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Race and Terrorism in French Cinema: Discourses of Whiteness and 'Brown Threat' in Nicolas Boukhrief's *Made in France*

In the decades following attacks on French soil by the Algerian Groupe islamique armé (GIA) in the 1990s, the September 11, 2001 attacks and the subsequent 'Global War on Terror,' there has been a proliferation of French and Francophone films depicting Islamist terrorism both within and outside the borders of metropolitan France. Films such as Philippe Faucon's *La désintégration* (France, 2011), Aberrahmane Sissako's *Timbuktu* (Mauritania/France, 2014), Nabil Ayouch's *Les chevaux de Dieu* (Morocco/Belgium 2015), and Nicolas Boukhrief's *Made in France* (France, 2015) have been praised for adding nuance to the stereotyped portrayal of Islam and Islamist terrorists in mainstream media and cinema. In this respect, these fictional films can be situated within the third component of what Michael Frank refers to as 'the global imaginary of terrorism,' which he defines as (1) 'actual occurrences of terrorism,' (2) 'the [political and media] discourse that accompanies them,' and finally (3) 'literary and cinematic fictions created in response to both the political-social reality and the current public debate.'¹ French and Francophone 'cinematic and literary fictions' that show Islamist terrorism engage with a French 'political-social reality' and 'current public debate' in which the notion of Islam as a threat to metropolitan French socio-cultural stability predates the global imaginary of terrorism that Frank describes. In addition, as numerous scholars have observed, the metropolitan French socio-cultural stability that Muslim populations allegedly threaten is a system sustained by what Juliette Galonnier refers to as the 'normative invisibility' of Whiteness within the French cultural imaginary, wherein individuals racialized as non-White are implicitly seen as less French, more threatening etc.² This article proposes some hermeneutic frameworks for analysing how French cinematic representations of Islamist terrorism, regardless of intention, might reproduce or subvert such hegemonic discourses of Whiteness in France.³ Considering French and Francophone representations of Islamist

¹ Michael C. Frank, *The Cultural Imaginary of Terrorism in Public Discourse, Literature and Film: Narrating Terror* (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 16.

² Juliette Galonnier, 'Maneuvering Whiteness in France: Muslim Converts' Ambivalent Encounters with Race', *French Politics, Culture & Society* 39.2 (2021): pp. 69–94 (p. 69).

³ For this article, I have made the decision to capitalize the 'W' in 'White' when referring to the socially constructed racial category, with the exception of direct quotations in which an author used the lowercase 'w'. This is in keeping with the recommendation of the 2022 Diversity Style Guide developed by the Center for Integration and Improvement of Journalism at San Francisco State University. People in favour of the lowercase 'w' have argued, that unlike the word 'White,' 'Black reflects a shared sense of identity and community' (Laws) while also noting that the word 'has long been capitalized by hate groups' (Coleman). However, the Diversity Style Guide comes to a much different conclusion, based in part on arguments from the American-based Center for the Study of Social Policy (CSSP). The CSSP argues in favour of the capital W in 'White': "[t]o not name 'White' as a race is, in fact, an anti-Black act which frames Whiteness as both neutral and the standard... We believe that it is important to call attention to White as a race as a way to understand and give voice to how Whiteness functions in our social and political institutions and our communities.' In regard to the disturbing echoes with White supremacist organisations, Kwame Anthony Appiah asserts that '[i]f the capitalization of white became standard among anti-racists, the supremacists' gesture would no longer be a provocative defiance of the norm and would lose all force.' While I believe that the capital 'W' in 'White' is appropriate in the context of this article, and my arguments about the dangers of normalizing Whiteness, I also acknowledge that some may disagree with this decision. It is also possible that my own thinking on this issue will evolve over time as we continue to debate the reparative role that appropriate language can play in discussing past and present issues of race and identity. It is worth noting that this debate has also played out in the French context with a 2012 article in Slate noting that 'A l'AFP, Omar Sy est "le premier noir" à remporter un César, mais pour Le Monde, c'est "le premier Noir"' (Levenson). While generally news organisations follow the convention of capitalizing 'Noir' and 'Blanc' as indicated in the French style manual *Le bon usage* (informally called *Le Grévisse*), some French journalists and writers have questioned this choice as 'political' (Dambrine et. al) while the writer Claude Ribbe argues that 'on ne peut mettre la majuscule au substantif noir ou au substantif blanc que si justement on valide la notion de race' (Levenson).

For the sources cited in this note, see respectively: 'White, white', *The Diversity Style Guide*

<<https://www.diversitystyleguide.com/glossary/white-white/>> [accessed 11 November 2022]; Mike Laws, 'Why We Capitalize "Black" (and Not "White")', *Columbia Journalism Review*, 16 June 2020

<<https://www.cjr.org/analysis/capital-b-black-styleguide.php>> [accessed 11 November 2022]; Nancy Coleman,

terrorism and terrorists through the lens of race is a significant departure from how these representations are typically discussed in both scholarly and mainstream accounts.

The first section of this article proposes viewing Islamophobia, and in particular fears of the Islamist terrorist, in contemporary France as a form of racism, similar to discourses of 'Brown threat' and the 'dangerous Brown man' that have been evoked with significantly more frequency in the Anglophone context. I then propose the socially constructed racial category of 'Brown' as a productive way to describe how inhabitants of contemporary France are racialized in ways that are distinct (though at times overlapping) with being racialized as 'White' or 'Black'.

The second section is a case study analysis of French-director Nicolas Boukhrief's 2015 film *Made in France*, in which a French-born Muslim with an Algerian father and a French mother thwarts a terrorist attack on French soil. Boukhrief's film is an especially rich object for analysis because the film's anti-Islamophobia message is embodied by a Muslim 'hero' protagonist who, while he is of Algerian descent, is marked (both implicitly and explicitly) as Whiter than other characters throughout the film.⁴ My analysis of Boukhrief's film shows how the categories of White, Brown, and Black are integral to any analysis of contemporary French visual discourses of Islamist terrorism. Furthermore, as my reading of *Made in France* will show, a failure to be explicit about how socially constructed racial categories are intertwined with discourses about Islam and terrorism in France, means that even a film's good-faith effort to combat Islamophobia may fall flat if it appears indifferent to the salience of racial categories within France's allegedly colourblind society. More broadly, I hope that my analysis of Boukhrief's film offers a model—whether to emulate or contest—for how to broaden discussions of race and racism in the French context, by introducing the category of 'Brownness' in addition to 'Blackness' and 'Whiteness'.

A reader might well ask what the value is of using the term 'Brown' when it maps so closely onto pre-existing stereotypes that are more legible in the French context such as the 'garçon arabe,' or the 'jeune de banlieue.'⁵ Nacira Guénif-Souilamas describes the 'garçon arabe' stereotype as 'un revenant du passé colonial' part of a population who are 'ethniciées en raison de leur origine arabe et/ou musulman.'⁶ However, specific knowledge about someone's ethnic or religious origin is not necessary for someone to be racialized as 'Arab' or 'Muslim'. As a 2021 article in *Le Monde Diplomatique* observes, '[e]n France, les confusions concernant Algériens, Arabes, Berbères et Kabyles ne sont pas rares.'⁷ Indeed, there is a way in which relying on the ethnic category of 'Arab,' even when working to deconstruct the term as Guénif-Souilamas does, risks obscuring that the continued presence of anti-Brown racism in France is not simply a legacy of past colonialism. It is also, to quote Étienne Balibar, a 'total social phenomenon' in France's present which allow individuals and groups in France to engage in 'the phantasm of prophylaxis or segregation (the

'Why We're Capitalizing Black', *The New York Times*, 5 July 2020

<<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/05/insider/capitalized-black.html>> [accessed 11 November 2022]; Ann Thúy Nguyễn and Maya Pendleton, 'Recognizing Race in Language: Why We Capitalize "Black" and "White"', *Center for the Study of Social Policy*, 23 March 2020 <<https://cssp.org/2020/03/recognizing-race-in-language-why-we-capitalize-black-and-white/>> [accessed 11 November 2022]; Kwame Anthony Appiah, 'The Case for Capitalizing the B in Black', *The Atlantic*, 18 June 2020 <<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/time-to-capitalize-blackand-white/613159/>> [accessed 11 November 2022]; Claire Levenson, 'Pour une utilisation décomplexée du mot noir', *Slate.fr*, 25 March 2012 <<https://www.slate.fr/story/52115/noir>> [accessed 25 November 2022]; Louis-George Tin, 'Le Noir et Le Rose, Entretien Avec Louis-Georges Tin', *Vacarme*, 2 July 2006, <<https://vacarme.org/article671.html>> [accessed 25 November 2022].

⁴ The terms 'hero' and 'anti-hero' are placed in inverted commas throughout this article to make clear that I am referring to the 'hero' and 'anti-hero' as specific narrative archetypes within the action film genre and more broadly. For more on archetypal figures within this genre see for instance, Yvonne Tasker, *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

⁵ For discussion of the connotations and stereotypes surrounding this term see, for instance, Thomas Guénolé and Emmanuel Todd, *Les jeunes de banlieue mangent-ils les enfants?* (Lormont: Le Bord de l'eau, 2015).

⁶ Nacira Guénif-Souilamas, 'La Française voilée, la beurette, le garçon arabe et le musulman laïc. Les figures assignées du racisme vertueux', in *La République mise à nu par son immigration*, ed. by Nacira Guénif-Souilamas (Paris: La Fabrique, 2006), paragraph 14, Kindle edition; *ibid.*, paragraph 17, Kindle edition.

⁷ Arezki Metref, 'Algériens... mais pas arabes', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, March 2021 <<https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2021/03/METREF/62851>> [accessed 7 November 2022].

need to purify the social body, to preserve “one’s own” or “our” identity from all forms of mixing, interbreeding or invasion).⁸ While the knowledge of France’s specific history of immigration from North Africa, of the Algerian War etc. has shed light on how certain ‘stigmata of otherness’ (‘darker’ skin, the veil etc.) took their current forms, it is equally true that a person from France’s White majority does not need knowledge of that specific history to engage in ‘forms of violence, contempt, intolerance, humiliation and exploitation’ against groups racialized as ‘other.’⁹ Documented cases of discrimination in France against Indian Sikhs, immigrants from India and Pakistan’s Punjab region, Amazigh populations, and refugees from Afghanistan show how the term ‘anti-Arab’ racism, rather than a more general term like ‘anti-Brown’ discrimination, excludes a category of stigmatized French minorities who are less likely to be racialized as White or Black, and whose specific geographic and cultural identities are erased by the term ‘Arab.’¹⁰

The film I will be analysing as a case study in this article’s second section, Bouhkrif’s *Made in France*, is often described as portraying French terrorists who are part of a ‘un groupe islamiste.’¹¹ However, Bouhkrif, who is of Muslim heritage, disavows the term, stating it gives the mistaken impression that the faith of Islam is solely responsible for creating terrorists.¹² This wariness of the term ‘Islamism’ is echoed by Thomas Deltombe, quoted in a 2017 article in *Libération*, asserting that ‘le flou entourant le mot “islamisme” “est devenu une arme idéologique,”’ since racists can label any Muslim as an ‘Islamist.’¹³ Bassam Tibi’s oft-cited distinction between Islam as religious faith and Islamism as ‘an ideological use of religion within the political realm,’ is further complicated if one considers Talal Asad’s argument that the very idea of separating religion from politics is itself a problematic notion with roots in Christian theology.¹⁴ Asad persuasively argues that the idea that religion can be neatly separated from politics (a notion foundational to present-day secular democratic governments such as France) normalizes a view of post-Enlightenment, liberal-democratic Western political organisation from which Muslims are implicitly excluded.¹⁵ In this sense, ‘Islamist’ as a descriptor of an ideology and its adherents, is similar to words such as

⁸ Etienne Balibar, ‘Is There a “Neo-Racism”?’ in *Race and Racialization: Essential Readings*, ed. by Tania Das Gupta et al. (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2007), pp. 83–88 (p. 83).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ See, for instance, Abhik Chanda, ‘Turban dans les écoles: les Sikhs se mobilisent en France’, *La Presse*, 13 September 2013 <<https://www.lapresse.ca/international/europe/201309/23/01-4692167-turban-dans-les-ecoles-les-sikhs-se-mobilisent-en-france.php>>; Christine Moliner, ‘Les maux de la clandestinité: retour sur une expérience d’accompagnement socio-sanitaire de migrants pendjabis indiens sans papiers en Île-de-France’, *Migrations Société*, 5 (2015): 139–156; ‘Les Amazighs de France réagissent à la discrimination pratiquée par le gouvernement français’, *Congrès Mondial Amazigh*, 3 July 2016 <<https://www.congres-mondial-amazigh.org/2016/07/03/les-amazighs-de-france-r%C3%A9agissent-%C3%A0-la-discrimination-pratiqu%C3%A9e-par-le-gouvernement-fran%C3%A7ais/>> [accessed 7 November 2022]; Maurice Midena, ‘Afghans “migrants”, Ukrainiens “réfugiés” : racisme médiatique?’, *Arrêt sur images*, 7 March 2022 <<https://www.arretsurimages.net/articles/afghans-migrants-ukrainiens-refugies-racisme-mediatique>> [accessed 7 November 2022].

