Paris, ‘En Carton’

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ABSTRACT

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The colonization of parts of Africa and the Caribbean has continued to greatly impact both France and these formerly colonized countries. In 1830, the French monarchy invaded Algeria. During the colonization of Algeria, France imposed its own culture and civil code, giving Algerians French citizenship in an attempt to force them to denounce Islam (543 Balch). 1954 saw the Algerian War of Independence, which ended in 1962. During the 1630's, French religious orders began to develop colonies in the Caribbean or French Antilles (Peabody 114). Due to the propagation of the French language in these colonies, as well as the deplorable living conditions resulting from problematic governance in the wake of independence from France, large portions of formerly colonized populations immigrated to France. Unprepared for this influx of different cultures, immigrants were relegated to factory jobs and undesirable neighborhoods both in Paris itself as well as the surrounding suburbs. In this study, I will examine the difficulties facing these immigrants from lack of integration into French society; and how France's relationship with immigrants is manifest in the ways certain films polarize diegetic spaces as either French or Other. This analysis argues that the spatial limitations facing the racial Other are not exclusive to the Parisian banlieue, or its subsequently named cinema genre. Different films from a variety of genres will demonstrate that limitations are set on immigrants in the city of Paris just as much as the urban/suburban divide that generalizes popular conceptions of postcolonial filmic representation.

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INTRODUCTION

In this study, I seek to portray how the city Paris is represented as a space of exclusion in contemporary French cinema. Within the context of France's colonial history, I will use three recent French films by European directors to examine how films whose milieu is primarily Paris proper, as opposed to the banlieue, or suburbs, represent characters as either colonizers or colonized because of how they are spatially compartmentalized on screen. This paper will focus on France's relationship with its Caribbean, North African and West African colonies because these are the racial minorities most represented in my chosen films. The term colonizer refers to French citizens who established themselves in French colonies with the aim of profit at the expense of the natives, "he is a privileged being and an illegitimately privileged one; that is, a usurper" (Memmi, *The Colonizer* 9). The colonized are citizens of any of France's colonies who exist in relation to the colonizer, "it is impossible to save the colonized from this myth- a portrait of wretchedness has been indelibly engraved" (Memmi 82). Because my chosen films are set in Paris, the union between colonizers and colonized will be transposed onto the relationship between French characters and characters who have either directly immigrated or descended from immigrants of former French colonies. Maghrebian refers to someone of North African descent, specifically from Algeria, Morocco or Tunisia, all former French colonies. The term *Beur,* a loose acronym for the French "Arabe", although slightly more pejorative, refers to someone of North African descent born in France. The term is often used in conjunction with banlieue cinema (Tarr 32).

I will analyze the use of diegetic space as a tool of colonial compartmentalization while taking into consideration the real space that is not present in the film, but whose characteristics are alluded too within the space that the film constructs. Characters of Maghrebian and Antillean origin have traditionally been spatially marginalized in the regions outside of Paris in the banlieue cinema genre. The Manichean racial divide between the French and immigrants becomes tangible because in these films, "geography is distorted into a simple binary- Paris and the suburbs. The *banlieue* is the place of social exile and ethnic difference" (Wakeman 86-7). In this work, I want to challenge and expand on the notion of the preexisting spatial colonial dichotomy that occurs according to the definition of banlieue cinema. Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* establishes the infrastructure of colonial domination that is applicable to the fragmented Paris depicted in all of my chosen films. Fanon writes, "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" (38-39). Fanon establishes the concept of reciprocal exclusivity, which is central to my argument about how space is distributed and movement between spaces is limited according to racial prejudice in the objects of this study.

As France continues to be plagued with political strife, a certain vocabulary has been developed in order to make sense of the spatial limitations put on racial minorities. Recently, in *Le Figaro's* article "Valls: 'Peu importe les mots, l'essentiel c'est de agir'", the Prime Minister of the French Republic, Manuel Valls, is quoted as saying "Les mots que j'ai utilisé hier parlant de processus de ségrégation, de ghettoïsation, d'apartheid

territorial, social, ethnique pour un certain nombre de quartiers, je les ai toujours utilisés parce que comme d'autres ici, je les ai vécus directement". Segregation and ghettoization are familiar terms but 'territorial apartheid' brings the subjects of race and space together in a concrete way, while likening France's situation to the original South-African apartheid. This specific vocabulary also extends to the domain of film itself. Adrian Fielder, in his article "Poaching on Public Space: Urban Autonomous Zones in French *Banlieue* Films" writes:

> The characters in the films in questions seem keenly aware of the mechanisms of surveillance by which the French state attempts to identify and regulate 'disruptive' elements of the population. This becomes apparent through the recurrent use of the phrase *en carton* ('in a box') as a derogative modifier added onto a description. The term has several meanings in current French slang, including 'shelved,' 'pigeonholed,' or 'in sights' (as in the cross hairs of a rifle)" (272-273).

As the title of Fielder's article suggests, the term 'en carton' is commonly used in discussions of banlieue films. Because I will be expanding upon the spatial constraints of this aptly named genre, I will use this term 'en carton' in relation to any diegetic space, city or suburbs, where a character is limited because of their race. I propose that immigrant characters from former French colonies are put 'en carton' and subject to 'territorial apartheid' not only in the filmic banlieue, but within narrative representations of the city of Paris as well.

Methodology

The three films I have chosen to illustrate this concept of cultural 'en carton' are *Lascars* (Klotz and Pereira-Lazaro, 2009)*, Caché* (Haneke, 2005) and *The Class* (Cantet, 2008). These films were chosen because while their primary milieu is Paris, they still manage to incorporate postcolonial tensions in their use of narrative space. I will

establish a theoretical framework based on three separate primary source concepts, which will be applied to all of my chosen films. Firstly I will use Henri Lefebvre's theories on constructed space in order to conduct a close analysis on how each film represents a different relationship between narrative space and the colonial Other. Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* does not use specific postcolonial examples however, "In invoking the 'working class' as the agent of revolutionary change throughout his text, Lefebvre was tacitly suggesting that the revolutionary working class was constituted out of the urban rather than exclusively factory workers" (Harvey xiii). David Harvey's analysis of Lefebvre's writing in his book *Rebel Cities* corroborates the idea that exclusion occurs on the basis of socioeconomic status not only between center and periphery, but also within the center itself. Secondly, I will use the writings of Michel Foucault to account for how the colonial hierarchies present in each film are part of a larger framework of dominance informed by general patterns of human behavior. There are many potential applications for Foucault's writings, "Foucault does not engage anywhere directly with the mechanics of colonialism, but his thinking is nevertheless highly influential because he helps us to think through the mechanisms by which power is constructed and disseminated" (Hiddleston 77). Foucault's *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* and *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* trace the development of various institutions based off the relationship between dominance and subordination, which can be applied to France's colonial history and postcolonial present. The final methodological lens through which my chosen films will be analyzed, is that of postcolonial theory itself. In utilizing the works of authors who experienced racial prejudice firsthand, I will draw the more theoretical concepts presented by Lefebvre and

Foucault into a discussion of concrete historical examples of French colonization. The writings of Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, and Aimé Césaire all address current issues for immigrants of former French colonies living in France within the context of France's colonization of Algeria, the Antilles, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Structure

In Chapter 1, I will use the film *Lascars* in order to demonstrate that spatial exclusion along colonial lines is so pervasive that it can even characterize spaces that are animated, therefore completely non-real in their portrayal. I will use the text *Animating Film Theory*, in order to discuss the importance of animated spaces and how through visual intentionality, they can reflect certain characteristics of the real world.

I will use Lefebvre's concepts of representational spaces and representations of space, to explore the significance of a wealthy mansion and the space of the ghetto, which are both represented in the film. The cartoonishly depicted French police play an important role in the narrative; therefore I will use Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* in order to discuss how the concept of discipline is instrumental in compartmentalizing delinquent youth and containing them in spaces that become defined by criminal behavior. Finally, I will examine the relationships between the three most important characters: Tony, Jose and Clemence. Because Tony is a white character living in the ghetto, he is caught between the colonizer's identity and wishing to be associated with the native way of life. The interracial relationship of Jose and Clemence speaks to the colonial-bred aspirations of the black man to be white, which Fanon explores in his book *Black Skin White Masks.*

In Chapter 2, I will use the spaces depicted in Haneke's *Caché* to show the impact of a largely obscured history of French colonial violence against Algeria and how this is

reflected in the tortuous relationship between the two protagonists, one French and the other, Algerian. I will begin with a brief summarization of the significant historical and political events directly impacting the plot of the film: France's colonization of Algeria, the 1961 Paris Massacres and Sarkozy's 2007 electoral campaign. After which I will examine the relationship between space and history as outlined by Lefebvre in *The Production of Space*. I will use the example of the Laurent family farmhouse in the film to explain how historical prejudice is brought to the present through space's ability to remain imprinted by the past. Georges and Anne's house in the city will be analyzed using Lefebvre's respective concepts of façade and bourgeois space. The character of Majid and his apartment will then be compared to Foucault's madman and the space of the asylum from *Madness and Civilization.* Finally, the topic of France's hereditary guilt residual from the colonial age, will be broached in terms of the relationships between Majid and his son, Georges and his son; and how each pairing holds the potential to either repeat or break the historical mold of colonizer/colonized relationships.

In the final chapter, I will narrow the scope of cultural 'en carton' to the space of a single institution: lycée Dolto from the film *The Class.* In this instance, the relationship between colonizer and colonized is manifest in the relationship between the teachers at the school, specifically Mr. Marin, and the students in his class. A discussion of Paris' *arrondissements* is necessary to explain the way that the students are compartmentalized in relation to the teachers, who rely heavily on the assumption that they come from bad neighborhoods. Lefebvre's concept of social space from *The Production of Space* will be used to show the analytic potential of lycée Dolto. Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* as well as *Madness and Civilization,* account for the tactics of subjugation used by the

teachers to keep the students docile and compartmentalized. I will end with a discussion of the three most significant spaces in the film: the teacher's lounge, the schoolyard and Mr. Marin's classroom. Each space will be subject to a postcolonial analysis to explain how compartmentalization is reflective of remnant hierarchies of colonial dominance.

Each film will show how there are no limitations to the kind of spatial limitations immigrants from former French colonies face when they live in France. Ranging from cartoon to European art-house and pseudo-documentary, my chosen films differ significantly from one another in terms of plot, cinematography and even mise-en-scene. However, by using the same methodological framework to analyze each one, it will be possible to draw connections between the disparate films because of their use of space as a compartmentalizing power along specifically racial lines. In making these connections and exposing the recurrent depictions of 'en carton', I seek to show that problems arising during French colonization continue to plague the *mère patrie* and are therefore manifest in cinematic depictions of Paris. To conclude, I will look at the greater ramifications of cultural 'en carton' specifically in conjunction with the recent massacre at *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris; confirmation that decolonization has in no way lessened the cultural tensions and subsequent violence remnant from the colonial era.

CHAPTER 1: *Lascars*

"Parody makes obedience and transgression equivalent, since it cancels out the difference upon which the law is based" (Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations" 178)

Albert Pereira-Lazaro and Emmanuel Klotz's animated film *Lascars* (2009) will illustrate how cultural 'en carton' is applicable in a fictional rendering of Paris and its banlieue. Because this film are animated, representations of characters and spaces become intensified. Consequently, the film depicts an exaggerated relationship between center and periphery while subjecting the characters to the same spatial compartmentalization and reciprocal exclusivity employed by realistic depictions of Paris. In the same colonial analogy that will be used for all of the films in this paper, I argue that the characters take on the characteristics of the French colonizers or their colonized, depending on the spaces they are permitted to occupy in the film. The writings of Henri Lefebvre will be used to examine how the animated spaces in the film become symbolic of certain aspects of the real spaces they are mirroring, in other words how Paris affects this film and how the film itself views Paris. The justice system and the police are both important factors in the film's narrative, thus they will be analyzed from a Foucauldian perspective in order understand how the hegemonic powers of discipline serve to control the characters' use of space. Finally, the characters themselves and the nuances of interracial relationships will be filtered through a postcolonial lens in order to ground the initial colonial analogy in historical fact.

Lascars is based on a successful television show of the same name. The film follows the mishaps of José Frelate, a black character and his unlucky friend Tony Merguez, who is white. The boys are supposed to go on vacation to the fictional paradise

island of Santo Rico but it turns out they have bought tickets to Svanto Vrico (presumably located somewhere in the fictional Balkans) instead and are forced to stay in the city for the summer. José's cousin finds him a job minding the mansion of the wealthy Judge Santiepi who enlists José to build him a Norwegian sauna while he is out of town. During this process José falls in love with the Judge's daughter, Clemence Santiepi. In a secondary plot line another couple of friends named Sammy and Narbé, get arrested at the airport before they are able to board their own flights to Santo Rico. Instead of admitting defeat, the boys hideout in a tropical themed amusement park in the center of the city, and get involved in the production of a low budget porno under the direction of aspiring Arab filmmaker Mohammed or "Momo". In an attempt to earn enough money to buy another ticket to Santo Rico, Tony Merguez strikes a deal with aggressive and psychotic drug supplier, Zoran, who goes after Merguez when he fails to meet his quota. During all of this, Tony must also contend with his over zealous cop girlfriend, Manuella. At the climax of the film, José and Clemence get into a fight, and José throws a massive party to destroy her father's mansion. However, the film ends with José and Tony repaying their debts to society by starring in a humiliating music video for the Judge where they rap about being law-abiding citizens.

Literature Review

There is a lack of contemporary sources dealing with *Lascars*' social impact. Unlike *The Class* and *Caché,* the *Lascars* franchise does not have a deliberate focus on social justice issues. Despite this, an examination of cultural parody and the role of animation in colonialism helps to situate *Lascars* as a part a tradition of comical colonial representation.

In his article "Speciesism, Part 1: Translating Races into Animals in Wartime Animation", Thomas Lamarre discusses how both Americans and Japanese used animal imagery in animation in order to represent their enemies, namely each other. Lamarre defines speciesism as "a displacement of race and racism (relations between humans as imagined in racial terms) onto relations between humans and animals" (76). Although the case of speciecism is specific to animals, creating any kind of significant visual difference in animation; exaggerated skin color or comically distorted facial features for example, also plays into the idea of human/animal divide. "This is fun colonialism, in which the interactions between colonizer and colonized appear in the guise of hyperactive yet harmless child's play" (85). The racial jokes and raunchy humor in *Lascars* allude to this fun colonialism as well.

In his article "Destroying the *banlieue:* Reconfigurations of Suburban Space in French Film", James Austin examines banlieue cinema's relationship to the actual space of the suburbs. He references the urban and suburban imagery from the French animated classic *Les Triplettes de Belleville,* arguing that it should be included in the canon of banlieue cinema. In the film, the fictional Paris expands and completely subsumes the surrounding countryside. "The suburban is excluded from the very imaginary of this film, which harkens back to an older, more traditional city/countryside divide that has long resonated in the French cultural and cinematic sphere" (Austin 91). Similar to *Lascars*, *Les Triplettes* represents spatial prejudice and urban dystopia through the power of animation.

