

**IMPASSE IN MULTILINGUAL SPACES: POLITICS OF LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY
IN CONTEMPORARY FRANCOPHONE CONTACT ZONES**

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This dissertation examines the contemporary dimensions of the longstanding phenomena of (im)migration, displacement, and integration in spaces where French is a dominant language. I call these spaces Francophone Contact Zones (FCZs), drawing on Mary Louise Pratt's research. I offer a differentiation of FCZs based on their scale and/or functionality. The notion of individual FCZs allows me to understand larger FCZs in terms of a manifold of individual cultural experiences.

I concentrate on the weaker parties in host societies, and I analyze the connections between language and space through an examination of the verbal communication of marginalized protagonists in a corpus of French and Francophone novels and films. My main argument is that pivotal public institutions and social spaces, such as courts, prisons, schools, postcolonial homes, and culturally and economically diverse neighborhoods, reflect and magnify the tensions of particular FCZs. I draw on Louis Althusser's theorization of Ideological and Repressive State Apparatuses (ISA and RSA) to analyze bilingualism, translanguaging and silence. I show how RSAs such as courts and prisons use mastery and non-mastery of the dominant French language against newcomers in FCZs. In my analysis of public schools, I demonstrate how they shift from ISAs to RSAs when the authority of the teachers, as representatives of the bourgeois class, is challenged by the students. I analyze the hybridity of vernacular languages in the Paris's Belleville neighborhood as an instance of the third space, a notion introduced by Homi Bhabha. I show that the languages of Belleville's residents are signs

of both belonging and exclusion. Finally, I argue that the problems of the large-scale FCZs are magnified in the private space of postcolonial homes. Indeed, such spaces can be the fiercest battleground of the clash between the culture of the host society and the traditions of newcomers. Ultimately, I show that the newcomers' mastery of the French language in FCZs reveals two conflicting aspirations: hopes for integration and a desire to preserve their unique cultural identities.

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PREFACE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

“As for space, it is supposedly given along with and in language, and is not formed separately from language. Filled with signs and meanings, an indistinct intersection point of discourses, a container homologous with whatever it contains, space so conceived is comprised merely of functions, articulations and connections – in which respect it closely resembles discourse.”

Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*¹

The world today is shaped by the migration and displacement of people, two phenomena that both result from and create zones of cultural conflict. The major historical events of the last century (e.g., the postcolonial processes, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the recent wars in the Middle East, and the economic and political instability in many states of the third world) have caused cultural clashes that impact not only the migrants, but the host societies as well. At the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries, France and the First World Francophone countries became zones of refuge for migrants from all over the world. The newcomers' adaptation to a different life in the host space meant adjusting to the French or Francophone culture and using the French language. Movements and journeys between countries and continents created, and continue to generate, new communities that often do not correspond to the geographical and /or

¹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, 1st edition (Cambridge, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992), 136.

political borders. In order to capture the instability that the transformations provoke during cultural and linguistic clashes in a particular space, and to theorize conflicts in the communities, social scientists and humanists have adopted the term “zone.”

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, a “zone” is “an area that is different from other areas in a particular way.”² The borders of a zone are not marked on a political map the way the borders of a state, country, or province are. The term is convenient because it designates a changing space whose boundaries are flexible. Due to their invisibility, in a different context, Michael Gott calls the zones’ borders “soft borders” in opposition to the “hard borders” that “are inscribed in law.”³ The zones’ soft borders are not marked on a map; rather, they are felt by a particular cultural presence of a community that does not fit the major cultural profile of a given space. The zones are shaped by the contradictions that exist inside their space. The term “zone” intends to describe how culturally distinctive spaces, undistinguishable within already marked territories and/or administrative units, exist on the conventional geopolitical maps.

The use of the term “zone” in literary and cultural studies is not new. In 1975, Mikhail Bakhtin introduced the concept of *heteroglossia* in *Dialogic Imagination*. The term “zone” was crucial for this concept because it signified “a primacy of context over text.”⁴ Bakhtin’s focus

² <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/zone>; Although, the term sounds contemporary, the source explains that the word originates from “Middle English, from Anglo-French, from Latin *zona* belt, zone, from Greek *zōnē*; akin to Lithuanian *juosti* to gird. First Known Use: 15th century.” Synonyms: “belt, corridor, land, neck, part(s), tract, region.”

³ “While hard borders are inscribed in law, the ‘soft borders of Europe are encoded in other types of texts indicating a pre-institutional social reality, the reality of images of what Europe is and who are Europeans and who are not.” Michael Gott, “West/East Crossings: Positive Travel in Post-1989 French-Language Cinema,” in *European Cinema after the Wall: Screening East-West Mobility*, ed. Leen Engelen and Kris Van Heuckelom (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013), 2.

⁴ M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 428.

was on Russian society as it was described in Russian novels. For him, a “zone” was a space from a novel created by verbal interactions between groups. He illustrated this by pointing to the languages spoken by various social groups in the same society at the same time. In his essay, “Discourse of the Novel,” he outlined the presence of various linguistic systems and languages already existing within the broader frame of the mainstream Russian language. According to Bakhtin, the novel does not express a single viewpoint or voice, rather, the novel is composed of multiple voices. Every voice is “anonymous and social as language,” and each utterance is “contradiction-ridden, tension-filled unity.”⁵ Bakhtin’s analysis of *heteroglossia* in *Dialogic Imagination* influenced the work of Ellen Berry and Mikhail Epstein on transcultural communication and zones.

Berry and Epstein apply the notion of “zone” to the post-Cold War period and, specifically, to dialogue between the First and Second Worlds. In their book, *Transcultural Experiments: Russian and American Models of Creative Communication* (1999), they reflect on transcultural “zones of fuzziness and interference.”⁶ They consider interference an inevitable process: “interference is not only a necessary, mutual and multidirectional process, but also a wavy and fuzzy one [...] that transposes the borders of interacting cultures, mentalities and disciplines in multiple directions.”⁷ While Bakhtin’s work is focused on a national context, the research of Berry and Epstein has expanded the concepts of voice and zone to include transcultural contexts during the contemporary moment of globalization. Using a different perspective, Aihwa Ong’s approach also connects the term “zone” to the ongoing processes of

⁵ Bakhtin, 272.

⁶ Ellen E. Berry and Mikhail N. Epstein, *Transcultural Experiments: Russian and American Models of Creative Communication*, 1st edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 225.

⁷ Berry and Epstein, 10.

globalization. In her book, *Flexible Citizenship* (1999), Ong applies the concept of zones to another context. She focuses on the rapid technological development and free economies of the so called “tiger states” in Asia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. The umbrella term, “tiger states,” originates from the foreign investment capital introduced to these economies and their consequent substantial growth in the late 1980s to the early 1990s.⁸ Ong investigates the relationship between the phenomena of “flexibility” and “transnationality” and maintains that zones do not coincide with political borders and are not contiguous to them.

Sheila Petty’s book, *Contact Zones: Memory, Origin, and Discourses in Black Diasporic Cinema* (2008), offers a new perspective of the notion of “zone.” By exploring it from the viewpoint of race in black diasporic cinema, Petty analyzes the particular experience of the black diaspora. One of her main approaches is applying the “not here/not there” situation of people of African descent in the dynamic and globalized world of today.⁹ Petty examines African migration that captures the migrants in a state of in-betweenness. Her research points out that the black diaspora has passed through various contact zones and stages of displacement and that such experience can be used as a basis for the study of other zones around the world. According to her, the situation of belonging nowhere between the starting point and the final migration’s destination is applicable to all transients. Building on this previous research, Randall Halle introduces the term, “interzone,” in his book, *The Europeanization of Cinema: Interzones and Imaginative Communities* (2014). For Halle, an interzone is a geographical and cultural space that appears as a consequence of the processes of globalization. He states that “an interzone, as a

⁸ Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*, 2nd edition, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), 216.

⁹ Sheila Petty, *Contact Zones: Memory, Origin, and Discourses in Black Diasporic Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008), 1.

physical and ideational space, is one of a transit, interaction, transformation, and contentious and contested diversity.”¹⁰ Although his examples are mostly from the recent history of East and West Germany, Halle explores the notion of interzones in a global context, and considers them to be spaces of movement and transition.

My own understanding of the term “zone” draws heavily on Mary Louise Pratt’s work on “contact zones.” Pratt analyzes migration and displacement in Latin American, African, and United States border literature. She focuses on the relationship between center and periphery, and explores the cultural clashes that occurred during the colonization of South America, the consequences of this colonization, and the processes of decolonization that followed. In her book, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing Transculturation* (1992), Pratt defines contact zones as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination-like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today.”¹¹ While Pratt primarily studies Latin America, her concept of the contact zone can be applied to other postcolonial and neocolonial contexts, such as those of contemporary France and Francophone states or territories.