¹¹ Robin Verner, ‘“Made in France”, La fiction qui avait précédé la réalité’, *Slate.fr*, 24 November 2015 <<https://www.slate.fr/story/110479/made-france-fiction-realite>> [accessed 1 November 2022].

¹² In a 2016 interview, Bouhkrif states that ‘[d]’ailleurs je n’emploie plus le mot islamiste – on ne dit pas catholiste mais catholique intégriste. Le mot islamiste crée la confusion. Ce n’est pas l’islam qui crée les terroristes. Daech est une secte apocalyptique. Cela tient aussi du paganisme nazi, du nihilisme le plus sectaire’, qtd. in Yannick Vely, ‘Nicolas Bouhkrif: “L’expression d’une pulsion de mort”’, *Paris Match*, 22 January 2016 <<https://www.parismatch.com/Culture/Cinema/Nicolas-Bouhkrif-L-expression-d-une-pulsion-de-mort-900597>> [accessed 16 August 2022].

¹³ Frantz Durupt, ‘Vous avez dit “islamisme”?’ *Libération*, 9 October 2017 <https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2017/10/09/vous-avez-dit-islamisme_1596640/?outputType=amp> [accessed 1 November 2022].

¹⁴ Bassam Tibi, *Islamism and Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), p. vii.

¹⁵ Asad argues that the idea of religion as ‘essentially a matter of symbolic meanings’ that can be abstracted from ‘specific processes of power and knowledge... is in fact a view that has a specific Christian history.’ Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 42. For his discussion of whether European sociopolitical structures, as currently constituted, could ever accept Muslims as legitimate members of the body politic (despite an alleged commitment to secular inclusion) see Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).

‘terrorism’ and ‘terrorist’—politically and racially charged terms that are often selectively used to justify political and racially motivated exclusion and violence. The refusal of many media organisations to name acts of violence committed by American White supremacists as terrorist (or even ‘Christianist’) violence is just one prominent example of the term’s selective, and racially encoded application. Thus, when referring to ‘Islamist terrorists’ and the ‘Islamist terrorist figure’ within this article, I am referring primarily to the popularly and stereotypically constructed trope within mainstream political and media discourse.

While scholarly and journalistic discussions of Islamist terrorism and its visual representations in the French context have been largely attentive to the socially and politically charged nature of the term ‘terrorist,’ significantly less attention has been paid to its racial dimension. In particular, the scholarly reception of French films showing Islamist terrorism has mostly refrained from engaging directly with categories of race or skin colour, even as discussions of terrorism in other contexts consider racialized terrorist stereotypes of the ‘Brown threat,’ the ‘dangerous Brown man,’ and globally circulating images of the ‘Islamic Rage Boy.’¹⁶ For instance, Maria Flood and Florence Martin’s ‘The Terrorist as *ennemi intime* in French and Francophone Cinema,’ which provides an extensive overview of French and Francophone films about terrorism, from *La Bataille d’Alger* to *Made in France*, never uses the terms ‘race,’ or ‘skin colour.’¹⁷ Instead, their focus is on how these films offer ‘necessary counter-narratives to the hegemonic representations of the Islamist terrorist such as those constructed in the studios of Los Angeles.’¹⁸ This absence of references to race is particularly notable when considering a large body of scholarship that argues for Islamophobia as not just a form of bigotry comparable to racism, but as a form of racism in and of itself.¹⁹ Anya Topolski persuasively argues that religious and ethnic prejudices and stereotypes (in particular of Muslims and Jews) were developed over centuries in tandem with racial categorisations (such as ‘Semitic’) as part of a ‘race-religion constellation.’ She writes ‘that the masking of the race-religion constellation prevents the acknowledgement of Islamophobia as a contemporary form of racism’ and that ‘by denying the reality of the race-religion constellation, it is more difficult to identify, connect and contest discriminatory practices ranging from legislation regarding the headscarf, halal and so on, to racial injustice.’²⁰ Key to the definition of racism that Topolski has chosen, and the one which I employ in this analysis, is that, as Nasar Meer and Tariq Modood remind us, ‘race is not just about colour’ and that ‘cultural racism...is not merely a proxy for racism but a form of racism itself.’²¹ According to Meer and

¹⁶ Christopher Rivera, ‘The Brown Threat: Post-9/11 Conflations of Latina/os and Middle Eastern Muslims in the US American Imagination’, *Latino Studies*, 12.1 (2014): pp. 44–64 and Kumarini Silva, *Brown Threat: Identification in the Security State* (University of Minnesota Press, 2016); Gargi Bhattacharyya, *Dangerous Brown Men: Exploiting Sex, Violence and Feminism in the ‘War on Terror’* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009); Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin, *Framing Muslims: Stereotyping and Representation after 9/11* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

¹⁷ In contrast, scholarship on Hollywood depictions of terrorism has been quicker to engage with terms such as ‘White’ and ‘Brown.’ Michelle Aguayo describes the casting of a White protagonist in the show *The Kingdom* as ‘scripted to represent essential differences between White and Brown women.’ She further argues that this ‘illuminates imperialist discourses, with Muslim bodies becoming the battleground upon which such discourses are both visually and literally being fought.’ Michelle Aguayo, ‘Representations of Muslim Bodies in the Kingdom: Deconstructing Discourses in Hollywood’, *Global Media Journal*, 2.2 (2009): pp. 41–56 (p. 53).

¹⁸ Maria Flood and Florence Martin, ‘The Terrorist as *ennemi intime* in French and Francophone Cinema’, *Studies in French Cinema*, 19.3 (2019): pp. 171–78 (p. 172).

¹⁹ While in this article I subscribe to the idea that Islamophobia should be considered a form of racism, Anna Sophie Lauwers makes a compelling case for distinguishing between anti-Muslim racism and what she terms ‘anti-Islam’ bigotry. Arguing that unlike the blanket prejudice of anti-Muslim racism ‘anti-Islam bigotry implies a prejudicial rejection of an essentialized idea of Islam...it understands religion or culture to be an individual choice and allows for the possibility that Muslims convert or assimilate.’ However, in my view, Lauwers undermines her argument somewhat by ultimately stating that the rhetoric of anti-Islam bigotry is often used to mask anti-Muslim racism, which in turn suggests that the distinction between the two terms is not as distinct as Lauwers initially asserts. Anna Sophie Lauwers, ‘Is Islamophobia (Always) Racism?’, *Critical Philosophy of Race*, 7.2 (2019): pp. 306–32 (p. 306).

²⁰ Anya Topolski, ‘The Dangerous Discourse of the “Judeo-Christian” Myth: Masking the Race-Religion Constellation in Europe’, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 54.1–2 (2020): pp. 71–90 (pp. 87–88).

²¹ Nasar Meer and Tariq Modood, ‘Islamophobia as the Racialisation of Muslims’, in *The Routledge International*

Madood, discrimination against Muslims in Europe has religious, cultural, and phenotypical (i.e. skin colour) components that can all be understood as a process of racialisation which causes someone to be categorized as ‘Muslim’ regardless of their religious affiliation or cultural background. Similarly, someone could be a devout Muslim but might be racialized as ‘White’ or ‘non-Muslim’ in certain circumstances because of their skin colour, educational background, manner of speaking or other markers that are independent of their religious affiliation.²²

French cinematic representations of Muslims living in France will necessarily, whether intentionally or not, racialize their individual characters in different ways depending on what information the director gives the audience regarding their religious, cultural, and phenotypical characteristics. For instance, in Boukhrief’s *Made in France*, the anti-Islamist, Muslim ‘hero’, Sam, has light skin, studied journalism at a prestigious ‘grande école’, has a French mother, a White wife named Laure, and does not use the vernacular slang known as ‘verlan’. These markers of Whiteness differentiate Sam from another Muslim character in the film, Driss, who has brown skin, lives alone in a high-rise apartment, used to deal drugs, spent time in jail, works in a strip club, and speaks with the kind of vernacular slang associated with the minority populations living in the French ‘banlieue’. Sam’s first name is another potential marker of Whiteness. The name ‘Driss’, on the other hand, contains none of the ambiguity, and potential to be racialized as White, as opposed to the nickname ‘Sam’ which could be short for either Samuel or Samir. Regardless of how characters like Driss and Sam are ultimately portrayed—the emotional complexity they exhibit, the degree of ‘humanity’ with which they are endowed—these external racializing markers remain part of the cinematic grammar that a director uses to create meaning for the audience. When Patrick Saveau acknowledges that Driss ‘checks all the boxes of the stereotypical disenfranchised young Maghrebi-French male whose profile is more often than not portrayed in the media,’ he is necessarily implying (whether or not by design) that Driss has fewer markers of Whiteness than other characters in the film, including the protagonist Sam, even though Sam is a practicing Muslim of Algerian heritage.²³ Analysing how characters in a French film about Islamist terrorism are marked as White, Brown, or Black is not to suggest that they should be reduced to these essentializing, socially-constructed categories.²⁴ Rather it is an acknowledgement that these categories exist and that it is impossible to separate a discussion of how a film addresses Islamophobia, stereotypes of Muslims, terrorists etc. without also exploring how these categories intersect with the socially constructed markers used to racialize individuals in post-colonial France.

Handbook of Islamophobia, ed. by Irene Zempi and Imran Awan (New York: Routledge, 2019), pp. 18–31 (pp. 22–23).

²² In her research on White converts to Islam in France, Galonnier discusses this complex intersection between perceptions of Whiteness and Muslimness in France, quoting White converts to Islam in France: ‘In Marseille, Sophie (27, social worker), also blond and blue-eyed, explained that she is constantly stared at in mosques: “I don’t have the typical face of a Muslim (sic), so, with my blue eyes, I really get noticed!” She confided that she herself could not help but gaze fixedly at other White converts, “even I catch myself staring at them.” The incongruous presence of White people within Muslim spaces attracts looks and raises eyebrows.’ Galonnier, ‘Maneuvering Whiteness’, pp. 73–74.

²³ Patrick Saveau, ‘Nicolas Boukhrief’s *Made in France*: Nuancing the Mediatized Approach to Islamic Terrorism’, in *Artistic (Self)-Representations of Islam and Muslims*, ed. by Ramona Mielusel (Springer International Publishing, 2021): pp. 79–92 (p. 84).

²⁴ Alec Hargreaves asserts that ‘il serait naïf et même dangereux de supposer que l’on puisse évaluer un corpus cinématographique ou un film individuel en y appliquant une grille statistique, fondée sur des catégories ethniques fermées’ and that French filmmakers and actors have a right not to be ‘cantonnés dans des ghettos ethniques.’ However, there is a key distinction between using racial categories as the sole criteria for evaluating the visual media of cinema and deploying a critical perspective that focuses on race as an important (though by no means exclusive) socially constructed category that filmmakers and their audiences use to create meaning. See Alec G. Hargreaves, ‘La représentation cinématographique de l’ethnicité en France: stigmatisation, reconnaissance et banalisation’, *Questions de communication*, 4.2 (2003): pp. 127–39 (pp. 132–33).

Islamophobia as Anti-Brown Racism in France

Before making the case for employing the racial category ‘Brown’ to discuss French discourses of terrorism, it is helpful to give some context for the specificity of discussing Islamist terrorism and its visual representations in contemporary France. A key difference between the iconic Islamist terrorist figure’s presentation in French cinema, and cinema from other cultural contexts such as the United States, is the implication that ‘Islamist terrorists’ are likely to be a citizen of the country they target. Examples of Islamist terrorist attacks in France perpetrated in whole or in part by French nationals include the 2012 ‘Affaire Merah,’ the shootings at the *Charlie Hebdo* offices in January 2015, and the 2015 Paris attacks. Post-2012 terrorist violence perpetrated by French Muslims has amplified pre-existing Islamophobic rhetoric within French political and media discourse. With its roots in the centuries-old racist discourse that justified French (and European) colonialism, such anti-Islam rhetoric has more recent origins in the Algerian War of Independence of the 1950s and 60s, which included multiple bombing attacks against French and Algerian civilians. It has also been shaped by pre-‘Global War on Terror’ events such as the bombings perpetrated by the *Groupe Islamique Armé* (GIA) in France between 1994 and 1996. The idea of metropolitan France’s Muslim inhabitants as a ‘fifth column’ that threatens French society thus has a history unique to France—rooted in large part in the French colonial occupation of Algeria and its aftermath—that predates both the September 11, 2001 attacks and more recent attacks in France.