The Power of Animation

Lascars is not set expressly in Paris, there is no cartoon Eiffel tower or animated Arc de Triomphe, but as the *Variety* review of the film suggests, "the story is set in a rough *banlieue* (poor suburb, the French equivalent of a ghetto) on the edge of an unnamed big city that sounds, judging by the accents like Paris" (Felperin). Lascars' strict adherence to the differences between city and suburb is far more reflective of the society the film is attempting to reflect, than an abundance of berets or baguettes.

One of the most significant features of *Lascars,* which distinguishes it from the other films in my corpus, is that it is animated. It is the film's animated quality, which allows it to express a kind of reality that live-action films cannot, due to the constraints of preexisting spaces. The book *Animating Film Theory* is relevant to a discussion of *Lascars'* representational potential, as it encompasses a collection of chapters, many of which discuss animation's tenuous relationship with reality. In his article "Realism in the Animation Media Environment: Animation Theory from Japan", Marc Steinberg discusses animation's creation of its own form of realism. "Realism is first and foremost a set of conventions proper to a historically produced configuration of a given medium, rather than a visual resemblance to a given reality" (289). It is this concept, the way a configuration of a given medium can trump the importance of visual resemblance, which lends *Lascars* the power to depict existing postcolonial tensions. Animation has infinite creative potential, animated spaces can be fluid and shifting, and animation opens up spaces for transformation. Consequently, animation has the power to portray an imagined utopia reformulated by real life social prompts and paired with the underlying hope that one day this utopia might be possible (Leslie 30). *Lascars* completely ignores the idyllic

potential of animation as a medium, instead of depicting a changing French society, the film depicts dystopic elements of the current status quo. In his discussion on "cartoon physics", Scott Bukatman writes about the infinite elasticity and uncannyness of the cartoon body, like Tom and Jerry, and the perennial Roadrunner and Coyote. Like these iconic "toons", the characters in Lascars stretch, wobble, and suffer injuries that would normally be fatal to the human body. Despite giving some fairly outlandish examples, Bukatman is also able to tie his cartoon physics and biology into a representation of reality, albeit a topsy-turvy one.

> If the production of animation is a topsy-turvy version of the production of live-action cinema, then the topsy-turvydom of cartoon physics is its onscreen equivalent, a visible sign of its otherness. And if the animated beings onscreen are marked by their disobedience and unruliness… then cartoon physics maps that disobedience onto the natural world itself (309).

The disobedience and unruliness of the cartoon body is a reflected in the physical construction of many of the characters in the film. Zoran the evil drug dealer has eyes that are persistently bloodshot and intimidatingly bulky genitalia, positing him as aggressive and overly masculine while Manuella, Tony's girlfriend, has massive ballooning breasts as a testament to her own aggressive sexual appetite. This kind of cartoon biology is reflective of the greater themes of over-sexualization and general delinquency that are key to the film's depiction of a dystopic French society. As Bukatman states, the perception of the animated medium as a representation of "otherness", allows *Lascars* to access themes of subjugation and remnant colonial repression in a different and arguably more pervasive way than its real-life cinematic counterparts.

Although the relation to reality evidently differs between animated films and live-action cinema, the plot of *Lascars* does exude themes and tensions specific to another genre of cinema. The majority of films that deal with the colonization and current relationship between France and its former colonies are typically labeled as banlieue cinema. "The term '*banlieue film'* or '*cinema de banlieue'* first appeared in 1995, following the release that year of six independently produced features focusing on the urban periphery as a site of social exclusion and ethnic difference" (Higbee 38). This impetus, which has driven films like *La Haine* (Kassovitz, 1995), although proportionally accurate, is limiting in the sense that it ignores the strong immigrant presence outside the banlieue and inside Paris itself. In the case of Paris, the concept of cultural 'en carton' which is the social exclusion element in banlieue cinema, is simply lifted from the urban/periphery divide and transposed into spaces within the filmic city or the imagined city. Although *Lascars* does not take place specifically in Paris or in the banlieue, visual elements of bourgeois establishments and the ghetto, betray the spaces and attitudes that the film was modeled upon. Most importantly, the film also exposes the impossibility of socio-economic upward mobility and the dangers of boundary crossing within the space of the animated city.

Representational Space and Representations of Space

Although there are several specific spaces in the film's diegesis that beg a closer postcolonial analysis, the animated space as a whole and the subjective stylistic choices that accompany the created world of *Lascars,* has important implications in terms of creating a cartoon Paris and consequently a cartoon 'en carton'. In his work *The Production of Social Space*, Henri Lefebvre creates a conceptual triad that he uses to

analyze a space's relation to its own production as well as society at large. This triad consists of spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces (Lefebvre 33). Each side of Lefebvre's triad finds traction within certain spaces in the film. *Lascars* is an animated representation of Paris in which spaces are depicted with the express aim of keeping certain characters 'en carton'. The theoretical link between Paris and the spaces depicted in the film is credible because as Lefebvre says, "like all social practice, spatial practice is lived directly before it is conceptualized" (34). In the case of *Lascars* the film is conceptually influenced by the lived relationship between troubled multiracial youth and the French bourgeoisie, spatially manifest as the relationship between "le ghetto" and the animated city of Paris.

Judge Santiepi's mansion is an example of a representation of space influenced by France's colonial history, because it is filled with universal indicators of affluence and power. Lefebvre writes, "representations of space are certainly abstract, but they also play a part in social and political practice: established relations between objects and people in represented space are subordinate to a logic which will sooner or later break them up because of their lack of consistency" (41). Judge Santiepi's mansion is filled with overt signs of wealth and violence, a veritable caricature of colonial symbolism. This helps to cement the relationship between his objects and the way the Judge identifies himself in relation to the other characters.

Like a museum, The Judge's mansion is full of historical artifacts and "[Representations of space] are part of the history of ideologies, provided that the concept of ideology is not restricted, as it too often is, to the ideologies of the philosophers and of the ruling classes" (Lefebvre 116). In the film, the mansion as a representation of space is

more one-dimensional than Lefebvre's real social spaces and is consequently directly restricted to the ideology of the ruling classes. Time and space are intricately connected, for time gives birth to space and dictates its means of production (Lefebvre 21). Consequently, the origins of the objects found in the Judge's house must be considered in the construction of this space's ideology. The Judge has a set of antique rifles mounted upon his wall, weapons which evoke a history of native oppression. A collector of historical tools of war, the judge also has swords, axes and a full suit of armor set in his hallway. This is representative of the antiquated notions of colonialism, which have no place in contemporary society.

These antiques are set in comical juxtaposition to the symbolism of the Norwegian sauna that the Judge has José build for him. Like the antiques, the sauna is an indication of the Judge's wealth, and it is no coincidence that he enlists a black man to build it. In her book *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies,* Kristin Ross explores the concept of "Neobourgeois Space". This is when spaces in Paris appear nonsynchronously with poorer immigrant-heavy areas, which remain in arrested development. For Ross, the differentiation occurs not so much in terms of wealth but rather, "when modernization has run its course, national subjectivity takes the place of class: one is French or not, one is modern or not" (149). Any spatial differentiation is completely dependent on cultural origin, and factors like class and financial status become subject to a racial divide. Ross continues, "French modernization, and the new capital city that crowned it, was built largely on the backs of Africans- Africans who found themselves progressively cordoned off in new forms of urban segregation as a result of the process" (151-152). France's strides towards modernization depended heavily on a non-French labor force, which

contributed to the continued subjugation of formerly colonized bodies. Therefore, when the Judge has José, a black man from the ghetto, build his sauna, it makes his mansion into a space that is representational of the ways in which immigrants were integral to the construction of modern French spaces whilst being excluded from these spaces based on remnants of colonial prejudice.

If the Santiepi mansion is a representation of space, then aspects of Lefebvre's representational space can be found in the depiction of where José, Tony, and their friends are from. The filthy suburb where the boys live is consistently referred to as "le ghetto" throughout the film. "Le ghetto" is differentiated from the mansion space in scenes where José and Tony ride the train between their apartments and the city; this indicates that the two spaces are far removed from each other. A representational space is "directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols" (Lefevbre 39). Similar to the way that the mansion used imagery to denote wealth, the ghetto's visual signifiers: dirty streets and concrete apartment blocks; create an atmosphere of poverty and mild anarchy. In the same vein, "what we call ideology only achieves consistency by intervening in social space and in its production, and by turns taking on body therein" (Lefebvre 44). Tony Merguez, his friends Narbé and Sammy, as well as the variety of drug dealers and shady characters who inhabit their apartment block all share filthy mouths and an aversion to legal employment. Tony refers to himself and José as "le dream team du ghetto", consequently he and his friends project the gangsta-rapper lifestyle associated with their style of clothing and the music they listen to, which extra-diegetically scores the film. For Lefebvre, the symbolism that delineates a representational space is often linked to art, like devotional symbolism in a church (Lefebvre 33). Like religion for the

church, the gangster lifestyle is the ghetto's ideology according to way Lefebvre argues that social spaces are imbued with meaning. In the film, the characters' lifestyle choices are constantly being reflected in their physical surroundings.

The ghetto as a whole includes two separate subspaces; the street where the gangsters hang out, and the apartment buildings where they live. Of the street, Lefebvre writes, "it is where movement takes place, the interaction without which urban life would not exist leaving only separation, a forced and fixed segregation" (*Urban Revolution*, 18). The street represents an urban life within the suburbs; a type of urbanity completely removed from the city's leafy promenades where the likes of Judge Santiepi and Clemence drive their fancy cars and walk their tiny dogs. The street in the ghetto becomes a place of collective living and public identity. The drug deal between Zoran and Tony, which initiates the majority of the film's action, occurs in the space of the street, representative of the ghetto's capability to make the illicit into something public. This public illegality is recurrent throughout the film; police brutality, stealing and violence all occur on the streets. The ghetto is a place where the insecure Tony Merguez is constantly trying to prove his "street credibilité" in front of the tough guys who appear to be permanent fixtures on the stoops and street corners. Evidently you must live up to the public standard on the streets or else reject the delinquent lifestyle like José does when he takes up residence in the Santiepi mansion.

Lefebvre also identifies "The urban space of the street is a place for talk, given over as much to the exchange of words and signs as it is to the exchange of things. A place where speech becomes writing. A place where speech can become 'savage' and, by escaping rules and institutions, inscribe itself on walls" (*Urban revolution* 19). In the film,

the streets become a place where savage speech is literally inscribed on the walls in the form of graffiti. These are the associated images and symbols that are so important in Lefebvre's criteria for representational spaces. Because the film is animated, the imagination of the animators know no bounds and they present the viewer with an oversaturated representation of the ghetto, buildings entirely covered with lewd art and language, which consequently amplifies the delinquent status of the characters who inhabit it. While the graffiti may appear to be visual markers of anti-conformity, it actually connotes a coherent system of non-verbal symbols, all expressing the same message (Lefebvre 39). Although the film is comical for the most part, there is an undeniable sense of anger and fatalism that underlies the narrative. When the Arab street gang watches Sammy and Narbé depart for their ill-fated trip to Santo Rico, one of them says dispassionately, "pas de vacances pour des vrais gars". Being a real man, an authentic tough guy, negates a character's ability to get off the streets and definitively leave the ghetto behind.

The other half of the ghetto as represented in the film, is apartment buildings where the characters live. In his description of the colonial world from *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon describes the native quarters as "a world with no space, people are piled one on top of the other the shacks squeezed tightly together" (4). *Lascars* takes this description literally when the interior of the graffiti-ed buildings in the ghetto are revealed for the first time. José and his cousin are living crammed into a small one-bedroom apartment, the camera pans up, cutting a cross-section of the building to reveal an elderly couple fighting in the dingy apartment directly above José and his cousin. The pan continues upward to reveal Tony Merguez and his girlfriend Manuella in a squalid,

tiny apartment of their own. All the apartments are identically constructed and similarly shabby. The dissection of the apartment building is deliberate in revealing the literal compartmentalization of the characters in the ghetto. Not only are they not permitted to live comfortably in the city; the characters are trapped in their quadrants with no room for either literal or figurative upward mobility. According to Lefebvre, representational spaces are passively experienced, lived through their association with dominant symbols and ideologies (39). The animated medium amplifies the confines of the apartment blocks and the anger splattered across the walls in the ghetto, causing the characters to be even more confined in the visual representations of their ideologies.

C'est le Son de la Police

The remaining aspect of Lefebvre's triad of spatial analysis is spatial practice. Spatial practice becomes a way of connecting spaces, and imbuing them with meaning because of the way members of society are expected to act within these designated spaces (Lefebvre 38). According to the tenets of spatial practice, the fate of characters such as Tony or José is predetermined because they live in a representation of the space of the ghetto. Spatial practice allows for places to take on their full meaning however, the way characters act in the space of the ghetto is only half of this space's significance. The ghetto dwellers are expected to act a certain way in relation to the disciplinary power of the police in the film. Their practices of delinquency are validated by the surveillance and spatial limitations put upon them by the judicial system.

The production of "le ghetto" is intimately tied to the damaging effects of Foucault's discipline, from *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Foucault writes, "The prison also produces delinquents by imposing violent constraints on its

inmates; it is supposed to apply the law, and to teach respect for it; but all its functioning operates in the form of an abuse of power" (266). Aspects of the ghetto ideology, such as irreverence towards the police and public crime, are products of the structural injustices of the prison system. Thus, the ghetto's spatial practice is directly influenced by the role of the police in the film. *Lascars* shows that it is impossible to break the cycle of reciprocal abuse between "les mecs du ghetto" and "les keufs". The space of "Le ghetto" is also significant in conjunction to how institutional hegemonies such as the police use spatial limitations in their hierarchical practices. Foucault's concept of discipline plays a strong role in how the spaces in the film are used as compartmentalizing factors. Although the police and the justice system (personified by Judge Santiepi), both appear as a united force in opposition to the ghetto and its gangsters, there is a nuance between the law and the administration of the law in the film, which affects how the power of discipline is utilized. According to Foucault, discipline should be considered as a kind of "counterlaw". Discipline excludes and exercises constraints asymmetrically, but does so in a manner entirely free of any contractual obligation (*Discipline and Punish* 222). It is in this nuance that the police in *Lascars* differ significantly from the justice wrought by Judge Santiepi. The police practice discipline as a counterlaw, a gray area, which facilitates their control over other characters. In his chapter "Panopticism" from *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault explores the reasons for discipline's efficacy in terms of subjugation:

> The way in which [discipline] is imposed, the mechanisms it brings into play, the nonreversible subordination of one group of people by another, the 'surplus' power that is always fixed on the same side, in inequality of position of different 'partners' in relation to the common regulation, all these distinguish the disciplinary link from the contractual link, and make it possible to distort the

> contractual link systematically from the moment is has as its content a mechanism of discipline (223).

The forced inequality and subordination of one group by another mentioned by Foucault, is very much applicable to the history of France's relationship with its former colonies. By examining the role of the police in *Lascars*, a link can be made between the reciprocal exclusivity practiced by the French colonizers and the way in which the cops in the film use Foucauldian discipline to entrap and compartmentalize delinquent youth in the cartoon ghetto.

