic confinement and subjugation of Algerian women) as part of a wider process of ‘decolonizing’ the post-colonial Algerian nation-state. As I illustrate in chapter three, section two, this conception of re-veiling as an anti-colonial act arguably informs much of the sexual politics of Algerian cinema of this period, including *Le Vent des Aurès*, *L’Opium et le bâton* and *Les Hors-la-loi*. In addition to the veil, MacMaster also highlights the symbolic significance of domestic space in the conflict. Of particular importance is MacMaster’s definition of the domestic domain as a form of battleground, between a colonial force bent on symbolically penetrating and ‘unveiling’ the private, everyday lives of Algerian society (an extension of a Eurocentric cultural model of domesticity), and a reactive, nationalist conception of the home as ‘the last remaining bastion of religious, cultural and social identity’ (2012: 4). In this respect, MacMaster’s observations support Frantz Fanon’s famous definition of the colonial mentality in the following terms:

if we want to destroy the structure of Algerian society, its capacity for resistance, we must first of all conquer the women; we must go and find them behind the veil where they hide themselves and in the houses where the men keep them out of sight (1965 [1959]: 37-38, see below).

Again, it is arguably due to these colonial policies that post-independence Algerian cinema appears so keen to emphasise and maintain the role of domestic space and the veil in the cultural imaginary.

In the second half of *Burning the Veil*, MacMaster turns his attention to the role and status of Algerian women in the revolution and in the immediate aftermath of independence. In this section, MacMaster initially breaks down women's role in the conflict into three main categories. The first type of female nationalist analysed by MacMaster is the figure of the urban *fidayate* (fire carrier), who carried weapons, information and supplies through besieged cities such as Bone, Constantine and Algiers (2012: 316-319). Perhaps the most important aspect of these militants was the way in which they were mythologized in the post-colonial era despite the fact that the vast majority of women who participated in the conflict were based in rural, peasant areas. These observations thus explain the ways in which Pontecorvo's film *La Bataille d'Alger* (1966) can be seen to misrepresent and mythologize the revolution in its almost exclusive focus upon female urban resistance. The second figure analysed in *Burning the Veil* is the *moussebilate*, that is, the largely peasant women who provided pastoral care for the ALN members (*l'Armée de libération nationale*) in the rural maquis. MacMaster's analysis of these women is important as they appear to resemble the majority of largely passive, domesticated female protagonists in Algerian films of the period, including *Le Vent des Aurès*, *L'Opium et le bâton* and *Les Hors-la-loi*. However, this observation is also important in that it highlights the ways in which almost all of the narratives produced during this period occlude the small but significant percentage of largely middle class, educated women who travelled from urban areas in order to join the rural resistance. As MacMaster illustrates, these *évoluées* were often treated with suspicion on their arrival in the maquis by nationalist fraternities steeped in rural, patriarchal conventions. Indeed, it is for this very reason that *les évoluées* were consigned to discursive margins of national becoming in a post-war era characterized by a similar desire to maintain patriarchal tradition (2012: 348-395). One aim of this research is thus to illustrate how the reinstatement of patriarchal ideology is mirrored in the conservative sexual politics of post-independence Algerian cinema.

A different approach to the period is adopted by Ranjana Khanna, whose 2008 monograph *Algeria Cuts* aims to explore the ways in which Algerian women have been omitted or ‘cut’ from the dominant structures of colonial and postcolonial representation, including the fields of art, film, literature, politics and law. In terms of methodology, Khanna’s text draws from structural and post-structural theorists such as Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida, cultural historians such as Benjamin Stora, post-colonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha, Frantz Fanon and the psychoanalytic work of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. This interdisciplinary approach is particularly evident in the opening chapter of *Algeria Cuts* (entitled ‘The Living Dead’), in which Khanna explores the significance of Mohamed Garne, a French citizen who was awarded compensation in 2001 (including disability benefits and a partial military pension), after it emerged that his mother, Kheira, had been systematically raped over a prolonged period by French officers during the war. According to Khanna, in ‘the awarding of reparation from father to son, Kheira became incidental, the instrument of the violent reproduction of the masculinist state’ (2008: 4). It is this judicial case that establishes the premise of *Algeria Cuts*, which analyses the forms of ‘cutting, interruption, impurity and incommensurability’ inherent in France and Algeria’s representation of women (2008: 5).

In relation to my own work, the most important part of *Algeria Cuts* is Khanna’s comparative analysis of Pontecorvo’s 1966 Italo-Algerian co-production *La Bataille d’Alger* and Assia Djebar’s 1978 film *La Noubia des femmes du Mont Chenoua*. In her introduction to both narratives, Khanna defines Pontecorvo’s film as an example of what Teshome Gabriel (drawing from the two Argentine directors, Fernando Solinas and Octavio Gettino) termed ‘third cinema’, that is, ‘a political cinema of decolonization that aims to dismantle the hegemony of Hollywood filmmaking’ (2008 : 105), whilst classifying Djebar’s film in terms of a ‘fourth cinema’, ‘which involves a melancholic reminder sometimes known as *jouissance* that cannot be addressed by guerrilla cinema’ (2008: 106 [emphasis in original]). In this respect, Khanna’s notion of fourth cinema mirrors – to a certain extent – Ella Shohat’s concept of post-Third-Worldist cinema, which ‘interrogates the limits [of the nation] through the grids of class, gender, sexuality and diasporic identities’ (2003: 74). That said, Khanna’s reliance upon the notion of third cinema is not unproblematic, primarily as Teshome’s teleological taxonomy (which associates the passing of time with the emergence of a radical political consciousness expressed in film form) has proved blind to the

protracted vicissitudes often involved in the decolonization process (for example the civil war which ravaged Algeria in the 1990s). This is the first of two methodological problems inherent within Khanna's otherwise illuminating work. Having established a qualitative distinction between the two films, Khanna then analyses the ways in which Pontecorvo's film elides the participation of Algerian women from the narrative of national becoming. In order to support her hypothesis, Khanna concentrates on what is arguably the best known sequence in the film, that is, Pontecorvo's dramatisation of the three *fidayate* (fire-carriers), who carry bombs through a tense and divided Algiers. In the following analysis (based heavily on the Lacanian concept of the mirror-image), Khanna describes how this sequence suppresses the subjectivity of the women in its formal techniques (deviation from the neo-realist aesthetics that underpin much of the film), *mise-en-scène* (the significance of mirrors) and lack of dialogue (which was removed to the horror of the scriptwriter Franco Solinas). According to Khanna, as 'the women exist outside of the terms of the symbolic they become not the (desirer) of the imago in the mirror but the reflective material itself' (2008: 122).

Khanna's complex reading of *La Bataille d'Alger* is certainly persuasive. However, I would argue that her chapter is also flawed for two main reasons. The first reason relates to the ways in which this interpretation appears to ignore the historical specificity of the region and period in drawing largely from the theories of Jacques Lacan, a psychoanalytic approach to film studies loosely based on 1970s' apparatus theory and which has been defined as 'totalizing, repetitive and ahistorical' (Hughes and Williams 2001: 5). Adopting a psychoanalytic approach to Algerian film is also arguably problematic given that psychoanalysis has been criticised for phallogentrism (the privileging of the phallus as the ultimate arbiter of meaning) and, more importantly, Eurocentrism (Frosh 2006). In drawing instead from the work of historians and cultural historians, my work hopes to avoid such methodological problems. The second flaw in Khanna's work relates to an apparent ignorance regarding the cinematic context in which the film was released (in other words, the small but significant wave of Algerian national films produced in the aftermath of independence). Interpreting *La Bataille d'Alger* in relation to – as opposed to removed from – this cinema thus emphasises rather than undermines the progressive political potential of the film through a close analysis of the trope of female, gendered transgression. In the pages that follow this analysis, Khanna then shifts her attention to Assia Djébar's 1978 film *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua*. The influence of psychoanalytic theory is less evident here, with Khanna describing Djébar's film as a narrative 'in which women's gazes are not



forbidden or reflected inward, and when women's sounds are not severed' (2008: 124). My own reading of the film expands upon Khanna's effective although short analysis in drawing attention to how, like Pontecorvo, Djébar uses the trope of female spatial transgression as a method of critiquing patriarchal ideology (see chapter four, section two).

One of the few theorists to offer a wide-ranging analysis of representations of gender in Algerian cinema (alongside Austin 2012) is the Algerian cultural theorist Lotfi Maherzi, whose little-known 1980 monograph *Le cinéma algérien: institutions, imaginaire, idéologie* informs much of the work in this thesis. In terms of methodology, Maherzi's text is split into two parts: 'les fondements économiques et institutionnelles du cinéma algérien', which focuses on Algerian cinematic industry; and 'imaginaire et discours idéologique', which offers a highly innovative and indeed pioneering textual analysis of post-colonial Algerian cinematic history. Perhaps the most striking aspect of Maherzi's work is the ways in which it differs from the approach adopted by European film scholars of the same period, who instead appropriated theories from European psychoanalysts and post-structuralists in focusing primarily upon the notions of the 'gaze', suture and spectatorship (see for example Doane 1982; Metz 1982). Whilst Ranjana Khanna has extended this methodological lineage in applying similar theories to *La Bataille d'Alger*, Maherzi's approach appears, in my own view, to be more suited to an analysis of Algerian cinema, primarily as it is rooted in the historical specificity and discursive climate characteristic of the era. One of the most interesting aspects of Maherzi's work is that it displays a surprising sensibility towards the sexual politics at play within early Algerian cinema, especially as *Le cinéma algérien* was written just a few years after western film scholars had initially begun to question the sexual politics of classical Hollywood cinema (see, for example Rosen 1973; Mulvey 1975; Haskell 1987). Maherzi's sensibility towards configurations of gender is especially apparent in chapter one of the second part of *Le cinéma algérien* (entitled 'saisie de l'imaginaire contenu dans la production filmique'), which initially focuses on representations of women in *Le Vent des Aurès*, *Le charbonnier* (Bouamari 1972), *Vent de Sud* (Riad 1975) and *Echebka* (Benedouche 1976). Maherzi does not come to a particularly positive conclusion regarding the role of women in these narratives, claiming that, when they are visible, women occupy a passive, domesticated and frequently victimized position as wife or mother rather than active participant in the battle for national sovereignty (an observation largely supported by my own work). In his words, 'la place

de la femme dans le cinéma algérien est presque toujours absente ou du moins elle n'occupe que rarement le devant de la scène' (1980 : 262). Maherzi also draws attention to the ways in which these films often associate Algerian women, and more precisely, mothers, with indigenous space, claiming (in relation to *Echebka*) that 'la terre représente [...] l'espace maternel, c'est-à-dire, celui des origines, celui où baigne le féminin. Dans cet espace, la mère et la terre sont les garants des bonnes traditions' (1980 : 237). This observation is especially relevant as it demonstrates the close relationship that exists between configurations of narrative space and the sexual politics of the films.

In the second part of this chapter, Maherzi then shifts his attention to cinematic representations of Algerian men. Of particular note is Maherzi's discussion regarding the figure of *le moudjahid* (*le maquisard*), the first and most important of three masculine role models that, according to Maherzi, feature prominently in post-independence Algerian film (the other two being *le fellah* [*le paysan*] and *l'intellectuel* [*le responsable politique, l'instituteur*]) (1980: 245). Within this taxonomy, Maherzi defines the archetypal *moudjahid* as an idealised although ultimately depersonalised figure who is often depicted selflessly sacrificing himself to the national cause through acts of violence and martyrdom. In his words, 'ce qui caractérise le moudjahid, c'est également son sens du sacrifice, de l'audace et de l'héroïsme sans borne' (1980: 247 [see also Shafik 2007: 175]). Chapter three, section two of my thesis aims to expand upon these observations in defining the figure of the *moudjahid* (for example Ali in *L'Opium et le bâton*) as the embodiment of a constellation of patriarchal masculine ideals, including virility, machismo and heroism. In this respect, I position the figure of the *moudjahid* as central within the conservative sexual politics that underpin many of the films of this period. I also expand upon Maherzi's useful although ultimately descriptive analysis in illustrating how the figure of the *moudjahid* arguably mirrors the wider contours of nationalist discourse of the period, including Frantz Fanon's notion of the 'New Algerian Man' and the 'cult of the martyr'.

In relation to French cinema of the period, Geneviève Sellier's *Masculine Singular: French New Wave Cinema* (2008) is key. Sellier's methodology is especially significant in that it breaks from the formalist concerns characteristic of much of the French discourse on *la nouvelle vague*, in order to instead focus upon issues relating to representation and gender – a theoretical perspective that, as Sellier rightly argues, addresses one of the most conspicuous 'blind spots in the French historiography of the

New Wave' (2008: 7). In this respect, *Masculine Singular* can be seen to share methodological parallels with the work of Guy Austin, Ginette Vincendeau, Lotfi Maherzi and, perhaps more obliquely, Pierre Bourdieu, rather than the psychoanalytic approach to Algerian film pursued by Ranjana Khanna. It is this 'sociocultural perspective' (Sellier 2008: 5) which I wish to adopt in this thesis. Sellier's work is also interdisciplinary in that it draws from a large and varied pool of discursive sources, including film reviews and press articles written at the time. Combining analysis of these sources with often astute textual analysis of the films, Sellier thus constructs the main premise of her argument; namely that New Wave cinema is founded upon a fundamentally androcentric perspective which naturalizes the masculine as universal (2008: 8).

Whilst the first half of *Masculine Singular* focuses on the discursive, theoretical and cinematic context which frames the films, it is the second half of Sellier's monograph which is especially important in relation to my own work. In chapter seven, Sellier explores the ways in which certain New Wave narratives ostensibly draw from a history of Romanticism (Rousseau and Byron) in associating masculinity with the conservative traits of virility, machismo and a quest for ontological solitude (2008: 128). It is for this reason that Sellier describes Jean-Luc Godard's 1963 *Le Petit soldat* as 'creating an aggressively misogynistic masculinity, at once "virile" and immature, a contradictory mix that invites the spectator into an empathetic relation with the character' (2008: 136). As I show in chapter two, section two, this conception of masculine identity is also evident in a number of films discussed in this thesis, which feature a carousel of duplicitous and sexually predatory men unable to express the trauma of conflict through anything but sporadic outbursts of violence and barely suppressed rage. In chapter eight, Sellier then turns her attention to the women of the New Wave. Sellier's aim in this chapter is clear: to deconstruct the myth of the New Wave as a vehicle for modern emancipated woman by instead illustrating how narratives of the period defined women alternately as 'the woman-child' (*Le Petit soldat* [Godard 1963]), derisory shop-girls (Chabrol, Rozier) and, more generally, as the embodiment of a Pygmalion myth founded upon a conception of woman as the creation of the masculine *auteur* (see, in particular, Godard's relationship with Anna Karina). Admittedly, Sellier does identify a number of examples of 'new femininity' (2008: 170) found in the star-image of Jeanne Moreau, Emmanuelle Riva in Alain Resnais's 1959 *Hiroshima mon amour* and Corinne Marchand in Agnès Varda's 1962 *Cléo de 5 à 7*, although these films are defined as atypical in relation to the overarching misogynist

and patriarchal tendencies of the period. One of the most important aspects of this chapter is Sellier's observation that a small number of French films reflect tropes associated with nineteenth-century literary modernism (in particular Flaubert and Baudelaire) in depicting women as alienated objects of quasi-sociological, ethnographic study (2008: 120, 149). As I show in chapter two, section one of this thesis, this observation is particularly applicable to *La Belle vie* (Enrico 1963), *Muriel* (Resnais 1963), and *Le Boucher* (Chabrol 1969), all of which depict women as anxious, alienated, and domesticated individuals who depend upon men for emotional support.

Sellier's undeniably influential work is significant in that it systematically deconstructs one of the central tenets of previous European film scholarship, that is, the New Wave as a radical vanguard of cinematic expression devoid of traces of the past. Instead, *la nouvelle vague* is positioned within a broad continuum of fundamentally patriarchal cultural discourses, including literary modernism and Romanticism. However, *Masculine Singular* is also problematic for a number of reasons. One possible criticism of Sellier's work is that it appears to define French cinema of the period under the totalising rubric of 'the New Wave', when, in reality, this period was made up of a variety of different aesthetic fraternities (see above for a description of these). In drawing attention to a number of films which do not fit into the mould of the New Wave, this thesis thus conceives of 1960s' French cinema in heterogeneous rather than homogeneous terms. *Masculine Singular* also arguably overstates the extent to which New Wave narratives appropriated tropes from (an often distant) French literary tradition, rather than for example, the equally misogynistic (and more recent) *film noir* (for example *The Big Sleep* [Hawks 1946]). In this respect, this thesis will question Sellier's claims in drawing attention to other possible reasons for the conservative sexual politics which characterise this era of filmmaking.

A possible reason for this gendered conservatism is proposed in Mark Betz's 2009 work *Beyond the Subtitle* (2009), which attempts to transcend the dominant tendency in European film theory to define Hollywood as the generative source of art cinema (2009: 99). Instead, Betz analyses the emergence of modern European cinema as a response to the death of European colonialism – a theoretical approach which shares parallels with this thesis (although Betz compares the New Wave with new Italian cinema rather than Algerian narratives of the period). Out of the four large chapters which make up *Beyond the Subtitle*, chapter three is undoubtedly the most important in relation to my own work. At the beginning of this chapter, Betz summarises the tendency within contemporaneous film criticism to define women's role within the

New Wave as the embodiment ‘of egalitarian relations between men and women [...], unencumbered by the inevitability of marriage, facility and domestication’ (2009: 95). The remainder of Betz’s chapter is then dedicated to exposing this definition as a myth by analysing what he terms the trope of the ‘wandering woman’ (2009: 93), a female *flâneur* (in other words, *flâneuse*) who, according to Betz, embodies ‘the emotional and spiritual isolation’ of the bourgeois European subject (2009: 97). In relation to my own work, this observation is particularly relevant in that it effectively demythologises one of the central traits of 1950s’ and 1960s’ French cinematic discourse, which, as Betz shows, tended to regard the New Wave (and its associated fraternities) as a celebration of female liberation (see chapter two, section two). Instead, as Betz claims, women in post-war European films are associated with a sense of profound dislocation, ‘signified spatially by an ultimately uninhabitable view of the modern European city’ (2009: 98).

Whilst *Beyond the Subtitle* defines this alienation as a vehicle for mediating the demise of empire, my own work explores the ways in which this trope is bound up with – and even dependent upon – the politics of anti-colonial resistance. In this respect, this thesis can be said to adopt a comparatively critical, even feminist tone largely absent from Betz’s work, which both fails to explicitly identify the inherently conservative politics at work in representing women as passively alienated from (rather than critically engaged with) their surrounding environment and eventually succumbs to a lack of focus. Indeed, after explicitly stating the premise of his argument in the first few paragraphs of chapter three (the ‘wandering woman’), Betz then proceeds to devote a large amount of analysis to issues only tangentially linked to this argument, including colonial cinema, post-colonial/anti-colonial French cinema (which do not all feature mobile women) and a discursive history of the trope of *flânerie* in European cultural modernism. Eventually, Betz discusses a number of films which do appear to support his notion of the wandering woman, including Louis Malle’s *L’Ascenseur pour l’échafaud* (1958), Jean-Luc Godard’s *Vivre sa vie* (1962), and Agnès Varda’s *Cléo de 5 à 7*. Yet, within this section, Betz’s argument appears increasingly contradictory. Of particular note is Betz’s definition of Varda’s film as visualising the emergence of a form of female social subjectivity (2009: 139) – a claim which appears to stand in counterpoint to his original argument regarding the sense of dislocation and alienation that characterises post-war representations of women (2009: 95). In reading the narrative through the optic of space, my own work will thus come to a more coherent conclusion regarding *Cléo de 5 à 7*, namely that Varda uses patterns of narrative space as a method of critiquing colonial and patriarchal ideology. A second criticism of

*Beyond the Subtitle* is that, like much of the critical writing on the New Wave, Betz's work appears to overemphasise the extent to which New Wave women inhabited public places (for example the street), rather than the domestic sphere. In the second chapter of my thesis, I instead draw attention to the small but significant number of titles which are set almost exclusively in the domestic realm. In this respect, these films could hypothetically be seen to share parallels with the archetypal melodrama, which similarly 'takes the notion of social crisis and mediates it in a private context, the home' (Elsaesser 1987: 47). Finally, as with Khanna, Betz's liberal appropriation of psychoanalytic terminology ('self' and 'Other') proves problematic considering he neither explains nor unpacks the theoretical significance of these terms.

A slightly different take on gender in French cinema is proposed in Ginette Vincendeau's *Stars and Stardom in French Cinema* (2002). As the title suggests, Vincendeau's work focuses primarily upon the French star system, and in particular, how this system differs from its American and English counterparts in the comparatively significant role French stars play in cultural life and the political sphere. In terms of methodology, Vincendeau's work can thus be hypothetically positioned within a broad lineage of 'star studies', involving, on one hand, discussions of stardom within the Hollywood context (*The Stars* [Morin 1961], *Stars* [Dyer 1979]), and, on the other, the few works which have attempted to transcend this paradigm (notably Guy Austin's 2003 *Stars in Modern French Film*). In relation to my own work, two chapters of Vincendeau's work are particularly relevant. The first of these chapters is entitled 'Jeanne Moreau and the Actresses of the New Wave: New Wave, new stars'. In the first few paragraphs of this chapter Vincendeau summarizes the work of Geneviève Sellier, who argues that women of the New Wave embody a carousel of retrograde feminine ideals (Sellier 1997 cited in Vincendeau 2002: 112). In analysis that follows, Vincendeau then claims that viewing the same films through the theoretical optic of star studies 'modifies Sellier's conclusions' (2002: 113). Central to Vincendeau's argument is the physical appearance of New Wave women, who embody 'a new femininity [...], fresh, alluring, different' (2002: 113). According to Vincendeau, this new femininity is especially evident in the look, behaviour, gestures and dress of often non-professional actresses such as Anna Karina, Jean Seberg, Bernadette Lafont and Marie-France Pisier, who echo the 'ideology of the New Wave: authenticity, modernity and sensuality' (2002: 117). Supported by articulate and methodologically sound textual analysis, Vincendeau's observations are persuasive. However, this argument is apparently

undercut by the final few paragraphs in this chapter, which instead emphasise the ways in which many new wave narratives also feature a number of “old” stereotypes’, (2002: 120) including; the infantilized femme fatale (Anna Karina), the idealized fantasy woman (Anouk Aimée and Delphine Seyrig) and the attractive whore (Bernadette Lafont). In this respect, although adopting a somewhat reactive posture (in relation to Sellier’s work) Vincendeau’s analysis appears increasingly unable to ignore the undeniable paradox which lies at the heart of *mademoiselle new wave*: as a figure who simultaneously exhibits an ostensibly ‘new’ physical appearance whilst embodying a constellation of retrograde feminine ideals associated with patriarchal discourse and ideology. It is precisely these ideals that this thesis seeks to explore.

In chapter seven of *Stars and Stardom*, Vincendeau shifts her attention to two male stars of the New Wave: Jean-Paul Belmondo, the comic action man of Godard’s famous 1960 film *A bout de souffle*, ‘who was at once physically tough, gracious and sexy’ (2002: 161), and Alain Delon, star of a number of neo-noir thrillers such as Melville’s 1967 *Le Samouraï*, and who Vincendeau describes as *un homme fatal* largely devoid of humour (2002: 172). Vincendeau adopts a similar methodology here as within the previous chapters of her monograph, discussing the two men in relation to cinematic context (Hollywood cinema, *film noir*), economic trends (namely American-inspired capitalism and modernization), and autobiographical details relating to the two actors’ private and public lives. In this respect, this thesis shares parallels with *Stars and Stardom* (and, in particular the work of Sellier) in both its focus (representation) and methodology (socio-cultural and discursive analysis). Vincendeau’s approach also stands in contrast to previous theories on cinematic configurations of masculinity, which generally adopt a psychoanalytic perspective (for example, Neale 1983 and Silverman 1992), or Sellier’s work, which aims to position the New Wave within a broad continuum of patriarchal discourse, including literary modernism and Romanticism. One aspect of the period that remains unexplored in Vincendeau’s otherwise illuminating work is the Algerian War, and, in particular, the impact of this war upon normative constructions of masculinity in French cinema (especially as *A bout de souffle* has been defined as an allegory for a generation marked by the spectre of conscription [Stora 1998: 40]). It is precisely this question that chapter two, section two of my thesis aims to analyse.

### 1.2.2 *Space*

As yet, no theorist has devoted an entire work to exploring the significance of the family and/or domestic space in 1950s' and 1960s' French cinema. For this reason, I have drawn instead from the work of geographers, feminist geographers, historians, cultural historians and sociologists in discussing the role of narrative space in the films. With this in mind, one of the largest influences upon this work is the French philosopher, sociologist and theorist of space, Henri Lefebvre. In his prolific career, Lefebvre wrote more than sixty monographs and three hundred articles, effecting wide ranging developments in European philosophy, geography, political science and literary criticism. Perhaps the most important of Lefebvre's works in relation to this thesis is his 1961 monograph *Critique de la vie quotidienne II, Fondements d'une sociologie de la quotidienneté*, which examines the effects of modernization upon 'everyday' French life through a potent blend of sociological, philosophical and semiological analysis (in this respect Lefebvre's work is often associated with other French theorists of the post-war everyday, notably Roland Barthes, Edgar Morin, and, to a certain extent, Jean Baudrillard). Of particular interest is Lefebvre's astute and prescient analysis of what he terms the 'dazzling wonders' of the 'romantic [women's] press', which disseminate an ideology of femininity under the guise of an idealised universe drained of political and semantic significance (2008 [1961]: 80). As Lefebvre claims, 'the crowning achievement of the operation, if we can call it that, is to suggest and insinuate a moral order' (2008 [1961]: 86). One of the key concepts involved in Lefebvre's discursive analysis of the everyday is the notion of reprivatization, which renders the distinction between public and private space in terms of a dichotomy through a process of retreat, or *repliement* (2008 [1961]: 87). According to Lefebvre, reprivatization emerges when a society's defining characteristic becomes its ability to limit the political socialization of individuals – the result being that citizens experience public and social matters not only as hostile or foreign but also out of one's grasp. In Lefebvre's words, 'private life and the everyday provide an alibi from escaping from history, from failures, from risks and from threats, and this creates a gulf between the "lived" and the domain of history' (2008 [1961]: 94). In relation to my own work, Lefebvre's notion of reprivatization is relevant as it highlights the ways in which popular discourses of the period represented the interior/private domain as a neo-colonial space in privileging privatized images of white, conjugal bliss over traces of racially inflected political antagonism (although this argument is implicit rather than explicit in Lefebvre's work). Drawing from Lefebvre's



theories regarding the modern home, chapter two of this thesis will thus illustrate how certain French films of the period subvert this discourse by instead depicting the domestic realm as polluted by the politics of an empire in dramatic demise. In this respect, representations of domestic space are shown to be key in the anti-colonial politics of the films. Apart from *Critique de la vie quotidienne II*, a sensibility towards the power of social space is also particularly apparent in Lefebvre's three works, *De l'Etat 2. De Hegel à Mao par Staline* (1976), *De l'Etat 3. Le mode de production étatique* (1977), and *De l'Etat 4. Les contradictions de l'Etat moderne* (1978). In comparison to *Critique de la vie quotidienne II*, in which Lefebvre devotes large portions of analysis to discursive representations of idealised domesticity, these three works instead aim to deconstruct the wider social reality of Parisian urban planning through the theoretical prism of Lenin, Luxemburg, primary accumulation, state formation, and imperialism (1976: 305-364; 1977: 86-132). Important here is Lefebvre's definition of colonization as a phenomenon involving the ability to transcend the spatial and temporal confines of the colony. Indeed, as Lefebvre – and many others following him have claimed (for example Ross 1995, see below), post-independence Paris witnessed the reiteration of colonial spatial relations in the construction of a powerful, white centre surrounded by an archipelago of banlieues and shantytowns occupied by a large percentage of ex-colonial immigrants. It is this phenomenon that is encapsulated by Lefebvre's famous observation regarding 'the colonization of everyday life' (Lefebvre cited in Ross 1995: 7). As regards my own work, Lefebvre's analysis of the post-colonial city-space is useful as it again highlights the ways in which certain French directors use the trope of peripatetic urban journeys as a method of critiquing these processes of neo-colonial spatial segregation (see chapter four, section one).

A slightly different interpretation of domestic space is proposed by Claire Duchén, who approaches the era from a largely socio-historical and discursive perspective in her comprehensive monograph, *Women's Rights and Women's Lives in France 1944-1968* (1994). Since its publication, Duchén's interdisciplinary work has been undeniably influential in exploring the apparent disjuncture that existed between, on the one hand, discourses of the period, including; political publications, proscriptive literature, autobiographies, memoirs, government statistics and socio-political commentaries; and, on the other, the socio-economic reality of women's lives during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s (1994: 6). In defining discourse as a form of ideological barometer, Duchén's work thus stands in counterpoint to the work of theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu (see below), whose study of Berber (Kabyle) space draws instead from

a history of social science and anthropology. *Women's Rights* also differs from Lefebvre's earlier work on the home in adopting the concise vocabulary of historical research rather than Lefebvre's quasi-poetic structuralist/semiological lexicon (as seen in the work of Barthes and Baudrillard). In terms of structure, the first part of *Women's Rights* chooses to focus largely upon the immediate post-Occupation years, when 'French women had to contend with continued – or increased – material hardship combined with legislation that placed them firmly in a maternal role' largely associated with the home (1994: 31). Duchen's observations here are particularly significant in analysing the ways in which both 1950s' and 1960s' French and Algerian society was predicated upon a reinstatement of patriarchal ideology, despite the radical mutation in gendered relations hoped for during World War Two (in France) and the Algerian War of Independence (in Algeria). In this part of the monograph, Duchen also defines the years 1945 to 1968 as an era in which 'mechanisms of exclusion successfully kept women out of the French political scene' (1994: 62). Chapter four of Duchen's work is particularly sensitive to the significance of social space in the construction of normative gendered roles. In this chapter, Duchen initially draws attention to the housing crisis that characterised 1950s' French society, after large numbers of *appelés*, *pieds-noirs*, ex-colonial Maghrebi immigrants suddenly arrived in mainland cities after effectively been uprooted from their homeland by the decolonization process (1994: 76). According to Duchen, this upheaval contributed to the emergence of a discourse of domesticity characterised instead by collective fantasies of homeownership, or, in her words, 'the home as a haven' (1994: 66, 76). Central to this discourse was the figure of the archetypal housewife, whose apparently liberated status (through the wonder of consumer durables), was, at the same time, undercut by her position within the domestic sphere, that is, a space associated with self-sacrifice, the illusion of female satisfaction and servitude – in other words, acquiescence to a patriarchal authority. As Duchen claims, the discourse of domesticity 'infantilised the housewife by increasing her level of dependence: economic dependence on her husband in that she no longer earned a wage [...], and dependence on the expert' (1994: 71). As such, *Women's Rights* could hypothetically be positioned within a broad continuum of works which define popular culture as a vehicle for patriarchal ideology, and, more specifically, hegemony (see for example Lefebvre 1961 and Ross 1995, below).

In relation to my own work, Duchen's observations are obviously important in their sensitivity to the significance of domestic space in the post-war French cultural imaginary. However, analysing representations of this space in cinematic narratives of

the period also highlights a significant blind spot in Duchen's research; that is, the ways in which certain 1960s' films subvert – rather than support – the discourse of domesticity in representing interior space in broadly negative terms, as a dysfunctional site of political and private trauma rather than an idealised haven. However, as I show in chapter two, section one of this thesis, this act of subversion is arguably associated with the anti-colonial politics of the films rather than a desire to fundamentally interrogate the significance of normative gendered ideals. Indeed, chapter two, section two will then illustrate how these narratives appear to substitute the constellation of female stereotypes disseminated in popular discourses of the period (the idealised and suppliant housewife and mother), with the stereotype of the passive and alienated victim of patriarchy and modernization (*Muriel, Le Boucher, La Belle vie*) or the infantilised 'gamine' (*Adieu Philippine* [Rozier 1962]). On a more general note, Duchen's work could also be critiqued for both ignoring the significance of race (and the Algerian War) in the emergence of the discourse of domesticity (a problem addressed by the work of Ross, below), and, secondly, for focusing almost exclusively on the periods directly following Occupation and the May 1968 crisis rather than the Algerian War. It is precisely these issues and this period that this thesis will investigate.

In many ways, Kristin Ross's 1995 work, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* is a potent synthesis of Lefebvre and Duchen's work. Drawing from these two authors, Ross's aim is clear: to demonstrate how the largely state-led drive towards modernization and new consumerism in metropolitan France can be sensibly understood in the light of withdrawal from Empire and post-war immigration. One of the most persuasive aspects of Ross's work is her analysis of the ways in which France responded to the waves of immigration arriving in the metropolises in the wake of decolonization through redefining and reconceptualising the domestic, private sphere as a hermetically sealed space, free from 'contamination' by traces of the Algerian War and the ex-colonial 'Other' (in this respect the modern home functioned as a form of microcosm of the post-colonial metropolis). Instead, popular publications of the period (including *Marie-Claire, Elle* and *Femmes d'aujourd'hui*), represented the home as an implicitly feminine space, cleansed of the morally diseased or (racially) tainted elements of the national body and instead populated almost exclusively by the figure of the archetypal housewife, the 'arbiter of the nation's welfare' (Ross 1995: 78). In this respect, according to Ross, French women became unwitting guardians of an apolitical space in

which they were simultaneously sovereign (occupying a position similar to the *évolué* or respected native in the colonies), and subjected (as individuals prohibited from occupying anything other than the passive role of mothers and wives). As Ross claims, ‘the transfer of a political economy [in the colonies] to a domestic one involved a new emphasis on controlling domesticity, a new concentration on the political economy of the household’ (1995: 77-78). On the one hand, this hypothesis is certainly useful for my own work, especially as it provides a valuable illustration as to the ways in which certain French films of the period subvert the visual logic of contemporaneous popular discourses in representing the home as a politicised space, susceptible to the symbolic contamination by traces of the conflict embodied in the masculine figure of the *appelé* (see chapter two, section one). On the other hand, Ross’s claims are also limited, primarily as they implicitly and inextricably associate the domestic realm with female victimization, but also as they implicitly define popular discourse as a vehicle for patriarchal hegemony. According to this approach, French women are thus simultaneously posited as arbiters of their own domination and – perhaps more obliquely – perpetrators of a neo-colonial ideology associated with the domestic realm.

In addition to analysing the sexual politics inherent within discursive representations of the 1950s’ and 1960s’ home, Ross also discusses the political implications involved in the widespread socio-spatial shifts that characterised the decolonization years, when large numbers of working-class indigenous French and ex-colonial immigrants were systematically removed from the central *taudis* (‘slums’) and *îlots insalubres* (‘unhealthy blocks’) to the Parisian suburbs on the pretext of hygiene and modernization. In relation to my own work, these observations are useful as they draw attention to the ways in which certain French films of the period use the trope of the urban journey (from centre to periphery or vice versa) as a method of critiquing a modernization drive predicated upon the ‘return to atavistic [in other words colonial] principles of racial identity and their attendant spatial logic of inclusion and exclusion’ (1995: 149 [for example Varda’s *Cléo de 5 à 7* and Drach’s *Elise ou la vraie vie*, chapter four, section one]).

As regards Algeria, one of the largest influences on this thesis is the revolutionary psychiatrist, historian, sociologist, and cultural theorist Frantz Fanon, whose work has informed much of the following discussions regarding representations of narrative space in post-independence Algerian cinema. During Fanon’s short lifetime (he died in 1961, one year before the advent of Algerian Independence), he published

four major monographs, two of which are especially relevant to my own work. One of the most prescient examples of Fanon's theories regarding colonial space can be found in his chapter 'L'Algérie se dévoile' from the work *L'An V de la révolution algérienne* (1959), which examines the role of the *moudjahidat* (female freedom-fighters) alongside the 'historical dynamism' of the veil in the national resistance (1965 [1959]: 185). This chapter is important for this thesis as it explores the complex relationship between space and gender in the colonial situation, and illustrates how the manipulation of spatial limits (between, for example, private and public space, but also between the veiled and unveiled female body) were instrumental in the implementation of – and resistance to – colonial dominance. It is for this reason that Fanon initially claims that, according to the strictly binary, patriarchal logic of colonialism, 'Algerian women [...] rarely venture into the European city', before describing the ways in which unveiled *fidayate* were later tasked with 'carrying revolvers, grenades, hundreds of false identity cards or bombs' into these very settler zones (1965 [1959]: 175, 181 [see chapter four, section two for a discussion of Gillo Pontecorvo's 1966 film *La Bataille d'Alger* which dramatises these *fidayate*]). On the other hand, Fanon's nationalist proto-feminism could also be criticised for overestimating the extent to which the liberation struggle had forced Algerian society to undergo self-transforming social change. Indeed, as various theorists have illustrated (Cherki 2006; Khanna 2008), despite achieving national sovereignty, the one-party state remained fundamentally conservative in its views on women, who were subtly coerced back into the domestic sphere (and, in some cases into wearing the veil) by masculine figures returning from the maquis (see chapter three, section two for a discussion of how patriarchal ideology is maintained in many of the Algerian films of this period).

Apart from *L'An V de la révolution Algérienne*, Fanon's sensitivity to the hegemonic and subversive potential of colonial space is also evident in two chapters of his work *Les Damnés de la terre*, published posthumously in 1961. The first of these chapters is 'De la violence', a scathing socio-psychological account of the colonial situation which includes several paragraphs dedicated to analysing the dynamics of the colonial city-space. In comparison to 'L'Algérie se dévoile', the gendered aspect of the colonial situation is not as prominent in this chapter. Instead, Fanon attempts to deconstruct the wider logic of colonial urban planning, describing the archetypal colonial city (for example Algiers), as 'a motionless, Manichaeistic world' (2001 [1961]: 40). In response to this, Fanon defines the anti-colonial movement as a method

of literally and symbolically uniting a people previously divided by ‘a world divided into compartments’, a process by which the binary logic of colonial space is subsequently reconfigured in terms of a dialectic (2001 [1961]: 40). An emphasis upon space is also evident in the next chapter of *Les Damnés de la terre*, entitled ‘Grandeur et faiblesse de la spontanéité’. During this chapter Fanon shifts his attention away from the colonial city in order to instead focus upon the rural peasantry, who are described as ‘throwing themselves into the rebellion with all the more enthusiasm in that they had never stopped clutching at way of life which was in practice anti-colonial’ (2001 [1961]: 110). Fanon also emphasises the importance of socio-spatial alliances between the urban bourgeoisie and the rural peasantry in the success of the revolution, defining the ideal organisational framework of the insurrection as ‘set afoot by the use of revolutionary elements coming from the towns [...] together with those rebels who go down into the country as the fight goes on’ (2001 [1961]: 114). In relation to my own work, *Les Damnés de la terre* is especially relevant for a number of reasons; primarily as it explains the insistent focus upon (revolutionary) rural space that characterises many of the Algerian films of the period (for example *Le Vent des Aurès*, *Les Hors-la-loi* and *L’Opium et le bâton*), but also as it helps to understand the act of urban, gendered transgression that forms the dramatic crux of Pontecorvo’s *La Bataille d’Alger* (see chapter four, section two). It is also important to note that, as yet, no critic has used Fanon’s theories regarding revolutionary rural space in relation to post-independence Algerian cinema. Fanon’s work is however also potentially problematic in its tendency to idealise the rural peasantry whilst ignoring the fact that the war was, in reality, largely led by members of the recently urbanized petty bourgeoisie. A final critique of Fanon’s work is that it remains apparently blind to the significance of space in traditionally Berber areas of Algeria. This observation is important, in that certain Algerian films of the post-independence period appear to foreground the primacy of Berber spatial codes as an anti-colonial praxis (see chapter three, section one).

One of the central theorists of Berber space is the French sociologist, anthropologist, and ethnographer Pierre Bourdieu. Of particular significance is his 1972 work, ‘Trois études d’ethnologie kabyle’, a set of three short chapters included in his monograph *Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique*. In contrast to Fanon, Bourdieu focuses mainly upon the spatial and sexual politics characteristic of the Berber (Kabyle) people, who represent around 20 to 30 percent of the Algerian population and whose cultural traditions, religion (a blend of Islam with Jewish and Christian elements), and languages (Kabyle, Chaouia, Mozabite), implicitly challenge the monolingualism of the

sovereign Algerian nation-state (instead based upon a stringent adherence to Islam and Arabic). In the second chapter of *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique* (entitled 'La maison ou le monde renversé'), Bourdieu examines the strict gendered codes which govern Berber social space. According to Bourdieu, Berber society is split along a gendered dichotomy. On the one hand resides the feminine domestic and private space of the home, known as the *haram* and associated with water, rawness, depth, shadow, the *hurma*, fecundity, nature, and shame. On the other hand stands the masculine public space of the street and village, known as the *houma* (or *thajma'th*) and associated with fire, cooked, height, light, day, virility and culture (2000 [1972]: 69). As I will show in chapter three, section one of this thesis, Bourdieu's theories are particularly useful for understanding the sexual and spatial politics of Lakhdar-Hamina's 1966 film, *Le Vent des Aurès*. A certain sensitivity towards the spatial codes inherent within traditional Berber culture is also evident in the first of these three chapters in Bourdieu's collection, entitled 'Le sens de l'honneur'. In this chapter, Bourdieu discusses the everyday implications of the Berber *nif* (a masculine honour inextricably associated with virility, protection and public space), and *hurma* (a female honour linked to sacrosanctity, shame and the inviolable nature of the domestic realm). Perhaps the most crucial aspect of this chapter is Bourdieu's definition of the *hurma-haram* as 'n'existant que par le sens de l'honneur (nif) qui le défend' (2000 [1972]: 47) – a sense of masculine obligation graphically realised in Tewfik Farès's 1969 film *Les Hors-la-loi*, in which the central outlaw, Slimane, wreaks revenge on another member of the village for breaking into his mother's house (see chapter three).

Bourdieu's sensitivity towards spatial codes is also apparent in his later monograph *La Domination masculine* (1998), a sociological treatise that examines the insidious everyday implications of patriarchal hegemony upon men and women in the Berber region of Kabylia and the 'west'. One of the most glaring methodological problems with *La Domination masculine* is the ways in which it attempts to elide the distinctions between the specificity of Berber/Kabyle culture and a comparatively general Western society through an all encompassing, universal paradigm. Bourdieu's work has also been criticised for propagating an ahistorical and – to some extent – mythologised version of Berber culture (Lacoste-Dujardin 2008: 7). However, despite these limitations, *La Domination masculine* is nevertheless a useful text in that it expands upon one of Bourdieu's most famous concepts in the form of 'symbolic violence', that is, 'a gentle imperceptible violence' predicated upon processes of

dehistoricization, eternalization and the establishment of arbitrary binary opposites as opposed to physical harm (2001 [1998]: 1–2). Furthermore, Bourdieu identifies one of the main sites of symbolic violence as the domestic space of the home, which crystallizes gendered divisions, and thus hierarchies, in ascribing arbitrary symbolic meaning to spaces (public and private) and the movement of social bodies within these spaces. On a more general note, despite being influential in social sciences, gender studies, business studies and philosophy, Bourdieu's work has rarely been applied to the discourse of cinema (one of the rare examples being Guy Austin's 2012 monograph *Algerian National Cinema*, see below). In applying theories proposed in 'trois études d'ethnologie kabyle' and *La Domination masculine* to the discourse of post-independence Algerian cinema, I will show how certain narratives produced during this period reassert the traditional socio-spatial codes of Berber culture as a method of anti-colonial resistance. The fourth chapter of my thesis will also appropriate Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence as a theoretical tool for analysing the sexual and spatial politics of Assia Djebar's 1978 film *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua*.

Perhaps the most comprehensive analysis of post-independence Algerian cinema can be found in Guy Austin's 2012 monograph *Algerian National Cinema*, which examines the complex and vexed history of Algerian filmmaking, from its inception in 1962 to the emergence of a contemporary cinema increasingly inclined towards the expression of identities previously silenced by the monolithic discourse and censorship of the one-party state (for example, women, Berbers and youth). One of the most striking aspects of *Algerian National Cinema* is its interdisciplinary methodological approach, which draws from a select pool of film theorists, feminist thinkers, historians and cultural historians. Furthermore, in applying Bourdieu's largely ethnographic theories to the medium of cinema, Austin's work also remains particularly sensitive to the role of space – not only within the social, everyday reality of the colony and the post-colonial state, but also within the discursive parameters of the colonial and post-colonial imaginary. After establishing the primacy of space within the colonial situation (as a method of subjugation and resistance), Austin then explores the ways in which colonized social space is represented in the canon of Algerian films directed in the aftermath of the war. The first film analysed by Austin is Pontecorvo's *La Bataille d'Alger*, which, in his words, establishes a 'dichotomy between high and low' in order to 'express the power relations of coloniser and colonised' (2012: 38-39 (see chapter four, section two for a discussion of how Pontecorvo's film uses the trope of gendered



urban transgression as a way of critiquing patriarchal ideology). Austin then goes on to discuss Lakhdar-Hamina's *Le Vent des Aurès*, exploring how this film both reflects the 'specific traumas' (2012: 44) inflicted upon rural space during the conflict (including *regroupement* or the removal of peasants from their land), alongside the Berber (spatial) codes catalogued by Bourdieu (2012: 45-47). According to Austin, the influence of Berber tradition upon the narrative is particularly evident in the way the film establishes a subtle although important dichotomy, 'between the indoor "feminine" world of the house and the outdoor "masculine" world of the fields', a sense of binary opposition crystallised in the visual trope of the threshold (2012: 45). A similar spatial/gendered dichotomy is also shown to exist in *Les Hors-la-loi*, which represents the rebellion through an extended allegory of pre-conflict resistance. However, whilst the sense of gendered, binary opposition is associated with Berber tradition in *Le Vent des Aurès*, in *Les Hors-la-loi* it is associated with the formal influence of the classic Hollywood Western: the result being 'repeated low angle shots of the [masculine] protagonists silhouetted against the background of hills and mountains' (2012: 52). In analyzing Algerian film through the prism of spatial theorists such as Bourdieu, Austin's work is an undeniably influential and innovative account of Algerian cinematic history. However, *Algerian National Cinema* also remains shot through by a number of limitations. Of particular note is Austin's claim that certain films of the period reassert the primacy of Berber spatial codes whilst simultaneously denying the cultural specificity of the region in their use of Arabic as opposed to the Berber language(s). In Austin's work this tension remains unresolved or, at least, eclipsed by a largely descriptive account of how (as opposed to why) the films reflect Berber tradition. This thesis will seek to explore this very question in drawing attention to the ways in which the films reassert the traditional socio-spatial codes of Berber culture as a method of anti-colonial resistance. My work will also seek to expand upon Austin's conceptualisation of the films in drawing attention to the ways in which they reflect both Frantz Fanon's notion of revolutionary rural space alongside a tendency in nationalist discourse and Arab culture to differentiate between the governmental *bled el makhzen* and the rural, rebellious *bled es siba* (Evans 2007: 13).

As this section has illustrated, previous scholarship on 1960s' and 1970s' French and Algerian cinema is split. Not one theorist has attempted to discuss these two cinemas in tandem: a theoretical blind spot that this thesis seeks to address through the thematic prism of narrative space and gender. Furthermore, a number of separate issues

have also become evident. In relation to French cinema, undoubtedly the most comprehensive analysis of gender has been proposed by Geneviève Sellier, whose innovative work has helped demythologise one of the central tenets of dominant European scholarship. As yet, no theorist has produced a substantial study exploring the significance of domestic space in 1950s' and 1960s' French cinema. For this reason, I have drawn instead from the work of geographers, feminist geographers, historians, cultural historians and sociologists in the conception of this thesis. In relation to Algeria, perhaps the most comprehensive (and relevant) work on this topic is Guy's Austin's *Algerian National Cinema*, whose interdisciplinary work includes a notable sensibility to both issues of gender and space. This thesis will aim to bridge the current chasm between post-colonial Algerian and French cinema through a similar methodological approach.

### **1.3 Historical Contextualization**

Despite the fact that France and Algeria are often conceptualised in radically opposing terms, a number of parallels nevertheless exist in the discourses and socio-spatial shifts that characterised both societies before, during, and in the immediate aftermath of the Algerian War. In particular, as this contextualization will illustrate, these two societies share particular parallels in relation to the different ways in which men and women were positioned (and represented) within official and popular discourses and social space.

#### **1.3.1 *Gender: masculine resistance and female domesticity***

Many of the French films discussed in this thesis reflect (deliberately or not) political decisions and discourses that arose in the years following France's liberation from Nazi Occupation (1940-1944), a particularly volatile period in French history that had major implications for both men and women. On one hand, whilst certainly destroying families through the loss of a son, partner or husband, the conflict also involved an increase in women's agency facilitated in the immediate postwar period by constitutional changes permitting women the right to paid employment and suffrage. Nevertheless, in the years following the Occupation, it became increasingly evident that aspirations regarding the enfranchisement and emancipation of women were failing to translate into a concrete socio-political praxis. Instead, women's access to post-war

French polity remained restricted by masculine exclusivity alongside a pervasive ‘expectation that they would remain in their domestic and maternal roles’ (Leahy 2002: 48). Claire Duchen has also illustrated the extent to which popular publications of the era (including *Marie-Claire*, *Elle* and *Femmes d'aujourd'hui*) were complicit in shaping normative discourses on gender (1994: 95) in representing the home as an ambivalent space, populated simultaneously by modern appliances and retrograde ideals of femininity embodied in the archetypal figure of the house-wife. In this case, popular discourses of the period functioned in order to contain potentially transgressive forms of femininity, despite the fact that a number of the editors and journalists who wrote for (and read) these publications were women<sup>18</sup> (thus forming an example of what may be defined as ‘patriarchal hegemony’). It was only towards the end of the 1960s, with legislative changes instigated in 1965 and 1967<sup>19</sup> alongside the radical events of May 1968 that *la presse féminine* would finally begin to lose its influential status as an authority on discourses of femininity (Ross 1995: 3). On the other hand, as the historian Henry Rousso has famously argued, this period also witnessed the emergence of a discourse which mythologized and lionized maquisards of the Resistance, despite the fact that the comparatively few people involved in the maquis did so unknowingly or even by accident (1994: 414). Crucially, it is important to note that this *résistancialisme* represented the Resistance in fundamentally masculine terms – as the province of an active male subject which stood in stark contrast to the passive and domesticated figure of the housewife disseminated in *la presse féminine*.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, both of these discourses proposed retrograde gendered ideals which stood in counterpoint to the everyday, contemporary reality of the French population.<sup>21</sup>

In the late 1950s, France’s attempts at quelling the rise in Algerian nationalism began to falter, with accusations of complicity with torture (in Algeria), alongside the rise of metropolitan hostilities towards North-African communities (including random arrests, administrative detention and a curfew applied exclusively to the Algerian population). Historians generally identify the period from 1957 to 1958 as a critical turning point in the war, witnessing what is known as the ‘battle of Algiers’ in 1957,

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<sup>18</sup> From 1952-1960, Françoise Giroud was editor-in-chief of *L'Express* before being superseded by the pulp-fiction novelist Françoise Sagan (see Ross 1995: 82).

<sup>19</sup> These legislative changes related to the ownership of property and contraception.

<sup>20</sup> Sarah Leahy has also highlighted the ways in which collaboration was frequently defined as the province of women whilst Resistance was associated primarily with men (2002: 24).

<sup>21</sup> The disjuncture between idealized discourses of Resistance and the ambiguous reality of Occupation is explored in Louis Malle’s film *Lacombe Lucien* (1974).

and the May 1958 crisis, which saw both the collapse of the Fourth Republic alongside the immediate devolution of executive, unprecedented presidential powers to General Charles de Gaulle. Instigating bold constitutional changes in the form of the Fifth Republic, de Gaulle is thus often credited with saving the country from the ominous spectre of a civil war fought between supporters of *l'Algérie française* (particularly French Generals and hardline *colons*) and a government seen as increasingly inclined towards an independent Algeria. Nevertheless, by July 1958, France had already sent 450,000 conscripts to Algeria, increasing metropolitan discontent with a war that was proving progressively disruptive to the rhythms and routines of everyday life. Indeed, as Alistair Horne claims, by the latter part of 1961, French society had become disillusioned by the seemingly never-ending waves of 'rebellious generals, raucous *pieds-noirs*, murderous fellagahs, anti-French diatribes at the United Nations and fruitless peace talks' (2006: 505). It was this combination of national cynicism and apathy that made de Gaulle's decision to eventually grant Algeria independence in 1962 (with the signing of the Evian Accords) logical – if not entirely unproblematic.

In terms of gender, decolonization affected French men and women in different ways. On one hand, many of the three million military personnel that had participated in the conflict (including *appelés*, *rappelés*, *paras* and Generals) often appeared traumatised or at least unwilling to speak of their experiences in the colonies. In particular, Benjamin Stora has cited a number of possible reasons for the trauma of *l'appelé déboussolé*, including; unemployment, difficulties in reintegrating into a society irrevocably marked by modernization, anxieties regarding the newfound independence (and possible infidelity) of partners and wives, and the yet to be diagnosed condition of posttraumatic stress disorder<sup>22</sup> (1998: 265; see also Dine 1994: 109-145). Yet perhaps the most telling sign of a crisis in masculinity was to be found in de Gaulle's revival of the (masculine) myth of national Resistance, established almost twenty years earlier and which reached its belated apotheosis in de Gaulle's transfer of the Resistance hero, Jean Moulin's ashes to the Panthéon in 1964.<sup>23</sup> As I will show in chapter three, this *résistancialisme* was simultaneously mirrored in post-independence Algeria through the state-led commemoration, lionization and mythologisation of the

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<sup>22</sup> While post-traumatic stress disorder was only formally recognised as a legitimate medical condition in 1980, some estimates suggest that as many as 250,000-300,000 veterans from the Algerian War may suffer from the condition (Inrep 2011: 43-47).

<sup>23</sup> As Benjamin Stora has illustrated, this period witnessed the emergence of a war of heritage, between Gaullists and 'la petite gauche' who similarly invoked 'la Résistance [...] au nom de l'antifascisme' (Stora 1998: 111).

(male) martyrs of the Algerian Revolution. On the other hand, one of the major factors affecting French women in the immediate post-colonial period was the wave of modernization sweeping the nation. As Benjamin Stora claims, ‘les dernières lueurs d’une guerre qui semble ne plus finir s’éteignent donc, soufflées par un vent de modernité frénétique’ (1998: 211). For women, the result of this mainly state-led drive was the Taylorisation of the domestic sphere, transformed from a space of leisure and relaxation into a warped mirror-image of the Renault factories emerging on the southwest outskirts of Paris. In this respect, whilst 1960s’ modernization ‘elevated the figure of the housewife to the role of technician or manager of the newly modern home’ (Ross 1995: 8), domestic discourses associated with modernization nonetheless failed to question the underlying gendered hierarchy that structured public and private spaces. Instead, *la presse féminine* continued to propagate passive and retrograde ideals of women as mothers and/or housewives. An equally important – although often overlooked – factor affecting women in the post-colonial period was the emergence of structuralism as the replacement for the existentialist, classically humanist and Marxist theories that had dominated the intellectual domain during the Occupation and post-Liberation years. In its theoretical perspective, structuralism was primarily concerned with demythologising the rituals, routines and discourses associated with everyday (domestic) life. However, in its tendency to ‘understand rather than transform the world’ (Laubier 1990: 46) structuralism also failed to provide a concrete political praxis for socio-gendered revolution. As Ross claims, ‘structuralism acted as though it was a theoretical discourse about the society, a knowledge of the social, when in fact it was nothing more than the discourse *of* that society, the chitchat of technocracy, its continuation and ideological reinforcement’ (1995: 178 [emphasis in original]).