While scholarship has begun to analyse the ways in which French and Francophone cinema representing post-9/11 Islamist terrorism engages with the longer histories of French Islamophobia, it has largely left unexamined Islamophobia’s intersections with racial categories such as ‘White,’ ‘Brown,’ or ‘Black.’ This in turn echoes a broader reluctance (if not hostility) within France to discussing the specific ways in which socially and historically constructed categories such as race, gender etc. shape French society. As Bruno Perreau observes, in the context of French reactions to Queer theory, this reluctance is often described as stemming from a fear of both external and internal invasion. He writes that ‘France’s anxiety about becoming Americanized is not just a simple question of loss of sovereignty. The idea of a foreign cultural invasion is a direct echo of the fantasy of an enemy within.’²⁵ Hostility to theories of race within France is thus part of a broader French paranoia towards allegedly ‘imported’ critical theories that focus on historically marginalized populations. Rim-Sarah Alouane is quoted in a 2022 article observing how ‘[i]mporting critical race theory and intersectionality is deemed in France as a call to separatism.’²⁶ It is important to note that in the French context these fears of ‘separatism’ have been used to pass legislation, such as a 2021 law ‘confortant le respect des principes de la République’, that further stigmatize minorities and in turn stoke fear of the Muslim other as a national security threat.²⁷ The implication that critical theories of identity might lead to ‘communautarisme’ (in which French society becomes destabilized through fragmentation into ethnic enclaves) has been further amplified by political rhetoric.²⁸ Former French education minister Jean-Michel Blanquer

²⁵ Bruno Perreau, *Queer Theory: The French Response* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), p. 10.

²⁶ Monique El-Faizy, ‘Behind the Backlash: What the Fight over “Wokeism” in France Is Really All About’, *Grid*, 30 March 2022 <<https://www.grid.news/story/global/2022/03/30/behind-the-backlash-what-the-fight-over-wokeism-in-france-is-really-all-about/>> [accessed 14 August 2022].

²⁷ Fatima Khemilat notes how a 2021 law passed by the French senate to combat ‘séparatisme’ as part of the fight against ‘l’islamisme radical’ stigmatizes France’s minority Islamic population in the name of French national unity: ‘La loi contre le séparatisme pourrait ainsi, paradoxalement, fragiliser les principes républicains qu’elle prétend “conforter” et exclure encore davantage une population déjà marginalisée, en lui refusant toute forme de visibilité sociale et le droit de se mobiliser, individuellement ou collectivement.’ Fatima Khemilat, “Lutte contre le séparatisme”, une loi qui stigmatise les minorités?’, *The Conversation*, 7 June 2021. <<https://theconversation.com/frances-new-separatism-law-stigmatises-minorities-and-could-backfire-badly-162705>> [accessed 25 November 2022].

²⁸ For instance, former French Education minister Jean-Michel Blanquer founded the think tank ‘Laboratoire de la République’ in part to combat what he considered ‘pensées de la fragmentation’ including ‘une pensée qui cherche d’abord et avant tout à définir les gens par leur identité supposée.’ In terms later echoed by former French Minister

has in fact suggested that an ‘islamo-gauchisme [qui] fait des ravages à l’université’ played a role in the 2016 murder of French school teacher Samuel Paty by a Chechnyan Muslim immigrant who had learned online about Paty’s use of caricatures of the Prophet Mohamed in Paty’s class.²⁹ In the aftermath, Blanquer denounced the ‘islamo-gauchistes,’ whom he named as ‘des auteurs intellectuels de cet attentat.’³⁰ This places scholars attempting to decode the significance of race within French cinematic representations of terrorism within an ironic double-bind. Analysing how these representations of terrorism engage with socially constructed racial categories risks public attacks from the French far right: in April 2022, the French government opened an investigation into an excel spreadsheet containing hundreds of names of alleged ‘islamo-gauchistes’ published on the far-right website Fdesouche.³¹ In another incident, the names of professors considered ‘islamo-gauchistes’ were published and widely circulated online with the accusation that they are developing theories ‘qui ont que pour unique but de faire avancer l’islam et par conséquent le radicalisme islamique...’³² On the other hand, to ignore racial categories within these visual representations of Muslims and terrorists in France risks being complicit with a problematically colourblind vision of French identity that, as many scholars have argued, sustains systemic racism through the normalizing of Whiteness as the most acceptable, least threatening form of racial identification in France.

The critical perspective on race, specially Whiteness and Brownness, on which I base my analysis, has thus itself been accused of intellectual complicity with terrorism by individuals such as former French minister Jean-Michel Blanquer (see above) and far-right political figures such as Marion Maréchal.³³ Both terrorists and their supposed ‘intellectual accomplices’ are depicted as threats to French socio-cultural stability because of a shared vision of society that, allegedly, essentializes and reifies racial difference. Yet, as this article will reinforce, it is precisely the refusal to engage with critical theories of race that allows Whiteness to remain an unchallenged norm in French society—paradoxically reifying racial difference by implicitly coding non-Whiteness as

of Higher Education, Research and Innovation Frédérique Vidal, the French organisation Vigilances Universitaires claims that ‘les tenants de cette idéologie [décoloniale] diffusent dans l’université des éléments de discours qui [...] préparent une forme de séparatisme avec les institutions essentielles à l’universalisme républicain: l’école, la langue et la laïcité’. See respectively Timour Ozturk, ‘Le rejet de “l’idéologie woke” au cœur du lancement du think tank de Jean-Michel Blanquer’, *RadioFrance*, 14 October 2021 <<https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceinter/le-rejet-de-l-ideologie-woke-au-coeur-du-lancement-du-think-tank-de-jean-michel-blanquer-6886046>> [accessed 26 November 2022]; Sarah Nafti, ‘Islamo-gauchisme: après les propos de Frédérique Vidal, le débat reprend parmi les universitaires’, *L’Étudiant*, 1 March 2021 <<https://www.letudiant.fr/educpros/enquetes/islamo-gauchisme-apres-les-propos-de-frederique-vidal-le-debat-reprend-parmi-les-universitaires.html>> [accessed 26 November 2022].

²⁹ It is worth noting that in early 2022, French President Emmanuel Macron replaced Blanquer with Pap Ndiaye, French intellectual of Senegalese heritage, who has published and spoken publicly about the impact of colonialism and race on present-day France. Right-wing politicians in France in fact criticized Ndiaye in terms similar to those used by Blanquer to describe the ‘islamo-gauchistes’: ‘...le Rassemblement national l’a qualifié de “militant racialisé” et Reconquête! d’Eric Zemmour l’a accusé d’être “chargé” par Emmanuel Macron “de déconstruire l’histoire de France”’. See Angelique Chrisafis, ‘A New York, Pap Ndiaye critique les “Traces d’anti-Américanisme” dans la politique française’, *Imaz Press*, 20 September 2022 <<https://imazpress.com/afp/a-new-york-pap-ndiaye-critique-les-traces-danti-americanisme-dans-la-politique-francaise>> [accessed 7 November 2022].

³⁰ Mathilde Durand, ‘“Ce qu’on appelle l’islamo-gauchisme fait des ravages”, dénonce Jean-Michel Blanquer’, *Europe1* <<https://www.europe1.fr/politique/ce-quin-appelle-lislamo-gauchisme-fait-des-ravages-denonce-jean-michel-blanquer-4000366>> [accessed 19 October 2022].

³¹ Maxime Birken, ‘Une “liste d’islamogauchistes” diffusée sur “Fdesouche”, une enquête ouverte’ (Huffpost, 27 April 2022) <https://www.huffingtonpost.fr/actualites/article/une-liste-d-islamogauchistes-diffusee-sur-fdesouche-une-enquete-ouverte_195555.html> [accessed 1 November 2022].

³² Carole Collinet-Appéré, ‘“Islamo-gauchisme”. 600 noms de chercheurs, parmi lesquels des Bretons jetés en pâture sur internet. Les réactions.’, *Franceinfo*, 9 March 2021 <<https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/bretagne/islamo-gauchisme-les-noms-de-chercheurs-bretons-jetes-en-pature-sur-internet-1990156.html>> [accessed 15 August 2022].

³³ On October 27, 2020, Marion Maréchal, an ally of the far-right failed 2022 presidential candidate Éric Zemmour, tweeted her approval of Blanquer’s comparison of ‘left-wing’ professors in France to terrorists: ‘Le Ministre de l’Éducation @jmblanquer reprend notre analyse sur le danger des idéologies “intersectionnelles” de gauche à l’Université. Propagande racialisée, néoféministe, LGBT, etc. n’ont pas leur place dans l’enseignement.’ (@MarionMarechal, 27 October 2020).

threatening or undesirable. Maintaining what Juliette Galonnier refers to as the ‘normative invisibility’ of Whiteness in France is thus a part of how structural and systemic racism is maintained within a French republic that continually asserts its commitment to colourblind equality.³⁴ As Mathilde Cohen and Sarah Mazouz observe, ‘[i]f Whiteness is a category of identity that is most useful when its existence is denied, then it is a powerful means of racial control and a powerful way to protect racial advantage.’³⁵ This racial control can emerge, as we will see, even in art that claims to undermine such hegemony.

Normative Whiteness, Anti-Muslim Racism, and the ‘Brown Threat’

Despite France’s taboos around using racial categories to describe French society, recent work in sociology and political science affirms that ‘Whiteness’ is an implicit cultural norm that is associated with an ‘authentic’ French identity. Jean Beaman concludes that for France’s ‘Maghrebin second generation...[e]ven though many respondents see being French as constitutive of their identities, they understand that their compatriots do not see them as French, which they attribute to their being non-white.’³⁶ It is important to note that the rise and increased mediatisation of Islamist terrorist violence in recent decades has added a new strand to the links between race, inequality and threat in the French cultural imaginary.³⁷ Contemporary theories of race acknowledge how skin colour, social class, education, speech patterns, manners of dress, etc. are markers that contribute to how specific groups are racialized. While skin colour is only one of these factors, the phenotypical categories of White, Brown, and Black are still often used to refer to these categories. This reliance on vocabulary that references colour (White, Black, Brown etc.) to refer to social identities can lead to the reductive accusation that those employing critical theories of race are in fact contributing to racial discrimination and prejudice by reifying the very categories they claim to contest. This article takes the stance that failing to name these categories is part of how Whiteness is normalized and in turn ignores the reality of how social groups are racialized by others, and the subsequent impact of this racialization on their lived experiences.

Within this context, it is important to acknowledge that socially constructed markers of race, and not just specific information about devotion to the Islamic faith, play a significant role in determining who might be stereotyped as a potential Islamist terrorist threat in France. One significant difference between the Francophone and Anglophone context is the latter’s explicit theorizing of a socially constructed ‘Brown’ racial identity, which is linked in turn to stereotypes of Islamist extremism. As previously stated, discussions of Islamophobia and its links to terrorism in North American and British contexts have not shied away from categorizing Islamophobia as a form of racism, noting how ideas about physical appearance, including ‘biological features (brown skin), result in a sense of postcolonial superiority over all those considered Muslim.’³⁸ In contrast, studies of race linked explicitly to skin colour in the French context have focused almost exclusively on the category of ‘Black’ or ‘Noir,’ not ‘Brown,’ ‘basané,’ or ‘brun,’ discussing for instance, ‘the lived experience of race—more saliently anti-Blackness.’³⁹ While the racial term

³⁴ Galonnier, ‘Maneuvering Whiteness’, p. 69.

³⁵ Mathilde Cohen and Sarah Mazouz, ‘Introduction: A White Republic? Whites and Whiteness in France’, *French Politics, Culture & Society*, 39.2 (2021), pp. 1–25.

³⁶ Jean Beaman, ‘Are French People White?: Towards an Understanding of Whiteness in Republican France’, *Identities*, 26.5 (2019): pp. 546–62 (p. 557).

³⁷ There has been significant work showing how minority groups are racialized and stigmatized in France. See for instance Michel Wieviorka, *La France raciste* (Paris: Seuil, 1993), Didier Fassin and Eric Fassin (eds.), *De la question sociale à la question raciale ? Représenter la société française* (Paris: La Découverte, 2016), and Paul Silverstein, *Postcolonial France: Race, Islam, and the Future of the Republic* (London: Pluto Press, 2018).