The term “zone” has clearly been an important theoretical concept in the analysis of spaces of migration, displacement, exile, cultural clashes, and the literary and filmic texts that seek to represent them. However, the scholarly literature about “zones” has not been systematically applied to French-speaking contexts, despite the attention to displacement and diasporic communities within French and Francophone studies. While I agree with Halle’s view

¹⁰ Randall Halle, *The Europeanization of Cinema: Interzones and Imaginative Communities*, 1st edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 23.

¹¹ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 2007), 7.

that the “zones” are spaces where movements and transitions occur, I think that the zones are not only spaces of movement. I consider Pratt’s term “zone” to be broader than Halle’s term “interzones” since “contact zones” contain “interzones.” By “contact zone,” I refer to a social space where cultural, economic, or political clashes between at least two cultures occur. By “Francophone Contact Zone” (FCZ), I refer to a contact zone where the major language of the dominant society and its institutions is French. Although the FCZs’ borders are not always fixed on maps, in some cases, relatively vast spaces have functioned as FCZs for a fairly long period of time. One example is the Canadian province Quebec that has been a contact zone between French, American, and Canadian cultures over several centuries. Regardless of the variables that shape the FCZs, zones are always spaces where both contacts and clashes happen. One of my reasons to prefer Pratt’s term is that it shows the interrelations between contacts and clashes in the zone. The advantage of the term “FCZ” over a different designation of a space is its flexibility. The term “zone” has been popular in research because of its ability to differentiate spaces that, by some cultural and linguistic criteria, differ from the broader cultural homogeneity shown by a conventional geopolitical map. The term “zone” can thus track with various contexts, times, and spaces, and allow us to consider them alongside each other.

I study a selection of Francophone literature and films that depict conflicts caused by movements in FCZs in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. My dissertation argues that the marginalized Francophone communities live and move through FCZs. Most studies focus on one particular culture or space (e.g., the cultural space of French-Maghrebi living in France or French-speaking Canadians in Quebec). By contrast, I examine the artistic representations of distant FCZs formed under various circumstances and in different timeframes. I analyze the FCZs from my corpus through an examination of the cultural and linguistic interactions of the

protagonists in particular spaces that illustrate the contradictions in the FCZs. Principally, my dissertation focuses on the language and culture of some marginalized communities in FCZs from the 1960s to the beginning of the 21st century. The relationships in the FCZs are asymmetrical. The position and voice of the stronger, dominant community, the host culture, is imposed and obvious, while the voice of the marginalized community is suppressed. For this reason, I emphasize the perspectives of the subaltern weaker parties in the FCZs. When the characters are excluded from the dominant society, they become what William Brown, Dina Iordanova, and Leshu Torchin call, “disposable” persons.¹² For this reason, I focus on the inability of some “disposable” persons to connect through French. In addition, the speech, or the lack of speech, of the protagonists reflects the power relations of the contact zones where the characters reside and operate. Indeed, *silence* can be a tool of resistance for the marginalized residents of FCZs. In the FCZs, conflicts exist between newcomers and the society’s state institutions, as well as between newcomers and local citizens. Overall, in my dissertation, I analyze the relationship between space and language in the FCZs.

In order to facilitate the examination of the FCZs, I offer a differentiation according to their scale. I propose the following distinctions of the FCZs: large-scale FCZs (Quebec, the urban margins of the big European cities), small-scale public institutional FCZs (court, prison, school), small-scale private FCZs (the postcolonial home), and individual mobile FCZs. Literature and cinema create contact zones through the travel of characters thereby making the individual FCZs outcomes of their movement. The individual FCZ is the space of contact that the stranger creates while traveling through and interacting with a host culture. In the Introduction, I

¹² William Brown, Dina Iordanova, and Leshu Torchin, *Moving People, Moving Images: Cinema and Trafficking in the New Europe* (St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 2010), 103.

first discuss my work on language in FCZs. Then, I describe the differentiation of the FCZs that I introduce, and provide a short summary of the dissertation chapters. Lastly, I explain how my approach of language examination in the FCZs allows me to enrich the scholarship on zone and language.

1.1 FLEXIBLE ROLE OF THE LANGUAGE / DEBATES ON LANGUAGE

Despite strong scholarly interest in migration, displacement, exile, and the role of the French language, there is still much to be done in terms of exploring the politics of language use in FCZs. One of this dissertation's main contributions is its investigation of the language of marginalized characters in literature and films about FCZs. The French language used by the marginalized in the FCZs has characteristics distinguishing it from standard French. This specific French language of the underprivileged characters reflects the individual and collective identity in a particular FCZ. This language's vocabulary and usage are marked by the past and present of the FCZ.

My interest in the French language and its importance in French and Francophone culture is not new. According to Nicholas Hewitt, debates on the French language emerged in the sixteenth century when French replaced Latin “as the dominant medium for writing.”¹³ Here, I provide an overview of the aspects of language that I analyze in the chapters of the dissertation. I focus primarily on bilingualism, translanguaging, and the flexibility of the language in the FCZs. By *bilingualism*, I mean the use of a language other than French in literature or film. In some

¹³ Nicholas Hewitt, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Modern French Culture*, 1st edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 125.

cases, I examine the mixing of French vernacular and the protagonists' native languages since both are the strongest markers of belonging and exclusion in FCZs. Compared to bilingualism, the *translanguaging* requires a higher degree of mastery of the non-native language.

Translanguaging is the act of knowingly switching from French to another language, and vice versa, on the part of the narrators or characters to convey specific meanings. I discuss language as a tool of repression in the spaces of the institutions of court, prison, and school. The question of French language's importance in the education of the youths is not new. Due to the language impact on education, the language /education relationship has endured a longtime discussion. In the 19th century, some of the French governments imposed a policy of standard French in the public schools. Hewitt writes that "the single most effective measure" in this direction was "the introduction in 1881-83 of free, compulsory primary education" exclusively in French.¹⁴

In the 20th century, the political, economic, and social frames in France and the FCZs evolved. In the 1980s, the alternative language of adolescents became fashionable in mass culture and the arts.¹⁵ The youth communicated in the so called, *le langage des jeunes* or *le langage des cités* or *des banlieues*.¹⁶ In this context, I examine language as a tool of repression at school. I investigate the symbolic opposition between French and English in *Leolo* (1992) by Quebecois filmmaker, Jean-Claude Lauzon. In the film, *Le thé au harem d'Archimède* (1985) by French-Maghrebi filmmaker Mehdi Charef, I analyze a flashback scene in which the absence of speech implies the deep rupture between the educational system and the students from the banlieues. In the film, *Entre les murs* (2008) by Laurent Cantet, I investigate the cultural and verbal misunderstandings between teacher and students in the classroom. The misapprehensions

¹⁴ Hewitt, 126.

¹⁵ Hewitt, 127.

¹⁶ Hewitt, 131.

originate from the social gap between these two parties in the classroom. Thus, I study the language of youth from three different perspectives in three FCZs – a Quebecois neighborhood of Montreal in the 1960s, a fictional suburb of Paris in the 1980s, and the 20th arrondissement of Paris at the beginning of the 21st century. I investigate how the French language used by the students reflects the social tensions and conflicts in FCZ.

The analysis shows that Anna Maria Mangia’s term, “langage de frontière,” can be used to characterize the language of all marginalized youths.¹⁷ The students’ “langage de frontière” reveals both their reaction to the school rules, as well as their belonging to the FCZ. By reproducing the language of the adolescents from the marginalized neighborhoods, the three films contribute to the exploration of schools as spaces of social conflicts and add to our understanding of power hierarchies in contemporary FCZs. Moreover, the three films can be analyzed from the perspective of *autoethnography*. I understand “autoethnography” as a depiction of the personal, intertwined with the social and the cultural, at a given time and space. Autoethnography focuses on the relationships between selves and society and tells stories of communities. Lauzon, Charef, and Cantet created the films based on their own experiences. Thus, the verbal communication of the characters represents autoethnographic accounts. From the protagonists’ interactions, we can partially reconstruct the perspective of an entire youth community in a given space and time. Furthermore, I point to the fact that the language is a marker of identity and belonging in marginalized neighborhoods, whereas the same language functions as a marker of exclusion in Paris. In addition, I explain how the language in the closed private space of the postcolonial home can function as a tool of reprimand or even punishment.

¹⁷ Anna Maria Mangia, “La langue de banlieue de Mehdi Charef: Le thé au harem d’Archi Ahmed,” *Ponts* 7 (2007): 73.

My dissertation illustrates that, in the FCZs, the language connects and divides; it helps, but also often hinders the relations between marginalized and locals, and between newcomers and the main society's institutions. As Dana Strand wrote, language is "a marker of difference as well as a point of tension, performance and potential subversion."¹⁸ The intrinsic connection between language and space is a subject of Henri Lefebvre's book, *The Production of Space* (1974). There he states, "Every language is located in a space. Every discourse says something about a space (places or sets of places); and every discourse is emitted from a space."¹⁹ Continuing his approach of exploration of spaces through the language, I examine the verbal communication of the protagonists in particular spaces that I consider FCZs. In the following pages, I offer a differentiation of the FCZs.