The compartmentalizing power of discipline is best exemplified in the character of Manuella, Tony's cop girlfriend. *Lascars* depends on caricature in order to emphasize stereotypes and common conceptions, and the depiction of the police is one of the most dramatic social statements in the film. Tony gets picked up and roughhoused by a couple of thuggish cops and he thinks his drug dealings have been discovered. Instead, the cops bring him to a surprise party for Manuella's induction into the police force. Tony is introduced to her entire family who are all cops. He is whirled around the room, meeting cousins, aunts and uncles until he comes face to face with Uncle Adolph, a Hitler caricature replete with moustache and Doberman Pinscher. The presence of Uncle Adolph characterizes the very nature of the police as a hegemonic, even genocidal, institution. Foucault concurs that historically speaking, the disciplines were general formulas of domination and "the historical moment of the disciplines was the moment when an art of the human body was born, which was directed not only at the growth of its skills, or at the intensification of its subjection, but at the formation of a relation that in the mechanism itself makes it more obedient as it becomes more useful" (182). Foucault gives only a few concrete historical examples, preferring his concepts to remain abstract

and therefore more widely applicable. Although he doesn't mention Hitler by name, the demanded subjection and obedience of the human body is applicable to both the Holocaust and the relationship between the French colonizers and the colonized.

As Manuella's induction party continues, the behavior of the police becomes less judicial and more raucous. The cops guzzle wine, beer, and champagne while two police are locked in a passionate embrace against the wall. As Tony desperately searches for the duffel bag of marijuana he accidently brought to the party, the cops begin a deranged conga line singing about how they pick up kids from the projects and slap handcuffs on their wrists. Tony becomes trapped between lines of dancing policemen, a literal representation of how police in the banlieue strive to keep delinquents 'en carton'. The mechanical, homogenous nature of the police force is set against the individuality of the other characters in the film during this scene. The policemen in the conga lines surrounding Tony become identical, their movements coordinated like cogs in a machine.

As the film progresses the ideology of confinement takes a more comical turn. After Tony discovers that Manuella is a cop he tries to break up with her, and she knocks him out and handcuffs him to his own bed. This scene is symbolic primarily because it depicts the police's power to contain the lower classes within the space of the ghetto. Tony feels constantly surveyed in his relationship with Manuella, and in confining him to his own home it becomes even easier to keep tabs on him. Her use of handcuffs is also significant because instead of preventing a crime, she is merely restraining her wayward boyfriend calling into consideration the idea of "counterlaw". This action could also be a way for the film to highlight the ludicrousness of police activity in the banlieue. Despite

the inclusion of levity however, the film does reference the harmful recidivism resulting from the circle of abuse between the judicial system and the ghetto.

Santo Rico: The Abandoned Homeland

Another example of a space that has the power to keep characters 'en carton', is the unattainable Utopia known as Santo Rico. One of the most important spaces in the film is a location none of the characters ever succeed in reaching, the illusory Promised Land of Santo Rico. José and Tony were issued incorrect tickets and their friends Sammy and Narbé are so drunk that they are forcibly removed from the airport before they even board their flight. Because of the implications of Santo Rico's name and its unattainable status in the film, this space takes on the postcolonial qualities of the abandoned homeland, to which return is impossible for both the colonizers and the colonized. The name Santo Rico is a conjunction of the Caribbean countries Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico. It is the utopic vacation site for both the rich and the poor characters in the film. By treating *Lascars* as a postcolonial analogy, this tropical island can be viewed as both a native homeland and a colonizer's paradise in the film.

Santo Rico's mythical status is established in large part because of the deplorable conditions of the ghetto where the majority of the characters in the film live. Immigrants from former French colonies arrived in France with inflated expectations with respect to their quality of life and they ended up marginalized in the suburbs, or else compartmentalized and thus limited within the space of Paris itself. In his chapter about the immigrant's arrival in France, Memmi writes, "Here he will learn that the Eldorado described by his friends, the promised land so ardently desired, is no longer what it was. It's harder to find a job, and the police keep a watchful eye. He will enter a vicious circle

of his own" (*Decolonization* 77). Because of the vile immediacy of living in France, immigrants long for their country of origin, despite being impoverished or war-torn.

Although it is not specified that José or Narbé (two black characters) have emigrated from a Caribbean country, analyzing Santo Rico in a postcolonial context allows for it to assume the position of an abandoned native homeland especially because, "not all those living in exile were colonial subjects, but all former colonial subjects now settled in a host country feel they are exiles" (Memmi 106). The irony that two black characters are denied return to their presumed homeland brings up the idea of the impossible return, which Albert Memmi discusses in his *Decolonization and the Decolonized.* Memmi writes, "It is the return to the old country that becomes a kind of dream, gradually losing its substantiality. The only thing that remains for sure is nostalgia, and, after all, absence makes the heart grow fonder. It is as if his country had greater presence for him now than when he lived there" (107). Because none of the characters lived in Santo Rico directly, Memmi's nostalgia is substituted for fantasy. Indeed, throughout the film, numerous characters wax poetic about the glories of Santo Rico, the hot weather and the girls in bikinis. Tony's constant refrain of "sous les cocos, sous les cocos, sous les cocotiers" reminds the audience of the mythical importance this location has for the boys living in the ghetto.

An important substitution for Santo Rico occurs, when Sammy and Narbé miss their flight. Determined not to subject themselves to the mockery of their peers, they hide out in a tropical themed amusement park. In a well-placed transition from close up to a wide shot, the amusement park is revealed to be an oasis located in the center of the city. A microcosmic paradise, a reflection of the utopic motherland located in an urban

dystopia. In his chapter on "The Immigrant" in *Decolonization and the Decolonized*, Memmi describes how the immigrant's apartment is a recreation of the homeland, "waiting for the mythic, return to the homeland, which he speaks of so nonchalantly, he has created a facsimile that allows him to dream, and to wait" (84). This is yet another example of cultural 'en carton' because the characters are closing themselves off from integration within the colonizing country. Sammy and Narbé spending the summer in an amusement park is their own attempt to recreate the homeland in a new, unforgiving country.

Santo Rico holds great significance as the homeland for the symbolically colonized characters in the film. However, the country also represents the lost glory of France's colonial age. Many of the problems that arise in the film result from the friction between the ghetto-dwellers and the rich white characters that live in the city. The separation between urban and periphery is the final attempt at isolating the natives and keeping colonial supremacy. José and Tony infiltrating the mansion of Judge Santiepi represents a spatial transgression occurring on the soil of the colonial motherland, an indication that the colonizers have lost the upper hand. "Indeed, the idea of mother country is relative. Restored to its true self, it would vanish and would at the same time destroy the super-humanity of the colonialist. It is only in a colony, because he possesses a mother country and his fellow inhabitants do not, that a colonialist is feared and admired" (Memmi, *The Colonizer* 61). Because of Santo Rico's inaccessibility, the colonizers have lost the presumed sanctity of their motherland and consequently the colonized are integrated further into the society of their new land, constituting an increased threat to the set order of colonial hierarchy. The colonizers wish to return to the

native motherland in order to cement their superior status, but since no one can return, the power dynamic is redistributed. The absence of the native homeland solidifies the status of the colonized as French citizens because of their loss of personal history, thus the hierarchical claims of the colonizers have lost their potency.

Tony Merguez: The Reluctant Colonialist

One of the most important characters in the film is Tony Merguez, he is a white character and fiercely loyal to "le ghetto", creating an unusual intersection between space and the history of the colonizer. Although Tony Merguez is not part of any kind of visible minority, he represents an important staple character in the banlieue cinema genre. José is a black character that spends the majority of the film attempting to escape the ghetto. Tony on the other hand, is the ultimate poser; selling weed, swearing, and constantly trying to prove his street cred. The fact that Vincent Cassel voices Merguez heralds a comparison between *Lascars* and *La Haine*, where Cassel also plays a white, albeit Jewish boy from the hood. In his article about banlieue cinema, Will Higbee writes, "critical discussion of the *banlieue* film in the mid-1990's was disproportionately centered on Mathieu Kassovitz's *La Haine*, due to the film's considerable commercial success, its multiethnic 'black-blanc-beur' trio of lead actors and the media controversy generated by its (apparently) antipolice narrative" (40). In *La Haine,* it is the black character Hubert who does not subscribe to the gangster sensibility and he spends the majority of the film trying to prevent Vinz from shooting a cop. The structure of the "black-blanc-beur" trio in *Lascars* is quite similar. José is trying for a better life, he wants out of the ghetto while Tony sells drugs and Momo, an Arab character (identifiable by his cartoonishly brown-beige tint), is simply content stirring up trouble.

Because Tony is the only character who actually enjoys living in the ghetto, he over identifies with the black and beur stereotypes more than the characters of actual immigrant origin. In this sense, his colonial counterpart is 'the colonizer who refuses', from Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized.* This type of colonizer is one who arrives at a colony, abhors colonial practices and consequently refuses to be involved in the subjugation of the natives. This has implications for the spaces that Tony inhabits in the film. Of 'the colonizer who refuses', Memmi writes:

> Since his rebellion has closed the doors of colonization to him in the middle of the colonial desert, why not knock at the door of the colonized whom he defends and who would surely open their arms to him in gratitude? He has discovered that one of the camps is that of injustice; the other, then, is that of righteousness (22).

In the film, Tony does not like Clemence and he disparages Jose's new bourgeois sensibilities, which the latter develops during his time living in the "camp of injustice", also known as the Santiepi mansion. For Tony, the ghetto is a "camp of righteousness", and more than any other character he prides himself on espousing its values, calling himself "un mec du street, un mec dur". During an early scene in the film, Tony returns to his apartment to find that his girlfriend Manuella has completely remodeled it. She removes all signs of his gangster persona; his home space has been changed to no longer reflect his values. However, like Vinz from *La Haine,* the inescapable reality is that Tony is white, and he lacks that depth of perspective and anger which accompanies several generations of the formerly colonized who were differentiated from whites and homogenized amongst themselves due to the color of their skin. Although it is their financial realities that keep these "blanc" characters 'en carton', it is not enough to simply identify with the formerly colonized on this level. "To succeed in becoming a turncoat, as he has finally resolved to do, it is not enough to accept the position of the

colonized, it is necessary to be loved by them" (Memmi 37). It is this desire to be loved by the colonized, which characterizes Tony's constant need for praise and acceptance. It is both Tony and Vinz's antithetical relationship with the police and their inability to break free of the ghetto's 'en carton', which explains the desire of both characters to belong to an alternative community.

Clemence and José: The Myths of White Purity and Black Sexuality

One of the most significant intersections between race and space that occurs in *Lascars* is the relationship story between José Frelate and the daughter of his employer, Clemence Santiepi. Because Clemence is white and wealthy, and José is black and previously unemployed, their relationship embodies the intersection of two postcolonial ideologies that are explored in some detail in Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* namely; the myth of negroe sexuality and the black man's desire to be white. When José and Clemence come face-to-face for the first time in the film, it is clear that José has liked her for some time. When he asks her out they are in the backyard of her father's house and she accepts on the condition that Momo accompanies them as well. Clemence seems supremely uninterested in José until a fight breaks out during dinner at the kebab restaurant. With a bloody nose, Clemence kisses José as they hide from the police behind a fence near restaurant. Clemence gets a taste of the ghetto and she finds herself attracted to the danger associated with dating a black man. According to Fanon:

> The white man is convinced the black man is an animal; if it is not the length of his penis, it's his sexual power that impresses the white man. Confronted with this alterity, the white man needs to defend himself, ie. To characterize 'the Other,' who will become the mainstay of his preoccupations and his desires (147-148).

Perhaps privy to the same commonly held bias as Fanon's white man, seeing José in a fight arouses in Clemence this desire for his perceived animalistic sexual power.

However, The myth of black sexual power has a counterpart and this is the essential desire of the colonized to become the colonizer, or the black man to become white. *Black Skin, White Masks,* follows the journey of the Antillean man's immigration to France and his desire for acceptance. Fanon writes, "The sexual myth- the obsession with white flesh- conveyed by alienated minds must no longer be an obstacle to understanding the question" (62). Once the black man legitimizes the colonial Manichean divide, he becomes an alienated mind and will always try and elevate himself to the illusory height of mythologized white flesh. Albert Memmi corroborates Fanon's arguments behind the black man's unconscious desire for a multiracial relationship. According to *The Colonizer and the Colonized,* "reflection of self and love of another are common to all candidates for assimilation…Love of the colonizer is subtended by a complex of feeling ranging from shame to self-hate" (Memmi 121). In a postcolonial context, José's initial attraction to Clemence is more about the shame of his skin color and the allure of the colonial ideal than Clemence herself. José is not simply projecting. The portrayal of Clemence in the film is intentional in its fulfillment of the colonial ideal. She is tall, blonde, blue eyed and tan, and according to Memmi, "A blonde woman, be she dull or anything else, appears superior to any brunette. A product manufactured by the colonizer is accepted with confidence. His habits, clothing, food, architecture are closely copied, even if inappropriate. A mixed marriage is the extreme expression of this audacious leap" (121). As the relationship between José and Clemence progresses, José's audacity grows and he begins to lose himself. He copies the colonizer in taking on the attitudes and physical traits of Judge Santiepi. He is leaving the compartmentalization of the native ghetto behind in favour of a new 'carton'.

The Santiepi mansion becomes the point of intersection for the myths of black virility and white purity. Although José and Clemence kiss for the first time in a dirty back alley, the majority of their relationship is conducted in the comfort of her father's lavish mansion. In taking the job for Judge Santiepi, José has become a caricature of the black hired hand. According to Fanon:

> The black man is a toy in the hands of the white man. So in order to break the vicious circle, he explodes, I can't go to the movies without encountering myself. I wait for myself. Just before the film starts, I wait for myself. Those in front of me look at me, spy on me, wait for me. A black bellhop is going to appear. My aching heart makes my head spin (*Black Skin,White Masks* 119).

Fanon's moment of self-reflexivity indicates that the subordinate black character is all too common in fictionalized representations of his race. José is Fanon's black bellhop and he attempts to elevate his status by taking a white girlfriend. The longer José stays in the mansion however, the more he appropriates elements of rich colonizer culture. When the troubled Tony tracks him down looking for a place to stay, José opens the door wearing a monogrammed robe and drinking wine from a crystal glass. The caricature of the hired hand or "black bellhop" has become a caricature of the bourgeoisie. It is as if José is seeking to rectify the initial deviance of a relationship between a white woman and a black man by attempting to become a white man himself. The illusion that José has created is contingent upon his proximity to the space of the mansion. He and Clemence never spend time together at his apartment in the ghetto or else the illusion of his "whiteness" would be shattered. A badly timed phone call wherein José overhears Momo removing thorns from Clemence's backside and interprets her guttural moans as sexual infidelity becomes the straw that broke the camel's back. José's carefully constructed colonial identity combusts and he throws a party to destroy the Santiepi mansion in order

to exact his revenge on Clemence. Destroying the mansion is symptomatic of this space's importance in the film. The mansion is initially a space of rarefied exclusion, a projection or overcompensation perhaps, of Judge Santiepi's own sexual insecurities. When José is living there he believes he is free from the confines of the ghetto. The truth is, he is being boxed in worse than ever, forced into a limbic state of being black while striving to be white, literally black skin, wearing a white mask. Clemence is an extension of the space of the mansion and by destroying her home; he is destroying the mythical supremacy of white skin that kept him confined for the duration of the film. His party symbolizes the breaking open of the 'carton' as the entire ghetto helps him to destroy the mansion, this bastion of colonial superiority.