As regards Algeria, Assia Djebar has also spoken of Algerian women under colonization as being doubly imprisoned; ‘étrangères mais présentes terriblement dans [une] atmosphère raréfiée de la clausturation’ (2001: 24), whilst Gayatri Spivak has famously described the ‘female subaltern’ as ‘even more deeply in shadow’ than [her] colonized, male counterpart (1988: 287). Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge a subtle transmutation that took place during colonization in the way in which the colonial apparatus treated (and, perhaps more importantly, represented) Algerian women. Indeed, from the invasion of Algeria in 1830 to the Second World War, colonised Algeria was largely represented in feminine terms; as an eroticised and unveiled ‘body-to-be-possessed’ inextricably associated with one of the central topos of colonial

discourse, the harem (Alloula 1986: 118). Derived from a long genealogy of Orientalist<sup>24</sup> discourse, the harem featured within a veritable panoply of artistic mediums, including; literature (*The Disenchanted* [Loti 1906] and *Aziyadé*, [ibid. 1877]) and *A Thousand and One Nights* [1899-1904]), painting, (*Femmes d'Alger* [Delacroix 1834]), film (*L'Atlantide* [Pabst 1932]) and the ubiquitous colonial postcard, which Malek Alloula has famously described as a site of colonial 'stereotype and phantasm' (1986: 3). On the other hand, Algerian men were almost totally absent from this female universe of mythology and 'suberoticism' which arguably reached its apex at the 1931 *Exposition coloniale internationale* held in Paris (1986: 92). During the post-war period (and particularly in the late 1950s), the visibility of the harem as a metonymy for a colonised, mythologised and (sexually) submissive Algeria waned, as France instead began to pursue an extensive 'emancipation' programme, involving welfare and social projects, improvements in education, reform of the personal status law, and – crucially – an increase in the spectacle of public unveiling (MacMaster 2012: 13, 334). As the Algerian Revolution progressed, the image of the unveiled, Westernized (i.e. 'emancipated') Algerian woman thus emerged as the dominant mode of representing Algeria in France (if Algeria was visible at all). Perhaps the most enduring image of the conflict can be found Gillo Pontecorvo's 1966 film *La Bataille d'Alger*, in which three female *fidayate* (fire carriers) masquerade as western(ised) women in order to transport bombs over the restrictions placed on the war-torn city. In this film (as in Fanon's work from which Pontecorvo drew inspiration), the uprising thus emerges as a nationalist movement predicated upon egalitarian values and the equal participation of men and women. Nevertheless, Pontecorvo's version of the Revolution is misleading, primarily as the number of *fidayate* which participated in the Algerian Revolution (particularly in the later stages of the conflict) was extremely small – especially compared to the comparatively large number of peasant women (*moussebilate*) who instead provided essential support in the maquis as cooks, nurses and look-outs (Vince 2009: 154-155).<sup>25</sup>

After a hundred and thirty-two years of colonial rule, Algeria eventually attained national sovereignty on the 19 of March 1962, with the devolution of power to the FLN.

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<sup>24</sup> Edward Said famously defines Orientalism as a 'style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident"' (2003: 2).

<sup>25</sup> As Vince shows, out of the 10,949 women officially recognized, 82 per cent are registered as members of the civilian population who supported the FLN/ALN; 16 per cent were in maquis units (where they were generally nurses) and only two per cent are registered as *fidayate* (2009: 154-155)

Five months later, the popular war veteran, Ahmed Ben Bella was elected president of Algeria, forming a regime characterised by anti-democratic authoritarianism despite talk of popular participation and references to the nationalist-revolutionary aspirations<sup>26</sup> of the Third World masses in a discursive trend that Robert Malley has defined as Third-Worldism (1996: 18). One of the most important figures in the discourse of the post-independence one-party state was the philosopher and cultural theorist Frantz Fanon, whose status as a nationalist figure ‘haunts’ many of the Algerian films discussed in this thesis (primarily due to the influence of the state upon cinema of this period). The author of a number of anti-colonial/nationalist works, including *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952), *L'An V de la révolution algérienne* (1959) and *Les Damnés de la terre* (1961), Fanon had been instrumental in advocating the Algerian Revolution within the Francophone intellectual elite – primarily through his close relationship with Jean-Paul Sartre with whom he shared a theoretical approach combining psychoanalysis and existentialism. Yet Fanon also drew from a tradition of European libertarian Marxism (for example Lukács) in his notion of the ‘New Algerian Man’, emancipated from the shackles of a colonial apparatus that systematically eroded Algerian masculine authority primarily through the eroticisation and symbolic (and literal) unveiling of Algerian women. As Verges claims, in Fanon’s writing ‘colonialism prevented colonized masculinity from becoming modern by branding it with the marl of the pre-modern. [According to Fanon], decolonized masculinity would thus be heroic and modern’ (Verges in Goldie 1999: 78; Seshadri-Crooks 2010: 96). Nonetheless, as numerous theorists have since shown, far from destabilizing patriarchal conventions, Fanon’s New Algerian Man is a troubling concept; primarily as it appears to be somewhat paradoxically predicated upon a homosocial conception of nation and self-hood alongside the highly conservative masculine values of virility, heroism and asceticism (Goldie 1999: 79). Furthermore, it is this subtle form of ‘masculinist’ nationalism (Butler 1993: 18) that would be then appropriated by a succession of post-independence leaders – firstly by Ben Bella in the immediate aftermath of independence, and then subsequently by Boumediène.

By contrast, the relationship between the post-colonial Algerian state and Algerian women has often been marked by a sense of ambivalence. This is a tension reflected both within official legislation and the contours of cultural discourse (Bensmaïa 1996; Khanna 2008). Nevertheless, at least in the immediate aftermath of

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<sup>26</sup> Martin Evans has described the post-independence regime as a heady and idealistic ‘fusion of socialism and Islam’ (2007: 75).

war, official discourse appeared to propagate the notion of independent Algeria as a paragon of sexual equality, with the first president Ahmed Ben Bella describing the legacy of the *moudjahidat* (female freedom fighters) in the following terms: ‘women have already assumed their full and entire responsibilities. It would be a dishonour to forget [these women] today. We will block the path of false doctrines and destroy false preachers of Islam and Arabism’ (cited in Vince 2009: 159). Drawing from socialist ideology alongside the arguably ‘protofeminist’ theories of the revolutionary theorist Franz Fanon (Kipfer 2007: 702), Ben Bella’s remarks certainly echo an initially progressive trend in the post-colonial Algerian polity, whilst between 1963 and 1964 well-known *moudjahidat* such as Djamila Bouhired, Zohra Drif and Djamila Boupacha were both displayed around the world as symbols of modernity and subsequently mythologized in Pontecorvo’s famous film. Due to his increasingly unpopular ‘cult of personality’ (Evans and Phillips 2007: 80), Ben Bella was deposed in 1965 by Houari Boumediène (a former independence fighter like Ben Bella), who presided over the country until 1978. A particularly authoritarian ruler, Boumediène constructed an increasingly totalitarian police state characterized by the ubiquitous *sécurité militaire* (military security), frequent instances of censorship, and the reinstatement of Islam as a state religion in 1976. This was a move which, in drawing from religious traditionalism, antimodernism and ethnonationalism of nationalists such as Sheik Ben Badis-in particular his dictum ‘Islam is my religion, Arabic is my language, and Algeria is my country’ (cited in Evans and Phillips 2007: 45) – ultimately ‘aggravated women’s citizenship rights deficit’ (Lazreg 1994: 63). After Boumediène’s death in 1978, Chadli Bendjedid was elected president of Algeria in 1979, enacting an unpopular shift away from the socialist ideals espoused by Ben Bella and Boumediène and instead providing increasing concessions towards Islamists in terms of private and public sovereignty and women’s rights (Khanna 2008). Thus, despite the ‘radical mutation’ in post-colonial gendered relations theorised by Fanon under colonization (1965 [1959]: 10, 14 cited in MacMaster 2012: 381), Algerian polity remained instead dominated by androcentric exclusivity, the ossification of hierarchical strata and a succession of patriarchal war veterans who gradually eroded women’s rights (both public and private) through a series of constitutional changes in legislation (Cherki 2006). Funded by the state, it is for this reason that many of the Algerian films of the period marginalise the role that women played in the conflict whilst mythologizing the male martyrs of the Revolution.



### 1.3.2 *Space: migration and reprivatisation*

In addition to their positioning/representation of men and women, post-colonial France and Algeria also share an important parallel in their structuring of social space. As regards France, Kristin Ross has described how 1950s' and 1960s' French society witnessed a number of socio-spatial shifts engendered by the advent of decolonization and the largely state-led modernization drive (1995: 150). Perhaps the most obvious of these shifts was the splitting of the nation-state; between new metropolises driven by professional opportunities and new consumerism, and a rural *France profonde* increasingly associated with a nostalgic and idealised provinciality. During these years France also witnessed the influx of an unprecedented number of immigrants<sup>27</sup> arriving from France's newly emancipated colonies. A large percentage of these immigrants were from Algeria,<sup>28</sup> often affected by agricultural reforms initiated in 1945 or exiled from their homeland for supporting colonial forces (for example *les harkis* and *les pieds-noirs*). In response to these waves of immigration, a post-war urban housing crisis, and a government backed slum clearance,<sup>29</sup> urban planners decided to construct utopian social-housing projects situated on the outskirts of cities – known as HLM (*Habitation à Loyer Modéré*) or collectively as *les grands ensembles* in a process known as *rénovation* (Marchand 1993: 291). Often populated by a mixture of working-class French and North African communities, these areas (including the Parisian districts of La Courneuve, Clichy-sous-Bois and Aulnay-sous-Bois) quickly became hot-beds of racial exclusion and economic disenfranchisement. As Stora illustrates, 'enfin, en toile de fond de ces mutations, le paysage urbain se modifie profondément. La fin des années algériennes, c'est la construction des grands ensembles, l'accroissement des banlieues et un nouveau moyen de vivre (mal?)' (1998 : 213). Certain theorists have associated the socio-spatial dynamics at work in the post-colonial metropolis with those inherent within the archetypal colonial city; a hypothesis certainly supported by the fact that during the years of decolonization, many personnel involved in running political

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<sup>27</sup> I have chosen the term 'immigrants' here as, although French colonial officials gave the Algerian population the chance to become French citizens, very few individuals took up this offer – primarily as it involved renouncing Islam (Evans 2007: 41; Evangelista 2011: 40).

<sup>28</sup> The number of immigrants arriving from Algeria was only eclipsed by Italian and Spanish populations (Roach cited in Etcherelli 1985: 13). According to Bernard Marchand, more than a million *pieds-noirs* relocated in France during these years after being effectively hounded out of Algeria and the Maghreb (1993: 284).

<sup>29</sup> For more details relating to this slum clearance see Ross (1995: 153), Marchand (1993: 291) and, in particular, Feldman (2014: 41-74).

decisions within the colonies (councillors, for example) were transferred to a similar role in the metropolis (Ross 1995: 8). However, this observation nevertheless underplays France's desire to retain symbolic (if not literal) power over its formally colonial subjects in a process that Sophie Body-Gendrot has termed the "third-worldisation" of the national space (1993: 81). In other words, as with the archetypal colonial city, post-colonial France continued to control the rise of Algerian nationalism by splitting metropolitan space in terms of a dichotomy; between a powerful 'visible' centre and a dispossessed, 'invisible' periphery, populated largely by displaced Maghrebi communities. According to Stephan Kipfer, these socio-spatial processes had the effect of 'peripheralizing the working-class, imposing much of the weight of reproduction onto women, whilst banishing immigrants to "neo-colonial" shantytowns and the worst public housing tracts' (2007: 202). Hannah Feldman has also shown how this desire to structure and sterilize the body-politic was reflected in André Malraux's decision to 'whitewash' the facades of Parisian buildings (in particular the Marais district) as part of a process of 'preservation' (2014: 46). In her words, 'this symbolic investment in "whitening" correlates very specifically with France's refusal to account for the different ethnic traditions that had come to compromise the new nation' (2014: 48).

On a similar note, Kristin Ross has illustrated how France responded to the waves of immigration flooding the nation by redefining and reconceptualising the modern home as a hygienic, functional, and – most importantly – hermetically sealed space, free from the 'archaic' traces of a colonialism deemed increasingly anathematic to France's modernised future, despite the fact that many immigrants lived in close proximity to post-war baby-boomers who had relocated to *les grands ensembles* (1995: 149). Within the popular publications of the period such as *Marie-Claire*, *Elle* and *Femmes d'aujourd'hui*, the modernized domestic realm thus became a site of neo-colonial power which reiterated the dialectics of racial exclusion and inclusion characteristic of colonial discourse. That said, it is important to acknowledge the inherent ambivalence which characterised this realm – as a site of colonial control and gendered subjugation. With this in mind, Claire Duchon has shown how sociological surveys conducted at the time appear to show a major disjuncture between these images of idealized domesticity and the everyday reality of French women, who often felt disempowered, disenfranchised and alienated from their concrete surroundings, particularly when these modernist archipelagos became a 'city of women' during the

day (1994: 89).<sup>30</sup> Bernard Marchand has also described ‘la sarcellite’ as ‘une maladie des habitants des grands ensembles [qui] venait d’un sentiment d’isolement, d’abandon au milieu de grands barres monotones’ (1993: 283). It is this sense of disjuncture that can be seen as the defining feature of a post-colonial French society split between idealised popular discourses and the sobering everyday reality experienced by *la nouvelle vague* generation (and, in particular, French women). In chapter two, I will show how French films of the period mediate this disjuncture in an ambivalent manner, critiquing colonial policies whilst remaining subtly conservative in their representations of gender.

As regards Algeria, one of the ways in which France maintained its dominance over the colonized population was through the control, manipulation and appropriation of space. It is for this reason that in his 1961 work *Les Damnés de la terre*, Frantz Fanon describes the colonized cityspace in dichotomous terms, as a world ‘cut in two’ (2001 [1961]: 37) split between the ‘strong’ and ‘easygoing’ settlers’ town, ‘always full of good things’, and ‘the native town’, as ‘a crouching village [...], wallowing in the mire’ (1961: 39; see Evans 2012: 34; MacMaster 2012: 10). Delineating the contours and boundaries of the colonial cityspace would also be a central feature of what is known as the battle of Algiers (1956-1957), a particularly intense period of guerrilla warfare during which ‘les quartiers arabes’ were ‘bouclés’ (Stora 2010) in a temporarily successful attempt to disrupt the flow of sensitive information and clandestine weapons. Similarly, in rural areas, including Northern Kabylia and the central eastern Aurès Mountains, colonial forces pursued a policy of *quadrillage* or partitioning, that is the spreading of large numbers of *appelés* across Algeria (in farms, roads, railway lines etc) with the immediate aim of safeguarding people and property and the long-term goal of ‘a radical “top-down” reform on a recalcitrant periphery’ (MacMaster 2012: 9). Nevertheless, colonial forces were less successful in controlling these regions, primarily due to their sheer magnitude and frequently hostile climate. Indeed, in 1956, 34 members of the FLN managed to attend the highly significant Soummam Conference in rural Northern Kabylia, despite the fact that the region was supposedly occupied and controlled by the French army. As I will later show, it is due to this form of nationalist activity (amongst others) that rural areas would come to occupy such a privileged space in the post-independence cultural imaginary. In terms of representation, colonial

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<sup>30</sup> See Jean-Luc Godard’s 1967 *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d’elle* for an in depth exploration of the relationship between gender and *les grands ensembles* (although one which moves away from discussions regarding the Algerian War).

discourse reflected – at least initially – the diametric spatial logic of inclusion and exclusion characteristic of the archetypal colonial city. It is for this reason that Julien Duvivier’s famous ‘colonial’ film *Pépé le moko* (1937) represents Algiers in terms of a stark dichotomy, split between the reassuring and familiar settler quarters and the indigenous Casbah as the embodiment of a ‘radically other social order’ predicated upon ‘social chaos’ (Morgan 1994: 640). Joseph McGonagle and Edward Welch have also described how colonial discourse represented the Casbah as an ‘unknowable, ungraspable place’, ‘mysterious and opaque in its nature’ (2013: 32). However, in the aftermath of the Second World War, the visibility of the divided colonial cityspace (alongside imagery associated with the harem) waned, as France was confronted with increasingly violent bouts of pan-African nationalism. Instead, dominant discourses of the period (such as the popular press and the TV series *5 colonnes à la une*) reiterated a particular strand of Orientalist/colonial discourse in representing Algeria as ‘empty [rural] landscapes’ populated – during the conflict – almost exclusively by French soldiers (Austin 2007: 185). It is precisely these images of division and ‘nothingness’ (Austin 2007: 185) that post-independence Algerian cinema sought to critique through its representation of gendered, spatial transgression.<sup>31</sup>

Numerous historians have illustrated the profound socio-spatial shifts that characterised Algerian society with the attainment of national sovereignty – especially in relation to women (see, for example MacMaster 2012; Stora 1998). Of particular note were the waves of rural to urban migration that took place in the immediate post-colonial period, as thousands of nationalist supporters were freed from the kind of rural detention centres depicted in Lakhdar-Hamina’s *Le Vent des Aurès*. Arriving in the northern cities, many occupied buildings that were left vacant by the mass exodus of almost 700,000 *pieds-noirs* between the years 1961 and 1962. However, these vacancies were unable to stem the emergence of a profound housing crisis (including overpopulation and crowding) caused by a toxic combination of domestic migration, demographic expansion and state-led modernization. Indeed, whilst the state was busy mythologizing and lionizing the martyrs of the Revolution, *moudjahiddine* often returned traumatised from the rural maquis to find ‘une Algérie nouvelle bouleversée, détournée du fleuve de sa tradition’ (Stora 1998: 217). During the post-independence period, Algerian women were increasingly expected to resume their roles as wives and mothers in the domestic realm. As Neil MacMaster has shown, this reassertion of

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<sup>31</sup> Benjamin Stora has also talked about the sensation of ‘absence [et] amnésie’ (1998 : 248) that characterises French discourses of this period.

patriarchal ideology came as a surprise to many women, primarily as a result of the levels of independence experienced by the *moudjahidat* (female freedom-fighters) during the conflict,<sup>32</sup> but also due to the ‘radical mutation’ in gender relations previously theorised by the figurehead of the post-independence regime, Frantz Fanon (1959: 10, 14 cited in MacMaster 2012: 381). As the FLN bomb-carrier Baya Hocine claimed, ‘we [Algerian women] broke through the barriers and it was very difficult for us to go back to how things were. In 1962 the barriers were rebuilt in a way that was terrible for us’ (cited in MacMaster 2012: 381). The reassertion of masculine domination has been interpreted in a number of ways. On the one hand, the resequestration of women can be seen as an indirect response to a colonial project which had, since the generals’ revolt in 1958, pursued a campaign of ‘modernization’, ‘civilization’ and ‘emancipation’, inspired by the radical secularism of the Jacobin Revolution and propagated through mass unveiling parades. These parades formed part of a broader strategy to ‘maximise disarray in the FLN by seizing on a latent contradiction between the growing liberty of women militants [...] and the weight of conservative and patriarchal values’ (MacMaster 2012: 334). In this respect, the state’s attempts to redefine the domestic sphere as the province of women should be seen within the wider framework of a pervasive anti-colonial sentiment which touched upon every aspect of post-colonial life. On the other hand, post-colonial resequestration can also be seen as response to masculine anxieties relating to the increase in female agency during the war;<sup>33</sup> anxieties aggravated by the mixing of genders caused by the post-independence housing crisis (MacMaster 2012: 384, 371; Stora 1998: 227).

In terms of setting, post-colonial Algerian cinema tended to privilege the vast, rural plains of Northern Kabylia and the central eastern Aurès Mountains over northern littoral towns (including Algiers, Bone, Constantine), primarily as it was in these regions that the Revolution was initiated, fought and organised (see, amongst others, the long history of Berber-nationalist activity against Arab, Ottoman and French forces [Kabylia], the violent insurrection of All Saints Day [the Aurès Mountains, 1954] and the Soummam Conference [Kabylia, 1956]). In their depiction of rural conflict, films such as *Le Vent des Aurès*, *L’Opium et le bâton* and *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua* thus arguably represent the Revolution in far more accurate terms than, for

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<sup>32</sup> Feeling of disillusionment were particularly prevalent amongst the unveiled carriers of weapons and information known as *fidayate* [fire-carriers]) (see Vince 2009; MacMaster 2012).

<sup>33</sup> Neil MacMaster has illustrated the profoundly patriarchal values that lay at the heart of the FLN, despite the fact that women were permitted to fight in the maquis during the conflict (2012: 17).

example, Pontecorvo's *La Bataille d'Alger*, which focuses almost exclusively upon the shift from maquis to urban, guerrilla warfare that characterized the later stages of the war. Indeed, Guy Austin has shown how, rather than reflecting the everyday reality of the conflict, Pontecorvo's choice of urban setting instead mirrors trends within European cinema, and, in particular, Italian neo-realism (2012: 37). Finally, post-colonial Algerian cinema (and visual culture) can be seen to invert the colonial spatial logic (division and 'nothingness'), instead proposing a universe characterised by communality, contiguity, and gendered, spatial transgression (although, as I show in chapter three, section two, this observation is slightly problematized in relation to the 'framing' of women).

### 1.3.3 *Summary*

As this contextualisation has shown, a number of parallels exist between post-colonial French and Algerian society. In France, the end of the Algerian War coincided with de Gaulle's revival of the Resistance hero, whilst in Algeria, Ben Bella appropriated Fanon's notion of the New Algerian Man as a homosocial model for self/nationhood. Both of these discourses proposed retrograde masculine ideals which stood in counterpoint to the traumatic reality of men returning from conflict. In contrast, French women found themselves defined by the highly influential discourse of *la presse féminine*, whilst, in Algeria it was the official discourse of the one-party state which formed the primary arbiter of women's role in society. Inherent within both of these discourses was a highly retrograde conception of post-colonial womanhood inextricably intertwined with the domestic realm. As I have shown, in the immediate post-colonial period, both countries also witnessed number of socio-spatial shifts engendered largely by mass domestic migration. In Algeria, these waves of migration contributed to existing masculine anxieties relating to women's active role in combat (leading to a reassertion of patriarchal values through resequestration), whilst in France, the arrival of immigrants from North Africa – and, in particular, Algeria – led to the privatisation and reconceptualisation of the domestic realm as a hermetically sealed (feminine) space, free from the 'contaminating' effects of the foreign 'Other', and by analogy, France's colonial past. In the following chapters, we will see how these historical and cultural trends were reflected in the cinematic narratives of the period.

## Chapter 2. French Cinema

### 2.1 Narrative space in French cinema

In the introduction to this thesis, I illustrated how the years of decolonization coincided with the emergence of a discourse of domesticity, disseminated largely in the popular women's press (for example *Marie-Claire*, *Elle* and *Femmes d'aujourd'hui*) which represented the home – and, by analogy the nation-state – as a modern, secure, clean and privatized space, safe from the ‘contaminating’ influence of a colonialism deemed increasingly distant and archaic. All traces of France's colonial past were to be expunged from representations of this space, including Algerian immigrants often affected by agricultural reforms initiated in 1945 or exiled from their homeland for supporting colonial forces (for example *les harkis*), alongside the waves of French *appelés* returning from Algeria, traumatised by their experiences of warfare. Instead, popular discourses of the period represented this space as inhabited almost exclusively by the figure of the bourgeois housewife, the fragile arbiter of the modern home. As Claire Duchen claims, ‘women's magazines avoided subjects which caused conflict, thereby skilfully avoiding mention of the outside world as far as possible and creating a cosy picture of female complicity based on household concerns’ (1994: 6). Since this process was governed by a dialectic of exclusion and inclusion evocative of colonial spatial logic, it is thus entirely possible to regard popular representations of the domestic realm as an expression of neo-colonial power. By contrast, this section will illustrate how a number of French films produced during and in the immediate aftermath of the conflict stand in counterpoint to this discourse by instead representing domestic space as defiled by signs of the Algerian War. Within this framework I will analyse *Adieu Philippe* (Rozier 1962), *La Belle vie* (Enrico 1963), *Muriel ou le temps d'un retour* (Resnais 1963), and *Le Boucher* (Chabrol 1969). It is in this process of contamination that I will locate the anti-colonial politics of the films.

#### 2.1.1 *Adieu Philippe: Dédé, the (domestic) silent witness*

Begun in 1960, finished in 1961, before being premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in 1962, Jacques Rozier's *Adieu Philippe* is a coming of age story (*bildungsroman*) in which three young protagonists, Liliane (Yveline Céry), Juliette (Stefania Sabatini), and

the ambivalent object of their amorous affection, Michel (Jean-Claude Aimini) are forced to reconcile the romantic complications and responsibilities associated with the transition from youth to adulthood and the impending spectre of conscription that looms over Michel's head like a shadow throughout the film. The film opens with images of a frenetic band playing jazz in a Parisian television studio. It is here that Michel – a cameraman working in the studio – meets the two young women, who spend the remainder of the film acting in a string of farcical advertisements and vying for Michel's attention (Michel describes them flippantly as 'starlets'). Halfway through the film Michel is fired from his job, before leaving for an impromptu extended holiday in Corsica with the two young women, who have somewhat implausibly also decided to visit the island. The remainder of the film thus dramatises the three protagonists sleeping on nocturnal beaches, driving around idyllic mountains and engaging in meandering banal conversations (all of which achieve little in terms of plot progression). In this part of the film, self-reflexive cinematic modernism is replaced by a potent blend of neo-realism and naturalism that Claire Clouzot has defined as 'an objective film language' (cited in Neupert 2011: 31). Towards the end of the film, Michel is then called up for military service, before embarking on a large ship destined for Algeria. During this lyrical climax, the two women bid farewell to their doomed antihero, whose fate in conflict remains unclear.

Previous scholarship on *Adieu Phillipine* has tended towards focusing almost exclusively upon Rozier's formal techniques. In particular, Christian Metz has famously analysed each scene of the film in semiotic/structuralist terms, as part of his theory of the *grande Syntagmatique* (1974), whilst Richard Neupert discusses the ways in which, as the original sound recording of *Adieu Phillipine* proved unusable, in post-production Rozier became a sort of archeologist, reconstructing his own soundtrack artificially in the studio. Neupert terms this Rozier's 'alternative sound practice' (2011: 31). Both of these pieces of scholarship are important in drawing attention to a film which has been otherwise cast into borderline critical oblivion, certainly compared to filmic narratives produced by Rozier's friend Jean-Luc Godard. In this analysis, however, I wish to focus on another aspect of *Adieu Phillipine*, namely the relationship that exists between Rozier's representation of the domestic sphere and the Algerian War. In *Adieu Phillipine*, the domestic sphere is visualised three times. The first – and arguably most important – of these occasions occurs approximately twenty minutes into the film, after Michel invites his friend Dédé to dine with him at his parents' home along with four unidentified members of his family. The scene begins when Michel arrives at their



house in his new car with Dédé (at this point screeching tyre noises surprise the family). Over the next few minutes of the film, Rozier then dramatises the family engaging in a largely light-hearted conversation about everyday life in a modestly sized dining room. Interestingly, formal techniques used here appear to eschew the formal conventions of classical Hollywood filmmaking, which often privileged the shot-reverse-shot formula as a method of constructing what Laura Mulvey has famously termed ‘an illusion of voyeuristic separation’ (1975: 8). Instead, Rozier relies largely on long, static wide shots of the characters around the table in order to lend a quasi-ethnographic, documentary feel to the *mise-en-scène*. It is perhaps due to these formal techniques that Geneviève Sellier has criticised Rozier for casting an entomological gaze over upon his characters, who are reduced to the status of anthropological objects of enquiry (2008: 127). In this scene, the modern home is represented as a site of tension: on one hand, it is a space of convention, tradition and bourgeois harmony, an observation supported by the behaviour and appearance of Michel’s family (white, middle class, married), their eating habits (pork and red wine, which Roland Barthes famously defined as a sign of national identity [1957: 58]) and the traditional décor that adorns their modestly sized household (i.e. devoid of the panoply of consumer durables evident in Alain Resnais’s *Muriel*, see below). Seen in this light, Rozier’s representation of the modern home thus chimes with the ways in which domestic discourses of the period attempted to redefine the private realm as a safe, harmonious, and above all, apolitical space through a process of reprivatization; that is, a folding back into the tradition and security of familial and conjugal routine. As Henri Lefebvre claimed at the time, ‘consolidated around the nucleus of the family, private life and the everyday provide an alibi for escaping from history, from failures, from risks and from threats, and this creates a gulf between “the lived” and the domain of history’ (2008 [1961]: 94).

On the other hand, in this scene, images of domestic harmony also coexist with two contemporary anxieties. The first of these anxieties revolves around the waves of modernization sweeping the nation and the possible repercussions that this might have upon everyday life. These anxieties are particularly apparent when the conversation turns to the car that Michel has just bought with his friends, a decision that leads one older family member to exclaim in irritation, ‘on ne peut pas boucler les fins de mois mais Monsieur achète une voiture’, before another describes French youths as ‘[croyant] qu’ils sont à l’Amérique’. These anxieties appear to affect the older members of the family rather than Dédé or Michel, who seems proud of his job at the television studio (a space which, in many ways, epitomises France’s modernized future). The

second anxiety evident in this scene relates to the Algerian War. It is notable that at no point does the family's conversation explicitly address the conflict which hangs over Michel's head (and, indeed, the film itself) like a 'sword of Damocles' throughout the film (Sellier 2008: 120). Instead, it is via the somewhat traumatised figure of Michel's friend Dédé that this anxiety is expressed, creating a troubling tension between the visible domestic arena and violent yet invisible vistas of Algeria. At first glance, Dédé appears to play a relatively minor role in the film, in that, after saying little during the conversation around the dinner table, he disappears completely from the landscape of the diegesis. However, this interpretation of the film is somewhat complicated by a single shot of Dédé that takes place during the dining scene, in which he replies to the question as to whether he has anything 'à raconter ?' with the conspicuous response 'rien, rien, rien', despite the fact that he has just returned from – and quite obviously been affected by – the conflict (when Michel initially jokes that he looks tanned, he retorts curtly 'je ne ris pas'). Formal techniques are again particularly important here, with Rozier combining one of the few close ups used in the scene with a dissolve cut to emphasise the significance of Dédé's muted reply, a gesture which subtly interrupts and thus contaminates the everyday, domestic ritual of dining (and thus domestic space) with the silent and affective language of trauma.<sup>34</sup> As Philip Dine claims in relation to literary narratives of the period, 'all those touched by the war will discover that the characterizing feature of this particular load of suffering is its radical incommunicability, the very opposite of the traditionally vaunted brotherhood of arms' (1994: 120). As we will see, it is this process of silent, and indeed at points violent contamination that characterises all of the films discussed in this chapter.

*Adieu Phillipine* features two further scenes set in the domestic sphere. The first of these is a brief scene which occurs when Michel calls up Liliane (who is at home in her mother's house) in order to arrange a date. During the minute or so that follows their telephone conversation, Liliane has a short discussion with her mother, who appears to disapprove of her behaviour. Liliane's response – 'puisque tu es d'une autre génération' – is typical of the blithe and derisory attitude that the two women adopt towards tradition and authority throughout the narrative (see following section for a discussion regarding Rozier's representation of female identity). The third and final time that Rozier represents the domestic space occurs when the two girls are pictured listening to

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<sup>34</sup> It is interesting to note that, in his reading of the film Christian Metz simply dismisses this dissolve cut as systematic of Rozier's 'intention of treating this episode [the dining scene] as two distinct syntagmas' (1974: 155). This formalist interpretation completely drains the scene of its anti-colonial potential.

a mambo record surrounded by images of Hollywood movie stars (Mario Lanza) and singers (Elvis Presley) which adorn the walls of Liliane's room (again signs of the influence of American culture upon *la nouvelle vague* generation), before the two friends move to the kitchen in order to prepare some food. Their conversation then turns to the thorny issue of Michel's impending conscription, reminding the viewer of the spectre of conflict which, in the words of Jean Collet, 'marks each smile in the film with the seal of absence and perhaps death' (Collet cited in Sellier 2008: 119). In the following section, I will illustrate how this scene contributes to the conservative sexual politics of the film in representing the two young women as derisive 'gamines' incapable of understanding the individual (in other words, ontological), collective, or political dimensions of the Algerian War. This observation is especially applicable to the ways in which the girls reduce the conflict to a flippant discussion about military dress ('ils ont des chaussures terribles'), rather than, for example, the trauma of returning *appelés*, *harkis*, or ethical questions relating to torture. That said, the presence of the conflict is undeniably present in this scene, if only as it stands in stark contrast to (and thus punctures) the tone of carefree juvenile banality which otherwise characterises the film. In this respect, the domestic sphere is transformed from an anodyne apolitical screen (as within popular discourses of the period) to an indeterminate and overdetermined site infused with memories of unspeakable colonial horror. As I will now demonstrate, *Adieu Philippine* also shares parallels with Robert Enrico's *La Belle vie* (1963), which represents the modern home in similarly politicised terms.

### **2.1.2 *La Belle vie*: undermining the domestic ideal**

Filmed in 1962 although banned until 1963 due to its explicit references to the Algerian War, *La Belle vie* is the first full-length film work by the French director Robert Enrico. The narrative itself focuses on Frédéric (Frédéric de Pasquale), a French conscript returning to France after twenty-seven months of military service, and his childhood sweetheart Sylvie (Josée Steiner), a hairdresser whom Frédéric quickly marries upon his arrival home. The couple then embark upon an extravagant honeymoon to Monte Carlo (paid for by Sylvie's rich friends), before returning to Paris in order to start their new life as a married couple together. However, as the film shows, this new life in Paris is not without its problems. The couple appear especially beset by financial problems, which at least initially hinder them from moving out of Frédéric's claustrophobic studio despite the fact that, halfway through the film, Sylvie realises she is pregnant. Frédéric

also appears unable to cope with his experiences of the Algerian War, his memories of which cause him to become increasingly sullen and withdrawn as the narrative progresses, until he is eventually recalled for military service at the end of the film. In this respect, *La Belle vie* bears certain parallels with Michel Drach's 1970 film *Elise ou la vraie vie*, whose similarly ambiguous title expresses the often problematic reality of contemporary life in late 1950s' France (see chapter four, section two for a discussion of Drach's film).

*La Belle vie* begins with documentary footage of French soldiers fighting in the Wilayas of Algeria, images which immediately illustrate the differences between Enrico's film and other works analysed in this chapter, which largely represent the war through a fictional diegetic world of political understatement and ambiguity. Instead, *La Belle vie* arguably shares similarities with *le cinéma parallèle*, a clandestine group of films made during the years of decolonization in order to specifically target the limitations of censorship, often through using archival footage of atrocities committed during the Algerian War (see for example René Vautier's *Algérie en flammes* [1958]). In Enrico's film, footage of fighting then gives way to images of Frédéric travelling on a train to Paris: he attempts to assuage his traumatic experiences of conflict by daydreaming about the prospect of arriving home. As such, the film chimes with Vladamir Pozner's 1959 short story *Les Etangs de Fontargente*, in which 'relatives and friends of a close-knit community find a returning *appelé* outwardly unscathed but inwardly scarred' by his period of conscription (Dine 1994: 114). The following few minutes of the film then alternate between, on one hand, close-ups of a pensive, silent Frédéric on the train, and, on the other, a montage of panning, tracking and subjective-shots of a snowy Parisian *quartier* accompanied by complementary descriptions provided by Frédéric's interior, homodiegetic monologue (see the second section of this chapter for a discussion of the role of this interior voice in the conservative sexual politics of *La Belle vie*). This part of the film is particularly striking in its formal innovation, in that Frédéric not only appears to at points guide the movement of the camera during the montage, but also addresses a number of the figures depicted in the *quartier*, despite during these moments being essentially located in off-screen, non-diegetic space. Positioned outside of the linear chronology of the diegesis, this short montage thus forms a visual dramatisation of Frédéric's hopes regarding his return to the capital.

Perhaps the most important aspect of this montage is when Frédéric talks about his home, describing it as 'une petite chambre de bonne, là-haut sur les toits sur tout

Paris' (on Rue de la Huchette). Slow tracking shots of central Parisian streets, opulent gardens and – crucially – the exterior of an apartment block then appear on screen, whilst Frédéric's voice continues; 'c'est un royaume, c'est mon royaume. Dans quelques heures je suis là-bas. Je n'arrive pas à le croire'.<sup>35</sup> This scene thus chimes with the discourse of domesticity characteristic of the period in representing Paris – and, in particular, the home – as a familiar, secure and somewhat idealized space, standing in stark contrast to the initially incendiary documentary footage of warfare shot in Algeria. As Kristin Ross claims, during the years of decolonization, 'to be at home was to have an identity, one based upon security and permanence' (1995: 107). On a similar note, Henri Lefebvre has also described how domestic discourses of the period represented the interior realm as 'a romantic cosmos stripped of risk and violence, where lyricism has become familiarity' (2008 [1961]: 83). Nevertheless, Frédéric's romanticised memories are almost immediately shown to be at odds with the everyday reality of this space. Indeed, instead of finding his sweetheart Sylvie waiting for him at home, Frédéric discovers his keys now open an apartment occupied by an embarrassed young couple in bed together (he is forced to dress in the hallway). Leaving the building bewildered and dejected, Frédéric eventually locates Sylvie dancing at a Paris ball, giving her a small bejewelled living beetle as 'un signe de fidélité'. However, despite the fact that Sylvie appears happy to see Frédéric, by this point, his fantasies regarding the domestic realm – as a site of security, stability and conjugal bliss – have been shattered by sexual anxieties resulting from his time in Algeria as a conscript. In this respect, the film mirrors anti-war discourses of the period, which often 'played upon deeply rooted cultural anxieties about war, virility, degeneration, and natality in France', mobilizing fears regarding domestic female sexual independence alongside the more controversial question of how the sexuality of *appelés* could be corrupted by the horror of torture (Kuby 2013: 134).

In relation to this analysis, perhaps the most striking aspect of *La Belle vie* is the way in which domestic space is progressively contaminated by the politics of decolonization. The first example of this process of contamination occurs approximately halfway in the film, when Sylvie notices that the beetle given to her by Frédéric upon his arrival to Paris hangs dead on the wall of his apartment, forming what is traditionally seen as a harbinger of suffering and infidelity or what Frédéric terms a

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<sup>35</sup> The use of the possessive adjective 'mon' during this montage creates a sense of (masculine) ownership over the domestic realm. See the following section for a discussion of how the film mediates patriarchal ideology through the representation of gendered identities.

'malheur'. Enrico then combines a close-up of the dead beetle with the non-diegetic sound of martial drumming, before the whole image is superseded by documentary footage of nationalist demonstrations in Algeria apparently taken from a televised news piece (the voice of a journalist describes this as 'une image d'un Alger fiévreux'). In this sequence, the image of the dead beetle thus forms the focal point for a nexus of complex semiotic connotations. On the one hand, it is associated with the individual – or rather conjugal – problems that will from this point onwards plague the couple, particularly in relation to underlying questions regarding Frédéric's increasingly unfaithful, erratic and apparently traumatised behaviour. As within the myth of Lazarus, Frédéric has the scarred appearance of a man who has returned from the dead. In this respect, the film shares parallels with literary accounts of the conflict, in which the initial optimism of *la quille* quickly 'gives way to the complex reality of individual reintegrations' (Dine 1994: 119). Claude Liauzu has also linked the 'silence' of returning *appelés* with 'l'impossibilité de dire le désarroi et la souffrance, de les exorciser par un partage, ou par la reconnaissance de la société et de la nation' (1990: 511). On the other hand, through a simple process of montage (the syntagmatic collision of two shots), the beetle is also associated with national anxieties regarding the rise of nationalist resistance and the abuse of state power (including random arrests, administrative detention and a curfew applied exclusively to the Algerian population), which, during the early 1960s, 'rendent visible aux yeux de beaucoup la punition infligée aux Algériens voulant l'Indépendance' (Stora 1998: 70). Finally, that the beetle is pictured within the couple's home thus subtly defines the domestic realm as a porous and fragile space tarnished by the traumatic residue of conflict. This formal and spatial dialectic will also be repeated later in the film, when sounds of rioting bleed into a scene set in Frédéric's lover's apartment. Enrico then suggests the origins of this cacophony by interspersing archival footage of the events of the 17 of October 1961 into the fictional world of the diegesis, thus again depicting the domestic realm as a palimpsestic space inextricably linked to the painful demise of empire.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> On the 17 of October 1961, tens of thousands of Algerian demonstrators marched in disciplined rank through the heart of the capital in protest against police repression and the curfew issued in 1958 by the Prefect of Police, Maurice Papon. In response, the police attempted to 'contain' the largely peaceful demonstrators through brutal force, shooting and beating many individuals before throwing a number of bodies into the Seine. Although the precise count of those killed during this demonstration remains highly contested (largely due to a police cover-up during the period), consensus indicates that the number exceeds a hundred, and is quite possibly closer to two hundred (House and MacMaster 2006: 1; Feldman 2014: 160).

As the film progresses, Enrico builds upon this association by emphasising the fragility of the domestic realm – as a veritable anti-idyll saturated with the politics of conflict. With this in mind, at one point in the film, Frédéric awakes from a nightmare about the capital being bombed, before Sylvie cradles him back to sleep.<sup>37</sup> A few scenes later, Frédéric’s nightmares are then realized when his motorbike is destroyed in one of the sporadic attacks on the city orchestrated alternately by the FLN and the OAS (*Organisation de l’armée secrète*), a dissident paramilitary organisation whose nationalist campaign of terror against the Fifth Republic in the years of decolonization would eventually leave five to six thousand people dead (Stora 1998: 91). In this instance, the everyday harmony of the home is thus shattered by the threat of decolonial, urban terrorism. A similar situation arises after Frédéric is later seen walking alone in a fairground during one of his many melancholic perambulations through the city. As he approaches a mock shooting range/stall surrounded by men dressed in military fatigues (presumably *appelés* on-leave), on-screen space is contaminated by deafening sounds of gunfire, although it is unclear as to whether these are diegetic (exterior) sounds emanating from their plastic weapons or noises associated with Frédéric’s (interior) memories of warfare. Frédéric then returns to his (again empty) apartment apparently traumatised by this event. Yet, the domestic realm again proves incapable of expelling traces of conflict from its fragile boundaries. Instead, non-diegetic sounds of martial drumming and marching again bleed into on-screen domestic space, before the camera suddenly visualises documentary footage of Nazi demonstrations, atrocities, and the vilification of Jews during the Occupation, posing the rhetorical question ‘vous voulez recommencer?’ In mobilising memories of the Holocaust as a political praxis against colonialism, Enrico’s film can thus be defined alongside Alain Resnais’s *Muriel* (see below), Edgar Morin and Jean Rouch’s work of *cinéma vérité*, *Chronique d’un été* (1960), and Jean-Luc Godard’s *Le Petit soldat* (1963) as an example of what Michael Rothberg has termed ‘multidirectional memory’, that is, a cultural artefact which visualizes the intimate – although often overlooked – relationship between Holocaust memory and memories of the Algerian War (2009: 5). Furthermore, that this process of contamination again occurs in the family home is significant, in that, like the other works previously discussed in this chapter, *La Belle vie* represents the domestic realm as an antagonistic and politicised space in which

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<sup>37</sup> During this short scene, sounds of an explosion accompany an extreme wide shot of the nocturnal Parisian skyline, before the camera shifts to a close up of an evidently distraught, sleeping Frédéric. As such, the origins of the explosion remain ambiguous. It is possible that the explosion only exists in Frédéric’s dream.

everyday routines and rituals are constantly disrupted by Frédéric's traumatic memories of conflict and the politics of decolonization. It is for this reason that Enrico has himself defined the film as 'un témoignage sur un personnage traumatisé par son expérience de la guerre, sur son instabilité, ses obsessions, des choses qui sont bien connues' (1964).



Figure 1. Fragile domestic harmony in Enrico's *La Belle vie* (1963)

As the film progresses, Frédéric appears increasingly obsessed with the dimensions of his living quarters, lamenting that 'on ne peut pas vivre à trois dans cette chambre' when the couple look after a friend's baby, and immediately discussing the prospect of relocation when he receives his first salary. In this respect, Frédéric's behaviour echoes concerns raised by the young married couple interviewed in Chris Marker's quasi-ethnographic documentary about everyday Parisian life, *Le Joli mai* (1963), who appear fixated on the need to 'préparer [leur] intérieur', apparently as a method of escaping the ominous spectre of conflict and conscription. Frédéric even goes so far as to ask an indifferent lover as to the cost of her apartment and how it is heated, before commenting on 'la bonne orientation' of the room. Towards the end of the film, the couple eventually move out of Frédéric's cramped 'chambre de bonne' into the kind of suburban HLM featured in Jean-Luc Godard's tirade against new consumerism *2 ou*



*3 choses que je sais d'elle* (1967). Interestingly, neither film mentions the large percentage of Maghrebi immigrants that were forcibly moved from central districts (notably le Marais) to these modernist ‘utopias’ in a process of modernization, or, more specifically *rénovation* during the years of colonial declension (Feldman 2014: 41-74). To some extent, this process of elision undermines the anti-colonial politics of the film.

After relocating, the personal problems previously plaguing the couple initially seem to disappear. Instead, they appear happy and relaxed during a party in their new apartment (attended by all-white and apparently bourgeois guests) during which Frédéric’s friend gives him a large photo-print of his old neighbourhood, claiming ‘vous avez tout; l’appartement et la vie dans le quartier’ (represented in the image). Roland-François Lack has described this part of the film as one of the clearest examples of the ‘jouissance of new consumerism’ which characterised many classic New Wave narratives, including Louis Malle’s *Le Feu follet* (1963) and Godard’s *A bout de souffle* (2010: 135). In its emphasis upon the fundamental newness of 1960s’ France, *La Belle vie* also shares parallels with Godard’s *Le Petit soldat* (1960/1963), which similarly chronicles ‘the [painful] reinsertion of a former member of the contingent into a rapidly modernizing society’ (Betz 2009: 105). Shortly after hosting his party, Frédéric sings a whimsical song on guitar, featuring the lines, ‘fini le temps de la bagarre, je suis bien dans ma maison [...] la belle vie est à ma porte, elle entre avec ma chanson’, (figure 1) before the couple retire to bed, discussing Sylvie’s pregnancy and potential baby names in a picture of marital bliss subtly associated with the refolding back into the private interiority of the domestic. On the one hand, these scenes therefore appear to subscribe to dominant discourses of the period in representing the domestic sphere as a form of ‘Utopia’ (Lefebvre 2008 [1961]: 82), free from political antagonism and conflict and instead characterised by ‘la privatisation de vie qui installe l’apathie’ (Stora 1998: 187). Enrico’s film also shares certain parallels with Simone de Beauvoir’s 1966 novel *Les Belles images*, in which the two central protagonists dream that they will return from a vacation to find their tiny apartment transformed into a vast, luxurious space, ‘complete with an efficient and unobtrusive heating system, invisible electric wiring’ (Beauvoir 1968: 55 cited in Ross 1955: 147). However, in the climatic scene of the film, the prospect of a stable future is finally and irrevocably shattered when a military officer calls at the door in order to inform an obviously distraught Frédéric that he is to be ‘rappeler sous le drapeau’. Despite his efforts at constructing a conjugal ‘royaume’ far removed from the bloody Wilayas of Algeria, Frédéric is thus ultimately unable to prevent the conflict from infiltrating the fragile boundaries of domestic space, which,

‘with brutal irony forecloses on [Frédéric’s] happiness by the end of the film’ (Lack 2010: 135). In the following analysis, I will show how a similar process of infiltration and contamination is also evident in Alain Resnais’s 1963 film, *Muriel*.

### **2.1.3 *Muriel ou le temps d’un retour: contaminating the domestic realm***

Whilst certainly occupying a privileged position in the pantheon of post-independence French cinema, Alain Resnais’s 1963 work, *Muriel ou le temps d’un retour* remains a controversial piece of filmmaking, with Robert Benayoun arguing that ‘*Muriel* is not a film about Algeria but a film where Algeria is something everyone tries to forget’ (cited in Tomlinson 2002: 53). However, as this analysis will illustrate, this interpretation is rendered somewhat problematic by Resnais’s representation of the modern home as a form of palimpsest, in which a domestic post-colonial present constantly threatens to collapse into the awful horror of a colonial past. Covering a fortnight from the 29<sup>th</sup> of September to the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1962 (five months after the signing of the Evian Accords), the narrative dramatises the lives of Hélène Aughain (Delphine Seyrig), a single widow, and her ex-lover Alphonse Noyard (Jean-Pierre Kérien), who attempt to rekindle a previous romance during a volatile few weeks in the Northern port of Boulogne-sur-Mer. The film therefore begins with Alphonse’s arrival and introduction to Hélène’s stepson, Bernard (Jean-Baptiste Thierrée), who – like Alphonse – has just returned from Algeria in order to marry his fiancée, ‘Muriel’ (to whom the viewer is at no point introduced). Thus, in line with the sub-title of the film, *le temps d’un retour*, the basic premise of the narrative concerns the event of a return; for Hélène, in Alphonse, it signifies the return of an old love interest, for Bernard, it represents his recent return from his time spent in Algeria as a French soldier (it is initially unclear what role Alphonse has played in the colonies). For the remainder of the film, the protagonists spend their time engaging in fragmented, tense meals, walking around the town, and frequenting a number of bars and cafés in scenes often characterised by despair and barely veiled aggression. By the end of the film, the spectator has been exposed to two major revelations. Firstly, far from being Bernard’s fiancée, Muriel is revealed to be the pseudonym for an anonymous Algerian woman tortured in Bernard’s presence during his time as a conscript. Secondly, the reasons for Alphonse’s amorous visit to see Hélène are called into question with the arrival of his long-suffering wife, Simone, who wanders melancholically through Hélène’s empty flat in the final tracking

shot of the film, ‘tracing a clear path through rooms whose exact relations had previously been obscured’ (Kite 2009: 23).

Certain theorists have drawn attention to the symbolic significance of Boulogne, as a town in which the past and present coexist in a state of uneasy tension (Wilson 2006: 101-104; Silverman 2013: 56). This tension is immediately apparent in the simple fact that, despite evidence of the aggressive drive towards architectural modernization that characterised the years of decolonization (exemplified in the half-finished modernist apartment which flashes across the screen throughout the film), Boulogne remains to some extent scarred by the atavistic traces of the Second World War. Memories of this trauma can be found in the references to bombing and smoke that occur sporadically throughout the film, alongside the archipelago of derelict ruins scattered across the town. It is for this reason that Françoise describes Boulogne as having ‘l’air tout reconstruit’ whilst Alphonse describes the town as ‘une ville martyre’.

With these observations in mind, one way of interpreting Boulogne is as a spatial reflection of the psychological state of the protagonists, whose complex past lives constantly threaten to disrupt the becalmed surface of the post-colonial present. This process is, of course, applicable to the ways in which Bernard is haunted by his time as a conscript in Algeria, although it is also evident in the conflict of memories that characterises Alphonse and Hélène’s relationship, which, naturally enough, began in 1939 with the outbreak of World War Two. It is for this reason that Naomi Greene describes Resnais’s films as involving a tendency to depict the cinematic landscape as a ‘huge mental space [in which] rooms, cites, and objects convey the “play of feeling” that the spectral characters are unable to voice’ (1999: 33). In a similar fashion, Gilles Deleuze has described Resnais’s ‘landscapes’ as ‘mental states, just as mental states are cartographies, both crystallised in each another, geometrized, mineralized’ (1986: 206-207). Building upon this interpretation of the film, Resnais’s choice of location also has a subtle although significant resonance in terms of the political climate of the era. Earlier in this thesis, we considered the importance of de Gaulle’s decision to revive the myth of wartime martyrdom as a method of uniting a nation traumatised by decolonization. To a certain extent, *Muriel* mirrors what could be termed the multidirectional or palimpsestic<sup>38</sup> logic of this discourse by mobilizing memories of the Second World War as a response to colonial declension. Nevertheless, whilst de Gaulle’s vision of the war was predicated on an idealised notion of national ‘*grandeur*’

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<sup>38</sup> I have taken these terms from the work of Michael Rothberg (2009) and Max Silverman respectively, who applies the phrase ‘palimpsestic memory’ to cultural artefacts that crystallize the ““knotted intersections” of history’ (2013: 8).

(Greene 1999: 3-4), Resnais represents the conflict in comparatively ambivalent terms, as an era characterised by epistemological uncertainty, romantic complications and the faded majesty of architectural ruins. As we will see later in this section, this observation is also applicable to the palimpsestic landscape of Chabrol's *Le Boucher*, which, like *Muriel*, unites France's past and present as part of an oppositional cinematic praxis rooted in anti-state and anti-colonial ideology.

Although certain sections of the film take place in the streets of the town, the main site of action in *Muriel* is undoubtedly H  l  ne's apartment – a claustrophobic, 'uncanny space' (Wilson 2006: 98) in which much of the film (including the first and last scene) is set. As an antiques showroom, H  l  ne's apartment remains – to an extent – bound to the past, leading Bernard to claim that 'on ne sait jamais quand on se r  veille si c'est dans du Second Empire ou du rustique normand' (in the following section of this chapter I will show how H  l  ne's personality reflects her domestic surroundings). However, it is also important to acknowledge the unmistakable signs of modernization that mark this domestic space, including; a veritable panoply of consumer durables, Formica worktops and a washing machine – alongside its metonymic signifier, Pax powder. If only in this respect, Resnais's depiction of domestic space mirrors – to a certain degree – representations of everyday life propagated by popular publications of the time, including *Marie-Claire*, *Elle* and *Femmes d'aujourd'hui*, which depicted the everyday domestic sphere as the locus of an 'integral functionalism' (Lefebvre 2008 [1961]: 78). Furthermore, H  l  ne's almost pathological wish to keep this space free of stains also chimes with a national longing for hygiene and cleanliness characteristic of popular discourses of the period.<sup>39</sup> It is for this reason that, in the opening scene, H  l  ne angrily reprimands Bernard for placing a coffee pot on a piece of furniture, demanding 'comment veux-tu que je vende cette table s'il y a une marque?', whilst H  l  ne's customer claims 'je ne veux surtout pas vieillir mon appartement' when enquiring about a piece of furniture. On the other hand, Resnais also subverts this 'discourse of the domesticated sublime' in a number of ways (Lefebvre cited in Ross 1995: 89). Firstly, H  l  ne (as with other characters) often seems constrained by the claustrophobic dimensions of her apartment, an observation which subsequently undermines idealized notions of the domestic realm as a functional space characterised by 'the efficiency of movement and flow of bodies from one room to another' (Ross 1995: 105). As Jean Cayrol specifies in the screenplay, 'H  l  ne ne s'arr  te de bouger, d'aller et de venir. On

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<sup>39</sup> Kristin Ross has linked this longing to a desire to be cleansed of the traumas of the Occupation and decolonization (1995: 73).

va la sentir mal à l'aise, elle s'occupe, se perd dans mille gestes, se trompe, revient comme si elle avait oublié quelque chose' (Cayrol 1963: 52). Hélène's wish for her apartment to be 'extraordinaire et réfléchi' thus stands in stark contrast to the everyday reality of this domestic space, which instead emerges as a locus of disorder, claustrophobia and intrusion – a narrative trope that I will discuss in more detail towards the end of this analysis. Furthermore, not only do Hélène's unconventional living arrangements (as a single widow living with her stepson) clash with contemporaneous dominant ideals regarding conjugal living, but her alienated, traumatised behaviour<sup>40</sup> and archaic appearance suggests she is older than the idealized figure of the modern housewife as propagated by popular publications of the period (the following section defines this female alienation as symptomatic of the conservative sexual politics of the film). It is for this reason that Raphaëlle Branche claims that 'le passé n'a pas été intégré au présent et Hélène, dans son appartement moderne, reste dans le passé' (Branche 1995: 192). In this respect, *Muriel* shares parallels with certain structuralist works of the period (for example Georges Perec's 1965 novel *Les Choses*) in its astute and subversive commentary on the commodification of the private, domestic realm. As Lefebvre claims, 'modernity leads to a thoroughly modern boredom, heavily affecting the youth, those without a future, and women, [...] who bear the brunt of an isolated and dismembered everyday life' known at the time as *la sarcellite* (cited in Merrifield 2006: 65). However, crucially, Resnais's film also transcends these works in using patterns of narrative space as a subtle critique of colonial ideology.

This chapter has previously shown how *Adieu Philippine* and *La Belle vie* critique contemporaneous discourses of domesticity by creating, in Kafkaesque fashion, a world of colonial horror out of banal and the everyday. In Resnais's film, it is the characters of Bernard and Alphonse who represent, by analogy, the shame and trauma of the conflict.<sup>41</sup> Apart from a brief introduction by Hélène, few details regarding Bernard's experiences in Algeria are provided; instead he appears apparently unable to narrativise or even articulate simple details regarding his time as an *appelé* in the colonies, angrily changing the subject when conversations turn to his past or abruptly leaving the room, in turn disrupting the frequent domestic rituals which punctuate the narrative. Benjamin Stora has previously defined the figure of the returning *appelé* in

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<sup>40</sup> See Sharpe (2012) for a discussing regarding Hélène's role as a sign of national trauma.

<sup>41</sup> In addition to Alphonse and Bernard, the figure of Muriel has also been described as 'a radical metonymy' for the violence inflicted upon the national body of Algeria, despite the fact that she remains both anonymous and absent from the diegesis (O'Brien 2000: 54).

terms of un ‘silence gêné’ (Stora 1998: 265), triggered by prolonged separation from family, wives and loved ones, unemployment, difficulty in reintegrating into a society irrevocably marked by the shock of modernization and American capitalism, the yet to be diagnosed condition of post traumatic stress disorder, and the stifling effect of government censorship that effectively rendered the war taboo. It is precisely this sense of ‘silence gêné’ that is embodied by Bernard, leading Françoise – in a phrase typically charged with significance – to describe him as ‘songeant’. As the script writer, Jean Cayrol claims, ‘j’ avais été très frappé par la gêne des garçons qui revenaient de l’armée; ils étouffent littéralement, comme si l’expérience qu’ils avaient vécu là-bas était incommunicable’ (l’Arc 1961: 11 in Wilson 2006 : 94). As with Dédé in *Adieu Philippine* and Frédéric in *La Belle vie*, Bernard’s ‘silence’ thus functions as a constant reminder of what lies just outside the representational framework of the diegesis – that is, the Algerian War. In *Muriel*, neither Bernard nor Alphonse appear physically wounded by warfare (at one point Hélène turns to Alphonse, stating ‘j’ avais tellement peur que vous soyez défiguré par la guerre’). In this respect, an analogy can be drawn between the unblemished masculine body of the war veterans in the film (which respectively conceals trauma and secrets), and the modernized, feminine sheen of Hélène’s apartment, which provides a similarly fragile although ultimately imperfect façade behind which lurks the persistent horror of conflict. As Maxim Silverman claims, ‘Boulogne’s blandly modernized present is exposed as a superficial veneer covering a personal and collective past which embraces the war’ (2013: 57). This observation can be further nuanced by drawing attention to the emphasis placed on smooth, unblemished surfaces that existed simultaneously in popular domestic discourse (in relation to worktops) and military discourse, according to which ‘torturers [based in Algeria] boasted about employing a clean torture, one that didn’t leave any traces’ (Vidal-Naquet 1972: 13). It is for this reason that, in his 1957 account of torture, the Franco-Algerian journalist Henri Alleg reports feeling heartened that scars induced from the torture sessions he had to endure were visible on his body: they were, in many ways, a sign that his torturers would not execute him for fear that they would be investigated (Alleg 1957: 105-106).