1.2 DISTINCTION OF THE FRANCOPHONE CONTACT ZONES

Nicholas Hewitt writes that, at the beginning of the 20th century, in 1914, just before World War I, "the French empire was second in extend only to the British: the new French colonies and protectorates in North and West Africa, Oceania (Tahiti, New Caledonia) and Asia (Indo-China and the trading stations in India) combined with earlier possessions in the Americas to give the language a presence on five continents."²⁰ A look at the political and economic maps shows that, as a result of France's colonial ambitions and the consequent postcolonial processes, the FCZs

¹⁸ Dana Strand, "Etre et parler: Being and Speaking French in Abdellatif Kechiche's *L'Esquive* (2004) and Laurent Cantet's *Entre les murs* (2008)," *Studies in French Cinema* 9, no. 3 (2009): 259.

¹⁹ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 132.

²⁰ Hewitt, *The Cambridge Companion to Modern French Culture*, 126.

spread all over the world. In addition, migration and displacement, outcomes of the decolonization after 1945, caused the creation of diasporic communities and formation of the FCZs.

It is not possible, nor is it necessary, to analyze all FCZs, but, in order to facilitate their examination, I offer a differentiation of the FCZs according to their scale. Quebec and the suburbs of many European Francophone cities are easily recognized as large FCZs. As a result of the French and the British colonizations of Northern America in the 16th century, Francophone and Anglophone communities began coexisting in Quebec. For several centuries, for the Quebecois, the French language has been a crucial link to metropolitan France. The French language made the Quebecois more resilient and united against the Anglophone influence and the danger of assimilation. In the 20th century, the Francophone community in Quebec continued to be the weaker party in Canada. Although the cultural and ethnic disagreements between Francophones and Anglophones have subsided, at the beginning of the 21st century, they still exist. Their cultural clashes illustrate the long-lasting impact of the historical conflicts between the two communities.

Another large-scale FCZ is the urban suburbs, the *banlieues*, of French industrialized cities within the hexagon. The *banlieues* housed newcomers from various backgrounds. An essential part of the diverse population there are the first generation migrants from Maghreb as well as French of African descent and their French Maghrebi children, the beurs. The origin of the word *beur* is a neologism based on verlan, a Parisian backslang, used by the young second generation immigrants of Magherbi descent (from France's former North African colonies) in the early 1980s. The beurs are an ethnic minority in postcolonial France, one associated with identity based on French and North African culture. Brought up between two cultures, that of their

parents' heritage and that of the mid-20th century's France, the beurs are active participants in the life of the banlieues. As pointed out by Carrie Tarr, the term "beur cinema" was coined in a special issue of *Cinematographe* in July 1985, and describes a set of independently released films by and about *beurs*.²¹ Some of the representations of the *banlieue* life reflect the clashes between the marginalized people and the cultural norms of the middle and upper classes of the dominant French society. In the category of the large FCZ, I also consider the marginalized neighborhoods in Paris in the second half of the 20th century. I investigate Belleville as an example of a large-scale FCZ that is similar to the *banlieues*. It is one of the marginalized Parisian neighborhoods that have sheltered newcomers from diverse backgrounds.

Large FCZs are zones of contact in general, but, in practice, the contact and conflicts occur most often in the space of the state institutions. The state institutions are smaller-scale public institutional FCZs that function in the large FCZs. Exploring the space of the state institutions as contact zones offers a particular focus that can be overlooked in the large FCZs. Henri Lefebvre argues that the spaces capture and embody a set of relations in a particular time and carry specific function and structure. According to him, "Space is a social morphology: it is to lived experience what form itself is to the living organism, and just as intimately bound up with function and structure."²² In my dissertation, I look at particular spaces of some state institutions – court, prison, and school – because they are a "social morphology" of the society. I call these spaces "miniature FCZs" and use Lefebvre's theoretical research as a basis for their exploration. These relatively small, closed spaces embody and represent the values of the host society. For this reason, in these spaces, the conflicts between strangers and hosts are more

²¹ Carrie Tarr, *Reframing Difference: Beur and Banlieue Filmmaking in France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 2.

²² *The Production of Space*, 94;

visible, as these spaces magnify the asymmetrical relations in the large-scale FCZs. In the film, *Trois couleurs: Blanc* (1994) by Polish film director Krzysztof Kieslowski, Karol is called to the French court for his divorce proceedings. In the film, *Illégal* (2010) by Belgian filmmaker Olivier Masset-Depasse, the protagonist lives initially in Molenbeek, Belgium, but she is sent to a detention center that functions as a prison. Court and prison are two of the society's institutions that impose the rules of FCZs.

While court and prison are institutions that one avoids, the school is open for all youths of the society. By definition, the school ensures the youngest generations' progress in the future and transfers the society's values and knowledge to the youths. As such, school is a unique space and marks all adolescents. In the film, *Léolo* (1992) by Quebecois filmmaker Jean-Claude Lauzon, I analyze the Quebecois school at the beginning of the Quiet Revolution. By exploring the bilingualism in the film, I demonstrate the repressive role of the Quebecois school. The flashback in Charef's film, *Le thé au harem d'Archimède*, which lacks speech, demonstrates the pressure of the school as an Apparatus. The flashback shows the fracture between the young urban poor and the school. In the film, *Entre les murs* by Cantet, the oppositions between the teachers as representatives of the status quo and the underprivileged students are obvious. The asymmetrical relations between teachers and students in the closed space of the public school push the plot forward. The three spaces of court, prison, and school I analyze function as FCZs. The clashes in these relatively small FCZs are informative representations of the conflicts in society.

As an essential space of the human existence, the home, has been analyzed from various perspectives. In this dissertation, I investigate the private space of the postcolonial home as a small-scale private FCZ. I define the postcolonial home as a closed private space where a family

or an individual lives after a postcolonial migratory journey and displacement. In the relatively small space of the home, some of the cultural conflicts of the society emerge and constantly reappear, causing troubles, misfortune and misery for some of home's inhabitants. I demonstrate that even the limited space of home can function as a miniature FCZ. In the film, *Inch' Allah Dimanche* (2001) by Yamina Benguigui, the action takes place in a newly established home of the family in Saint Quentin, France. In the relatively small closed space, the Maghrebi culture of origin and the outside French way of life collide. For the protagonist, Zouina, the home space is not safe, rather it is a space of restrictions and exclusion from the family activities. Similarly, the main character, Joseph, from the novel, *L'impasse* (1996) by Daniel Biyaoula, travels back from France to Congo and feels unwelcomed at home. Joseph brings in a new perspective on life that scandalizes his relatives. His postcolonial home preserves the traditional customs of the Congolese society, but it has also acquired new characteristics, an outcome of the cultural and economic transformations in the African society. Surprisingly for Joseph, his family has adopted new ideas and imposes requirements on his behavior. The family wants Joseph to look and behave as a Parisian although they have never been in France. Joseph's impasse consists of the impossibility to be loyal to both old traditions and new customs. Looking at the home space through the lens of a contact zone allows me to show that the interaction of large FCZs and the postcolonial home can produce a change in the family's perceptions of values. In the film, *Inch' Allah Dimanche* by Benguigui, the conflicts of the large FCZ enter the space of home and manifest themselves as personal conflicts. In *L'impasse*, the family space becomes a battleground of the social and cultural clashes of the large FCZ and, thus, home turns into an impasse space for Joseph. In another case, in the film, *35 rhums* by Denis, the family members

unite and isolate the space of home from the outside pressure of the FCZ. This becomes possible only because this home is sealed for outside influences and interventions.

The last type of FCZs is the one-person mobile FCZ. The novel, *L'impasse*, gives examples of both a postcolonial home as a miniature, private FCZ and a one-person mobile FCZ. Joseph is a stranger in both cultural spaces (Brazzaville, Congo and in Pourry, France) where he resides. Although he has lived in France for about 15 years, he still feels that he is a newcomer there, and he is a guest in his home in Brazzaville. My argument is that a person can create a small mobile space that I consider to be a miniature, individual contact zone. An individual FCZ is the space of interaction that the stranger creates while traveling through and communicating with the host culture. Joseph is a newcomer in his place of origin, and Brazzaville becomes a new host culture for him. New and old cultural stereotypes function in his childhood home, and his adult home becomes a space of conflict, instead of a space of safety. Another example of a one-person FCZ is the space that the Quebecois Gregory Francoeur from *Une histoire américaine* creates when he arrives in California. There, he relies on his native French language to write both his personal journal and his defense for the California court. By using the French language to expose his misadventures in California, the character produces a unique contact zone. In this protagonist's case, the French language is a tool for survival in the new space. At the same time, the character brings his cultural background that reveals itself as a set of cultural differences creating misunderstandings. Thus, in San Francisco, Gregory generates a small, mobile Francophone Contact Zone.