³⁸ Tina G. Patel, ‘It’s Not about Security, It’s about Racism: Counter-Terror Strategies, Civilizing Processes and the Post-Race Fiction’, *Palgrave Commun*, 3 (2017) <<https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2017.31>>, paragraph 8.

³⁹ Trica Danielle Keaton, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, and Tyler Edward Stovall, ‘Introduction: Blackness Matters, Blackness Made to Matter’, in *Black France: The History and Politics of Blackness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012): pp. 1–14 (p. 2).

linked to Brown skin, ‘basané,’ does exist in France, journalistic, political, and scholarly discourse looking at racism or discrimination against individuals who are not racialized as Black or White do not employ this term with any regularity, using instead categories such as ‘Arab’, ‘Maghrebi’, or ‘Muslim’.⁴⁰

I argue that ‘Brown’ is an omnipresent, if infrequently articulated, racial category within both mainstream and academic discourse about race in France, one that is consistently conjured through its opposition to both Blackness and Whiteness. Mireille Rosello contrasts a category of ‘people whose skin color makes them likely to be constructed as black[sic]’⁴¹ with ‘the Arab living in the suburbs [who] has been systematically suspected of being in cahoots with international terrorist organizations.’⁴² The use of a phenotypical category (Black) alongside an ethnic category (Arab) is common in French discussions of minority populations as well as in public discourse between minority French individuals themselves.⁴³ The presence of an important distinction between French minorities racialized as Black and those racialized as Arab is also born out, tragically, in French studies on police profiling. A 2017 study on racial profiling by the French police, for example, initiated by France’s Défenseur de droit Jacques Toubon, uses the racial categories ‘perçu comme arabe,’ ‘perçu comme noir,’ and ‘perçu comme blanc.’⁴⁴ These three racial categories indicate that there is a perception of Arabs as neither Black nor White, suggesting, as Rosello does, an implied racial category linked to brown skin.

Furthermore, studies have shown significant differences in public perception in terms of those likely to be racialized as ‘Black’ and those likely to be racialized as Arab. Research from the *Commission nationale consultative des droits de l’homme* (CNCDH) that relied on extensive polling of the French population affirmed that ‘[l]a population noire a une meilleure image dans l’opinion que la plupart des autres minorités,’ going on to say that Black members of the population were not considered as dangerous as

⁴⁰ Here is an illustrative example of how ‘basané,’ in the French context does not necessarily refer to a social category clearly distinct from ‘noir.’ In an article published after Barack Obama’s election, Thierry Leclère imagines a Person of Colour elected President in France: ‘En clair et en couleur, pour un président basané. Noir ou arabe, je vous laisse le choix...’ Here ‘basané’ is presented as purely a phenotypical marker whereas ‘Noir’ and ‘Arabe’ presumably refer to social categories and the communities associated with them. Articles in the popular press will reference the stereotype of ‘le bon Noir’ and the stereotype of le ‘bon Arabe’ referring in the latter case to an ethnic/geographic term. This fact risks eliding how phenotypical markers of ‘Brownness’ play a role in determining whether one is racialized as ‘Noir’ or ‘Arabe’ in the French context. In a 2020 speech at the César film awards, the French actress Aïssa Maïga declared: ‘On refuse d’être les bons Noirs, les bons Asiatiques, l’Arabe qui vous laisse tranquille.’ See respectively Haciba Meftah, ‘Être un « bon Arabe » en France, ou la tentation de ne plus en être un’, *Middle East Eye*, 5 February 2021 <<https://www.middleeasteye.net/fr/opinion-fr/france-arabes-musulmans-discrimination-souffrances-psychiques-malaise-identitaire>> [accessed 5 November 2022]; Clément Vaillant, ‘Aux César 2020, Aïssa Maïga livre un plaidoyer pour plus de diversité au cinéma’, *HuffPost*, 28 February 2020 <https://www.huffingtonpost.fr/culture/article/aux-cesar-2020-aissa-maiga-livre-un-plaidoyer-pour-plus-de-diversite-au-cinema_160491.html> [accessed 5 November 2022].

⁴¹ Mireille Rosello, *Declining the Stereotype: Ethnicity and Representation in French Cultures* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998) p. 5.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴³ Chong J. Bretillon prefaces her discussion of ‘Racial Identity Alongside Islam’ in French rap with the salient question, ‘[i]f the French see a “dormant terrorist” in every North African, where do Black Muslims fall within this amalgamation?’ She cites a 2016 duet entitled ‘Blokkk identitaire’ between Médine, a French rapper of Algerian descent, and Youssoupha, a Black French rapper of Congolese descent, in which the two rappers ‘play representative roles of the Arab and Black African respectively as they trade insults and jabs about each other’s communities.’ Chong J. Bretillon, “‘Double Discours’: Critiques of Racism and Islamophobia in French Rap’, in *Postmigratory Cultures in Postcolonial France*, ed. by Kathryn Kleppinger and Laura Reeck (Liverpool University Press, 2018): pp. 147–65 (p. 156).

⁴⁴ Unsurprisingly, those perceived as ‘arabe’ or ‘noir’ were 20 times as likely to be stopped by police. See Jacques Toubon, *Enquête sur l’accès aux droits. Volume 1. Relations police/population : le cas des contrôles d’identité* (Défenseur des Droits, République Française, 2017) <https://defenseurdesdroits.fr/sites/default/files/atoms/files/rapport-enquete_relations_police_population-20170111_1.pdf> [accessed 24 November 2022].

les Maghrébins et les Arabes, eux seraient d'abord perçus comme musulmans, et l'islam aujourd'hui a une image négative, associée dans l'imaginaire collectif au terrorisme et au djihad. Ce n'est pas le cas des Noirs, alors même que beaucoup d'entre eux, notamment la plupart des Sénégalais ou des Maliens, sont musulmans.⁴⁵

If we accept that the category of 'Brown' is implicit within the opposition between a White population, a Black population and an Arab population, then it becomes clear that a French version of the 'Brown threat' and the 'dangerous Brown man' exists, even if the idea has rarely been explicitly expressed in terms of the colour brown.⁴⁶ This highlights the need to consider the categories of White, Brown, and Black Muslim as having distinctive meanings and stereotypes within France. As my analysis of Bouhkrif's film *Made in France* will show, it would be reductive to view a film about terrorism in contemporary France, or any cultural context for that matter, without acknowledging that being racialized as a Black Muslim, a Brown Muslim, or even a White Muslim, impacts the lived experiences of populations who can be placed into these socially and historically constructed categories.⁴⁷

Discourses of Whiteness and 'Brown Threat' in Nicolas Bouhkrif's *Made in France*

My discussion of race and Islamist terrorism in Bouhkrif's *Made in France* can be situated as part of what Lia Brozgal calls 'a longer conversation about what it means "to race" French cinema, that is, to attend to the hermeneutics of race in cinematic production from France.'⁴⁸ Combining critical race theory's focus on 'race and power' and visual cultural studies' articulation of race as a 'visual phenomenon,' Brozgal makes the case that

'seeing through race' in French cinema can be a salutary endeavor, one that mobilizes the silver screen as a mirror in which the complexities and ambivalences of French universalism's alleged colourblindness are reflected and can be contemplated.⁴⁹

While a number of (primarily Anglophone) scholars have begun to examine racial categories as signifiers in popular French comedies such as Dany Boon's *Bienvenu chez les Chti's* (2008), Olivier Nakache and Éric Toledano's *Intouchables* (2011), and Philippe de Chauveron's *Qu'est-ce qu'on a fait au bon dieu ?* (2014), the hermeneutics of race remain underexamined regarding French films like *Made in France* that depict Islamist terrorism.⁵⁰ What is more, while the comedies mentioned above discuss race within a metropolitan French context, cinematic depictions of terrorism deploy racial signifiers (the 'Brown Arab' from the *banlieue*, as well as the 'Brown Muslim terrorist') that are recognisable both within France and on a global level.⁵¹ While Bouhkrif's *Made in France* is clearly trying to add nuance to how Muslims are depicted in a post-9/11 and post-2012 French and global

⁴⁵ *Rapport 2020 sur la lutte contre le racisme, l'antisémitisme et la xénophobie* (Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de L'homme) <<https://www.cncdh.fr/fr/publications/rapport-2020-sur-la-lutte-contre-le-racisme-lantisemitisme-et-la-xenophobie>> [accessed 24 November 2022].
p. 91.

⁴⁶ See note 16.

⁴⁷ See for instance Juliette Galonnier, 'The Racialization of Muslims in France and the United States: Some Insights from White Converts to Islam', *Social Compass*, 62.4 (2015): pp. (570–83).

⁴⁸ Lia Brozgal, 'Seeing Through Race in Contemporary French Cinema', *L'Esprit Créateur*, 59.2 (2019): pp. 12–24 (pp. 12–13).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13; 15.

⁵⁰ In addition to Brozgal, see, for instance, David Pettersen, 'Transnational Blackface, Neo-Minstrelsy and the "French Eddie Murphy" in *Intouchables*', *Modern & Contemporary France*, 24.1 (2016): pp. 51–69 and Chloé Delaporte, 'Du stéréotype dans la comédie française contemporaine : autour de *Qu'est-ce qu'on a fait au Bon Dieu ?*', *Mise au point*, 9 (2017) <<https://doi.org/10.4000/map.2271>> [accessed 24 November 2022].

⁵¹ Bhattacharyya describes how a 'shift from what I am describing as "black" to "brown" myths is centered around the implied dangers of non-Western cultures', adding that this shift is something 'beyond the horrific histories of violence against Africans and yet enabling a continuance of the link between bodies and social meaning' (p. 97).

media landscape, it is important to keep in mind, as Sara Ahmed remarks, that even attempts to ‘unstick’ the label of ‘terrorist’ from someone perceived as Arab may paradoxically reinforce the very link they claim to subvert.⁵² As Rosello concisely notes, ‘[t]here is no innocent reference to a stereotype.’⁵³ In other words, regardless of the filmmaker’s intentions or political orientation, visual media, including film and television, play a crucial role in assigning ‘social meaning’ to Brown bodies, whether or not these bodies are ‘actually’ Arab and/or Muslim.⁵⁴

Made in France stands out amongst French cinematic representations of Islamist terrorism because its ‘hero’ protagonist, Sam Al-Kansari (Malik Zidi) is a practicing Muslim and of mixed French -Algerian heritage and is implicitly racialized as White throughout the film.⁵⁵ Sam’s nemesis in the film is Abu Hassan (Dimitri Storage), a White French man and Islamic convert born Laurent Pelletier who, it is ultimately revealed, invented orders from Al-Qaeda to manipulate a multi-racial trio of impressionable French youths into planning a terrorist attack on French soil. The three young men—Christophe (White French convert and raised Catholic), Sidi (Black and of Malian origin) and Driss (Brown and of unspecified ethnic origin)—are dead before the film’s climactic showdown between Sam and Abu Hassan.⁵⁶ At the film’s end, Sam thwarts the attack that the White convert Hassan had planned and the latter is killed by the police.⁵⁷ Both the film’s cast and its plot provide a particularly complex case study for how to unpack visual discourses of Islamophobic racism in the French context.



Figure 1: Scene featuring (left to right) Sidi (Ahmed Dramé), Christophe (François Civil) and Driss (Nassim Si Ahmed). *Made in France*, dir. Nicolas Boukhrief, 2015.

⁵² Sara Ahmed, ‘Affective Economies’, *Social Text*, 22.2 (2004): pp. 117–39 (p. 132).

⁵³ Rosello, p. 38.

⁵⁴ In the American context, Christopher Rivera argues that ‘US media and legislation function as the overarching framework that establishes the Brown Threat.’ Christopher Rivera, ‘The Brown Threat: Post-9/11 Conflations of Latina/os and Middle Eastern Muslims in the US American Imagination.’, *Latino Studies*, 12.1 (2014): pp. 44–64 (p. 45). Though his work focuses on the US, he expresses a need for ‘more global comparative work on the role of the Brown Threat in Europe’ (p. 62).

⁵⁵ As of this writing, protagonists of the French-produced films and television shows on the theme of Islamist terrorism have tended to be Brown individuals from impoverished or lower-class backgrounds: Philippe Faucon’s *La désintégration* (2012), François Gérard’s *Voyages sans Retour* (2013), and Cédric Jimenez’s *Novembre* (2022) – or the horrified family members of radicalized converts to Islam – Rachid Bouchareb’s *London River* (2009) and *La route d’Istanbul* (2016), Thomas Bidegain’s *Les cowboys* (2015), and Marie-Castille Mention-Scharr’s *Le ciel attendra* (2016). Created by Eric Rochant and produced by Canal+, the French spy thriller television show *Le bureau des légendes* (2015–20) also features several characters who are ‘homegrown’ French terrorists who must be thwarted by the almost exclusively White agents of France’s Direction générale de la Sécurité extérieure (DGSE).