On the surface, *Lascars* is a comedy about the boys in the hood, the jokes are raunchy, the soundtrack upbeat and the dialog heavily laden with slang. The animation style is oversaturated and deeply concerned with exaggerating various parts of both the female and male anatomy. Despite all of this, the film's undercurrent carries a certain degree of anger and despair at the failure of decolonization. The frustration evident in *Lascars* is a result of the ways in which the spaces in the film evoke compartmentalization along racial lines. Lefebvre's conceptual triad accounts for the ways in which the spaces in the film take on an iconic quality, elements mirrored in more realistic representations of different areas of Paris and its banlieue. The tensions between the characters from the ghetto and those from the city are reflected in the power of Foucault's discipline, which is used to keep ghetto characters 'en carton'. Furthermore, many of the characters themselves embody aspects of both the French colonizer and the colonized found in the writings of prominent postcolonial authors. The film ends with the

bourgeois appropriation of ghetto ideology. In order to make amends for destroying the Judge's mansion, José and Tony are forced to rap in an educational music video about following the rules. Thus the film ends with a victory for discipline, the sublimation of the ghetto to the power of bourgeois spaces, and shame for the colonized. In the film, the animation leaves room for exaggeration and physical comedy. However, as Esther Leslie writes in her chapter in *Animating Film Theory,* "animation's small worlds propose certain stances on the part of viewers, encouraging them to be at least minimally alert to the ways of the image world unrolling before them, especially as it compares to the world in which they sit" (32). Through humor and unconventional means, *Lascars* demands a consideration of its social context.

CHAPTER 2: *Caché*

In the film *Caché*, it is France's distant colonial history as well as recent attempts at decolonization, which play the most important role in how space is controlled and characters are compartmentalized. Directed by notoriously political Michael Haneke, the film begins with a shot of the outside of a house in Paris. It is revealed that the shot is actually a videotape received by Georges Laurent and his wife Anne, indicating that someone has been surveying their house. The mysterious videotapes accompanied by violent, childish drawings continue to plague the Laurents until they get a tape filmed outside of Georges ancestral home in the country. At this point, Georges begins to suspect Majid, an Algerian man whose parents were laborers for Georges' parents and who died in the 1961 Paris Massacres. The Laurents were set to adopt Majid but threatened and jealous, young Georges tricked Majid into beheading a chicken and then told his parents Majid had done it to scare him. Majid got sent away to a state-run orphanage and Georges grew up to host a popular literary talk show. The next videotape Georges receives is of an apartment building near the suburbs. He finds the building and confronts the man living in the apartment that is shown in the videotape. It is Majid, who firmly denies any involvement in the video surveillance of Georges' life, but Georges verbally threatens him nonetheless. One evening, his son Pierrot does not return home and Georges immediately suspects Majid, bringing the police to the apartment building where Majid and his son are arrested. Pierrot returns home the next day, having forgotten to tell his parents he was staying with a friend. Upon his request, Georges returns to Majid's apartment where Majid says, "I wanted you to be present", and slits his own throat. Shaken to the core, Georges finally tells Anne the whole truth about his childhood

indiscretion and Majid's suicide. The next day, Majid's son approaches Georges at work in order to try and speak with him about his father. In the final scene, Pierrot is leaving school and is approached by Majid's son, they converse, but out of earshot of the audience.

Literature Review

Much of the scholarship surrounding *Caché*, focuses on themes of European guilt and the disparagement of bourgeois culture. "Haneke and the Discontents of European Culture" by Christopher Sharrett, focuses on a number of Haneke's films and the ways in which they deal with representations of western patriarchal capitalist society. The article ignores the specific colonial context, focusing more on Haneke's critique of bourgeois high society, something common to *Caché* as well as *La Pianiste* (2001), *Benny's Video* (1992) and other Haneke films. *Caché* pushes the idea of cultural commodification with overt indicators of high cultural currency such as Anne's job in publishing or Georges' highbrow talk show. For Sharrett, it is Georges' role as a literary talk show host, which gives him an inflated sense of superior class status, consequently allowing him to treat Majid poorly (Sharrett, 14). Mattias Frey's "Benny's Video, Cache and the Desubstantiated Image" also briefly addresses Haneke's critique of the Western Bourgeoisie, but cites the scenes of the dinner party and Anne's book launch as primary examples, ignoring Georges profession as a literary talk show host. The main focus of Frey's article however, is the issue of visual medium in film, specifically the way that Haneke uses videotapes to destabilize the spectator, never sure whether we are watching the film, or a videotape within the film.

In comparing academic sources with newspaper reviews, there arises a sort of irony with respect to *Caché* and its intended viewership. The bourgeois lifestyle that Haneke critiques is far more conducive to art house film appreciation than blue-collar audiences. The majority of scholarly sources concur in terms of the overarching themes in Haneke's corpus, which results in certain assumptions about narrative and stylistic choices in *Caché*. Journalist Jason Solomons interviews Haneke for an article in *The Guardian* and poses questions which might have presented themselves to less high-minded viewers. Solomons asks the obvious "Whodunit?" with respect to the videotapes. To which Haneke replies, "But if you come out wanting to know who sent the tapes, you didn't understand the film. To ask this question is to avoid asking the real question the film raises, which is more: how do we treat our conscience and our guilt and reconcile ourselves to living with our actions?" This reveals both Haneke's true narrative motive, as well as a certain degree of exclusion with respect to audiences. Western guilt is evidently something that most scholars feel they should mention, even in passing, but this strong message has the potential to be lost in light of the unsolved enigmas that the film presents.

Are they Doomed to Repeat it?

It is *Caché's* direct interaction with history and time that allows for the significant diegetic spaces to be analyzed in a postcolonial sense. The three most important historical moments that the film condenses and references repeatedly are: the French colonization of Algeria, the 1961 Paris Massacres and political events concurrent with the film's release. Although France had many colonies, it was Algeria's prized position and consequent cultural entanglement, which made the country's decolonization process

violent and complicated. Memmi wrote, "During the colonization of Algeria, some farsighted intellects realized that the only way to prevent upheavals among the colonized would be to make them loyal citizens of France" (*Decolonization* 82). While this may have worked at the outset, Algeria's desire for independence resulted in a gristly separation. In her book *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*, Kristin Ross refers to this bloody decolonization as "The Great Divorce". Because Algeria was considered part of France, "Algeria's status was different from that of Indochina or sub-Saharan Africa; whereas France's role in sub-Saharan Africa was articulated in terms of a right of property, in Algeria, from the outset, France affirmed a relation of identity" (Ross 123). The history of Algeria's elevated status throws into sharp relief the violent process of disentanglement. In his article, "The Algerian War, the French State and Official Memory", Henry B. Cohen writes about France's scant acknowledgement of guilt during the Algerian War of Independence because, "If the French state had recognized its activities in Algeria as a war, that would have implied French recognition of Algeria as a separate nation. Hence it was not a war, but a police action, a '*maintien de l'ordre'*" (220). Algeria's pride of place became an excuse to consider French violence as part of an internal dispute, or, to return to Ross' marital metaphor, a family matter. This historical instance is reflected in the film through the tortured relationship between Georges and Majid. The two boys almost became brothers; deceit and violence tore them apart and yet years later, Georges is inexorably drawn to Majid. Their lives are entangled until the moment where Majid ends his, and Georges, like France, must live with the consequences.

The next historical event central to the plot of *Caché*, is the 1961 Paris Massacre. Haneke himself critiques the subjectivity of French national memory, which is paramount in a consideration of the events surrounding this Massacre. As if to address the lack of recognition for the atrocities committed by the French police in 1961, *Caché* uses the Massacre as a spur for narrative action. Details concerning the Massacre were largely obscured until historian Jean-Luc Einaudi took the stand against former prefect of the Paris police, Maurice Papon, in 1997. Although he was on trial for war crimes committed during the Holocaust, Einaudi recalled how Papon commanded the police to break up a peaceful Algerian FLN demonstration which resulted in 11,000 Algerians getting taken away, many tortured, some killed, and others thrown in the Seine (Cohen 231). Although Algeria was the crown jewel of the French colonies, there was an important difference between being a French subject and a French citizen, meaning there was never a time when Algerians were truly considered part of France. It is this initial colonial differentiation, which allowed for the French to avoid any kind of identification with the murdered Algerians, "who did not have the right to appear within French public space" (Rancière 29).

The political events occurring shortly after the film's release, while not directly applicable to the film's plot, solidify Haneke's claims about France's consistently torturous relationship with its former colonies. Reviews of the film diverged significantly between French critics and Anglo-American reviews. Keywords "colonial" and "neocolonial" were omnipresent in English reviews, and largely ignored in the French ones, resulting in scant acknowledgement of the harmful result of France's colonial history (Celik 67). In his article "'I Wanted You To Be Present'", Ipek A. Celik discusses

Sarkozy's 2007 Toulon campaign speech and the dangers of historical revisionism in conjunction with his analysis of *Caché.* In an address to the colonial migrants, Sarkozy states, "By what right do you ask the sons to repent for faults that often weren't committed by their fathers other than in the imagination of those who profess repentance!" furthermore, "he has to accept that the country to which he comes is an old country that started to exist long before him" (Celik 61). Sarkozy is ignoring the hundreds of years of historical precedent, and seeking to further alienate immigrants who already feel culturally and professionally limited in a new country. Although Sarkozy's campaign came two years after the release of *Caché,* the theme of hereditary guilt is reflected in the film's depictions of two different sets of father and son. Instead of partitioning history and separating colonial crimes according to specific generations, *Caché* connects the historical elements that Sarkozy sought to keep disparate. Celik's article concurs that *Caché* was timely in the sense that France's political situation continued to reflect themes explored in the film in the time after its release, a definite validation of the film's accusations of French colonial guilt.

Space and History

Unlike the fictional depictions of the city in *Lascars*, or the limited view of a single space within city in *The Class*, *Caché* depicts two distinct and related spaces that are very much implicated by their actual surroundings. The Laurent family farm where Georges grew up and his mother still lives and Georges and Anne's house in the city both exude a kind of exclusion or cultural 'en carton'. The film pinpoints this exclusion through its narrative use of the videotapes Georges and Anne receive, containing footage of the exterior of these spaces. The tapes never penetrate spaces to reveal their interior;

instead they depict an immigrant population being kept at arms length, never permitted to freely assimilate into French space. Because of the importance of history and temporality as a narrative medium in this film, each of the significant spaces is informed by the interactions between past and present. The Laurent family farm, a multigenerational space, represents the diachronicity of past and present, a more honest portrayal of Georges' crimes against Majid in relation to France's crimes against Algeria. Georges and Anne's house by contrast, is a one-dimensional representation of the present. Much like Sarkozy's disavowals of the contemporary significance of the historical atrocities committed against France's formerly colonized peoples, this space is presented as nothing more than a bourgeois façade, willfully ignorant of the depth of societal intolerance.

The location of the Laurent family farm further aids in exposing the inaccuracy of the 'en carton' theory applying strictly to the relationship between the banlieue and the city. Located in the countryside, the Laurent farm espouses the grandeur of aristocracy and old family wealth. While Majid is excluded from spaces within Paris, he is also excluded from spaces far from the city. In this instance, the spatial limitations he faces are subject primarily to the undesirability of his Algerian heritage. Georges' ancestral home depicts several different stages of France's history with Algeria, intertwined with his own personal history. In *The Production of Space,* Lefebvre addresses the changing role of time and how spaces are inculcated by their history. According to Lefebvre:

> The historical and its consequences, the 'diachronic', the 'etymology' of locations in the sense of what happened at a particular spot or place and thereby changed it- all of this becomes inscribed in space. The past leaves its traces; time has its own script. Yet this space always, now and formerly, a *present* space, given as an immediate whole, complete with its associations and connections in their actuality (35).

Although Lefebvre argues that spaces are foremost “present space”, he does acknowledge the importance of historical traces. Consequently there are two events, one historical, one narrative, which are most strongly inscribed in the space of the farmhouse. Hashem, Majid’s father, was a laborer for Georges’ parents. Both of Majid’s parents attended a peaceful protest in Paris, which ended in their disappearance and presumed murder along with hundreds of other Algerians (the 1961 Paris Massacres). When Georges father travelled to Paris to try and find Majid’s parents, he was told to feel fortunate that he was rid of such “jigaboos”. Meanwhile back at the farm, young Georges is threatened by the imminent integration of Majid, the symbolic Algerian immigrant, into his family. It is this irrational fear of diluting a wealthy French family (and consequently France itself) by elevating the son of common laborers, which spurs Georges to convince Majid to behead the chicken. Like Maurice Papon and the 1961 Massacres, Georges orchestrated a coup that ensured Majid’s disappearance.

This personal/historical correlation is manifest in the space of the farmhouse, and the events that occur within. Since the mysterious videotapes show the farmhouse from the outside, the viewer sees a large, rustic estate. This is sharply contrasted by the first shot of the interior, not a part of the videotapes, which is Georges mother’s bedroom: small, cramped and laden with geriatric paraphernalia. When Georges mother enters, a nurse or caregiver is supporting her, and she is gently laid into bed. There is no disguising the vulnerability of old age, and it is this reminder of the cruelty of passing time, which allows for Georges to finally vocalize his suspicions about Majid’s involvement in the mysterious videotapes. He asks his mother if she remembers Majid, and when she is initially hesitant, he presses the subject until she admits that the memory of sending an

orphan away was in fact a very painful one, “it was a long time ago, and not a happy memory”. It is the authentic, vulnerable quality of his mother’s bedroom space, which permits Georges for the first time in the film, to acknowledge how the past can never truly be buried, and its imprints remain in the present. Whether Majid is responsible for the videotapes or not, Haneke is reminding the viewer that Georges cannot repress the troubling memories of his childhood.

The inscription of the past on present spaces from Lefebvre’s *The Production of Space* evidently inspired author Ipek Celik’s own analysis of the film and in his article he writes:

> Haneke’s appropriation of the temporal indexicality of surveillance video enables a narrative in passé compose (present perfect, literally a ‘compound past’ that stretches to the present); he thus shows the historical injustice as a continuity presented to us as ruptures. But the spatial indexicality that aims to create a link between the protagonist and the Western art house audience, and thus to some extent to seek the bourgeois spectator’s identification, at some point contradicts and obfuscates the temporal indexicality that captures the past in the present, the historicality of the narrative that the audience rejects (or fails to see) (Ipek 74).

The obfuscation of the temporal as a result of identification with the bourgeois audience that Celik claims, might have more to do with the critical reception of the film and omission of colonial content by the French critics. For the sake of analysis however, this idea of compound past is present in an analysis of the other visible space in the farmhouse, Georges’ childhood bedroom. The scene presents a grown man sleeping in the bed he slept in as a child, a neat visual example of filmic passé-compose. Furthermore, it is during this particular slumber that Georges is plagued by dreams about Majid. The images are far more coherent than the fractional and extremely biased flashbacks of Majid as a feral child that are spliced in seemingly at random throughout the film. In this dream, we see the young Majid beheading the chicken and spattered with its blood, he

advances on Georges, wielding a hatchet. As he strikes, Georges wakes up in a panic. In the narrative reality Majid did not attack Georges with a hatchet, this is merely the conflation of his childhood and his adult life wherein Georges presumes that Majid is seeking violent retribution. Since in the film, the only violence Majid inflicts is upon on himself, Georges' dream reflects this colonial paranoia about the barbarous aggression of the Other, as well as the reality that this kind of aggression is a symptomatic response to the spatial compartmentalization immigrants face in France. Georges' dream is also an interesting parallel to the videotapes, which, according to Celik's article, enable this passé-compose narrative. While the tapes are pushing for Georges to acknowledge his own inner demons by guiding him to visit certain significant spaces, his admissions of guilt are only manifest in non-normative narrative tools, such as dream sequences or flashbacks. Videotapes are indexical recordings of significant spaces, the tapes led Georges to the farmhouse where the dream he had in his childhood bed, while not narratively accurate, is representative of the ramifications of his own personal history.