In summary, FCZs can be large-scale, shared spaces and they can be small, mobile trajectories through spaces that are unique, depending on the person who creates them. Their uniqueness originates from the individual cultural background of the newcomer who enters a

space where established cultural norms are in place. These small, mobile contact zones may seem insignificant compared to the vast spaces of the FCZs of the margins of the big Francophone cities and Quebec. In contrast to the large FCZs, these small FCZs do not depend on administrative borders or even on the “soft borders” that Gott mentions in his research.²³ However, I show that, regardless of the scale of the FCZs, the conflicts in them reflect common asymmetrical relations that arise between marginalized and the representatives of the local culture, or between the marginalized and the institutions that embody the norms of a given space. This method allows me to view the FCZs as a manifold of individual experiences, an approach that could be lost to the generalizations of grand scale FCZs.

1.3 CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

Structurally, the dissertation has four chapters and each of them is consecrated to the language and culture of the representatives of the marginalized Francophone communities in a particular space. Each chapter explores a representation of a space in three fictional works, novels, and films. In the first chapter, “Bilingualism and Translanguaging in Francophone Contact Zones,” I explore bilingualism and translanguaging, two outcomes of the (im)migration processes in FCZs. I study bilingualism in Polish film director, Krzysztof Kieslowski’s *Trois couleurs: Blanc* (1994). In the book, *Une histoire américaine* (1986) by Quebecois writer and filmmaker Jacques Godbout, I analyze the phenomenon of translanguaging. In the film, *Illégal* (2010) by Belgian filmmaker Olivier Masset-Depasse, the protagonist’s path serves as a counterpoint to the first

²³ Gott, “West/East Crossings: Positive Travel in Post-1989 French-Language Cinema,” 2.

two works. I focus on bilingualism and silence, a thus far unexplored aspect of the film. I use the theoretical work of the French philosopher, Louis Althusser, and his research on Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) and Repressive State Apparatuses (RSA). I illustrate that, while one might be tempted to situate language usage on the ideological side of Althusser's scheme in his work on ISA and RSA, language can serve also as a form of repressive violence against migrants and foreigners, at least in the context of certain official state institutions such as courts, prisons, and schools.²⁴ Contrary to the common believe that language proficiency would help the newcomers survive in their encounter with the RSA in a contact zone, the three works in the first chapter show that the official representatives of state power, the RSA, use both mastery and non-mastery of the dominant language against newcomers. Regardless of the linguistic capacity of the migrants, RSAs seek to push them outside of the state (that has become a contact zone) it oversees. The chapter demonstrates that the French language is a major factor in a contact zone when it interacts with other language(s), and that the interaction between languages creates contact zones.

In the second chapter entitled, "The School as a Repressive State Apparatus in Francophone Contact Zones," I explore the French school as a FCZ. At the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries, schools continue to be important sites where the process of education takes place. Today, schools instruct youths whose parents have been newcomers to the FCZs. Stacey Weber-Fève writes that the school is "an extension of the State and potentially the

²⁴ I analyze the space of the school in the second chapter using the theoretical work of Louis Althusser.

most powerful (and subversive) arena for perpetuating colonial discourses.”²⁵ Thus, schools are exemplary contact zones where the work of cultural integration is supposed to take place. The chapter begins with examples of the representation of schools in French cinema since the educational institution is one of the staples of society. I study the verbal communication between teachers, as representatives of the status quo, and students. At the school ground, the society’s contradictions are intensified. These contradictions are not generational oppositions. They are socially charged interactions, especially when the students come from a modest background and need to communicate with teachers who protect the society’s division. The chapter focuses on the film, *Léolo* (1992) by Quebecois filmmaker Jean-Claude Lauzon, the film, *Le thé au harem d’Archmède* (1985) by French-Maghrebi filmmaker Mehdi Charef, and the film, *Entre les murs* (2008) by Laurent Cantet. While Althusser considers the school to be an ISA because it does not use physically abusive methods on the students, this chapter shows that the schools within the FCZs, as represented in the films, work differently and, thus, can come closer to being RSAs. The cinematic representations of these schools reveal how the educational institutions shift from ISAs to RSAs when the authority of the bourgeois class is challenged by the students. Furthermore, I use Bourdieu’s view on school that it is not a space of equality and social reforms; instead, it is a space that reinstates the social inequality. The chapter demonstrates that the French language used by the students reflects the social tensions and conflicts in FCZ during the respective time periods.

In opposition to the closed spaces of the prison, court, and the school where the state representatives use standard French, in the third chapter titled, “Language and Space in

²⁵ Stacey Weber-Fève, *Re-Hybridizing Transnational Domesticity and Femininity: Women’s Contemporary Filmmaking and Lifewriting in France, Algeria, and Tunisia* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), 174.

Belleville,” I examine the role of French vernacular language in the open space of Belleville. Up to the end of the 20th century, Belleville was one of Paris’ vibrant quartiers where migrants from various geographic places live together. The linguistic richness of the quartier is an outcome of the postcolonial processes in the second half of the 20th century and the migration from the former French African colonies to contemporary France. The mixture of languages in Belleville captures and preserves the cultural richness of the neighborhood. I seek to answer the question of how the vernacular of Belleville shapes the respective FCZ. I look at the connection between space and vernacular language in *La vie devant soi* (1975) by the Litvak writer Romain Gary and at the double exile of the protagonists in *Le petit prince de Belleville* (1992) by Calyxthe Beyala. In Gary’s novel, I examine the connection between space and language through the eyes of the protagonist, Momo. Gary transcribes his unique vocabulary by modifying the spelling of the words. In *Le petit prince de Belleville*, the language of the two protagonists, Abdou Traoré and his son Loukoum, is a generational marker. The protagonists interlace their descriptions of the life in the neighborhood, using two different styles of expression. The language of the father corresponds to his double exile in France. Loukoum is raised in a home where the traditional African customs apply, but he goes to a French school where the host society’s standards of learning are imposed. Henceforth, the language of Loukoum relates to his societal in-between position.

In Allouache’s film, *Salut cousin!*, the cultural clashes between two cousins, Mok and Alilo, appear often as linguistic misunderstandings. Mok is a beur living in Belleville, while Alilo is a guest coming from Algiers. The language in this case is an expression of the space of origin. Mok speaks the vernacular of Belleville, but his rapping performance in front of the youths from the adjacent neighborhoods is on La Fontaine’s fables. Contrary to his expectations,

the youths do not like La Fontaine's fables and he is forced to leave the stage. The events during the performance illustrate the cultural rift between language and culture of the marginalized youths and those of the traditional French society. The incident evokes the rupture that existed since the 17th century between the aristocratic standard French and the speech of the commoners. According to Hewitt, the difference between the standard French and the 20th century urban vernacular "is almost large enough for colloquial French to be considered a separate, parallel language."²⁶ Mok's incident demonstrates that the use of standard French is a source of division in the urban margins of Paris.

In French literature and films, the vernacular language appears long before the 1980s. For example, the writers, Louis-Fernand Céline (1894-1961) and Raymond Queneau (1903-1976), have used the vernacular in their works to describe the misery of their protagonists. The vernacular language of the quartier in the three works I investigate has a different function. Belleville's everyday language has a double signification. On one hand, it is a mark of connection to the space of Belleville. The authors, Gary, Beyala, and Allouache all rely on the vernacular language of Belleville for creating the atmosphere of the neighborhood. Contrary to the closed spaces of the FCZs, court, prison, and school, where the use of standard French is required, the mixture of languages in Belleville unites its residents, creating a space of solidarity. On the other hand, the vernacular language of the neighborhood is a sign of rejection from the larger space of Paris. So, the usage of the vernacular language in Belleville is a marker of belonging to the neighborhood and a marker of exclusion outside of it. In this chapter, I extend Homi Bhabha's work to think about the neighborhood as an ambivalent third space. According to Bhabha, the third space is a hybrid space – product and outcome of postcoloniality. The

²⁶ Hewitt, *The Cambridge Companion to Modern French Culture*, 130.

mixture of languages in the neighborhood is also a sign of postcoloniality. Belonging to Belleville and speaking its language not only hinder integration into mainstream society, but they are sufficient conditions for expulsion from the neighborhood and Paris, and ultimately from France.