⁵⁶ These three characters are played respectively by François Civil (Christophe), Ahmed Dramé (Sidi) and Nassim Si Ahmed (Driss).

⁵⁷ The focus on a multi-racial group of aspiring terrorists in a Western European country, including an overzealous White convert, recalls the 2010 British satire *Four Lions*, directed by Chris Morris. Both films look to demythologize the process of Islamist radicalization, however, Morris opts for a darkly comic satire, whereas Boukhrief chooses the thriller genre and a reliance on melodramatic tragedy.

As previously stated the 'hero' is a Muslim who can be racialized as White, his antagonist is a White French convert to Islam, and the three young terrorists (who Sam wants to save and Hassan wishes to corrupt) correspond to the multi-racial 'black-blanc-beur' metaphor common to both French cinema and French popular discourse.⁵⁸ Given how the film aims to subvert racial stereotypes and makes use of these visual racial references, it is particularly striking that both journalistic and scholarly assessments of the film rarely, if at all, use terms such as 'race' and 'racism' when discussing *Made in France*.⁵⁹

As the narrative unfolds and the characters are introduced, *Made in France* uses many different markers of race to highlight stereotypes surrounding its White, Black, and Brown characters. While both Sam, the light-skinned middle-class Muslim of mixed French and Algerian heritage, and Driss, the Brown boxer and formerly incarcerated drug-dealer, whose specific ethnic or geographic origins are not explicitly articulated, could, in theory, be racialized as Brown characters of North-African heritage, Sam has many markers of Whiteness that Driss does not have access to. These include Sam's ethnically and religiously ambiguous first name, to his lighter skin, his education at a 'grande école', his French mother, his White wife, and his non-vernacular manner of speaking. The difference between Sam and Driss is further exacerbated by Sam's belonging to a well-educated, financially comfortable stratum of French society. I thus argue that both his phenotypical characteristics and this economic status mark him as 'Whiter' than Driss. As Jasbir K. Puar observes in *Terrorist Assemblages*, '...the ascendancy of whiteness is not necessarily delimited to white subjects...The ethnic [subject] aids the project of whiteness through his or her participation in global economic privileges that then fracture him or her away from racial alliances.'⁶⁰ This fracture between Sam and a character such as Driss' is constructed in the film through the above-mentioned markers of Whiteness. All of these factors mark him as 'Whiter' than Driss in the sense that Sam reads as less 'threatening' to the normatively White sociocultural institutions that terrorists allegedly wish to destroy. For this reason, although both characters could be racialized as Brown, the fact that Driss lacks the many markers of Whiteness which Sam possess, clearly code him as the character who most closely resembles the stereotypes of the 'dangerous Brown man' and fears of 'Brown threat' within the film.

Moreover, Boukhrief's decision to cast Malik Zidi, an actor with a French mother and a Kabyle father to play Sam (which mirrors the director's heritage) cannot be disentangled from a longer colonial history in which the Kabyle ethnic group were fallaciously presented as a more 'Aryan' Algerian 'tribe' distinct from darker skinned Arabs, and possibly related to the Gauls.⁶¹

⁵⁸ The three protagonists of Mathieu Kassovitz's *La haine* (1995) are perhaps the most well-known example of the 'black-blanc-beur' trope in cinema. The term was also famously used to describe the racial and ethnic diversity of the 1998 World Champion French national football team. For discussion of the latter see Christos Kassimeris, 'Black, Blanc and Beur: French Football's "Foreign Legion"', *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 32.1 (2011), pp. 15–29. For discussion of the trope of the 'black-blanc-beur' trio in French cinema and popular culture see, for instance, Cristina Johnston, *French Minority Cinema* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2010), pp. 39–84; Will Higbee, 'The Return of the Political, or Designer Visions of Exclusion? The Case for Mathieu Kassovitz's "Fracture Sociale" Trilogy', *Studies in French Cinema*, 5.2 (2005), pp. 123–36; Alec G. Hargreaves, 'Black-Blanc-Beur: Multi-Coloured Paris', *Journal of Romance Studies*, 5.3 (2005), pp. 91–101.

⁵⁹ To give a representative example from the film's reviews in the French press, Alexandre Hervaud refers to the terrorist group as 'trois jeunes paumés' without offering further details as to how the youths might be racialized. Alexandre Hervaud, 'Made in France, Thriller sans Excuse', *Libération*, 29 January 2016 <https://www.liberation.fr/cinema/2016/01/29/made-in-france-thriller-sans-excuse_1429921/> [accessed 24 November 2022]. Interestingly, Jimia Boutouba, in her most explicit reference to race, refers to a meeting between Sam, Driss and Sidi as a 'red-haired man sitting between two young black men.' While it is misleading, in my view, to refer to Driss as Black, it also points to the subjectivity and fluidity of perceived markers of race. Nonetheless, I believe that when analysing the film, it is appropriate, and indeed necessary, to consider that on a narrative level, the viewer is meant to decode Sidi as Black, Driss as Brown, and Sam as occupying a fluid positionality between White and Brown Muslim. Jimia Boutouba, 'Through the Lens of Terror: Re-Imaging Terrorist Violence in Boukhrief's *Made in France*', *Studies in French Cinema*, 19.3 (2019): pp. 215–32 (p. 223).

⁶⁰ Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 31.

⁶¹ Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch describes the racist 'mythe Kabyle' during the French colonial period which

These ‘tribes’ were contrasted with Algerians with darker skin as a way to justify colonial dominance over those populations. While certainly neither the character, actor, nor director should be defined by this heritage (nor is it my intention to do so), the casting of a light-skinned, part French/part Kabyle actor as the ‘non-threatening Muslim hero’ implicitly reinforces associations between Whiteness and French Republican acceptability.⁶²

In addition to Sam’s phenotypical presentation as White (alluded to by other characters), Boukhrief layers another stereotype related to social class onto his Muslim protagonist, that of the ‘bourgeois’—a term ‘connoting the idea of an élite stratum arising from within the Maghrebi minority.’⁶³ Sam fits neatly into the *bourgeois* typology as described in a 2012 article in *Le monde*:

La religion, héritage des valeurs parentales, joue un rôle aussi important que discret dans leurs vies. Ils sont loin des débats sur le halal, le voile ou la burqa qui agitent la sphère politico-médiatique. Mais revendiquent le droit d’être français de confession musulmane. Et défendent l’idée que leur double culture participe aujourd’hui à l’identité de la France.⁶⁴

As this quote suggests, to be racialized as a middle-class Muslim ‘bourgeois’ does not mean one will not be subject to anti-Muslim racism.⁶⁵ However, it does underscore that there exists within the French imaginary a category of Muslim deemed as ‘marginally less threatening’ due to their social class, educational status, and practice of a ‘discreet’ form of Islam. By making Sam the ‘hero’ (and the only Muslim character alive by the film’s end), the film becomes primarily about combatting Islamophobia specifically against individuals likely to be racialized as Muslim and ‘bourgeois.’ This is an important message but is distinct from addressing the question of Islamophobia directed against a Brown, working-class, formerly incarcerated character such as Driss, who does not have the privilege of potentially presenting as White or the cultural capital of Sam’s elite education and white-collar profession.⁶⁶ Sam’s markers of Whiteness (and Driss’

distinguished ‘deux races’, les Kabyles et les Arabes.’ Indeed, in nineteenth century French colonial mythology, the Kabyles were said to be ‘issus comme la nôtre de la race aryenne’ and a ‘cousin de nos Gaulois.’ Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, ‘Le postulat de la supériorité blanche et de l’infériorité noire’, in *Le livre noir du colonialisme, 16ème-21ème siècle*, ed. by Marc Ferro (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2003): pp. 646–91 (pp. 673–674).

⁶² Peter Debruge observes that Malik Zidi is ‘a white-skinned, red-headed actor of Algerian descent. Like his character, the Kabyle thesp [sic] looks more innocuously European than most native Frenchmen.’ (Peter Debruge, ‘Film Review: “Made in France”’, *Variety*, 15 November 2015 <<https://variety.com/2015/film/reviews/made-in-france-film-review-inside-the-cell-1201644560/>> [accessed 12 August 2022]).

⁶³ Alec G. Hargreaves, ‘The Bourgeoisie: Mediation or Mirage?’, *Journal of European Studies*, 28.1 (1998): pp. 89–102 (p. 89). For more on the term ‘bourgeois’ see also Nicolas Beau, *Les Bourgeois de la République* (Paris: Seuil, 2016); Rémy Leveau and Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, *La bourgeoisie: Les trois âges de la vie associative issue de l’immigration* (Paris: CNRS, 2001). There are multiple allusions in *Made in France* to Sam’s red hair as unusual for a Muslim. In one of the first interactions between Driss and Sam, Driss jokingly asks Sam if it is expensive to dye his beard red.

⁶⁴ Célia Roger, ‘Le charme discret de la bourgeoisie’, *Le Monde*, 29 June 2012 <https://www.lemonde.fr/m-styles/article/2012/06/29/le-charme-discret-de-la-bourgeoisie_1726493_4497319.html> [accessed 12 August 2022].

⁶⁵ Raphaëlle Moine notices a similar blindness to intersections between racism and social class in France in the film *Qu’est-ce qu’on a fait au bon dieu?*: ‘[t]he collective and social dimension of racism is thus completely absent from the film, the corollary of which is that it ignores questions of class and their interpenetration with ethical issues: all the characters, including the sons-in-law, are bourgeois, so in a sense they are “good immigrants,” with the most blatant stigmas being directed at poor people who play only a very minor role in the narrative: the African family’s lazy cleaning woman, the rather stupid Arab trafficker from the suburbs who sticks up for Rachid..., a Chinese caterer who dreads a health inspection.’ Raphaëlle Moine, ‘Stereotypes of Class, Ethnicity and Gender in Contemporary French Popular Comedy: From *Bienvenue chez les Ch’tis* (2008) and *Intouchables* (2011) to *Qu’est-ce qu’on a fait au bon dieu?* (2014)’, *Studies in French Cinema*, 18.1 (2018): pp. 35–51 (p. 48).

⁶⁶ Peter Cherry observes a similar intersection between social class and the acceptability of a Muslim character in his analysis of the 2012 British film *My Brother the Devil* (dir. Sally El Hosaini): ‘Furthermore, throughout the film’s trajectory, Sayid is always portrayed as worthy of the audience’s respect through his affable nature and contributions to the British economy. It is through this dualistic positioning that the film unintentionally colludes with an emergent British homonationalism.’ Peter Cherry, ‘“I’d Rather My Brother Was a Bomber than a Homo”: British Muslim Masculinities and Homonationalism in Sally El Hosaini’s *My Brother the Devil*’, *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 53.2 (2018): pp. 270–83 (p. 282).

inability to access them) become particularly significant when we consider that a final image of Sam praying alone (after Driss has been murdered and thus removed from the narrative). This is meant to represent, according to Patrick Saveau, ‘a view of Islam that embraces ethnic and religious diversity’.⁶⁷ While I agree with Saveau that the film adds some nuance to depictions of Muslims in the French media, there is a particular irony in the alleged embodiment of an ‘ethnically and religiously diverse’ Islam being represented by a character such as Sam, who is marked as Whiter than the other minority characters within the film. That this embodiment occurs after the film’s principal avatar of the problematic Brown-threat stereotype (Driss) has been literally and figuratively discarded well before the film’s ending is particularly problematic. This further points to the importance of explicitly acknowledging the discourses of Whiteness and Brownness present within these films, because without this vocabulary, it becomes more difficult to articulate what is problematic about *Made in France*’s seemingly good-faith effort to combat negative stereotypes of Muslims.

A close reading of Driss’ death scene helps further illustrate how the film’s commentary on ‘Brown Threat’ discourse is subsumed by cinematographic choices that recentre Whiteness and ultimately endorse a ‘sanitized’ form of Islam practiced in private by a light-skinned, middle-class Muslim. After Sidi is shot by the police near the midpoint of the film, Driss is the character within the terror cell who has the fewest markers of Whiteness. Devastated by his friend death and beginning to suspect that Abu Hassan is not who he says he is, Driss declares that he is leaving the terrorist cell because he wants to limit civilian casualties by targeting institutions of the French state. After questioning Abu Hassan’s knowledge of Islam, Driss angrily turns to leave. The White French convert Hassan shoots him in the back. Driss tackles him and the two fall onto a glass coffee table, which shatters. As Driss strangles Hassan, Sam tries to pull him off, but Hassan takes a knife from his pocket and stabs Driss. Driss locks eyes briefly with Sam in a medium shot and then falls to the ground out of frame. A shocked Sam, shown in a medium shot, stares in open-mouthed horror at the off-screen body of Driss. There is then a high angle full shot with Hassan and Sam centered with Driss’s motionless brown body to the left of the frame. The sequence ends with a medium shot of Christophe, his face covered in blood, wide-eyed and in shock. In the final high angle shot of his death scene, Driss is relegated to the bottom left of the frame.