One of the most disconcerting aspects of Bernard’s personality is his apparent inability to remain within a certain location for an extended period of time. This observation is clearly applicable to the ways in which he appears desperate to leave the claustrophobic confines of the domestic realm (especially when Alphonse inhabits this space), frequently mentioning other, faraway places that he is planning to move to,

perhaps in an attempt to ‘break free’ of his increasingly antagonistic relationship with his stepmother (at one point he incongruously claims that he intends to go to New Caledonia). With this in mind, Raphaëlle Branche has described how Resnais creates ‘une association récurrente [qui dure] tout au long du film; celle de Bernard et de l’escalier. Il est le seul à le descendre, à le monter régulièrement’ (1995: 192). However, Bernard also appears strangely drawn to the domestic sphere, despite the fact that he rarely seems at ease in the presence of others. Indeed, this observation is supported by the sequence of events that takes place during the dizzying montage of close-ups that constitute the opening scene of the film, during which Bernard is dramatised staining a table in Hélène’s apartment with a boiling coffee pot, an act which Maxim Silverman has associated metonymically with the torture of Muriel, which similarly revolves around moisture (her hair is wet) and heat (she has burns on her chest) (2013: 55). Hélène then leaves to meet Alphonse at the local train station (Alphonse has arrived at the town with a young woman that he introduces as his niece, Françoise [Nita Klein]), before the three protagonists return home to prepare a meal in the now empty apartment. It is at this point that Bernard abruptly arrives back into the domestic realm, unsettling the nascent relationship between Hélène, Alphonse and Françoise in refusing to engage in banal conversation (behaviour in many ways evocative of Dédé in *Adieu Philippe* [figure 2]). In this respect, Bernard’s behaviour and erratic movement from public to private space is from the outset represented as one of the main reasons for the atmosphere of ‘perpetual malaise’ that hangs over the family (Cayrol cited in Armes 1968: 128). Indeed, each time Bernard arrives – often abruptly and uninvited – at the apartment, he appears to shatter the fragile rituals, rhythms and conventions traditionally associated with domestic space through his sheer silent presence, leading Bernard to ask Hélène sardonically why his visits ‘n’ont pas l’air de te faire plaisir ?’

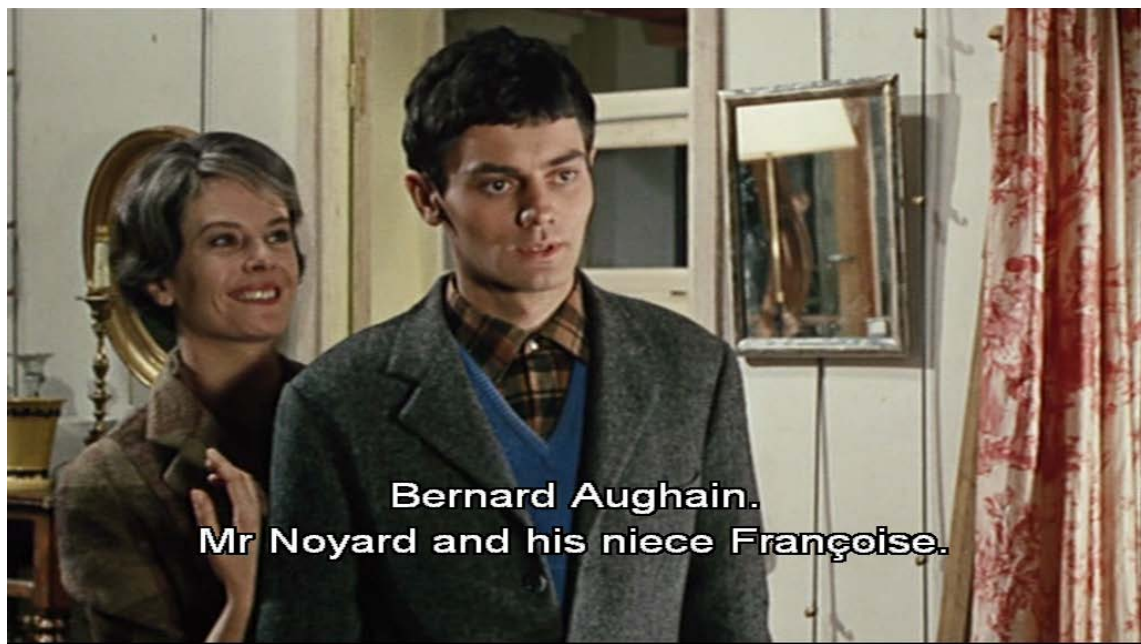


Figure 2. Disrupted domesticity in Resnais's *Muriel* (1963)

In *Muriel*, the reasons behind Bernard's increasingly bizarre behaviour remain unclear: when he is not accidentally staining H el ene's apartment (as in the opening scene), he is frequently depicted silently observing the other protagonists with his video camera, an object which both ties *Muriel* to a genealogy of films featuring similarly voyeuristic masculine figures (see for example *Rear Window* [Hitchcock 1954]) *Peeping Tom* [Powell 1960]), and forms a self-reflexive indication of what French filmmakers like Resnais were unable to show during the war due to censorship, that is, testimonial evidence of the trauma of conflict. Bernard's voyeuristic tendencies are particularly explicit when he replies to Fran oise's question 'vous avez un m etier?' with the response, 'je retourne. Je cherche. Je regarde' – an ambiguous reply arguably evocative of the colonial desire to overcome perceptual limitations posed, for example, by the *haik*<sup>42</sup> or the cloistered harem (Fanon: 1965 [1959]: 69). It is for this reason that Malek Alloula has defined the archetypal colonial postcard as featuring young Maghrebi women drawing their 'veils aside in a gesture of inaugural invitation for the viewer' (1986: 15), whilst a large amount of scholarship has been dedicated to the symbolic significance of Marc Garanger's photographic collection, *Femmes Alg eriennes* (1960), in which a series of unveiled Algerian women glare violently back at the camera as part of a procedure linked to the introduction of photographic identity cards. In this respect, although unwilling to explicitly talk about the conflict, Bernard's

<sup>42</sup> As Joseph McGonagle claims, the *haik* is a large piece of (usually white) fabric worn by women in Algeria. Traditionally, it is wrapped around the body, leaving only the hands, feet and eyes visible (2007: 221).



voyeuristic behaviour bears the atavistic traces of his role as an *appelé* in the colonies, traces which gradually inflect the everyday, domestic space of the modern home as the film progresses. Whilst popular discourses represented Algeria as France's distant and outmoded 'Other', Resnais instead emphasises the awful proximity of these two worlds, thus mobilizing the modernist techniques of juxtaposition and metonymy within a cinematic praxis rooted in anti-colonial ideology.

On a similar note, theorists have generally agreed on the unsavoury character of Alphonse, who has alternately been described as a controlling, manipulative and sexually demanding individual, 'dissimulating his past' (Wilson 2006: 103) through fabrication and 'embroidered memories' regarding, amongst other things, his role in Algeria (Armes 1968: 125). However, what has often been ignored in previous scholarship are the parallels that exist between Bernard and Alphonse – particularly in relation to patterns of *mise-en-scène* and narrative space. Like Bernard, Alphonse embodies the spirit of (de)colonization; although whilst Bernard appears traumatized by his direct experiences of conflict, Alphonse's behaviour rather chimes with official discourse of the period, oscillating between self-censorship, 'amnésie' (Stora 1998: 8), alongside a tendency towards idealization crystalized in the revivification of *nostalgérie*, that is, a discourse of longing and loss that takes, as its primary focus, idealized memories of colonial Algeria (McGonagle and Welch 2013: 17).<sup>43</sup> As Naomi Greene claims, 'behind the pathetic lies told by Alphonse [...], one glimpses the official lies, "the rhetoric of grandeur," promulgated by those in power' at the time (1999: 50). Yet, Alphonse also shares a second and, perhaps more important parallel with Bernard, in that he is constantly penetrating and contaminating the boundaries of private, domestic space. Of particular significance are the ways in which Alphonse consistently leaves his belongings lying around Héléne's apartment, literally and metaphorically staining the (hygienic) domestic realm as Bernard does in the opening scene (see above). Whilst Héléne complains to Roland de Smoke, Alphonse appears ignorant of his intrusive presence, instead humorously claiming, 'il y a des gens qui prennent mieux les taches que d'autres. Moi, par exemple'. As Celia Britton has illustrated, Alphonse also has a tendency to wait for Héléne in the shadows of her apartment; a narrative trope appropriated from both a long genealogy of gangster and horror films alongside the cinema of Alfred Hitchcock to which the film is deeply indebted (1990: 44). This occurs on a number of occasions, notably when Héléne returns from the casino to an apparently

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<sup>43</sup> As McGonagle and Welch rightly claim, the origins of *nostalgérie* can be traced back to the 1930s, although 'it came into sharp focus among the *pied-noir* community in the decades following the end of the Algerian War' (2013: 17).

empty flat. A few moments later she turns on a side light, a gesture suddenly followed by the sound of Alphonse's off-screen voice ('vous rentrez tard!'). A reverse angle shot then exposes his position within the *mise-en-scène*, although by this point Hélène again finds herself unsettled by this evidently intrusive act. Indeed, Alphonse's behaviour appears to become more invasive as the film progresses, particularly during the scenes in which he transgresses the fragile boundaries of her bedroom (she appears particularly uncomfortable during these moments), until he eventually resorts to indiscriminately rummaging through Hélène's rooms and furniture. Although the reasons behind his behaviour remain ambiguous (what exactly is he searching for?), the narrative significance of Alphonse's actions is clear; as with Bernard, he is the main reason for the sense of 'banal yet disrupted domesticity' that pervades the film (Wilson 2006: 101).

As with Bernard, much of Alphonse's behaviour appears to echo acts performed by military officers stationed in Algeria. This process of transposition is especially evident when Alphonse unexpectedly bursts into the bathroom of Hélène's apartment holding a toolbox and hammer – an image reminiscent of torture committed in colonial detention centers such as the notorious El-Biar complex, which frequently took place in similarly domestic settings (bathrooms, kitchens). Tellingly, Bernard then responds to Alphonse's question 'pourquoi me regardez-vous ainsi?' with the loaded retort 'j'ai essayé de vous imaginer en Algérie', before Alphonse defensively declares 'je répondrai quand j'ai rhabillé (sic)' after glancing down at the hammer in his hand. As such, Alphonse's behaviour forms a perfect example of how the Fifth Republic attempted to sidestep questions of torture during the years of decolonization with a toxic combination of obscurantist rhetoric, censorship and propaganda. Resnais's film also shares parallels with Jean-Luc Godard's 1963 film *Le Petit soldat*, which represents torture in similarly banal and domestic terms.<sup>44</sup> Finally, Alphonse's tendency to indiscriminately rummage through Hélène's apartment is arguably reminiscent of *les rafles* (raids), organized by the French army during the conflict as part of the so-called 'pacification' process (see Pontecorvo's 1966 *La Bataille d'Alger* [chapter four, section two] for a graphic dramatisation of this process).

As this analysis has illustrated, in *Muriel*, Resnais represents the domestic realm as a chaotic space, 'sullied' (literally and figuratively) by Bernard and Alphonse, who both function synecdochically for the Algerian War and consistently penetrate the fragile, porous boundaries of Hélène's apartment through their intrusive behaviour. This

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<sup>44</sup> In *Le Petit soldat*, the central male character – an OAS agent named Bruno – is tortured by FLN members in a sterile hotel bathroom in Geneva.

is a conclusion tentatively explored by Emma Wilson, who concludes her persuasive reading of Resnais's film in claiming that 'Bernard's memories of Algeria and Muriel colour the seemingly unrelated domestic scenes in his home town' (Wilson 2006: 100; also see Britton 1990: 46). However, neither theorist attempts to situate the text within wider discursive, socio-spatial and filmic contexts, nor questions the political potential of its representational patterns (which this section aims to do). Ultimately, I would thus argue that despite being located firmly within metropolitan space, the anti-colonial potential of *Muriel* depends less upon its formal strategies (see O'Brien 2000; Greene 1999), but rather upon its representation of the domestic sphere as a porous space, susceptible to contamination by traces of a conflict embodied in the performative rituals of the two central male protagonists. In the following analysis, I will show how this process of contamination is also evident, albeit in a comparatively violent form, in Claude Chabrol's 1969 film *Le Boucher*.

#### **2.1.4 *Le Boucher*: violent domestic penetration**

Set in the isolated village of Trémolat in southwest rural France, *Le Boucher* focuses upon the lives of Mademoiselle Hélène (Stéphane Audran), a young, cultured head teacher, and Popaul (Jean Yanne), the local butcher. Both of these characters are to some extent alienated from the bourgeois society which surrounds them: Popaul through his traumatic experiences in the Algerian War and Indochina, and Hélène through the distress of a failed relationship which has led her to find solace in her schoolchildren rather than marriage and family. After meeting at a local wedding in the opening scene of the film, the two individuals spend an increasing amount of time together, dining at Hélène's apartment, going to the local cinema, and foraging for mushrooms before Hélène discovers clues suggesting that Popaul is responsible for the spate of violent murders terrorizing the village. In the last few scenes of the narrative, Hélène's anxieties are finally confirmed when he breaks into her apartment with a knife, before stabbing himself in front of her in an apparent act of suicide. Hélène then inexplicably drives Popaul to the local hospital in an ultimately futile effort to save him, before appearing seemingly traumatized next to a misty river in the final shot of the film. As the film ends, Hélène's blank expression, silence and isolation from the village suggest a 'continued allegiance to the murderer she has protected and loved' (Bell 2008: 47).

Unlike all of the films discussed in this chapter, *Le Boucher* is not set in urban France but in the pastoral vistas of *la France profonde* – a concept linked in the French imaginary to the populist rhetoric of Pierre Poujade, whose highly conservative and moralist discourse of anti-modernization and regionalism united the ‘shopkeepers scattered [...] throughout provincial France’ throughout the 1950s (Ross 1995: 128). In interviews, Chabrol has previously explained his decision to film in Trémolat as part of a desire to mobilize images of the prehistoric caves that lie close to the village as a metaphor for the unconscious savage impulses that haunt Popaul’s fragile ego (Chabrol cited in Yakir 1979: 4). Expanding upon this explanation, we may also contextualize the film in relation to a certain rural nostalgia that arose in the mid-to-late 1960s. This nostalgia was expressed; firstly, in an increase in sociological and ethnographic research into rural communities<sup>45</sup> and, secondly, in a popular discourse increasingly bent on mythologizing the rural peasantry according to a warped metropolitan ideal (Farmer 2011: 370). Indeed, Chabrol would later explicitly pay homage to this phenomenon in his work *Le Cheval d’orgueil* (1980), a dramatisation of the life of Pierre-Jakez Hélias, whose eponymous ethnographic study of the Breton language and provincial culture became an instant bestseller in 1975. Yet, perhaps the most persuasive reading of *Le Boucher*’s setting emerges if we are to focus upon the apparently idyllic aspects of the village; as a space drained of the political and racial antagonism often found in urban areas at the time, given the high levels of immigration linked to the twilight of France’s colonial empire. In this way, Chabrol can be seen to emphasize the full horror of Popaul’s actions precisely by locating the narrative in a space traditionally associated with moral purity, provincial harmony and the ‘continuity of village life’ (Austin 1999: 63). As James Monaco claims, ‘the formal dialectics [of the film] are a matter of contrast between the seductive, peaceful, effulgent surface of bourgeois life and the searing, abrupt violence which every once in a while unpredictably rips through it’ (1977: 279).

This chapter has previously examined the extent to which 1960s’ French cinema mobilises the interior realm as a locus of anti-colonial ideology, and, in this respect, Chabrol’s film is no exception. In *Le Boucher*, domestic space takes the form of Hélène’s apartment, a tastefully arranged and clean flat adorned with a panoply of books, renaissance paintings, traditional furniture and artefacts, all indicative of what Pierre Bourdieu might term cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986: 47). As such, to a certain

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<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Goubert (1960); Lefebvre (2001 [1949-1969], 1966); and Morin (2013 [1967]).

extent, the film ignores the socio-spatial reality of the period, when domestic techniques disseminated in popular discourses originally aimed at an urban demographic were eventually adopted by *la France profonde*. It is for this reason that, in his ethnographic study of the village of Plodémet, Edgar Morin claims, '[la femme rurale] aspire de plus en plus à un intérieur propre, confortable, agréable, et elle fait pression pour opérer la révolution domestique dans l'archaïque demeure' (2013 [1967]: 93). That said, Hélène's living quarters also appear subtly marked by the discourse of domesticity that rose to prominence during the years of decolonization. The atavistic traces of this discourse are especially evident if we consider Hélène's secure and detached apartment (which is located directly on top of the school in which she works) as the apotheosis of a process of post-colonial privatization symbolically rooted in the notion of splendid, apolitical isolation. According to Henri Lefebvre, it is this desire to retreat from socio-political and racial tension that resulted in the *banlieues pavillonnaires*<sup>46</sup> that proliferated in the suburban margins of many French towns during the mid-1960s (1966: 129). As Lefebvre claims, 'the image of the detached house corresponds with an ideal involving the wish for protection and isolation, the need for identification and confirmation of the self, the need for contact with nature, in short, the requirement of isolation' (1966: 129). Morin also identifies this desire for domestic isolation as one of the central characteristics of late 1960s' rural France, claiming 'la maison assure la liberté d'intérieur' (1967: 230; see also Ross 1995: 92-93).

Whilst Chabrol represents the domestic sphere in reassuringly apolitical terms – as a form of privatized refuge – the same cannot be said about public space. This observation is particularly applicable to the courtyard that lies directly in front of Hélène's apartment, a space which is often depicted at night in sombre and somewhat threatening terms, devoid of warmth and humanity. Indeed, apart from the shadowy and increasingly violent figure of Popaul, the only object that inhabits this space is the local war memorial; a perfect example of the monumentalisation of World War Two martyrdom instigated by de Gaulle during his presidency and involving the erection of overdetermined monoliths, libraries, museums and flags.<sup>47</sup> Through a simple visual analogy, Chabrol thus represents the public realm as a politicised palimpsestic space, in which the violent legacy of colonialism (embodied by Popaul) constantly threatens to destabilise the discourse of military hagiography and monumentalisation that

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<sup>46</sup> Lefebvre uses this term to refer to the large-scale suburban housing estates which populate many French, and, in particular English suburbs.

<sup>47</sup> Pierre Nora has famously described this process as involving the establishment of *les lieux de mémoire* (1989: 7; also see Greene 1999: 4).

characterised de Gaulle's term in office. As we have seen, this observation is also applicable to Resnais's *Muriel*, which, in a similar fashion, undermines the Gaullist discourse of *résistancialisme* by setting the film in a town filled with ruins from the Second World War.

For the first third of *Le Boucher*, the spatial dichotomy between private and public space is tested although maintained, as such supporting Henri Lefebvre's claim that 'the contrast between the outside world and the inner world gives housing its meaning' (1966: 129). In the film, the symbolic power of the domestic realm (as a form of secure kingdom) is especially evident in the second scene of the film, when Popaul walks Hélène home after the couple have met at the wedding ceremony. Here, Chabrol uses a slow tracking shot to simultaneously frame Hélène entering the entrance of the school whilst the war memorial positioned in the adjacent courtyard is clearly visible in the foreground of the frame (this is the first point at which Pierre Jansen's atonal score will be introduced in the film). Hélène then ascends the stairs to her apartment, before gazing invitingly out of her window onto the street below. Although she has not allowed Popaul to enter into the inner sphere of her home, Hélène's subtly provocative gesture arguably acts in order to legitimize the increasingly forceful and indeed fatal trips that Popaul makes to the school/domestic space in the remainder of the narrative. As such, the film appears to share parallels with post-war *réalisme noir*, in which women are represented as 'duplicious and guilty' (see for example, Yves Allégret's *Manèges*, 1950) or 'both *fatale* and victim, leading her man to his death through the pursuit of her own desire' (Leahy 2002: 39). A few scenes later, Popaul then turns up uninvited at the school whilst Hélène is giving a lesson: he peers voyeuristically through the window of her classroom, again appearing hesitant to transgress the spatial boundaries separating public space and the private space of the school/domestic realm (this behaviour will be mirrored in the penultimate scene in the film during which Popaul confesses to his crimes [see below]). Nevertheless, Popaul is more confident on this occasion, asking Hélène whether she would like to dine with him that evening, to which she agrees. In the next – and highly significant – image, Chabrol then uses an extreme wide shot of the school in order to simultaneously frame Popaul arriving outside the building later that evening, whilst Hélène again leans out of her first floor window. This is the final point at which public and private space exist in a state of mutual exclusivity rather than violent contamination.

From this point onwards, Popaul will infiltrate the privatized, domestic space of Hélène's apartment four times. The first of these occasions occurs directly following the

shot discussed above, when Popaul arrives to cook H  l  ne dinner in her home in a combination of domestic ritual and anxious courtship. Surprisingly, the scene ends pleasantly when the two individuals leave H  l  ne’s apartment to go to the local cinema. Halfway into the film, H  l  ne realizes that Popaul is probably guilty of the murders after finding a lighter that she has previously given him at one of the crime scenes. Returning home, H  l  ne attempts to block out this realization through meditation. However, this attempt ‘to retreat from reality’ (Wood and Walker 1970: 137) proves futile when the police officer in charge of the investigation into the murders abruptly arrives at her door in order to question her (again visualizing the disruption of the domestic sphere). A few scenes later, Chabrol cuts to a slow tracking shot of the school/H  l  ne’s apartment, which appears dwarfed by the enveloping darkness of the rural environs. Here, Chabrol uses Pierre Jansen’s atonal non-diegetic music in order to create a sense of unease, further heightened by the fact that it is unclear whether this is a subjective or objective shot.<sup>48</sup> Chabrol then shifts to a static, interior shot of H  l  ne working at a warmly lit table in her front room – an image which again defines the relationship between the characters, and, by extension, the public and private realm, in terms of an apparently ‘schematic dichotomy which fluctuates throughout the film’ (Austin 1999: 62). However, in contrast to the early stages of the film – in which this distinction is maintained – here, H  l  ne is apparently unable to prevent the repressed trauma of the conflict (embodied by the character of Popaul) to pollute and politicise the hitherto secure, ‘hygienic’ and apolitical confines of the domestic sphere. This process of contamination is at first apparent in the ways in which Pierre Jansen’s atonal non-diegetic score subtly bleeds into on-screen images of domesticity (during this shot H  l  ne paces restlessly around her front room), before the fragile harmony of the domestic *mise-en-sc  ne* is suddenly disrupted by the sound of Popaul’s monotone pleas of ‘Mademoiselle H  l  ne’, a kind of perverse mantra that – echoing the schoolchildren – he will repeat throughout the film. On a more general note, Popaul’s increasingly bizarre behaviour arguably mirrors the motifs of ‘pathos, drunkenness, debauchery and sexually inspired violence’ associated at the time with what was known as *le mal alg  rien* (Dine 1994: 115). Despite suspecting him to be a killer, H  l  ne then somewhat implausibly allows Popaul into her apartment on the pretext of sharing a jar of cherries, before Popaul apparently proves his innocence by using the lighter that H  l  ne suspects he has left at the crime scene. Out of all of the scenes in the film, this is perhaps the

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<sup>48</sup> Guy Austin has drawn attention to the ways in which Chabrol appropriates formal techniques from Hitchcock in his frequent use of the subjective-shot in order to explore the themes of voyeurism and spectatorial complicity (1999: 9).

most potent example of H  l  ne’s ambiguous role in the narrative; as a morally ambivalent figure who appears increasingly complicit with Popaul’s crimes as the narrative progresses. This scene is also problematic in that, like the archetypal Hollywood narrative, it appears to ‘capitalize, in fetishistic fashion, on the eroticism of [female] passivity’ by representing H  l  ne as a somewhat masochistic individual who takes pleasure in the possibility of pain (Haskell 1987: 347).

Later in the film, Popaul will again infiltrate the confines of H  l  ne’s apartment after he agrees to paint her front room white in order to distract her from the murders terrorizing the village (ironically committed by him). In this short but highly significant scene, he is shown in white overalls, painting the ceiling of her front room on a ladder whilst one of her school children, Charles, attempts to finish a piece of homework.<sup>49</sup> Popaul does not achieve his task particularly successfully: he drips paint onto H  l  ne’s carpet in an image subtly evocative of an earlier scene in the film, in which blood spattering onto a tartine eaten by one of H  l  ne’s schoolchildren reveals the presence above of one of Popaul’s freshly murdered victims. Apart from forming a somewhat elliptical reference to Popaul’s desire to conceal the evidence of his murder, on one level this image arguably evokes the ways in which official discourses of the period eliminated traces of the war from the purview of the general public (and, indeed from the historiography of decolonization), through a blend of idealization, censorship and propagandist fabrication. This imagery could also be interpreted more specifically, as a reference to the role of the French army in Algeria, whose desire for a modern and hygienic *modus operandi* of torture<sup>50</sup> was mirrored in ‘nightmarish guise’ in metropolitan popular discourses across the sea (Ross 1995: 111). Finally, Popaul’s behaviour is reminiscent of Andr   Malraux’s attempts at symbolically cleansing Paris of its (colonial) past through a dual combination of architectural ‘preservation’ and ‘whitewashing’ (Feldman 2014: 66-67). In all of these readings the modern home is symbolically stained by the spectral trace of colonial praxis. Soon after this scene,

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<sup>49</sup> Early in the film, Popaul boasts about being a logical man, claiming ‘dans l’arm  e il y a deux choses qu’on aime beaucoup parce qu’on ne les a pas. C’est la logique et la libert  ’. However, his inability to answer the simple mathematical question the schoolboy Charles struggles with towards the end of the narrative attests to the violently illogical behaviour that characterizes Popaul’s real nature.

<sup>50</sup> Torture methods employed by the army included waterboarding, rape (whether bodily or performed by household objects) and electrocution by the *g  g  ne*, a simple electrical apparatus which Pierre Leulliette has described as a ‘genuine product of civilization’ (1964: 233 [see Jean-Luc Godard’s *Le Petit soldat* for a graphic demonstration of its insidious power]). These methods were chronicled in graphic prose in Henri Alleg’s *La Question* (1957).



Hélène realizes that Popaul has taken the original lighter left at the murder scene from her desk drawer – a revelation that, according to her suddenly tense and anxious behaviour, she apparently interprets as an irrefutable sign of guilt. Sending Charles home, Hélène is then pictured ascending the stairs of her apartment before abruptly rushing back down into the school in order to close an exterior door. However, as she walks back through the building, Popaul’s pallid face appears at the window of her classroom, ‘a man shut out in the darkness, desperate for communication’ (Wood and Walker 1970: 138). Despite his incessant pleas, Hélène refuses to let him in, claiming that she has a headache, before clambering back up to the increasingly fragile refuge of domestic space, which seems apparently unable to block out Popaul’s now nightmarish incantations of ‘Mademoiselle Hélène’. Chabrol then cuts to a slow panning, subjective shot of the apparently empty courtyard and war memorial that resides directly below Hélène’s window, before a frenzied Hélène again runs downstairs into the school in order to close another exterior door that she has forgotten about (during this scene Chabrol superimposes the faint sound of a heartbeat onto the narrative in order to heighten the sense of tension). Nevertheless, by this point it is too late: Popaul has already penetrated the sanctum of the school. In the following penultimate scene, Popaul proceeds to slowly advance across the classroom towards Hélène (who is apparently pinned to the blackboard in fear), confessing his role in the crimes whilst drawing a knife. Yet, in direct contrast to the young women that he has previously slaughtered during the film, Popaul appears ultimately unable to harm Hélène. Instead, he turns the knife on himself.

At this point, it is important to acknowledge the difference that exists between this scene and the other films discussed in the rest of this section, which, as I have shown, revolve around contaminating and thus politicising the domestic space of the home rather than the educational space of the school. Chabrol’s decision to set the penultimate scene of his film in this space is not, however, insignificant, considering that in France, schools have traditionally been considered as ‘places [in which] national identity is formed and constantly renewed’ (Faroux 1996: 55). Furthermore, at no point in the history of France was this process of renewal more apparent than during the 1960s, when de Gaulle set about reviving a form of “nationalist pedagogy”, inherited from thinkers such as Jules Michelet and Ernest Renan and based upon animating the cult of national heroes such as Napoleon, Joan of Arc and Jean Moulin.<sup>51</sup> In this respect,

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<sup>51</sup> The apotheosis of this vision was the 1959 *loi Debré*, which aimed to maintain the republican character of state education (Neather 1999: 181).

educational policies of the period formed a perfect example of the ways in which de Gaulle attempted to heal the wounds of a divided country by emphasising the ahistorical and eternal aspects of its national identity – despite the huge political, social and cultural changes engendered by the onset of decolonization. Quite obviously, Chabrol’s film stands in contrast to this discourse by representing the school as a site of colonial trauma rather than unbridled *grandeur*, thus transforming the film from a cinematic text solely concerned with subverting neo-colonial images of idealised domesticity, to a narrative which attempts to undermine the very ideological foundations of the Fifth Republic. With this in mind, Chabrol’s film could hypothetically be conceptualised as a precursor to Michael Haneke’s *Caché* (2005), which, in a similar fashion, ‘dramatises the hidden splitting and compartmentalisation on which egalitarian republican France is constructed’, again through images of domesticity, schooling and the traces of unresolved colonial trauma (Silverman 2010: 58).

### **2.1.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has analysed the role of narrative space in a number of French films produced during and in the aftermath of the Algerian War. In particular, I have shown how these films stand in counterpoint to the neo-colonial discourse of domesticity characteristic of the period (which represented the modern home as an apolitical space drained of any traces of the conflict), by instead depicting domestic space as symbolically soiled by the alternately silent and violent trauma of warfare. This process of contamination takes different forms in different films. *Adieu Philippine* is perhaps the most atypical of the films discussed in this chapter as it focuses primarily upon a prospective rather than a returning conscript (Michel), who inhabits a variety of spaces throughout the narrative (notably the beaches and hinterlands of Corsica) rather than being exclusively confined to the realm of the home. Yet, the film also includes a number of scenes in which domestic space is contaminated by traces of the conflict. This observation is particularly applicable to the scene which features Michel’s friend Dédé, a figure whose reserved behaviour and semiotic status in the film proves paradigmatic in relation to all of the other works discussed in this chapter, including *La Belle vie*, which focuses upon a similarly traumatised conscript plagued by memories of his time in colonial Algeria. In terms of Enrico’s representation of narrative space, *La Belle vie* revolves around establishing an idealised notion of the domestic realm before undermining this notion through reference to the Algerian War. That said, Enrico’s film

is also slightly different from *Adieu Philippine* (and, indeed all of the other films discussed in this chapter), in that it dramatises an *appelé*'s attempts at preserving rather than penetrating the increasingly fragile boundaries of interior space. As we have seen, this observation is particularly applicable to the final scene of the film, when Frédéric is recalled for duty after having eventually established a state of conjugal and domestic bliss with his wife Sylvie.

In *Muriel*, Resnais represents the domestic realm as symbolically and literally stained by the two male figures of the film (who both at least claim to have lived in colonial Algeria) from the outset. It is important to note that, in *Muriel*, both of these characters appear unable to rid themselves of what might be termed performative rituals apparently inherited from the colonies; Bernard through his voyeurism (reminiscent of the colonial gaze) and Alphonse in his incessantly intrusive behaviour (reminiscent of *les rafles*). Like *Adieu Philippine*, Resnais also depicts the modern home as a space under siege from the insidious threat of modernization and technocentrism. Unlike all of the other films discussed in this chapter, Claude Chabrol's *Le Boucher* is not set in urban France, but *la France profonde*. Nevertheless, similar spatial tropes are also evident in this film. Perhaps the most important aspect of *Le Boucher* is the ways it at least initially establishes a strict dichotomy: between a politicised public space associated with Popaul and conflict (represented via the war memorial that lies in front of Hélène's apartment), and a reassuringly apolitical private space associated metonymically with Hélène. In contrast to all of the other works discussed in this chapter, Chabrol chooses to maintain this dichotomy for almost half of the film, primarily in order to heighten the thriller aspect of the narrative. Yet, as within *Adieu Philippine*, *La Belle vie* and *Muriel*, this fragile distinction eventually disintegrates in a spectacularly violent fashion. *Le Boucher* also mobilises images of the school as a method of critiquing the republican values associated with the state.

In the introduction to this section, we saw how popular discourses of the period reiterated the spatial logic of colonialism in depicting the modern home as a hermetic space drained of political antagonism. By contrast, all of the narratives in this section represent the interior domain as contaminated by the politics and trauma of decolonization. It is precisely in this process of contamination and politicisation that I have located the anti-colonial potential of the films.<sup>52</sup> In the following section of this

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<sup>52</sup> It is important to note, however, that none of the films discussed in this chapter focus on or even feature anyone of Maghrebi origin. This observation thus both undermines the anti-colonial political potential of the films, and positions them in contrast to Michel Drach's 1970

chapter, we will see how this anti-colonial subtext coexists with, and is even dependant upon, a gendered conservatism rooted in patriarchal ideology.

## 2.2 Conservative Sexual Politics in French Cinema

In the last section of this chapter, we explored the tendency in post-independence French cinema to define the modern home as a domestic landscape haunted by the repressed trauma of conflict. As such, these films stand in contrast to popular discourses of the period, which instead reiterated the spatial logic of colonialism in defining the modern home as an apolitical space, cleansed of France's colonial past. However, as we will now see, these films also share parallels with this discourse in representing gendered identities and relations in fundamentally conservative (patriarchal) terms. In relation to men, this conservatism is expressed through the virile posture adopted by many of *les appelés*, who are apparently able to seduce at will despite remaining haunted by their memories of conflict (a trope which I will associate with the disavowal of masculine sexual anxiety). Many of the films also construct an empathetic relation vis-à-vis the spectator and these antiheroes, despite the fact that they often act in an arguably morally reprehensible manner. By contrast, women are rarely associated with sexual agency and autonomy in the films. Instead, as I will show, the films focus upon a string of desexualized female figures, alienated from their surroundings, and, on a more general note, the politics of decolonization. In this respect, the films support Mark Betz's argument that, in post-war European cinema, 'women are poised for modernity but have yet to become fully active participants in it' (2009: 98). I will end this chapter with some remarks regarding the relationship between patterns of narrative space and the politics of gendered identity in the films.

### 2.2.1 *Adieu Philippe*

*Women: derision and the domestic*

In a short although illuminating reading of *Adieu Philippe*, Geneviève Sellier has described how Rozier's narrative associates French women with a 'derisive laughter that gives the film its dominant tone' (2008: 120). According to Sellier, this observation

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work *Elise ou la vraie vie*, which chronicles the relationship between a French woman and an Algerian immigrant (see chapter four, section two).

is particularly applicable to the film's central female protagonists, Liliane (Yveline Céry) and Juliette (Stefania Sabatini), two young women who bear a striking similarity to a number of New Wave actresses, notably Anna Karina and Bernadette Lafont (figure 3). As such, both women could be defined according to Ginette Vincendeau's definition of 'the gamine', a figure characterised by a similar combination of innocence and adolescent impertinence (2002: 94, 117). Expanding upon Sellier's observation, I will now illustrate how this derisive attitude contributes to the gendered conservatism which lies at the heart of the narrative. Approximately a quarter of the way into the film, the two women visit a television studio to watch the 'rushes' of a commercial in which they have featured (advertising the cleaning product 'O Poil 54'). During the following few minutes of the film, Rozier then alternates between, on the one hand, raw and disjointed footage of the commercial (in which the two young women repeatedly fail to carry out a series of simple instructions dressed up as stereotypical housewives) and, on the other, images of Liliane and Juliette, who appear increasingly amused by their inability to complete the gestures and spoken refrains required by the role.<sup>53</sup> This scene is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, as with the opening scenes of the film (set in a television studio packed with cameras and recording equipment), it forms a self-reflexive reference to Rozier's own production techniques (and more, generally, the cinematic apparatus), particularly as the two women watch the rushes in what appears to be a small cinema. If only in this respect, this scene thus emphasises parallels between *Adieu Philippine* and other 'classic' New Wave films, which formed, in the words of Jean-Luc Godard, 'both cinema and, at the same time, the exploration of cinema' (Godard 1968: 99 cited in Greene 2007: 2). However, the implications of this self-reflexivity upon the gendered politics of the narrative remain ambiguous. It is true that, in a positive light, this scene could be read as a subtle interrogation of the inherently patriarchal nature of popular discourses of the period seeing as the two women appear completely alienated from their on-screen (domestic) counterparts. Nevertheless, a comparatively critical interpretation is also possible, primarily if we interpret the women's hysterical reaction to their domestic masquerade as a gesture drained of political consciousness and which trivializes the reality of housework, a 'vocation' which Simone de Beauvoir famously defined as completely devoid of autonomy, productivity and creativity (1983 [1949]: 475). Writing in 1961, Henri Lefebvre also described how, as housewives, 'women were subsequently demoted to carry out inferior

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<sup>53</sup> Pachala – the film's producer played by the renowned actor Vittorio Caprioli – appears less impressed, having spent 1 million dollars on the project.

tasks, making them relatively unproductive economically and relatively ineffective socially' (2008 [1961]: 222). With this in mind, a potentially productive method of approaching *Adieu Philippine* is to compare it with Chantal Ackerman's 1968 short film, *Saute ma ville*, which dramatises a young housewife (played by Ackerman) performing an increasingly disruptive set of domestic duties in her modernized kitchen before eventually blowing herself up. As such, unlike *Adieu Philippine*, Akerman's film violently deconstructs rather than trivializes the patriarchal stereotypes proliferated in popular discourse through a cinematic praxis rooted in radical feminism (Margulies 1996: 2). It is also important to acknowledge an apparent contradiction that lies at the heart of Rozier's work, in that, after the film has subtly – although uncritically – mocked the figure of the archetypal housewife (and, by analogy the discursive universe that she inhabits), the two women are later pictured performing a variety of domestic duties in Liliane's mother's home, beautifying themselves with consumer durables and making food in her parents' kitchen. In direct contrast to these scenes, none of the male characters in *Adieu Philippine* are framed in the same way: during the one scene that Michel (Jean-Claude Aimini) is depicted in the home he dines with his family and Dédé, before quickly rejoining his male friends (either in the workplace or driving through the roads of Paris in the American car that they have bought together). Later in this analysis, I will show how this spatial dichotomy contributes to the gendered conservatism that lies at the heart of the film.



Figure 3. Liliane and Juliette as archetypal ‘gamines’ in Rozier’s *Adieu Phillipine* (1962)

In addition to mocking contemporaneous domestic discourses, the two women also adopt a particularly derisive stance towards the Algerian War, which inflects many of the conversations and rituals that take place throughout the film. This observation is particularly applicable to two scenes in the narrative, the first of which occurs when the two girls are pictured discussing Michel’s impending departure in the confines of Liliane’s home. In the previous section of this chapter I illustrated how this scene acts in order to critique the neo-colonial discourse of domesticity of the period in representing the modern home as haunted by the spectral horror of conflict. However, what is also apparent in this scene are the ways in which the two young women trivialize the War in reducing the conflict to a flippant discussion regarding the unattractive appearance of military fatigues (‘ah oui les grosses pompes’), rather than, for example the politics of torture (an issue that would be taken up by Simone de Beauvoir in a vitriolic 1962 article in *Le Monde*, in which she described the rape and torture of the female FLN militant Djamila Boupacha). This observation is also supported by one of the most problematic scenes of the film, in which Michel is depicted driving through the idyllic Corsican landscape (with Liliane and Juliette) to catch the boat that will take him to Algeria. Michel appears uncharacteristically melancholic during this scene, in which he solemnly laments his impending departure in the obscure-half light of the car (‘je pars demain, moi pour longtemps. C’est tout. Le reste’). By contrast, the two girls appear blissfully unaware of the gravity of the situation. This naivety is firstly evident in the ways in which they frame his journey as a tale of unrequited love rather than political obligation (‘mais je t’aime Michel’), before responding to his own exclamation that ‘il y a quand même des choses plus importantes non?’ with hysterical, shrieking laughter. As blithe gamines, the two central female protagonists in the film are again prevented from adopting an informed, critical stance vis-à-vis the Algerian War. On one level, the women’s behaviour can be seen to chime with Henri Lefebvre’s definition of the ‘total-woman’ (featured in popular discourses of the period), who ‘let men devote themselves to sterile games: politics, war, feelings, intellect’ whilst she devoted herself to the monotony of housework and conjugal routine (2008: 82). Rozier’s representation of women also chimes with Ginette Vincendeau’s claim that ‘most New Wave women’s identity is coterminous with the realm of emotions’ rather than, for example, the world of politics or employment (Vincendeau 2002: 120).

Vincendeau's hypothesis is also important in drawing attention to the ways in which *Adieu Philippine* configures narrative space in terms of a gendered dichotomy; between the masculine world of employment and the implicitly feminine world of the private and the domestic. This observation is obviously applicable to the two brief although significant scenes in which the two women are pictured in Liliane's house performing domestic rituals and discussing Michel's impending departure for Algeria (the significance of this has been discussed in the previous section of this chapter). It is also evident in the very first scene in the film, during which Juliette and Liliane wait hesitantly outside the television studios in which Michel works before he lets them into the building – not in order to offer them work, but as a cynical attempt at courtship. In this sense, Rozier's film mirrors rather than challenges the ways in which, after the Liberation, women were systematically excluded from – or marginalised within – the masculine workplace: a 'specific view of an appropriate division of labour which perpetuated a view of women as [what Simone de Beauvoir famously termed] the second sex' (Duchen 1994: 164). Admittedly, the two young women do pursue a number of small-time roles in commercial advertisements as the narrative progresses, including acting in the aforementioned television commercial for cleaning products alongside a later farcical advert for refrigerators.<sup>54</sup> Yet, by the end of the film, the financial value and professional prospects involved in these 'shaky projects' appears, at best, negligible (Sellier 2008: 118). Instead the girls appear resigned to a life spent confined to the dispossessed margins of the labour market, whilst Michel heroically sacrifices himself to the 'nation' (the significance of which is discussed below). As I will show in chapter four, section one, Rozier's film thus stands in stark contrast to Michel Drach's *Elise ou la vraie vie* (1970), which instead chronicles the partially successful penetration of a woman into the masculine/patriarchal world of the factory line.

#### *Men: machismo, independence, martyrdom*

With regards to Rozier's representation of masculinity, the clear hero of *Adieu Philippine* is Michel. At no point in the film do Juliette or Liliane express any kind of amorous interest in anyone else in the film; rather they appear fixated on maintaining his affection, despite his role in the deterioration of their friendship. Michel is an

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<sup>54</sup> The fact that the two women advertise an appliance obviously linked to the home again subtly associates women with domestic duties (and thus the home), despite the fact that the advert is filmed in an empty shop.



amalgamation of cultural influences; his physical appearance and dress owe as much to French cultural icons of the 1950s and 1960s such as Johnny Hallyday as they do to the Hollywood film stars that adorn the walls of Liliane's bedroom. In relation to other French protagonists of the period, Michel's nearest equivalent is perhaps Michel Poiccard (Jean-Paul Belmondo), the insouciant anti-hero of Jean-Luc Godard's 1960 film *A bout de souffle*, who displays a similar tendency towards an Americanised machismo tinged with humour (Vincendeau 2002: 184). Geneviève Sellier has also commented upon the lack of credible older men in *Adieu Philippine*, who, in her words, 'consist of a collection of "fathers" each more grotesque and "impotent" than the next' (2008: 118). This observation seems particularly applicable to the farcical and unreliable television producer Pachala (Vittorio Caprioli), who seems utterly incapable of managing his finances (he owes a large sum of money to Michel, Juliette and Liliane by the end of the film). The derisive gaze that Rozier projects onto the older male characters in the film is not without significance. On the one hand, it has been linked to Rozier's famous disdain for film producers and middle-men with whom Rozier would himself experience problems in the months following the shooting of the film. On the other hand, Rozier's representation of older men as pathetic and inadequate arguably forms part of an 'Oedipal rejection' characteristic of 1960s' French cinephilia, which desecrated many of the male directors who had worked in the era of post-war filmmaking famously defined by François Truffaut in 1954 as 'le cinéma de papa'. However, it is important to note that whilst representing the older generation in broadly negative terms, Rozier's film nevertheless fails to break with traditional gendered stereotypes.

Whilst Liliane and Juliette are frequently depicted in the confines of their parents' house, at no point is Michel represented in the same way. Instead, he spends his time either at work (a space implicitly associated in the first scene with masculinity), or in an array of bars, nightclubs and cafes, manipulating the two young women into dating him at the same time. It is important to note that Michel's behaviour is neither seen as abnormal, nor criticised by any of the characters (or by Rozier himself, through, for example strategically placed editing, patterns of framing and/or lighting). On the contrary, the sociological, 'distanced gaze' (Sellier 2008: 119) that Rozier projects onto the characters appears instead to normalize Michel's derisive machismo, despite the fact that by the end of the film, he has quite obviously contributed to the violent disintegration of the young women's friendship. In this respect, Molly Haskell's description of the archetypal anti hero of 1960s Hollywood cinema 'as appearing heroic

due their alibi as social discontents' is equally applicable to Rozier's film (1987: 332). To some extent, the potentially alienating aspects of Michel's misogynist personality are also offset by the humorous and largely colloquial dialogue used in the film, which one film critic at the time described as providing 'a warm and attentive description of a certain real youth of today' (Anon 1963: 13 in Neupert 2011: 35). On a more general note, Rozier's choice to represent the American influence upon French society in cultural rather than economic terms is important – primarily as it obscures the rise of *les jeunes cadres* who proliferated in French society during the 1950s and 1960s and populated many of Jacques Tati's films, notably *Playtime* (1967). This process of elision could be explained by the fact that, according to Kristen Ross, 'virile asceticism played no role in the image of *the jeune cadre*' (1995: 175 [emphasis in original]). As such, ignoring the influence of *le jeune cadre* on French society proves key to reinforcing rather than undermining the primacy of masculine identity and patriarchal ideology.

One of the most important aspects of *Adieu Philippine* is the car that Michel buys with his friends – an important visual trope in the narrative that positions the film in relation to other New Wave works which share a similar infatuation with the American automobile (see, for example, *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud* [Malle 1957], *Lola* [Demy 1961], *Un homme et une femme* [Lelouch 1966], and, in particular, the work of Jean-Luc Godard; *A bout de souffle* [1959], *Le Petit soldat* [1960/63] *Pierrot le fou* [1965], *Made in U.S.A.* [1966] and *Weekend* [1967]). Andrew Dickos has previously shown how the archetypal film noir narrative (from which much of the New Wave drew) used the automobile as a sign of the ambivalence of modernity in its dual association with progression (in terms of efficiency) and danger (in terms of speed) (2002: 176-177). However, it is also important to understand representations of driving as a symbolic act involving the potential to subvert or ossify gendered conventions depending on who is shown to be in control. It is partly for this reason that Françoise Sagan's 1954 novel *Bonjour tristesse* is frequently viewed as a feminist novel in its portrayal of a young female protagonist addicted to driving sports cars, an observation mirrored in Roger Vadim's definition of 'the young girl of today' as driving her own car in Paris with 'more confidence than a cab driver' (Vadim [1955] cited in Schwartz 2010: 149). By contrast, at no point does Rozier depict Juliette or Liliane behind the wheel of a car. Instead, it is Michel (or, if not, his male friends) who maintain exclusive control of their vehicle, 'picking up' girls from the side of the road until they apparently grow bored of their company. In relation to the sociocultural climate characteristic of

the era, contemporaneous popular discourses frequently equated the aesthetic beauty of the automobile with the female body; a semantic association perhaps crystallised in the sleek contours of the Citroën DS (la Déesse), which Roland Barthes defined as being ‘prostituée’ et ‘appropriée’ by the (male) owner (1957: 152), whilst Bernard Marchand has explored how, during this period, ‘l’automobile, encore rare et chère, était devenue, pour les Français, l’objet d’un véritable culte’ (1993: 309) (see also chapter four, section one for a discussion of how the Citroën DS is represented in Varda’s 1962 *Cléo de 5 à 7*). Viewed in this context, representations of driving in *Adieu Philippine* thus arguably become a sign of mastery over a ‘female’ object and the extension of an identity based upon traditionally masculine values of escapism, freedom, agency, individuality, panoptic visibility (through patterns of gazing) and above all the overarching sense of ‘movement which traditionally characterises virile masculinity’ (Vincendeau 2001: 145). This observation is also applicable to Jean-Luc Godard’s *Le Petit soldat* (1963), in which the central male protagonist, Bruno, is frequently pictured driving whilst his girlfriend Véronika passively and narcissistically admires her mirror image in the adjacent seat.<sup>55</sup>

After being effectively fired from his job halfway through the film, Michel and a male friend decide to embark on an impromptu holiday at the Corsican Club Med, a seaside resort offering a potent combination of sun, sand, sea and sexual liaisons to young hordes of holidaymakers.<sup>56</sup> It is important to note that Michel does not appear particularly concerned about losing his source of income (a privilege denied to the two girls), primarily as their trip is a chance for Michel to experience the pleasure of freedom and unbridled lust before he is called up for military service. After having arrived on the island, the two friends are first pictured strutting around the beach-side bars, before discussing a number of women that Michel is seeing on the island in a particularly virulent display of machismo (he responds positively to his friend’s question of whether he is making progress with a girl named Jacqueline before changing his mind, claiming that she is beginning to annoy him). In the following scene, Juliette and Liliane somewhat implausibly arrive on the island, although Michel does not appear particularly pleased to see the two women. Instead, he continues to court a number of young and single girls at the seaside bars that litter the Corsican coastline, before all

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<sup>55</sup> See also Chris Marker’s 1963 documentary *Le Joli mai*, in which a male worker responds to the question ‘when are you free?’ with the revealing response, ‘on my way to work’ – in other words, outside of the domestic realm and en route to the masculine world of employment.

<sup>56</sup> As Richard Neupert has shown, these scenes in Corsica were actually shot before the first part of the story in Paris (2011: 33).

three protagonists hire a car in order to explore the hinterlands of the island. The remainder of the film thus dramatises the three protagonists sleeping on nocturnal beaches, driving around idyllic mountains and engaging in meandering banal conversations whilst Michel behaves increasingly ambivalently towards the two women. Crucially, neither of the two women criticise Michel's apparent unwillingness to commit to a relationship, but continue to pander to his ego before Michel is called up for military service. Indeed, the especially virile behaviour that Michel exhibits during his trip to Club Med (a site which embodies the fantasy of unbridled masculine desire) is, in many ways, framed as a response to – and thus legitimised by – the pressures placed upon young French men by the Algerian War. It is for this reason that Sellier has described the last half of the film as dramatising Michel's 'last pleasures before war' (2008: 131), whilst Michel himself reasons, 'même s'ils ne me balacent pas, j'ai envie de partir de toute façon avant l'armée' after being reprimanded for insulting his manager. As I will show later in this chapter, this trope is also mirrored – although to some extent inverted – in Robert Enrico's *La Belle vie* (1963), which represents the misogynist behaviour of the central male protagonist as a natural response to the past (as opposed to future) trauma of conflict.

This analysis has so far illustrated to the ways in which *Adieu Philippe* represents French men in terms of a virile independence alternately crystallised in the trope of car ownership and the island of Corsica (as a site of unbridled masculine desire). Whilst this may be true, important too is the way in which Michel responds to the increasingly ominous shadow of conflict that looms over the final few scenes of the film. For the majority of the narrative, Michel appears in a state of disavowal – or at least calculated denial, changing the subject when conversations turn to the thorny issue of conscription, or simply distracting himself through virile manipulative behaviour masquerading as courtship. This tendency towards denial is especially evident in the fact that Michel refrains from interrogating Dédé about his experiences of war, but instead facetiously jokes about his friend looking tanned. However, a subtle shift in Michel's behaviour is also evident towards the latter stages of the film, during which this denial is replaced with a subtle sense of resignation, punctuated – in the scene discussed earlier in this analysis – with a single and sudden burst of rage (to which the girls respond with derisive laughter). Crucially, at no point in the film does Michel appear melancholic or upset by the fact that he will soon be leaving behind the affective and romantic ties that he has fostered during the film (behaviour that could hypothetically be construed as feminine), but rather adopts a stoic, resigned stance that

accords perfectly with the masculine ideal of the martyr. In this respect, *Adieu Philippine* can be seen to mirror certain traits characteristic of official discourse of the period, which eulogised male heroes of the French Resistance in a discourse of *résistancialisme* whilst defining the figure of the paratrooper as a macho warrior willing to sacrifice himself for *l'Algérie Française*. Alistair Horne has described how 'many a French para gave his life heroically, assured that he was defending a bastion of Western civilization' (Horne 2006: 4). This observation is especially applicable to the highly lyrical, final sequence in the film, during which Liliane and Juliette are pictured on the shoreline of Corsica whilst Michel leaves the island on a large ship destined for Algeria. At no point does Michel question the moral or ethical implications of his act, but rather accepts his fate with the conviction of a man convinced of his place in national martyrology. By contrast, the fate of the two young women remains ambiguous, primarily as the film ends with images of them waving at Michel from the Corsican littoral. Presumably, they will return to their lives as shop girls and part-time actors, having effectively achieved little in terms of professional or emotional development. It is for this reason that Geneviève Sellier has defined Rozier's representation of the conflict 'as a decisive way of distinguishing masculine from feminine rather than the object of a political concern' (2008: 120). The film also bears certain parallels with the classic Grecian tragedy, which 'enacts a process of emotional release or catharsis brought about by identification with the suffering [male] protagonist' (Cook 1982: 44), and the Romantic tradition, which dramatises a similar tension between female emotion (which is seen as a danger to masculine identity) and the male hero's 'tragic destiny' (Sellier 2000: 474). What is clear is that the two women have not achieved the status of tragic martyrdom associated with Michel, which is (along with full-time employment) represented as an exclusively masculine privilege – an observation which again underlines the conservative sexual politics which lie at the heart of the film. As we will now see, this conservatism is also applicable to one of the least analysed narratives of the period in the form of Robert Enrico's *La Belle vie*.

### **2.2.2 *La Belle vie***

*Women: epistemological deprivation and the 'containment' of female sexuality*

In *La Belle vie*, Enrico's representation of women is almost exclusively restricted to the film's central female protagonist, Sylvie (Josée Steiner); a Parisian hairdresser who

bears more than a passing physical resemblance to the figures of Juliette and Liliane in *Adieu Philippine*. In particular, both films support Sellier's definition of the New Wave as depicting middle-class (in other words financially stable) female characters 'with very little make-up as opposed to the masquerade of femininity such as it was deployed in commercial cinema' (Sellier 2008: 150). The two films also share parallels in focusing upon female protagonists who work in small-time jobs stereotypically associated with women (shopgirls, actresses, hairdressers), rather than attempting to challenge gendered stereotypes by working in a traditionally masculine profession (see, for example Michel Drach's 1970 film *Elise ou la vraie vie* [chapter four, section one]). By contrast, Sylvie is certainly not as young and derisive as the 'gamines' of *Adieu Philippine*, but instead bears the hallmarks of an individual coming to terms with (although not necessarily understanding) the problems associated with the war, adulthood, and conjugal life.

One of the most innovative and iconoclastic aspects of *La Belle vie* is the way in which Enrico intersperses archival, documentary footage into the fictional world of the diegesis – a formal technique used nine times in the film. On these occasions, Enrico uses footage depicting a wide variety of global crises, including stock images of civil unrest in China, America, South Africa and England (apparently culled from news reports), footage of Nazi concentration camps (including images of atrocities used in Alain Resnais's 1955 work *Nuit et brouillard*), alongside film taken during the October 1961 massacre of Algerian demonstrators in Paris.<sup>57</sup> Perhaps the most important footage features at the beginning of the film, when Enrico uses an extended montage of documentary shots depicting *appelés* fighting in Algeria, exposing ALN (*Armée de Libération Nationale*) members in the rural maquis (shots that could have hypothetically been taken in the Aurès Mountains or Kabylia), alongside military officers conducting violent searches in unidentified urban areas.<sup>58</sup> In the previous chapter of this thesis, I explored how this part of the film creates a simple formal and thematic dichotomy; between images of trauma and conflict and the safe, reassuring space of the home, which Sylvie's partner Frédéric (Frédéric de Pasquale) dreams about during his return to the capital via an interior diegetic monologue. Whilst this may be true, it is also important to note that this extra-diegetic footage of the war

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<sup>57</sup> It is for this reason that Vernon Young has defined *La Belle vie* as an 'actuality-editorial of international violence' (1963-1964: 576).