The farmhouse is a space of history and vulnerability associated with Georges' past, and it is the videotapes that serve to bring this space into the present. His house in the city however, represents only a one-dimensional present, a willful ignorance of the history and time. According to Lefebvre, older spaces such as the farmhouse used to show their age, like rings in a tree trunk. However, "with the advent of modernity, time has vanished from social space. It is recorded solely on measuring-instruments, on clocks, that are as isolated and functionally specialized as this time itself. Lived time loses its form and its social interest- with the exception, that is, of time spent working" (Lefebvre 95). Unlike the cluttered, homey, farmhouse, where proof of multigenerational habitation

is discernable from the worn furniture and the numerous photographs and paintings on the walls; Georges and Anne's home is the paragon of modernity: sleek, monochrome and completely without personal touches, a perfect picture of bourgeois artifice. In his chapter "Contradictory Space", Lefebvre writes, "The bourgeois apartment is no doubt a parody of the aristocratic mansion, yet beyond this imitative aspect a quite different way of occupying space is to be discerned" (314-315). The difference between aristocratic and bourgeois space is reflective of the difference between the Laurent family farm and Georges house in the city. The family farm is a place of collective history, of past and present, and while Majid was excluded from it, the farmhouse was a place where at the very least there was space for an admission of guilt. The bourgeois space of Georges and Anne's house however, is a dismissal of the past and a systematic compartmentalization of the present, where what is valued above all else is class exclusivity, successful public personae, and repression of vulnerability.

Georges and Anne's house is more than simply a bourgeois space it is a bourgeois façade. According to Lefebvre, a façade is designed with the express purpose to be looked at, while controlling what is visible to the outside world. He writes how "a façade admits certain acts to the realm of what is visible, whether they occur on the façade itself…or are to be seen *from* the façade. Many other acts, by contrast, it condemns to obscenity: these occur *behind* the façade. All of which already seems to suggest a 'pscyhoanalysis of space'" (Lefebvre 99). The bourgeois façade is tangible in the house's exterior as well certain interior spaces, which could also be classified as public. Contrastingly, the truly private spaces in the house are imbued with an air of obscenity. The first shot in the film is a videotape of the outside of Georges and Anne's

house, on rue des Iris. An iron grille in front of the door characterizes the exterior of the house, and thick ivory obscures most of the outside walls and windows. These elements on the outside of the house mark the inaccessibility of the various spaces within. From the point of view of façade, this exterior denotes wealth and exclusivity, the residents have full liberty to decide who is and isn't permitted to enter. The videotapes turn this idea of impenetrable façade on its head. The filming of the house takes on an almost wistful quality as the camera watches the Laurent family come and go as they please, knowing the spaces inside are forbidden.

The living room and dining room, although inside the house, are still part of a fabricated façade in the sense that they are part of a projection of Georges and Anne's public personae. As previously mentioned, for Lefebvre, the passage of time in modernity is quantified by time-spent working, "economic space subordinates time to itself" (95). This necessity for production and capital gain is reflected in the décor of the Laurents' dining room, transforming it into a kind of economic home space. The walls are lined with books, a direct replica of the backdrop of Georges literary television show and reference to the fact that Anne works in publishing. The décor is also a way to boast intellectual prestige; anyone visiting will be reminded of the Laurents' elevated educated status. This marks a lack of divide between personal and professional life because the persona Georges projects on television is the same one he plays in the illusory privacy of his home space. The dining room is further proven as interior façade when Georges and Anne host a dinner party. This party occurs in the midst of the mysterious videotapes, phone calls, and the Laurents' ongoing marital problems, because entertaining and putting on a good face is essential to maintaining the bourgeois image. During dinner, the

doorbell rings and Georges goes outside to discover yet another mysterious videotape. In this instance it is significant that the doorbell was rung during dinner to announce the sinister package, as if the culprit is reminding Georges that they would never be invited or included in this gathering of rarefied upper class intellectuals. Georges hides the video in his coat pocket, wishing to maintain the appearance of the untroubled family and not wanting to expose the vulnerability of their situation to his "friends". Upon his return however, Anne pushes him until he is forced to reveal the source of their tension. "Since Anne has decided to share the good news with you, I wont hide it, Are you happy now? It's not very entertaining", says Georges with ire, as he puts the video into the television.

The focal point of the Laurent's living room is the television itself. Like in the dining room, the walls surrounding the TV are laden with DVDs, overtly referencing the purpose of the space and reminding visitors that the Laurents are culturally current and well-read. The TV is the most important feature in this room because when George and Anne are watching the tapes of the exterior of their home, it is a way for the seemingly impenetrable façade to be breached. Much in the same way that the space of the farmhouse is imprinted by the historical event of the massacres, representations of the present are tangible in the Laurent house through the medium of television. After yet another tape is delivered to them, Georges and Anne bicker about how to best handle the situation and Georges changes the channel to a news station. Although the TV is not in the foreground of the shot, the images on the screen are of violence in Iraq and Palestine. The TV appears like a small window showing what is happening outside the bourgeois comforts of home. This scene is reminiscent of how France's contemporary politics influenced both *Caché* itself, and its consequent critical reception. The inclusion of the

televised news is also a reminder of how the Laurent house is a modern space, where history has no bearing. Once the TV is no longer showing footage of their house, Georges and Anne completely disregard it. Their indifference to violence in the real world is symptomatic of the bourgeois ignorance of the damage wrought by a European colonial past.

The most private inner-sanctum of the bourgeois home is the bedroom. The obscenity associated with private space in Lefebvre's definition of façade, is applicable to the space of the bedroom primarily because it is treated as a space that is contrarily non-sexual in its illicitness. Georges and Anne's marital strife is a recurrent theme in the film. They fight constantly about how best to handle the mysterious videotapes, and their son Pierrot even accuses his mother of having an affair with her boss and family friend. The root of this marital discord however, can be traced to the difficulties associated with bourgeois space, "a psychoanalysis of space would show that bourgeois space implies a filtering of the erotic, a repression of *libidines* that is at once caesura and censure" (Lefebvre 315). The bourgeois quality of the house in general is not conducive to a warm spousal relationship, and the near constant intrusion of friends as well as the watchful eye of the mysterious videotapes do not allow for any kind of privacy. The audience does not see the bedroom, a space that is specifically designated for expressions of love and sensuality, until the very end of the film. After Majid has killed himself, it is in their bedroom where Georges tells Anne the entirety of what has occurred. It is as though Majid's violent suicide is the only thing strong enough to force Georges and Anne to confront their relationship in private. Anne has company over when George returns from Majid's apartment, so he calls Anne on the phone and implores her to come to the

bedroom, delineating it as a private space if not a secret one. When she enters the room, the lights are off and the curtains drawn, Georges is sitting alone in the dark. It is in a bedroom once again where Georges is able to find his vulnerability and emerge from behind the façade long enough to tell his wife the truth. Instead of sex, it is honesty, which makes the bedroom a space of intimacy. Therefore in this instance, the bedroom's obscenity is not from an expression of illicit sexual desire, it is from the revelation of Georges' crimes. The bedroom is the only place where the diachronicity of past and present is admitted.

Body and Soul

Caché begs a Foucauldian analysis in many respects, the most evident being the role of surveillance in the film in relation to Foucault's "Panopticism". While this comparison is supremely well-founded, popular scholarship on the film often makes reference to this particular line of analysis, specifically how the film uses the power of surveillance to trap the elite characters in their spaces rather than the deviant ones (Burris 158). Consequently, some of Foucault's other writings will be used to make less overt analyses of the respective roles Georges and Majid play in the film. Haneke's Majid takes on the qualities of Foucault's madman, from *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason,* who represents the consequence of external pressures and prejudice in the creation of misshapen self-conception. Georges on the other hand, wears the mantle of the colonizer or Foucauldian doctor, using the power of superior knowledge to subjugate the symbolic native to the power of the asylum.

Because the initial social reaction to mental difference or disturbance was bodily confinement, these two separate planes of being have been consistently merged. It is this

theory that mental difference must be corporeally contained, which accounts for how immigrants from formerly colonized countries are kept 'en carton' in France. *Caché* depicts this relationship at a microcosmic level, namely Georges' constant desire to keep Majid locked away both physically and metaphysically. It is the asylum as well as the label of "madness" itself that become the most important tools in keeping cultural compartmentalization intact. In his chapter on "The Great Confinement" from *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault traces the origins of the asylum to the confinement houses of the seventeenth century, which were necessitated by the outbreak of the plague. It is this historical instance he argues, which imbues the asylum with much of its power. "From the middle of the seventeenth century, madness was linked with this country of confinement, and with the act which designated confinement as its natural abode" (Foucault 94). The idea that madness must be spatially confined works on two different levels in the film, it is firstly Majid's literal incarceration as a child and secondly, the spatial compartmentalization he is subject to in his adult life, which breeds the depression that results in his suicide. The madman is created as much from the institution of the asylum as from his own mental instability.

It is in large part the institution itself that tells the madman he is insane. When Majid's son confronts Georges after Majid's suicide, he traces his father's problems back to his childhood trauma, telling Georges how "the orphanage teaches hate, not politeness". This orphanage is the first instance of "asylum" in the film and since Majid was not actually emotionally disturbed, his madness was arguably a byproduct of the asylum. This "hate" to which Majid's son refers, can be found in the cruel methods of confinement that characterized the early asylums in "The Great Confinement". Because

his parents were dead, and Georges' parents no longer wanted him, Majid became a ward of the state:

> For the first time, purely negative measures of exclusion were replaced by a measure of confinement; the unemployed person was no longer driven away or punished; he was taken in charge, at the expense of the nation but at the cost of individual liberty. Between him and society, an implicit system of obligation was established: he had the right to be fed, but he must accept the physical and moral constraint of confinement (Foucault 110)

Georges does not feel guilty for his role in Majid's institutionalization because his basic needs were met by the state. Evidently Georges does not account for the emotional damage incurred by Majid over being denied a family and instead being raised in a place where he was morally obligated to the space of his confinement, until Majid's son confronts him about it.

The second space of confinement to which Majid is subject, is his apartment. Like numerous other "native" spaces discussed in this paper, Majid's status as an immigrant from a former French colony is concretized by the physical appearance of his home space. However, unlike the ghetto in *Lascars* for example, Majid's apartment is one of the few examples of "native" space that is infiltrated by a colonist presence. The hallmark of the mysterious videotapes, which plague the Laurents, is that they only show the outside of houses, to mark the exclusive nature of these spaces. This remains true for the tape of Majid's apartment; the only thing visible is the building's exterior and the outside of Majid's door. Georges however, acts as though exclusion does not apply to him and he enters Majid's home with no social grace or semblance of politeness. He speaks aggressively demanding, "who are you", "what do you want from me" "don't bullshit

me". He refuses Majid's offers for him to sit down, instead he remains standing as if to visually denote his dominance.

One of the most significant aspects of this scene however, is when Georges pulls out the gruesome childish drawing that was wrapped around the latest videotape he and his wife received. Although by this point, Majid has reiterated several times that he is not responsible for the videotapes, Georges thrusts the drawing into his hand accusing him of drawing it in reference to the chicken incident from their youth. This becomes yet another incident of insanity fabricated by the "keeper". Foucault writes, "The assignation of guilt is no longer the mode of relation that obtains between the madman and the sane man in their generality; it becomes both the concrete form of coexistence of each madman with his keeper, and the form of awareness that the madman must have of his own madness" (458). In order to cement his superior status and perhaps to make sense of his own feelings of guilt, it is of paramount importance for Georges to prove that Majid is insane. The significance of Majid's apartment as both a literal and emotional mental asylum is most potent in the scene of his suicide. He invites his symbolic keeper to his apartment, and cuts through the platitudes concerning the necessity and benefits of the asylum for the madman, as he cuts through his own carotid artery. The idea of spatial confinement is very relevant in *Caché*, particularly in a consideration of how Georges faces no limitations, while Majid is defined by limitations. Just like Foucault's madman, Frantz Fanon's "colonial subject is a man penned in; apartheid is but one method of compartmentalizing the colonial world. The first thing the colonial subject learns is to remain in his place and not overstep its limits" (*The Wretched of the Earth* 15). Georges

goes to extreme lengths to remind Majid of his physical place and social status in relation to himself.

The Prodigal Sons

Although national history dictates much of the film's narrative action, personal or familial history plays an important role in conceptions of space and racial stereotypes. Pierrot Laurent is the son of the symbolic colonizer, and Majid's son, unnamed in the film, is the son of the colonized. Urban street youth has been discussed in some detail in an examination of the exaggerated physical qualities of the boys in the hood from *Lascars.* In his continued quest to incriminate the European colonizer, Haneke subverts the tradition representation of the hostile delinquent. Similar to *Lascars,* Majid's son's physicality is exaggerated only in this instance; it is with the intention of making Georges' racial paranoia appear increasingly ridiculous and unfounded. Majid's son only appears three times throughout the film, but in each instance his moral superiority paves the way for the intergenerational guilt that tortures Georges.

In *Decolonization and the Decolonized,* Albert Memmi writes about "The Immigrant's Son" and the difficulties of reconciling a distinct cultural past with the desire for assimilation in the future. Memmi paints a familiar picture of the immigrant's son, t-shirt, leather jacket, baggy pants and backwards baseball cap (120-121). When Pierrot Laurent fails to return home one evening, Georges suspects foul play and enlists the help of the police to confront Majid. When the police knock at Majid's apartment door, it is Majid's son who answers. He is handsome and clean-shaven, wearing an argyle sweater, hallmark of the slightly pretentious academic. The young man bears none of Memmi's visual insignia, which no doubt typically help the police to identify and

incriminate suburban youth. The clothing and physical appearance is only half of the whole condemnatory package, because "The son does not fear the police like his father, who retains the reflexes of an immigrant. Instead he provokes them, throws stones at them knowing that in a democratic country he is not risking much" (Memmi 114). In *Caché,* it is Georges who throws the stones and brings the police to the Majid's doorstep. Instead of a standard cop car, Majid and his son are taken down to the station in the back of a police van, with barred windows and a partition between them and the driver. Sitting in a literal cage, the animal imagery is reminiscent of the colonial domination tactic wherein the native is reduced to a subhuman state. While this is applicable to this scene, the docility of Majid and his son as well as their tame and average appearances make the armored truck seem like a darkly comical overreaction.