In the last chapter, “The Impasse of the Postcolonial Home in FCZ,” I explore the postcolonial home. I define the postcolonial home as a closed private space where a family or an individual lives after a postcolonial migratory journey and displacement. I demonstrate that in the postcolonial home the language can function as a tool for punishment. In *Inch’ Allah Dimanche* (2001) by Yamina Benguigui, I look at the influence of the outside spaces on the closed domestic space. I study the limited verbal communication in the newly organized home of the protagonist, Zouina. The path of Joseph from the book, *L’impasse* (1996) by Daniel Biyaoula, depicts his painful return to his hometown, Brazzaville, and to his childhood home. I explore the drastic grip of the home space on the protagonist. In the small closed space of the home, Joseph feels unwelcomed and misunderstood. His relatives punish him by subjecting him to a traditional ritual. Then, Joseph is forced to acknowledge the superiority of his older brother in front of the extended family. One of the family’s correction tools inside their home is the language.²⁷

Finally, the film, *35 rhums* (2008) by Claire Denis, represents a contrasting atmosphere in the postcolonial home of a small family, consisting of a father and a daughter. Denis’ film serves as a counter example of the previous two works. The home in *35 rhums* is an isolated space from the outside world. The film is rather a representation of the home space as a space of safety that

²⁷ Joseph relates his ordeal, “Je n’entends que des silences et des paroles écrasantes.” Daniel Biyaoula, *L’impasse: Roman* (Paris ; Dakar: Présence africaine, 2000), 140.

protects against the reminiscence of exile and the insecurity of the present. One of the reasons for the peace and security that the characters feel in their personal space is the composed verbal communication between them. At the beginning of the story, their verbal exchanges create the sense of calm and contribute to the feeling of unchangeable situation. With no exterior influences the postcolonial home in *35 rhums* is a small tension-free space.

This chapter contends that home is a controversial space. The representations of the homes in the fictional works I study show that homes are expected to be protective, but, instead, they are spaces of discomfort and even conflict. Moreover, contrary to the cultural cliché that home is a space of safety, the postcolonial home is an illusory space. The postcolonial home preserves the features of its original setting, but acquires new characteristics in the changing cultural and economic context of the postcolonial transformations. The postcolonial home reflects the contradictions of the FCZ. Like the state institutions I analyzed, it is a space where these conflicts are intensified. I demonstrate that, although the postcolonial home is a microspace, it is, by itself, a closed miniature contact zone.

The films and novels I examine in *Impasse in Multilingual Spaces* all explore the connection between language and spaces. They represent spaces that I view as FCZs of different scale. The large FCZs can be zones of potential contact, but for many of the residents, the contact with the host culture may be weak, sporadic, indirect, or altogether nonexistent (e.g., Souleymane's mother from Cantet's film, *Entre les murs*, lives in France, but rarely interacts with the host culture). So, by considering miniature public FCZs (court, prison, school), I can focus my analysis on spaces where actual interaction and conflict happens. In each case, I focus on the individual experiences of the protagonists. Moreover, I explore several small FCZs created by the personal journeys of some characters. The examples of individual contact zones

that are accumulations of cultural and linguistic experiences of individuals have no analogue in the research on contact zones. It is the individual experience, not the meta-cultural framework that brings a better understanding of what the contact and the conflict are in the FCZs. Thus, the large FCZs can be deconstructed or decomposed into miniature contact zones of individuals. One can even argue that the vast FCZs can be viewed as an accumulation of the experiences of all individuals in them. From this point of view, exploring the connection between language and space is a productive way to analyze and understand the largest FCZs and the smallest FCZs.

By investigating FCZs through the language of the protagonists, this dissertation opens a way for an understanding of the contemporary processes of migration, displacement and integration of newcomers. Examining the language of the protagonists who live in or move between spaces allows me to discover the flexibility and polyvalence of language use in the FCZs. My dissertation illustrates that the French language in the FCZs is a *means* for integration and a *condition* for survival after migration and displacement. In short, I argue that the French language in Francophone Contact Zones is a prism through which readers and viewers can see the connections between tradition and present, home and exile, departure and return, and adaptation versus exclusion and marginalization. By analyzing the language of the marginalized protagonists in various spaces, I see my dissertation as a rethinking of the relation between space and French language within French and Francophone Studies.

2.0 BILINGUALISM AND TRANSLANGUAGING IN FRANCOPHONE CONTACT

ZONES

“Les langues dessinent un cercle élastique d’inclusion et d’exclusion ; elles proposent une certaine ‘géométrie’ de l’espace culturel.”

Sherry Simon, *Le trafic des langues: traduction et culture dans la littérature québécoise*¹

In the first chapter, I will concentrate on the phenomena of bilingualism in Francophone Contact Zones. I define the term *bilingualism* as the ability of an individual in speaking two languages and / or the presence and use of two languages in a given space. In contact zones, bilingualism appears when the newcomers interact with official state institutions (e.g. police, prison, court). In order to analyze the connections between bilingualism and the state institutions, I will use the theoretical work of the French philosopher, Louis Althusser (1918-1990). In his essay, “Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d’État,” Althusser introduced the term *Repressive State Apparatuses* (RSAs). According to him, RSAs are forms of state power that function through violence. He writes: “Tous les Appareils d’État fonctionnent à la fois à la répression et à l’idéologie, avec cette différence que l’Appareil (répressif) d’État fonctionnent de façon massivement prévalente à la répression, alors que les Appareils Idéologiques d’État

¹ Sherry Simon, *Le trafic des langues: traduction et culture dans la littérature québécoise* (Montréal: Boréal, 1994), 27.

fonctionnende façon massivement prévalente à l'idéologie.”² While one might be tempted to situate language usage on the ideological side of Althusser’s scheme, I will show how language can serve as a form of repressive violence against migrants and foreigners, at least in the context of certain official state institutions such as courts and prisons. Language use is a central element in negotiating the power relations of the contact zone. Mary Louise Pratt, along with other postcolonial theorists such as Edward Saïd and Homi Bhabha, analyze the “highly asymmetrical relations” between the dominant culture in a given space and the cultures of diasporic newcomers who enter that space.³ In this chapter, I examine the politics of bilingualism in three fictional works. I explore language usage in the film *Trois couleurs: Blanc* (1994) by Polish director Krzysztof Kieslowski, the novel *Une histoire américaine* (1986)⁴ by Quebecois writer Jacques Godbout, and the film *Illégal* (2010) by Belgian director Olivier Masset-Depasse.

The protagonists, Karol from *Blanc* and Gregory from *Une histoire américaine*, are tangled in a linguistic and cultural gridlock. Karol from *Blanc* does not speak or understand French well, doesn’t fit into the dominant culture, and requires a translator during his divorce proceedings in the French court. *Blanc*’s main characters’ ultimate unfortunate fates are directly caused by the intolerance of poor language abilities in the contact zones and that the State Apparatuses align with, and are easily manipulated by, the citizens of the host culture. Thus, the State Apparatuses punish language incapacity and follow a policy of exclusion of the “impotent Other” from the contact zone. Gregory from *Une histoire américaine* perfectly speaks and understands the language of the host country, but he does not want to use it. He relies on writing

² Louis Althusser, “Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d’Etat,” in *Positions, 1964-1975* (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1976), 102.

³ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 7.

⁴ Jacques Godbout, *Une histoire américaine* (Paris: Points, 1995).

his journal in French for his criminal defense. In this case, the newcomer's reluctance of using the contact zone's language is treated by the RSA in the same way as the lack of language proficiency is treated. While interacting with RSAs (court, prison, and police), the protagonists from the two works fall into an impasse. In *Illégal*, the protagonist's path serves as a counterpoint to the first two works. Tania, the main character, tries to blend into the host society, passing as Belgian by speaking French and refusing to use her native Russian. However, despite her language mastery, she also falls into an impasse during her interaction with the state's prison system. Although she has some connections to a diasporic community of people with similar background (same language, culture, or similar place of origin), she needs to deal with the RSA alone. The interactions of the protagonists with the RSAs in Francophone Contact Zones today show how language mastery by immigrants and migrants plays into the "highly asymmetrical relations" that Pratt mentions in her initial definition of contact zones.

For the individuals in contact zones, the use of the dominant culture's language (French in FCZs) plays a crucial role for survival. This is especially important when the migrants encounter RSAs. The use of a foreign language pits the newcomer against the RSAs and diminishes his chances of survival. Bilingualism in FCZs operates as a marker of cultural conflict. Based on the above, one might assume that, if newcomers possessed high proficiency of the host country's language, this mastery would assure a fair treatment by the RSA and a positive outcome from the impasse these migrants face. However, I will argue that, contrary to the common believe that language proficiency would help the newcomers survive in their encounter with the RSA in a contact zone, the three works show that the official representatives of state power, the RSA, use both mastery and non-mastery of the dominant language against newcomers. Regardless of the linguistic capacity of the migrants, RSAs seek to push them

outside the state (that has become a contact zone) it oversees. To begin, I will illustrate my argument by analyzing bilingualism in the film *Blanc*.