<sup>58</sup> During this montage, Enrico uses a melancholic piano refrain repeated in the penultimate scene of fragile domestic bliss discussed later in this analysis. Frédéric also whistles this melody throughout the film.

simultaneously constructs an epistemological asymmetry, between the spectator and Frédéric – who are both aware of the traumatic reality of the Algerian War – and Sylvie, who appears almost completely unable to understand the reasons behind Frédéric’s progressively sullen and withdrawn behaviour. This observation appears especially applicable to three scenes in the film. The first of these occurs when Sylvie is depicted in the hair salon in which she works, tending to a customer – who happens to be her mother. During this short although important scene, Sylvie’s mother appears concerned about her daughter’s relationship with Frédéric, enquiring whether he is happy, to which she replies that he is experiencing ‘un mauvais moment à passer’, in other words, draining his behaviour of political significance and instead locating it in the realm of the trivial and the everyday. This pattern of behaviour is again apparent during a scene located approximately halfway into the film, when Sylvie and Frédéric are pictured in a small Parisian café. Frédéric, in particular, appears distracted and detached from his surroundings, silently drinking a beer at the table until Sylvie questions him about his behaviour. Evidently frustrated at his wife’s inability to grasp the severity of his experiences in the colonies (he claims ‘tu ne comprends pas’), Frédéric then exits the café, leaving Sylvie upset and bewildered by his actions. Again, Enrico represents Sylvie – and thus, by analogy, French women – as unable to comprehend the insidious and prolonged effects of conflict upon the male psyche. Towards the latter stages of the film, an increasingly dejected and isolated Frédéric comes across a small number of *appelés* congregated around a military stall located on the pavement (presumably informing the public about military actions and, by extension, promoting a positive idea of French foreign policy). Approaching the stall, Frédéric then buys a small porcelain ornament from one of the officers, before suddenly smashing it against the pavement in an act which forms a clear indication of the effects of the conflict upon the mentality of returning conscripts. Soon after, two police officers then manhandle a bemused Frédéric into a van, before the camera finally shifts to a close up of Sylvie, who implores the spectator in a brief although impassioned monologue that ‘il ne fait pas de politique’.<sup>59</sup> Again, she has misinterpreted what is, in this case, an unequivocally and explicitly political act. In none of the scenes discussed above does Sylvie appear to understand the individual and collective implications of the conflict upon Frédéric’s subsequent behaviour. This is understandable, given that she has not been exposed to the extra-diegetic footage of conflict that the spectator has witnessed at the beginning of

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<sup>59</sup> It is notable that Sylvie breaks the fourth wall during this shot by directly addressing the camera.

the film. As such, she is prevented from adopting a politically radical stance in relation to the War. In this respect, *La Belle vie* echoes the ways in which popular magazines of the period downplayed the relationship between women and politics by defining the ideal woman as ‘distinctly reformist, apolitical and syncretic’ (2008 [1961]: 82; see also Duchon 1994: 33, 36).

One of the most complex scenes in *La Belle vie* occurs towards the end of the film, when Frédéric is pictured taking photographs of his model-friend Kiki as part of an advertising shoot for a (fictional) domestic cleaning brand called ‘Palmehuille’.<sup>60</sup> During this scene, the film appears to gently mock popular discourses of the period by substituting the figure of the archetypal housewife for a veiled model incongruously adorned with a panoply of Oriental regalia – an observation which echoes the aforementioned ‘rushes’ scene in *Adieu Philippine*, in which Liliane and Juliette respond hysterically to their shaky efforts at domestic masquerade in a television advert. As such, both films attempt to establish a critical distance between popular discourse which is represented in absurd and superfluous terms – and French cinema of the period, which purports to expose the ‘reality’ of women’s lives. However, the relationship between *La Belle vie* and this discourse remains ambiguous. On the one hand, it is true that *La Belle vie* stands in counterpoint to this discourse by collapsing the distinction between the metropolitan domestic realm and the bloody Wilayas of Algeria. It was in this blurring of boundaries that, in the previous section of this chapter, I located the anti-colonial political potential of the films. On a similar note, none of the films discussed in this thesis feature the figure of the archetypal housewife as proliferated *ad infinitum* in the pages of the popular women’s press. However, whilst this might be true, *La Belle vie* also shares certain parallels with this discourse in a number of ways. This hypothesis is first supported by a subtle although significant shift which takes place in Sylvie’s attitude and behaviour as the narrative progresses. At the beginning of the film, Frédéric arrives in Paris to find the city ablaze with nocturnal festivities. Walking through the joyous throng of people, he appears ecstatic about the prospect of returning to his life in the capital. Nevertheless, a subtle sense of masculine anxiety is also evident in this part of the narrative, primarily as Frédéric soon discovers his apartment occupied by an embarrassed young couple in bed together rather than his sweetheart Sylvie (who is instead out dancing at a Parisian ball with an unidentified male figure). During this scene, Frédéric’s initial dreams regarding the home – as a

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<sup>60</sup> The three slogans written on the transparent board are, ‘moi, aussi j’emploie palmahuille’, ‘avec palm, vos mains toujours belles’, and ‘huile palm, 100 fois meilleure’.



space of security, permanence and romantic bliss – are thus quickly replaced by anxieties regarding the possible infidelity of partners and wives experienced by many *appelés* returning from the war (Stora 1998: 265).

This is the only point in the film at which Sylvie is associated with a potentially transgressive form of female sexuality. Indeed, as soon as she has spotted Frédéric (who has begun to play an impromptu trumpet piece on stage in the hope of gaining her attention), Sylvie leaves the man that she has been dancing with, clutching Frédéric's legs in a clear sign of loyalty before responding enthusiastically to Frédéric's declaration of love. From this point onwards, the potentially transgressive aspects of Sylvie's sexuality are constantly repressed in the film. This process of repression or containment is firstly evident in the simple fact that Sylvie never appears to instigate or lead sexual contact with Bernard (or any other man, for that matter), but instead emerges as a somewhat desexualised individual more concerned with upholding conjugal tradition through the rituals of marriage and motherhood. As such, Sylvie's role in the film thus stands in stark opposition to the ways in which Brigitte Bardot's often highly eroticised performances challenged attempts at 'containing femininity and [...] women as sexual subjects' (Leahy 2002: 69). Instead, *La Belle vie* appears to mirror the sexual politics of popular discourses of the period which involved a similar attempt at repressing female sexuality through didactic images of motherhood and domesticity.<sup>61</sup> As Henri Lefebvre claims, 'the crowning achievement of the operation, [the popular press] if we can call it that, is to suggest and insinuate a moral order by means of anecdotes which pander to [...] a romantic sentimentality' (2008 [1961]: 86). On a similar note, Sylvie is depicted as an altruistic and self-sacrificing individual who often privileges Frédéric's narcissistic angst over her own suffering. This process of selfless psychic repression is especially evident in the café scene discussed earlier in this chapter, when Sylvie engages in an empathetic although ultimately futile attempt at ascertaining the origins of Frédéric's anxiety (he responds by walking out of the café), before soothing him in bed when he suffers from a nightmare in the following scene. It is also applicable to the ways in which Sylvie sacrifices time with her family in order to appease Frédéric, 'qui ne veut voir personne', before, more generally, responding to Frédéric's apparent lack of commitment to their relationship and increasingly insolent behaviour by entering into a state of muted and often isolated distress rather than vocalising her anger explicitly. In this respect, Enrico's film shares parallels with

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<sup>61</sup> A perfect example of this overt eroticism can be seen in Roger Vadim's *Et Dieu... créa la femme* (1956), when Bardot suddenly breaks into a frenzied mambo surrounded by men in a bar in St Tropez.

1960s' Hollywood cinema, in which 'women were rarely [...] permitted to explode against the inequities of her situation, or embark upon her own journey of liberation. Their rebellion is defensive and their victory pyrrhic' (Haskell 1987: 336). At no point does the film attempt to address concerns related specially to women in society – including contraception, abortion and employment (in this respect the film stands in contrast to French cinema of the 1950s which, on occasion, foregrounded these issues [see Hayward 2005: 176]). Instead, *La Belle vie* again mirrors the sexual politics of popular discourses of the period, which were predicated upon a similar analogy between female identity (and, in particular, the figure of the archetypal housewife), and a Judeo-Christian ethics of domestic self-abnegation. As Claire Duchen claims, 'the notion of women's innate sense of sacrifice fitted neatly into the scenario of the selfless housewife living through and for those she loved' (1994: 85; also see Ross 1995: 90; Beauvoir 1983 [1949]: 611). With this in mind, Enrico's narrative thus subtly supports the patriarchal hegemony of these discourses, despite the fact that Sylvie is not a housewife *per se*.

A final point regarding Enrico's depiction of French women is also worth noting. In an influential 1989 article, Colin MacCabe and Laura Mulvey explore the sexual politics of Jean-Luc Godard's films, which often highlight 'the exploitation of women as an image in consumer society' (1989: 53, 59). In order to support their argument, the authors focus primarily upon Godard's *Une femme mariée* (1964) and *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* (1967), although a similar exploration of female sexual alienation under capitalism can also be detected in Simone de Beauvoir's 1968 *Les Belles images* (Sellier 2008: 19), and, more generally, the star-body of Brigitte Bardot (especially in Godard's 1963 *Le mépris*). To varying degrees, all of these works involve a feminist element by implicitly defining the new consumerism of the 1960s as a method of masculine domination, or, to be more precise, hegemony. By contrast, Enrico's film lacks such a progressive gendered interrogation of capitalism. This observation is largely applicable to the latter stages of the film, when Frédéric is awarded a lucrative contract as part of his work as a photographer. After turning up unexpectedly at Sylvie's work place with a wad of bank notes, the two individuals then go shopping in the arcades of Paris in a highly idealised picture of conjugal bliss. This scene is significant for two principal reasons. Firstly, at no point during this scene does Sylvie attempt to pay for any of the items of clothing that she tries on, but allows Frédéric to treat her using his newfound affluence. As such, Enrico's depiction of middle-class consumerism relegates Sylvie (and, by simple analogy French women) to a

state of economic dispossession, despite the fact that Sylvie works in a salon throughout the film. Of equal importance is the subtle distinction that is established during this scene; between a female spectacle (Sylvie) who narcissistically revels in the experience of 1960s' consumerism (she tries on items of clothing throughout), and a male figure (Frédéric) whose sole purpose is to gaze supportively at the female body which is styled accordingly.<sup>62</sup> As such, the film avoids the threat of 'denaturalising the supposed naturalness of male identity' in associating men with consumption (Tasker in Powrie 1997: 8). *La Belle vie* also stands in contrast to Agnès Varda's 1962 work, *Cléo de 5 à 7*, whose eponymous heroine gradually becomes conscious of the alienating effects of consumerism as the film progresses (see chapter four, section one).

*Men: from emasculated anti-hero to patriarchal ideal*

Central to Enrico's representation of masculinity is Frédéric, the ambivalent returning *appelé* around whom much of the film revolves. For the first half of the film, Frédéric emerges as a rather weak individual apparently unable to cope with the harsh reality of post-duty life, forming part of what the French author Philippe Labro defined as the 'multitude de solitudes' that returned from Algeria in the years of decolonization (1967: 354). This analysis has previously argued that this weakness is linked to masculine anxieties regarding an increase in female independence which characterised the war and post-war years – anxieties that are especially evident in early scenes in which Frédéric discovers Sylvie dancing at a ball with another man (although, in this respect, these fears are quickly allayed by Sylvie's enthusiastic response after seeing him). In addition to these sexual anxieties, Frédéric also appears distraught by his inability to find employment in the capital, causing him to meander listlessly through a number of bars and cafés asking the owners whether they can offer him any work. This sense of lassitude is especially evident in the scenes which occur immediately after Frédéric and Sylvie return from their honeymoon in Monte Carlo – a trip paid for by the couple's rich older friends (Joseph [Gregori Chmara] and his unnamed wife [Nane Germon]), and characterised by excessive, grandiose statements of wealth (including the couple's dining habits [champagne and caviar] and propensity towards gambling).<sup>63</sup> It is also

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<sup>62</sup> In this respect, this scene supports John Berger's famous assertion that in patriarchal discourse, 'men *act* and women *appear*' (1977: 47 [emphasis in original]).

<sup>63</sup> At one point during the trip, Sylvie informs Frédéric that Joseph has lost a significant amount of money from gambling the night before. Frédéric responds angrily to this news, claiming that

evident in the long periods of time that Frédéric spends in the domestic (feminine) space of the home, a space itself a sign of emasculation given its small size. Admittedly, towards the latter stages of the narrative, Frédéric does find employment as a photographer, although, by this point, he has already experienced a long period deprived of autonomy and confidence associated with economic stability.

By contrast, from the outset, Sylvie appears to enjoy her stable vocation as a hairdresser (a vocation which nevertheless contributes to a stereotype of women as simultaneously image obsessed and excluded from the traditionally ‘masculine’ spheres of politics and business). Finally, Frédéric appears distraught by the memories of war, which both haunt his return to the capital and contribute to the near breakdown of his relationship with Sylvie.<sup>64</sup> In this respect, *La Belle vie* shares certain parallels with, on one hand, the archetypal *film noir*, which features similarly castrated and solitary (masculine) antiheroes ‘filled with existential bitterness’ (Silver and Ward 1992: 6; see also Krutnik 1991: 88), and, on the other, a number of French films of the period, including; *Tirez sur le pianiste* (Truffaut 1960), *Muriel ou le temps d’un retour* (Resnais 1963 [see below]), *Le Boucher* (Chabrol 1969 [see below]), and Louis Malle’s *Ascenseur pour l’échafaud* (1958), whose ‘subtext deplores the loss of a heroic male identity, that of the soldier, castrated by modern society’ (Sellier 2008: 132). It is important to note that Frédéric’s weaknesses are at no point ridiculed in the film. Instead, the spectator is led to empathise with Frédéric’s disconsolate behaviour, primarily as he/she has witnessed the traumatic extra-diegetic footage of the conflict which appears at the beginning of the film (footage which simultaneously places Sylvie in a state of epistemological deprivation), but also as, directly after this footage, the spectator is permitted access to Frédéric’s subjectivity via an interior, homodiegetic monologue. As Geneviève Sellier has shown, these formal techniques are also used in Jean-Luc Godard’s *Le Petit soldat* (1963), which ‘maintains a privileged relation with the viewer throughout the film through the central male protagonist’s interior voice’ (2008: 136). In contrast, at no point in *La Belle vie* is female subjectivity articulated in this way. Instead, the spectator is unable to empathise with Sylvie to the same extent, seeing as he/she does not have access to her inner thoughts. In this respect, Enrico’s film can be positioned in relation to a long genealogy of patriarchal discourse (for example

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the couple could have bought an apartment with his losses (see previous section for a discussion regarding the subtext of domestic anxiety that pervades the narrative).

<sup>64</sup> It is noticeable that Frédéric appears especially affected by these memories before and after the brief sections of extra-diegetic documentary footage of civil unrest and conflict which punctuate the everyday world of the diegesis.

the work of Baudelaire), in which women were similarly defined as unknowable, opaque, or in the words of Simone de Beauvoir, ‘mysterious in essence’ (1983 [1949]: 286 [see also the figure of Hélène in *Le Boucher*, below, and on a more general level, the roles played by Anna Karina in Godard’s films). On a similar note, by the end of the film, Frédéric has ultimately failed to explicitly address his fears regarding Sylvie’s infidelity. Instead, these doubts are reconfigured in a sublimated, ontological form: as a narcissistic angst that harks back to a long history of disconsolate antiheroes featured in Romantic literature (see, for example Byron), 1960s’ Hollywood cinema (Haskell 1987: 332) the Hollywood Western (Neale 1983: 10), French poetic realism (in particular, the figure of Jean Gabin [Vincendeau 2011: 104]), and *film noir* (Hayward 2005: 132).

In the second half of the film, Frédéric’s attitude and behaviour change. On the one hand, Frédéric appears increasingly willing to cheat on Sylvie, a trope also evident in other French films of the period, which likewise ‘systematically emphasise the sexual dimension of male behaviour’ (Sellier 2008: 96), despite the masculine sexual anxieties which characterised the period. The first signs of this behaviour occur approximately halfway into the film, when he is pictured flirting with a young female colleague whilst Sylvie is simultaneously pictured alone in the domestic domain. Only a few scenes later, Sylvie then visits Frédéric at work (a photography studio) to inform him that she is pregnant. However, instead of responding enthusiastically to the news, Frédéric appears dejected, responding with the reply ‘tu trouves ça drôle? C’est la trouille quoi!’<sup>65</sup> Evidently upset, Sylvie leaves his studio (after slapping him and calling him ‘un salaud’) before running out onto the street in tears. The apotheosis of Frédéric’s increasingly irresponsible behaviour occurs approximately three-quarters into the narrative, when the couple are initially pictured in Frédéric’s claustrophobic living quarters. Whilst Frédéric plays the guitar, Sylvie reads a copy of *Elle* magazine, asking ‘tu sais que c’est pas si mal que ça, une fois arrangée, une chambre de bonne’ to which Frédéric replies, ‘tu parles ! C’est invraisemblable quand on n’a pas une fortune’. Despite their close proximity, the lovers seem distracted and distant (a distance expressed through isolated shots of the characters) until one of their friends arrives with a baby that they have agreed to look after for the evening. In the few minutes that follow, Frédéric continues to strum the guitar until the baby starts to cry, apparently awoken by the sound of his playing. Evidently frustrated by what he sees as a brief moment of responsibility, Frédéric then leaves the apartment to visit Christiane

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<sup>65</sup> This phrase will be alternately associated with the conflict and the problems of married life throughout the narrative (see also the ambiguous title of the film).

(Françoise Giret), an ex-lover with whom he is apparently pursuing an illicit affair, whilst Sylvie presumably looks after the baby at home (in off-screen space). At no point during this scene – or, indeed in the film – does Frédéric express any remorse or guilt regarding his behaviour, but rather appears positively composed considering the potentially disastrous consequences of his actions (alongside their moral justification). In contrast to earlier scenes in the film, it is notable that all of Frédéric’s adulterous conquests occur outside his cramped apartment (in this respect, these acts are, to some extent, represented as a ‘flight’ from domesticity). A number of interpretations of Frédéric’s increasingly unfaithful behaviour are possible, if only as his ability to seduce all of the women in the film (including a tour guide that he briefly works with, his model friend Kiki, his ex-lover Christiane and, of course Sylvie), appears to stand in contrast to his relatively ordinary physical appearance, which in no way exhibits the same levels of ‘awe-inspiring’ aestheticized beauty owned, for example, by Alain Delon (Vincendeau 2002: 179). Instead, Enrico’s work appears to chime with Sellier’s description of New Wave films as featuring ‘less-than-ideal versions of masculinity’ (2008: 100), who functioned as alter-egos of the directors rather than as erotic spectacles for female spectators. However, this apparent contradiction is perhaps resolved if we are to interpret these figures as simultaneously offering a normative physical role model with whom the (male) spectator can identify, and an idealised ‘ego ideal’ (Mulvey 1975: 10) who embodies the masculine fantasy of omnipotent and all-encompassing virility. It is also important to note that *La Belle vie* shares parallels with *Adieu Phillipine*, in that both films represent sexual virility as a form of antidote against the trauma of conflict (although, in Rozier’s work this is a future rather than a past trauma).<sup>66</sup> Frédéric’s ambivalent behaviour could also hypothetically be positioned in relation to the archetypal antihero of the classic Western, who crystallizes a similar tension, between ‘the symbolic (social integration and marriage)’ and ‘a nostalgic celebration of phallic, narcissistic omnipotence’ (Mulvey 1989: 36, also see Neale [1983:10] for a similar exploration of ‘doomed male narcissism’). By the end of the film, a subtle although significant transformation has thus taken place in Frédéric’s character. No longer is he the sexually anxious, financially dispossessed and traumatised figure who wanders melancholically through the streets at the beginning of the film, but a virile, affluent and confident individual who has, through this process,

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<sup>66</sup> Frédéric appears especially inclined towards committing acts of adultery after Enrico intersperses a section of documentary film into the world of the diegesis; a simple visual dialectic (montage) which again reinforces an understanding of his behaviour as a natural response to the horrors of conflict.

become the dominant unit in the couple's relationship. As we saw earlier in this analysis, the same cannot be said of Sylvie, who has – inversely – been transformed from a position of sexual independence and agency to the comparatively passive state of wife and mother in the domestic realm. As I will now show, this state of female passivity is also present in Alain Resnais's 1963 film *Muriel ou le temps d'un retour*.

### 2.2.3 *Muriel ou le temps d'un retour*

#### *Women: alienation and dependency*

In her work *Stars and Stardom in French Cinema*, Ginette Vincendeau proposes a useful taxonomy for defining the actresses of 1960s' French cinema (2002:117). According to this taxonomy, on the one hand, this period witnessed the emergence of the young, late-teen 'gamine' ('child'), a term that Vincendeau applies to actresses including Anna Karina, Jean Seberg and Bernadette Lafont, who 'formed the visual embodiment of the youthful values of the New Wave' (2002: 117). This chapter has previously illustrated how the young and impertinent female characters of *Adieu Philippine* could also be grouped under this rubric. On the other hand, Vincendeau also identifies a group of slightly older and arguably more sophisticated actresses that emerged in this period, including; Jeanne Moreau, Emmanuelle Riva, Anouk Aimée, Stéphane Audran (see *Le Boucher* [Chabrol 1969], below and Delphine Seyrig (2000: 117), who had previously acted in Resnais's *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* (1961) and would go on to star in a number of important works, including *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie* (Buñuel 1972), *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (Akerman 1975) and, of course, *Muriel*.

Delphine Seyrig was thirty-one when she won a Volpi Cup at the 1963 Venice Film Festival for her role as Hélène in *Muriel*. However, Seyrig's character appears much older than these thirty-one years, primarily due to the thick woollen blazer, pleated long skirt, fur coat and oversized felt hat that Hélène wears throughout much of the film, hiding her short greying hair and contributing to the impression that she is a desexualised and self-conscious individual who, in her own words, is not fond of going to cafés as she does not like crowded areas (at the beginning of the film she also twice implores Alphonse [Jean-Pierre Kérien] not to look at her). In this respect, Hélène's character can be seen as a departure for Seyrig, who had previously embodied the epitome of sleek, seductive and opaque feminine beauty in her unnamed role in

Resnais's *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*.<sup>67</sup> Instead, she emerges as a somewhat tragic middle-aged woman, wracked by existential angst and drained of erotic desire. This observation is evident in the simple fact that Hélène appears unsure as to why she has invited Alphonse to Boulogne, given that she is obviously romantically (sexually?) involved with a shady local construction worker, Roland de Smoke (Claude Sainval). When Alphonse demands an explanation from her, she protests ambiguously, 'je ne sais pas ce qui m'a poussé. On n'est pas maître de ses sentiments'. Indeed, once Alphonse has arrived in Boulogne, Hélène spends her time ambivalently alternating between the two men in tense domestic scenes devoid of eroticism rather than initiating any kind of (explicit) sexual encounter with either individual. It is for this reason that Marcel Mettey has described Hélène as 'une femme perdue, éperdue, facilement hagarde, cheveux gris, voix sourdement vibrante d'inquiétude' (Mettey 1978: 163 cited in Wilson 2006: 103). This effect is also heightened by the harsh lighting and stuttered editing used by Resnais throughout the film, standing in contrast to the formal conventions of classical Hollywood cinema, by which 'women are coded for strong visual and erotic impact so they can be seen to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*' (Mulvey 1975: 11 [emphasis in original]). In this respect, *Muriel* differs radically from Resnais's earlier film *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959 [screenplay written by Marguerite Duras]), in which the central female protagonist (played by Emmanuelle Riva) 'becomes the instrument of a poetic vision of the body and of physical love' (Sellier 2008: 171). Instead, as I will show later in this chapter, *Muriel* shares parallels with Claude Chabrol's 1969 film, *Le Boucher*, which features – to a certain extent – the same stereotype of a desexualized woman incapable of knowing or taking responsibility for her desire.

Previous scholarship on *Muriel* has tended towards conceptualising Hélène as an individual alienated from her domestic surroundings, and, by analogy, contemporary modernized society (Greene 1999: 32; O'Brien 2000: 49; Wilson 2006: 100). This sense of alienation is especially evident in Hélène's apparent inability to control the domestic sphere of her home, which emerges as a locus of fragmentation, claustrophobia and intrusion rather than stability, permanence and marital bliss. It is for this reason that Hélène bemoans her failure to make her apartment 'extraordinaire et réfléchi', alongside the fact that the domestic objects that clutter this space appear to hinder rather than aid her domestic tasks (after the initial dining sequence, Hélène wrestles with her furniture,

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<sup>67</sup> Lynne Higgins has, however, questioned such a positive reading of *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*, instead claiming that the film's formal innovation has the effect of concealing what is at the centre of the narrative, the rape of a young woman (1991: 303-322).



complaining ‘et cette table qui bute!’). In this respect, Resnais’s narrative supports Mark Betz’s contention that ‘post-war narratives usually connote atmospherics not of buoyancy but of depression, narratives not brimming with life and action but dragged out in dead time, [female] characters not in touch with the world but alienated from it’ (2009: 95). However, what remains unsaid in these observations is the ways in which Resnais’s representation of gendered (female) alienation contributes to the conservative sexual politics which lie at the heart of the film. This hypothesis is largely supported by the simple fact that at no point in the film does H  l  ne express any critical opinion regarding women’s role in the home and society more generally, but rather appears traumatised by the dizzying series of domestic duties associated with the private sphere. In this respect, it is entirely possible to position *Muriel* in relation to the small number of 1960s’ French films which, according to Genevi  ve Sellier, draw from the conservative sexual politics of nineteenth-century literary modernism (in particular Flaubert and Baudelaire) in depicting women as alienated objects of quasi-sociological/ethnographic study (2008: 120, 149), whilst Susan Hayward defines the ‘cinema of the postmodern age as characterized by [...] a sense of alienation felt by those who are not part of the consumer society or who have been profoundly affected by it’ (Hayward 2005: 260-261; see also Betz 2009: 98). This observation also raises an interesting comparison between *Muriel* and Chantal Akerman’s *Jeanne Dielman, 23, quai du commerce, 1080 Bruxelles*, in which the central female figure (again played by Seyrig), is depicted as an alienated housewife who prostitutes herself in order to make ends meet. Yet, whilst Resnais’s film represents women as ultimately unable to change their domestic situation (in other words trapped within what could be described as a state of domestic, existential angst), in Akerman’s film, the main female protagonist decides to take action against her surroundings by murdering one of her clients.

Resnais’s film is also problematic as it appears to associate female alienation with the past. This observation is firstly supported by H  l  ne’s archaic appearance, which appears highly incongruous compared to the brightly coloured Formica worktops and consumer durables which line H  l  ne’s kitchen (including a washing machine and a box of Pax<sup>68</sup> powder). It is also apparent in the ways in which H  l  ne clings onto past memories of her relationship with Alphonse in the vain hope that they will free her from her present state of existential angst and lassitude. Associating H  l  ne with the past obviously again emphasizes her status in the narrative as an individual alienated from

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<sup>68</sup> Pax powder is also a visual trope which features in Chris Marker’s *Le Joli mai* (1963), Jean-Luc Godard’s *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d’elle* (1967), and, most famously, Jean Baudrillard’s semiological/structuralist treatise, *Le Syst  me des objets* (2006 [1968]).

the present (she is instead associated with the antiques that litter the dining room and bedrooms of her apartment which doubles as a showroom). However, perhaps more importantly, representing H el ene in this way again appears to preclude the potential for any kind of progressive dialogue regarding women’s place in society through focusing almost exclusively upon a female figure whose entire identity is based on past memories and tradition. It is for this reason that Rapha elle Branche claims that ‘le pass e n’a pas  et e int egr e au pr esent et H el ene, dans son appartement moderne, reste dans le pass e’ (Branche 1995: 192), whilst Robert Benayoun positions the film in relation to what he terms a ‘cinema of alienation’, which ‘betrays a sudden desperate nostalgia for certain essential [in other words conservative] values [embodied by the figure of H el ene]’ (2008: 107).

This analysis has so far examined Resnais’s decision to use a desexualised older woman as a signifier for modern alienation. Whilst this may be true, it is also important to acknowledge the extent to which the characters in *Muriel* appear alienated from each other. Again, this observation appears especially applicable to the figure of H el ene, who emerges as a cold and emotionless individual, unable to connect with and care for her stepson, Bernard (Jean-Baptiste Thierr e), despite the fact that he appears increasingly traumatized by his experiences in the colonies (she claims ‘j’ai assez mal   l’aider’.) Instead, H el ene consistently scolds Bernard for his apparent inability to preserve the fragile sense of polite, domestic decorum that she has established in preparation for Alphonse’s visit (a perfect example of this occurs in the beginning of the film, when she reprimands him for placing a coffee pot on a piece of antique furniture, alongside a later scene in which she reproaches him for the tone of his voice). On the one hand, this behaviour positions H el ene in relation to the figure of the archetypal housewife, whose job – according to popular press of the period – was to conserve the illusion of the home as a ‘haven’ of hygienic, domestic bliss (Duchen 1994: 76). On the other hand, this behaviour is also arguably evocative of the trope of the abject mother (as seen, for example in the films of Hitchcock), who transgresses boundaries of normative morality by lacking the maternal qualities traditionally associated with motherhood. This trope is also evident in Chabrol’s *Le Boucher*, in which the central female protagonist progressively deviates from the (maternal) behaviour expected of a teacher in acquiescing to her murderous lover (see below).

In addition to her stepson, H el ene also appears alienated from the masculine protagonists in the film. Alphonse, in particular, appears perplexed and angered by her decision to invite him to Boulogne, seeing as it quickly becomes apparent that she is

pursuing a relationship with Roland de Smoke. Alyssa O'Brien has also illustrated how *Muriel's* atonal soundtrack contributes to a 'mood of social angst, alienation between people, and a lack of security' (2000: 51), whilst Naomi Greene has identified the 'lies told by the characters' as the source of the sense of 'alienation and violence' that pervades the narrative (1999: 63). It is important to note, however, that H  l  ne's apparent inability to empathize or connect with any of the protagonists in the film does not elevate her to a position of aloof authority. On the contrary, H  l  ne emerges as a weak and dependant individual who is increasingly victimised and even terrorised by Alphonse (and, at points Bernard) as the film progresses. This sense of victimization is particularly evident in a short shot which features late in the film, when H  l  ne telephones Roland de Smoke to tell him that she is scared (she whispers in a voice tense with fear 'j'ai peur, qu'est-ce que je dois faire'), before suddenly hearing the door of her apartment close. After quickly replacing the receiver, H  l  ne then fixes her gaze into off-screen space, although Resnais then cuts to an apparently disconnected, exterior shot of an apparently unknown couple arriving at the local train station rather than a corresponding, eye-line match shot which would have exposed the origins of the disturbance.<sup>69</sup> Again, the suggestion is that Alphonse has entered into the apartment without H  l  ne's consent (see previous section for the anti-colonial potential of this act).

Another potential problem with Resnais's representation of women is the way in which H  l  ne appears to appease Alphonse, despite the fact that his behaviour appears increasingly intrusive – and possibly violent – as the narrative progresses. With this in mind, perhaps the most ambiguous scene in *Muriel* occurs approximately halfway into the film, when H  l  ne leans over a sleeping Alphonse in order to place her coat on his lap – presumably in order to keep him warm. Suddenly Alphonse's hand grasps H  l  ne's arm, before the whole image is suddenly superseded by two extreme wide shots of local monoliths – phallic symbols arguably indicative of (off-screen) sexual abuse.<sup>70</sup> Yet, the significance of any possible violence is undermined shortly later when the two protagonists are pictured walking and chatting together happily on the coast. To a certain extent, this observation is also applicable to Bernard's relationship with his on-off girlfriend Marie-Do (Martine Vatel), a similarly weak young woman who features

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<sup>69</sup> Resnais uses particularly harsh, natural lighting from a nearby table lamp in this shot to emphasise the sense of tension and malaise.

<sup>70</sup> A similar visual metonymy is also used during the footage positioned at the centre of the film, which reveals Bernard's complicity in the torture, potential rape and murder of an Algerian woman ostensibly named Muriel.

sporadically throughout Resnais's narrative. Of particular note is a short shot that takes place approximately a third into the film, when Marie-Do enquires as to whether Bernard is making a documentary with the video camera that he often uses to voyeuristically film Boulogne's inhabitants, to which Bernard ominously replies 'pire'. Marie-Do's response – 'vous me faites peur' suggests that, due to Bernard's increasingly bizarre and voyeuristic behaviour, their relationship has become untenable. However, just a few scenes later, the two lovers appear again happily together on-screen, with Marie-Do having apparently forgotten about her earlier anxieties about Bernard. More seriously, a number of shots in the film appear to associate Marie-Do with the unnamed Algerian women (obliquely referred to as Muriel) tortured, perhaps raped and killed by Bernard and his conscript-accomplice Robert (Philippe Laudenbach). In the film, this association is mediated by the ways in which Bernard consistently implores Marie-Do to keep her eyes open – an apparently innocuous remark that only gains significance when Bernard later reveals that 'les yeux de Muriel n'étaient pas fermés'. If only in this respect, *Muriel* can be seen to share parallels with the work of Alfred Hitchcock in its depiction of a diegetic universe populated by women victimised and terrorized by men although dependent upon them (Modleski 1989: 4). This observation is also supported by the movement of the female figures in the film, who appear desperate although ultimately unable to leave Boulogne and thus, by analogy, the male figures upon whom they rely. It is for this reason that Héléne tells Alphonse that 'il serait mieux pour toi que tu partes', before she is almost immediately pictured in bed with him (he stays with her in Boulogne until the final scene). As with many of the women in the films discussed in this chapter, none of the female characters in *Muriel* have successful professions (Françoise is a small-time actress, Héléne's unsuccessful antiques showroom and gambling debts have forced her to mortgage her house). Instead, they spend their time appeasing the tyrannical male protagonists upon whom they depend for emotional and financial support.

A final point regarding Resnais's representation of women is also worth noting. As I have so far illustrated, *Muriel* predominantly concerns the lives of petit-bourgeois characters existing in an urban setting. However, interpreting the film exclusively in these terms also threatens to obscure the underlying subtext of the film; that is, the torture and potential rape of an Algerian woman by Robert and Bernard. Furthermore, that the sadistic victimization of this woman is at no point shown or heard subsequently raises questions regarding the ethical and aesthetic politics of the cinematic praxis. On the one hand, Resnais's positioning of this torture outside the boundaries of the

cinematic frame (i.e. in extra-diegetic space) can be interpreted positively, as a form of representation that frustrates the scopophilic-voyeuristic desire traditionally associated with the (masculine) spectator of Hollywood cinema (Mulvey 1975). It is in this vein that Emma Wilson interprets the film, as avoiding the ‘voyeuristic imaging of a woman being severely hurt’ (2006: 94). However, for the very same reasons Resnais’s film could also be criticised for reiterating patterns of representation characteristic of colonial discourse, in which the ‘female subaltern’ was denied a voice and thus the status of subjectivity (Spivak 1988: 287). Instead, Muriel’s trauma is mediated – and therefore manipulated and controlled – exclusively by Bernard, who subsequently decides to eradicate any chance of her testimony being indirectly articulated in destroying all evidence of her torture. In *Muriel*, the trauma of the masculine perpetrator thus appears to eclipse the trauma of the female (colonised) victim. In this respect, *Muriel* can be seen to share certain parallels with Jean-Luc Godard’s *Le Petit soldat* (1963), which similarly privileges the existential angst of its masculine anti-hero, Bruno, over the subjectivity of its central female protagonist, Véronika, who is killed at the end of the film.

#### *Men: fragility and misogyny*

This section has so far illustrated the extent to which Resnais’s narrative depicts a universe of alienated and weak women dependent upon the fragile promises of ambivalent and often controlling men. But what about the ways in which masculine identities are constructed in the film? It is not an exaggeration to claim that representations of masculinity have been almost completely ignored in previous work on *Muriel*. Nevertheless, two aspects of Resnais’s film are immediately apparent: firstly, that apart from a few peripheral characters, *Muriel* is comprised of two central male protagonists, Bernard and Alphonse; and secondly, that neither of these figures subscribe to classical notions of beauty, embodied, for example, in the fetishized and eroticised star bodies of Jean-Claude Brialy (see, for example, *Le Beau Serge* [Chabrol 1958]) and Jean-Louis Trintignant (see, for example *Le Combat dans l’île* [Cavalier 1962]). Rather, Resnais downplays the possibility of spectatorial identification in order to emphasise the anti-colonial subtext of the film. This observation is also supported by McGonagle and Welch’s claim that conscript narratives such as *Muriel* ‘have the potential to open up a more honest or critical understanding of the war’ through an

authentic perspective ‘guaranteed by its very ordinariness or stereotypical banality’ (2013: 51).

In terms of appearance, Alphonse is a moustachioed middle-aged man, whose smart dress sense belies the traits of an upright and respectable individual, or, in the words of Françoise, ‘un homme adroit’. That said, this appearance is quickly proven to be deceptive as Alphonse lies to Hélène about being in the toilets when she arrives to pick him up. It is also immediately obvious that Alphonse is romantically involved with Françoise, despite the fact that he introduces her as his niece. However, perhaps the most important aspect of Alphonse’s character is the way in which he lies about having lived in Algeria for fifteen years, describing the country in idealized and nostalgic terms, as ‘un bien beau pays [...] le soleil et le ciel toujours bleu’. If only in this respect, Alphonse’s character mirrors – to a certain extent – the behaviour of colonial officials and politicians of the period, who – through censorship, fabrication and obscurantist rhetoric – ‘évitaient tout ce qui pourrait apparaître comme une sorte d’état de guerre’ (Stora 1998: 15). This observation is also supported by the ways in which Alphonse responds to Roland’s questions about Algeria with the loaded response ‘il me faudrait du temps, beaucoup de temps avant que je puisse parler à coeur ouvert de ce sujet’. As it happens, Alphonse is forced to face up to his past in Algeria much sooner than he realizes, when Ernest exposes his claims about Algeria as false, a revelation which – by simple analogy – associates officials of the period with a similar process of fabrication and manipulation. To heighten this effect, Resnais represents Alphonse as a sexually predatory figure, who misleads almost all of the women in the film, including his past love Hélène, his mistress Françoise, and his wife Simone, who arrives at the end of the film to find Hélène’s apartment empty after Alphonse has fled to Brussels. In this regard, the anti-colonial politics of the film essentially preclude the possibility of representing masculinity in anything other than misogynistic terms.

Apart from Alphonse, the other main male character in the film is Bernard, an unusual looking young man (high cheekbones, piercing eyes and extremely thin physique), whose return from Algeria involves a somewhat volatile propensity towards traumatised masochism and sporadic aggression. On the one hand, the more vulnerable side of Bernard’s personality is immediately evident in the simple fact that he seems unable to hold a polite conversation with the other protagonists in the film, but instead often appears distracted and reserved in the presence of others, especially in comparison with Alphonse’s gregarious character. In this respect, *Muriel* supports Philippe Labro’s description of *les appelés* as experiencing ‘aucune universalité’ upon their return to

France (1967: 354). As the film progresses, Bernard spends more and more time on his own, disappearing on mysterious peripatetic perambulations through the streets of Boulogne before finally deciding to move into the family's dilapidated work shop in an attempt to patch up the fraught relationship between him and his mother. Although initially obscure, the reasons behind this propensity towards melancholic and, to some extent, masochistic behaviour become clearer as the fragmented details of his shameful past in the colonies emerge, firstly through a hidden military diary that Alphonse discovers whilst rifling through Bernard's belongings (in which he expresses suicidal thoughts), but also after the spectator learns of his and Robert's complicity within the death of "Muriel". As Marie Linné claims, 'il est vrai que c'était un profond silence pendant les premières années quand on est rentrés. Pourquoi? Parce qu'on n'est peut-être pas toujours fier de tout ce qui s'est passé' (cited in Stora 1998: 268). In the climatic final stages of the film, Bernard seems finally unable to hide his emotions, a combination of 'rage, anger and guilt' (Greene 1999: 48). He appears particularly upset after Françoise accidentally plays his tape recorder during the third family meal (thus exposing the aural evidence of "Muriel's" torture), before shooting Robert in a flood of tears. With this in mind, one way of interpreting *Muriel* is as a film that undermines the conventions of patriarchal discourse by associating masculine identity with fragility and trauma rather than macho posturing.

That said, a number of observations also prevent such a politically progressive reading of the film. With this in mind, certain theorists have drawn attention to the way in which Bernard's fragility also coexists with a propensity towards extreme violence, particularly towards women (Monaco 1978; O'Brien 2000; Leperchey 2000). This aggression is at first evident when Bernard silently and accusingly glares at Alphonse after his arrival at Hélène's apartment, before taking a sleeping scorpion from his pocket in a potent harbinger of the string of dramatic revelations that will take place in the final act of the narrative. Later in the film, Bernard again challenges Alphonse for discriminating against Arabs, before storming out of the scene. As he leaves, the camera shifts to a brief shot of Françoise, whose empathetic facial expression again suggests compassion rather than the patronizing derision associated with the other characters. This shot is significant in that it somewhat problematically contributes to Bernard's status in the film as a traumatized pariah whose bizarre behaviour contributes to rather than reduces his sexual appeal. After the final dining scene of the film, Bernard will also revel in Alphonse's misery by voyeuristically filming his response to Ernest's revelations that he is a liar and fantasist. Apart from Alphonse, the other male individual

that Bernard acts aggressively towards is Robert, the shady ex-conscript who, along with Bernard, is responsible for the torture, possible rape and murder of “Muriel”.<sup>71</sup> In terms of screen-time, Robert does not play a particularly large role in the narrative (he is only present for an extended period of time in four scenes). In the second of these scenes, Bernard and Robert are first pictured together when they bump into each other in a local bar. Over the following few minutes of the film, two young men talk tensely about aborted plans (the details of which are not made explicit), before Robert claims ‘tu veux raconter Muriel. Muriel, ça ne se raconte pas’. Evidently angry, Bernard then barks back, ‘fous-moi la paix avec Muriel!’ It is unclear as to how this scene ends. Shortly after, the two men are pictured together in one of Boulogne’s main streets. Again, Robert appears eager to antagonize Bernard, claiming ‘au fond tu veux mourir’, before the whole scene is superseded by a shot of an apparently unconnected individual stapling up a picture of two men fighting on a shop wall. In this respect, Resnais hints at the possibly violent end to Bernard and Robert’s conversation through a process of montage and metonymy (the picture standing for the possible altercation that has occurred between the two protagonists off-screen). As this scene suggests, for the majority of the narrative, Bernard does not act upon an apparently repressed – or at least latent – propensity towards violence (this propensity having been established halfway through the narrative through admissions regarding his role in “Muriel’s” death). It is only in the final stage of the film that Bernard’s increasingly aggressive behaviour becomes violent, when he shoots Robert with a small pistol hidden in the pocket of his jacket. In his reading of the film, James Monaco has underlined the inherently selfish and narcissistic nature of this act, through which Bernard again attempts to locate responsibility in other people rather than himself (1978: 88). In this respect, *Muriel* chimes with ‘a growing anxiety that the violence of [torture conducted during the Algerian War] was leaking into the French domestic sphere – that is, contaminating the metropolitan body politic’ (Kuby 2013: 131).

On a similar note, certain theorists have drawn attention to the subtly misogynistic aspects of Bernard’s character (O’Brien 2000; Lepercqy 2000; Wilson 2006). Undoubtedly the most significant sign of this misogyny is Bernard’s disconcertingly calm confession regarding his complicity within the sexual assault,

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<sup>71</sup> A number of scenes in the film suggest that Robert is involved in the OAS (*Organisation de l’armée secrète*), the French dissident paramilitary organisation responsible for a spate of assassinations and bombings committed during the decolonization process with the aim of stopping Algeria’s independence. This hypothesis is particularly applicable to the second time when Robert appears in the film, when he and Bernard talk tensely about secret, aborted plans.



torture and rape of “Muriel”. In her account of the film, Alyssa O’Brien has described this event – the point of rupture, of no return – as a form of structuring ‘absence’ around which the diegesis anxiously revolves (2000: 53; Wilson 2006: 94). Yet the spectral traces of this traumatic event also contaminate a number of scenes of the film; notably when Bernard incongruously insists that Marie-Do keep her eyes open whilst talking to him (see previous section for a more detailed account of this demand), but also after he slaps Françoise for rummaging through his belongings.<sup>72</sup> On a more general note, Alyssa O’Brien has drawn attention to the symbolic significance of Bernard’s video camera, as ‘an instrument of power’ (2000: 60) by which the returning conscript is able to voyeuristically scrutinize – and thus dominate – the other protagonists in the film (notably Marie-Do). In all of these scenes, Bernard appears to take a perverse pleasure in controlling and manipulating women.

In the beginning of this analysis, we raised the question of whether *Muriel* destabilizes the legitimacy of patriarchal ideology by casting Bernard as a form of vulnerable pariah, traumatized by his experience in the colonies. Yet, this reading of the film is also undermined by the fact that this narcissistic fragility also limits the progressive potential of the film, namely by minimizing the impact of Bernard’s violent tendencies towards men and, in particular, women. In other words, instead of being led to empathise with the universe of female victims that populate *Muriel*, Resnais invites us, somewhat controversially, to identify with the masculine perpetrator of this process of victimization. As Marie-Claire Ropars argues, ‘d’une certaine manière, Bernard vit le passé historique d’un mode individuel, sur un mode qui est finalement très narcissique, celui de sa propre aventure et de son traumatisme personnel’ (1974: 297). Later in this chapter we will see how a similarly troubling tension between apparent weakness and (misogynistic) violence is also evident in Chabrol’s film *Le Boucher*.

It is true that, for the majority of the film, both Bernard and Alphonse spend a large amount of time penetrating and thus contaminating Héléne’s apartment – behaviour that I have previously linked to the anti-colonial politics of the film. However, in the fifth and final act of the film, two simultaneous events occur which radically alters the behaviour of both of these characters and thus the sexual politics of the narrative. The act begins when Alphonse’s brother-in-law Ernest (Jean Champion) arrives at Héléne’s apartment, interrupting the meal that she has prepared for Alphonse, Bernard, Françoise, and her friends Claudie (Laurence Badie) and Marc (Gérard Lorin).

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<sup>72</sup> As Alyssa O’Brien has illustrated, the parallels between the two events lie in details of Bernard’s confession: ‘je m’y suis mis aussi. Muriel geignait en recevant les gifles. La paume de mes mains me brûlait’ (2000: 59).

Over the following few minutes of the film, the atmosphere in the apartment becomes increasingly tense, until Ernest launches into an impassioned and unchallenged tirade against Alphonse, exposing his brother-in-law as a philanderer and fantasist who has lied about almost every aspect of his life during his time in Boulogne, notably his past in Algeria (he has apparently never been), alongside his relationship with Simone (Françoise Bertin), his long-suffering wife who has been burdened with the responsibility of Alphonse's failing restaurant whilst he courts Hélène. This is the first of two revelations that take place during this scene. Immediately after this tirade, Alphonse violently grabs Ernest by the neck, whilst Bernard tells Françoise to fetch the tape recorder that the spectator has sporadically glimpsed in his room throughout the film. However, before she is able to give it to him, Françoise inadvertently plays the recording previously stored on the machine, filling Hélène's apartment with a short burst of men's laughter. Judging by Bernard's horrified reaction (he rips the tape from the deck), this sound has been recorded during the sadistic torture, possible rape and murder of Muriel (although the other protagonists appear unaware of the significance of this incident).

In the very last stages of the film, a subtle although significant gendered dichotomy is established. On the one hand, after fatally shooting Robert, Bernard flees the town after ominously replying to his stepmother's worries about him not having any money with the loaded response, 'c'est pas grave'. This behaviour is mirrored to a certain extent in the ways in which Alphonse eventually evades the attention of his brother-in-law in order to board a bus destined for Brussels. In this respect, neither of the male figures in the film are criticised or punished for their violent (Bernard) and manipulative (Alphonse) behaviour, but instead absolve themselves of any kind of responsibility, whether domestic (Alphonse) or judicial (Bernard), in fleeing the town. If only in this respect, Resnais's film must thus be seen in relation to other French films of the period, including Godard's *Le Petit soldat* and Cavalier's *Le Combat dans l'île*, which similarly represent masculine identity as a search for a state of solitude devoid of affective ties. The same cannot be said, however, for the women of the film, who appear confined to a state of domestic dependence. This observation is at first applicable to the ways in which Hélène desperately attempts to leave Boulogne for Paris, before being elliptically told that the train no longer departs from there, a revelation that prevents her at least temporarily from escaping the domestic routine of her life in the town. It is also applicable to the very final tracking shot of the film, during which Alphonse's long-suffering wife Simone finally arrives at Hélène's apartment only to find it (for the first

time in the film) empty, devoid of life. As such, the very final scenes of *Muriel* can thus be seen to crystallise the wider sexual politics of the film, associating women with alienation, dependency and the past, and men with a search for a masculine identity predicated upon a lack of responsibility. As I will now show, this gendered conservatism is also evident in Claude Chabrol's 1969 film *Le Boucher*, despite the revolution in sexual relations that characterised the mid-to-late 1960s.

#### 2.2.4 *Le Boucher*

This chapter has so far focused on a collection of films directed in the late stages and early aftermath of the Algerian War, including *Adieu Philippine* (1962), *La Belle vie* (1963) and *Muriel* (1963). Claude Chabrol's *Le Boucher* (1969), however, was released seven years after Algeria had been awarded independence, a temporal lapse which, as I will argue, considerably impacts upon the film's sexual politics. In relation to women's rights, these seven years witnessed a number of improvements, including the legalisation of contraception in 1967 (*la loi Neuwirth*) and the formation of a number of feminist groups, including *Féminin-Masculin-Futur*, *Féminisme-Marxisme* and *psychanalyse et politique (psych & po)* in 1967 and 1968. Perhaps more importantly, this period coincided with a more general increase in awareness regarding the hitherto unexplored issue of women's sexuality (reflected in articles on the pages of women's magazines),<sup>73</sup> alongside a shift towards understanding gendered identities as socio-cultural constructs rather than as an expression of an eternal essence (a viewpoint arguably inherited from the strand of existential feminism originally pioneered by Simone de Beauvoir in her 1949 treatise *Le Deuxième sexe*). Claire Duchen has also identified the civil unrest of May 1968 as a 'pivotal point in the history of feminism' (1994: 192), leading to a heightened awareness of women's place in society and the prominent women's liberation movement, the MLF (*Mouvement de Libération des Femmes*). Despite these changes, however, as I will now show, Chabrol's film remains bound by a fundamentally conservative conception of gender relations.

*Women: from maternal frigidity to sexual perversion*

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<sup>73</sup> Although, as Claire Duchen has shown, this awareness remained symbolically tied to a heteronormative and monogamous conception of marriage (1994:195).

In *Le Boucher*, Chabrol's representation of women is almost exclusively limited to the film's central female protagonist; H  l  ne, an attractive although 'spinsterish' schoolteacher (Hayward 2005: 258) played by Chabrol's wife, St  phane Audran (who would have been thirty-seven during filming). In this respect, *Le Boucher* shares parallels with Resnais's *Muriel* in focusing upon a middle-aged female figure rather than the infantilised 'gamines' of *Adieu Philippine*. However, *Le Boucher* also differs from Resnais's film in that Chabrol's representation of women fluctuates as the narrative develops. For at least the first half of the film, H  l  ne emerges as a somewhat desexualised figure, whose practical dress sense (shirts, cardigan and high-necked jumpers) and short, cropped hair position her in stark contrast to the universe of 'easy women' and 'whores' (Sellier 2008: 102) that populate many of Chabrol's earlier films. This contrast is particularly apparent if we compare *Le Boucher* to Chabrol's directorial debut, *Le Beau Serge* (1958), which casts a young Bernadette Lafont as a 'notorious tramp' (Sellier 2008: 103) apparently bent on ruining the relationship between the two heroes of the film through her provocative and sexually transgressive behaviour. In *Le Boucher*, H  l  ne's seemingly 'frigid' behaviour is at first apparent when she and Popaul (Jean Yanne) walk home together after meeting at a local wedding. When the two individuals eventually reach H  l  ne's school (and home), she politely bids Popaul farewell instead of allowing their encounter to develop into a sexual act. Guy Austin has also shown how H  l  ne's personality is reflected in the ways in which she has 'locked herself up in a tower high above the rest of the village' (Austin 1999: 64). To Popaul's surprise, H  l  ne later invites him to dine at her house with him in a scene which forms a perfect example of the sexual dynamics which characterise the early stages of the film. The scene itself begins when Popaul arrives at H  l  ne's apartment before sitting next to her at a dining room table. Unfortunately, the only seat available is made for a small child, and, to make matters worse, instead of lavishing attention on Popaul or pandering to his ego, for the next few minutes of the film, H  l  ne makes him wait in silence as she finishes a pile of marking, behaviour reminiscent of a teacher/student (or mother/son) relationship rather than that associated with potential lovers (figure 4).



Figure 4. Maternal frigidity and masculine impotence in Chabrol's *Le Boucher* (1969)

A similar dynamic is also evident later in the film, when H el ene, Popaul and one of her schoolchildren named Charles (William Gu erault) are pictured foraging for mushrooms together in a local forest. The three protagonists appear happy and relaxed, until Popaul and H el ene begin a brief although significant conversation about why she is single. H el ene appears to anticipate the question, replying that she does not want to be involved with anyone due to the failure of a past relationship, before stating that [faire] 'l'amour peut rendre fou'. In any case, H el ene claims that she loves the schoolchildren as if they were her own – an argument which again reinforces a conception of H el ene as a figure who has found solace in her role as a surrogate mother rather than marriage or sexual liberation. Somewhat inappropriately, Popaul then asks H el ene what she would do if he was to kiss her. H el ene does not respond particularly positively to Popaul's proposition, instead stating that 'je ne dirais rien, mais je vous demande de ne pas le faire'. The scene ends when H el ene gives a dejected looking Popaul a lighter as a birthday present. In his reading of the film, Guy Austin has drawn attention to the ways in which this gesture can be read as an indication of H el ene's nascent feelings for Popaul, seeing as in French the verb 'allumer' (to light), is semantically linked to the term 'une allumeuse', meaning 'a female tease' (1999: 64). That said, it is crucial to note that female sexual desire remains implicit rather than explicit during this scene, in other words repressed rather than celebrated (Dorian Bell defines H el ene as 'a picture of purity' [2008: 52]). Chabrol's representation of French women as sexually suppressed teachers chimes with the literary conception of the governess, who was to nineteenth-

century (and life) what the teacher was to the earlier twentieth century. As Molly Haskell claims, ‘the governess, like the schoolteacher after her, was “incomplete,” was sexually deprived, which in turn led to her behaviour neuroses’ (1987: 338). It is also reminiscent of the figure of ‘blond’ in Hitchcock’s films (for example the eponymous heroine of Hitchcock’s 1964 film, *Marnie* [played by Tippi Hedren]), who is reprehensible not because of what she does but what she withholds: romance and sexual availability. More importantly, H  l  ne’s initially consistent refusal to reciprocate Popaul’s sexual advances (along with her celibate lifestyle more generally) stands in stark contrast to the process of sexual awareness that characterised the 1960s, and, in particular, the May 1968 riots. It is for this reason that Michael Selig has described *Le Boucher* as a film in which ‘the authenticity of [the veteran’s] experience and the reconstruction of a masculine identity [appears to] require the ultimate exclusion of women and female sexuality’ (1993: 10). This analysis will also later raise the somewhat troubling question of whether Chabrol represents H  l  ne’s sexual refusal as the ultimate reason for Popaul’s crimes.