The arrest is enough to push Majid to suicide, since as Memmi says, "the father retains the reflexes of the immigrant" and is deeply afraid of the police. Georges brings them to Majid's home, into his space, marring it in a way that Majid cannot live with. Perhaps it is the distant memory of colonial violence, the more recent memory of police brutality during the massacres, or even authoritative violence he suffered at the ambiguous orphanage he was sent away to, but the appearance of the police on his doorstep is symptomatic of history's repetitive nature, and for Majid the only way out is death. Majid's son does not fall into the same trap as his father, or even that of the ghetto stereotype like the boys from *Lascars* or *La Haine*.

After Majid's suicide, his son approaches Georges at his place of work. As in the scene with the police, Majid's son is well dressed in a pressed button-down shirt. He does not yell at Georges or attack him, he merely asks to talk, and Georges is the one

who responds first dismissively, and then aggressively. Instead of overtly blaming Georges for Majid's suicide, his son brings up Georges' initial transgressions, "You deprived my father of a good education". Once again this is contrary to the archetype of the immigrant son outlined by Memmi. For Memmi's immigrant's son, " his revolt extends to the educational institutions that characterize the society he lives in. He will arrive late and create disturbances, seeing school as a symbol of control" (117). Memmi's son lacks the foresight to recognize that a good education is a one-way ticket out of the ghetto. This is something Majid was denied, but his son is determined not to squander the same opportunity. The son's allusions to the events of Georges' youth are suggestive of how even the most ancient sins of the colonizer are not forgotten by the colonized and how through a history of colonial oppression, the latter have been put at an irreconcilable disadvantage.

Pierrot Laurent on the other hand, is a perfect model of the problematic effects of bourgeois privilege. Effectively ignored by his parents throughout the majority of the film, he is sullen, taciturn and inconsiderate. Pierrot is absent for hours on end, which only worries his parents after Georges has antagonized Majid. While Majid's son is attempting to break the mold, Pierrot follows the path carved out by his own father. In his prequel to *Decolonization and the Decolonized,* Memmi discusses the hereditary nature of colonization within the colonies themselves due to scarcity of new blood.

> The gradual selection of the mediocre, which necessarily takes place in a colony, is further worsened by a restricting recruiting ground. Only the colonizer is called by birth, father to son, uncle to nephew, from cousin to cousin, by an exclusive and racist government to manage the affairs of the city. The governing class, solely of the colonizer group, thus benefits from only negligible inflow of new blood. A kind of etiolation, if one can call it that, is produced by administrative consanguinity (*The Colonizer and the Colonized* 50).

In a consideration of Memmi's colonial nepotism, Pierrot is also trapped by his own history. Majid's parents were laborers for Georges' parents, therefore Georges believes he has the power to subjugate Majid, so he seeks him out in order to exercise the authority that he considers to be his right. Pierrot shares his father's entitled attitude until the film's ambiguous final scene where there appears to be the possibility of redemption. The camera holds a static shot of the outside of Pierrot's school, identical to the shot a few scenes earlier when Georges comes to pick up his son. This sets up the expectation for Georges to appear, but instead it is Majid's son who meets Pierrot outside his school. The camera holds at a long shot so it is impossible to hear what the boys are saying, but their conversation appears convivial. Majid's death suggests that it is too late for his and Georges' generation, but there is hope for both of their sons.

Haneke refuses to allow Majid or his son to play into harmful colonial stereotypes. This sets the characters in stark opposition to the relatively shabby spaces they are permitted to inhabit. It also negates the necessity of discovering who is responsible for the videotapes, because Georges is the one constantly denying these characters free access to colonial spaces in the film. When Majid's son approaches Georges at his office, Georges harangues him for bothering him at work and Majid's son replies, "You'd have let me in your house?" The videotapes are simply depicting what Majid and his son already know, that they are spatially excluded on the basis of historical precedent.

In his *Discourse on Colonialism*, Aimé Césaire writes, "I have said- and this is something very different- that colonialist Europe has grafted modern abuse onto ancient injustice, hateful racism onto old inequality" (24). This idea of colonial continuity is the backbone of *Caché's* contemporary political message, which is adverse to the French

political tactic of historical compartmentalization. The French government's attempts to obscure violent events like the 1961 Paris Massacre and countless other atrocities committed during the Algerian War of Independence, speak to a mentality of 'en carton'. This refusal to reconcile the past with current racial strife is akin to the refusal of integration that *Caché* depicts through its use of external footage of wealthy French spaces. The spaces of Georges' family farm and his house in the city respectively, depict two different kinds of affluence, connected in the ways that they exclude the racial other. For Majid, his apartment is a space of confinement in itself, where until he takes his own life, he cannot escape the label of insanity that Georges is forever trying to pin on him. If in the colonial analogy, Majid and Georges represent the relationship between France and Algeria, then their sons represent the danger of hereditary colonial practices that are so engrained in French society. *Caché* problematizes the French national desire to obscure the past. It is the interactions between space and history in the film that combat this historical compartmentalization, which seeks to keep the plight of the colonized separate from the issues concerning immigrant in France today.

CHAPTER 3: *The Class*

Laurent Cantet's 2008 film *The Class* depicts a perfect microcosm of France's postcolonial history as it plays out in the space of Mr. Marin's classroom.
This film will be used as the final example of cultural 'en carton' this time, within the singular space of an institution. Henri Lefebvre's concept of social space from *The Production of Space* will be used to argue for the analytical potential of the spaces inside the school, and the ways the school is impacted by the real space of Paris. Analyzing the space of the school as one of Foucault's proverbial institutions, allows for Foucault's concept of discipline to be applied to the relationship between Mr. Marin and his students. The students become objects of control and the teachers are the administrators of institutional discipline. Once this hierarchy according to a spatial analysis has been created in the abstract, the addition of a postcolonial analysis will allow for a grounding of the film in France's current racial issues that are a direct result of the country's colonial past.

The Class is based off the lived experiences of Francois Begaudeau, a white, high school French teacher who plays himself in the film under the name Francois Marin. The plot follows Mr. Marin and his culturally diverse students during the school year at Lycée Dolto, an immigrant heavy school located in Paris' 20th *arrondissement*. Mr. Marin teaches French and the film focuses on his class and the tumultuous relationship between teacher and students. One of his students Khoumba, refuses to participate in class, while her friend Esmeralda constantly talks back and causes problems for Mr. Marin. Many of the boys in the class are second-generation immigrants from former French colonies in Africa. Cherif is from Morocco, Boubacar from Cote D'Ivoire and Souleymane is from

Mali. A new student Carl joins the class midway through the film, having been kicked out from his previous school, and he is Antillean. The boys fight about their nationalities through the inflated importance of soccer, and Souleymane and Carl almost come to blows. As the year comes to a close, the teachers assemble to discuss each student's progress and assign him or her grades. Esmeralda and another student Louise are present because they are the class representatives. The girls inform Souleymane that Mr. Marin believes that he has reached his academic limits. As tensions escalate Souleymane storms from the class, accidentally clipping Khoumba in the face with a sharp part of his backpack, splitting open her eyebrow. His actions result in a disciplinary hearing and the consequent expulsion of Souleymane. Outraged at Esmeralda and Louise for inciting Souleymane's ire, Mr. Marin tells them they behaved "like sluts" in the teachers meeting and consequently must include this faux pas in the incident report. Although the film ends on a convivial note: the teachers facing the students in a soccer game, one of the students approaches Mr. Marin and asks him what the point of it all was.

Literature Review

Because of the film's critical success at Cannes (winning the Palme d'Or), *The Class'* notoriety resulted in an important discussion of racial representation in popular media. In his article "The Color of Unworthiness", author Abdoulaye Gueye argues for the inclusion of *The Class* in a series of films that arose due to the demands of the Collectif Égalité. Founded in 1998 by Cameroon-born novelist Calixthe Beyala, the Collectif's aim was to increase representation of ethno-racial minorities in French film and television (Gueye 158). *The Class* is shot in near-documentary style and this cinematic technique seems to lend credence to the argument that the film did not shy

away from depicting socially problematic material. Cantet himself said, “The film we wanted to make had to be a reflection of the French society—multiple, many-faceted, complex. Sometimes also with frictions that the film does not try to cover up” (Gueye 161). However, the acclaimed racial diversity of the cast is found primary within the students, many of who misbehave throughout the film, some to the point of expulsion. Gueye’s article acknowledges the compartmentalization occurring in the space of the film specifically along class and racial lines. He even likens the predominantly white leadership of the teachers to the silenced voices of Blacks in America. However, Gueye only mentions colonialism once, and not in the context of the representation of specific colonial nuances (Sub-Saharan African vs. Antillean), which are so central to the plot. While the article focuses on current issues of representation in the French media, it ignores the root cause of negative immigrant portrayal.

For North American audiences, the film was appealing in its universality rather than French specificity. In *The New Yorker* review of the film, David Denby writes, “’The Class’ is a prime document of French post-colonial blues, though its relevance to American urban education could not be any greater if it had been made in the Bronx or Trenton or South Los Angeles” (118). Denby’s reference to urban education speaks to the way that multicultural youth are associated more with the problematic city-center in many cities in North America. For these audiences, the universalizing potential of the plight of marginalized youth overwhelmed the postcolonial message, but issues of space and marginality were translated successfully. More than reviews and scholarly articles, *The Class* has had a remarkable impact on public conceptions of the reputations of schools in certain low-income areas. A father writing for the French online school forum

L'Etudiant, states that although they lived in district for Lycée Dolto, he didn't want to send his son there because "it is the one where the film *The Class* was shot, which has a reputation for being difficult". This brings us back to Gueye's concern wherein despite its massive success, *The Class* may have cause more harm than good in terms of negative representations of immigrant minorities (169).

Paris, 'en carton'

In his book *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre examines the significance of what he calls 'social space' which according to him is an important tool for analyzing society (34). Space becomes a way of visually ordering the social hierarchy that is generated by the production of space. The architecture of repression, or presence of visual confines as a consequence of the production of space, becomes evident in an analysis of a space still wrought with colonial influence and prejudice. Because *The Class* takes place in Paris' 20th arrondissement, it illuminates the multiple systems of exclusion existent within the actual city center. According to Lefebvre, "Social spaces interpenetrate one another and/or superimpose themselves upon one another. They are not things, which have mutually limiting boundaries and which collide because of their contours or as a result of inertia" (86-87). The spaces inside the school are the only ones that are visible in the film however, according to Lefebvre's claims about the interpenetrative and overlapping qualities of social space, the diegetic locations are arguably heavily influenced by the prejudices of Paris itself as a social space.

Films and scholarship pertaining to the banlieue genre, have popularized the Manichean divide between Paris as the center and the peripheral slum or *bidonvilles*. The city of Paris however, is subject to its own internal reciprocal exclusivity, which comes in

the form of the boundaries, established by the system of arrondissements. Lycée Dolto is located in the 20th arrondissment and illuminates the multiple systems of exclusion present in the city center. The 20th arrondissement is not technically part of the suburbs because the arrondissement system is within the Parisian infrastructure. However, the fact that the film takes place in the last possible neighborhood does connote its proximity to this stigmatized space. According to conceptions popularized by banlieue cinema, immigrants and the lower class inhabit the slums, while the upper class French hold exclusive domain over the city center. *The Class* on the other hand, makes the argument for a strong immigrant presence within Paris proper. More than simply living in Paris, the children of immigrants posses a strong urban identity. During a scene when Mr. Marin asks the students to read their self-portraits aloud to the class, Esmeralda, a student of Tunisian origin makes it clear to everyone that she lives in the 20th arrondissement. Mr. Marin is confused when Khoumba asks for the correct spelling of Lafayette, since the upscale shopping center is located in the 9th. Mr. Marin's incredulity only grows when Khoumba asserts that she spends time in the 4th arrondissement, at Luxembourg station. In response to his skepticism, Khoumba and Esmeralda both maintain that they are city girls, not "hicks" from the country.

After the massive influx of Algerians and North Africans into France after the Algerian Revolution in 1962, there began to develop immigrant-heavy pockets in the city (Ross 152). Although the industrialization of Paris involved pushing industrial labor sites (the primary occupation for immigrants and the lower class) to the periphery, many of these pockets known colloquially as *ilots insalubres*, or unhealthy blocks, remained (Ross 152). "The suburbanization of the immigrant population was not total- significant North

African areas such as the *Goutte d'or* remained vital for the time being, though it would soon be massively redeveloped as a political reaction to the general French perception of the area as a kind of ghetto" (Ross 152). Goutte d'or as an urban ghetto further illustrates the reciprocal exclusivity occurring within the city center. According to the article "Social Mix Policies in Paris", which discusses contemporary efforts to diversify both low income and upper class areas in Paris, Goutte d'or has been a target for cultural gentrification since the 1970's. However, "in the end, both the construction of social housing and the rehousing of families served to consolidate the social and ethnic population of the southern part of the neighborhood, accentuating social differentiation in the area" (Bacque et al. 261). Evidently, a true diversification is impossible and instead of breaking open the 'carton', this attempt at social mixing only served to create a smaller 'en carton' within the previous one, and further compartmentalize along preexisting racial lines. Lefebvre corroborates:

> Formal boundaries are gone between town and country, between center and periphery, between suburbs and city centers, between the domain of automobiles and the domain of people. Between happiness and unhappiness for that matter. And yet everything (public facilities, blocks of flats, 'environments for living) is separated, assigned in isolated fashion to unconnected 'sites' and 'tracts'; the spaces themselves are specialized just as operations are in the social and technical division of labour (97-98).

The city of Paris is neither truly diversified, nor strictly compartmentalized. The spaces in the film best illustrate this confusion because even though the students attend a school and perhaps even live within city limits, they are socially compartmentalized on the assumption of where their race belongs in Paris' colonially driven cultural hierarchy.

Discipline at Dolto

In order to link Lefebvre's ideas about social space to the vestiges of colonial hierarchy visible in the film, aspects of *The Class* can be filtered through a Foucauldian analysis of the role of discipline within the metaphorical institution. In his chapter "Panopticism" from *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* Foucault writes:

> 'Discipline' may be identified neither with an institution nor with an apparatus; it is a type of power, a modality for its exercise…and it may be taken over either by 'specialized' institutions… or by institutions that use it as an essential instrument for a particular end (schools, hospitals) or by pre-existing authorities that find in it a means of reinforcing or reorganizing their internal mechanisms of power (250).

If discipline is present in schools, and schools themselves are institutions in the sense that they are subject to internal mechanisms of power, then Lycée Dolto as a Foucauldian institution takes on the same hierarchical practices that France exercised on their colonies and continues to exercise on immigrants from those former colonies. Because of this comparison, the French, white teachers of the lycée can be considered disciplinarians and the students the subjected bodies of this discipline. Because both parties are byproducts of colonization but also of spatial compartmentalization, the 'en carton' that began in the colonial era has been reincarnated in the space of the school, and all the players remain relatively the same.

The authoritative role of the teachers at Lycée Dolto is echoed in much of Foucault's writing. The physicians in *Madness and Civilization* for example, are able to hold both literal and symbolic power over the madman. According to Foucault, Life in the asylum "permitted the birth of that delicate structure which would become a kind of microcosm in which were symbolized the massive structures of bourgeois society and its values…Transgression-Punishment relations, centered on the theme of immediate

justice; Madness-Disorder relations, centered on the theme of social and moral order" (274). The close connection between transgression and punishment in Foucault's asylum is also mirrored in the film. In the first staff meeting, the teachers debate the efficacy of having a demerit system in the face of increased behavioral problems. Immediate justice comes into play at the crux of the film when Souleymane goes off in class and accidentally wounds Khoumba. As the teachers debate the best way to proceed, Mr. Marin points out that disciplinary hearings result in expulsions 100% of the time. Immediate justice in the face of transgression is the way in which madmen were dealt with, and the students at Dolto are faced with a similar institutional fervor for punishment. The relationship between the teachers and students in the film creates its own microcosm in which the French bourgeois values of Mr. Marin and the rest of the teaching staff are aggressively imparted upon the subjected bodies of the multicultural class.