2.1 LINGUISTIC IMPOTENCE IN *TROIS COULEURS: BLANC*

The film *Blanc* is a part of the trilogy *Bleu, Blanc, Rouge* by Polish director Kieslowski. The title of the trilogy refers to the colors of the French flag and to the slogan of the French revolution of 1789, “Liberté, égalité, fraternité.” Regardless of the political stance that the title suggests, the film *Blanc* does not have an explicit political message. Still, it connects the personal stories of the characters to a social framework. The plot takes place in France and Poland. The characters must interact with these two societies’ institutions. The film begins with the protagonist Karol Karol from Poland who is in a new cultural space in France. There, he is summoned to the French court. The film ends in Poland where the protagonist’s French ex-wife is trapped in prison. Since the characters change their initial location, moving to a different country, the new cultural spaces (France for the protagonist and Poland for his ex-wife) function as a contact zone for them.

Blanc is a continuation of Kieslowski’s exploration of the thin line between morality and immorality in his television series *Decalogue* (1989) in which he reflected on moral choices such as love, punishment, life, and relationships.⁵ All of these choices point to the complex and contradictory nature of human beings. Although the story in *Blanc* is presented in a chronological order, it contains unpredictable twists – humiliation and revenge, death and

⁵ In *Blanc*, two of the characters were played by Zbigniew Zamachowski and Jerzy Stuhr, who already worked together in *Decalogue X*. In both films these actors played the roles of brothers.

resurrection – and the film’s genre cannot be easily determined. It could be considered a dark comedy, but also a drama or even a thriller. The story is told against the background of changes in Poland in the 1990s that Krzysztof Kieslowski and co-screenwriter Krzysztof Piesiewicz witnessed. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the Eastern Bloc, and particularly Poland, began a transition toward market economies and democratic regimes. The film’s generic hybridity reflects the unstable period of perestroika in Poland and the Eastern Bloc. The old practice of imposing a plan by the government for economic development could no longer be utilized. At the same time, the rules of market economy were new and ill-suited for the post-communist society. However, the film does not focus on the economic and political transformations in Poland or the Soviet Bloc after 1989. Rather, it emphasizes the search for equality in the sentimental sphere, namely a couple’s love and strong desire for revenge that unfolds afterwards.

Blanc tells the story of a Polish hairdresser Karol Karol who is married to a French woman named Dominique Vidal. At the beginning of the film, it becomes clear that the marriage has not been consummated and Dominique seeks a divorce. During the formal court proceedings, Karol is present but cannot express himself in French. He uses his native Polish language to give his side of the story, requiring a translator. In opposition, Dominique flawlessly expresses her wish for divorce and later obtains it, leaving Karol on the street with his large empty suitcase. He spends the night at the couple’s hair salon in Paris, but the next day Dominique accuses him of seeking revenge. Karol flees and first lives in Paris metro tunnels playing popular Polish melodies on his comb. Upon Karol’s request, another Pole, Mikolai, takes Karol’s suitcase, with Karol inside, on a flight from Paris to Warsaw. At the Warsaw airport, criminals steal the suitcase and then discover Karol inside with no valuables or money. They beat him and leave

him at a dumpster. Karol's linguistic incapacity in France led not only to sexual impotency, but also to financial uselessness and, thus, he becomes literally and metaphorically a "disposable person."⁶ Karol reaches his brother's home and returns to working as a hairdresser. While trying to find ways to acquire money, through trading land parcels, he becomes rich. Still thinking constantly about Dominique, he studies French. After Karol calls her from Poland, only for her to hang up on him, Karol invents a revenge plan. First, he appoints his wife Dominique as the sole beneficiary of his will and then stages his death. Dominique is invited to the funeral and, afterwards, in her hotel room, Dominique discovers that Karol is alive. They make love and Karol disappears according to his initial plan. The police investigate Karol's death and accuse Dominique of foul play. For this reason, Dominique is put in prison, thus accomplishing Karol's revenge plot. Karol goes to the prison's yard looking at Dominique's cell. They communicate through a silent language. Dominique makes signs with her hands that Karol understands. The scene shows that no language or even voice is needed for their mutual understanding. At the end, Karol cries in the prison yard. The film's ending suggests that the wish for revenge is stronger than love itself. It also points to the humiliation in the contact zone being a powerful stimulus for revenge, and, in this case, Dominique functions as a symbol of the FCZ. She wants to dominate the relationship, imposing her interests ruthlessly on the newcomer Karol. Through bilingualism, the film shows how a newcomer's language proficiency affects his actions and status in a contact zone.

The asymmetrical relation (in the respective contact zones) of the characters in *Blanc* is cultural, but its most tangible aspect remains the sexual impotence of the protagonist. This sexual

⁶ William Brown, Dina Iordanova, and Leshu Torchin, *Moving People, Moving Images: Cinema and Trafficking in the New Europe* (St Andrews: St Andrews Film Studies, 2009).

impotence is paralleled and emphasized by his linguistic impotence. The film is framed by two scenes of “linguistic impotence” in which each protagonist interacts with a State Apparatus (French court and Polish detectives). The first scene is at the beginning of the film showing the divorce proceedings at the French court. The French court functions as a contact zone that is a miniature model of the bigger contact zone, France. There, Karol needs an interpreter to translate the French into Polish for him, and his Polish statements into French for the court. The second scene takes place near the end of the film, after Karol’s staged funeral and after Dominique’s discovery that Karol is alive. The scene reveals the conversation between Dominique and the Warsaw police in her hotel room, in the same languages as in the court scene, Polish and French, but this time, it is Dominique who needs an interpreter. Compared to the previous bilingual scene, there is a reversal in the roles of the characters. In the first scene, the French court rules against Karol. In the second scene, Karol frames Dominique, and the Warsaw police treat her as a criminal. Thus, Dominique is accused for the death of her ex-husband. The space of the hotel room (as was the Paris courtroom) operates as a miniature contact zone wherein Dominique is a newcomer and is not able to speak the language of the host country. From this perspective, these two scenes function in opposition to each other. The language use and proficiency of the newcomer is a marker that shows how an individual fits into the contact zone. This is particularly evident when the individual needs to interact with the RSAs of the society, in this case, its justice system, the police, and the prison. The scenes show that an individual who lacks language proficiency is interpellated as inferior during the RSA interaction.

The impact of the court scene is foreshadowed by the opening of the film when Karol is trying to find his way to the courtroom. His body language reflects his nervousness while approaching the building of the state institution. Karol asks a guard for directions, barely saying,

“J’ai un papier...de convocation.” His behavior differs from the rest of the crowd since he seems disoriented in the setting. In addition, at the opening credits, we see a suitcase traveling on an airport conveyor belt. At this point, there is no clear connection between the suitcase and the protagonist, but there is an alternation, in the form of cross cutting, between the appearance of the suitcase and Karol. We see the suitcase and we see Karol on the street entering the yard of the building, then we see the same suitcase still travelling on the conveyor belt. We see Karol in the building, and again the suitcase. Thus, we see the suitcase three times, always when Karol enters a new space. With the plot’s development, we understand that this is a flashback of when Karol travels within his suitcase as the only way for returning to Poland. The alternation between Karol’s approaching the courtroom and the suitcase suggests that Karol compares to luggage in the judicial system. He is a part of the system, but as the suitcase on the beltline, he follows a predetermined path and cannot change the course of events.⁷ Moreover, before entering the courtroom, Karol chases a flock of pigeons from the stairs of the building. While the pigeons fly away, one of them defecates on Karol’s shoulder, sending an ambivalent message. On one hand, Karol is humiliated and he quickly wipes off the bird droppings as he continues toward the building. On the other hand, according to the Polish folklore, a bird defecating on a person is considered good luck. This detail brings two opposite messages, that something good is about to happen and/or that something bad is about to happen. The seemingly unrelated path of the

⁷ The metaphor of the suitcase appears several times in the film. At first, Karol is unable to communicate effectively during the court proceedings and is treated as luggage in the court system. Later, at the airport, the suitcase is comically transported on the top of all the bags, giving the impression that it will fall at any second. This represents Karol’s unstable position in life. However, when he becomes rich, the suitcase does not appear again. Thus, the appearance and disappearance of the suitcase symbolize Karol’s changed social status.

suitcase, and the conflicting messages sent by the bird's excrement creates ambiguity that corresponds to Karol's literal and formal wanderings within the judicial system.