As the narrative progresses, H  l  ne appears increasingly receptive to Popaul’s advances. As we have seen, this observation is applicable to the birthday present that H  l  ne gives Popaul – ironically after politely refusing his sexual proposition. It is also evident in the ways in which she invites him to her home on a number of occasions throughout the narrative (the anti-colonial significance of this act has been discussed in the previous section). However, it is important to note that the significance of H  l  ne’s feelings – and, indeed, of H  l  ne’s character in general – are dramatically altered by a number of scenes which appear to implicate Popaul in the murders. The first of these scenes begins when H  l  ne is pictured leading her schoolchildren on a trip to the pre-historic caves which lie close to the village, before she discovers the body of a mutilated young woman on a nearby ridge. Next to the body is the lighter that H  l  ne has given Popaul earlier in the film (a discovery which quite obviously positions him as the main suspect in the crime). Significantly, in the next scene of the film, H  l  ne fails to inform the visiting police officer of her discovery, behaviour which effectively taints H  l  ne’s nascent feelings for Popaul with the trace of moral transgression and sexual perversion, despite the fact that the couple have not yet engaged in any explicit sexual activity *per se*. With this in mind, one of the most problematic scenes in *Le Boucher* occurs when Popaul later arrives outside H  l  ne’s school with a jar of cherries. Peering down at the courtyard below, H  l  ne does not appear overly frightened about allowing Popaul into

her apartment, instead telling him ‘montez’ in a monotone voice drained of emotion. For the following few minutes of the film, the two protagonists then proceed to eat the cherries that Popaul has brought with him; H  l  ne appears to disavow her knowledge of the murders (in this respect her behaviour could be seen as an example of Sartrean ‘bad faith’), until she asks Popaul whether he has a light for her cigarette. He responds by apparently using the exact lighter that she originally gave him for his birthday – a revelation that temporarily absolves him of any responsibility in the murders and causes H  l  ne to sob with relief. H  l  ne’s ambiguous behaviour in this scene can be interpreted in a number of ways. On the one hand, her emotional response to his use of the lighter can be seen in a positive light, as the behaviour of an individual desperate to cling onto the possibility of romance, despite the fact that this romance appears increasingly untenable. On the other hand, H  l  ne’s moral value is also dramatically undermined in this scene by the simple fact that, in allowing Popaul to enter into the domestic space of her home, she has effectively acted in a sexually provocative manner towards a suspected killer. This observation also raises the somewhat vexed question of whether Chabrol represents female sexuality as fundamentally masochistic, given the clear dangers posed by Popaul. Although initially speculative, this hypothesis gains credence as the narrative progresses, especially when Popaul’s guilt is finally and unequivocally confirmed. In the final stages of the film Popaul breaks into H  l  ne’s school, admitting his role in the crimes before stabbing himself in an act of suicide. Nevertheless, despite the violent nature of this gesture, H  l  ne continues to behave in a seemingly compassionate and even intimate way towards Popaul, driving him along a labyrinth of country roads until the two protagonists eventually arrive at the local hospital. In his last words before being admitted to the operating theatre, a pallid Popaul suddenly implores H  l  ne to kiss him. Unexpectedly, she complies in an act which realises his earlier (frustrated) attempts at seduction (when H  l  ne was unaware of his murderous tendencies). Shortly later, a doctor informs an apparently traumatised H  l  ne that Popaul has died, leading her to spend the night staring blankly on the misty banks of the local river. In addition to being a highly obscure ending to a film characterized by ambiguity, this shot also supports Mark Betz’s claim that, in post-war European cinema, ‘women frequently exhibit a profound dislocation from the people who once were or could be close to them. They are, in a word “alienated”’ (2009: 98).

At the beginning of this analysis, I illustrated how *Le Boucher* ignores the progressive gendered discourses which characterised the period in associating H  l  ne – at least initially – with sexual abstinence and diffidence. However, as we have now

seen, Chabrol's representation is more complex than that, seeing as H  l  ne's sexual desire for Popaul is represented as increasingly bound up with, and even dependent upon, his morally abhorrent role in the murders. In this regard, *Le Boucher* again stands in contrast to discourses surrounding May 1968, which associated female sexuality with liberation and social revolution rather than perversion and moral transgression.

*Men: masculinity in crisis*

Apart from H  l  ne's young student, Charles (William Gu  rault), the only other male protagonist in *Le Boucher* is Popaul (Jean Yanne), the doomed antihero responsible for the string of murders that terrorize the village. In terms of physical appearance, Popaul is a relatively handsome man, whose thick-set body and lumbering gait would have chimed perfectly with Pierre Poujade's traditionalist conception of *la France profonde* as populated by proletarian working-class heroes (despite the fact that he is not the patriarchal head of a family unit as such). As for previous scholarship on *Le Boucher*, theorists have tended towards conceptualising Popaul's murders in loosely Freudian terms; as an expression of the savage unconscious impulses (the id) repressed by the civilized conscious mind (the ego) (Austin 1999: 67; Warshow 1972: 57; Bell 2008: 46). In order to support these observations, critics usually focus upon the dark, psychopathic urges that Popaul fails to repress throughout the film, alongside the symbolic imagery of the caves which lie near the village and are the site of a number of prehistoric drawings by Cro-Magnon Man (with whom Popaul is associated). Although this interpretation of the film is certainly persuasive,<sup>74</sup> in my own analysis I wish to steer away from focusing exclusively upon Popaul's violent and murderous behaviour, partially due to the fact that this behaviour is largely eclipsed by the comparatively sensitive side of Popaul's personality, which casts doubt on his complicity in the crimes and renders his guilt even more shocking. In the first part of this analysis, I will therefore question the extent to which Chabrol represents masculine identity in what could be termed a state of fragility or crisis, before exploring questions of spectatorial identification.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Chabrol himself has endorsed this reading, claiming that 'dans chaque individu existe une part de violence qui vient de la nuit des temps' (cited in Bell 2008: 46).

<sup>75</sup> The phrase 'crisis in masculinity' has often been used to describe periods in which socio-political phenomena (conflict, modernization) have been seen to disrupt the authority of patriarchal ideology (Cook 1982; Powrie 1997; Austin 2003; Vincendeau 2011).



In *Le Boucher*, Popaul at least initially appears as an authoritative figure, who charms H  l  ne with his confident, affable manner and culinary skills (he expertly cuts a joint of meat during the wedding at the beginning of the film). Nevertheless, from this point onwards, Popaul’s masculine authority quickly wanes as he becomes increasingly dependent upon H  l  ne as a fetishised object of his unfulfilled love and perverse desire. Popaul’s weakness is particularly evident in a number of points in the film, including; when H  l  ne responds coolly to his sexual advances in the aforementioned ‘mushroom picking’ scene; when Popaul fails to seduce H  l  ne after visiting her apartment (he instead appears submissive and childlike); and, most poignantly, Popaul’s attempts at playing the heroic maquis during a school fete, when H  l  ne is again ‘confronted with a seemingly desexualised and inept schoolboy’ rather than a potential suitor (Austin 1999: 67). On a more disturbing note, Popaul’s masculine authority is further undermined by the fact that he does not rape his female victims – a revelation that raises questions of sexual inadequacy and impotence (although these questions are left unresolved in the narrative). This pattern of behaviour is evoked in the penultimate scene of the film, when Popaul appears unwilling – or unable – to (sexually) assault H  l  ne, despite having broken into the school in an act which, on a symbolic level, mirrors the logic of rape.<sup>76</sup> If only in this respect, Popaul thus shares more than a passing similarity to the archetypal Hitchcockian male, whose inability to adopt a conventionally patriarchal position in society results in a plethora of psychosexual disorders (see, in particular, the figure of Norman Bates in Hitchcock’s 1960 film *Psycho*).<sup>77</sup> After having effectively trapped H  l  ne in this classroom of the school, in classic Chabrolian fashion, the film then subverts the spectator’s expectations when Popaul stabs himself – instead of H  l  ne – in a highly masochistic act of self-mutilation. Instead of attempting to cure himself of his pathologies, Popaul chooses oblivion. In the final scenes of the film, H  l  ne then drives a dying Popaul to the local hospital, whilst he gazes pathetically up at her from the passenger’s seat. This drive represents the final stage of Popaul’s slow descent: from a state of virile authority to abject emasculation. A number of interpretations of this fall from grace are possible.

Earlier in this chapter, I illustrated how Enrico’s *La Belle vie* and Resnais’s *Muriel* focus upon returning *appel  s* disturbed by their violent experiences of decolonization. As for *Le Boucher*, few details are provided regarding Popaul’s past in

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<sup>76</sup> This analogy is especially evident if we are to focus upon H  l  ne’s attempts to protect the ‘feminine’ space of the home from penetration by a violent masculine intruder.

<sup>77</sup> Film theorists often define these neuroses in psychoanalytic terms, as a refusal to complete the Oedipal trajectory originally theorised by Freud (Hayward 2000: 138).

the colonies, other than he has previously fought in Indochina and Algeria and that he is apparently traumatised by a number of appalling atrocities, including ‘les cadavres, la tête dans la gadoue, coupée en deux, la bouche ouverte [...] des gosses avec les yeux crevés’. The extent of Popaul’s trauma is also evident in the ways in which he often mediates his memories of conflict in elliptical and allegorical terms, ambiguously describing his role as in the army as a butcher (‘j’ai toujours été boucher, boucher pour l’armée .. en Algérie, en Indochine’), before stating that he thinks war films are ‘dégueulasses’. On the one hand, these three films thus share similarities in chronicling the painful return of ‘the *djebel* generation’ into a world in which their often shameful stories were ignored and suppressed (Dine 1994: 111). On the other hand, Chabrol’s film also differs from these works, in that, whilst Enrico and Resnais’s narratives systemically disavow the sexual anxieties experienced by returning *appelés* through a masquerade of virility, *Le Boucher* instead crystallises these concerns in the symbolic impotence of the central male protagonist (despite the fact that Hélène and Popaul only meet after he has returned from Algeria). As Emma Kuby claims, this impotence arguably mirrors contemporaneous concerns regarding the sexuality of *appelés* involved in torture, who were often considered as tainted with deviant and ‘inordinate erotic desires’, thus rendering them unfit for heteronormative family life (2013: 133). As such, Chabrol’s film forms a subtle critique of the discourse of Gaullist *résistancialisme* (which reached its apex five years prior in 1964)<sup>78</sup> in associating ex-veterans with fragility and sexual abnormality rather than ‘la reviviscence durable de la geste héroïque’ (Lindeperg 1997: 328).

Another way of approaching the film is to interpret Popaul’s fragile personality as the result of a long, drawn out process of emasculation led principally by Hélène. This reading of the film appears especially plausible if we focus upon the effect of Hélène’s increasingly ambivalent attitude towards Popaul, which veers erratically between romance and diffidence and causes her would-be suitor to become progressively neurotic (and psychopathic) as the film develops. This ambivalence is particularly prominent when Hélène sporadically invites Popaul to her apartment before responding to his sexual advances with icy reservation. It is also evident in the ways in which she gives Popaul a lighter as a birthday present before refusing his request for a

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<sup>78</sup> The unequivocal hero of Gaullist *résistancialisme* was Jean Moulin (1899 – 1943), a high profile resistant who died at the hands of the Gestapo after bravely defying the urge to speak under torture. As part of an attempt to unify France after the humiliation of the Algerian War, de Gaulle would transfer Moulin’s ashes to the Panthéon in 1964 in a ceremony rich with pomp, regalia and national pride.

kiss, leaving Popaul's masculine charisma deflated by the bitter taste of rejection. It is for this reason that Robert Wood and Michael Walker have identified the origins of Popaul's distress as 'the denial or deprivation of [Hélène's] love' (1970: 134), before claiming that, 'had Hélène been able to give him the love he required, one feels sure that the beast in Popaul could have been cured' (1970: 134). On a more general note, the misogynistic sexual politics of ambivalence and emasculation that characterize the film can also be seen as an allegorical response to the waves of feminism generated during the May 1968 riots, which galvanized the impetus of women's liberation movements (for example the MLF) during the year before the film's release (Duchen 1994: 192). Interpreting the film in this way thus positions *Le Boucher* at the centre of a broad continuum, between the patterns of masochism and masculine sexual anxiety that pervade classic gangster movies (Warshaw 1948: 131-132), the archetypal *film noir* (Krutnick 1991: 88), *polar* (Powrie 1997: 11), and, more recently, works featuring the French star Gérard Depardieu, whose role as 'suffering macho' forms a similar 'expression of [masculine] impotence in the face of feminism' (Vincendeau 1993: 353).

Earlier in this chapter we saw how Resnais's *Muriel* arguably undermines the authority of patriarchal ideology by representing Bernard as an *appelé* wracked with anxiety, vulnerability and trauma. To some extent, a similar observation is also applicable to *Le Boucher*, which, as I have shown, associates *appelé* identity with symbolic impotence rather than the virile omnipotence displayed by figures such as Michel in *Adieu Philippine*. However, as with *Muriel*, the radical political potential of the film is also undermined by a number of factors. In this case, it is the comparatively complex question of spectatorial identification and masculine identity that is at stake. At first glance, this question appears relatively straightforward: as a violent killer, we would assume that Popaul is not a figure with whom the spectator is encouraged to identify. Furthermore, a number of details support this reading of the film, notably the lack of masculine interior homodiegetic voice, masculine flashbacks, or subjective shots taken from Popaul's point of view.<sup>79</sup> Nevertheless, certain points in the film also encourage the spectator to identify with Popaul. With this in mind, one of the most disconcerting elements of the narrative is a jarring disjuncture that exists between the objective significance of Popaul's crimes (as an act of almost unparalleled savagery) and the relatively minor space that these crimes occupy in the diegesis itself. At no

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<sup>79</sup> The film only uses a select few shots apparently taken from Popaul's perspective, notably when he arrives at the school after Hélène has found the lighter connecting him to the crimes. The two short subjective shots used during the final break-in are taken from Hélène's perspective.

point in the film does the spectator experience the murders in real time, but retrospectively through the speculative rumours circulating in the village (rumours that H  l  ne initially dismisses after hearing two of her schoolchildren talking about the first crime). When Chabrol eventually depicts one of Popaul’s victims on-screen, the body is framed in a static long shot (thus preventing any direct close-ups of the victim’s face or wounds), whilst H  l  ne responds to the discovery with muted surprise rather than abject horror. In this scene, as within the film more generally, Chabrol’s *mise-en-sc  ne* thus acts in order to minimize the ethical and emotional impact of the crimes, and, by extension, Popaul’s complicity with them. To some extent, the narrative also rationalizes and thus legitimizes Popaul’s behaviour through frequent references to his time in the army; a traumatic past exacerbated by his failure to adopt a traditionally patriarchal (virile) posture in post-independence French society. It is undoubtedly for this reason that Robin Wood and Michael Walker have described Popaul as ‘Chabrol’s most human “beast”’ (1970: 133). Perhaps the most significant scene in the film in relation to Chabrol’s sexual politics occurs when Popaul finally breaks into H  l  ne’s school after she has realized that he is probably guilty of the murders. Earlier in this analysis, I mentioned how Chabrol confounds expectations by dramatising Popaul’s eventual suicide rather than H  l  ne’s grisly death. Whilst this may be true, it is also important to note the significance of this gesture, as an act which again functions to undermine the morally abhorrent aspects of Popaul’s character. Indeed, in this brief scene, Popaul casts himself as a virtuous and benevolent man, who (ironically) spares H  l  ne from his own destructive urges. As such, she is elevated to a state of sacred inviolability, whilst he is transformed into an unlikely hero. Popaul’s fragile moral authority is then further bolstered when he stabs himself with a knife, as such evoking the behaviour of a masochistic pariah rather than a sadistic killer, before H  l  ne cradles a dying Popaul lovingly in her arms. As James Monaco claims, ‘like a Saint out of Genet, Popaul sacrifices himself for us all, living out our own collective madness and making it concrete’ (1977: 275).

As this scene suggests, one way of interpreting *Le Boucher* is as a film in which the primacy of patriarchal ideology is destabilized by images of masculine martyrdom and masochism. With this in mind, Chabrol’s narrative shares notable parallels with Resnais’s *Muriel*, which, in a similar fashion, represents Bernard’s return from the colonies as an attempt to hold together an ego evidently shattered by the trauma of conflict. However, as with *Muriel*, the progressive political potential of *Le Boucher* is also undermined by the simple fact that these images of masculine weakness also

coexist with, and thus – to some extent – legitimize Popaul’s tendency towards misogynistic violence and murder. In this respect, *Le Boucher* emerges as perhaps the most controversial film in this thesis by leading the spectator into an empathetic relationship with a sadomasochistic killer. On a similar note, the film also completely ignores the progressive sexual agenda pursued by women (and men) during May ‘68.

### 2.2.5 Conclusion

In this section we have seen how, despite their anti-colonial politics, many of the films produced during the immediate aftermath and during the conflict remain characterised by gendered stereotypes. Within this framework, the four films could hypothetically be split into two groups, with, on the one hand *Adieu Philippine* and *La Belle vie*, and, on the other, *Muriel* and *Le Boucher*. In Rozier and Enrico’s narratives, the female protagonists are all relatively young, attractive (according to social norms), and ultimately ignorant of the horrors of war. In Rozier’s film, this ignorance takes the form of derision, whilst Enrico’s work represents its central female protagonist Sylvie in a state of epistemological deprivation as she does not have access to the extra-diegetic footage of warfare that the spectator is exposed to at the start of the film. I also showed how *La Belle vie* systematically ‘contains’ female sexuality as the film progresses through the tropes of marriage and motherhood. It is important to note a crucial difference that exists in the two films’ representation of men, in that, whilst *Adieu Philippine* focuses on a prospective conscript, *La Belle vie* chronicles the painful return of a traumatised *appelé* to his life in Paris. Nevertheless, the two films share parallels in depicting sexual conquest as an effective method of assuaging the trauma of conflict (whether this is past or future). Both films also establish an empathetic relationship vis-à-vis the spectator and the central male protagonists, in representing men as virile and charming individuals associated alternately with martyrdom (Michel in *Adieu Philippine*), and a transition from emasculated antihero to patriarchal ideal (Frédéric in *La Belle vie*).

In *Muriel*, Resnais uses the sexually manipulative aspects of Alphonse’s character in order to – by analogy – denigrate the reputation of colonial officers in the conflict (with whom Alphonse is compared via his nostalgic memories of Algeria), whilst simultaneously representing Bernard’s return from Algeria in terms of a volatile propensity towards traumatised masochism and often misogynistic aggression. In this respect, the radical potential of the film is undermined by the simple fact that Bernard’s

trauma largely eclipses the suffering of the women he victimises. By the time we reach *Le Boucher*, any possibility of a tough, controlled and unified masculinity has vanished. Instead, Chabrol's film chronicles the disintegration of patriarchal authority via the symbolic impotence of Popaul, whose masochistic tendencies arguably provide a palliative for the wider masculine sexual anxieties that characterised 1960s' France, especially in the re-ignition of feminism during the May 1968 riots. Finally, in terms of their representation of women, *Muriel* and *Le Boucher* share an important parallel, in that they both focus on middle-aged, alienated female figures drained of sexual agency and desire. However, Chabrol's film also differs from *Muriel* in gradually associating female sexuality with moral transgression and perversion, as such completely ignoring the progressive gendered discourses of May 1968, which instead used women's sexual agency as a metaphor for social liberation and revolution.

To summarise, despite adopting a vehemently anti-colonial posture in their structuring of narrative space, the films discussed in this chapter remain bound to patriarchal ideology in their construction of gendered identities. This is not surprising, firstly as most of the films dramatise the symbolic penetration of an implicitly feminine private realm by an active masculine *appelé* (as such associating French women with domestic violation and passivity), but also as the films arguably arise out of a wider desire to restore an image of patriarchy shattered by the vicissitudes of conflict. As I will show in the following chapter of this thesis, a similar tension between anti-colonial and patriarchal ideology is also evident in many of the Algerian films produced in the immediate aftermath of independence.

## Chapter 3. Algerian Cinema

### 3.1 Narrative Space in Algerian Cinema

In the second chapter, we saw how certain 1960s' French films critiqued colonial ideology (and, in particular, the neo-colonial discourse of domesticity characteristic of the period) in representing the domestic domain as polluted by the trauma of *l'appelé déboussolé*. This section is driven by a similar desire to explore the political potential of narrative space in post-colonial Algerian cinema. In terms of textual analysis, I will focus on three of the most canonical Algerian films of the era, that is; *Le Vent des Aurès* (Lakhdar-Hamina 1966), *Les Hors-la-loi* (Farès 1969) and *L'Opium et le bâton* (Rachedi 1969), showing how each of these films use the trope of socio-spatial transgression as a revolutionary anti-colonial praxis. As such, this chapter will support Joseph McGonagle and Edward Welch's claim that 'the Franco-Algerian relationship is [often] staged through the visual representation of space', including the *bled* (ancestral village) in Algeria and, more recently, the banlieues in France (2013: 9, 145-179). However, whilst McGonagle and Welch's studies focus primarily upon contemporary French and Algerian cinema, this chapter will cast a retrospective gaze over the politicised landscape of early post-colonial Algerian filmmaking.

#### 3.1.1 *The significance of space in post-colonial Algerian culture*

In terms of its topographic makeup, Algeria can be divided into three main elements; densely populated northern cities (Algiers, Annaba [formerly Bône], Oran); the vast, inhospitable Saharan desert located in the south; and the Atlas and Saharan Mountain ranges of which both northern Kabylia and the central eastern Aurès Mountains are an extension (the Berber language is used in both of these regions). It is these rural areas that have formed the primary locus of a long history of independent activity and resistance to central authority; firstly, by Berber nationalists against Arab, Ottoman and French rule, and later as the site of largely Berber-led resistance against colonial forces during the War of Independence. During the war, Algerian territory was separated into six Wilayas,<sup>80</sup> themselves divided into *mintaka* (zones) *nahia* (regions) and *kasma* (sectors). As Martin Windrow explains, 'the heart of the rebellion was always the

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<sup>80</sup> This process began during the Soummam Conference in 1956 and was intended to maximize the FLN's ability to control the local resistance movements. Each Wilaya was designed to contain an appropriate amount of human resources and urban/rural spaces.

remote highlands of the Aurès (Wilaya 1) and Kabylia (Wilaya 3), whose mountains, canyons, hidden valleys, caves and cliff villages’ (known as *mechtas* [hamlet] or *douars* [Arab tent village]) ‘offered-limitless hide-outs’ (Windrow 1997: 13-14; see also Silverstein 2003: 88). Of particular significance was the violent insurrection which took place on All Saints Day, 1954, in the Aurès Mountains (an event which is often cited as the catalyst for the Revolution itself and was led by the FLN commander Ben Boulaid [see below]), alongside the organization of the 1956 Soummam Conference as an example of how FLN leaders managed to hold a conference for twenty days “‘in the heart of a Kabylia cross-griddled [*quadrillé*] and supposedly pacified by the French armed forces’” (Abane in Horne 2006: 146). It is for these reasons that Algeria has come to be conceptualised – and, to some extent mythologised – diametrically in nationalist discourse and Arab culture; split between the flat coastal plains of *bled el makhzen* and the lawless, rebellious and rural mountainous regions of *bled es siba*. In privileging rural over urban settings, the three films discussed in this chapter thus appear to represent the conflict accurately – particularly, for example, compared with Pontecorvo’s *La Bataille d’Alger*, which instead chooses to focus almost exclusively upon France’s significant if ultimately pyrrhic victory during the brief period of urban guerilla warfare that took place from 1956 to 1957. Nevertheless, as I will later show, the films also contain many mythic elements which undermine the subtle claims to historical accuracy implicit within Algerian cinema of this period.

### 3.1.2 *Le Vent des Aurès*

Filmed in 1966 but set during the War of Independence, *Le Vent des Aurès* is a simple yet effective story which recounts the insidious effects of colonialism upon a peasant Algerian-Berber family living in the central eastern Aurès Mountains. The narrative is essentially split into two parts. For approximately the first half the film, the family are shown pursuing daily rituals and routines (washing, cleaning, cooking) in and around their house until tragedy strikes; firstly with the death of the father (who is killed during an air raid), and, secondly, with the arrest of the son Lakhdar (Mohamed Chouikh), for carrying supplies to the ALN (*Armée de Libération nationale*) fighters hidden in the Aurès Mountains (his status is thus as a part-time guerrilla or *moussebiline*). It is this event which announces the second phase of the film, during which the unnamed mother of the family (Keltoum) begins her intrepid quest through the rural landscape in order to find her son, whom she eventually locates in a colonial detention centre (her status is



thus as one of the women who provided food and support to the fighters known as *moussebilate*). Nevertheless, the film ultimately concludes tragically when the traumatised mother-figure throws herself onto the electric fence surrounding the centre. In one of the rare readings of the film, Guy Austin has shown how the narrative functions in an allegorical sense, ‘as a metaphor for the journey to freedom from colonial rule’ (2012: 44-45). This observation appears especially pertinent to the ways in which, during the conflict, the harsh climate of rural areas acquired a specific mythological status in nationalist discourse as a signifier for anti-colonial ideology (see also Lakhdar-Hamina’s *Le Vent de sable* [1982] alongside Mohamed Slim Riad’s *Le Vent du sud* [1975]). Expanding upon this interpretation, this analysis will draw attention to the ways in which Lakhdar-Hamina’s narrative represents Algeria as a form of tabula rasa, characterised by gendered socio-spatial transgression. I will also draw attention to the ways in which the film arguably shares parallels with colonial discourse in representing Algeria as a monolithic entity devoid of socio-cultural antagonism.

#### *Influence: Soviet cinema and colonial discourse*

In his spatially sensitive reading of the film, Austin identifies two ways in which *Le Vent des Aurès* draws from Soviet cinema in its elegiac portrayal of national suffering.<sup>81</sup> According to Austin, this influence is firstly evident in Lakhdar-Hamina’s cinematographic techniques (extreme wide shots of the mother silhouetted against the horizon), which evoke the films of Dovjenko and Donskoi, but it is also applicable to Lakhdar-Hamina’s use of Soviet montage<sup>82</sup> in order to express the mother’s alienation from the unforgiving and foreign environment (2012: 48) (later in this section I will show how Soviet montage is also used in Ahmed Rachedi’s *L’Opium et le bâton*, although for a different purpose). One aspect of Lakhdar-Hamina’s narrative that remains underanalysed in Austin’s otherwise illuminating study is the relationship between the film and colonial discourse. Drawing from tropes propagated within a long history of Orientalism, colonial discourse was expressed through a number of disparate media, including literature, art, photography, cinema and the ubiquitous colonial

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<sup>81</sup> This influence is perhaps unsurprising since Lakhdar-Hamina trained in Czechoslovakia and the FLN regime was officially socialist (Austin 2012: 47).

<sup>82</sup> As a formal theory, montage asserts that meaning is produced ‘in the rapid alternation of shots [through editing] whose signification occurs at the point of their collision’ (Hayward 2000: 96). This technique is associated primarily with Lev Kuleshov, Pudovkin, and, in particular, Sergei Eisenstein. In *Le Vent des Aurès*, montage takes the form of alternating shots between the mother’s disconsolate face and the surrounding environment.

postcard. In the words of Elizabeth Ezra, ‘above and beyond the merely exotic [...], representations of the colonial located cultural difference in specifically political terms, confirming France’s [...] status as a world power’ (2000: 2). Perhaps the most significant aspect of colonial discourse (in relation to this analysis) was the way in which it generally tended towards representing the colonies in abstract terms, as ‘an empty landscape’ (Zarobell 2010: 136) devoid of Algerians and occupied almost exclusively by French military officials. This observation is applicable to the classic ‘colonial’ films, *Sirocco* (Séverac 1930), *SOS Sahara* (Baroncelli 1939) and *L’Atlantide* (Pabst 1932), all of which privilege the subjectivity of *le légionnaire* at the expense of the colonized population, who instead remain largely consigned to the margins of off-screen space. Kamal Salhi has also shown how European films of this period ‘disregarded local culture’ (for example Berber tradition) in favour of an exotic ideal (Salhi 2008: 441). With the outbreak of war, the figure of *l’appelé* replaced *le légionnaire* as the primary mediator of the colonial experience (see chapter two). Nevertheless, as Austin has illustrated – according to French cinema – Algeria remained a space characterized by a sense of ‘nothingness’, despite the violent conflict fought between French forces and *moudjahiddine* during this period (2007: 182). This sense of ‘nothingness’ is evident within a number of works of 1960s’ French cinema, including Jacques Demy’s 1964 film *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* (in which Algeria is mediated via a photograph of a French soldier surrounded by an environment devoid of Algerians) and Resnais’s *Muriel* (which features postcards of an idealized although empty Algerian landscape); 1950s’ and 1960s’ television, for example, the series *5 colonnes à la une* (which privileged images of French *appelés* over *les moudjahiddine*); and more recent documentaries, including Tavernier and Rotman’s acclaimed work *La Guerre sans nom* (1992), which effectively erases *pieds-noirs* and the indigenous Algerian population from the narrative of decolonization by focusing almost exclusively upon *appelé* testimony.

The relationship between colonial discourse and Lakhdar-Hamina’s film is complex. In his interpretation of the film, Austin has described how *Le Vent des Aurès* replaces the previously empty landscapes characteristic of France’s colonial imaging of Algeria, with a ‘representation of indigenous struggle and suffering’ via the quest of the mother (2007: 182). However, certain aspects of the narrative appear to contradict such a subversive reading of the film. As I have previously shown in this analysis, colonial discourse had a tendency to elide the visibility and thus subjectivity of the indigenous colonized population in its representation of Algeria as a pacified and largely desolate

landscape inhabited almost exclusively by the figure of *le légionnaire* and then *l'appelé*. Evidently, Lakhdar-Hamina's film differs from these narratives in its use of a mother-figure (as opposed to a masculine military official) as a metonymy for national sovereignty (as opposed to colonial superiority). However, *Le Vent des Aurès* also arguably reiterates the inclusive/exclusive representational logic of colonial discourse in a number of ways. Firstly, in chronicling an allegorical and largely non-violent quest across Algeria, Lakhdar-Hamina's film remains conspicuously silent as to the atrocities committed in the region during the conflict, including the 'deliberate policy of terror' (Horne 2006: 134) advocated by the FLN, (including mass execution, throat slitting, mutilation and decapitation), alongside the mass executions of suspected nationalists by the French forces. Admittedly, the film does include one memorable sequence in which a French aircraft bombs the local village during the harvest, killing the father of the family, although this act is represented in impersonal terms – the perpetrators are never shown individually. In this respect, *Le Vent des Aurès* stands in stark contrast to the films that I will discuss later in this chapter, including *Les Hors-la-loi* and *L'Opium et le bâton*, all of which –to varying degrees – depict colonial Algeria as a site of explicit and individualised violence between colonial officials and Algerian nationalists. Instead, Lakhdar-Hamina's film appears to conform to Ella Shohat's definition of Third-Worldist film as using 'the expulsion of the colonial intruder' in a cinematic praxis of 'national becoming' (2003: 62).

As with colonial discourse, *Le Vent des Aurès* also remains conspicuously silent as to the complex politics which characterised the era. Hence the film's elision of the tumultuous period in the revolution that took place after the capture and miraculous escape of the Berber (Chaoui) regional leader of the Aurès (Wilaya 1), Mustafa Ben Boulaid.<sup>83</sup> As Alistair Horne explains, 'upon returning to the Aurès [in 1955], Boulaid discovered that it had more or less reverted to its state of parochial anarchy', ravaged by a series of unwise tactical decisions taken by his temporary successor, Bachir Chiani – who was eventually formally executed along with eight of his young men for his incompetence (2006: 142). *Le Vent des Aurès* also makes no reference to the fact that, only a year earlier, Algeria's first president Ben Bella had been deposed in a bloodless coup by his former friend and independence fighter Houari Boumediène in 1965.

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<sup>83</sup> Despite being completely absent from all of the narratives discussed in this chapter, Mustafa Ben Boulaid played a key role in the revolution, leading the violent insurrection which took place on All Saints Day, 1954, successfully presiding over operational decisions in the Aurès Mountains during the war (Wilaya 1), until being eventually killed by a booby-trapped radio in March 1956.

Instead, the film weaves a subtle narrative of national unity in depicting Algeria as a space populated by families unequivocally committed to the Revolution. As one individual claims, ‘dans les moments pénibles, nous devons nous entraider’. Finally, in its nostalgic representation of rural conflict, Lakhdar-Hamina’s narrative elides many of the contemporaneous social and gendered problems that affected urban areas due to widespread domestic migration in the immediate post-independence period. As Benjamin Stora has shown, these problems ranged from widespread unemployment, bureaucratic disintegration, a pervasive housing crisis and – as a result of the overcrowding involved in this crisis – an increased tendency towards enforced resequstration (1998: 227). Instead, as with colonial discourse, Lakhdar-Hamina’s narrative represents Algeria as a tabula rasa cleansed of the cultural, social, economic, religious, political and gendered tensions that in reality characterised the post-colonial nation-state, particularly in urban areas.

On a more general note, these antagonistic blind-spots could be explained by the influence of the one-party state on 1960s’ Algerian cinema, which subscribed to a similar combination of monolithic historiography and anonymous hagiography crystallised in the slogan, ‘un seul héros: le peuple’ (Windrow 1997: 14). It is for this reason that Viola Shafik claims ‘the perspective of the film coincides completely with the confined horizon of the simple peasant woman. There is little treatment of the larger political context’ (2007: 145). This observation is also supported by the fact that characters in the film speak Arabic as opposed to the local Chaouia (Berber) dialect spoken in the Aurès Mountains – a process of linguistic misrepresentation symptomatic of the project of Arabisation pursued by the state in the immediate aftermath of decolonization. A similar process of linguistic misrepresentation is also evident in *Les Hors-la-loi* (again set in the Aurès Mountains) and *L’Opium et le bâton*, which features dialogue in Arabic despite being set in the Berber (Kabyle) speaking region of Kabylia.<sup>84</sup> As Ella Shohat claims in relation to Third-Worldist cinema,<sup>85</sup> ‘the view of the nation as unitary muffles the “polyphony” of social and ethnic voices within heteroglot cultures’, assuming the fundamental ‘coherence of national identity’ at the expense of cultural, religious and ethnic hybridity (2006: 299, 308).

*From private (domestic) to public space*

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<sup>84</sup> All of the quotes used in this chapter have been taken from the French subtitles of the films.

<sup>85</sup> Ella Shohat defines Third-Worldist cinema as narratives produced ‘during the post-war collapse of European empires and the emergence of independent nation-states’ (2006: 290). See Malley (1996) for a detailed description regarding Third-Worldist ideology and Algerian independence.

One of the most neglected aspects of *Le Vent des Aurès* is Lakhdar-Hamina's representation of domestic space, despite the fact that this space plays a central role in the diegesis until the mother embarks upon her intrepid quest. Indeed, for at least thirty minutes of the first hour of the film, the central protagonist is visualised preparing food within her home, working at her loom and superstitiously placing a marked egg into a fire in an attempt to ascertain the fate of her son. What is immediately apparent in these extended scenes are the ways in which Lakhdar-Hamina creates a sense of everyday routine and ritual through a series of medium and close-up shots which neither privilege the perspective of mother (thus disrupting the verisimilitude of the diegesis), nor spectator (thus potentially creating a sense of voyeurism). Realist cinematographic techniques essentially prevent the symbolic eroticisation of the domestic domain, which is represented instead as part of a quasi-ethnographic study concerning the power of maternal succour, altruism and longing. Perhaps the most important aspect of Lakhdar-Hamina's narrative, however, is the way in which the film visualises an Algerian woman crossing the threshold separating the private (domestic) realm and public space in her epic quest across the Aurès Mountains. This observation is particularly applicable to the opening credits of the film, during which Lakhdar-Hamina uses a long take combined with a wide shot to visualize the mother collecting water from a nearby stream, whilst her house can clearly be seen in the background.<sup>86</sup> Lakhdar-Hamina's association of Algerian women with public (as opposed to private) space is important for a number of reasons. On the one hand, Lakhdar-Hamina's film can be seen to critique colonial discourse in associating Algerian women with maternity and public space, rather than the 'atmosphère raréfiée de la claustration' and 'latent eroticism' characteristic of the colonial harem (Djebar 2001: 24; Alloula 1986: 78). This observation is also supported by the title of the film, which subtly subscribes to a dialectic conception of history (see the semantic logic linking the term 'wind' with motion, revolution, and ultimately independence) rather than the strictly Manichean dualism characteristic of colonial spatial logic, that instead 'appears to forbid notions of dialectical transformation' (Kipfer 2007: 710). In this respect, Lakhdar-Hamina's film could hypothetically be defined alongside certain other works of post-colonial Maghrebi cinema, notably the female Tunisian director Moufida Tlatli's 1994 *Les Silences du palais*, which constructs a similar form of 'anti-harem' in representing domestic space

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<sup>86</sup> The distinct lack of editing here (and throughout the film) supports Teshome Gabriel's definition of 'Third-Worldist' filmmaking as predicated upon what is usually defined as 'excess' (i.e. 'non-dramatic') elements in western cinema (1989: 44).

as a site of maternal genealogy and sisterhood rather than sub-eroticism and voyeurism (Murphy 2007: 176 [see also Assia Djebar's *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua*, chapter four, section two]). On the other hand, Lakhdar-Hamina could also potentially be criticised for preserving the symbolic violence of gendered spatial segregation via the headscarf that the mother figure wears throughout the film. As numerous theorists have argued, the veil<sup>87</sup> or *hijab* (Arabic for “screen” or “curtain”) occupies a particularly contentious position within Muslim societies such as modern Algeria (Fanon 1965 [1959]; Mernissi 1987; Lazreg 1994; MacMaster 2012). During the conflict itself, colonial forces attempted to undermine the influence of the veil as part of a process of social “progression” rooted in a Eurocentric conception of “modernity”. As a response to this project, the act of veiling and unveiling came to occupy a symbolic role within the nationalist movement; primarily as a silent sign of anti-colonial resistance, but also as a way of tricking colonial officials into allowing unveiled *fidayate* to traverse the embattled streets of Algiers (see chapter four, section two for an in-depth discussion of how this act is dramatized in Pontecorvo's *La Bataille d'Alger*). Following the end of the war, the veil again assumed a central position with the increasingly conservative politics of post-colonial Algeria, although as a method of guaranteeing the ‘spatial regulation of [gendered] segregation’ (MacMaster 2012: 371) in a society whose patriarchal values had been disrupted by the effects of conflict, rather than as a symbol of opposition to colonial occupation. With this in mind, Lakhdar-Hamina's film appears to legitimize and thus subtly perpetuate the symbolic violence of this segregation by focusing on an Algerian woman who appears to naturally adopt the veil in the presence of others. As I will show later in this chapter, this observation is applicable to many of the veiled female figures in Algerian films of this period, including Tewfik Farès's 1969 film, *Les Hors-la-loi*.

### 3.1.3 *Les Hors-la-loi*

Directed by the co-writer of *Le Vent des Aurès*, Tewfik Farès, *Les Hors-la-loi* is a 1969 Algerian film set in 1946, almost ten years before the ‘first shots’ of the Algerian War were fired in 1954 (Horne 2006: 89). It is true that *Les Hors-la-loi* shares certain similarities with *Le Vent des Aurès*, firstly in that it is set in the Aurès Mountains, but also as it represents the revolution via an allegorical ‘quest’, from *bled el makhzen* to

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<sup>87</sup> I use the term veil/*hijab* here to refer to the wide range of items of clothing used as a method of restricting the visibility of the female body, including; the Algerian *haïk*, *hadjar* or headscarf, the Iranian *chador*, and the *burqa*, which is common in Afghanistan and India.

*bled es siba*. However, Farès's narrative also differs from *Le Vent des Aurès*, firstly by focusing upon a fraternity of Algerian 'outlaws'<sup>88</sup> rather than literal *moudjahiddine*, secondly by appropriating conventions characteristic of the classic Hollywood Western (as opposed to Soviet cinema), and thirdly by reasserting (as opposed to denying) the traditional socio-spatial codes of Berber culture as a method of anti-colonial resistance.

At the beginning of the film, the heroic 'outlaw' Slimane (Sid Ahmed Agoumi) is imprisoned for attempted desertion from the French army. Leaping over the confines of the prison cell in a miraculous and daring escape, Slimane then ventures to his home region in the Aurès Mountains in order to see his dying father. Nevertheless, his attempts at evading the French army are thwarted by the local caïd (tax collector), who captures and delivers Slimane to the local gendarmes. At this point, Slimane meets the two other main protagonists in the film, Ali (Mohamed Chouikh – who had played the role of the son Lakhdar in *Le Vent des Aurès*<sup>89</sup>) and Moh (Cheikh Nourredine), with whom he establishes a close friendship. The three men then decide to escape from the prison (on horseback), killing the caïd, whose son subsequently invades Slimane's mother's house until her own son returns for the hinterlands of the Aurès. The final third of the film coincides with a number of significant moments; firstly, a dramatic shootout between Slimane and the son of the caïd (who is subsequently killed along with his two accomplices); secondly, the reappropriation of the village from colonial control (after the three 'outlaws' have stolen the taxes collected by French forces); and thirdly, the capture and subsequent imprisonment of Ali by colonial forces. In the final part of the film, Slimane and Moh infiltrate the prison in which Ali is being held, causing havoc amongst colonial officials and shooting the regional governor, who replies to the question 'qu'est-ce qui s'est passé?' with the response 'les hors la loi'.

### *Influence: the classic Western and Berber culture*

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<sup>88</sup> 'Les 'hors-la-loi' was a colloquial term used by the French army to describe *moudjahiddine*, or, more specifically, 'the army of the frontiers' recruited from Algerian refugees in Tunisia or Morocco (see *L'Opium et le bâton* [below] for an example of a French officer using the term to refer to an Algerian resistant).

<sup>89</sup> After acting in Lakhdar-Hamina and Farès's films, Mohamed Chouikh would go on to forge a career as a renowned Algerian director, directing works including; *La Citadelle* (1988), *Youcef* (1993) and *L'Arche du désert* (1997).

Out of all of the films discussed in this chapter, *Les Hors-la-loi* is perhaps the most spatially sensitive, if only as the entire narrative revolves around a spatial dialectic of masculine imprisonment and escape. In an important reading of the film, Guy Austin has shown how *Les Hors-la-loi* appropriates iconographic and cinematographic patterns from the classic Hollywood Western, including ‘the pursuit of a wild horse with the wounded hero [Slimane] on its back’, alongside ‘repeated low angle shots of the protagonist’ framed ‘against the background of hills and mountains’ (2012: 52, 53). Expanding upon this interpretation of the film, I would also argue that *Les Hors-la-loi* mirrors the archetypal Western in its structuring of narrative space. In particular, Jane Tompkins has argued that ‘what men are fleeing in Westerns is not only the cluttered Victorian interior but also domestic dramas that go on in that setting [...] women, like language, remind them of their own interiority’ (1992: 66). This sense of gendered division is evident within a number of classic Westerns, including; *Stagecoach* (Ford 1939) *The Virginian* (Gilmore 1946), *The Searchers* (Ford 1956), and, as I will now argue, *Les Hors-la-loi*, all of which feature taciturn masculine antiheroes crossing (or transgressing) the threshold of the domestic, private sphere in their search for ‘the solace of open space’ (Ehrlich in Tompkins 1992: 67). As regards *Les Hors-la-loi*, this observation is particularly applicable to the scenes which occur after Slimane, Moh and Ali escape from the rural prison in which they are being confined approximately halfway into the film (figure 5). Instead of ‘hiding’ in the house of a local resident (in order words, the domestic realm), Ali and Moh somewhat paradoxically head to the hinterlands of the Aurès (a place of visibility). Farès then uses a fast-paced tracking shot to visualise the two men chasing a wounded Slimane through the Aurès Mountains in a picture of rebellion and resistance (see the opening scenes of *Le Vent des Aurès* for a similar tracking shot of ALN members running through arid ground in a nocturnal operation). A similar gendered structuring of narrative space is also evident when Slimane decides to return to the village in order to confront the son of the caïd, who has infiltrated and occupied his mother’s house in response to his father’s murder. Filmed with a low-angle shot, Slimane appears silhouetted against the arid landscape, claiming ‘on va gagner le maquis’, whilst his cousin (and potential love interest) Dawda remains framed beside the domestic realm – a space with which she and the other women will be consistently associated throughout the film. This applies in particular to the scene which takes place immediately after the death of Slimane’s father, during which a stark socio-gendered divide is evident; between the men of the village (who gather around the body in a homosocial space), and the women of the village (who prepare tea in an adjacent



domestic room). In the following scene Slimane then comforts his distraught mother, enquiring about whether she wants to stay with family relatives for support. Her response; ‘je ne peux pas quitter cette maison’, is a subtle although significant indication as to the socio-spatial gendered politics which underpin the diegesis. Indeed, at no point in the film are women represented in the same way as men (silhouetted individually against the indigenous landscape). Instead, as within the classic Western, they remain largely within – and thus symbolically tied to – the domestic realm.



Figure 5. Masculine imprisonment and escape in Farès's *Les Hors-la-loi* (1969)

At first glance, the intertextual references that underpin *Les Hors-la-loi* may seem surprising; primarily as the sense of enterprise, aggressive expansionism and imperialism characteristic of the Hollywood Western (Dyer 1997: 36) appears potentially incompatible with discourse of anti-colonial nationalism that runs throughout *Les Hors-la-loi*. However, on closer inspection Farès's appropriation of the archetypal pioneer narrative appears entirely appropriate – primarily due to similarities in the patriarchal socio-spatial codes that underpin, on the one hand, the classic Western, and on the other, traditional Berber society. In his analysis of Kabylia (a region which shares many linguistic and cultural parallels with the Aurès Mountains in

its Berber heritage), the sociologist and ethnographer Pierre Bourdieu has shown how traditional Berber society is founded upon a strict set of gendered, mythico-ritual, socio-spatial divisions; between ‘le monde proprement masculin de la vie publique et du travail agricole’ and ‘la maison, univers des femmes, monde de l’intimité et du secret’ (*haram*) (2000: 69). This system had been severely disrupted by colonization, which had instead pursued an active policy of literally and symbolically ‘unveiling’ the domestic realm, and, by extension, the Algerian female body as a method of minimising nationalist resistance through the destruction of the tribal, patriarchal and agnatic kinship structure that lay at the heart of Algerian society (MacMaster 2012: 4; see also Fanon 2001 [1961]: 37-38). On a more general note, Homi Bhabha has described how ‘the recesses of domestic space [often] become the sites for history’s most intricate invasions’ (cited in McGonagle 2007: 227). Seen in this light, Farès’s appropriation of tropes and formal patterns characteristic of the classic Western therefore serves as a method of reasserting the primacy of Berber socio-spatial codes weakened by years of colonial rule. In other words, the positive aspects of the Western (as a method of reasserting a specific culturally gendered [Berber] heritage) outweigh the potentially politically problematic implications of Farès’s intertextual referents (i.e. the Western as a vehicle for imperial ideology). Towards the end of the film, Slimane returns from the hinterlands of the Aurès to find his mother’s home occupied by the son of the murdered caïd. Forcing the caïd out of the house (a site of feminine domesticity) into public (masculine) space, Slimane then kills his nemesis in a dramatic shoot-out. To a western spectator unfamiliar with the socio-spatial codes characteristic of Berber society, this act of intrusion may appear relatively insignificant in terms of narrative function. However, viewed in light of Bourdieu’s observations regarding Berber culture, this scene acquires a renewed significance, as an example of how the code of masculine honour known as the *nif* maybe broken by the penetration of the hermetically sealed site of feminine honour known as the *hurma* (see below for a discussion of these concepts). As ‘toute violation de l’espace sacré [haram] prend la signification sociale d’un sacrilège’ (Bourdieu 2000: 69), Slimane’s behaviour is thus a logical if not extremely violent response to this act of intrusion.

*From bled el makhzen to bled es siba*

This chapter has previously shown how *Le Vent des Aurès* arguably reiterates the representative logic of colonial discourse in depicting Algeria in homogenous and monolithic terms; as a form of tabula rasa populated almost exclusively by the totemic mother-figure. Like *Le Vent des Aurès*, *Les Hors-la-loi* narrates the quest of an individual searching for a family member in the Aurès region of Algeria. Yet, *Les Hors-la-loi* also differs from *Le Vent des Aurès* in its representation of the Algerian landscape as split between *bled el makhzen* and *bled es siba*.

In the opening scenes of the film, Slimane is shown training with a group of French officials in a military facility. As a *harki* (that is, one of the Muslim Algerian auxiliaries fighting alongside the French forces), his position within the narrative – at least according to nationalist discourse – is therefore one of subjugation and acquiescence to the colonial system. Slimane is then briefly imprisoned for attempted desertion – scenes which arguably evoke Mustafa Ben Boulaid’s miraculous escape from a Constantine prison in 1955 which was subsequently mythologised in post-war nationalist rhetoric as part of Boulaid’s symbolic status as ‘the father of the revolution’ (Horne 2006: 172), before he finally begins his journey home to see his dying father. During the following scenes, Slimane catches a lift from the renowned Algerian actor Brahim Haggiag,<sup>90</sup> borrowing a horse from the local blacksmith in order to venture into the unforgiving terrain of the Aurès Mountains. Crucially, Slimane’s subsequent arrival at his home region coincides with a subtle although highly significant shift in formal technique; from the medium and close up shots that predominate during the opening scenes of the film (i.e. a narrative space associated with colonial ideology and subjugation), to a series of extreme wide panning shots of Slimane dominating the surrounding rural landscape (accompanied by non-diegetic percussive and stringed music). In other words, Farès uses formal technique to announce a socio-spatial shift, from *bled el makhzen* to *bled es siba*. Shortly after these scenes, this process is then reversed when images of the extreme wide, panning shots of the Aurès Mountains (again accompanied by non-diegetic music) are replaced by medium shots of two French gendarmes unsuccessfully attempting to make their way into the rural village by car (‘on ne peut plus continuer en voiture’). Unlike Slimane, they are unable to make the transition from *bled el makhzen* to *bled es siba* (at least with modern machinery). In this respect, Farès’s film can be seen to mirror Martin Evans’s definition of the Algerian

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<sup>90</sup> Out of all of the actors involved in 1960s Algerian cinema, Brahim Haggiag has perhaps played the largest role, featuring in *Les Hors-la-loi* (as a cart driver), *L’Opium et le bâton*, (as an ALN militant), and Pontecorvo’s *La Bataille d’Alger* (as the leader of the urban guerrilla faction around which the film revolves).

mountains (in particular within the Aurès region and Kabylia) as ‘natural obstacles where the power of the plain stopped abruptly and the end result was a Berber society that was fiercely independent’ (2007: 13). During the conflict itself, the harsh climate of rural areas also acquired a specific mythological status in nationalist discourse as a signifier for anti-colonial ideology (see, for example the semiotic value of ‘the wind’ in Lakhdar-Hamina’s film), making it difficult for colonial planners to extend de Gaulle’s 1958 Plan de Constantine from urban to rural areas.<sup>91</sup> As the narrative progresses, Farès develops this sense of socio-spatial division – on one hand associating *bled el makhzen* with certain topographic sites (‘la vallée’, prisons, colonial offices, interior and confined spaces [see also the colonial offices in Gillo Pontecorvo’s 1966 Italo-Algerian co-production *La Bataille d’Alger*]); people (l’administrateur, le brigadier, le caïd [i.e. the bureaucratic collective]); thought processes (rationality, logic) and cinematic techniques (static medium shots). On the other hand, the dissident lands of *bled es siba* are associated instead with high, mountainous villages (‘les maquis’), the (masculine) individual, and a sense of ownership, freedom and motion emphasised by cinematographic techniques (extreme wide, panning and tracking shots) and Georges Moustaki’s fast, percussive score.

Numerous theorists have identified the tendency in colonial discourse towards representing the colonies in dichotomous terms, split between, on one hand, European spaces associated with familiarity, reassurance and hope, and, on the other, indigenous (i.e. ‘Other’) spaces associated with transgression, crime and sexual deviancy (see, for example Ezra [2000]). Possibly the most potent example of this socio-spatial division can be found in Julien Duvivier’s famous ‘colonial’ film *Pépé le moko* (1937), which portrays the Algerian Casbah as a ‘dark labyrinth of tortuous streets, tumbling terraces and mysterious spaces’ populated by shady characters (Vincendeau 1998: 34). To a certain extent, these discursive tropes echoed the socio-spatial reality of the archetypal colonial cityspace, which Frantz Fanon famously described as a world ‘seemingly without contradiction and fluidity; appearing as a one-sided form of ‘putting natives in place’ for good (Fanon 2001 [1961]: 51-52 cited in Kipfer 2007: 710). However, colonial discourse had a tendency to symbolically ‘split’ the colonies in two even when narratives were set outside of the fragmented confines of the colonial city. This observation is, for example, applicable to Georg Wilhelm Pabst’s ‘colonial’ film, *L’Atlantide* (1932), which juxtaposes claustrophobic, underground passageways

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<sup>91</sup> As McGonagle and Welch claim, the Plan de Constantine was a somewhat desperate ‘attempt at retaining colonial authority in Algeria by means of interventionist urban planning, housing construction and economic growth’ (2013: 27).

reminiscent of Orpheus's descent into Hades (i.e. a foreboding site of exoticism, savagery and 'Otherness') with the images of a military garrison located on the fringes of the Sahara (i.e. a space of reassuring familiarity and civilization). Evidently, *Les Hors-la-loi* by no means replicates the representational patterns characteristic of colonial discourse – primarily as Farès replaces the archetypal “civilised settler” (and, by extension, the civilised space occupied by the settler) with the figure of a renegade outlaw located on the anarchic margins of society. Despite the film's vehemently anti-colonial ideological message, this observation begs the question of whether Farès's narrative reproduces the Manichean dualism characteristic of colonial discourse under a different, post-colonial, guise.

### 3.1.4 *L'Opium et le bâton*

Made by the Algerian film director Ahmed Rachedi during his management of the ONCIC (*Office National pour le Commerce et l'Industrie Cinématographique*) from 1967 to 1973, *L'Opium et le bâton* (directed in 1969 and released in 1971) chronicles the uprising of a rural peasant village located in the mountainous Berber region of Kabylia (Wilaya 3). The narrative itself begins when Dr Bashir Lazrak (Mustapha Kateb) decides to leave Algiers to fight amongst the *moudjahiddine* in the rural village of Tala Athmane (the centre of which is named Thala), located 15 km east of Tizi Ouzou in Kabylia. Joining his brother Ali (Sid Ali Kouiret), Bashir quickly learns of the difficulties experienced by the ALN in the face of the oppressive colonial forces which preside over the region, ruling through the twin tactics of “hard” violence (*le bâton*) and “soft” persuasion (*l'opium*). The trajectory of the film thus revolves around the gradual revolt of the community through increasingly frequent instances of violent insurrection led by the nationalist hero Ali (and involving a significant cameo from Brahim Haggiag), who is finally shot after being captured in the penultimate scene. The narrative concludes with the complete destruction of the village by colonial forces.

*Influence: literary realism, Soviet cinema and Hollywood spectacle*

This chapter has previously illustrated how post-independence Algerian cinema appropriates often surprising transnational cinematographic techniques and iconographic tropes in its representation of rural revolution (Soviet cinema and colonial discourse in *Le Vent des Aurès*, the classic Western in *Les Hors-la-loi*). To some extent,

*L'Opium et le bâton* differs from these two works by instead drawing from the work of the Algerian Francophone (Berber) writer Mouloud Mammeri, whose eponymous 1965 novel provides a narrative and aesthetic blueprint for the film. Certainly this appropriation seems applicable to the ways in which Rachedi's use of realist formal techniques mirror the 'brutal realism' employed by Mammeri in order to document the everyday existence of a rural community living under colonization (Poole 2013: 189). In particular, the film appears to support dominant historiographical accounts of the later stages of the conflict, when FLN leaders took the strategic decision to shift the revolution to the rural areas of Algeria (including the Aurès Mountains and Kabylia) after the politico-military failure of The Battle of Algiers (1956-1957) (Revere 1973: 486). As in the film, during this stage in the revolution ALN fighters would often descend from the *djebel* (mountain) in small groups in order to conduct a number of dangerous and often violent missions; destroying colonial infrastructure (power pylons, train tracks, army convoys), assassinating pro-French sympathisers (including the infamous figure of the caïd [see *Les Hors-la-loi*]) and ambushing 'the isolated outposts of French SAS officers' before vanishing into the night' (Horne 2006: 330). *L'Opium et le bâton* also mirrors the French response to this shift in operations (overseen, in reality, by General Maurice Challe and his 'Operation Binoculars') through the ruthless behaviour of the French officer Delécluze (Jean-Claude Berq) and other military officials. One of the most significant scenes in the film occurs when colonial forces decide to blow up the olive trees located on the peripheries of the village in order to expose the ALN fighters supposedly hiding in this area. This scene is important for a number of reasons; if only as it forms a historically accurate representation of how colonial forces targeted the indigenous landscape – including livestock and farm and forest lands – as part of the tactic of 'pacification' that will reach its violent apotheosis with the destruction of the entire village at the end of the film (Horne 2006: 336; see also Knauss 1977: 65). In terms of formal techniques, this scene is also significant as an example of Soviet montage (see above for a discussion of how this is used in *Le Vent des Aurès*). In accordance with the rules of montage, Farès thus establishes a simple visual dialectic: between the trauma of the rural community (who are framed individually using a series of short close-up shots), and the origins of this trauma (the desecration of the indigenous landscape framed using medium and wide-angle shots). Interestingly, a third element in this dialectic is then introduced when the camera shifts to the figure of Tayeb, who is implicitly defined as responsible for the trauma of the community (as opposed to the colonial forces). As I will later show, this choice of shot

is arguably symptomatic of a larger atmosphere of suspicion within the narrative regarding the allegedly neo-colonial corruption of the urban bourgeoisie. I will also later illustrate how the process of urban to rural migration visualised at the beginning of the narrative acts as a symbolic antidote to this corruption.