"Docile Bodies" and "The Means of Correct Training" from Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* discuss the ways in which discipline is exercised over the subjugated body. In the film it is the teachers at Dolto, who occupy the role of those who have the power to exercise discipline. Although the teachers represent the colonizers in a postcolonial analysis of the film, their methods of subjugation transcend any specific historical instance since according to Foucault, "in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the disciplines became general formulas of domination" (137). Since discipline is not associated with a specific apparatus or institution, it is also not associated with a particular person or group of people, which allows for a connection to be made between French colonizers and the semi-fictionalized teachers in the film. The film begins with each of the teachers introducing themselves. There is one black man who is occasionally

visible in the frame, but the white teachers are the only ones who speak. Some of these teachers reveal that they worked previously in the banlieue and are pleased to be in the city, or in cultural-spatial terms, back in their natural habitat. Aside from holding age and status seniority over the students, the teachers are the only racially homogenous assemblage shown in the film. Their hierarchical position is solidified due to the exclusive nature of their group.

If the teachers in the film are the physicians in Foucault's asylum, then the students are the metaphorical madmen, subject to the absolute control of their physicians and the institution, which "reduces differences, represses vice, eliminates irregularity" (*Madness* 245). If the teachers are the executors of discipline in Foucault's prison, then the students are the docile bodies. According to Foucault, it is the exercise of discipline, which creates subjected, or "docile" bodies (*Discipline* 138). Meaning that the students as docile bodies or as madmen occupy these positions in relation to the authority of the teachers. Exercising discipline over the body is done in the name of sapping a body's individual power in the name of collective aptitude and productivity (Foucault 138). There are certain students who are successfully integrated into the institutional hierarchy of Lycée Dolto. One white student named Louise excels in class and is praised by the teachers. Others like Carl, who was expelled from his previous school, and Souleymane who gets expelled from Dolto, eschew the docility being thrust upon them by their teachers. Foucault writes of the administration of discipline, "lastly, there is the modality: it implies an uninterrupted, constant coercion, supervising the processes of the activity rather than its result" (137). The teachers at Dolto, even Mr. Marin, care very little for the result of their role in the lives of their students because of the transient nature of high

school. When Khoumba begs Mr. Marin not to push for Souleymane's expulsion, Mr. Marin argues that it is necessary since "It helps society run smoothly". Because Souleyman is beyond the school's control, the process of keeping the institution running smoothly is more important than the potentially damaging fate that awaits Souleymane outside its walls. During the scene in which Mr. Marin finally cracks and takes Souleymane to the principal's office, students watch from the barred windows of the classroom. The effect becomes that of prisoners, watching a cellmate being led to the gallows. This is a result of the repressive architecture of the institution. In his chapter "Docile Bodies", Foucault writes:

> In organizing 'cells', 'places' and 'ranks', the disciplines create complex spaces that are at once architectural, functional and hierarchical. It is spaces that provide fixed positions and permit circulation; they carve out individual segments and establish operational links; they mark places and indicate values; they guarantee the obedience of individuals" (148)

Souleymane challenges the functionality of the school's hierarchical construction. When the students are in school they sit at individual desks, this marks their fixed positions and individual segments. Souleymane fails the test of obedience and is cast out of the complex ranking system of the classroom. The students are subject to discipline and they become docile bodies. When Souleymane is taken out of the class, he is no longer a docile body and is no longer visually imprisoned like the others, he is simply expelled and forced to live outside the system, an irregularity that must be eliminated.

The teachers and students in the film occupy specific roles in relation to discipline and control, but this hierarchy would not be possible without the space of the school itself. In "The Means of Correct Training" from *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault explains the

benefit of the way an army camp is organized, allowing for maximum surveillance and control of the soldiers. This represents a change in how institutions were laid out:

> That of an architecture that is no longer built simply to be seen…but to permit an internal, articulated and detailed control- to render visible those who are inside it; in more general terms, an architecture that would operate to transform individuals; to act on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct, to carry the effects of power right to them" (Foucault 172).

The students' conceptions of self are altered as they spend time in the school. One of discipline's primary aims is to disperse groups with a common aim, to render revolt impossible through partitioning and verticality (Foucault 236). Partitioning is the key element in creating cultural 'en carton', but this technique relies heavily on tangible space to make the exclusions most effective. Partitions are visible everywhere throughout the film, the way the desks are isolated in Mr. Marin's classroom, the locked mailboxes belonging to each teacher, the individual panes of glass created by the bars on the classroom windows. These small elements add to the compartmentalizing potential of the three primary diegetic spaces in the film: the teacher's staff room, the schoolyard and Mr. Marin's classroom. All of these spaces are subject to the disciplinary techniques of partitioning and verticality in order to solidify the status inequalities between the teachers and the students. It is here where the link between space and postcolonial analysis will be explored, in order to demonstrate how Lefebvre's spatial archetypes and Foucault's writings on societal hierarchies have a grounding in a historical instance which continues to dictate how the colonial 'other' is depicted onscreen.

The Lions' Den

A diegetic space with immense potential for reciprocal exclusivity is the staff room at Lycée Dolto. This is a room solely for the teachers in the colonial microcosm.

After what is assumed to be a frustrating day, one of the male teachers comes storming into the staff room and launches into a tirade against his students. “Stay in your crap neighborhoods” he yells, “you’ll be here all your lives and it serves you right”. This scene references the mixing and superimposition of different social spaces because evidently the teacher is using certain harmful assumptions about the banlieue being a “crap neighborhood” in order to spatially compartmentalize the offending students and solidify his own superiority since he lives in what he considers to be a better neighborhood. According to Lefebvre, “the dominant tendency fragments space and cuts it up into pieces. It enumerates the things, the various objects that space contains. Specializations divide space among them and act upon its truncated parts, setting up mental barriers and practico-social frontiers” (89). It is important for the teacher to divide up space into his neighborhood and the “crap neighborhood” of his students because it is from this truncation that he can maintain his superiority. Wherever the students truly live is irrelevant because in many of the teachers’ opinions, they are taking up the traits of their perceived social space.

The teacher’s rant hits a climax when he starts in on the students in the schoolyard and how they act like animals in heat. This is accompanied by a grotesque imitation of one of the students; the teacher’s face is monstrously twisted and he emits lewd, animalistic sounds. This paralleling of the native as animalistic or subhuman is not a new tactic of colonial domination. Writing in 1961, Frantz Fanon argues, “at times this Manicheism goes into its logical conclusion and dehumanizes the native, or to speak plainly it turns them into an animal” (*The Wretched of the Earth* 42). For the angry teacher, as for Fanon, the divide between teacher and student is too nuanced, the

difference between human and subhuman better illustrates how the colonizer treated the native and how little the teacher thinks of his students. Writing later, in 1995, Kristin Ross reiterates this same sentiment of the colonial power's need to verbally subjugate the colonized in order to retain their supremacy, "by qualifying, animalizing, and pluralizing the colonized, the European continues to supply himself with wholeness, humanity and integrity" (164). This scene depicts the characteristics of two distinct diegetic spaces. By comparing the students to animals while they are at play in the schoolyard, the teacher is demarcating the yard as a native space, or more contemporaneously, a microcosmic ghetto. The teacher's words and actions are cruel, and since this scene takes place in the staff room, he evidently feels justified enough to air his grievances aloud because this is a space for him to find support from the other teachers.

Another significant scene in which the staff room becomes a place of distorted colonial importance, is when the guidance counselor announces to the assembled teachers that a student named Wei's mother is getting deported because she didn't have the correct paperwork. All the teachers seem appropriately sad, particularly since Wei is one of the more manageable students. Despite the upsetting news, this is the same moment one of the female teachers decides to announce that she is pregnant. Completely overshadowing the news about Wei, she pulls out a bottle of champagne and all the teachers partake. The juxtaposition of this luxury beverage and the sparse, harshly lit staff room emphasizes the ludicrousness of her actions. The champagne speaks to the comparatively sumptuous lifestyles that the teachers aspire to lead outside of the space of the school. In a socioeconomic context, the champagne is a marker of the "aspirational lifestyle". A group's aspirational qualities, like a brand, are dependent upon its exclusivity. In an

article entitled “Should the Devil Sell Prada?” the authors explore the ways in which exclusive luxury stores cultivate the aspirational lifestyle with the threat of rejection, by treating their clientele exclusively. The article states how “individuals may behave strategically in ways that cultivate approval, such as by idealizing the group’s attributes or exhibiting an increased willingness to promote its values” (Ward and Dahl 591). The champagne is mark of the inflated, aspiration ideals of the group of teachers, which permits them to place themselves above the students. However, it is important to note that Wei’s plight is not forgotten, the pregnant teacher raises her glass and hopes that her unborn child will be as smart as Wei. China is not a former French colony, and Wei is constantly being differentiated from the other students because of his race. He is well thought of in the space of the colonizers, despite being drastically overshadowed by the announcement of the teacher’s pregnancy. Equation of any kind between the colonizer and the colonized would destroy the principle of the former’s privileges. Champagne in the staff room is an assertion of the colonial privilege and general opulence while the fate of deportation threatens a Chinese student and his family.

It is at the first staff meeting where this same teacher once again eclipses a real issue facing the school, with an unrelated material issue of her own. Mr. Marin and the strong-willed history teacher are debating the creation of a new disciplinary system when the blonde teacher moves on to the pressing issue of the 10 cent raise on the school’s coffee machine. This raise was created in order to bring in a profit from coffee sales for the school. Like drinking champagne when an immigrant family’s fate hangs in the balance, the problem of available coffee trumps the creation a functioning disciplinary system. When discussing the role of discipline in “Panopticism”, Foucault writes how

discipline is used "to substitute for a power that insidiously objectifies those on whom it is applied; to form a body of knowledge about these individuals, rather than to deploy the ostentatious signs of sovereignty" (*Discipline and Punish* 220). Perhaps not as refined or calculated as the disciplinarians in Foucault's writing, the teachers objectify the students and use misconceptions about the banlieue and the immigrants who live there in order to bolster their body of knowledge concerning the students. The champagne scene and the financial coffee debate also indicate that the teachers or colonizers do not shy away from ostentatious signs of sovereignty. All of the scenes taking place in the staff room reveal the petty bourgeois values of the teachers, which are only comfortably exposed in a space kept expressly for their homogeneity.

Concrete Jungle

In opposition to the exclusive space of the teachers' lounge is the decolonized space of the schoolyard. Unlike the staff room, which is exclusive primarily in name, it is the architecture of the schoolyard has been created expressly to keep the students 'en carton'. Made entirely of concrete, the small playground is sunken into the center courtyard of the school and entirely too reminiscent of a prison yard. The students are beneath the rest of the school and completely walled in, like the animals they are so often compared to. The schoolyard also becomes a representation of the ghetto. Visually, the grey concrete confines of the schoolyard mirror other cinematic depictions of the ghetto, such as the shabby collective housing units from *La Haine,* or the purposefully identical cement block-apartments depicted in *Lascars.* Lycée Dolto is not located in the ghetto, but the film's appropriation of banlieue architecture serves once again to remind audiences of the prevalence of the banlieue as an abstract and malleable concept. On a

postcolonial level, the students in the film play into the assumption that the schoolyard is native space, a created facsimile of the homeland. Albert Memmi writes in *Decolonization and the Decolonized*, "the ghetto is not only a substitute for the illusory promised land, but a mitigated form of the abandoned homeland" (83). The schoolyard ghetto is indeed a part of this illusory Promised Land and a form of the abandoned homeland because although the students are at school in Paris, the colonial Promised Land, they are only permitted to live out their cultural identities within the containment of four concrete walls.

This uninviting concrete jungle is a place meant solely for the students where they can be themselves free of colonial influence. The fact that they are all children might suggest a certain unity, particularly in relation to the authority of the adult teachers. In some respects this is true, but the damage inflicted by the French colonial system is such that Memmi's abandoned homeland is in actuality, many lands with differences that become irreconcilable in the space Paris' Promised Land. Fanon writes, "the nation is passed over for the race, and the tribe is preferred to the state. These are the cracks in the edifice which show the process of retrogression that is so harmful and prejudicial to national effort and national unity" (*The Wretched* 48). The most obvious cracks in the edifice of the racial other are between the students of truly varied ethnicities. Wei, one of the only Chinese kids in the class, does not share the same ideologies as his peers admitting that sometimes he feels ashamed for them because of the way they behave. In the schoolyard he is only ever seen spending time with another Chinese student, evidently seeking a member of his own tribe. When a soccer ball is kicked his way, the other kids call him "Jackie Chan", a nod to ill-conceived perceptions of Chinese culture wrought by

Hollywood and American capitalism, pervasive even in France. Wei throws the ball back to them, uninterested in joining in the game.

In order to evade the danger associated with mass ideology and the strength of a common objective, Fanon specifies how "the colonial bourgeoisie had hammered into the native's mind the idea of a society of individuals where each person shuts himself up in his own subjectivity, and whose only wealth is individual thought" (48). Although Fanon is referring to natives within one 'tribe', the prizing of individual thought creates friction within the heterogeneous mix of 'tribes' represented in the film. The separation between Wei and the other students is more obvious than the nuanced tensions that the film explores between members of 'tribes' with even greater similarities. This friction is embodied primarily through the relationship between Souleymane and Carl. These characters represent France's colonial impact in West Africa and the Caribbean respectively, and how a lack of unity between these two factions results in more gradated racial violence within the film.

Coupe d'Afrique

Souleymane is distinctly Malian; his identity is built around this ethnic association, his tattoo from the Koran, his fierce support of the Mali soccer team and the fact that his own mother does not speak French, only Bamanankan. He is not interested in integrating himself in the school or the classroom, and that is ultimately why he is expelled. While the other kids read their self-portraits aloud in class, he says, "I have nothing to say about me because no one knows me but me". He is a metaphor for the great number of Mahgrebian immigrants who refuse to let themselves be assimilated into French culture, from which they are both excluding and excluded. Unlike Algeria,

"Africa south of the Sahara may have been decreed French territory, but never was it decided that Africa south of the Sahara was France" (Ross 123), indicating that there were arbitrary levels of inclusion between France and its colonies. *The Class* was so highly praised in part because of its multi-racial cast, but what is most successful in terms of race representation is the way the film does not shy away from showing the ethnic intricacies among the black characters instead of amassing them under the homogeneity of skin color. Souleymane is the unchallenged class delinquent until the arrival of Carl, a student coming to Dolto who has been expelled from his previous school. Carl differs culturally from Souleymane because he is from the Caribbean, and unlike many of the Mahgrebian kids in the class, he actually identifies as French. As each male student proudly supports the soccer team of his origins, Carl supports the French team because, as he argues, the Caribbean is a French region.