Figure 2: Driss’ (Nassim Si Ahmed) death scene. *Made in France*, dir. Nicolas Boukhrief, 2015.

Driss’ death ends the film’s visual representation of individuals whose skin colour and background make them most likely to be racialized as Brown and threatening. In the death scene described in the previous paragraph, the camera emphasizes the impact of Driss’ death on the light-skinned, highly educated, middle-class Muslim Sam, as well as the White convert Christophe. In a further indication of how Driss’ story is subsumed within the film’s overall narrative architecture, Driss is

⁶⁷ Saveau, p. 89.

never mentioned again in the film, even as other characters who die (Sidi, Hassan's wife etc.) are alluded to in the final minutes, presumably to give the viewer some closure. In his critique of Michael Haneke's *Caché* (2005) (in which an Arab character kills himself, while the White, bourgeois, French protagonist lives), Paul Gilroy writes that he 'was particularly troubled by what could be interpreted as Haneke's collusion with the comforting idea that the colonial native can be made to disappear in an instant through the auto-combustive agency of their own violence.'⁶⁸ Indeed, '[g]etting the Arabs to do away with themselves is a timely fantasy in the context of today's pervasive Islamophobia,' continues Gilroy.⁶⁹ Similarly, in *Made in France*, it is the light-skinned, Kabyle character with a French mother who survives, while the 'angry Brown character' is conveniently killed and forgotten before the film's climactic scene. While *Made in France* certainly does more than *Caché* to explicitly address Islamophobia, the death of Driss can be read (regardless of directorial intent) as enacting a similar 'timely fantasy' in the face of France's well-documented history of anti-Muslim racism.

Following Driss' death, it is the White convert characters (Christophe and Hassan) who are shown in stereotypical terrorist scenarios, such as preparing to drive a car bomb into a school and recording a beheading video.⁷⁰ While American and French action films and television shows depicting terrorism, such as Clint Eastwood's *American Sniper* (2014), Howard Gordon and Alex Gansa's *Homeland* (2011–20), Éric Rochant's *Le bureau des légendes* (2015–20), and Cédric Jimenez's *Novembre* (2022) pit White 'heroes' against Brown Muslim others, Boukhrief replaces this visual metaphor with two White French convert terrorists who are ultimately thwarted by a French Muslim of Algerian heritage. However, the film implies that with a more competent terrorist cell leader, Driss may have willingly gone along with bombing an institution of the French state, a fact that hardly makes him less 'threatening' to French sociocultural stability even if he claims to be opposed to explicitly targeting civilians. Instead, the role of the 'hero' is bestowed upon Sam, the light-skinned Muslim, who would certainly be less likely to experience (though certainly not entirely exempt from) the kind of anti-Muslim racism that someone like Driss might regularly face.

Paul Gilroy's analysis of *Caché* provides some further context for showing how another death scene, that of the White convert Abu Hassan, privileges the 'psychological gravity and complexity' of the film's White characters in a way that contributes to what Gilroy terms 'the white, bourgeois monopoly on dramatizing the stresses of lived experience...'⁷¹ His plot to blow up a pre-school foiled by Sam, Abu Hassan has now been cornered by the police. We see him from behind in a medium shot, shrouded in smoke, in a face-off with half a dozen or so police officers with machine guns and riot gear. The film cuts to a close-up of Abu Hassan's grim, blood-stained face, then a brief point-of-view shot where we see his machine gun firing through the smoke at the police, followed by a medium shot of him, machine gun in hand, being riddled with bullets. The camera alternates between wide shots of the police firing through a smoky haze and full shots of Abu Hassan, mortally wounded, falling to his knees, arms outstretched as if in supplication. Earlier in the film, Hassan smashes Christophe's framed photo of Tony Montana (Al Pacino), the gangster, 'anti-hero' protagonist of Brian De Palma's *Scarface* (1983), which he derisively refers to as 'American propaganda.' In the depiction of his death, Boukhrief references *Scarface* by echoing Tony Montana's iconic death scene in which Montana is similarly shown standing alone in a full shot, shrouded in smoke, firing a machine gun indiscriminately at his many assailants, before he is riddled with bullets and falls, arms outstretched to the ground. Comparing Abu Hassan to the drug kingpin Tony Montana in *Scarface* can be read as mocking Hassan and his loathsome, unrealized

⁶⁸ Paul Gilroy, 'Shooting Crabs in a Barrel', *Screen*, 48.2 (2007): pp. 233–35 (p. 234).

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ This focus on White converts as the most extreme members of a terrorist cell is also present in the aforementioned *Four Lions* (2011, dir. by Chris Morris). Similar to *Made in France*, it is Barry (Nigel Lindsay), a White convert who remains steadfast in his desire to carry out a terrorist plot in England, even when his accomplices (who were raised in the Muslim faith) show ambivalence.

⁷¹ Gilroy, p. 234.

ambition to be a terrorist mastermind.⁷² Yet, there is a troubling irony in likening Abu Hassan to Tony Montana, one of the most iconic ‘anti-heroes’ of the action thriller genre to which *Made in France* belongs. While the scene represents Abu Hassan (and by extension Islamist ideology’s) ultimate failure, it also associates the film’s White French ‘anti-hero’ with an iconic character, who is often discussed as one of the greatest characters in the history of popular cinema.⁷³ Not only is Abu Hassan in fact successful in dying a martyr, but the manner in which his death is filmed glorifies him through the connection to a film that continues to occupy ‘une place singulière dans la culture populaire juvénile.’⁷⁴ As a reminder, after his death, the Brown character Driss is shown in the bottom left of the frame (with Sam and Hassan in the centre) in a high angle shot for around seven seconds. In contrast, Bouhkrief choses to show Hassan’s face, in close-up, for almost ten seconds, his lifeless eyes staring out of his white face directly at the viewer.



Figure 3: Close up in Abu Hassan’s (Dimitri Storage) death scene. *Made in France*, dir. Nicolas Boukhrief, 2015.

While Driss’ death is filmed in a way that emphasizes the reactions of the White protagonists, Hassan’s death puts the audience face to face with a White male character, inviting the viewer to contemplate the psychological interiority and extinguished ambitions of Boukhrief’s twenty-first-century terrorist ‘anti-hero’. The point here is not that Hassan is displayed more sympathetically than Driss, who proves to have more compassion and thoughtfulness than his initial portrayal as a ‘dangerous Brown man’ suggests. Rather, the cinematography of Hassan’s climactic death scene ultimately centres on a White bourgeois character’s failed attempt to reinvent himself, rather than on the tragedy of the film’s lone Brown character’s ignoble death at the hands of a manipulative

⁷² Admittedly the comparison between the White French convert Abu Hassan and the Cuban drug kingpin Tony Montana (played by the Italian American actor Al Pacino) raises complicated questions related to Whiteness, Brownness, and ‘passing’ which are worthy of greater examination. However, my specific argument here is focused only on Tony Montana as an internationally recognizable, iconic film character (see notes 74 and 75).

⁷³ To give just a few examples, the French website *SensCritique* ranks *Scarface* as fifth in their list of ‘des meilleurs films de gangsters,’ the website *Crumpe* lists Tony Montana as the fourth in their list of ‘10 meilleurs anti-héros des films des années 1980’ and *Empire* magazine ranked Tony Montana as the twenty-seventh ‘Greatest Movie Character’ of all time, a fact that was reported in the French press. See respectively ‘Top des meilleurs films de gangsters’ <https://www.senscritique.com/top/resultats/les_meilleurs_films_de_gangsters/330926> [accessed 1 November 2022]; ‘10 meilleurs anti-héros des films des années 1980’, *Crumpe*, February 2022 <<https://www.crumpe.com/2022/02/10-meilleurs-anti-heros-des-films-des-annees-1980/>> [accessed 1 November 2022], Laure Croiset, ‘Les 100 plus grands personnages de films de tous les temps’, *Challenges*, 1 September 2015 <https://www.challenges.fr/cinema/les-100-plus-grands-personnages-de-films-selon-un-classement-empire_552250> [accessed 1 November 2022].

⁷⁴ Farid Rahmani, ‘*Scarface*, un film culte pour des adolescents et jeunes hommes issus des quartiers populaires’, in *Films cultes et culte du film chez les jeunes, Penser l’adolescence avec le cinéma*, ed. by Jocelyn Lachance, Hugues Paris and Sébastien Dupont (Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 2013), pp. 93–100, qtd. in Céline Masoni, ‘Procès fictionnels et imaginaires périphériques: la série *Gomorra* dans la réception active des rappers français’, *Cahiers de Narratologie [En ligne]*, 36 (December) <<https://doi.org/10.4000/narratologie.9872>> [accessed 24 November 2022].

White man. There is little doubt that Abu Hassan's carefully choreographed death scene would likely place the 'psychological gravity and complexity' of his White 'anti-hero' more squarely in the viewer's minds than that of the Brown character Driss who is never again referenced in the film.

While Hassan's death emphasizes the experiences and interiority of the film's White characters (and characters with many markers of Whiteness, like Sam) over its Brown and Black characters, the film's final scene is where Boukhrief's recentring of Whiteness is the most apparent. At this point in the narrative, all of the central characters, save Sam, have been killed. Sam is shown praying discreetly in the background at home while his wife, Laure, reads his article about infiltrating the jihadist cell. As we watch Laure read in a close-up, we hear Sam's words in a voice-over: 'J'espère que cette enquête contribuera à transmettre ce qu'il m'a enseigné. La foi ne doit jamais nous pousser vers les ténèbres. Elle doit bien au contraire nous faire aimer et respecter la vie.' This is a moralising message, and the binarism implied by this opposition of 'light' and 'darkness' has unmistakable echoes of both orientalist discourse and French political speech.⁷⁵ After these lines, Sam emerges from the room, in which he had been praying, to join his wife and son in the well-lit dining area of their middle-class apartment, and the film cuts to the final credits.

It is worth noting that these lines about 'Islam as peaceful' are not uttered by or associated with the Brown character from the *banlieue* but by the light-skinned *bourgeois* who embodies a discrete, apolitical form of Islam that is presented as 'compatible' with France's alleged commitment to secularism. Indeed, Sam's infiltration of the terrorist cell as a mole for the French state has already reinforced his status of 'acceptable Muslim' since he is willing to act as a complicit enforcer of the state apparatus. Sam's final voiceover corresponds to a white-washed, illuminated, middle-class domestic tableau that contrasts sharply with the film's lone Brown character, who lives in a dimly lit high rise, where he is shown (only once) furiously pummeling a punching bag. While Driss does ultimately show a level of ambivalence about killing civilians (although not about committing violence against the French state and its agents), it is the Muslim character marked repeatedly as 'Whiter' than other minorities in the film, and who corresponds to the less threatening 'bourgeois' stereotype, who emerges at the film's end as the embodiment of a 'peaceful' Islam, practiced in private, and compatible with French republican secularism.

In many ways, this ending shows how Sam conforms not just to the stereotype of the 'bourgeois' but to the 'musulman laïc,' who Guénif-Souilamas refers to as the opposite of the 'garçon arabe' and as 'la face positive' of Islam in France 'tenue de démontrer une intégration réussie fondée sur la loyauté aux "valeurs" républicaines.'⁷⁶ Given that Sam is only shown praying (aside from early scenes in the clandestine mosque, the teachings of which he clearly abhors) alone in his apartment, this final scene in the film also suggests *Made in France's* complicity with what Guénif-Souilamas calls 'l'affirmation dans l'espace public [in this case through the public space/medium of a mainstream film] d'une appartenance religieuse tenue de n'exister que dans l'espace privé.'⁷⁷ The fact that the 'hero' Sam unites the characteristics of the 'musulman laïc' while also being shown with so many markers (phenotypical, familial, linguistic, socio-economic etc.) of Whiteness, highlights the extent to which the film presents an image of Islam that implicitly marginalizes French populations likely to be racialized as Brown, like Driss. In sum, Boukhrief's ending contributes to the mythology of Whiteness as a desirable, 'non-threatening' norm while leaving unaddressed the arguably more pressing issue of how Brown characters who do not benefit from Sam's economic, cultural and phenotypical capital might imagine a future for themselves in

⁷⁵ 'Moreover, the sheer power of having described the Orient in modern, Occidental terms lifts the Orient from the realms of silent obscurity...into the clarity of modern European science.' Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 1995). Note also, for instance, how Emmanuel Macron concluded his speech in honour of the schoolteacher Samuel Paty, who was murdered for showing caricatures of the prophet Muhammad: 'Nous continuerons, oui, ce combat pour la liberté et pour la raison dont vous êtes désormais le visage...en France, professeur, les Lumières ne s'éteignent jamais. Vive la République. Vive la France.' Emmanuel Macron, 'Cérémonie d'hommage national à Samuel Paty à la Sorbonne', 21 October 2020 <<https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2020/10/21/ceremonie-dhommage-national-a-samuel-paty-a-la-sorbonne>> [accessed 15 August 2022].