Viola Shafik has also drawn attention to the ways in which the film includes certain ‘mythological’ and ‘commercial’ elements devoid from Mammeri’s largely realist text and instead characteristic of the conventions of Hollywood cinema (2007: 30, 174). Of particular note is the battle-sequence which takes place towards the end of the film. During this long extended sequence (completely absent from Mammeri’s novel), *fidayine* (ALN militants) including Dr Bashir, Ali and Bougeb descend from the *djebel* in order to ambush a French military convoy on one of the winding streets located high up in the Kabyle mountains. After a brief although violent spell of active gunfight, Dr Bashir is forced to abort his mission due to injury, whilst Ali and Bougeb fight on, evading an airstrike orchestrated by French forces before they are both captured and eventually killed after being paraded in front of their fellow Talaens (see following section for a discussion regarding the representation of martyrdom and mourning in this sequence). What is immediately apparent from these bombastic scenes is that they neither draw from French film history (in which Algeria was represented as a passive landscape devoid of conflict), nor from the embryonic Algerian national cinema, which had previously depicted the revolution as allegorical quest (*Le Vent des Aurès*), mythical pre-war resistance (*Les Hors-la-loi*), or, in the case of Pontecorvo’s Italo-Algerian co-production, *La Bataille d’Alger* (1966), urban, guerrilla warfare (see chapter four, section two). Instead, these scenes appear to draw from Hollywood representations of World War Two, for example, *Sands of Iwo Jima* (Dwan 1949), *Halls of Montezuma* (Milestone 1951) and *D-Day the Sixth of June* (Koster 1956), all of which represent military conflict as a form of Manichean spectacle, between a number of heroic warriors bound together by fraternity and blood (in the Hollywood tradition this is the allied forces, whilst in *L’Opium et le bâton* it is the ALN militants); and an impersonal and ultimately weak opponent (represented by the Nazi forces and colonial officers, respectively). With this in mind, *L’Opium et le bâton* appears to share certain parallels with Mark Robson’s 1966 *Lost Command*, a Hollywood blockbuster which reiterates similar militaristic iconography in its depiction of French conscripts ‘pacifying’ Algerian rebels in the Aurès Mountains.<sup>92</sup> As Lotfi Maherzi claims of post-

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<sup>92</sup> Although apparently set in the Aurès Mountains, *Lost Command* was actually shot in Spain.

independence Algerian cinema, ‘la démarche sociologique empruntée par les cinéastes s’appuie sur “le spectacle-récit”’ (1980: 278).

*From urban to (revolutionary) rural space*

In its representation of rural revolution, Rachedi’s film mirrors a number of trends in the pre and post-independence nationalist imaginary. One of the major figures which “haunts” the narrative is the philosopher and revolutionary cultural theorist Frantz Fanon, whose status as a cult nationalist figure was appropriated by the one-party state (and thus the state-endorsed cinema) in the immediate aftermath of independence (see for example, the creation of Frantz Fanon Day in 1963 to mark the first anniversary of his death). The author of a number of anti-colonial/nationalist works, including *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952), *L’An V de la révolution algérienne* (later translated as *A Dying Colonialism*) (1959), and *Les damnés de la terre* (1961), Fanon had been instrumental in advocating the Algerian Revolution within the Francophone intellectual elite – primarily through his close relationship with Jean-Paul Sartre with whom he shared a theoretical approach combining phenomenology and existentialism and an interest in the politics of identity and nationhood. Furthermore, Fanon’s work was important in that it involved a powerful spatial dimension which preceded the so-called ‘spatial-turn’ in European social theory by at least a decade (see, for example, the work of Foucault, Lefebvre, de Certeau, and Virilio et al). This spatial element is particularly applicable to Fanon’s conception of a pure rural rebellion ‘fought by the peasantry [for example Ali] to regain land taken by the French’ (Kielstra 1978: 5).

In reality, this conception of the revolution was only partly true. Whilst certainly fought by combatants of rural/peasant origin, the war was nevertheless orchestrated and led by representatives of the recently urbanized petty bourgeoisie, frequently former minor officials and paid employees (see also Perinbam 1973: 428; Revere 1973: 486-487). However, in the post-colonial era, the one-party-state would appropriate Fanon’s idealized notion of the rural peasantry (as a method of legitimizing the new socialist sector in agriculture), despite the fact that it was, to some extent, a myth. It is this quasi-myth that is evident in Rachedi’s film (as a project funded by the state); primarily through its rural setting, but also during the numerous scenes in which the whole community is forced to gather in front of the colonial offices in order to ascertain information regarding the ALN members fighting in the maquis. Despite the threats made by officer Delécluze and the translator, Tayeb, the villagers frustrate the wishes of



the colonial officials through their staunch silence. It is for this reason that the film has been described as dramatising ‘un “TOUT” qui résiste [...] ce tout c’est le village, donc l’Algérie’ (Aissaoui 1984: 78 cited in Austin 2012: 55). This observation is equally applicable to *Les Hors-la-loi*, *Le Vent des Aurès* and Lakhdar-Hamina’s later work *Chronique des années de braise* (1975), all of which feature a similar monumentalisation and mythologisation of the rural peasantry. Rachedi’s representation of the Kabyle community also chimes with Fanon’s description of the rural peasantry as a gentle and supportive network of individuals, each willing to protect the ‘militant nationalist [for example, Dr Bashir] who decides to throw his lot with the country people instead of playing hide-and-seek with the police in urban areas’ (Fanon 2001 [1961]: 126). Finally, *L’Opium et le bâton* reflects Fanon’s argument that, in the postindependence period, Algeria could prevent the neo-colonization of the postcolonial nation-state in facilitating bipartite ‘socio-spatial alliances’, between those associated with the urban ‘bourgeoisie’ (urban government officials, technocrats, Third-Worldist intellectuals) and the rural communities (Kipfer 2007: 703). Without such a broad socio-spatial alliance, Fanon prophetically feared that postcolonial regimes were likely to descend into warped, neocolonial caricatures governed by overblown administrative centres and antidemocratic centralism. It is for this reason that he claims that ‘the leading members of the party ought to avoid the capital as if it had the plague. They ought, with some few exceptions, to live in the country districts. The centralization of all activity in the city ought to be avoided’ (2001 [1961]: 126). In the film itself, Fanon’s fears are crystallised in the figure of Tayeb (the pro-French translator played by Rouiched), who appears ‘frustré et sadique mais également fasciné par la puissance de la France’ (Maherzi 1980 : 261). This observation is also applicable to the similarly demonized figure of the caïd in *Les Hors-la-loi*.<sup>93</sup>

### 3.1.5 Conclusion

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<sup>93</sup> It is important to note, however, that these national “traitors” are conspicuously absent from *Le Vent des Aurès*, which casts the Algerian population in unequivocally positive terms. This monolithic portrayal of Algeria is arguably linked to the state’s early desire to cleanse the nation of any elements that could be hypothetically associated with Algeria’s colonial past, notably colonial officials (for example le caïd), but also women who were influenced by (or who were perceived as being influenced by) European feminism, for example Assia Djebar (see chapter four, section two).

This analysis has tackled the question of narrative space in post-colonial Algerian cinema. In the first part of this section, we saw how images of spatial transgression in Lakhdar-Hamina's film act in order to subvert the representational logic of colonial discourse, which traditionally confined Algerian women to a state of sub-erotic imprisonment. However, the radical potential of this imagery is also undercut by the fact that, firstly, the film makes no mention of the ways in which women were subtly coerced back into the private sphere in the immediate aftermath of decolonization (a theme that would only be addressed twelve years later with Assia Djebar's *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua*), but also in that the central female protagonist remains to some extent spatially restricted by her veil (or, more specifically, headscarf), a form of clothing that arguably functions metonymically for domestic, spatial segregation (Austin 2012: 62 [see next section for a more in-depth discussion of the act of veiling]). In this respect, patterns of narrative – and what could be termed corporeal space – are unquestionably linked to the conservative sexual politics of the film. As for *Les Hors-la-loi*, I illustrated how Farès's narrative defines the post-colonial nation-state as a Manichean dichotomy (between the heroic maquis and the weak and ineffective colonial town), as such arguably reiterating the binary logic of colonial discourse under a different guise. In the following section of this chapter, I will show how Farès's narrative is split along another binary, in associating men with the public space of the *houma* (or the Berber *thajma'th*), whilst relegating women to a state of passivity in the domestic realm (the *hurma-haram*). In this sense, spatial patterns will again prove instrumental in the subtle gendered conservatism which characterises the film. In the final part of this section we saw how *L'Opium et le bâton* mirrors the work of Frantz Fanon, firstly in representing the Algerian rural peasantry in monolithic and mythical terms, but also in depicting socio-spatial alliances as crucial to the success of the revolution and construction of the post-colonial nation-state. In the following section of this chapter, I will explore how Rachedi's film also mirrors the Fanonian notion of the New Man by depicting men in terms of a sublimated virility masquerading as heroism.

### **3.2 Conservative Sexual Politics in Algerian Cinema**

In the previous section of this chapter, I showed how certain Algerian films of the post-independence period use the trope of socio-spatial transgression as a revolutionary political praxis in order to symbolically critique the policy of socio-spatial control employed by colonial forces. In this section, we will see how this anti-colonial subtext

co-exists with, and is even dependent upon, a fundamentally retrograde (patriarchal) conception of gender.

### 3.2.1 *Le Vent des Aurès*

*Men: absent fathers and le fils-avant-tout*

Apart from the few French military officials that appear sporadically throughout the film, Lakhdar-Hamina's narrative features two main male figures in the form of Lakhdar (Mohamed Chouikh) and his unnamed father. Lakhdar's father, in particular, plays a relatively minor role in the film, participating in the family's daily chores and organizing the harvest before he is killed approximately a third of the way into the film. One possible reason for this is that much of the film's earlier scenes focus upon the domestic realm, a 'feminine' space from which men (in Berber culture) are traditionally banished during the day. Instead, as Pierre Bourdieu claims, 'la place de l'homme est dehors, dans les champs ou à l'assemblée [...]. On suspecte celui qui demeure trop à la maison pendant la journée' (2000: 50). When he does briefly feature in the *mise-en-scène* (for example in the doorway of his house to wash), the father takes care to explicitly assert his patriarchal authority, demanding that his wife (Keltoum) begins the daily tasks, to which she replies obediently. One of the most intriguing scenes in the film occurs when the father is suddenly killed during an apparently unprompted air-strike on the village. What is immediately evident here is the way in which the father's death is somewhat abruptly followed by a sequence of the villagers attempting to quell a fire, rather than emotional images of grief and/or mourning (as after Ali's death in *L'Opium et le bâton*). The distinct lack of pathos during this scene could be seen as evidence of the close link between post-independence Algerian cinema and the national project, which similarly aimed to 'gommer l'individu [...], bloquer sa subjectivité' (Berrah 1997: 180). Another possible reason for the muted reaction to the father's death stems from the fact that, as he has not sacrificed himself during battle, his death has little worth for the martyr-centric discourse of Algerian nationalism.

Apart from the father, Lakhdar-Hamina's film features only one other male protagonist in the form of Lakhdar, the mother's militant son whose capture leads to her epic quest across the rural landscape. In terms of appearance and behaviour, Lakhdar is a young and committed individual who spends the majority of his time (prior to his capture) in and around the domestic realm, trying – somewhat naively – to persuade his

mother that he is safe from the hands of colonial forces, despite his role as a *moussebiline* – that is, one of the part-time militants involved in transporting supplies and arms to the ALN fighters hidden in the *djebel*. If only through his largely passive (and arguably somewhat domesticated) role within the conflict, Lakhdar thus stands in counterpoint to the idealised and often violent masculine heroes depicted in the Algerian films previously discussed in this chapter (for example Slimane, Ali and Bougeb in *Les Hors-la-loi*). Rather, Lakhdar's role in the film conforms to what Camille Lacoste-Dujardin terms 'le fils-avant-tout', that is, a figure (in Berber culture) who embodies the contradictory traits of 'l'indépendance masculine proclamée' and 'une dépendance à la mère toujours vivace' (1985: 13; see also MacMaster 2012: 323). In relation to *Le Vent des Aurès*, Lakhdar appears especially close to his mother during the first third of the film, when he frequently disappears into the maquis in order to perform tasks for the Resistance. Sensing the dangers involved in this task, Lakhdar's mother attempts to dissuade him from completing what he terms 'notre devoir', stating 'je ne pourrai fermer l'œil tant que tu seras absent', before handing him a pendant as a talisman. Unfortunately, this object is not enough to protect Lakhdar, who is shortly later captured by French forces after they violently ransack the family's home, a potent example of how colonization often targeted the domestic realm – literally and symbolically – in order to weaken nationalist spirit. The strong bond between mother and son is especially evident in the touching final stages of the film, when the two individuals are finally reunited, albeit on opposite sides of the fence of the detention centre in which Lakhdar is being held. However, it would be a mistake to interpret Lahkdar-Hamina's representation of passive, filial masculinity as a subtle critique of patriarchy – primarily as Lakhdar appears to replace his father as the dominant unit in the family, despite being largely absent from the diegesis. On a basic level, this dominance is expressed in the simple fact that the mother figure appears willing to embark on a long and painful journey for her son, after earlier in the film claiming 'il ne reste que toi, mon fils'. This dominance reaches its hallucinatory zenith when the mother figure literally kills herself as an expression of maternal love in the closing stages of the film. Ultimately, it is this act which crystallises the transcendental power of *le fils-avant-tout*, as a figure whose privileged status alone is able to reduce women to a state of self-abjection and self-abnegation.

*Women: la mère-avant-tout*

In a highly comprehensive reading of the film, Guy Austin has argued that – to a certain extent – *Le Vent des Aurès* ‘shifts constructions of nationalism away from the patriarchal discourse of the FLN’ (2012: 43). Central to Austin’s argument is the way in which the mother (figure 6) is shown to dominate the surrounding landscape through a series of extreme wide-shots reminiscent of cinematography associated with Soviet cinema, whilst the violence of colonialism manifests itself in the traces of a profound psychological trauma rather than the taboo subject of sexual violence often in reality experienced by women during the war (Lazreg 1994: 160). Almost paradoxically, *Le Vent des Aurès* thus appears to empower its central female figure precisely through a process of measured suffering that crucially never threatens to disrupt the masculine honour of Algerian men (for example through the depiction of rape), or, for that matter, the privileged status of *le fils-avant-tout*. By the same token, at no point in the film is the mother-figure depicted in anything but maternal terms – an observation which highlights the ways in which the film subverts certain tropes characteristic of colonial discourse, which eroticized the female colonized population through a process of symbolic and literal unveiling (see below for a discussion of the complex semiotic significance of the veil). Lakhdar-Hamina’s film also appears to break with colonial conventions in representing a female figure able to cross the threshold separating domestic (private) and public space, rather than symbolically ‘imprisoned’ within the colonial harem (Alloula 1986: 17). It is for this reason that Austin has defined cinema of this period in terms of an attempt to ‘wrest Algerian identity away from colonial constructions’ (2012: 4). Nonetheless, this act of socio-spatial transgression may also mirror the fact that, in the Aurès region, ‘les femmes semblent jouir de plus de libertés que les femmes kabyles’ (Lacoste-Dujardin 2008: 113 [see below for a discussion of how Kabyle women are represented in *Les Hors-la-loi* and *L’Opium et le bâton*]). Finally, Lakhdar-Hamina’s representation of Algerian women arguably evokes a wider genealogy of Berber female heroes featured in popular tales, who, like the mother-figure, ‘sont déjà âgées, mères accomplies de garçons, étaient dotées de l’autorité de femmes maîtresses de maison, suppléant leurs défunts maris’ (Lacoste-Dujardin 2008: 105).<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> For example ‘Dihya, Kahina de l’Aurès, qui au début du VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, s’illustra dans la défense de l’Afrique du Nord berbère contre l’implantation Arabo-islamique’ (Lacoste-Dujardin 2008 : 113).



Figure 6. Veiled female suffering in Lakhdar-Hamina's *Le Vent des Aurès* (1966)

One of the most complex aspects of Lakhdar-Hamina's film is the veil, or more precisely, headscarf worn by the mother throughout the narrative. This headscarf is not without significance, if only as it establishes a firm link to the sociocultural customs characteristic of rural (Berber) regions in Algeria, in which women generally avoided wearing the *haiik* (a long white shroud covering a large portion of the body) and *hadjar* (a short piece of fabric covering the bottom half of the face), that were, by contrast, customary in urban areas (MacMaster 2012: 12; Lacoste-Dujardin 2005: 362; Bourdieu 2000: 50).<sup>95</sup> On a more general level, the inclusion of the headscarf (compared to its conspicuous absence) arguably forms a subtle response to a long genealogy of colonial practice, by which Algerian women were systematically and literally unveiled as part of an unequivocally Eurocentric process of modernization. According to this interpretation, Lakhdar-Hamina's inclusion of the veil/headscarf thus functions as an atavistic reminder of how veiling was used during the conflict as a 'mechanism of [anti-colonial] resistance' (Fanon 2001 [1961]: 185). Joseph McGonagle has also described how, in officially Islamic nations such as Algeria, 'the veil signifies [a] sanctity' mirrored in the equally precious realm of the *hurma-haram* (2007: 225). In this respect, the veil can be seen as an extension of the gendered spatial codes which govern the

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<sup>95</sup> A similar portrayal of Berber customs can be found in the documentary footage of Chaoui women which lies at the heart of René Vautier's otherwise fictional film, *Avoir 20 ans dans les Aurès* (1972).

boundaries of public and private space. Finally, by adopting a more critical tone, Lakhdar-Hamina could be accused of failing to address the forced reinstatement of the veil (that is, the *haïk* and the *hadjar*) that characterized the post-independence years in order to preserve the socio-cultural accuracy of the narrative. Ultimately, as with all of the films discussed in this chapter, *Le Vent des Aurès* appears unwilling to challenge patriarchal ideology in depicting a completely unveiled female protagonist (compared, for example, with Assia Djebar's *La Noubia des femmes du Mont Chenoua*, which focuses upon an unveiled woman, despite being set in a rural Berber region [chapter four, section two]).

Austin has also drawn attention to the ways in which *Le Vent des Aurès* forms a largely accurate account of the revolution (certainly compared to *Les Hors-la-loi*, *L'Opium et le bâton* and Gillo Pontecorvo's 1966 *La Bataille d'Alger* [see chapter four, section two]) in its representation of a rural *moussebilate*. However, the specific reasons behind – and implications of – Lakhdar-Hamina's choice of a mother-figure to represent Algerian women remain ambiguous. A potential reason for this choice of protagonist is as a response to the ways in which colonial discourse systematically denied the status of motherhood to the female colonized population (through a process of eroticisation), whilst simultaneously representing the French nation in fundamentally maternal terms – as the symbolic 'mother' of the colonies (see, for example the colonial film *L'Atlantide* [Pabst 1932]). This observation is not without significance, primarily as it draws attention to the ways in which *Le Vent des Aurès* arguably reiterates iconography characteristic of colonial discourse (mother-figure as a metonymy for the 'nation') as part of an anti-colonial praxis, but also as it forms an example of how, in nationalist discourse, 'women are typically constructed as the symbolic bearers of the nation, but denied any direct relation to national agency' (McClintock 1995: 354). As I illustrated in the previous section of this chapter, *Le Vent des Aurès* also arguably evokes certain aspects of the colonial imaginary in representing the Algerian landscape as a form of *tabula rasa*. A second, perhaps more persuasive interpretation of the film is also possible, especially if the narrative is viewed in relation to the pervasive ideological influence of the one-party state upon Algerian cinema of this period. Of particular note are the ways in which the FLN's failure to delineate a specific policy regarding the liberation of women during the conflict 'left the hands of the post-independence regime untied and free to pursue what turned out to be a deeply conservative policy', revolving around patriarchal, patrilineal, pro-natalist ideology and anti-feminist politics (MacMaster 2012: 339). If this desire to revert back to patriarchal tradition was explicit

in the conservative discourse of Ben Badis and the *Ulemas* (a puritanical fraternity of influential Arabo-Islamic scholars), it also subtly bleeds into the conservative sexual politics of *Le Vent des Aurès*, which elides both women's active (armed) role in the revolution and their struggle for recognition and equality in the immediate post-war years.<sup>96</sup> As Lotfi Maherzi claims, 'cette histoire, si émouvante et poignante soit-elle, ne saurait pas remplacer l'analyse de la situation et des conditions sociales de la femme durant la lutte de libération' (1980: 263).

This analysis has previously illustrated how Lahkdar-Hamina's narrative reflects the conservative sexual politics of Berber culture in its representation of Algerian masculinity in terms of absent fathers and passive sons (*le fils-avant-tout*). Whilst this may be true, this hypothesis also relates to the film's depiction of Algerian motherhood. Central to this claim is the work of the ethnographer Camille Lacoste-Dujardin, who has previously analysed the tendency in Berber culture (especially in popular stories, fables and legends) to define Algerian women as 'mères-avant-tout' (1985: 57), an observation particularly applicable to Lahkdar-Hamina's largely monolithic depiction of the central female figure, who fails to express any other emotion other than maternal succour and longing. Dujardin has also drawn attention to the considerable social status granted to Berber women who give birth to sons (an event traditionally characterised by honour and pride), rather than daughters (an event traditionally marred by shame and humiliation) (1985: 86). In Dujardin's words, 'seul le fils autorise une femme à bénéficier sa vie durant de ce statut de mère, seul statut reconnu honorable par les hommes dominants' (1985: 86). Interpreting *Le Vent des Aurès* according to Dujardin's ethnographic observations regarding Berber culture ultimately again highlights the ways in which Lahkdar-Hamina's film can be seen to subjugate rather than empower the central female protagonist, whose status in the narrative is arguably mediated by – and therefore dependent upon – her son.

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<sup>96</sup> It is true that, in the early stages of the film, a young Algerian woman is pictured with other masculine ALN members located in a cave in the maquis. However, instead of being actively involved in politico-military decisions or operations, this individual serves a drink to the other *moudjahiddine* before quickly disappearing out of shot. As with the mother, her role in the Revolution is rendered largely minimal, passive and domestic.



### 3.2.2 *Les Hors-la-loi*

*Men: the ethics and aesthetics of le nif*

One of the most important theorists of Berber culture was the socioethnologist Pierre Bourdieu, whose work during the early 1960s and 1970s provided a groundbreaking if arguably ahistorical<sup>97</sup> account of Berber customs characteristic of rural Northern Kabylia. In relation to Farès's narrative, Bourdieu's work is important for two reasons; firstly as the film is set in the same Kabyle region as Bourdieu's fieldwork, but also, and perhaps more importantly, as *Les Hors-la-loi* appears to support Bourdieu's exhaustive research conducted into the highly conservative sexual politics of Berber society. Central to this claim is Bourdieu's account of the multifaceted and complex Berber masculine honour code or ethics known as the *nif*.<sup>98</sup> According to Bourdieu, one of the most important aspects of the *nif* relates to the ideal appearance and countenance of Algerian men.

In Farès's film, representations of Algerian masculinity are largely limited to the three masculine "outlaws" who lead the resistance in the rural Kabyle countryside: the young and taciturn Ali (Mohamed Chouikh), the older and somewhat jaded Moh (Cheikh Nourredine), and the ruggedly handsome Slimane (Sid Ahmed Agoumi). Out of these three characters, Slimane is arguably the most authoritative and culturally complex figure; his physical appearance and attire drawing as much from the stars of the classic Western (for example John Wayne) as from historical figures in the revolution, for example Cheikh Mokrani, the leader of the ultimately unsuccessful revolt carried out against French forces in Kabylia at the end of the nineteenth-century. Central to this observation is the way in which Slimane adopts a number of different outfits as the narrative develops, substituting the French military fatigues that he is presumably forced to wear as a *harki* for a denim waistcoat and jeans (a sign of the influence of American culture), before eventually settling upon a somewhat hybrid combination of a poncho (as seen within the classic Western) and a long white<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> In particular, Camille Lacoste-Dujardin has criticized Bourdieu for forgetting 'la prise en compte des différents contextes historiques' (2008: 7). This trend is, however, not so evident in Bourdieu's collection of photographs, *Images d'Algérie: une affinité élective* (2003), which explores 'the ways in which Algerians inhabit and respond to the urban environments of colonial settlements' (McGonagle and Welch 2013: 35).

<sup>98</sup> In addition to the *nif*, Farès's construction of masculine identity chimes more broadly with the Algerian notion of 'masculine toughness' known as *redjla* (Evangelista 2011: 68).

<sup>99</sup> Bourdieu identifies the colour white as a sign of the *nif*.

woollen cloak known as the burnous (famously worn by Mokrani). This eventual choice of attire is not without importance – firstly, as it represents Slimane’s transformation from a signifier of colonial subordination and cultural intermediacy to a sign of indigenous national identity and thus sovereignty, but also as, within Berber culture, the burnous functions as a sign of virility, machismo and masculine honour (*le nif*) (Lacoste-Dujardin 2005: 176). Slimane’s generalised (or rather composite) appearance also reflects the ways in which the post-independence regime ‘portrayed the 1954-62 struggle as a continuation of the anti-colonial resistance of the nineteenth-century, from Abd al-Qadir’s resistance war (1834-47) through the Kabyle insurrection of 1871 to the 1945 uprising in Setif and Guelma’ (Silverstein 2003: 89). Significant too is the highly visible presence of firepower in the narrative (especially after the three outlaws ransack the arms cache approximately a third into the film), primarily as ‘tout bon Kabyle ne se séparait jamais de son arme, dont on disait qu’elle était le gardien de son honneur et sa liberté (Lacoste-Dujardin 2005: 102; also see Bourdieu 2000: 48). Finally, in his reading of the film, Guy Austin has drawn attention to the ways in which the figure of Ali mirrors Clint Eastwood’s ‘man with no name’ persona in his taciturn behaviour and moody gaze (2012: 53). The measured and laconic behaviour of all of the characters also supports Bourdieu’s description of the ideal Berber man as ‘pondéré, prudent [et] retenu dans son langage. Il pèse toujours le pour et le contre’ (2000: 39 [this observation is especially applicable to Slimane’s muted response to his father’s death]). With this in mind, Farès uses cinematographic techniques appropriated from the Western in order to depict Slimane standing tall, silhouetted against the unforgiving landscape of *bled es siba*, a form of framing which chimes with the homological association in Berber culture between *le nif* and ‘le Haut’ (Bourdieu 2000: 57). In direct opposition to this method of framing, colonial officials appear in a string of static mid-shots of cramped, claustrophobic offices, symbolically and literally dominated by the burden of ineffective bureaucracy.

Bourdieu has also defined the ethics of the *nif* in terms of ‘un jeu du défi et de la riposte’ (2000: 24). As regards *Les Hors-la-loi*, this logic of retaliation is clearly applicable to the ways in which the three outlaws avenge the trauma experienced by the local population by causing havoc amongst the colonial administration, particularly during the daring act of subterfuge that forms the dramatic climax of the film. It is also evident in the ways in which Slimane wreaks revenge on his nemesis for breaking into

his mother's house (see above).<sup>100</sup> Finally, the largely paternal role played by the male protagonists (as 'symbolic fathers of the revolution') also mirrors the ethnologist Camille Lacoste-Dujardin's definition of 'le héros Kabyle' [as] 'avant tout un défenseur de sa communauté' (2005: 361). Indeed, one possible interpretation of *Les Hors-la-loi* is as a film predicated upon the symbolic transfer of patriarchal power – from Slimane's father to Slimane, and the subsequent reaffirmation of patrilineal lineage involved in this act. The highly patriarchal ideology that runs as a subtext throughout the film is also evident when one of Slimane's rivals claims in defence 'nous ne sommes ni des femmes ni des fous'.

This analysis has so far shown how we may use Bourdieu's ethnographic research on Berber culture in order to understand Farès's constructions of gendered identity. But what about relationships between men and women in the film? It would not be an exaggeration to define Algerian national cinema as profoundly prudish despite its apparently revolutionary attitude. Indeed, Mouny Berrah claims that, by 1991, only Sid Ali Mazif's politically progressive *Leila et les autres* (1977) contained a kiss between protagonists (1997: 75). As regards *Les Hors-la-loi*, Farès's film features one prominent potential relationship between men and women in the blossoming romance between Slimane and his cousin Dawda (played by the Algerian actress Djamilia), who looks after Slimane after he is wounded by the caïd (in counterpoint to western social conventions, Berber culture encourages marriage between first cousins). As with the majority of Algerian films, Farès's representation of heterosexual romance takes a sublimated form: at no point do either of the characters kiss or even embrace. Rather their relationship develops through a series of elliptical, fleeting glances (emphasised through slightly longer countershots) and subtly suggestive behaviour and dialogue. Nevertheless, Slimane and Dawda's muted relationship is also significant in that it highlights the ways in which nascent nationalisms rarely represent the process of national becoming through anything other than the fundamentally conservative logic of heteronormativity, or, in the case of *Le Vent des Aurès*, mother-son relations. Indeed, Farès's representation of heterosexual romance arguably again acts in order to reassert the masculine Berber code of the *nif*, which views inter-cousin marriage as a method of creating 'une brèche dans la barrière de protections dont s'entoure l'intimité familiale.

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<sup>100</sup> Whilst the son of the caïd and his accomplice are killed during this scene, one unfortunate adversary lies helpless in a corner of the courtyard after being wounded (although not fatally) during the shoot-out. According to the logic of the *nif*, this individual would thus face almost certain exile from the community or even death – a fate implied in his ominous words 'faire de moi ce que vous voulez'.

“Il vaut mieux, dit-on, protéger son *nif* que le livrer aux autres” (Bourdieu 2000: 56). Although implicit within the majority of the narrative, the film’s reliance upon the Berber honour code of the *nif* becomes explicit during a meeting between two French officials and the newly appointed caïd, who discuss the possibility of whether Ali will provide details regarding the other “outlaws” under duress. Whilst the two officials appear confident in their ability to extract information, the caïd is more sceptical, claiming ‘il y a chez nous un certain sens de l’honneur, un code si vous voulez. Ça s’appelle un *nif*’. The implication being that the *nif* is so powerful that it will prevent Ali from speaking in any situation.

#### *Women: hurma-haram and la femme fatale*

In comparison with the three masculine ‘outlaws’ around whom the narrative revolves, Farès’s representation of Algerian women is more muted. Of particular note is Slimane’s cousin Dawda, who features in a handful of scenes in the film. The first of these scenes occurs when Dawda and another woman are shown preparing food and drinks for the men of the village (who mourn the death of Slimane’s father in an adjacent, separate space), before Slimane enters the room. At no point in this scene is the spectator offered any information about Dawda, who stares passively at the floor before complying with a number of commands made by male figures present, including her father (who demands that she goes and see her aunt), and then Slimane himself, who orders her to place a rug in the corner of the room for him and his mother to sit on.<sup>101</sup> The next time that Dawda features in the narrative is after Slimane is wounded in his escape from the rural prison. Here, Dawda again adopts a passive, domesticated role, responding to Moh’s medical advice/orders with a simple nod before walking silently over to Slimane’s bedside, presumably to tend to his injuries. In this respect, *Les Hors-la-loi* shares parallels with *L’Opium et le bâton* and Lakhdar-Hamina’s *Le Vent des Aurès*, in – at least initially – associating Dawda with the domestic sphere – an observation that mirrors the ways in which Algerian women were coerced back into the space of the home in the post-independence period as wives and mothers (MacMaster 2012: 348). Admittedly, it is true that during the last half of the film Dawda is seen outside of the domestic realm on a number of occasions. However, during these short scenes, Dawda remains a fundamentally passive – and, to some extent dependant figure,

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<sup>101</sup> As with the mother in *Le Vent des Aurès*, Dawda wears a headscarf (compared to the urban *haïk* or *hadjar*). As such the film is largely accurate in its depiction of Berber customs.

doting on rather than challenging Slimane ('je vous ravitaillerai', she claims), despite his arguably reckless and at points violent behaviour. At no point in the film does Dawda express any desire to be actively involved in the struggle for independence (the first time we hear her speak is an hour into the film), but rather adopts a largely submissive role reminiscent of the *moussebilate*, that is, largely peasant women who 'conformed quite "naturally" to the everyday role that they had always played in peasant society, preparing food, washing and drying clothes and showing the customary forms of deference to men (reserve, avoidance of eye contact, not speaking unless spoken, to eating apart)' (MacMaster 2012: 321-322). Ultimately, Dawda appears more concerned with her relationship with Slimane than the wider political context which frames the film. These concerns are particularly apparent during two short scenes in the narrative, when Dawda appears distraught by the prospect of Slimane's death or capture (on one occasion she silently cries, whilst in another scene she laments 'j'ai toujours peur pour toi'). By contrast, at no point during these scenes, or indeed during the film, does Slimane dwell on the prospect of a potential future with Dawda, but instead consistently stresses his commitment to the Revolution in a series of lyrical monologues, including the notable line, 'la lutte engagée avec le caïd, l'administrateur, les gendarmes, finira un jour de toute façon . . . par ma mort . . . ou ma victoire'.<sup>102</sup> As such, Farès's film casts the nationalist movement in highly individualised and ontological terms, as a search for a tragic masculine identity free to roam in the rebellious hinterlands of *bled es siba*.

Apart from Dawda, *Les Hors-la-loi* features only one other significant Algerian female figure in the form of Slimane's unnamed mother, who, like Dawda, adopts a compliant role in the film, lamenting the death of her husband from within the domestic sphere.<sup>103</sup> Yet, a crucial difference is also apparent in Farès's representation of these two women. Central to this observation is the "shoot-out" which occurs approximately halfway through the film. I have previously shown how this scene acts as an example of how Farès mobilises the Berber ethics of the *nif* as a way of reasserting a masculine identity destabilised after years of colonial rule. While this is true, this scene is also significant in relation to Farès's representation of women (or, more specifically Algerian mothers) as symbolic signifiers of what is known in Berber culture as *hurma-*

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<sup>102</sup> During this monologue, Farès uses a slow zoom on Slimane's pensive although determined face, slowly relegating Dawda to the obscure realm of off-screen space.

<sup>103</sup> After Slimane arrives at the village, members of the family debate the mother's future in the village, concluding that 'elle ne peut pas rester toute seule'. Although brief, this discussion again depicts Algerian women as individuals who are unable to live autonomously outside of the traditional patriarchal unit.

*haram*, that is, the sacred, passive and feminine realm of the domestic sphere traditionally governed by the *nif* (Bourdieu 2000: 46-49). It is for this reason that Slimane's mother appears unable to liberate herself from her captors. Instead, it is her son who bravely accomplished this task – a gesture which simultaneously establishes the masculine honour code of the *nif* and reasserts the fundamentally patriarchal ideology that lies at the heart of traditional Berber culture. Farès's representation of Algerian mothers as 'sacred' also chimes with Berber tendency to define women as 'mères-avant-tout' (Lacoste-Dujardin 1985: 82), an observation equally applicable to *Le Vent des Aurès*.

A final point regarding Farès's representation of women is also worth noting. As I have so far illustrated, *Les Hors-la-loi* depicts Algerian women in highly conservative terms; as docile partners (Dawda) and sacred, equally submissive mother-figures (Slimane's mother). However, interpreting the film exclusively in these terms also threatens to ignore one of the most significant sequences in the film, which occurs when the three masculine outlaws are briefly trapped in the rural prison approximately a third of the way into the narrative. The sequence itself begins with a close up of Ali, who starts to recount the story of how he has been wrongfully imprisoned for allegations made against him by his former manager. Farès then uses a slow zoom on Ali's face followed by a dissolve cut in order to signify a temporal shift – from the diegetic present to a mimetic past (in other words, a flashback). During the next few minutes, the spectator is then shown past images of Ali bathing in a tank of water, before he is suddenly surprised by a young French woman named Hélène (Jane Augier), who tries to seduce Ali despite being his manager's wife. Ali responds by fleeing the farm, explaining (in a non-diegetic voice over) that 'la femme du patron, ça n'était pas pour moi. Je risquais d'avoir des ennuis et de perdre mon travail'. The situation reaches its dramatic climax when Hélène accuses Ali of sexually assaulting her after following him to a neighbouring farm. As Ali claims, it is for this reason that he has been imprisoned. Although relatively brief, this scene is important for a number of reasons. On one level, Farès's depiction of Ali as a cool-headed, professional and, above all, honourable worker again chimes with the Berber notion of the masculine *nif* as 'une forme de sagesse, toute de dignité et de maîtrise de soi, de mesure' (Lacoste-Dujardin 2005: 361). It is for this reason that Ali responds indifferently to Hélène's provocative behaviour. However, what is perhaps more significant about this flashback is how Farès's representation of Western (French) women differs from that of their Algerian counterparts. In particular, whilst Algerian women are associated with passivity,

domesticity and sanctity (the *hurma-haram*), the female settler emerges as a form of *femme fatale*, eager to corrupt Algerian men through sexual provocation. This observation is not without significance, firstly as it illustrates a general trend in nationalist discourse to define ‘enemy women as sexually promiscuous’ (Nagel 1998: 257), but also, and perhaps more importantly, as it is indirectly indicative of the ways in which Algerian women were ‘protected’ from the supposedly “decadent” effects of western culture (and particularly western feminism), through a process of domestication and thus subordination. Indeed, as Marnia Lazreg has shown, any kind of progressive agenda on women and emancipation was, at least in the immediate post-independence years, ‘associated with the individualist psychology of Western secularism, capitalism and neocolonialism’ (Lazreg 1994: 156; see also MacMaster 2012: 379).<sup>104</sup> As I will now show, a desire to protect Algerian women from the threat of cultural contamination is also evident in *L’Opium et le bâton*.

### 3.2.3 *L’Opium et le bâton*

#### *Men: myth, martyrdom and the Fanonian ‘New Man’*

In one of the earliest and most comprehensive readings of Algerian national cinema, Lotfi Maherzi has described how ‘la conscience d’avoir vaincu le colonialisme [...] est augmentée par la fabrication d’un portrait-type du combattant algérien, aux vertus morales exemplaire, noble, généreux, fieres’ (1980: 246). As regards *L’Opium et le bâton*, these traits are particularly evident in Dr Bashir’s militant brother, Ali (Sid Ali Kouiret), who presides over politico-military operations in the rural region of Kabylia. In terms of appearance, Ali’s taciturn, stoic personality and rugged, youthful looks bear more than a passing similarity to other *moudjahiddine* featured in Algerian cinema of the period, including Slimane in Farès’s *Les Hors-la-loi* and Ali La Pointe in Pontecorvo’s 1966 *La Bataille d’Alger*. But, whilst *La Bataille d’Alger* reinforces the relationship between sign (the cinematic image) and referent (the pro-filmic and historical event) through its representation of urban, guerrilla warfare,<sup>105</sup> Rachedi’s

<sup>104</sup> This process was and remains particularly damaging to the western-educated Algerian writer and director, Assia Djebar (see chapter four, section two), who is often denigrated by conservative factions for supposedly acquiescing to the former colonial power in her use of French (as her primary written language), and 2005 acceptance into the Académie française.

<sup>105</sup> Ranjana Khanna has previously illustrated how *La Bataille d’Alger* purports to represent the conflict in accurate, ‘objective’ terms through a number of formal and narrative techniques (2008: 17). Central to this observation is Pontecorvo’s representation of the ‘milk bar’

narrative subtly severs the ties between cinema and historical truth. This hypothesis is particularly applicable to the ways in which the film elides any mention of the operational commanders who presided over the region (Wilaya 3) during the conflict, including; Abane Ramdane,<sup>106</sup> Krim Belkacem<sup>107</sup> and Omar Ouamrane.<sup>108</sup> Possible reasons for the omission of these important veterans of the revolution include; the pervasive influence of the one-party state on 1960s' Algerian cinema, which propagated a similar combination of monolithic historiography and anonymous (or, at least depersonalised) hagiography alongside the fact that at least two of these figures (Belkacem and Ouamrane) challenged the FLN Political Bureau formed by Ben Bella, Boumediène, and Mohamed Khider in the immediate aftermath of independence. Abane and Krim's Berber heritage would also have clashed with the ways in which the post-independence state 'vise à l'effacement de toute revendication spécifique portant sur la culture berbère' (Stora 1998: 235).<sup>109</sup> In this respect, the figure of Ali can be seen as symptomatic of a wider process of historical cleansing (or "mythologisation") pursued by the post-independence regime and state-controlled cinematic narratives of the period. As Benjamin Stora claims, 'cette écriture de l'histoire commence dès juin 1966, lorsque est décidé de mettre en œuvre une mesure de souveraineté en nationalisant, par arabisation, l'enseignement de l'histoire' (Stora 1998: 229 [emphasis in original]). As I illustrated in the last section of this chapter, Rachedi's film also proposes a somewhat mythologised version of history in reiterating the Fanonian conception of a pure, rural revolution fought by the peasantry to regain land taken by the French.

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bombings carried out by the three famous *fidayate* ('fire carriers'), Djamilia Bouhired, Samia Lakhdari and Zohra Drif, and the way in which Pontecorvo involved Saadi (an ex-FLN leader) in the writing and screenplay of the film. Pontecorvo also blurs the line between fiction and reality by using cinematographic techniques characteristic of newsreel footage (telephoto lenses, fluid/unstable handheld cameras, high levels of graininess/contrast).

<sup>106</sup> Abane Ramdane was an Algerian revolutionary born in Kabylia and based in Wilaya 3. A close friend of Frantz Fanon, Ramdane was assassinated in 1957 (supposedly by Krim Belkacem [see below]) for creating a cult of the individual rather than collective leadership. Interestingly, Ramdane's death would be covered up by the FLN by turning him into a hero and martyr (see below for a discussion regarding the trope of martyrdom in *L'Opium et le bâton*).

<sup>107</sup> Like Ramdane, Krim Belkacem was born in (Berber) Kabylia – the region over which he presided as chief during the war. He was assassinated in 1970 in a hotel room in Frankfurt, West Germany, after having been accused of organizing an assassination attempt against Boumediène. Nevertheless, Belkacem was posthumously rehabilitated by the Algerian state by being buried in the Martyrs Square on October 24, 1984.

<sup>108</sup> Omar Ouamrane was an Algerian revolutionary who operated in Wilaya 3 alongside Ramdane (until his death) and, in particular, Belkacem. As Alistair Horne claims, 'starting from a small handful of men, the Krim-Ouamrane maquis could, by 1954, claim some 500 at least partially armed members, with a further 1,200 militants standing by' (2006: 78).

<sup>109</sup> More recently, Berberocentric Kabyle associations, such as the *Association de Culture Berbère* (ACB) in Paris, have sponsored talks and conferences on wartime personages like Abane, Belkacem, and Ferhat Abbas (Silverstein 2003: 90).



As regards the complex gender politics which underpin the diegesis, Ali is also a particularly important figure, despite the fact that it is only with the fierce battle sequences that occur towards the last third of the film that his crucial role in the uprising becomes clear – as the leader of a regional *katiba*,<sup>110</sup> including Bougeb, Omar (played by the renowned Algerian actor Brahim Haggiag), and a radicalised Dr Bashir (whose role in the film will be discussed below).<sup>111</sup> During the following scenes, these *fidayine* descend from the *djebel* in order to ambush a French military convoy on one of the winding streets located high up in the Kabyle mountains, evading an airstrike orchestrated by French forces before Ali and Bougeb are captured by French forces. In the previous section of this chapter, I illustrated how this part of the film draws from the commercial conventions of Hollywood cinema in its representation of the Algerian war as a form of spectacle. What is also evident in these scenes is the way in which bombastic images of firepower and death take precedence over dialogue, emotion and mourning (see below for how the issue of mourning relates to Rachedi’s representation of women), whilst wide angle shots of the group and surrounding environment prevent individual identification with the ALN fighters. None of the *moudjahiddine* question the moral, political or logistic basis of the mission, but rather accept their fate with grim determination and commitment. To a certain extent, these scenes thus support Viola Shafik’s definition of Algerian cinema of the period as representing resistance fighters devoid of ‘psychological depth’ (2007: 175), an observation equally mirrored in Lotfi Maherzi’s description of Algerian cinema of the period as involving ‘la suprême dépersonnalisation du maquisard’ (1980: 278). On a similar note, this part of the film (and, indeed the film as a whole) reduces the conflict to a homosocial spectacle of masculine heroism, machismo and martyrdom – despite the fact that the revolution was, in reality, fought in many different terrains (see, for example Pontecorvo’s *La Bataille d’Alger*), and between different nationalist factions (for example, the café wars<sup>112</sup>). As with all of the Algerian films discussed in this chapter, *L’Opium et le bâton* also

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<sup>110</sup> A *katiba* was a main mobile unit of the ALN, composed of either of a small company (approximately a hundred men), or a section (about thirty men).

<sup>111</sup> For at least the first third of the film, Ali is unable to fight in the maquis after being captured by French forces. Interestingly, Ali is eventually freed by one particularly moral *appelé* (Jean-Louis Trintignant), in scenes that would be almost directly repeated three years later in René Vautier’s 1972 film *Avoir 20 ans dans les Aurès*. With this in mind, both films arguably draw from Noël Favrelière’s controversial first person account of desertion in the Algerian maquis, *Le Désert à l’aube* (1960).

<sup>112</sup> The café wars were bouts of conflict that took place between the FLN and the MNA (Mouvement national algérien) during the war. Their name derives from the fact that part of the fighting between these two nationalist groups took the form of bomb attacks and assassinations in cafés.

completely ignores the role of the small although significant number of armed female militants fighting in the maquis.<sup>113</sup> The rare films that do feature images of these forgotten combatants remain largely unknown or at least highly difficult to source (see for example, René Vautier's 1957 documentary *Algérie en flammes, Patrouille à l'est* [Laskri 1971] and *Zone interdite* [Lallem 1972]).

One of the most important scenes in relation to Rachedi's representation of Algerian masculinity occurs directly after these battle sequences. The scene begins with a shot of officer Delécluze (Jean-Claude Bercq) lamenting the lack of cooperation between colonial forces and local villagers, before summoning Ali and Bougeb (who have been captured during the previous encounter) to the village square. Whilst Ali's sister, Farroudja (played by the French-Kabyle actress, Marie-José Nat) unsuccessfully attempts to comfort her brother, non-diegetic, stringed instrumentation is used to elicit a sense of pathos in the spectator. Revealing the imminent death of the two captured militants, Delécluze then commands Ali to pick up a packet of cigarettes tossed on the floor, whilst Bougeb cries 'ne ramasse pas, Ali! meurs debout!' Resisting the demands of the officer, Ali is subsequently shot, whilst an anonymous ALN fighter hidden on the outskirts of the crowd fires upon the colonial troops, creating chaos in the area. Throughout this sequence, Ali's mother cries uncontrollably. During the ensuing pandemonium, Bougeb then manages to escape to the colonial weapons cache located on the peripheries of the village, pouring oil on the collected arsenal before being shot in the chest (although not fatally) by Delécluze. The camera then shifts to an extreme wide shot of Bougeb unhinging a grenade stored in his pocket whilst dragging the panicked officer with him into the cache, before the building appears to explode with both men inside.

This scene is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, as regards the wider socio-cultural context which frames the film, these images mirror the pervasive tendency in post-independence Algerian nationalism towards a historical revisionism founded upon the 'cult of the martyr', defined, as in Rachedi's film, as a sacrificial figure willing to die for the spirit of the nation (Silverstein 2003: 89). This cult was mirrored in with the ways in which the FLN covered up the 1957 assassination of the Algerian revolutionary Abane Ramdane in turning him into a martyr (on the pages of the official newspaper *El Moudjahid*), alongside the decision taken in 1965 to bury the revolutionary theorist Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) in a martyrs (chouhada) graveyard,

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<sup>113</sup> Known as *les évoluées*, women who travelled from the urban cities to join the rural resistance were often treated with suspicion by peasant communities often couched in patriarchal tradition.

despite the fact that he had at no point participated in active combat. Ranjana Khanna has also illustrated how this cult resurfaced during the 1980s with the state commissioned construction of the *Makam al-Shahid*, or Martyrs Monument (in 1982) – a modernist monolith which, according to Khanna, functioned to commemorate twenty years of independence whilst simultaneously distracting the people from pervasive socio-economic problems of the period, including; unemployment, political corruption, the rise of fundamentalist Islamism and the suppression of Berber demands (Khanna 2008:19). After being assassinated in 1970 for challenging the authority of Boumediène, Krim Belkacem would also be posthumously rehabilitated by the Algerian state in 1984 by being buried in the *Carré des Martyrs* (Martyrs Square) in Algiers, ironically in the same graveyard as his similarly martyred victim (Ramdane) and murderer (Boumediène) (Djebar 2000: 127). It is for this reason that the renowned Algerian author Slimane Chikh has previously claimed that ‘l’histoire de la lutte armée emprunte ainsi souvent le ton de l’hymne triomphaliste, qui se veut un juste hommage aux martyrs, hagiographie plutôt qu’histoire’ (1982 cited in Stora 1998 : 230). It is also possible to interpret Dr Lazrak’s pilgrimage to Thala as an act of martyrdom, in that, through this gesture, the doctor essentially sacrifices his bourgeois life in Algiers in order to devote himself to the Revolution. Bashir’s belief in national sacrifice is also evident when he poetically laments, ‘jadis, c’était autrement. Ils ne seraient pas là, tapis derrière leurs murs. Jadis, ils auraient combattu, ou seraient morts comme des preux’.

As with the previous battle scenes in *L’Opium et le bâton*, it is also important that images of martyrdom in Rachedi’s film associate Algerian masculine identity with the retrograde traits of heroism, stoicism and physical strength, rather than, for example, emotion, suffering and mourning. It is for this reason that the act of martyrdom occurs in the public (masculine) space of the *umma* (or Berber *thajma’th*) rather than the domestic sphere (a space associated with women in the discourse of post-independence nationalism). As Maherzi has argued, this observation is more generally applicable to the ways in which Algerian cinema defined the archetypal *moudjahid* in terms of ‘un sens du sacrifice, de l’audace et de l’héroïsme sans borne’ (1980: 247). In particular, *L’Opium et le bâton* shares parallels with Amar Laskri’s often overlooked 1971 feature film *Patrouille à l’est*, which involves a similar fixation upon the act of masculine martyrdom.<sup>114</sup> On a similar note, Assia Djebar has previously explored the gendered aspect of martyrdom through an analysis of Ahmed Zabana and Abdelkader Ferradj,

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<sup>114</sup> In Laskri’s film, martyrdom is represented largely through the trope of a radio broadcast, which constantly reminds the ALN militants of their duty towards the nation (‘nous libérons ce qu’ils appellent les zones interdites, nous les libérons par le sang de nos martyrs’ . . .)

two individuals guillotined in 1956 on suspicion of participating in the revolution. According to Djebbar, whilst Zabana ‘died like a man’ in the ‘fixed light of calm heroism’ (like Ali in Rachedi’s film), Ferradj went to the guillotine kicking and screaming (2000: 36-37). Unlike Zabana, Ferradj is therefore often elided in the discourse of nationalist martyrology as his death did not conform to the masculinist rules of martyrdom. As I have shown previously in this thesis, the sexual politics involved in this cult of martyrdom were also mirrored in the official stance of the Fifth Republic, which commemorated male martyrs of the French Resistance in a discourse of *résistancialisme*, whilst defining the figure of the paratrooper as a fearless hero ready to die in order to preserve the legacy of French colonial Algeria.

A slightly different version of Algerian masculinity is proposed by the figure of Dr Bashir Lazrak. In the opening scene of the film, the doctor opens his door to an unexpected guest (an FLN messenger), who inquires about whether Dr Bashir would be willing to help a *moudjahid* injured in the maquis. After initially refusing, the doctor apparently changes his mind after witnessing his guest being bundled aggressively into the back of a truck by French officials. On one level, this scene deviates from Mammeri’s eponymous 1965 novel, which describes the doctor in comparatively ‘western’ terms, sipping champagne, listening to classical music and spending time with his French mistress. Nevertheless, the film remains to some extent faithful to the original text in its domestic setting – a space with which Algerian women were increasingly associated in the discourse of post-independence nationalism (MacMaster 2012: 381). Unlike Ali, Dr Bashir is thus – at least initially – to some extent feminized within the narrative. This observation is particularly applicable to the ways in which Dr Bashir later complains about injuries to his feet obtained during a nocturnal hike through the unforgiving Kabyle terrain, behaviour which leads his guide to playfully describe him in the following terms; ‘tu comprends, des maquisards comme lui, la peau blanche, les ongles faits et cette chemise, je me disais: c’est un Français qui a appris l’arabe pour espionner’. Once the doctor finally reaches the safety of the ALN hideout, Ali also comments on Bashir’s tired appearance, urging, ‘allez vous reposer. Vous êtes fatigué et pas encore habitué’. Dr Bashir’s relatively effeminate appearance is also compounded by the fact that he occupies a role in the rural conflict often performed by women (whether *évoluées* or *moussebilate*), who were invariably required to fulfil traditional gendered support roles as nurses, doctors and aids to the male fighters (MacMaster 2012: 315, 321). In Mammeri’s novel, after witnessing the trauma of the rural community, Dr Lazreg returns to Algiers where he is interrogated, before

travelling to Morocco in order to pursue a love affair with a woman named Itto. However, in the film, Dr Bashir adopts a far more active role in the revolution, joining the maquis located in the rural Kabyle mountains and participating in the bombastic battle sequence which takes place during the final third of the film. In this respect, Dr Lazrak experiences a triple ontological transformation in the film: from apolitical apathy to political, nationalist commitment; from bourgeois (western) affluence to rural asceticism; and, most importantly, from effeminate sensitivity to stoic machismo. This transformation is exemplified in the fact that, whilst Bashir arrives at the village wearing a suit, he quickly changes to the burnous – an item of clothing that, as I have previously mentioned, is associated with the Berber notions of the *nif*. As Lotfi Maherzi claims,

Dr Lazrak apparaît dans ce film comme un intellectuel déchiré et partagé entre ce qu'il est, un médecin bourgeois habitant le quartier européen de la ville apparemment intégré, et ce qu'on lui demande d'être, un médecin à la disposition du Front : en autres termes, sa participation à la lutte de libération (1980: 253).

A final point regarding Rachedi's representation of Algerian masculinity is worth noting. In the previous section of this chapter, I illustrated how Rachedi's narrative draws from the revolutionary theories of Frantz Fanon in representing – and, to some extent – mythologizing the conflict as a pure, rural revolution fought by the peasantry to regain land taken by the French. Whilst this may be true, Rachedi's film is also arguably influenced by the sexual politics of Fanon's work, and, in particular his notion of the 'New Algerian Man'. According to Fanon, one of the central tenets of colonization was the ways in which it eroded the authority of Algerian men in claiming symbolic possession over Algerian women. This, in turn, led to feelings of impotence and jealousy within the colonized man, who, in the words of Fanon, wants 'to sit at the settler's table, to sleep in his bed, with his wife if possible' (2001 [1961]: 32). In a politico-theoretical response to this challenge, Fanon drew from a tradition of European libertarian Marxism (for example Lukács), Che Guevara and Fidel Castro's 'new socialist man' (Ross 1995: 167), and nineteenth-century fighters, for example Abdel Kader and El Mokrani, in order to, in his words, 'set afoot a new [Algerian] Man' (2001 [1961]: 253). Fanon's concept is complex – if only as it appropriates discursive tropes from a history of European philosophy precisely at the point at which certain French intellectuals (such as Sartre, Foucault and Claude Lévi-Strauss) loudly proclaimed the

‘death of man’.<sup>115</sup> However, perhaps the most problematic aspect of the Fanonian New Man is the way it ‘valorizes the undeniable machismo of violent struggle’ (Seshadri-Crooks 2002: 94), despite purporting to be resolutely ‘modern’. Whilst it is unclear whether Rachedi deliberately drew from Fanon’s work in order to inform his representation of militant Algerian masculinity (as Pontecorvo did in his representation of militant Algerian women [see chapter four, section two]), *L’Opium et le bâton* certainly shares parallels with the Fanonian concept of the New Man in somewhat paradoxically representing modern (i.e. post-colonial) Algerian masculinity in fundamentally retrograde terms. Images of heroic masculinity are especially evident during the long battle sequence that takes place approximately half-way through the film, when an ALN member and *appelé* engage in hand to hand combat, using knives rather than automatic weapons and performing a number of acrobatic throws, before grappling viciously in a shallow river. In these scenes, the masculine body-in-combat thus becomes a spectacle in itself. As Ella Shohat claims, ‘Third-Worldist films often favoured the generic and gendered space of heroic confrontations, whether set in the streets, the casbah, the mountains or the jungle’ (2006: 301), whilst Lotfi Maherzi has also questioned the virile physicality of post-colonial Algerian cinema, demanding, ‘le maquisard algérien apprend même le judo. On se demande où?’ (1980: 278).