The integration of French Caribbean immigrants into French society differs greatly from the experience of the Mahgrebian. In the postcolonial context of this film, these differences were used as a tool in establishing verticality among the students who are already at the lowest tier in the symbolic colonial hierarchy. France's African colonies fought bitterly for independence, sub-Saharan African became independent in 1960, and Algeria followed two years later (Saada x). The postcolonial experience of Algerian immigrants, as discussed in the context of *Caché,* while equally fraught was different than that of sub-Saharan Africans because of Algeria's elevated status during the colonial era. The French West Indies on the other hand, had a far less bloody decolonization. The Antillean desire for French integration is best expressed in Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, a work devoted to the internal and external struggle facing the

Antillean man both in Paris and back home in the Caribbean in the wake of France's colonial involvement. According to Fanon, many Africans wished to be considered Antillean, while Antilleans would be insulted if they were ever mistaken for Senegalese, Mali's neighboring country. The reason for this, he writes, is that "the Antillean is more 'évolué' than the African- meaning he is closer to the white man- and this difference exists not only on the street or along the boulevard, but also in the administration and the army" (9). While fighting in the French infantry during the Second World War, Fanon watched the Senegalese being ordered time and again to put themselves directly in the line of fire, a devaluing of African lives as compared to those of the French and the French Antilleans (9-10). It is this prized proximity to the French that fuels Carl's sense of nationhood, while the chip on Souleymane's shoulder has evidently been put there by a history of colonial abuse and contempt from both France and other colonies.

The first confrontation between Souleymane and Carl occurs during a soccer game in the schoolyard. Souleymane trips Carl but the latter still manages to score a goal and then disparages the Malian soccer team. The subsequent insults hurled between the two boys are strictly racial. "You Caribbean shit" yells Souleymane, "You Caribbean fag", as if Carl's race is his most offending feature. We see therefore, that it is impossible for a space with even the most congenial intentions to create bonds between cultures with such different relationships to their former colonizing power. Aimé Césaire defines 'négritude' "as an opening out and a gesture of contact with otherness" (Hiddleston 90) specific to a shared Black heritage, but *The Class* reveals this concept to be an unrealistic aim. Césaire's négritude speaks also of his desire to reconfigure colonial geography, to bring the Martiniquais back to his African roots, connecting him with the Mahgrebian

(Hiddleston 90). Instead of relating to Souleymane because of their shared colonial experience, Carl feels more connected to France. Souleymane says to Carl, "you are not my brother"; and indeed this is true, the space of the schoolyard and even the classroom is racially subdivided to the point of enmity. The idealism of transcendental humanism, even the expansive nature of négritude is not enough to forge a connection between different and competing black ethnicities because of the history of France's preferential treatment of one over the other. Although the students are free from the direct control of the teachers when they are in the schoolyard, for the majority of the film, the space fails to be a uniting power for the postcolonial natives. Instead, the schoolyard is a space like Memmi's ghetto, where ethnic communities isolate themselves for comfort whilst being rejected from mainstream society (Memmi, *Decolonization* 84).

Common Ground

In the film, because symbolic spaces of the colonizer and the colonized are so polarized, the classroom is meant to be neutral ground. Sometimes the relationship between Mr. Marin and the students is symbiotic enough to allow this neutrality to occur, however there are other times when postcolonial tensions seep in and poison this space of potential decolonization. One of the most important events that occur within the space of the classroom is Khoumba's refusal to read aloud from *The Diary of Anne Frank*. In Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism*, he interprets the manner in which the actions of Hitler became a source of shame for the white man because of his use of essentially colonialist practices. According to Césaire, "it would be worthwhile to study clinically, in detail, the steps taken by Hitler and Hitlerism and to reveal to the very distinguished, very humanistic, very Christian bourgeois of the twentieth century that without his being

aware of it, he has a Hitler inside him, that Hitler inhabits him" (3). When Mr. Marin assigns *The Diary of Anne Frank* to his students as way to inspire them to write their own autobiographies, it is his attempt to rid himself of the Hitler associations implicit in his status as a white, European male. Khoumba in particular is not fooled by Mr. Marin's attempt at solidarity with the plight of the Jews during the Second World War. Her refusal to read and insistence that Mr. Marin is victimizing her, solidifies his status as a colonial dominator. France's colonial history is so pervasive within the space of the classroom that not even the atrocities of Hitler can distract the students from the fact that they too are at the mercy of a dictatorial system.

Another significant infringement on the supposed neutrality of the classroom space is the parent teacher interviews. The space of the classroom is one traditionally reserved for interchange between teachers and their students, so where do parents fit in? The parent meetings cannot take place in the teacher's lounge because this has already been established as a space exclusively for the white French colonizers. And as it turns out, the strong ethnic identity of many of the parents actually serves to complicate a space as supposedly neutral as the classroom. The most notable example of this destruction of neutrality is the meeting Mr. Marin has with Souleymane's mother. Mr. Marin teaches French as a subject, and as the film progresses it becomes evident that he is concerned with teaching the oppressively formal nuances of the language. There is a significant degree of hypocrisy in having a scene where the French teacher is critiquing the academic progress of a child whose own mother does not speak the language of his education. In the context of the film, the mother's inability to speak French serves to underline her native otherness. "The colonial subject 'saw' in his womankind his last hope of autonomy

and hence of survival" (Saada 27). She is a beacon of cultural autonomy, in her traditional Malian dress, and her dialogue, which is almost entirely in Bamanankan. Because of her inability to communicate, Souleymane's mother is at the mercy of her husband and her sons, the eldest of whom serves as a translator in this scene. Mr. Marin's authority is filtered through Souleymane's brother. His French words, repeated by a teenager in Bamanankan lose their colonial power. During this entire scene Mr. Marin remains seated at his desk, while the parents sit on the class chairs with their children. The tradition divide between teacher and student becomes one between French teacher and immigrant family.

At other times throughout the film, the students or the teachers cross the colonial boundaries, and enter the spaces of the native or the colonizer, typically with disastrous result. The first example of this boundary crossing is when Esmeralda and Louise, who act as the class representatives, are present during the end of year student evaluations. This might be considered as some kind of overture to democracy by including the students in the final grading process, but the construction and blocking of this scene shows the inevitability of separation. The scene takes place in one of the classrooms but the teachers have transformed it, and made the space their own. They have rearranged the desks in a U shape to show their mutual respect for one another, while Louise and Esmeralda are seated separately in the corner. The teachers discuss all the students in the class; they even discuss Louise, as though the two girls are not present. They openly criticize and comment with a distinct bias towards the personalities of the students, particularly Souleymane. When Esmeralda points out that his marks have improved, this information is dismissed, regarded as less important than his bad behavior. When the

camera pans to reveal the presence of Esmeralda and Louise for the first time, Esmeralda adjusts her shirt that has “Tunisie” written across the chest. This is a direct indication that postcolonial tensions are at play. She is the symbolic Mahgrebian, confident to talk in her native tongue and wear this shirt as a representation of her native dress (Memmi, *Decolonization* 78). She is so at odds with the space the teachers have created, that she must leave at one point, and earns the scorn of the principal because of her laughter and insistence on eating. She represents a challenge to the colonial order because she is making light of the archaic proceedings of ill-informed judgment used by the teachers in order to maintain their illusory dominance over the students in the class. The intrusion of Esmeralda and Louise into the all-adult all-colonizer space of the student evaluations becomes massively problematic, and leads to a second significant spatial transgression.

Because of the harsh criticisms Mr. Marin doled out in the supposed sanctity of the teachers’ space, a fight occurs between Mr. Marin and the students within the space of the classroom. However, the real boundary-crossing occurs when Mr. Marin enters the space of the schoolyard in order to confront Louis and Esmeralda who complained to the guidance counselor after he accused them of acting like “skanks”. Louise and Esmeralda have their arms around each other in perhaps the first moment of cross-ethnic visual solidarity in the film. As the fight escalates, more students are drawn to the scene and Mr. Marin is vastly outnumbered. In the space of the schoolyard, where the physical boundaries of the classroom do not apply, Mr. Marin has no spatial dominance and the students crowd inappropriately close to him to reveal how physically, he is not much bigger than they are. Because he is out of his element and they are in theirs, the students take this opportunity to air their grievances against Mr. Marin and the school. Carl swears

freely and claims that the school has not tamed him, indicative of his own unconscious knowledge of the animalization of the native in colonial discourse. Kristin Ross writes, "the power that masters give themselves to qualify is a direct expression of property rights over the colonized" (164), but this power is shown to be illusory because Mr. Marin's descent onto native turf is concluded with him walking away in defeat, back to a space where he can maintain some modicum of control. This scene demonstrates that the colonially oppressed unite best under a mob mentality, which the process of cultural individualization as discussed in the context of the enmity between Souleymane and Carl, is attempting to avoid. It is in this scene where the role of the schoolyard is changed and perhaps redeemed. Even Carl, who initially stood in opposition to Souleymane, comes to his defense because of the injustices perpetrated by the school's disciplinary system. Oddly enough, it is Mr. Marin's spatial transgression that serves to unify, in the space of the schoolyard, the disparate postcolonial identities of the students in *The Class*.

The final instance of spatial boundary crossing in the film occurs on the last day of school when the teachers play soccer with the students outside in the schoolyard. This is meant to end the film on a congenial note, all the teachers even the principal are outside, yelling and cheering alongside the students. The jump cut to the empty classroom seems to suggest that since the school year is over, the teachers can remove their colonial masks and mingle with the natives, that their dominance was a necessity of the structure of the school system. What this amicable instance of boundary crossing truly propounds however, is that Souleymane refusing to conform to the idea of Foucault's docile body was the reason the teachers and students could not get along sooner. He refuses to coexist with the other students who have accepted their subordinate

postcolonial positions in relation to the space of the school. According to Memmi, the young immigrant sees "school as a symbol of control" (*Decolonization* 117) because order is based on the control of the teachers. This attitude is one of self-sabotage because success in the French educational system is a way out of less favorable socio-economic situations. It is after Souleymane's expulsion that the spaces in the school are cleared of racial anger, allowing for this heartwarming scene of boundary crossing to occur at the end of the film.

There are numerous scenes in the film which evidence the postcolonial tensions at work below the narrative. By addressing only a few scenes, the inescapability and pervasiveness of postcolonial thought is extremely clear, particularly when conceptualized through the film's use of space. The staff room, playground and classroom are spaces designated for a group of people defined by age and status. This definition and resultant compartmentalization was as true in France's colonies as it is in Paris today. *The Class* is such a significant film because it conveys the discord between a colonizing country and its colonies, the consequences of France's center/periphery divisiveness and the unharmonious results of Paris' system of arrondissements without ever leaving the space of the classroom.

CONCLUSION

Each film discussed in this thesis demonstrates cultural 'en carton' on a different scale. Through its comical and cartoonish depictions of the disparity between socioeconomic classes, *Lascars* shows how the symbolic native and colonizer will be set apart by the nature of their neighborhoods which consequently characterize their home spaces. Although the depiction of Paris is fictional in this film, it reflects real prejudices associated with conceptions of the city's relationship with its suburbs. *Caché* brings 'en carton' into a more realistic setting, referencing actual spaces and events that have occurred in Paris. Majid's suicide speaks to the impossibility of reconciliation between France and Algeria, because the latter has never truly been accepter into French society. The mysterious videotapes interspersed throughout the film reference the exclusivity of French society, and the way that the immigrant inevitably finds himself on the outside. Finally, *The Class* takes 'en carton' into the space of a singular institution. This film shows the direct tactics of colonial hierarchy exercised between the colonizers and colonized, but rationalized as the relationship between teachers and students. Examining the relationship between dominant and subjugated within the context of spatial limitation allows for a less overt yet increasingly significant depiction of the ways colonialism still exists in French society. The use of widely applicable scholarship from canonical theorists such as Lefebvre and Fanon combined with the work of French postcolonial authors, and applied to contemporary films set in Paris, shows how colonial archetypes have withstood the test of time.

Charlie, 'en carton'

France is not alone in its struggle with formerly colonized nations, many other European countries as well as the United States share in issues of immigrant integration, which can be reflected in different representations through various national cinemas. Despite the universalizing potential of what has been examined in this thesis, this study continues to be most relevant and applicable to Paris itself and the recent violence occurring there, with its roots in French colonization. The concept of problematic representations of the racial other is best exemplified in the January 7, 2015 shootings at the headquarters of the satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*.

Connecting the attacks and France's colonial history is no hard task as two of the shooters were identified as Algerian, and the potential third as Senegalese. Obscuring or ignoring the historical symptoms of the *Charlie Hebdo* killings has become a hallmark French political tactic. In his article for the CBC, Don Murray writes, "Hollande called French unity 'our best weapon. Nothing can divide us'. Perhaps, but just hours earlier a French woman of North African origin talked, in tears, of going back to her office in the afternoon and finding everyone looking at her suspiciously". Because they were French speakers, the shooters were identified as French radicalized Muslims. This begs the question; did Hollande mean the unity of France against Algeria, or the French against French Muslims? In the French context, unity is almost certainly at the price of immigrant exclusion. In light of *Charlie Hebdo*, the tides have turned for French president Francois Hollande, whose popularity has purportedly increased his approval rate to 34% (Chazan). The explosion of social media support, #JeSuisCharlie and the call to defend free speech are only one side of an issue that has sparked violence since the

beginning of the Algerian War for Independence. Hollande's call for French unity at the cost of racial exclusion rings false in light of the statistic that four in ten French people believe that *Charlie Hebdo* was wrong to publish offensive caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed in the first place (Chazan). The exaggerated physical qualities of the many of the racialized characters from *Lascars* is comparable to the irreverent quality of the *Charlie Hebdo* cartoons which according to the majority of sources, was a driving force behind the attack.

Mark LeVine, in his article for *Al Jazeera,* identifies the root cause of *Charlie Hebdo* as Algeria's residual anger over French colonization and the subsequently bloody War of Independence. "The collective wound of colonialism, its distortion and often destruction of existing pathways to modernity, is for all practical purposes immeasurable. As with a body that takes only seconds to stab or shoot, the deep wounds of foreign domination and postcolonial dictatorship can take a lifetime to heal properly if ever" (LeVine). *Charlie Hebdo* proves that one lifetime is not nearly enough to heal the colonial wounds. The combination of historical circularity and pervasive colonialism has manifested itself in countless different ways in French society. There are numerous overt cinematic representations of France's relationships with its former colonies, where plots center on actual events. The significance of my chosen films however, is to demonstrate that tactics of colonial domination are so pervasive as to be tangible in narratives where colonialism is not the primary theme. In his article "Haneke and the Discontents of European Culture", Christopher Sharrett writes of the famed director, "he offers, through his exploration of the relationship of culture to the fascist mind, a corrective to a dominant conceit that culture can take the place of politics and that a good understanding

or ‘reading’ of this or that work of art can be seen as a viable substitute for revolutionary activity and social change” (10). Although Sharrett claims Haneke critiques of Western Bourgeois society are meant to disengage the legitimacy of art in politics, there is a certain self-reflexivity in this statement, because if art makes viewers consider politics even in the abstract, than a medium like cinema has achieved its goals. All of my chosen films are significant in that they represent a social problem as well as the root causes. As France continues to widen the rift between the French and immigrants living in France, there will always be room for a postcolonial analysis on representations of this fractured society.

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