⁷⁶ Guénif-Souilamas, paragraph 6, Kindle edition.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, paragraph 31, Kindle edition.

contemporary France. It also points to the importance of naming the categories of White, Brown, and Black when analyzing French cinematic representations of terrorism so as to reveal when problematic discourses of Whiteness are being echoed and reinscribed in subtle ways.

Conclusion

Contemporary French films depicting Islamist terrorism inevitably evoke larger questions related to France's colonial past, as well as present-day concerns about immigrant communities of colour and their descendants now living in France. In writing about Xavier Beauvois's *Des hommes et des dieux*, a 2010 film about French monks in Algeria killed by Islamist terrorists, Maria Flood describes how "[i]n its evocation of a nostalgic, harmonious, and ultimately colonial past, *Des hommes et des dieux* speaks deeply to present-day anxieties about France and its relation to its former colonies, and the descendants of these colonies living on French territory today."⁷⁸ When viewing *Made in France*, the ending of the film imagines a similarly harmonious postcolonial and 'post-racial' present, one that seeks to alleviate some of those same anxieties. The calm tableau of a French family, imbued with many markers of Whiteness, that practices Islam can, and should, be read as an attempt to communicate a harmonious vision of interethnic solidarity in France as the film's final message. However, the fact that we are only given this vision once the character who most embodies both French and global discourses of 'Brown threat' has been killed and forgotten has a troubling resonance with the fact that being racialized as lower-class and Brown remains a barrier to 'cultural citizenship' for so many French citizens.⁷⁹

At the same time, the film's ultimate articulation of Islam as a peaceful religion is a welcome rebuke to media and political rhetoric, in particular from the French far right, that stigmatizes Islam and Muslims as inherently violent. Failed presidential candidate Éric Zemmour has in fact declared that he makes no distinction between 'Islam' and 'Islamism', while the French journalist Ivan Rioufol uses the term 'Islamism' as a slur to indiscriminately stigmatize areas in France with large Muslim populations.⁸⁰ In a political climate where a presidential candidate accused of anti-Islamic hate speech (Marine Le Pen) received 42% of the vote in the 2022 election, it would be irresponsible to dismiss the significance of Boukhrief's thesis that Islam in and of itself is not a threat to French socio-cultural stability. From this perspective, the decision to centre his film on a light-skinned character can perhaps be read as a strategic choice to make his urgent anti-Islamophobic message more acceptable within a contemporary French discursive landscape in which 'Whiteness' continues to connote Frenchness, normalcy, and a lack of threat. However, this acceptability comes at a cost. With the death of Driss, before the film's climax and dénouement, a French White-majority audience is ultimately spared from directly confronting the complex intersection between classism, colourism, racism and Islamophobia embodied by this Brown character. The film ultimately elides the question of how characters likely to be racialized as Brown, threatening terrorists, like Driss, might be granted less stigmatized social recognition. While the film imagines a space where Muslims with many markers of 'acceptable' Whiteness might live peacefully in France, it leaves unaddressed how characters racialized as Brown could find a comparable degree of tranquility and autonomy to what Sam enjoys at the end of *Made in France*.

The complex intersection between discourses surrounding terrorism, Islam, and socially constructed racial categories is of course not specific to the French context. As I alluded to in the opening paragraph, Michael Frank describes a 'global imaginary of terrorism' in which films such

⁷⁸ Maria Flood, *France, Algeria and the Moving Image: Screening Histories of Violence 1963–2010* (Cambridge, UK: Legenda, 2017), p. 127.

⁷⁹ See Beaman.

⁸⁰ See respectively, Yves Calvi, 'Éric Zemmour : "Il n'y a pas de différence entre islam et islamisme"', *RTL*, 7 September 2016 <<https://www.rtl.fr/actu/debats-societe/eric-zemmour-il-n-y-a-pas-de-difference-entre-islam-et-islamisme-7784760612>> [accessed 12 August 2022]; "'Trappes est devenue un "Trappistan"' estime Ivan Rioufol', *CNEWS*, 12 February 2021 <<https://www.cnews.fr/videos/france/2021-02-12/trappes-est-devenue-un-trappistan-estime-ivan-rioufol-1046318>> [accessed 1 November 2022].

as *Made in France* might circulate with political rhetoric, journalism, internet content etc. The ‘global imaginary of terrorism’ is itself embedded within, and derives meaning from, global imaginaries of race, including what could be called a ‘global imaginary of Whiteness.’ It is simply not possible to separate discussions of Islam and terrorism from discourses of race, and in particular Whiteness. This holds especially true when discussing mass media, such as a genre film like *Made in France* since, as bell hooks points out, ‘imperialist white supremacist patriarchal culture...is normalized by mass media and rendered unproblematic.’⁸¹ Similarly, the way in which contemporary political actors use discourses about Islam and terrorism to maintain their power and justify state violence can also be legitimately reframed as ultimately relating to questions of Whiteness and power. To conclude, as the philosopher Charles W. Mills has famously stated: ‘[w]hite supremacy is the unnamed political system that has made the modern world what it is today.’⁸² Naming, debating, contesting, and deconstructing racial categories – whether White, Brown, Black, Muslim, Arab – in discussing discourses related to terrorism both in France and globally, can help ensure that we are not tacitly normalizing these exclusionary systems.

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⁸¹ bell hooks and Amalia Mesa-Bains, *Homegrown: Engaged Cultural Criticism* (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 61.

⁸² Charles W. Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), p. 1.

BOOK REVIEWS

Four Caribbean Women Playwrights: Ina Césaire, Maryse Condé, Gerty Dambury and Suzanne Dracius. By VANESSA LEE. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021. x + 187 pp. Hb £79.99. ISBN: 978-3-030-83363-3.

Theatre provides a public space in which those who are habitually silenced can raise their voices. On stage, theatre resuscitates figures who have fallen victim to past devastations. Theatre, a social practice, provides individual spectators with the opportunity to re-evaluate the subject's position within community, society, and the state. Theatre can raise awareness, in real time, of circumstances directly affecting the daily lives of audience members. Thanks to its liveness, theatre communicates in visual and physical form the inner space of characters' intimate thoughts. Through spoken dialogue, theatre enables different levels of language – 'standard', dialect, Creole – to interact. Since it can be staged with limited resources, theatre can highlight the vibrancy and creativity of local communities, who 'do it themselves'. 'Theatre Matters', as the title of Chapter 2 in Vanessa Lee's book announces. And these reasons I have just cited are among those she provides across her fine publication (pp. 82, 76, 151, 131, 36, 6, 158).

It is thus the more regrettable that theatre is omitted from all but a handful of publications both in the areas of Francophone Caribbean studies, and postcolonial studies more broadly. As Lee remarks in her introductory Chapter 1, these fields tend to acknowledge the ground-breaking contributions to the theorization of 'race' and Caribbean identity by Frantz Fanon or Édouard Glissant; or they celebrate the prolific literary production of France's overseas territories, their most feted figures including Aimé Césaire, who was followed by Patrick Chamoiseau, Raphaël Confiant and others. As this rollcall illustrates, accounts of French Caribbean literary production tend to omit both theatre (except for Césaire's much discussed trilogy), and women theatre-makers. Lee's book provides a welcome counterpoint to androcentric representations of the French Caribbean, with her persuasive account of Martinican and Guadeloupian women's theatrical activity over the past four decades. She thereby joins the small but devoted number of scholars including Sylvie Chalaye, Carole Edwards, Susan Makward, Alvina Ruprecht and Emily Sahakian, who champion this marginalized field.

For Lee, these women playwrights counter triple marginalization, with their triple *marronage*. Focusing specifically on four theatre-makers active between the 1980s and 2010s – Ina Césaire and Maryse Condé from the earlier part of the period; Suzanne Dracius, and Gerty Dambury from latter – Lee describes theatre as a marginal art, not least in the French Caribbean, where it suffers from a lack of funds and resources. Second, the patriarchal world in which the already marginalized space of theatre is located, marginalizes these women further. Third, legacies of the transatlantic trafficking and enslavement of Africans still cast a long shadow of racial discrimination over France's overseas territories, conspiring towards a triple marginalization. However, far from submitting to these intersectional oppressions, the four playwrights, argues Lee, situate themselves in a genealogy of resistance and subversion dating back to the first plantation runaways and rebels, the *marrons*. Not only does the book foreground these rarely celebrated dramatists and their works, but it testifies to the French Caribbean's particularly high concentration of female theatre-makers, especially in comparison with hexagonal France, where they are still noticeably absent from playbills and executive staff lists. Not waiting to be programmed or appointed, French Caribbean women, explains Lee, take initiative, staging scores of plays. Theatre can thus be described as 'the genre of predilection for female French Caribbean artists' (p. 5).

Perhaps for this reason the figure of the Black female artist, analysed in Chapter 3, recurs across a number of plays. With specific reference to Dambury's *Lettres indiennes* (1993), *Trames* (2009) and *Des doutes et des errances* (2014), Lee highlights this figure, who in these works addresses timely and pressing themes such as the traumatism of enslavement, the oppressions of colonialism, its legacies of social and racial injustice in contemporary France and its overseas territories, and

current socio-political questions of gender and class. In so doing, these women characters affirm their right to expression, their French Caribbean female poetics becoming a means to emancipate themselves from reductive stereotypes. Like the writers who create them, these protagonists become 'agents of their own narratives' (p. 72). Notably, playful and poetic innovation with the French language, which the four playwrights often subvert with Creole words, phrases or entire dialogues, enjoys detailed and sensitive attention from Lee.

The *marron* Black female artists described in Chapter 3 join a lineage of subversive Caribbean women, who form the focus of Chapter 4. Despite the significant number of politically important Caribbean female figures, women, states Lee, are often absent from official histories, as well as from historical drama, which tends to foreground male heroes such as Saint-Domingue/Haiti's Henri Christophe and Toussaint Louverture, both treated by Aimé Césaire and Glissant. Dracius's *Lumina Sophie dite Surprise* (1996) and Ina Césaire's *Rosanie Soleil* (1992) recount women's vital contribution to the 1870 Insurrection of Southern Martinique, which had been provoked by the fact that, decades after the abolition of slavery, harsh labour laws and the restriction of the Black population's liberties, rendered life untenable for formerly enslaved people. Both plays feature the *pétroleuses*, an all-female group of insurgents who joined the protest by setting fire to plantations.

Finally, Chapter 5 demonstrates how Césaire's *Mémoires d'Îles* (1980) and Condé's *Comme deux frères* (1997) present history, politics, and society via the intimacy of women's private lives. In each chapter, Lee's comparative approach adds dynamism to her discussion, as she brings playwrights and plays into lively dialogue with each other. The book is also appended with a full playography listing published and unpublished works, along with productions. Importantly, Lee is attentive throughout to stage production and to the material conditions in which the plays were produced, accounting for set design, the actor's movements, and other scenic elements, as well as to theatrical venues.

This focus on staging is particularly important in the Caribbean, where the literary text is just one element among a profusion of European and endogenous artistic forms. These include the *conte* – storytelling where the *conteur* interacts with the audience, often with comical asides; music and song; Carnival; and dance, notably Martinican *laghia* and *danmyé*, themselves a form of *marronage* since they were devised by enslaved people determined to salvage their bodies, creativity and subjecthood from the pain and toil of plantation labour. The fact that women perform the *contes* and take part in these dance genres, both traditionally reserved for men, propels further the momentum of feminist *marronage*, according to Lee.