#### *Women: victimization, maternity and mourning*

Whilst *L’Opium et le bâton* chronicles the lives of a number of male ALN militants, Rachedi’s representation of women is comparatively limited to two main protagonists; Dr Bashir’s sister, Farroudja, and his unnamed mother, who welcome the doctor into their home whilst Farroudja’s child cries from hunger. From the outset, Algerian women are thus associated with maternity and the domestic realm – an observation which highlights ideological parallels between 1960s’ Algerian cinema and post-independence nationalist discourse, which similarly relegated women’s position to the domesticated private sphere. On a similar note, as with the unnamed mother-figure in *Le Vent des Aurès* and Dawda in *Les Hors-la-loi*, both women wear headscarves (as opposed to the *haïk* or *hadjar*), as such, to some extent linking the film to the Berber region in which it is set. Yet this fidelity is also undermined in that Rachedi represents the domestic realm as a space in which men and women were free to mix, when, in

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<sup>115</sup> As Kristin Ross claims, for the antihumanist Marxists who came to the forefront of the mid-1960s, “‘man’ is of course bad because it is nothing but an image that masks the conditions of bourgeois domination’ (1995: 163).

reality the opposite was true (Bourdieu 2000: 81-82).<sup>116</sup> The effect of this misrepresentation is to minimise the negative effects of the socio-spatial codes characteristic of Kabyle/Berber society (see chapter four, section two for a discussion regarding the ways in which Assia Djebar's 1978 film, *La Nouba des Femmes du Mont Chenoua* visualises the symbolic violence of these codes). On a more general note, Rachedi's film shares similarities with other Algerian films of the period, in which 'le rôle proposé relève davantage de la femme au foyer que de celui de la femme insérée dans le cadre d'une activité sociale' (Maherzi 1980: 262). As with *Le Vent des Aurès*, Rachedi's film also features distressing images of colonial troops destroying the domestic realm in an attempt to locate FLN militants. Out of this imagery, both narratives define decolonization as an attempt to restore the domestic sphere to a state of sanctity and inviolability. One of the most significant scenes in relation to Rachedi's representation of women occurs after the village population has been herded into the village square for interrogation. Farroudja and her mother are then prevented from leaving the village by Tayeb (the village translator and collaborator with the colonial regime), who drags the two women into a makeshift prison (along with other Talaens), leaving her young child crying alone on the street outside. After being released from the prison, Farroudja is then led to the colonial offices before being subjected to a prolonged period of violence and humiliation by Tayeb and other colonial officials. Eventually, Farroudja discloses details relating to the ALN militants operating in the area after Tayeb threatens to hand her child over to the SAS (*Sections administratives spécialisées*).<sup>117</sup> At no point in this entire sequence does Farroudja successfully challenge her persecutors. Instead she emerges as a helpless victim of patriarchal and colonial abuse. The one form of violence that is not visualised in this scene, the film as a whole, and indeed in Algerian national cinema more generally, is rape, despite the fact that 'the torture of Algerian women rarely took place without rape' (Lazreg 1994: 160), whether in the rural wilayas of Kabylia and the Aurès Mountains or the urban districts of Algiers (during the so-called Battle of Algiers, for example). This is not surprising, primarily as one of the central traits of post-independence society was a desire to regain control over the 'sacred', world of women – a world which had been symbolically 'penetrated' by colonization (MacMaster 2012: 369). The only film which did dare to

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<sup>116</sup> It is important to note that these socio-spatial codes have been significantly eroded since Bourdieu's initial work on 1960s Kabyle (Berber) society.

<sup>117</sup> The principal role of the SAS was to 'modernize' rural areas through education, medical assistance and rural development. This faction of the army involved approximately 800 individuals.

approach this subject was René Vautier's 1972 Franco-Algerian co-production, *Avoir 20 ans dans les Aurès*, in which a veiled Algerian woman is raped by an apparently unrepentant *appelé*.

This section has previously illustrated how Rachedi's representation of martyrdom functions as a method of recasting Algerian masculine identity according to a fundamentally conservative model of heroism, stoicism and physical strength. However, what is also significant about this scene of martyrdom is the behaviour of Ali's mother and sister, who respond to his death through an almost hysterical outburst of emotion, grief and mourning. The concept of mourning has previously been analysed by Ranjana Khanna, who has defined the 'mourning model of nationalism' as involving a process of 'remembering to forget' (2008: 166). According to Khanna, this process of state-led amnesia was particularly applicable to the female participants in the war, whose significant and often active role was erased in nationalist discourse of the post-independence era, leading to what she terms (drawing from Freud), a state of 'melancholia' (2008: 26-27). Yet, although illuminating, Khanna's theories arguably remain blind to the specifically gendered aspect of the act of mourning. Perhaps more useful in relation to Rachedi's narrative is Paul Silverstein's assertion that 'the post-war discourse on martyrdom has historically relegated women's roles to the domestic sphere of mourning/memorialising their fallen male "brothers"' (2003: 108). Whilst Silverstein does not expand upon his tantalizing hypothesis, he nevertheless draws attention to the complex semiotic web often associating female identity with the process of mourning. In accordance with Silverstein's observation, Rachedi represents mourning as an exclusively female act. At no point in the film do any of the *moudjahiddine* mourn the deaths of female *moudjahidat* killed in battle. Instead, mourning is represented as the province of wives and mothers, who respond to the martyrdom of a male militant (Ali) with a paroxysmal display of (female) emotion. This observation is not without significance – in that, through the trope of mourning, Rachedi's film arguably acts in order to propagate one of the oldest and well established gendered stereotypes in the 'archetype of the hysterical woman' (Austin 2008: 55 [see also representations of the mother-figure in *Le Vent des Aurès*, above]). On a more general note, it is also important to acknowledge the process of often uncritical hagiography involved in what may be termed the gendered politics of mourning, especially if the (masculine) object of this process ceases to exist at a point of unblemished and thus unchallengeable honour (as in Rachedi's film). In this respect, Rachedi's simultaneous staging of masculine



martyrdom and female mourning thus creates a dual effect; symbolically elevating the male *moudjahiddine* to a position of untouchable honour whilst relegating Algerian women to a state of subjugation as hysterical although ultimately passive wives and mothers. As Neil MacMaster claims,

The maternal-nationalist discourse was charged with a sentimental affectivity which valued women through their silent suffering and their willing sacrifice of martyr sons and husbands in the liberation struggle [...]. Implicit in this ideology was that women could only lay claim to heroism through Algerian males (2012: 385).

### 3.2.4 Conclusion

To conclude, this section has illustrated the ways in which post-independence Algerian cinema crystallises an unresolved tension between the politics of anti-colonial nationalism and patriarchal ideology. Thus, in *L'Opium et le bâton*, Algerian men are associated with myth, martyrdom and the somewhat paradoxical notion of the Fanonian New Man (predicated on the retrograde traits of virility and machismo), whilst women are associated with victimization, maternity and mourning. A subtle difference is evident between Rachedi's film and *Les Hors-la-loi/Le Vent des Aurès*, both of which appear influenced by the conservative sexual politics of Berber culture rather than the militaristic discourse of the one-party state. In *Les Hors-la-loi*, this influence manifests itself through the notion of the masculine *nif* and female *hurma-haram*, whilst Lahkdar-Hamina's narrative draws largely from the Berber concepts of *le fils-avant-tout* and *la mère-avant-tout*. All of the films discussed in this chapter elide women's active role in the revolution (in particular *les évoluées* and the *fidayate*), instead representing Algerian women as passive, victimized and veiled wives, lovers and mothers, and Algerian men as virile and heroic young martyrs. As Ella Shohat claims, 'largely produced by men, Third-Worldist films are not generally concerned with a feminist critique of nationalist discourse' (2006: 300). Instead, the films remain imbued with an ideology of masculine domination despite achieving liberation from the so-called 'night of colonialism' (Austin 2011: 198).

The reasons for this trend are, however, complex. One way of interpreting Algerian cinema of this period is as a form of cultural palliative which responds to the shattering of masculine authority during the war years by constructing an idealised image of patriarchal harmony. In the previous chapter of this thesis, we saw how this observation is also applicable to French cinema of the same period. However, the

Algerian narratives discussed above also differ from their French counterparts in mobilising images of domesticity and veiling as a method of asserting a national identity weakened by years of colonial domination. We will return to this crucial question in the conclusion of this thesis. In the following chapter, our attention will turn to a number of French and Algerian films which do not display the same desire to assert patriarchal ideology through gendered stereotypes.

## Chapter 4. Challenging Patriarchal Ideology Through Patterns of Narrative Space

This thesis has so far explored the shared tendency in post-colonial French and Algerian cinema to critique colonial ideology through patterns of narrative space whilst remaining fundamentally conservative in their representation of gendered relations. In this chapter, I will now draw attention to the few films which do not fit into this trend, by instead configuring narrative space as a method of resisting patriarchal ideology. In terms of structure, the chapter will be split into two sections. In the first section, I will analyse Agnès Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1962) and Michel Drach's *Elise ou la vraie vie* (1970), exploring the ways in which both films focus on independent female protagonists who attempt to penetrate traditionally 'masculine' spaces of the street and the factory, respectively. In the second section of this chapter, I will then shift my attention to post-colonial Algerian cinema, illustrating how, in a similar fashion, both Gillo Pontecorvo's *La Bataille d'Alger* (1966) and Assia Djébar's *La Noubia des femmes du Mont Chenoua* (1978) chronicle acts of female spatial transgression. In Pontecorvo's narrative, that act of transgression occurs in the tense confines of colonial Algiers, whilst Djébar's film is set in a rural (Berber) region characterised by spatial gender codes. Although set in different periods and different locations, all of the narratives challenge the socio-spatial codes of colonial and patriarchal ideology in depicting independent women who refuse to remain confined within the domestic sphere.

### 4.1 French Cinema

#### 4.1.1 *Cléo de 5 à 7: occupying the street*

Released and set in the final year of the Algerian War, Agnès Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1962) is a formally innovative film which chronicles – in almost real time – a few hours in the life of a young, classically beautiful and famous pop star, Cléo Victoire (Corinne Marchand). The narrative itself is split into a prelude and thirteen chapters. For the first half of the film, Cléo appears to depend largely upon other people (notable her minder), whilst secretly awaiting the results of a cancer biopsy. However, approximately halfway into the film, Cléo's outlook changes after a light-hearted rehearsal with her songwriters (Michel Legrand, Serge Korber) turns into a bitter argument about their influence over her life. At this point, Cléo leaves the confines of her apartment to walk, apparently aimlessly, around the streets of Paris, visiting her

model friend Dorothée (Dorothée Blank), before finally taking a taxi to the Parc Montsouris where she meets Antoine (Antoine Bourseiller), a soldier on leave from the Algerian War. In the final chapter of the film, Antoine accompanies Cléo to the hospital, where she learns her cancer is perhaps curable.

In the second chapter, I explored the ways in which certain French films of the period use representations of a politicised domestic realm as a way of critiquing colonial ideology. By contrast, in Varda's film, the domestic realm is only visualised once – and remains devoid of political antagonism (see below for a description of how this space mirrors Cléo's initial status in the film as a narcissistic spectacle). Instead, as I will now show, *Cléo de 5 à 7* arguably uses the trope of urban mobility in order to subtly challenge the neo-colonial logic of 1960s' Paris. This observation is especially applicable to the five-minute taxi journey that Cléo and Angèle make through the city during chapters three and four, when the two women return to Cléo's apartment after sipping a coffee in the Dôme café and shopping for hats (see below for a discussion regarding the anti-patriarchal potential of this trip). This journey involves a number of references to France's colonial past. The first of these references occurs after Cléo playfully protests about her music playing on the taxi radio. Varda uses a static, long take in order to frame Cléo's gently animated profile during this conversation in order to create a reassuring sense of familiarity and continuity, until Cléo appears to glance briefly out of the window of the taxi. Following the trajectory of her gaze, the camera then suddenly cuts to a close-up shot of a number of traditional African masks posed in a shop window, before cutting back to an evidently distraught Cléo, who responds to Angèle's question 'qu'est-ce que vous avez, madame?' with the ambiguous response 'j'ai mal au coeur'. Although these masks do not form an explicit reference to Algerian national identity *per se*, they are an irrefutable sign of the racialized, colonial violence that formed the Janus-face of 1960s' modernization and consumerism, especially as the masks are featured apparently innocuously in a shop window.<sup>118</sup> This imagery also evokes Alain Resnais's and Chris Marker's 1953 vitriolic tirade against colonialism, *Les statues meurent aussi*, which itself mirrors the display of masks in ethnographic museums, often removed from their historical context. The second reference to colonization during this scene occurs a few seconds later when the two women's journey is again disrupted, firstly, by a similar montage of traditional African artefacts,

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<sup>118</sup> Elizabeth Ezra has also drawn attention to the ways in which these masks 'can be viewed as a comment on Cléo's own mask-like persona, her performativity as both a singer in the public eye and as a woman embracing the trappings of femininity' (2010: 187).

and then by a disconcertingly violent crowd of art students (at least one of whom is of African descent) who pretend to attack the taxi as part of the ritualistic French tradition known as *bizutage* (hazing). Again, although this incident does not form an explicit allusion to Algerian nationalism, the behaviour, or to be more precise, appearance of these students forms another reference to France's colonial past. It is also important that, at this point in the journey, the taxi is positioned in Place Denfert-Rochereau; an area populated at the time by a large number of Maghrebi immigrants who had been forced to leave the Maghreb/Algeria due to the trauma of decolonization. It is perhaps for this reason that certain theorists have described Cléo's journey as involving 'other, faraway places' (Martin 2006: 117), and the "'off-screen," hidden side of Paris' (Piaux cited in Orpen 2007: 65). Shortly after this incident, the taxi driver again switches on the radio, which, for the remainder of the journey, covers a number of news items related to 1960s' political and public life, including two short, significant pieces explicitly about the Algerian War. The first of these pieces relates to 'Muslim rioting' near Djidjelli in the Constantine region of Algeria, which has apparently left twenty people dead and sixty wounded. A few moments later, the newsreader then provides a brief summary of the sentencing of Georges Robin, a military commander involved in the 1961 attempted putsch, which aimed to quash official negotiations with the FLN by forcibly overthrowing General de Gaulle. Valerie Orpen has illustrated how these short news items gain importance in the scene, as firstly; none of the women in the taxi speak during this moment, and secondly; the camera angle does not change (unlike the staccato editing used earlier in the journey) (2007: 18). Both of these factors allows the significance of the events to resonate within the world of the diegesis. The taxi journey eventually ends a few minutes later when then two women arrive at Cléo's apartment.

Although this scene certainly involves a number of references to colonization, it is however debatable whether these elliptical references alone are enough to define Varda's film as anti-colonial text as such. One potential problem with this scene is that none of the characters appear conscious of the racial and ethno-cultural significance of the area, but instead appear blinded by the activities of the art students around them and the radio that plays throughout their trip (Angèle appears particularly interested in a short broadcast advertising a brand of whiskey-based shampoo). Indeed, Cléo appears positively repulsed by the non-western artefacts that she glimpses in the shop window – a form of behaviour arguably representative of the Fifth Republic's attempts to 'conceal' the rise of pan-African nationalism from the purview of the general public through propaganda, censorship and what Benjamin Stora has defined as the rise of

‘auto-censure’ (1998: 72). As Florence Martin claims, ‘Cléo’s self-absorption can be seen as either an image of France’s denial about what is going on outside its borders or as France’s immense fear of the rebellious colonised other’ (2006: 119). According to this interpretation, Varda’s narrative thus stands in contrast to many of the French films of the period in indirectly associating its central female protagonist with the official stance of the state rather than passive, apolitical naivety (see chapter two, section two). Yet, Varda’s film also shares parallels with these works given that, in *Cléo de 5 à 7*, political concerns appear, in some ways, to be largely superseded by the ontological question of female identity (in the films discussed in chapter two this identity was, of course, masculine). Finally, it is important to note that, during this trip, the taxi remains largely confined to the relatively affluent 14<sup>th</sup> arrondissement of Paris, rather than, for example, the small-scale *taudis* (slums) and, larger-scale *bidonvilles* (shantytowns) visualised, for example, in Chris Marker’s 1962 documentary *Le Joli mai*, or the large-scale housing developments known as *les grands ensembles* (also referred to as ‘vertical bidonvilles’) which subsequently housed displaced communities on the outskirts of Paris (see Jean-Luc Godard’s 1967 *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle* for images of these housing estates cleansed of the immigrant communities that frequently inhabited them).<sup>119</sup> According to this interpretation, Varda’s film could hypothetically be critiqued for alluding to rather than explicitly exposing the spatio-racial segregation that would plague Paris from the 1950s onwards (although it is also important to acknowledge the influence of censorship on films until 1963). As we will see later in this chapter, this is not a criticism, however, that could be levelled at Michel Drach’s *Elise ou la vraie vie* (1970), which features a number of scenes set precisely in these marginal spaces.

I have previously raised the question of whether Varda’s anti-colonial politics can be said to be eclipsed by the anti-patriarchal subtext that runs throughout the narrative. With this in mind, perhaps the most important aspect of Varda’s film is Cléo’s perambulations through the modern city. Cléo traverses the streets of Paris four times (that is, excluding the long scenes that take place towards the end of the film when she strolls through the Parc Montsouris). The first time that Cléo walks through the city occurs at the beginning of the film, after she has just left a tarot card reader who

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<sup>119</sup> As Bernard Marchand claims, *les taudis/bidonvilles* were generally located ‘aux portes de la capitale, derrière les gares, le long des voies, partout où des terres restaient quelque temps inoccupés, des constructions de tôle et de carton apparaissaient’ (1993: 282). More specifically, *les taudis* were often positioned within the city centre (for example, la Goutte d’Or district [18<sup>th</sup> arrondissement]), whilst *les bidonvilles* emerged on the capital’s margins (for example the peripheral commune of Nanterre]).

has confirmed her suspicions that she is seriously ill. Despite this bad news, however, Cléo appears relaxed upon leaving the building. Cléo's assured attitude is evident in the ways in which Varda frames her walking spritely and confidently down the busy street to a nearby café with a long, uninterrupted wide panning shot, accompanied by lilting, non-diegetic legato string ensemble arrangement of 'La Belle P'.<sup>120</sup> It is also reflected in the ways in which Cléo casually deflects the sexual advances of a number of men loitering on the street with her smile (one man nonchalantly asks, 'alors, on se promène?'). Indeed, during this shot, Cléo appears to enjoy the attention of the male gaze; an observation supported by her fastidious and fashionable dress whereby her whiteness and bloneness dominate the largely darker background. It is for this reason that Sandy Flitterman-Lewis has defined Cléo – at least in the first half of the film – as a form of female 'spectacle' (1990: 273). The second point at which Cléo walks through the streets of Paris is when she leaves the café with Angèle a few minutes later. During this short, uninterrupted wide panning shot, Cléo again appears unconcerned as to the male attention she arouses during the short stroll to a hat shop located nearby.<sup>121</sup> Again, the streets of Paris are represented in non-threatening terms; as a space in which Cléo appears largely accepting of – or oblivious to – her role as an eroticized spectacle of a voyeuristic male gaze.

Halfway through the film, Cléo and Angèle return to Cléo's home from the centre of the city via taxi (see above and below for a discussion regarding the anti-colonial and anti-patriarchal potential of this act). Entering the vast, white and minimal apartment together,<sup>122</sup> the two women talk about Cléo's health (she does a brief stretching exercise), before Cléo's Spanish lover José arrives. The couple then spend a few minutes talking romantically about their relationship (non-diegetic stringed instrumentation is used during this scene to heighten the romantic effect), before José abruptly leaves. Cléo complains to Angèle about his apparent lack of commitment ('il se moque de moi', 'j'ai envie de le laisser'), before Cléo pianist, Bob, and lyricist, Maurice, arrive for a rehearsal with the singer. After her songwriters mock her artistic

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<sup>120</sup> Cléo will later play a recorded version of this song (featuring herself) on the jukebox in the Dôme café.

<sup>121</sup> During the short scene Cléo's narcissism is particularly pronounced. At one point Cléo claims that everything suits her ('tout me va') whilst trying on a hat in one of the many mirrors that populate the shop.

<sup>122</sup> Sandy Flitterman-Lewis has described this apartment as a 'fulminating world of the archetypal feminine' (1990: 272). This observation is supported by a number of objects which clutter this vast, white space, including a garden swing, angel wings (mounted on the wall), thick rugs, fluffy kittens, ostrich feathers, jewellery and mirrors. Valerie Orpen has also compared the feminine clutter of this space to a Watteau painting (Orpen 2007: 11).

talent, Cléo then storms out of the apartment onto the streets of Paris. Almost all of the critics that have analysed *Cléo de 5 à 7* identify this scene as a pivotal moment in the narrative. In what is undoubtedly the most influential reading of the film, Sandy Flitterman-Lewis has defined this scene as the moment at which Cléo transforms from ‘woman-as-spectacle’ to ‘woman-as-social-being’ (1990: 273). In order to support her argument, Flitterman-Lewis cites a number of subtle shifts that take place in this part of the film, including formal techniques (from an approach largely based upon realism to self-reflexive cinematic modernism), Cléo’s appearance (from chic white outfit to a black dress reminiscent of funeral wear), alongside a more general tendency for Cléo to act in a comparatively independent and open way – behaviour mirrored in the non-diegetic chapter titles of the film, which, from this point onwards, begin to include other people rather than just Cléo. This reading of the film is also mirrored in Geneviève Sellier’s claim that, from this point onwards, Cléo ‘becomes a consciousness’ (2008: 218). However, Flitterman-Lewis’s approach is also limited in that it effectively ignores one of the most important aspects of the film; that is Varda’s representation of narrative space and female urban mobility. From this point in the film, Cléo will inhabit the public space of the street two more times. On the first occasion, Varda’s camera follows Cléo as she suddenly leaves her apartment building alone, dressed in a black dress and a new hat that Angèle has superstitiously advised her not to wear as it is Tuesday. During this short tracking shot, Cléo again walks down a busy Parisian street, although in comparison to earlier shots discussed in this analysis, Cléo’s gait appears less spritely, whilst her unhappy countenance reveals cracks in the illusion of female spectacle that she has so far managed to preserve.<sup>123</sup> It is also notable that during this shot, Cléo no longer responds positively to the presence of three men who stare at her voyeuristically from an adjacent doorway.<sup>124</sup> Varda then cuts to a medium close-up of Cléo, who approaches a mirror placed on the side of a Chinese restaurant, lamenting in an interior diegetic monologue, ‘cette figure de poupée, toujours la même’. This shot is important for a number of reasons. The first of these reasons is linked to Varda’s use of the

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<sup>123</sup> During this shot, traces of the melancholic song that Cléo has just performed in her apartment (*Cri d’amour*) are repeated through a melody played by a little boy outside on a toy piano.

<sup>124</sup> The scopic regime that features in this shot, and indeed, throughout the film, is arguably linked to Varda’s appreciation of western art history, which has been traditionally structured around a passive female object and an active male voyeur (Berger 1977; Pollock 1988: 260). This observation is also supported by the fact that, according to Varda, much of the *mise-en-scène* and cinematography of the film was based on the paintings of the sixteenth-century German artist Hans Baldung Grien (1961 cited in Sellier 2008: 217). On a more general note, the variety of artistic intertexts which make up Varda’s film are quite possibly a result of her earlier career as an art history student (Ungar 2008).



homodiegetic inner-voice, a formal technique which simultaneously inscribes a sense of female agency into the diegesis (an agency bolstered by the use of subjective shots when Cléo enters a café soon after [see below]) and positions the film in direct contrast to the general trend in 1960s' French cinema, which use the same technique in order to privilege masculine over feminine subjectivity (see, for example, Enrico's 1963 *La Belle vie*, chapter two, section two). Immediately after, an apparently horrified Cléo watches a male street performer swallow and then regurgitate a number of live frogs, shortly before witnessing a male illusionist apparently thrusting a metal spike through his arm. In both instances, Varda thus subverts the gendered, scopic hierarchy established in early street scenes by positioning Cléo as active spectator rather than passive spectacle. The male abject body supersedes the female body-object.

In relation to the wider discourses of the period, Cléo's peripatetic wanderings are important: primarily as they position her in direct opposition to the passive and domesticated figure of the housewife as proliferated *ad infinitum* in the pages of the women's press, but also as Cléo's burgeoning independence would have jarred with the various social hygiene campaigns characteristic of the post-war years, which aimed to cleanse the streets of potentially 'transgressive' or dangerous elements (see above for how these campaigns included the suburbanization of the Algerian population). This desire was particularly evident in demagogic and moralist rhetoric of Marthe Richard (the municipal councillor of Paris), who called for the expulsion of prostitutes from Parisian pavements through a process of *nettoyage* (Ross 1995: 74). Although Cléo does not act in a sexually explicit manner *per se*, her behaviour thus must be read in relation to a select number of other famously independent women of the period, including Simone de Beauvoir, Brigitte Bardot and Françoise Sagan, who 'flouted the [rules and codes] of domesticity by their transgressive behaviour' (Duchen 1994:1). However, as I will now show, Varda's film is also significant, in that it essentially leads the spectator to identify with the persecution experienced by these women through a self-reflexive cinematic modernism rooted in radical feminism.

Shortly after leaving her apartment, Cléo again visits the Dôme café. As Cléo attempts to find a seat, Varda uses a subjective tracking shot<sup>125</sup> in order to visualise the crowds of people discussing a variety of topics, including the Algerian War ('c'est stupide, ces évènements en Algérie. Foutus politiques. On ne sait plus jamais où on est'), alongside Picasso's representation of women ('quand il peint un hibou, on dirait

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<sup>125</sup> Later in this chapter I will illustrate how Gillo Pontecorvo's 1966 Italo-Algerian film, *La Bataille d'Alger* also uses carefully placed subjective shots in order to inscribe a sense of female agency into the diegesis (although within a very different context).

une femme'). These conversations reflect the two main concerns of the film, that is, the implications of France's colonial legacy, and the sexual politics of the era. Two further points are also worth noting in this scene: firstly that, after entering the café, Cléo adopts a pair of sunglasses, suggesting a desire for anonymity also reflected in her black clothes, and, secondly, that she again appears perturbed by a man who brazenly offers to buy her a drink. Both of these details relate to the fact that Cléo appears increasingly conscious of the negative implications of her status as a female spectacle in the public space of the street. In the following few minutes of the film, Cléo then leaves the café in order to walk quickly although apparently aimlessly along a pavement filled with people. Although brief, this short trip is highly significant for a number of reasons. Of particular importance are the ways in which Varda deviates from the wide panning shots used during the earlier walking sequences (discussed above), in order to instead represent female urban mobility via a series of closely framed images of Cléo's body interspersed with nine rapid tracking, subjective shots taken from her view of the street (figure 7).<sup>126</sup> In an articulate and spatially sensitive study of the film, Valerie Orpen has described this scene as evidence of Cléo's status as a female *flâneuse* who, like the Benjaminian and Baudelairean *flâneur* of nineteenth century cultural modernism, derives pleasure from aimless strolling in the modern city<sup>127</sup> (2007: 62). Whilst this analogy is popular amongst many theorists, including Mouton (2001: 8) and Morrissey (2008: 99), it is also flawed, in that one of the central traits of original *flâneur* was a voyeuristic desire to observe the modern city without being seen (see for example, Baudelaire's 1857 poem, *À une passante*). By contrast, in all of these subjective shots individuals stare back (often accusingly) at the camera: the disconcerting effect being that the spectator is led to identify with the symbolic, scopic violence involved in Cléo's position as a young, classically beautiful woman who dares to inhabit the public space of the street alone (in other words, without a minder or husband).

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<sup>126</sup> These nine shots take place in less than a minute.

<sup>127</sup> Jill Forbes links Cléo's perambulations in the city to the Situationist technique of *une dérive* which aimed to 'realise the utopian promise of art in everyday life' by randomly walking through the city (2002: 88).



Figure 7. Inhabiting the (masculine) space of the street in Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1962)

At this point, a word of caution is, however, necessary. In chapter nine of the film, Cléo decides to take a taxi to the Parc Montsouris. It is here that she meets Antoine, a returning conscript whose affable demeanour and to some extent effeminate personality (soft voice, thin physique, love of arts and history), bears little relation to the manipulative, virile and aggressive *appelés* which populate many of the French films analysed in chapter two. Irrespective of this difference, what is immediately apparent during the final chapters of the film is that, after realizing the violent potential of the male gaze (and its associated domain, the street), Cléo eventually appears to acquiesce to normative social and gendered values in allowing herself to be courted by Antoine. One possible criticism of *Cléo de 5 à 7* is thus that, whilst leading the spectator to understand the symbolic spatial violence of patriarchal ideology, the film remains ultimately bound to the logic of heteronormativity.<sup>128</sup> In the next part of this chapter, I will show how this claim also arguably applies to Michel Drach's 1970 film, *Elise ou la vraie vie*. A second potential criticism of *Cléo de 5 à 7* has been proposed by Geneviève Sellier, who explores the subtext of cultural elitism which runs throughout Varda's film

<sup>128</sup> Heteronormativity shares parallels with patriarchy in that both systems revolve around the limitation and containment of sexual desire. However, whilst patriarchy revolves specifically around the containment of potentially transgressive female sexual desire, heteronormativity interprets any sexual act performed by individuals of the same sex (whether men or women) as transgressive.

(2008: 219-220). According to Sellier, this elitism is especially evident in the fact that Cléo's transformation is facilitated via a change in cultural milieu; from a number of spaces associated with popular culture and alienation (the tarot card reader's house, the hat shop that Cléo visits with her minder [a veritable sign of commodification] and her opulent apartment), to topographical sites instead linked to what Pierre Bourdieu might term cultural capital (1986: 47), namely Dorothée's sculpting studio, the cinema that the two friends visit, and the Parc Montsouris (located near the Sorbonne). In this respect Varda implicitly defines the artistic cultural milieu as space devoid of gendered inequality, a claim which Sellier exposes as false – especially in relation to the pronounced androcentrism of 1960s' cinephilia and *la politique des auteurs* (2008: 28-33).

This analysis has so far defined Cléo's peripatetic perambulations through the modern city as a vehicle for visualising the socio-spatial codes of patriarchal ideology. Nevertheless, it is also important to note that in a number of scenes in the film Cléo traverses Paris by car. In the following analysis, I will thus examine the anti-patriarchal potential of these journeys. Earlier in this chapter, I examined the anti-colonial, political potential of the taxi journey that Cléo and Angèle make in chapters three and four of the film, when the two protagonists subtly drift into marginalised spaces of the city inflected with ethno-cultural and racial segregation. Whilst this journey may be interpreted as a sign of Varda's anti-colonial politics, this scene is undeniably important in relation to the sexual politics of the film. Of particular note are the ways in which, like Cléo, the taxi driver (Lucienne Marchand) refuses to adopt a passive, domesticated role in private realm of the home (as a housewife), but instead occupies – and indeed works within – the public domain of the street (a space that Varda defines as a site of patriarchal dominance). If only in this respect, *Cléo de 5 à 7* stands in counterpoint to the majority of the films discussed in chapter two, which instead feature a universe of domesticated women who often depend on men for financial support. Secondly, this scene subverts dominant discourses of the period in associating the car and the act of driving with a strong and independent female identity, rather than a retrograde masculine subjectivity founded upon virility and machismo (see, for example, Rozier's 1962 film, *Adieu Philippine* [chapter two]). The semiotic significance of the car is particularly evident when the female taxi driver firmly states that her taxi is not a DS, but an ID (a cheaper version of the DS linked to the term *idée*). Although brief, this remark can be interpreted as a political gesture, seeing as the Citroën DS (la Déesse) was often represented in popular discourses at the time as an eroticized and feminized

object of masculine desire and ownership (Barthes [1957: 152]; also see Ross [1995: 73, 147]). Indeed, the very fact that the car is an ID or, more precisely *une idée*, is arguably symptomatic of one of the central tenets of the film; that is, to expose gendered identities as socio-cultural constructs (or *idées*) rather than as an expression of an eternal essence (a viewpoint arguably inherited from the strand of existential feminism originally pioneered by Simone de Beauvoir in her 1949 treatise *Le Deuxième sexe*). During the journey (which lasts approximately five minutes in total), the taxi driver also reveals that she has recently been subjected to an unsuccessful robbery by a number of male passengers. That said, she appears unperturbed by the attack, instead responding to Angèle's statement that operating a taxi is 'un dur métier pour une femme' by claiming, 'il est même un peu dangereux, mais j'aime ça'. The effect of this conversation (and indeed the taxi ride itself) is to position the driver as a paragon of female independence, strength and liberation. At this point in the narrative, Cléo is yet to have undergone the ontological transformation associated with her later perambulations in the city. It is undoubtedly for this reason that, as the two women eventually reach Cléo's apartment, she appears disgusted by the driver's behaviour, claiming 'ça me révolte'. As one of the more measured female figures in the film, Angèle responds to their encounter in a more considered way, claiming 'moi, je la trouve courageuse et charmante'.

This chapter has previously considered the significance of Cléo's increasingly independent behaviour in the film, particularly after she frequents the Dôme café before visiting her model friend Dorothée. Although she does not occupy a huge amount of on-screen time in the film, Dorothée is nevertheless an important character in *Cléo de 5 à 7*, if only as she facilitates rather than hinders Cléo's transformation; from narcissistic object of the male gaze to an individual aware of the symbolic (spatial) violence of patriarchal ideology. The first time that Dorothée is introduced to the spectator is when Cléo enters the studio space in which she is posing naked as part of a sculpture class. After entering the room, Cléo pauses to admire her friend (who pulls a face), forming the final stage of a scopic dialectic, involving, firstly, a passive female object observed by an active, male voyeur (Cléo's status as a 'spectacle' in the street), secondly, an abject male body observed by an increasingly subjective female spectator (the point at which Cléo watches a number of street performers), thirdly, a fully subjective female figure observed by a voyeuristic gaze (the aforementioned street-walking scene in which Cléo is visually 'assaulted' by the gaze of others), and finally, a fully subjective female spectator (Cléo) who gazes admiringly at an equally subjective female figure (Dorothée).

Shortly after, the two women then leave the studio in order to drive along the streets of Paris in Dorothée's boyfriend's car. During the following few minutes of the film, Varda frames the two protagonists with a long, wide tracking shot: they discuss a number of topics of conversation, including Cléo's illness, her lover José and minder Angèle. During this scene, Dorothée thus emerges as a compassionate, independent and (sexually?) liberated figure, unashamed of her body and entirely unconcerned with abiding by the didactic and proscriptive rhetoric of dominant discourses of the period. Instead of being tied to the home, Dorothée asserts her independence in occupying – and, indeed – traversing the city streets by car. In this regard, the figure of Dorothée and the female taxi driver featured earlier in the film can be seen as to some extent comparable, although, whilst Cléo initially responds to the driver with revulsion, during this later scene, she appears to admire Dorothée's carefree behaviour. In different ways, both characters thus contribute to Cléo's increasingly liberated attitude towards her body and sensitivity towards the possibility of challenging patriarchal ideology through acts of spatial transgression. As I will now show, a similar process of transgression is also evident in Michel Drach's 1970 film, *Elise ou la vraie vie*.

#### **4.1.2 *Elise ou la vraie vie: occupying the factory line***

Co-produced by the Algerian ONCIC (*Office National pour le Commerce et l'Industrie Cinématographique*), Michel Drach's *Elise ou la vraie vie* is a 1970 film largely based on a 1967 novel by the French author Claire Etcherelli and set in 1957.<sup>129</sup> At the beginning of the film, Elise (Marie-José Nat [see also *L'Opium et le bâton*]) leaves Bordeaux in order to locate her Leftist brother Lucien (Jean-Pierre Bisson), who has moved to Paris in order to initiate a worker's (Marxist) revolution in a Citroën car factory located in the suburbs of the capital (although these scenes were actually filmed in a Renault factory in Algeria). After deciding to work with Lucien for a short period of time in order to earn money, Elise is struck by the racist and sexist attitudes of many of the French managers in the factory, who taunt her because of her gender and treat the immigrant workers with contempt. After a gruelling few days, Elise meets a young Algerian worker and FLN member named Arezki (Mohamed Chouikh [see also *Le Vent des Aurès*, chapter three]), who acts compassionately towards Elise before she agrees to go for a drink with him after work. From this point onwards, the couple spend an increasing amount of time together. This situation is not unproblematic: as Elise's

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<sup>129</sup> The film was partly funded by the ONCIC and partly by Drach himself.

feelings for Arezki begin to grow she starts to experience the prejudice directed towards Algerian immigrants first hand (including everyday racism and, more significantly, *les rafles* orchestrated by French police during the conflict). The film concludes after Lucien is killed by French police during a demonstration in the city and Arezki goes missing. Two weeks later Elise leaves Paris and returns to Bordeaux. Her experience of 'la vraie vie' has lasted nine months in total. As previous scholarship on the film is extremely rare, this analysis will draw largely on the small but significant number of works which discuss Etcherelli's text, including Atack (1990), Poole (1994), Haxell (1995), Ross (1995) and McIlvanney (1997). In particular, I will show how, like *Cléo de 5 à 7*, Drach's film uses the trope of a strong willed, mobile woman in order to critique colonial and patriarchal ideology.

In 1959, the cultural theorist Roland Barthes published his short essay, *La nouvelle Citroën*, a semiological study analysing the status of the car (and, in particular, *la Citroën Déesse*) in popular discourses of the period. One of the central tenets of Barthes's argument was the ways in which these discourses represented the car in terms of 'une absence d'origine' (1957: 88), despite the increasing visibility of car factories located on the outskirts of Paris (the Renault factory located in Billancourt being perhaps the most [in]famous). In stark contrast, Drach's film visualises what remains unseen in or 'cleansed' from these discourses; mainly the rise in union militancy that characterised the factories (led by Elise's brother Lucien), but also the high level of ex-colonial immigrants involved in France's largely state-led modernization drive. In the film itself, immigrants are treated largely with contempt by the French line managers and directors. Racial prejudice is especially evident when Elise initially arrives at the factory to ask if they have any available employment: whilst a number of Algerian immigrants are turned away, she is immediately considered as a potential employee. In a similar fashion, a few scenes later a French doctor replies to an Algerian worker's claim that he is called 'Mohamed' with the sarcastic retort, 'tous les Algériens s'appellent Mohamed'. Finally, after growing close to a number of Algerian workers in her section (notably Mustafa and Arezki), Elise is eventually fired for standing up to the increasingly racist slurs of their line manager.

In *Elise ou la vraie vie*, representations of the suburban car factory thus function on a number of levels. Firstly, Drach's realist representation of the factory as a space populated by ex-colonial immigrant workers acts in order to deconstruct one of the central myths of the largely state-led drive towards modernization; that is, of a modern

France cleansed of its colonial past and of colonial racism. Instead, Drach visualises the integral part the colonies played in the construction of post-colonial French society. In this respect, Kristin Ross's description of Etcherelli's novel as 'posing a threat to the smooth progress of capitalist modernization' could also be applied to Drach's film (1995: 139). Secondly, the film exposes the colonial stereotype of the lazy, duplicitous and ignorant Algerian immigrant as a myth. Instead, immigrant workers emerge as a hard-working community, subjected to discrimination by a small number of French workers who occupy all of the important positions in the factory (doctor, line manager, head recruiter). As Drach himself observes, '*Elise* pose des problèmes du travail à la chaîne, du travail des femmes, des cadences infernales, de l'immigration, du racisme' (1970: 55). One of the most important scenes in Drach's film occurs approximately three quarters into the narrative, during which the couple initially visit Arezki's alcoholic uncle before dining with a number of nationalist militants in a *bidonville* located in the northwest peripheral commune of Nanterre (figure 8). As Jim House has illustrated, Nanterre was to play a particularly important role in the events of 17 October 1961 (four years after the film was set), when between one and two hundred Algerians demonstrating against the use of police force were massacred in the 'bloodiest act of state repression of street protest in Western Europe in modern history' (House and MacMaster 2006: 1). As such, Drach's decision to set part of the film here transforms the city into a form of palimpsest in which traumatic legacies of colonialism emerge from behind the modernized façade of post-colonial Paris. During the scene itself, Arezki defends Elise from a particularly sceptical militant, who questions her commitment to the nationalist cause (when Arezki claims that 'elle est avec nous', he replies with the retort, 'non. Elle est avec toi'). After learning that the area is about to be subjected to *une rafle*, the couple then decide to go to Arezki's residence in order to be alone together. Having initially lied about where he lives, Arezki eventually concedes that he lives in Jaurès; a comparatively impoverished area located in the Goutte d'Or district – one of the only places in central Paris which remained, at this point, untouched by the large-scale suburbanization of the immigrant population.<sup>130</sup> Entering into Arezki's living quarters (a cramped and dilapidated single room which Drach himself

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<sup>130</sup> On a similar note, this period also witnessed the influx of a large number of Chinese and Vietnamese communities who tended to settle in the newly constructed tower blocks located in the central Place d'Italie (13<sup>th</sup> arrondissement) following the end of the Indochinese War. As Bernard Marchand claims, 'les grandes concentrations ethniques de la région parisienne marquent ainsi les liens étroits entre l'histoire de la et celle de la capitale' (1993: 303).



has described as *un taudis*<sup>131</sup> [1970:55]), the couple then embrace, before the police arrive in the adjacent street, arresting a number of men in the area and forcing Arezki to strip completely naked in front of Elise. The sequence ends when Arezki pleads with a hysterical Elise to return home.



Figure 8. Urban margins in Drach's *Elise ou la vraie vie* (1970)

Earlier in this section, I illustrated how Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7* arguably represents an anti-colonial text in its depiction of socio-spatial transgression; from the white, affluent centre of Paris to the racially segregated Place Denfert-Rochereau, situated in the 14<sup>th</sup> arrondissement. Questions remained, however, regarding Varda's apparent unwillingness to expose the central *taudis* and *bidonvilles* largely located on the urban margins of the city and inhabited by a mixture of working-class communities and ex-colonial immigrants. By contrast, in this sequence, the central two protagonists of Drach's film are shown to venture into these very margins, an act which subsequently exposes the processes of spatio-racial segregation that took place during the years of decolonization (in this respect the film shares parallels with Chris Marker's 1962

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<sup>131</sup> As Drach himself claims, 'Le taudis qu'Arezki habite dans le film était un vrai taudis où s'entassaient cinq personnes. Des Algériens, des Maliens, et même des Français payaient 180 francs par mois pour y dormir, les uns la nuit, les autres le jour' (1970: 55).

documentary *Le Joli mai*, which features images of unspecified *bidonvilles*). As Sara Poole claims in relation to Etcherelli's novel, the couple's 'world is that of the city's poor: "la chambre meublée," factory or shop-assistant work, scrimping. It is also that of this milieu's "marginiaux," its atypical members' (1994: 82).

This section has so far illustrated how Drach's narrative arguably represents an anti-colonial work in its structuring of narrative space. Whilst this may be true, it is also important to acknowledge the ways in which *Elise ou la vraie vie* also critiques patriarchal ideology in its representation of private (domestic) and public space. One of the most important spaces in Drach's film is the suburban factory in which Elise and her brother work. Upon her arrival at the factory (located in the southwest region of Billancourt), Elise appears initially stunned by the cacophony of industrial sounds and smells generated by the overwhelmingly masculine production line (during this scene Drach uses point-of-view shots to heighten this effect [see *Cléo de 5 à 7*, above, and *La Bataille d'Alger*, below, for a similar use of this formal technique as a method of spectatorial identification]). Elise is then introduced to her line manager, 'Monsieur Gilles' (Georges Claisse), who firstly complains about her lack of appropriate clothing before leading her down to her workstation whilst a number of other unidentified workers in the factory whistle and shout. Over the next few minutes, Elise is accompanied along the production line by a particularly patronising and sexist worker ('ah, c'est les femmes maintenant' he claims), who largely glosses over the role that Elise has been tasked to perform despite its complex and at points intricate nature (the factory is a potent example of the processes of Taylorism and Fordism that invaded public and private French society in the 1950s and 1960s). When an alarm announces a break in work, he then berates Elise for her exhausted appearance, blaming her apparent inability to deal with stress of the production line firstly on 'les ratons' (a pejorative term for Algerians), and then on her status as a woman ('ce n'est pas un travail de femmes!'). In this respect, Drach's narrative mirrors the following remarks made by the French philosopher and political activist Simone Weil, who spent a certain amount of time working in various factories located in the capital: 'en tant qu'ouvrière, j'étais dans une situation doublement inférieure, exposée à sentir ma dignité blessé non-seulement par les chefs, mais aussi par les ouvriers, du fait que je suis une femme' (1951: 202 cited in Poole 1994: 39).

With this in mind, one reading of the film is thus as a feminist text which attempts to deconstruct the stereotype of the domestic (passive) housewife by instead dramatising a fiercely independent woman who attempts to penetrate the traditionally

patriarchal world of *la chaîne*. As Drach himself has claimed, ‘je voulais à tout prix que Marie-José joue Elise pour qu’elle joue enfin d’autres rôles que ces rôles d’adorable dragée dans lesquels on la confine’ (1970: 55). However, within this interpretation, a word of caution is necessary. One of the most important aspect of Drach’s film is the small group of women who sporadically appear in the cloakroom of the factory whilst Elise silently changes into her work uniform. During these scenes, a subtle although pervasive tension is apparent: between these women (who largely abide by the sociogendered codes of the factory by remaining within the cloakroom when they are not working in the offices separated from *la chaîne*), and Elise (who eats with Lucien and the other male workers when not positioned on the masculine space of the assembly line). If only in this respect, the political potential of the film is arguably undermined by the simple fact that female independence is not represented as a structuring norm in late 1950s’ society, but atypical, singular and unusual.<sup>132</sup> This observation thus positions *Elise ou la vraie vie* in contrast to Varda’s film, which instead weaves a subtle narrative of sisterhood united against patriarchy through Cléo’s relationship with Dorothee. The fact that Elise is eventually fired from the factory also forms a surprisingly fatalistic climax to a film otherwise characterised by the possibility of sociogendered revolution.

Whilst the first half of Drach’s film chronicles Elise’s arduous entry into the masculine world of work, the second half of the narrative shifts in focus in order to concentrate largely upon the blossoming romance between Elise and Arezki, who spend an increasing amount of time together after work strolling through the Parisian streets. In Drach’s film, the couple stroll together four times. The first of these occasions occurs when Arezki asks Elise whether she would like to go for a drink with him on the pretext that it is his birthday. As the couple do not want to be seen together by their colleagues, they face away from each other on the tram after work, before entering a brightly lit and crowded café filled with anonymous French workers (Drach uses a point-of-view shot here to emphasise the negative attention aroused by the couple). The couple then engage in a brief, warm conversation before Arezki walks Elise to her bus. The couple agree to meet for a second time shortly after. On this occasion, the couple frequent a comparatively empty café (free from the discriminatory gazes of others), talking freely about their past before Arezki leaves Elise at the local metro. Just before getting on the train, Elise has a sudden change of heart: running back up the metro stairs towards Arezki, she witnesses a number of Algerians being bundled into the back of a van in *une*

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<sup>132</sup> At one point in the film, a female worker even insults Elise by ridiculing Arezki’s Algerian heritage.

*rafle* (although it is unclear whether Arezki is amongst them). On the third occasion that the couple meet, the two lovers stumble into a busy café, before two older French men sitting next to them make disparaging comments about Algerian immigrants (one of the men claims that he would like to bomb Algeria). Making a swift exit from the café, the couple then stroll melancholically through the streets of Paris until Arezki is violently arrested by the police. Towards the end of the narrative, Elise and Arezki make their fourth journey through Paris, visiting Arezki's alcoholic uncle, the shanty towns located on the outskirts of the city (Nanterre), and Arezki's residence in Jaurès. This is the last time that the couple will be able to stroll through the city before Arezki goes missing.

These journeys are important for a number of reasons. Firstly, for Arezki, they represent an act of resistance against the government enforced curfews in place during the period, especially when Maurine Papon was appointed *préfet de police* in Paris in 1958 after performing a similar role in Algeria (Constantine). As Etcherelli claims in her original novel, 'Paris was an enormous ambush through which we moved with ludicrous precautions' (cited in Ross 1995: 176). It is also important to note the number of implicitly 'white' spaces that the couple penetrate during their journeys. This observation is particularly applicable to number of cafés frequented by the two lovers in which they are often subjected to racial slurs.<sup>133</sup> According to this reading of the film, Elise and Arezki's journeys through the city involve an anti-colonial element, in that they subtly resist the process of spatio-racial segregation that took place in the years of decolonization (see above for a discussion of how Varda's film achieves this aim in inversely visualising a journey from the centre to the racially inflected Place Denfert-Rochereau). On a more general note, the couple's perambulations through the city also evoke the FLN's later attempts to 'symbolically occupy' the 'exclusive districts of the French capital' during the ill-fated demonstrations of 17 October 1961 (Feldman 2014: 168-169). It is this desire to challenge the neo-colonial fragmentation of Paris that was later encapsulated by Henri Lefebvre's notion of the 'right to the city' as a 'demand [for] a transformed and renewed access to urban life' (1996: 158).

Earlier in this section I illustrated how Varda mediates Cléo's transformation from spectacle to independent subject via the trope of socio-spatial transgression (from

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<sup>133</sup> To a certain extent, Drach's film downplays the socio-spatial element of Etcherelli's original novel, in which Elise and Arezki's journeys are described in long paragraphs replete with rich detail regarding the topography and semiology of the city. Margaret Attack, in particular, has stressed the 'thematically and structurally important' representation of the city in the novel (1990: 62), whilst Sarah Poole has described how Etcherelli's Paris functions 'metaphorically for Elise's coming to awareness' (Poole 1994: 195). For Bridgett Longust, Etcherelli's Paris is a 'dystopian space of death and fear' (1996: 75).

domestic to public space). This observation is to some extent applicable to Etcherelli/Drach's narrative, in which the central female protagonist increasingly inhabits the 'masculine' space of the street rather than the typically 'feminine' space of the home. With this in mind, Drach's film can be seen to subvert the ideal version of womanhood propagated in 1950s' and 1960s' women's press, which instead symbolically restricted French women to the domestic realm. It is for this reason that Sara Poole has defined the journeys made by the couple through the capital as instrumental to Elise's process of self-discovery (that is, if we are to interpret Poole's reading in a feminist light) (1994: 63). That said, a number of observations also undermine the progressive anti-patriarchal potential of both films. One of the major parallels between the two works is that, although Cléo and Elise challenge patriarchal ideology in occupying the 'masculine' space of the street, in both cases this process of resistance is implicitly associated with the emotional, financial and political support of men. In Varda's film, it is Antoine and, to some extent José who supports Cléo's ontological transformation, whereas in Drach's film it is Elise's brother Lucien and then Arezki, who enables her to traverse Paris through his knowledge of the city.<sup>134</sup> It is for this reason that Sara Poole has defined Arezki as the person who 'forces Elise to leave the sidelines and move towards [a] coming to awareness, a process mirrored by her abandoning of the city limits and guided exploration of the city' (1994: 199). A final difference between the two films relates to their representation of domestic space. What is immediately apparent in comparing the two works is the obvious disparity between Varda's privileging of the (idealized) bourgeois home (see above for a discussion of this space) and the ways in which Elise is apparently unable to afford anything other than a cramped sombre room in a dilapidated women's refuge located in the poor northern suburb of Saint-Denis. Elise's inability to afford an expensive hotel room or apartment is not surprising given her social status (provincial working-class), but it is also linked to the way in which, unlike Cléo, Elise dreams of a room in which her and her lover can be alone together. This peripatetic quest for what Kristin Ross has alternately termed 'a self' and 'an interiority' (1995: 95) should not, however, be interpreted as a sign of acquiescence towards domestic discourses of the period (which represented the home as a secure, safe and above all feminine space), but is rather indicative of a desire to escape the racist discrimination experienced by the couple, particularly when the venture into public spaces (for example the largely white, working-class cafés located in the margins

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<sup>134</sup> In Drach's film, Lucien supports Elise by providing financial aide and political guidance. Much to the consternation of Arezki, he is also the only person with whom she uses the informal subject pronoun 'tu' as opposed to 'vous'.

of the city). As Bridgett Longust claims in relation to Etcherelli's original novel, 'the "real life" that Elise and Arezki share together is the streets, for they do not have access to a safe place inside' (1996: 67). As I will now show, a similar emphasis upon the symbolic power of the domestic sphere is also evident in Gillo Pontecorvo's 1966 film *La Bataille d'Alger* and Assia Djebar's 1978 *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua*. However, these films will also be shown to differ from either Varda or Drach's narratives in their highly graphic representation of colonial rule and post-colonial (rural) patriarchy.

## 4.2 Algerian Cinema

### 4.2.1 *La Bataille d'Alger: transgressing the colonial city*

Gillo Pontecorvo's *La Bataille d'Alger* is a 1966 Italo-Algerian co-production which chronicles France's significant if ultimately pyrrhic victory in 1956 to 1957, when the nationalist movement shifted its focus from the rural maquis of Kabylia and the Aurès Mountains to the capital. The film itself is influenced by the work of the revolutionary-nationalist theorist Frantz Fanon, and based around a historically accurate depiction of two FLN leaders, Ali La Pointe (Brahim Haggiag), and Jaffar, played by Yacef Saadi (who both part-financed the film through his company Casbah Films and participated in the conflict itself). The film begins when French paratroopers locate Ali's cramped hideout in the Casbah: he and a number of other militants appear tense although unwilling to surrender. Leaving their fate unresolved, the narrative then steps back in time in order to chronicle the events leading up to this disclosure, including Ali's radicalization in prison after witnessing the French army guillotining civilians suspected of participating in the conflict,<sup>135</sup> the logistical and organizational logic of nationalist cells, and the attempts at counter-terrorism orchestrated by the ruthless Colonel Mathieu (a composite of counter-insurgency officers, including Jacques Massu), who leads the attempted control, penetration, and eventual bombing of the Casbah. The film also includes a dramatisation of the so-called milk bar bombings orchestrated by Abane Ramdane and Yacef Saadi, and executed by the three famous *fidayate*, Djamila Bouhired, Samia Lakhdari and Zohra Drif on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 1956. Towards the

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<sup>135</sup> Although they are not mentioned by name, we can assume that these scenes implicitly refer to the deaths of Ahmed Zabana and Abdelkader Ferradj, two individuals guillotined in 1956 after having been suspected of participating in the revolution. As Alistair Horne has claimed, it is arguably this event that sparked the beginning of the Battle of Algiers (2006: 183).

end of the narrative, Pontecorvo returns to the images of Ali visualised in the opening scenes, before French forces blow up the young partisan after he refuses to surrender (other militants killed in the blast include a young woman based on the female *moudjahidat* Hassiba Ben Bouali and boy messenger known as Petit Omar). The narrative concludes with a coda depicting images of nationalist demonstrations and riots, reminding the spectator that although France achieved a significant tactical coup during the Battle of Algiers, it would eventually lose the Algerian War just five years later. Fabian Klose has also drawn attention to the ways in which France's use of torture during this period 'transformed military victory into a political defeat', as French society came to question the legitimacy of what was increasingly termed *une sale guerre* (2013: 88).

One of the most important aspects of *La Bataille d'Alger* is Pontecorvo's representation of the colonial city-space. Of particular note are the ways in which Pontecorvo reinforces a conception of colonial domination as a fundamentally spatial ideology predicated upon the delineation and control of borders and boundaries. Indeed, this observation is applicable to the second scene in the narrative, in which Ali La Pointe is shown scamming European settlers through a table-top card trick, before a middle-aged *piéd noir* woman alerts the police to his presence. Realising that the policemen have seen him, Ali then begins running down the vast boulevard before he is eventually captured and beaten by a baying mob of European settlers. Whilst it is unclear whether Ali's actions have broken French law (the majority of settlers engaging in the card game appear eager to play), what is immediately apparent in this scene is that Ali's presence in the colonial zone is tantamount to transgression. It is arguably for this reason (rather than his card-game) that he is eventually arrested. A similar situation also occurs later in the narrative when an elderly Algerian man is pictured lounging on the pavement in one of architecturally grandiose European areas of Algiers after a spate of assassinations perpetrated by guerrilla militants in the area. Suddenly, the man becomes aware of the vast number of settlers observing him from the surrounding high, neo-classical facades, establishing a simple spatial dichotomy; between a literally and symbolically dominant colonial mass (who hysterically scream 'murderer!' above the man before the police arrive to arrest him), and a subjugated colonized minority (whose bemused behaviour reveals innocence rather than guilt). Again the message is clear: the man is guilty of transgressing the underlying socio-spatial codes of the colonial city, irrespective of whether he has committed any actual crime (these codes being

particularly powerful during the Battle of Algiers).<sup>136</sup> As Frantz Fanon was to write in 1959, ‘the zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. The two zones are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity. Obedient to the rules of pure Aristotelian logic, they both follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity’ (1965 [1959]: 39). In this respect, the racialization of everyday space makes the ‘relief of anonymity’ (Kahn 1987) or the ‘melting pot’ of the modern city (Berman 1982) difficult to experience for those racialized as non-White. Whilst these two examples illustrate the ways in which colonized individuals were persecuted by the symbolic codes inscribed in colonial Algiers, the film also explores the ways in which nationalist militants manipulated these codes as a method of anti-colonial resistance. This applies firstly to the ways in which Yacef Saadi (in the film and in reality) ‘transformed the topography of the Casbah, creating an elaborate underground world of secret passages, safe houses, concealed rooms, and hidden bomb making factories’ (Evans 2012: 203), but it is also evident in the film’s dramatisation of a number of guerrilla assassinations perpetrated largely by young militant men, who are able to disappear into the Casbah after attacking targets in European zones precisely due to the spatial and racial segregation that existed in the city.