The court scene begins with a close-up of Karol when we hear the judge's voice posing the question, "Pouvez-vous nous dire les raisons concrètes pour lesquelles vous demandez le divorce?" The fact that the spectators only hear the judge's voice rather than seeing him suggests that he is not really involved in the proceedings. The magistrate's voice functions as an impersonal voice – representation of the State Apparatus. At first, Karol's spouse, Dominique, is also introduced by her voice only. We hear her rising intonation repeating the word "Concrète?" To the woman's question, the judge responds, "Oui, concrète." Thus, the word "concrète" is reiterated three times. This repetition suggests that there is only one reason for the divorce. Only then, the camera reveals a wide shot of the courtroom. The frame shows the two sides of the case, the spouses' opposing locations in the room and their contrasting points of view. The judge in the middle represents the institution and is supposed to solve the case. His central position implies impartiality. The camera alternates between close-ups of Karol and close-ups of Dominique following their dialogue, showing their conflict. The spouses respond to the judge's questions, but they talk and look to each other. We hear Dominique state: "Notre mariage n'a pas été consommé." Contrary to Karol, she does not show emotions and is very laconic in her statements. Karol explains (in Polish) that he became incapable of making love after the marriage. However, the judge makes a sign for Karol to stop his explanations. Karol thus raises the question of equality, "Où est l'égalité?" He feels that he does not receive fair treatment in the French court. At the time of posing this question, the courtroom door opens and the camera shows a woman (Julie from Kieslowski's *Bleu*, played by Juliette Binoche) who obviously made a mistake entering this room. The camera shows the judge's point of view in looking at the

newcomer and not at Karol. Only when the woman closes the door does the judge look back at Karol. This shift of the focus from Karol to the unknown newcomer shows the judge's low interest in the case. Karol's next question is in Polish: "Is the fact that I don't speak French any reason to refuse to hear my side?" suggesting that equality is impossible without speaking the language of the host country.

Dominique and Karol express themselves in their native languages and need the language of their spouse translated, but each show different attitudes. Compared to Dominique, Karol speaks more in Polish than Dominique does in French, but his words are not taken into account as Dominique's are. There is no language, psychological, or cultural barrier between Dominique's replies and the judge. The judge hears Dominique's answers immediately, while Karol's need to be translated for the court. The camera shows both the translator and Karol when he translates for Karol. When the translator translates for Dominique the camera also shows the translator and Karol. This underscores Karol's inability to use the language of the host country. It points to Karol's lack of knowledge of French while Dominique's lack of knowledge of Polish is not equally accentuated in this scene. The translation, although correct and impartial does not render Karol's feelings. Karol's arguments do not weigh as much as Dominique's short answers. Dominique's lack of emotion and the translator's lack of emotion well reflect the atmosphere at the court, while the sincerity of Karol's statements is lost in the translation. Moreover, there is a difference in the register of the antagonists. Karol's statements are colloquial while Dominique's statements are formal. Dominique's laconic utterances correspond to the judge's register and this influences the proceedings in her favor. Karol's testimony that feelings between him and his wife still exist and that he needs time to adjust to the new French setting are not taken into account.

He explains that things have changed after his marriage in France and we are introduced to a flashback of the marriage ceremony.

Kieslowski does not specify the time or place of the flashback scene. However, the flashback (in white) creates contrast between present and past and underscores the dramatic transformation in the relationship after the marriage. The flashback scene is from Karol's point of view. First, we hear a musical score and then the sound of Dominique's high heels. The couple move towards the church exit and we see pigeons flying and guests approaching the newly married. Then, there is an invisible shift, the flashback that has begun as Karol's memories now end as Dominique's memories. The judge's question brings her back from her reminiscences, and she says, "Je vous demande pardon?" This switch implies that both Karol and Dominique share the same happy memories. However, the judge aligns with Dominique, imposing a decision that serves Dominique only. Later, Dominique states that she will win all subsequent court proceedings. Her statement illustrates that the formal rules of the contact zone function in favor of the host society's citizens and against newcomers like Karol. After the divorce scene, Karol's impotence becomes not only physical, but financial. The scene puts an end to marriage and signals a beginning of Karol's plan for retribution.

When Dominique is in Poland, she lacks proficiency in Polish. She is not only in an inferior position while interrogated by the Polish Police, she is also interpellated as a criminal. The Polish police act against her, just as the judge acted against Karol at the French court. The scene in the court and the scene in the Warsaw hotel are connected and reversed. Dominique is directly accused of murdering her ex-husband. The first shot shows Dominique in a close up at the entrance of her hotel room. A voice asks, "Dominique Vidal?" and then announces, "Police." As in the courtroom scene, the voice represents the power of the State Apparatus. Dominique

remains surprised at the front door of the apartment while the police enter her personal space. A relatively large part of the frame is taken by a weapon in the hand of a policeman suggesting the gravity of the situation. Now, it is Dominique who needs to communicate through a translator. Dressed in formal, dark clothes, she uses her nationality as a barrier against the accusations of the Polish authorities stating, “Je suis citoyenne française.” However, her statement has no impact in the contact zone where she is a foreigner.⁸ The camera alternates between the persons who speak, but it mostly shows the Polish police detective in the center of the frame in close-up. This accentuates his accusations: “We have received word your husband did not die of natural causes.... Someone helped him.” As in the previous scene when Karol is lost in the court proceedings, in this scene, Dominique seems detached from the reality. At the time of the interrogation, she states, “Il n’est pas mort. Il est en vie,” leaving the detective in disbelief.⁹ A music score and the sound of a pigeon’s wings flying away imply that Dominique understands she has been framed. Symbolic in the film, the pigeons appear in the marriage ceremony flashback and in the yard of the courtroom when Karol chases them. On one hand, they symbolize happiness and the wedding between Karol and Dominique. On the other hand, they appear when misfortune happens. In this case, the sound of wings suggest that something flies away, a symbolic sign that Dominique will lose her liberty.

Right after this scene, the flashback from the beginning reappears. In the first scene, the flashback appears in Karol’s memories, and then in Dominique’s memories. In opposition, the second time, it begins in Dominique’s memories and then switches to Karol’s. The second time,

⁸ The detective tells her, “You have the right to remain silent until he [the French embassy’s representative] arrives.”

⁹ Detective: “Who?”

Dominique: “My husband.”

Detective: “Then whose burial did you attend yesterday at 11:30?”

the flashback is interrupted by a close up of Karol looking at the comb that he used as a musical instrument in Paris metro tunnels. The flashback reappears and, over a musical background, we hear Dominique's distant steps. She is walking out of the church and a flock of pigeons fly away, making beating sounds with their wings. Dominique turns back and she and Karol kiss. The shared memories show again that Karol and Dominique still have feelings for each other and that they perceive the past the same way. Bodily pleasure functions as a common language, but the lack of common culture has separated them. In the flashbacks, there is no dialogue between Dominique and Karol, while the conversations in both scenes underscore the gap between the characters. The second bilingual scene functions as closure of Karol's plan for vengeance.

In *Blanc*, there is also symbolism in the names of the characters. In an interview for *Telerama*, Kieslowski states, "J'essaie de trouver des noms à la fois faciles à retenir pour le spectateur et caractéristiques du personnage."¹⁰ The name Karol is diminutive of Karl, meaning "man." Since Karol cannot make love at the beginning of the film, his name is a caricature of the masculinity. *Dominique* means "of the Lord" and her family name, *Vidal*, means "vital." At the beginning of the plot, Dominique is related to the power of language and she wants to dominate the relationship. At the end of the film, her name underscores her helplessness; she has no voice or choice in the prison where she is trapped. The confrontation between the characters in *Blanc* illustrates the "asymmetrical relations" in the contact zone where local citizens dominate the newcomers and try to push them away from the contact zone. The State Apparatuses impose the "dictatorship of language" to the exclusion of newcomers.¹¹ In the film *Blanc*, the RSAs, court,

¹⁰ Krzysztof Kieslowski, "Je doute, je doute toujours," *Télérama hors-série*, January 9, 1993, 93.

¹¹ I am introducing the expression "dictatorship of language."

and prison defend the homogeneity of the contact zone and function as a barrier against the newcomers.

In the next section, I will turn a different language relationship between the Quebecois protagonist of the novel, *Une histoire américaine*, by Jacques Godbout and the dominant language in the contact zone of California.

2.2 BILINGUALISM AND TRANSLANGUAGING IN *UNE HISTOIRE AMÉRICAIN*

In opposition to Karol from *Blanc*, the Quebecois Gregory Francœur in *Une histoire américaine* (1986) is fluent in English, the dominant language of California, the contact zone where he resides. However, he relates his story in his native French and uses English only to show his discontent from the life in the new space. The novel cannot be understood without framing it in its historical, political, and literary context. As Godbout's whole oeuvre, *Une histoire américaine* reflects on the centuries of struggle between Anglophones and Francophones in Quebec. The novel is also a result of a concrete event, witnessed by Godbout and mentioned in the story: the unsuccessful referendum for Independence in Quebec in 1980. Godbout writes the novel after the referendum and the book is an outcome of the contradictions between Anglophone and Francophone cultures in Quebec. In addition, the book reflects the century-long literary interest of Quebecois writers in California. As Mary Jean Green explains:

The 1980s has also seen a geographical expansion of the Quebec fictional world. The characters of Jacques Poulin, Jacques Godbout, and Nicole Brossard move across a variety of North American spaces, engaged in multicultural dialogues and translations. [...] All these Quebec writers share an uneasy fascination with the

American West as a vision of a possible future life, and their Quebecois protagonists seem to gain a sense of their own identity in their contact with the cultural confusion of California.¹²

This statement is valid for Gregory Francœur, the protagonist of *Une histoire américaine*, who, after a short stay in California, would love to move back to Quebec. Like the rest of the protagonists from my corpus, he is “étranger” and is marginalized in the new space where he goes along willingly at the beginning. The narrator says that “En réalité Gregory pensa sérieusement en profiter pour s’exiler.”¹³ However, Gregory never fits there and, as Karol from *Blanc* wants to return to Poland, the Quebecois would also like to return to Quebec.