The diverse choreographies and polyphonic arrangements that Lee reveals exemplify the Creolized aesthetic typical of Francophone Caribbean theatre. Lee starts her book by describing how the Caribbean was populated first, from 3000 BCE, by Arawak and Carib people, who were decimated through genocide; then, from the seventeenth century, by European colonisers who trafficked and enslaved people from the African continent; then, after the definitive abolition of slavery in the nineteenth century, by indentured labourers from India and China; and then in the twentieth century, by migrants from the Middle East. For centuries the Caribbean has provided a prototype for a transnational, diasporic, multi-ethnic world, and its plays, created in its image, teach us not only about how to make theatre beyond the rigid categories and codes of page and stage, drama, and performance, European and 'other'. More importantly, they teach us how to live beyond identities individuated according to nationality, ethnicity, gender, or other potentially divisive categories. In the words of Condé cited by Lee, the sea links Caribbean islands rather than separating them, thereby replacing insularity with relationality.

Apart from Christiane Makward and Judith Miller's *Plays by Francophone Women Writers* (1994), almost no plays by this demographic are published in English translation. Thanks to the generosity of individual playwrights and translators, who have shared unpublished manuscripts, I have recently devised a new undergraduate module, 'Francophone Theatre and Thought'. This has proved very popular with students, and I hope Lee's highly informative, tightly argued and generously accessible book (she meticulously translates all original quotations into English) will

drive a much-needed wave of translations and stagings. Her landmark work invites critical engagement not only from students and scholars in French and Francophone studies, postcolonial studies, Caribbean studies, and theatre studies, but also from playwrights and directors in search of island voices with planetary resonance.

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Writing the Black Decade: Conflict and Criticism in Francophone Algerian Literature. By JOSEPH FORD. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2021. 169 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4985-8186-8.

Writing the Black Decade: Conflict and Criticism in Francophone Algerian Literature examines literature's relationship to conflict, specifically the period in Algeria known as the 'Black Decade' or 'la décennie noire.' The country, which had endured a one-party rule by the Front de libération nationale (National Liberation Front or FLN) since gaining its independence from France in 1962, saw its first multiparty elections in late 1991. The Front islamique du salut (Islamic Salvation Front or FIS) won the first of two rounds of elections, supported by many Algerians who were discontent with the FLN. In early 1992, however, the second round of elections was cancelled, and political chaos and violence ensued. This cancellation of the country's first democratic elections since Algerian independence is widely understood to have ushered in the Black Decade, which would last until 1999, the year marking Abdelaziz Bouteflika's rise to power. During the Black Decade, Algeria underwent a time of immense violence often referred to as the 'Algerian Civil War', but not easily understood or simply summarized as such. Indeed, the various ways of understanding the Black Decade provide a rich, complex background for Joseph Ford's analysis of literature and the cultural forces that mediate it.

In his book, Ford makes a strong case for rethinking literature as purely enlightening and emancipatory. Through a series of five chapters, each of which presents one or more of a total of seven Algerian writers who *wrote* the Black Decade, each telling a version of this layered cultural and historical moment, Ford encourages readers to be wary of viewing literature as separate and entirely independent from, or even fully aware of, the conditions from which it has emerged. Indeed, in his analysis of works by Rachid Mimouni, Assia Djebar, Maïssa Bey (Chapter 1); Salim Bachi (Chapter 2); Habib Ayyoub (Chapter 3); Kamel Daoud (Chapter 4); and Mustapha Benfodil (Chapter 5), Ford also rethinks and recasts testimonial literature and its politicisation, myth and mythology, the grotesque, literature's relationship to power and dissent alike, and even market dynamics' effects on the production and consumption of literature.

Writing the Black Decade argues that literature, though often characterized as uniquely illuminating and freeing, also can and often does reproduce problematic, overly reductive representations of conflict, thereby reifying notions it is uniquely equipped to question, nuance, and critique. Ford points in particular to the lack of direct access to the country during the Black Decade to show how writers and thinkers attempting to explain and represent the violence often relied on 'preexisting narrative tropes about Algerian violence,' many of which dated back to the Algerian War of Independence (p. 5). This tendency led to two main problems. First, even such revered historians as Benjamin Stora represent the Black Decade as stemming directly from the War of Independence by referring to the *décennie noire* as the 'Second Algerian War' when the reality is much more complicated (p. 9). Second, such an understanding has reinforced such problematic Orientalist stereotypes as the 'violent, warlike Arab', among others. Since the book frames literature as highly mediated by such other cultural texts as news media, literary journals, and historical work, Ford focuses on the following four 'mediating spaces of literature' and their influence both on and from literary narratives: news, journalism, and literary criticism; history and political science; academic literary criticism; and writers and publishers (p. 6).

Ford's greatest contribution to the field with this book lies in his characterisation of

literature as a mode of expression that does not always do the work of critique or reimagination but rather, and all too often, reproduces reductive histories that both misrepresent and overgeneralize. In his own words, he shows ‘how literature is never alone in the process of illuminating violence, encountering history, or mapping out new political futures: ‘rather,’ as Ford explains, ‘literature is part of a complex web of discourses that make the world’ (p. 16). This framework establishes an important critical lens through which literature is received as a mediated and mediating force, a way of understanding and a mode of expression to be interpreted, and one of many media through which humans express truth through content and form alike.

If there are critiques to be made of *Writing the Black Decade*, they are twofold. First, Ford at times takes such care to honour others’ contributions to his thinking that sometimes his own scholarly voice struggles to make itself properly heard. Furthermore, *Writing the Black Decade*’s concern with the reductive tendencies it explicates can sometimes give the impression that the book’s primary role is to catalogue and analyse examples of reductive writing in the context of the Black Decade, when in truth the book’s richness lies in its meticulously researched, convincingly structured, novel framework for the interpretation of literature in the context of conflict.

In sum, Ford’s analysis of connections between form and content bolsters a veritable hermeneutics of literature in a moment of conflict that sheds lights on both conflict itself and the ways humans express it, interpret it, make sense of it, and attempt to move beyond it. Even as *Writing the Black Decade: Conflict and Criticism in Francophone Algerian Literature*, then, analyses and explicates the layers and complexities of the landscape of literature in the context of conflict, so too does it explore the possibilities for literature to shape new narratives, create new futures, and define new worlds.

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ReFocus: The Films of Rachid Bouchareb. Edited by MICHAEL GOTT and LESLIE KEALHOFER-KEMP. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020. 248 pp. Pb £24.99. ISBN: ISBN 978-1-4744-6651-6.

Published with the ‘ReFocus’ series of Edinburgh University Press, dedicated to exploring directors whose oeuvre is understudied, this edited volume on the works of one of the most prominent and productive contemporary French directors, Rachid Bouchareb, is most welcome. The volume sets out to explore especially the lesser-analysed works of the director and to trace what makes Bouchareb a truly ‘global’ filmmaker.

In their introduction, the editors lay out the elements that give Bouchareb’s filmmaking its global nature. Leslie Kealhofer-Kemp and Michael Gott delineate the director’s varying themes, genres, budgets, production contexts (ranging from Louisiana to Vietnam), and how he remains focused on diversity of cultures, migration, and identity while always dealing with historical events that raise the questions of identity and belonging (from 7/7 London bombings to the Algerian War of Independence). The introduction also provides original insight into the often ignored parts of Bouchareb’s career – his films for TV and his role as a producer, heading a production company, which gave himself and other minority directors the opportunity to find funding for their early works – alongside an insightful close reading of *Peut-être la mer* (1983), a film that introduces themes of colonialism, migration and complexity of identities and belongings that appear throughout his filmography.

Several chapters in the volume examine the transnational nature of Bouchareb’s filmmaking from different angles. Through using Eduard Glissant’s framework of open and unpredictable connectivity of an archipelago, Kealhofer-Kemp’s gives insight into the diversity of sources, people, and ideas that inspire and influence the filmmaker at the pre-production stage of his filmmaking, which ‘encompasses moments of inspiration, conceptualisation, ideas, research,

interviews, writing, and other preparations and considerations' (p. 26). Then, Gott examines how the director establishes transnational mobility in his works starting from *Baton Rouge* (1985) – as an example of that breaks the stereotypical immobility of *banlieue* cinema – extending to *Little Senegal* (2001), *London River* (2009), and *Road to Istanbul* (2016). Gott shows how the director's concepts of space and mobility are complex as they include metaphorical dimensions such as language and culture. Then, Mireille Rosello examines what Bouchareb's films on terrorism explain about global connectivity and visual representation. The author argues that *London River* is a political film that makes visible the invisible lives and stories in an unconventional tale about terrorism that chooses to de-spectacularize and connect it to global environmental degradation. Finally, Valérie K. Orlando's article on a later film, *Two Men in Town*, examines the director's oeuvre as *cinéma-monde*, going beyond France and the Francophone world. Dealing with issues ranging from police violence to border control, the film moves outside of the US context, connecting the local to the global.

Several chapters explore the links that the director establishes with American cinema and culture. David Pettersen explores the director's use of American film genres (the war film, the Western, and the 'interracial buddy comedy') to explore themes of migration, diaspora and colonial history. Analysing *Cheb* (1991) and *Dust of Life* (1995) as war films by bringing in sources ranging from Mikhail Bakhtin to Etienne Balibar and then examples from French *auteur* cinema, Pettersen provides an interesting discussion about Bouchareb's understanding of genre, moving between translation and re-articulation. Nabil Boudraa and Ahmed Bedjaoui's article similarly trace Bouchareb's rapport with the US. The authors highlight his films' evolution from fascination with the country as a space open for identity politics compared to France, to a more critical examination of American society. Then, Gemma King's chapter reminds us that Bouchareb's filmmaking is also polycentric and moves beyond the centres of Hollywood-Paris, travelling to other regions with history of French colonialism (such as Vietnam) and Francophone regions (such as Belgium) or even other spaces that are not (or not recently) historically connected to France, such as Guernsey or Istanbul. King approaches Bouchareb's oeuvre as 'decentered cinema' (p. 167), moving away from traditional Francophone filmmaking with the spatial and funding focus on France, refocusing on Senegal, for instance, as the origin and the destination in *Little Senegal* (2001).

Multiple contributions in the volume explore history and memory of colonialism and migration. Michael O'Riley examines how *Poussières de vie* (1995) portrays the manipulation of the national narrative in Vietnam, and how paternalism, forgetting, and violence become an integral part of this process in the war-torn post-colonial state. Jennifer Howell's article reads the reactions against *Hors la loi* in France in the context of a 'new moment of memory' (p. 183). The author reads the debates that the film generated about the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) and the Algerian War of Independence through the lens of the changing French government's discourse, moving away from the more apologetic tone during the Chirac era to Sarkozy's 'anti-repentance' stance.

Touching upon issues of history and memory is eventually linked to identity issues: Julien Gaertner's chapter looks at the collective and controversial memories that *Days of Glory* and *Outside the Law* raise from the angle of identity and how these films overturn the typecast 'Arab heroes' (p. 117). Kaya Davies Hayon, too, examines Arab identity in the director's oeuvre, this time through the progressive representation of Arab women in *Cheb* (1991), *My Family's Honor* (1998), and *Just like a Woman* (2012), suggesting that these films 'offer complex constructions of female subjectivities' (p. 65). Finally, Anne Donadey's article analyses the representation of women in yet another understudied Bouchareb film, *Just Like a Woman*. Exploring it as a 'postcolonial feminist film' (197), Donadey focuses on the subtle critique of racism and patriarchy in this narrative of women's solidarity. Donadey provides a wonderful example of a close and 'intimiste' (p. 204) reading of the film, especially when examining the skillful way in which the director avoids voyeurism in belly dancing scenes (pp. 205–9).

The book does not sufficiently touch upon the details on the production of films, an issue that remains confined to Kealhofer-Kemp's contribution. Then, there is some inevitable overlap

in themes and films discussed. Yet, each contributor offers a fresh angle and complementary perspective in exploring the director's filmmaking and laying out its transnational stakes. Frequent references to interviews with Bouchareb make the contributions lively and the director's voice ever-present. The book offers new insight into some films that have already been well explored (such as *Hors la loi*), providing overviews of the less-accessible French language reviews of and controversies around these works. The collection's strongest point is its diligent focus on understudied Bouchareb films, such as *Baton Rouge*, *Cheb*, *Poussiere de vie* or *Just Like a Woman*. The book is a must-read for scholars of contemporary French cinema and post-colonial studies. The contributions would especially be useful to assign in courses that teach Bouchareb films, both to enlighten the students about the larger debates that surround these works in France and to serve as exemplary close analysis of images and narratives. This is so far the only scholarly work dedicated to Bouchareb's cinema. Let us hope that this insightful collection of articles is the beginning of more research on the prolific yet understudied contemporary directors' filmmaking.

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Bulletin of Francophone Postcolonial Studies

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The deadline for the receipt of articles to be included in the autumn issue is 17 February 2023.

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