France’s response to this escalating violence was swift and initially effective: in March 1956, the Algerian minister Robert Lacoste granted General Jacques Massu full responsibility for maintaining order in the city (known as *des pouvoirs spéciaux*), a decision perhaps best evinced through the deployment of 8,000 paratroopers into Algiers on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January, 1957, who proceeded to illustrate their ownership and mastery of colonial space via a number of high-profile processions through the city (as shown in the film). Bolstered by almost unprecedented military autonomy, various counter-insurgency tactics subsequently employed by Massu thus included the authorisation and institutionalisation of torture, the construction of *des zones interdites* (where stay was regulated or prohibited), the establishment of internment camps for nationalist sympathisers (the most notorious of these being the Barberousse prison), the enforcement of a curfew, and, perhaps most importantly in relation to this analysis, the application of *quadrillage*, that is, a tactic of politico-subversive warfare revolving around the socio-spatial control, division, and fragmentation of the city through a grid of military posts. Perhaps the most important scene in *La Bataille d’Alger* involves Pontecorvo’s dramatisation of the famous female bombing sequence, after an explosive

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<sup>136</sup> Perhaps the most explicit example of the symbolic violence of colonial socio-spatial logic was the *code de l’indigénat* which, until 1944, prohibited begging outside one’s commune (Khanna 2008: 9).



secretly planted in the Casbah by French officials has killed approximately seventy people. In the film, the traumatised community is initially shown attempting to descend into the settler quarters in order to demonstrate against the attack, before Jaffer appeals to the crowd to stop (on the pretence that they will all be killed), promising the FLN will avenge them. The camera then cuts to images of three Algerian women in an interior (domestic) space, whilst fast, non-diegetic percussion drowns out diegetic dialogue. The women are subsequently shown removing their veils, cutting their hair and applying makeup in order to adopt a more westernized appearance: they have been tasked to masquerade as European settlers (or at least westernised Algerian women) in order to carry bombs through the besieged city. Over the next few minutes, the film dramatises the trajectory of the women, who leave the confines of domestic space in order to pass the checkpoints located strategically around Algiers (figure 9). Two of the bombs successfully explode: that the resulting carnage is filmed without pathos is arguably one of the reasons that the French government banned the film until 1974. Ranjana Khanna has previously illustrated the ways in which this sequence ‘contrasts starkly with the [...] high neo-realism of the demonstration crowd scenes’, (2008: 20) an observation equally supported by Joan Mellen’s description of the images in terms of ‘a theatrical [...], nonrealistic aura’ (cited in Khanna 2008: 20). Whilst these observations are certainly indicative of an unexplored aspect of Pontecorvo’s film,<sup>137</sup> what is more relevant to my own analysis are the ways in which this sequence again illustrates France’s apparent inability to control the revolutionary aspects of the national movement, which disrupts the strict Manichean dualism characteristic of colonial spatial logic through an act of gendered, socio-spatial transgression.<sup>138</sup> In this respect, Pontecorvo’s film can be seen to share parallels with other Algerian films of the period, which also use the trope of socio-spatial transgression as a revolutionary anti-colonial praxis (although this transgression takes place largely in the rural Wilayas of Kabylia and the Aurès Mountains [see chapter three, section one]). However, as I will now show, *La Bataille d’Alger* also differs from these films in using images of gendered socio-spatial transgression as a critique of patriarchal ideology.

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<sup>137</sup>See Sharpe (2012) for a discussion of the relationship between the form and sexual politics of this sequence.

<sup>138</sup>This sequence is particularly revelatory of Fanon’s influence upon the film, since he ‘viewed decolonization in part as a form of reappropriating and transforming spatial relations in the colonial city’ (Kipfer 2007: 701).



Figure 9. Female urban resistance in Pontecorvo's *La Bataille d'Alger* (1966)

This analysis has briefly mentioned the ways in which Pontecorvo appropriates the theories of Frantz Fanon in his depiction of the vicissitudes of national becoming. *La Bataille d'Alger* is particularly influenced by Fanon's 1959 chapter 'L'Algérie se dévoile' (included in his monograph *L'An V de la révolution Algérienne*), a sociological and semiological treatise examining the symbolic role of the *moudjahidat* (and the act of veiling/unveiling) in the conflict. Of particular note is Fanon's description of colonized women as doubly confined under colonization, firstly by the restrictive socio-spatial codes of the colonial city, and secondly by the ways in which colonization – at least initially – <sup>139</sup> reinforced the legacy of domesticity and gender division in pre-colonial architecture and interior design (Fanon 1959; Çelik 1996: 129-130; Djebbar 2001: 24). To this equation we may also add a third component, in the form of the veil (or more precisely the *haïk*), a method of patriarchal control based (according to a feminist reading) around concealing the potentially transgressive aspects of female sexuality.<sup>140</sup> According to Fanon, one of the ways in which Algerian women could resist against the processes of sequestration and domestication inherent within the colonial project was by adopting an active role in the urban struggle; as unveiled

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<sup>139</sup> It is important to note that, during the later years of the war, French officials made a concerted effort to tempt Algerian women from the domestic realm as part of a wider policy of unveiling the female, colonized population (see MacMaster 2012).

<sup>140</sup> It is important to note that the veil (and its regional and cultural variants) is 'a shifting signifier that moves between signing captivity (in patriarchal hegemonic discourse) and freedom (as a liberated speaking subject)' (Foster 1997: 33). Fanon has also drawn attention to the 'historical dynamism' of the veil within Algeria's struggle for independence (1965 [1959]: 185).

*fidayate* tasked with carrying weapons through the city. In this respect, the three women who feature in Pontecorvo's film execute a triple act of socio-spatial anti-colonial transgression; from the confined space of the Casbah to the vast, neo-classical boulevards of the settler quarter; from the domestic space of the home to the masculine public space of the street (known in Islam as the *umma*); and finally, from the anonymous state of being veiled (a form of spatial confinement analogous to the threshold separating private/public space) to a state of revolutionary corporeal freedom and visibility. As Fanon claims, 'the Algerian woman who walks stark naked into the European city relearns her body, re-establishes it in a totally revolutionary fashion. The new dialectic of the body and the world is primary in the case of one revolutionary woman' (1965 [1959]: 59). In a particularly astute reading of the film, Austin has also drawn attention to the ways in which the initial part of this sequence imitates the trope of the colonial harem (in particular Eugène Delacroix's 1834 painting, *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement*), in mediating Algeria through the metonymy of 'incarcerated, passive femininity' (2012: 37). Significant too are the ways in which these images allude to the tendency in colonial discourse to represent Algerian women in a state of unveiling via a voyeuristic gaze (Alloula 1986: 68). In the initial half of this sequence, this voyeurism is prefigured through a commitment to Hollywood realism that, as Laura Mulvey has famously argued, construes women as passive objects of the spectatorial gaze (1975: 803). However, in the second part of this sequence, this sense of domesticity and passivity is overturned, firstly in the revelation that the women are able and willing to transcend the confines of domestic space (unlike the archetypal object of the colonial harem), but also in the increased use of subjective shots, which encourage the spectator to support the women's task, 'not necessarily out of political sympathy but through the mechanisms of cinematic identification' (Stam and Spence 1983: 13 [see also Varda's use of this formal technique in order to represent Cléo's perambulations through Paris]). In this respect, Pontecorvo's representation of gendered, socio-spatial transgression can thus be seen as a method of symbolically liberating Algerian women from a history of symbolic passivity and imprisonment in colonial discourse, and, in particular, within the colonial harem.

In this analysis, I have shown how Pontecorvo's narrative differs from the films discussed in the third chapter of this thesis by using the trope of socio-spatial transgression as a method of proposing a new vision of Algerian womanhood located outside the parameters of patriarchal discourse. However, despite the feverish and apparently progressive strain of nationalism depicted in *La Bataille d'Alger*,

Pontecorvo's film should also be treated with caution for a number of reasons. Firstly, although I have chosen to focus largely on a section of the film in which Algerian women actively participate in the Revolution, for the majority of the narrative this participation is muted by a subtle although significant emphasis on the male FLN leaders, Ali la Pointe, Ben M'Hidi and Yacef Saadi/Djefar, who make almost all of the politico-military decisions in the film before sacrificing themselves, as martyrs, to the Revolution. With this in mind, Katherine Roberts has defined these leaders as 'psychologically motivated characters whose actions are to be understood within a well-defined paradigm of submission, alienation and eventual revolt' (2007: 389). Moreover, a number of moments in the narrative appear to undermine women's involvement in the conflict. Hence the significance of an early scene in which Ali la Pointe hunts down an individual unwilling to join the Revolution in a Casbah filled with prostitutes; a brief although important allusion to the gendered Islamic puritanism that lay at the heart of nationalist ideology (along with drugs and wine, prostitution was banned by the FLN). On a slightly different note, women's role in the movement is again downplayed when a young couple are wed as part of a clandestine marriage orchestrated by FLN leaders, as such associating Algerian women with prospective domesticity and patriarchal tradition rather than personal independence and nationalist militancy. As official FLN documents written in early 1957 reveal: 'we must prepare [women] for their role as wives, mothers, housewives and citizens' (cited in MacMaster 2012: 338). Evidently, neither of these scenes are particularly empowering in relation to the processes of masculine martyrology and hagiography that exist, as a subtext, throughout the film. Instead, Algerian women are positioned at the disempowered margins of a patriarchal binary; as either "mothers" or "whores".

In the later stages of the film, Yacef Saadi/Jaffar is finally captured after French military officials expose the location of his hideout in the Casbah. With him is Zohra Drif, Saadi's romantic partner at the time, who, in addition to being involved in the "milk bar bombings" analysed earlier in this section, was also temporarily responsible for the resistance in Algiers after Saadi was effectively immobilised by the crackdown on the city. Evidently, this is a crucial piece of information that should have been included in a film that professes to chronicle – in minute, documentary-like fashion – the campaign of guerrilla warfare carried out by the FLN in 1957. However, this is not the case. Instead *La Bataille d'Alger* again seems to minimise women's engagement in the insurrection by instead defining Yacef Saadi/Djefar as the unequivocal, executive leader of the Algiers FLN faction. As Matthew Evangelista claims, Yacef (whose

account of the war the narrative is largely based) ‘downplays the women’s contribution when he fails to mention [the fact that Zohra Drif] came to lead the resistance in Algiers when he could no longer move around for fear of arrest’ (2011: 56). It is precisely this process of gendered elision that is tackled in Assia Djebar’s 1978 work *La Nouba des Femmes du Mont Chenoua*, again through representations of socio-spatial transgression.

#### 4.2.2 *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua: transgressing the threshold*

Filmed in 1977 and screened on television in 1978, Assia Djebar’s work, *La Nouba*<sup>141</sup> *des femmes du Mont Chenoua*<sup>142</sup> was the first feature-length Algerian film made by a female director. The narrative itself chronicles an unveiled female protagonist, Lila (Sawsan Noweir), interviewing a number of the countrywomen of Cherchell who detail their involvement in the conflict. As Reda Bensmaïa has illustrated, *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua* ‘offers viewers none of the classic narrative perspective that would enable them to close the circle and enter the subject matter of the film’ (1996: 877). Rather, Djebar’s film oscillates elliptically between details regarding the martyrdom of a woman named Zouleikha to Lila’s aphasic husband Ali (Mohamed Haymour), to Lila herself, whose epistemological attempts at understanding and chronicling the Revolution become increasingly eclipsed by an ontological transformation; from the symbolic violence of patriarchal ideology to a state of liberated, independent womanhood.

In the previous two chapters of this thesis, I have dealt mainly with films produced during or in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, from the early to late 1960s. Screened 16 years after the end of the conflict in 1978, Djebar’s narrative obviously represents an exception to this rule.<sup>143</sup> However, as we will see, *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua* nevertheless forms an important addition to this corpus, firstly as it allows us to access the long-term effects of independence upon Algerian society (in this respect it is to some extent comparable to *Le Boucher* [1969] and *Elise ou la vraie vie* [1970]), but also as, out of all of the films that we have analysed, Djebar’s narrative is perhaps the most sensitive to the symbolic power of social and

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<sup>141</sup> A *nouba* is a traditional Andalusian style of music that originated in Arab Spain during the eighth and ninth century. It is usually split into eight movements and characterized by its fixed course and key.

<sup>142</sup> Mount Chenoua is a mountain group between Cherchell and Tipasa on the coast of Algeria, west of Algiers. The majority of its inhabitants speak Berber.

<sup>143</sup> In this respect the film can be classed as a form of *cinéma djidid* (young cinema) or what Ella Shohat has termed ‘Post-Third-Worldist cinema’ (2003; 2006).

narrative space; as a method of replicating and resisting the ideological parameters of masculine domination.

Entitled 'Toushia: Ouverture', the opening act of Djébar's film is perhaps the most significant in relation to this analysis due to its highly complex representation of domestic space. The act itself begins by visualizing a young woman (who the spectator later learns is called Lila) leaning against a stark, interior wall. Individually framed in a medium shot, Lila is thus from the outset defined distinctly from her husband Ali who, at least initially, inhabits the obscure realm of off-screen space. Lila then moves slowly towards an inner doorframe, splitting the cinematic frame in two, and thus again defining domestic space fundamentally in terms of a gendered division, whilst Djébar's authorial, non-diegetic voice-over laments, 'I speak, I speak, I speak. I don't want anyone to see me. I don't want you to see me as I really am. Prisoner, fate made you a prisoner, in silence... in time and space'.<sup>144</sup> The camera then shifts to Ali (who gazes but does not speak), whilst Lila herself walks towards a painting of the Algerian countryside, positioned incongruously in the corner of the room. Acting metonymically as a sign of public space, Lila's position at the margins of its frame thus bears witness to an unrealized desire to transcend the confines of the domestic sphere (figure 10). In this initial scene, patterns of framing, *mise-en-scène* and non-diegetic monologue combine to define the domestic, private sphere as a space of gendered division and female confinement. On the other hand, it is ambiguous whether this sphere is a site of literal imprisonment until Lila walks over to the open door (framed previously in the corner of the composition), melancholically admiring the Chenoua Mountains whilst Djébar claims, 'independence, this was yesterday', bearing witness to a certain gendered disillusionment with the post-colonial nation state. Crucially, although she is evidently free to leave the household (Ali at no point challenges her), Lila seems unable – or at least initially hesitant – to transgress the boundaries of the domestic threshold. Instead, she appears *symbolically* imprisoned within her home. This is a recurring narrative trope that Djébar uses across her literary *oeuvre*, notably in her 1995 work *Vaste est la prison* (Hiddleston 2006: 92–93).

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<sup>144</sup> All of the quotes in this section have been taken from the subtitles of the film, whose dialogue is comprised primarily of Arabic or Berber.



Figure 10. Domestic symbolic violence in Djebbar's *La Noubia des femmes du Mont Chenoua* (1978)

One way of analysing Djebbar's representation of symbolic imprisonment is via the work of Pierre Bourdieu, whose ethnographic study of 1960s' Kabylia (located in northeast Algeria) proves pertinent to the setting of Djebbar's film (set in northwest Algeria) given the shared Berber heritage of the two regions. Specifically, Bourdieu defines Berber society as governed by laws of masculine domination that gain their legitimacy from a form of 'symbolic violence', that is, 'a gentle imperceptible violence' predicated upon processes of dehistoricization, eternalization and the establishment of arbitrary binary opposites as opposed to physical harm (2001: 1–2). Furthermore, Bourdieu identifies one of the main sites of symbolic violence as the domestic space of the home, which crystallizes gendered divisions, and thus hierarchies, in ascribing arbitrary symbolic meaning to spaces (public and private) and the movement of social bodies within these spaces. He argues that

as if femininity were measured by the art of ‘shrinking’ (in Berber the feminine is marked by the diminutive form), women are held in a kind of *invisible enclosure* (of which the veil is the only visible manifestation) circumscribing the space allowed for the movements and postures of their bodies (whereas men occupy more space, especially in public places) (Bourdieu 2001: 23 [emphasis in original]).

Characterized by an underlying sense of (gendered) confinement and division, Djebbar’s representation of domestic space thus forms a paradigm of the sites of symbolic violence theorized by Bourdieu. Furthermore, I would argue that this scene is particularly significant as it prefigures the broader aims of the film: to deconstruct (invisible) symbolic forms of masculine domination precisely through structured (visible) patterns of narrative space (see also Varda’s representation of urban, public space, above). In direct counterpoint to the representations of domestic space as a site of symbolic violence, Djebbar’s film subsequently constructs a number of interconnected sites of female resistance. These are sites defined as vast, open spaces, characterized by an emphasis on the acts of contiguity and spatial transcendence, and constructing what Reda Bensmaïa has defined as a ‘*topography of feminine places* [...] in which the female body is inscribed in its multiplicity; sometimes as a space opening out onto infinity, bounded only by the gaze cast upon the horizon’ (1996: 878 [emphasis in original]). Perhaps the most important of these sites is the couple’s bedroom, which stands in direct counterpoint to the domestic space visualized in the initial act. Here, wide shots of the bedroom replace the isolated mid-shots of Lila’s face, a shift in framing that emphasizes matrilineal solidarity as opposed to gendered division. Within this space, Lila is also frequently shown recounting stories to her daughter Aïcha whilst at one point in the narrative a number of doves are shown flying in the upper reaches of the room, the camera tilting upwards in order to detail their path. This use of camera movement stands in direct contrast to the static shots used within the initial act, which is instead characterized by a profound sense of symbolic confinement.<sup>145</sup> During these scenes, Djebbar also uses a complex *mise-en-scène* to position Ali as symbolically excluded from this space (visually and physically); he frequently peers into the bedroom from the hallway, dispossessed of his initially dominant gaze and sexually emasculated by his physical disability.

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<sup>145</sup> The use of birds as a shifting signifier to represent imprisonment and emancipation is also a visual trope of female Tunisian director Moufida Tlatli’s 1994 work, *Les Silences du palais*, with which Djebbar’s film shares certain parallels discussed later in this analysis.



This intimate relationship between space and matrilineal genealogy is also present within fictional representations of Djebbar's childhood bedroom, in which a young Djebbar is frequently shown listening to her grandmother's narratives. As Djebbar herself claims in a non-diegetic voice-over, 'as a little girl, in bed, I listened to granny every night tell, in her own special way, the story of our tribe'. As with Ali and Lila's bedroom, soft lighting is used in order to create a sense of the oneiric, dreamlike and haptic, whilst, later in the narrative, Djebbar uses a slow tracking shot to visualize an apparently endless line of women and children crouched on the floor of her fictional bedroom. In a similar way to the previous shot of flying doves (set in Lila and Ali's bedroom) patterns of *mise-en-scène* and cinematography combine to deconstruct a conception of the domestic domain as a hermetically sealed entity. Here, the non-diegetic sounds of animals and wind also suggests the crossing (or transcendence) of spatial divides: from diegetic to non-diegetic and interior to exterior.

A third site of female resistance emerges during the couple's trip to a local farm, situated high in the hills of the Chenoua Mountains. Whilst Ali examines a number of the animals, Lila explores the corresponding residence, wandering melancholically through the immense corridors and peering out over the adjacent gardens through a wide, open window. For a fleeting second, she appears lost within a moment of symbolic emancipation from the historical boundaries imposed by domestic space. Lila then returns to the stables below to talk to Ali, lamenting; 'What a beautiful house. You treat cattle, you cure them. But as an architect, I always wanted to build houses of glass, transparent houses'. This crucial piece of dialogue thus again destabilizes a conception of the domestic space as a hermetically sealed, feminine space. Instead, Lila's self-positioning as a symbolic "architect" inscribes a sense of female agency into the diegesis, whilst her aspirations of building 'transparent houses' emphasizes the significance of the gaze – in particular the prohibition of the gaze – in relation to gendered, socio-spatial codes. Nevertheless, this sequence also illustrates the pervasive dominance of patriarchal ideology through formal technique. In particular, whilst Lila certainly experiences a brief moment of emancipation from patterns of masculine domination, Djebbar's camera then shifts from a wide-angle shot framing both protagonists, to a close-up of Lila's contorted face against the stark, whitewashed walls of the farmhouse. The shot mirrors the initial act within the diegesis during which Lila is symbolically imprisoned in domestic space. As I will later illustrate, this sense of circularity (or perpetual return) forms part of a wider theme within the film, constructing what Bensmaïa has termed 'a world in progress, in gestation' (1996: 877).

The final space of female resistance within the narrative can be found in the Cave of Dhara, which, as Djébar describes, formed part of the 1871 Beni-Manacer nationalist revolt led by Sidi Malek. After depicting the nationalist fighters preparing for battle on horseback (a sequence from which the French are conspicuously absent), Djébar then cuts to images of women waiting with a number of children in the cave, claiming ‘when the men left to fight, the women waited. They were used to waiting’. Yet, crucially, representations of this cave are not restricted to dramatizing the act of waiting. In particular, whilst Lila is shown asleep sailing on the Mediterranean Sea (the symbolism of which is discussed below), the women again take to the cave, playing and dancing to a *nouba*, an act which, in many ways represents the absolute antithesis of “waiting”, if waiting is interpreted as a fundamentally static act. In particular, I would argue that it is important to analyse this sequence in relation to Djébar’s essay ‘Regard interdit, son coupé’,<sup>146</sup> in which she discusses the importance of Pablo Picasso’s 1955 work *Les Femmes d’Alger*. Djébar claims that this work represents ‘the liberation of glorious space, the awakening of the body in dance, in usage, in free movement’ (Djébar 2001: 260). There is a clear emphasis upon motion analogously present in the imagery of the cave, an emphasis that stands in stark opposition to the underlying sense of stasis and confinement historically characteristic of the Orientalist/colonial phantasm of harem although here associated (in the initial act) with contemporaneous domestic space. As Djébar explicitly states in her film, ‘the women were dancing and singing, but under the ground’. Furthermore, the visual topos of the cave also occupies a prominent position within Djébar’s wider literary *oeuvre*. In particular, discussing Djébar’s short story *Femmes d’Alger dans leur appartement* (2001), Khanna claims that representations of interiority in the narrative simultaneously reference ‘Algeria’s cavernous and mountainous landscape [...] and Plato’s metaphor of the cave’, as an illusory, phantasmagoric realm of confinement (2008: 165). Specifically, Khanna illustrates the ways in which Djébar recasts the Platonic cave as a site of symbolic female imprisonment analogous to the domestic domain; it is, she argues, a space which needs to be ‘transcended’ (2008: 165). Yet, do the women within Djébar’s film explicitly transcend the confines of the Cave of Dhara? In fact, I would rather claim that it is Lila’s synchronized journey around the coastline of Chenoua that symbolically emancipates these women from this obscure realm, arguably in the same way that Djébar’s literature and cinema act in order to free Algerian women from their state of

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<sup>146</sup> In the essay, Djébar also analyses Delacroix’s 1834 painting *Les Femmes d’Alger dans leur appartement*, which she claims crystallizes the colonial phantasm of the harem as ‘a rarefied atmosphere of confinement’ predicated upon a masculine, Eurocentric gaze (2001: 242–43).

subalternity within dominant (masculine) historiography. As Djebbar writes, ‘the woman who moves beyond this blindfolded, shadowy existence must not forget those who are incarcerated’ as she is ‘momentarily blinded by the sun’ (1980 cited in Khanna 2008: 165). The fact that Lila returns to the (then empty) cave after her journey on the Mediterranean Sea thus supports her – and Djebbar’s – position as an emancipatory figure, ‘rescuing the women from oblivion and restoring their agency’ (Martin 2011: 59).<sup>147</sup> Characterized by a shared emphasis upon the power of contiguity and boundless possibility, each of these spaces must thus be interpreted in counterpoint to the private sphere of domestic space, which in the first act is associated with confinement and (gendered) division: as a site of symbolic violence.

As I have previously argued, the initial scene in Djebbar’s film represents Lila as symbolically imprisoned within the domestic space. Nevertheless, I would argue that this initial act also visualizes a spatial dialectic between exteriority and interiority that prefigures broader shifts in the film. In particular, at one point during this act Lila is shown standing against a wall facing the camera, whilst the door in the adjacent room opens out onto the Chenoua Mountains. To a certain extent, this shot disrupts a conception of domestic space as a hermetically sealed impasse in visualizing Lila in relation to the *umma* (or what is known in Berber as the *houma* or *thajma’th*), that is the masculine, social space of religion and power (Mernissi 1987), providing what Stacey Weber-Fève has termed ‘an escape route’ out of discourses of patriarchal domination (2009: 20). In particular, after this initial sequence Lila leaves the domestic domain in order to join the congregation of Algerian musicians playing a *nouba* on the coastal mountains of Chenoua, framed by the iridescent contours of the Mediterranean Sea. Here, narrative space functions in two ways. First, the binary oppositions inherent within domestic space are replaced by an emphasis upon continuity. Djebbar uses panoramic, panning shots to capture the vast razed topography of the Chenoua Mountains, creating a sense of abstract communality between female identity and indigenous land. To a certain extent, these sequences thus appear to subscribe to the conventions of Third World cinema, which Teshome Gabriel claims privileges wide, panning shots of indigenous landscape over singular representations of the individual (1989: 45). Second, this shift (from the interior to the exterior) also involves a sudden

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<sup>147</sup> The visual topos of the cave also has a historical basis in Algerian history, as the site of *les enfumades*, the process by which French officers massacred both nationalist fighters and Algerian villagers in the early years of colonization. In addition to forming a space of philosophical resonance, Djebbar’s representation of the cave thus additionally functions as a site of national trauma.

focus upon motion; as Lila walks, so do the musicians, whose hypnotic, kinetic rhythms mirror the subtle undulations of the Mediterranean Sea and again stand in stark contrast to the oppressive sense of stasis characteristic of domestic space. As with the visual imagery of the bedrooms, farmyard and cave, the Chenoua Mountains should thus be first and foremost considered as a wider site of resistance against a history of patriarchal, socio-spatial domination. Gathering oral testimonies from the female inhabitants, Lila is then frequently pictured driving around the Mountains, the car functioning as a sign of autonomy, subjectivity and empowerment, whilst Ali is depicted gazing at the countrywomen from *within* the domestic realm. This form of imagery subverts both the earlier *mise-en-scène* of the narrative and also the historical (and narrative) positioning of women within domestic space. In her quest for oral testimony, Lila thus systematically disrupts the androcentric social universe of the *umma* (or Berber *houma/thajma'th*) through her sheer presence. This hypothesis is also supported through reference to the concept of the threshold, which Berber culture (androcentric in its traditional form) defines in terms of gender, split between the movement from inside to outside (masculine) and outside to inside (feminine) (Bourdieu 2000: 69).

Towards the end of the narrative, Lila lowers herself into a small, wooden boat, tracing the coastline of Chenoua during the poetic, penultimate act of the film. Here, Djebbar introduces a sombre non-diegetic musical refrain that stands in stark contrast to the recurring, repetitive *noubas* featured in the earlier scenes. Saxophone replaces percussion as the dominant instrument, whilst close-up shots of Lila's face linger on her pensive expression; she frequently appears asleep or lost in a meditative state. Yet, above all, it is the cerulean symbolism of the Mediterranean Sea that is significant in this sequence. First, as with the Chenoua Mountains, the sea stands in direct opposition to the confined and divided domestic realm. Instead, as a space characterized by vastness, contiguity and motion, it forms the final, definitive site of resistance within the narrative. As with the earlier "dove" sequence in Lila and Ali's bedroom, the visual trope of birds is also used in order to represent the transcendence of spatial confines. Expanding upon this reading, I would also argue that this sequence is also associated with the desire to return to a pre-colonial idyll that Homi Bhabha identifies as one of the central characteristics of post-independence discourse (1994). In particular, whilst the landscape of Algeria is inscribed with the etchings of historical specificity, representations of the Mediterranean Sea here evoke a melancholic nostalgia for a

location situated outside of time and the nation-space.<sup>148</sup> Whilst Lila reclines melancholically in the boat, Ali is pictured static on the shoreline, a form of positioning that completes the subversion of patriarchal socio-spatial codes initiated in the first act. Here Djébar enacts the final stage of Lila's symbolic journey: out of the symbolic 'prison' of the domestic domain, into the masculine social space of the *umma* until she finally transcends the geographical borders of the Algerian nation itself. In fact, as Austin argues, it is this concept of 'moving beyond the threshold' that forms the entire premise of the film (2011: 203). This is a hypothesis supported by Lila's desire to 'go elsewhere, [...] beyond the sea' and the climactic imperative 'land of exile, leave it behind!' Ultimately, it is this desire to travel outside of national boundaries (both literally and symbolically) that defines Djébar's work as an oppositional piece of filmmaking. Finally, *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua* chimes with Ella Shohat's notion of post-Third-Worldist cinema, which, in a similar fashion, 'breaks away from earlier macronarratives of national liberation in envisioning the nation as a heteroglossic multiplicity of trajectories' (2006: 306).

### 4.2.3 Conclusion

In chapter two and three of this thesis, I explored the general trend in post-colonial French and Algerian cinema to define women as weak and passive individuals symbolically tied to the domestic realm. In this chapter, however, we have explored the small number of films which do not conform to this definition, by instead focusing upon strong willed, mobile women willing to transcend the confines of the private, interior sphere in order to inhabit spaces traditionally populated by – and thus dominated by – men. It is for this reason that the eponymous character of *Cléo de 5 à 7* brazenly strolls through the streets of Paris, before being driven around the capital, firstly by a female taxi driver and then her friend Dorothée (both of these individuals form paragons of liberated womanhood). On a similar note, in Drach's film, Elise appears to thrive on walking the nocturnal Parisian streets with her lover Arezki (an act which is of political merit given his Algerian heritage and the racist attitudes that the two individuals encounter in the capital). Unlike Varda's narrative, however, *Elise ou la vraie vie* also

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<sup>148</sup> Interestingly, images of the Mediterranean Sea have also been mobilised, firstly in cinematic representations of *pied-noir* memory (focused on the large-scale exodus that coincided with decolonization), and, secondly, in contemporary Algerian cinema, as an expression of post-colonial nostalgia. It is for this reason that Joseph McGonagle and Edward Welch have defined the Mediterranean Sea as a form of visual 'palimpsest' (2013: 184).

tackles the issue of women's employment in chronicling Elise's attempts at penetrating the masculine world of *la chaîne*. That this attempt ultimately proves futile is a stark reminder of the extent to which late 1950s' French society remained riddled with the mechanisms of patriarchal domination.

By contrast, neither Pontecorvo's nor Djebbar's film portrays a bourgeois female individual strolling apparently aimlessly through an urban area. In *La Bataille d'Alger*, female mobility is inextricably linked to the politico-military logic of the Revolution, whilst in *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua*, the central female protagonist Lila meanders through the rural plains of Chenoua as part of her search for testimony regarding female participation in the uprising. Yet, it is important to note that these differences are, to some extent, illusory, in that, like *Cléo de 5 à 7* and *Elise ou la vraie vie*, both of these films depict female figures who refuse to adopt a submissive position in the domestic realm. As such, all of these films attempt to challenge the socio-spatial codes of patriarchy that remained ingrained in post-colonial French and Algerian society, thanks, in part, to the sexually conservative films discussed in chapters two and three.

## 5.1 Conclusion

### 5.1.1 *Space, gender, decolonization*

This thesis has provided a comparative textual analysis of post-colonial French and Algerian cinema via a discussion of representations of narrative space and gender. As regards narrative space, in chapter two, section one, I illustrated how many French films produced in the immediate aftermath of the conflict use the topography of the domestic realm as the locus of narrative action. This observation is crucial as it allows us to explore the ways in which these films stand in contrast to popular discourses of the period, which represented the home according to a neo-colonial logic of inclusion (of the French housewife as a sign of national welfare) and exclusion (of anything linked to France's colonial legacy, including *appelés*, *harkis* and Algerian immigrants). In direct counterpoint to this discourse, the films discussed in chapter two depict private, interior space as saturated by the politics of an empire in declension. This process of saturation and contamination takes different forms in different films. In *Adieu Philippine*, it is Michel's friend Dédé who infects the domestic realm with the silent language of trauma (a trauma emphasised through Rozier's formal techniques), whilst Enrico's *La Belle vie* revolves around establishing an idealised notion of the domestic realm before undermining this notion through reference to the Algerian War (see, for example, the ways in which Frédéric is recalled for military service in the final shot of the film). In *Muriel*, Resnais represents the modern home as a space contaminated by both the insidious effects of modernization (the consumer durables which litter Hélène's apartment) and colonization. The effects of France's colonial legacy are especially apparent in the ways in which Bernard and Alphonse penetrate the fragile, porous boundaries of Hélène's apartment through their intrusive behaviour. It is also important to note that, in *Muriel*, both of these characters appear unable to rid themselves of what might be termed performative rituals apparently inherited from the colonies; Bernard through his voyeurism (reminiscent of the colonial gaze) and Alphonse in his incessantly intrusive behaviour (reminiscent of *les rafles*). Finally, for the majority of *Le Boucher*, Chabrol depicts the modern home as a reassuringly apolitical space, safe from the "polluting" effects of France's colonial legacy. Yet, as with all of the films discussed in this section, the fragile boundaries protecting this space eventually disintegrate in spectacular fashion when Popaul (a figure traumatised by the horror of the Algerian War) breaks into Hélène's apartment before stabbing himself at the end of

the film. It is in this process of domestic disintegration and politicisation that I have located the anti-colonial potential of the films.

By contrast, none of the Algerian films discussed in chapter three are set exclusively in the domestic sphere. Instead, these films use the trope of socio-spatial transgression (from private to public and from urban to rural space) in order to mediate the anti-colonial politics which underpin cinematic narratives of the period. In *Le Vent des Aurès*, this transgression takes the form of a female quest across the hinterlands of central eastern Algeria. This quest, I have argued, is important as it essentially subverts the spatial logic of the colonial harem, which was itself predicated upon confining the female subaltern to a state of domestic 'imprisonment' (Alloula 1986: 17). However, this journey is also problematic as it ignores the gendered spatial codes of Berber tradition (a form of symbolic violence explored in Assia Djebar's film *La Noubia des femmes du Mont Chenoua*), but also as the central female protagonist remains to some extent spatially confined by her headscarf, despite dominating the surrounding landscape in iconography characteristic of Soviet cinema and the classic Western. In the same section of this chapter, I also illustrated the ways in which Farès's film *Les Hors-la-loi* reasserts (rather than denies) the socio-spatial codes of traditional Berber culture in chronicling the journey of a masculine 'outlaw' (Slimane), who both transcends the confines of the domestic space and the threshold of *bled el makhzen* (the [urban] land of colonial acquiesce) in order to inhabit and control the revolutionary, rural space of *bled el siba*. In the final part of this analysis, I then showed how Rachedi's *L'Opium et le bâton* supports Frantz Fanon's (mythical) notion of the rural peasantry as a revolutionary force, completely committed to resisting colonial oppression. Fanon's influence on this film is also apparent in the symbolic (ontological) quest made by Dr Bashir, who leaves the bourgeois space of Algiers for the revolutionary space of rural Kabylia.

Post-colonial French and Algerian cinema also share an important parallel in their conservative representation of gendered identities and relations. As regards French cinema of the period, chapter two, section two explored the tendency in 1960s' French cinema to define women as weak, naïve and domesticated figures who are unable to understand or take seriously the events in Algeria. This ignorance is quite obviously evident in the derisive behaviour of Juliette and Liliane in *Adieu Philippine*, and, on a slightly different level, the figure of Sylvie in *La Belle vie*, who is deprived of knowledge of the conflict through Enrico's formal techniques (namely the extra-diegetic footage featured at the beginning of the film). Enrico also contains the



potentially transgressive aspects of Sylvie's personality through the tropes of motherhood and marriage. In Resnais's *Muriel*, this process of 'containment' is even more pronounced in H  l  ne's status as a haggard and alienated figure, drained of sexual agency and stunned into a state of passivity by the carousel of everyday events that spin dizzily around her. A lack of female agency is also apparent in Chabrol's *Le Boucher*, in which the central female protagonist H  l  ne dotes on her schoolchildren like a mother whilst politely resisting Popaul's sexual advances. Chabrol's misogynistic sexual politics are also underlined by the fact that he eventually associates female sexuality with perversion rather than revolution (as such ignoring the gendered discourses of the May 1968 riots). It is also important to note that the very patterns of narrative space that define the works as anti-colonial also contribute to their gendered conservatism in associating women primarily with a symbolically 'penetrated' domestic realm.

As for post-colonial Algerian cinema, many of the films produced during this period exhibit a similar tendency towards depicting women in retrograde terms, although it is notable that this form of representation results partly out of the influence of official censorship which effectively rendered all references to female sexuality taboo. Official censorship does not, however, explain the ways in which the films deprive women of their active participation within the conflict (as *fidayate* or *  volu  es*), by focusing primarily upon passive veiled mothers (*Le Vent des Aur  s*) and – again veiled – wives (*Les Hors-la-loi*, *L'Opium et le b  ton*), whose role largely revolves around supporting and mourning masculine martyrs. If only in this respect, Algerian narratives of the period can be seen to support a conservative vision of the nation-state loosely associated with Sheik Badis and the conservative fraternity of the *Ulemas* rather than the proto-feminism of Frantz Fanon (see, in contrast, *La Bataille d'Alger*). Crucially, in representing Algerian women as domesticated and veiled individuals, post-colonial Algerian cinema can thus be said to challenge the cultural legacy of colonialism (unveiling as a cynical attempt at 'emancipating' the female population) by reinforcing a fundamentally conservative notion of womanhood.

One of the main differences between post-colonial French and Algerian cinema is their representation of masculine identity. On the one hand, many Algerian films of this era involve a tendency towards depicting men in hagiographic terms; as fearless warriors committed to the national cause. This trope is immediately apparent in the figures of Slimane in *Les Hors-la-loi* and Ali in *L'Opium et le b  ton*, both of whom reflect the Fanonian concept of the 'New Algerian Man' (ironically predicated upon a

reversion back to a conservative patriarchal ideal), whilst *L'Opium et le bâton* mirrors the 'cult of the martyr' (disseminated by official discourses of the period) in featuring a number of *moudjahiddine* (Ali, Bougeb), who sacrifice themselves for the Revolution. It is also important to note that, due to the effects of official censorship, these films largely refrain from representing masculine (sexual) desire in explicit terms. Instead, sexual virility is depicted in a sublimated form through the heroic actions of the *moudjahiddine*. As Ella Shohat's claims, 'Third Worldist revolutionary cinemas were not generally shaped by an anticolonial feminist imaginary' (2006: 291). On the other hand, French films of this period are generally populated by scarred anti-heroes who gradually inflect the domestic realm with the alternately silent and violent trauma of conflict. With this in mind, one possible interpretation of this corpus is thus as a set of narratives which undermine the authority of patriarchal ideology by associating men with weakness and symbolic impotence rather than macho posturing. That said, the disruptive potential of this trope is in many ways neutralised by the unwavering virility of these protagonists, who are able to seduce almost all of the women in the films despite acting in a reserved, aggressive, and often misogynistic manner. Many of these films privilege the ontological question of masculine identity over political concerns whilst disavowing the sexual anxieties associated with returning *appelés* during this period, whilst *Le Boucher* emerges as perhaps the most controversial text analysed in this thesis in associating violence with a masochistic masculine identity wounded by the threat of female sexuality.

In the final chapter of this thesis, I explored the few works that stand in contrast to the general trend in post-colonial French and Algerian cinema in using patterns of narrative space as an anti-colonial praxis. In the first section of this chapter, we saw how both Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7* and Drach's *Elise ou la vraie vie* depict independent female figures willing to occupy and traverse the (masculine) space of the street, whether by car (*Cléo de 5 à 7*) or by foot (*Cléo de 5 à 7* and *Elise ou la vraie vie*). As such, both films thus stand in direct counterpoint to the popular discourses of the period, which instead represented women as symbolically tied to the domestic routine of the home. In Drach's film, we also witness the attempted penetration of a woman into the traditionally patriarchal space of *la chaîne*, although the fact that Elise is eventually fired from the factory also forms a stark and pessimistic reminder of the insidious effects of masculine domination upon late 1950s' everyday life. Unlike all of the films discussed in chapter three, neither of these works are set – for any extended period – in

the domestic realm. I also discussed the anti-colonial potential of these films in drawing attention to the ways in which the female protagonists in *Cléo de 5 à 7* and *Elise ou la vraie vie* engage with the marginal spaces of post-colonial Paris (Place Denfert-Rochereau, Jaurès and Nanterre respectively).

In the second half of this chapter, I then turned my attention to a number of post-colonial Algerian films; one produced a mere four years after independence (*La Bataille d'Alger*), the other released sixteen years later in 1978 (*La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua*). On the one hand, we saw how Pontecorvo's narrative uses the trope of female spatial transgression through a divided Algiers in order to; firstly, symbolically emancipate Algerian women from their position of subalternity in the colonial harem (see also *Le Vent des Aurès*), but also as a blueprint for a secular, non-ethical nationalism based upon the revolution in gender relations as theorised by Frantz Fanon under colonization. By the time we reach Assia Djebar's *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua*, however, the possibility of this revolution has quite obviously evaporated. Instead, Djebar's vitriolic narrative bears witness to the reinstatement of patriarchal ideology that characterised the post-colonial period, when women were subtly forced back into a domestic role in society (along with the wearing of the veil). That said, as with all of the works discussed in this chapter, Djebar chooses to challenge and critique this ideology through depicting an (unveiled) female figure willing to transcend the domestic threshold in occupying – and traversing – “masculine” public space, known in Islam as the *umma* and in Berber as the *houma/thajma'th*.

### 5.1.2 *Screening the war since independence*

After the muted political iconoclasm of the 1960s, French cinema appeared to bifurcate into two opposing poles. In the early 1970s, a small number of cineastes attempted to expose the horrors of a conflict that had – to some extent – been sterilized by the pervasive influence of Gaullist censorship. René Vautier's *Avoir 20 ans dans les Aurès/To Be Twenty in the Aurès* (1972) and Yves Boisset's *RAS* (1973) are exemplary in this respect, bearing witness to ‘a desire to make up for lost time’ through a ‘bludgeoning emphasis upon the horrors of war and [its] brutalizing logic’ (Dine 1994: 228). Significantly, within both of these films, a process of spatial displacement has taken place; from the metropolitan domestic setting of the works discussed in this thesis (see, in particular, chapter two, section one), to the embattled Wilayas of Algeria. During the 1970s, a number of films were also released which appeared to legitimise or

even celebrate the role of army officials in the conflict. This sense of right-wing nostalgia – or what might be termed *nostalgérie* – is especially evident in René Gainville’s *Le Complot/The Plot* (1973) and Pierre Schoendoerffer’s *Le Crabe-Tambour/The Drummer-Crab* (1977), which, in their own ways, ‘reject history’ in favour of a mythologised narrative of masculine colonial engagement, despite again being set in Algeria (Greene 1996: 106). On a slightly different note, Bernard Tavernier’s 1992 documentary *La Guerre sans nom/The War Without a Name* is also significant as a striking example of a film which attempts to articulate the personal trauma of a war, which at this point, remained unacknowledged by the French state.<sup>149</sup> More recently, France has witnessed the emergence of a number of high-profile “blockbusters” which have attempted to explore the “hidden” side of the Franco-Algerian relationship. This desire to dramatise voices previously marginalized within state historiography is particularly evident in *Ennemi Intime/Intimate Enemies*<sup>150</sup> (Siri 2007), *Hors-la-Loi/Outside the Law*<sup>151</sup> (Bouchareb 2010) and *Indigènes/Days of Glory* (Bouchareb 2006).<sup>152</sup> As for the significance of this corpus in relation to my own work, French cinema has generally tended to represent the war in fundamentally masculine terms, as a conflict fought by men subsequently marked by the semiotic signs of trauma, shame and defeat. Only a small number of French films have deviated from this androcentric perspective, Claire Denis’s *Chocolat* (1988) and Brigitte Roüan’s *Outremer* (1990) being two notable examples.<sup>153</sup> As Catherine Portuges has illustrated, both of these narratives display a desire to ‘critique prior erasures of women’s subjectivity from the horizon of colonial stories’ (1996: 81).

Compared to France, Algeria’s cinematic relationship with the Algerian War has been more truncated. This thesis has dealt largely with the small although significant group of “Third-Worldist” films produced in the heady aftermath of the conflict. During the 1970s, however, Algerian directors became increasingly willing to criticise the legitimacy of the one-party state, addressing questions of ‘corruption, unemployment, women’s rights and agrarian reform’ (Austin 2007: 186). Examples of this *cinéma*

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<sup>149</sup> It was only in 1999 that what happened in Algeria between 1954 and

1962 was officially recognized as a “war” rather than a “law and order operation”.

<sup>150</sup> *Ennemi Intime* is a French war film based on Patrick Rotman’s 1992 historical account of the conflict, *La Guerre sans nom*. The film is a particularly scathing account of colonialism and the trauma of warfare.

<sup>151</sup> *Hors-la-Loi* is a drama/gangster film which focuses on the events of May 1945, when French police fired on a nationalist demonstration in the Algerian town of Sétif. The event is widely acknowledged as a decisive moment in the deterioration of Franco-Algerian relations.

<sup>152</sup> *Indigènes* dramatises the role of the *harkis* in World War Two.

<sup>153</sup> Although it is important to note that Denis’s film is set in colonial Cameroon rather than Algeria.

*djidid* (young cinema) include *Le Charbonnier/The Charcoal Burner* (Bouamari 1973), *Omar Gatlat* (Allouache 1977), and, of course, Assia Djebar's *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua*.<sup>154</sup> All of these films could hypothetically be defined according to Ella Shohat's concept of Post-Third-Worldist cinema, as a form of filmmaking which attempts to transcend the ideological limitations of neo-colonial, nationalist discourse in favour of a cinematic praxis rooted in cultural hybridity, linguistic polyphony and an anti-essentialist conception of gendered identities (2006: 295, 306). As such, many of these films form a subtle critique of the conservative sexual politics of Third-Worldist cinema (see chapter three), despite the fact that they often remain similarly concerned with challenging the legacy of colonial rule.

In 1988, the thematic concerns of Algerian cinema were radically and irreconcilably altered when thousands of young, anti-state protesters were massacred by the military in an event known as Black October, causing what Martin Evans and John Philips have termed 'the climax of a rupture between state and society' (2007: 105). Three years later, Algeria was then again shocked into a state of quasi-paralysis with the beginning of an extremely bloody civil war fought between the fundamentalist Islamist party, the FIS (*Front Islamique du Salut*) and the state (1991-2002). The few films that were made in the 1990s and 2000s are thus marked by the immediate trauma of these two events (notably the widespread targeting of women by Islamists) rather than the enduring legacy of colonial occupation.<sup>155</sup> Therefore, whilst France remains to some extent fixated on the politics of colonial memory (as a result of the processes of state repression and denial that characterised the conflict), the same cannot be said about Algeria. Instead, contemporary Algerian cinema bears witness to a country eager to heal the wounds of more than two decades of acrimonious civil war.

### 5.1.3 *Advantages of focusing on representations of space and gender*

In terms of focus, this thesis has deliberately privileged questions regarding the politics of cinematic representation. Through this approach, I hoped to have resolved some of the current limitations in film scholarship, which instead involves a tendency towards either Eurocentric and ahistorical formalism or apolitical biography (French cinema) or

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<sup>154</sup> That said, undeniably the most popular film of this decade – Lakhdar-Hamina's *Chronique des Années de Braise/Chronicle of the Years of Fire* (1975) – revives rather than critiques the earlier tendency towards nationalist mythology.

<sup>155</sup> Two notable examples of this trend include Yamina Bachir-Chouikh's 2002 film *Rachida*, alongside Merzak Allouache's *Bab El-Oued City* (1994).

sweeping generalizations regarding industry and cinematic context (Algerian cinema). Hopefully, this study has thus proved that focusing upon cinematic representation in this way can be an effective method of historicising and politicising a particular film or cinematic movement in light of its socio-political and cultural climate. Concentrating exclusively upon cinematic representation has also allowed me to draw from a diverse set of methodologies, including the work of classical film theorists, historians, cultural historians, feminist thinkers, philosophers, anthropologists and theorists of space. Only by adopting this interdisciplinary approach to the period can we begin to understand the cultural fallout of decolonization.

To this end, I have chosen to focus upon questions of narrative space and gender, primarily as I believe that both of these issues provide an invaluable insight as to how the conflict affected the “everyday” reality of French and Algerian society. On the one hand, all of the chapters in this thesis are to some extent concerned with the cultural and cinematic significance of space; as a method of redefining identities, establishing power relations, and challenging the pervasive influence of colonial and neo-colonial ideology. In this respect, this thesis has drawn attention to the ambivalent political potential of narrative space, as a tool of domination and resistance. On the other hand, this thesis has also analysed the somewhat complex relationship that exists between decolonization and the disruption of gendered identities involved in this process. In particular, by focusing upon the gendered politics of post-independence Algerian cinema, I have shown how the country remained imbued with the ideological mechanisms of masculine domination, despite achieving liberation from colonial oppression. On a similar note, by analysing the question of gendered identities in post-colonial French and Algerian cinema, we have seen how both countries arguably responded to the symbolic emasculation involved in colonial declension by reinforcing the primacy of patriarchal ideology.

#### 5.1.4 *Future avenues of inquiry*

Under the general rubric of representation, this research has chosen to interrogate two specific topics: narrative space and gender. With this in mind, future avenues of research could potentially explore the following subject areas that I have touched on although not had the space to fully explore in this project: representations of female resistance in post-colonial Algerian cinema, masculine sexuality in post-colonial French filmmaking (in relation to questions of spectacle, eroticism, homosexuality,

trauma and disavowal), representations of urban modernity in Algerian narratives (a subject that, to some extent, was side-lined in this thesis due to the fact that my Algerian corpus was mainly set in rural areas), and the hitherto unexplored theme of rural tradition in post-colonial French cinema – especially in relation to the rural nostalgia that characterized the late 1960s (see, for example, *Le Boucher*). All of these subjects would provide fertile grounds for research.

Finally, this project has chosen to focus mainly upon films produced in the immediate aftermath of conflict, with the exception of *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua* and *Le Boucher*. A potential way of expanding upon this research would be by looking backwards to the small group of documentary shorts produced during the conflict as part of the clandestine movement known as *le cinéma parallèle*, including *Algérie en flammes* (Vautier 1957), *Sakiet sidi youssef/Réfugiés algériens* (Clément, both 1958), *58 2/B* (Chalon 1959) and *Secteur postal 89 098* (Durand 1959). One possible method of approaching these as yet almost completely unexplored films would be to situate them in relation to the ‘discourse of truth’ (Rothberg 2009: 194) characteristic of the period. As such, this project could extend the methodological stance adopted in this thesis by exploring the relationship between cinema, politics and cultural discourse.

#### 5.1.5 *From dichotomy to dialogue*

In the beginning of this thesis, I outlined the ways in which existing scholarship tends to conceptualize decolonization in terms of a dichotomy rather than a dialogue. This dichotomy is immediately apparent in the vast amount of writing seemingly obsessed with the perceived “Frenchness” of the New Wave (an obsession that is in itself problematic considering the heterogeneity of works produced during this period), but it is also evident in the nation-state centrism of Lotfi Maherzi and Guy Austin’s undeniably pioneering work on Algerian filmmaking. However, as this thesis has shown, almost all of this scholarship remains limited by ignoring the subtle process of cultural symbiosis that exists between the two countries. That is not to say that these two cinemas involve a shared visual lexicon or formal aesthetic, but rather that the spectral effects of the Algerian War – as a conflict fought between France *and* Algeria – permeate every aspect of the narratives discussed in this thesis. As we have seen, this process of cinematic cross-contamination is apparent in the images of disrupted domesticity which populate the French films discussed in chapter two, although it can

also be glimpsed in Algeria's ultimately unsuccessful attempts at purging itself of the atavistic cultural traces of colonial occupation. With this in mind, instead of discussing the works analysed in this thesis as paragons of national cinematic production, I propose that we define them as examples of a transnational cinema of decolonization, rooted in 'cultural cross-breeding and interpenetration' (Higson 2000: 67). In this respect, this thesis chimes with recent developments in film scholarship, which tend towards conceptualizing the notion of transnationalism in terms of shared formal techniques and visual tropes rather than simply economic and industrial factors, for example production and distribution (Higson 2000; Shaw 2007; Higbee and Lim 2010). Only by adopting this transnational – or dialogical – approach can we begin to understand the infinite complexity of cinematic narratives produced during the demise of colonial rule; the point of rupture, of no return.

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Allégret Y (1950) *Manèges*. France

Allouache M (1977) *Omar Gatlato*. Algeria

----- (1994) *Bab El-Oued City*. Algeria

Bachir-Chouikh Y (2002) *Rachida*. Algeria

Baroncelli J (1939) *SOS Sahara*. France

Boisset Y (1973) *RAS*. France

Bouamari M (1973) *Le Charbonnier/The Charcoal Burner*. Algeria

Buñuel L (1972) *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie/ The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*. France

Bendedouche G (1976) *Echebka*. Algeria

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Charbi J (1965) *Une si jeune paix/Al-Salam Al-Walid*. Algeria

Chouikh M (1988) *La Citadelle/El Kalaa*. Algeria

----- (1993) *Youcef*. Algeria

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Clément R (1958) *Sakiet Sidi Youssef*. Algeria

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Demy J (1961) *Lola*. France

----- (1964) *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg/The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*. France

Denis C (1988) *Chocolat*. France

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Durand P (1959) *Secteur postale 89 098*. France

Duvivier J (1937) *Pépé le moko*, France

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Eisenstein S (1925) *Battleship Potemkin/Bronenosets Po'tyomkin*. USSR

Enrico R (1963) *La Belle vie*. France

Farès T (1969) *Les Hors-la-loi/The Outlaws*. Algeria

Ford J (1939) *Stagecoach*. U.S.A.

----- (1956) *The Searchers*. U.S.A.

Gainville R (1973) *Le Complot/The Plot*. France

Gilmore S (1946) *The Virginian*. U.S.A.

Godard Jean-Luc (1960) *A bout de souffle*. France

----- (1962) *Vivre sa vie/My Life to Live*. France

----- (1963) *Le Petit soldat/The Little Soldier*. France

----- (1964) *Une femme mariée*. France

----- (1965) *Pierrot le fou*. France

----- (1966) *Made in U.S.A.*. France

----- (1967) *Weekend*. France

----- (1967) *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle/Two or Three Things I Know About Her*.  
France

Hawks H (1954) *The Big Sleep*. U.S.A.

Haneke M (2005) *Caché/Hidden*. France

Hitchcock A (1954) *Rear Window*. U.S.A.

Koster H (1956) *D-Day the Sixth of June*. U.S.A.

Lakhdar-Hamina M (1966) *Le Vent des Aurès/ The Winds of the Aurès*. Algeria

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Algeria

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Lallem A (1972) *Zone interdite.* Algeria

Laskri A (1971) *Patrouille à l'est.* Algeria

Lelouch C (1966) *Un homme et une femme/A Man and a Woman.* France

Malle L (1957) *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud/Lift to the Scaffold.* France

----- (1963) *Le Feu follet.* France

----- (1967) *Le Samourai.* France

Marker C (1963) *Le Joli mai/ The Lovely Month of May.* France

Mazif S (1977) *Leila et les autres.* Algeria

Milestone L (1951) *Halls of Monkzuma.* U.S.A.

Morin E and Rouch J (1960) *Chronique d'un été/Chronicle of a Summer.* France

Pabst G (1932) *L'Atlantide/Atlantis.* France

Pontecorvo G (1966) *La Bataille d'Alger/La battaglia di Algeri/The Battle of Algiers.*  
France/Italy/Algeria

Powell M (1960) *Peeping Tom.* England

Pudovkin V (1926) *Mother/Mать.* USSR

Rachedi A (1969) *L'Opium et le bâton/Opium and the Stick.* Algeria

Resnais A and Marker C (1953) *Les statues meurent aussi/Statues Also Die*. France

Resnais A (1959) *Hiroshima mon amour/Hiroshima, My Love*. France

----- (1961) *L'Année dernière à Marienbad/Last Year in Marienbad*. France

----- (1963) *Muriel ou le temps d'un retour/Muriel or the Time of a Return*. France

Riad M. (1975) *Le Vent du sud*. Algeria

Robson M (1966) *Lost Command*. U.S.A.

Roüan B (1990) *Outremer/Overseas*. France.

Rozier J (1962) *Adieu Philippine/Goodbye Philippine*. France

Rozier J (1973) *Du Côté d'orouët*. France

Séverac J (1930) *Sirocco*. France

Schoendoerffer P (1977) *Le Crabe-Tambour/The Drummer-Crab*. France

Tavernier B (1992) *La Guerre sans nom/The War Without a Name*. France

Tlatli M (1994) *Les Silences du Palais/The Silences of the Palace*. Tunisia

Truffaut F (1960) *Tirez sur le pianist/Shoot the Piano Player*. France

----- (1962) *Jules et Jim*. France

Varda A (1955) *La Pointe courte*. France

----- (1962) *Cléo de 5 à 7. Cléo from 5 to 7*. France

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Vautier R (1955) *Une nation, l'Algérie*. France

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Zinet M (1971) *Tahia ya didou/Alger insolite*. Algeria