Although Godbout is mostly known as a writer, he is also a prolific filmmaker, and the theme of the *américanité* is a major topic in his oeuvre. *Une histoire américaine* is thus an outcome of his longtime interest in California. In 1983, he produced the documentary, *Comme en Californie* (1983), in which he reflected on California’s impact on American culture and life, and on the connections between California and Quebec. Contrary to *Une histoire américaine*, the film gives a positive perspective of the American way of life in California. In another documentary called *Allias Will James* (1988), Godbout described the life of Will James, a famous cowboy of the American West, who was born in Quebec and named Ernest Dufault. Godbout also recounts James’ writing success in America. In a different documentary, *Le sort de l’Amérique* (1996), Godbout explored the connections between the historical battles in Quebec and the impact they produced on the USA. These examples show that the American way of life

¹² Mary Jean Green, “The Quebec Novel Today: Multiple Perspectives,” *The French Review* 67, no. 6 (1994): 924.

¹³ Godbout, *Une histoire américaine*, 1995, 19.

– its past, present, and future – are of major interest for Godbout and that his works on *américanité* explore its different aspects.

The novel, *Une histoire américaine*, is divided into 13 chapters and reveals the twists and turns of Gregory Francoeur’s life, a Quebecois intellectual, in California at the end of the 20th century. The book itself could be considered as a textual contact zone and a text about contact zones. The French title of the story announces that the novel will provide an American story and already implies some contradictions between the two languages and cultures. The protagonist, Gregory Francoeur, states, “J’aurai mené la lutte des langues de l’Amérique au Pacifique!”¹⁴ At first glance, it seems that the novel criticizes the American way of life. However, the book is doing more than this; it also shows the stranger’s troubles in a contemporary contact zone. As with Karol from *Blanc*, Gregory is not related to any diasporic community although there are many groups of migrants.¹⁵ He becomes one of the many invisible newcomers in a huge multilingual space.

Gregory Francoeur is a professor and political activist in the period preceding the referendum for independence in Quebec in 1980. After the unsuccessful referendum, Gregory is offered an opportunity for a few months’ research in Berkeley, California. There, he plans to explore human happiness among people in their forties. While in California, Francoeur reflects on the past and makes a parallel between his personal life and the national struggles for independence in Quebec. His reflections function as cinematic flashbacks, he finds a parallel between his personal life and Quebec Independence. Both are failures because of his divorce and

¹⁴ Godbout, 14.

¹⁵ In his journal, he mentions the variety of people who are looking for a place to live. Ironically, he calls this place “lieu idéal,” “Tous les matins, il y avait deux douzaines d’étrangers, Taiwanais, Polonais, Japonais, Allemands, Pakistanais, Anglais et le reste, à faire la queue pour éplucher une ‘nouvelle’ liste de l’agence, à la recherche éperdue du lieu idéal.” Godbout, 29.

because no real political changes have taken place in his country after the referendum. In coming to California, he hopes to begin a new life. There, Gregory gets involved in a net of a political human trafficking. For this reason, he is arrested and put in prison. The novel concentrates on the protagonist's past described in his journal while in the American prison. The prosecution accuses him of rape and arson:

On lui imputait (la République, l'Etat, Robert Roenicke, procureur) deux chefs d'accusations uniques: le viol sauvage d'une certaine Cheryl Wilson [...] D'après un deuxième chef d'accusation, quelques jours plus tard [...] Gregory Francoeur avait incendié un pavillon du Centre de recherches en physique nucléaire.¹⁶

Thus, Gregory's initial plan for a pleasant life in California turns into a strategy of how to get out of California's prison system. Since the prison is one of society's Repressive State Apparatuses, the fight for proving his innocence could be analyzed as a fight with a State Apparatus. In addition, the prison as a space with determined borders can be analyzed as a smaller contact zone. There, Gregory realizes that his only tool of defense is the journal he writes in French in which he explains his actions leading up to his arrest:

Gregory obtint, en faveur insigne, un régime spécial: trois semaines de sursis (et de solitude) dans cette cellule étincelante, attenante à la bibliothèque de l'institution, pendant lesquelles il pourrait rédiger sa propre version des faits. [...] Il consignerait tout cela dans son journal! On lui accorda d'écrire en français [...] Cette discussion pour préparer le procès dans sa langue maternelle le mit en joie.

¹⁶ Godbout, 12.

“J’aurai mené la lutte des langues de l’Atlantique au Pacifique!” pensa-t-il avec amusement.¹⁷

This gesture of the prosecution points to the fact that the native language is believed to be the best weapon for defense. In addition, for the protagonist, the French language has a therapeutic function; he finds consolation writing in his native language. Gregory tries to find the most appropriate register for his defense and chooses an everyday register to expose his past.¹⁸ Thus, the style of his records differs from the register of the bureaucratic court documents (although we do not have access to them in the novel). The ending of his reflections, “Sa vie était en jeu? Hélas Vegas! La roulette tournait,” evokes the famous casino expression, “Les jeux sont faits,” used when the game has started and bets can no longer be changed, though the final outcome is still unknown.¹⁹ This suggests the unpredictability of Gregory’s future.

Being the only Quebecois among the rest of the American prisoners, Gregory is treated as a dangerous criminal due to his different origins, his previous political commitment in Quebec, and his involvement in the illegal immigration network. His native language is an additional feature that marks him as an unusual individual. By the end of the story, an opportunity for Gregory to get out of prison appears, but he would be acquitted only if he left the United States. He says that he would do this gladly: “Alors! fit Francoeur en souriant, qu’ils me déportent et

¹⁷ Godbout, 14.

¹⁸ “Il se demanda s’il ne devait pas adopter un ton plus solennel, un peu grandiloquent peut-être, qui siérait mieux à sa défense. Un langage d’avocat. [...] Aurait-il assez de talent pour persuader le procureur qu’il faisait fausse route? Puis il se dit qu’il n’avait jamais triché. [...] Il se contenterait d’inviter les lecteurs à partager sa démarche, sa réflexion, ses hésitations, ses souvenirs. Ce jury, ce n’était après tout qu’un groupe d’amateurs anonymes qui avaient tous [...] le visage de Roenicke.” Godbout, 16.

¹⁹ Godbout, 17.

tant pis pour le bonheur! Je n'ai pas besoin d'une enquête pour être heureux.”²⁰ Thus, the last pages suggest that Francœur will return to his native Quebec, just as Karol from *Blanc* returns to Poland. In both cases, the Repressive Apparatuses of the contact zones push away the two newcomers by imposing strict rules against them. At the end of the story, Francœur envisions a better future back in Quebec with Terounech from Ethiopia (one of the members of the political organization he supports), even with their child, who would be “le premier descendant de la dynastie des Planétaristes.”²¹ The term, “Planétaristes,” coined by Gregory, means that Gregory imagines a new world order without borders. While this is a utopian view, such an ending demonstrates the protagonist’s wish for a better world without visible and invisible restrictions, and without pressure from the RSAs of the contact zone.

Gregory’s journey is presented by two seamlessly interweaving narratives. One is by an omnipresent narrator, who tells the story in third person. The other is the voice of Gregory from his journal, which is written in past tense and in chronological order. A large portion describes Gregory’s isolation in California where he lives alone in San Francisco and creates a miniature Francophone Contact Zone with his way of thinking, acting, and writing in French. He has no friends and is not able to find witnesses for his defense:

Ce n’était pas une mince affaire de préparer seul sa défense et de tenir ce journal!
Normalement Gregory aurait dû pouvoir appeler à l’aide, et voir se précipiter dix témoins crédibles prêts à jurer leurs grands dieux qu’il y avait erreur judiciaire !

²⁰ Godbout, 177.

²¹ Godbout, 179.

Mais, quand Roenicke avait réclamé des noms d'amis proches, il avait été incapable d'en trouver un seul.²²

In his rental house, Gregory feels so abandoned, he plays various roles of people he invented.²³ He would like to have a conversation with strangers, for example, such as a random street singer he meets. Further on, he tries to imagine the meeting with the political activist Mary Ann Wong, and later dreams about getting closer to her. While in Professor Hunger's apartment, Gregory directly states that he is looking for a friend. Gregory goes to California after a separation from his wife, Suzanne. Although she is often in his thoughts, she never appears in the events of his actual stay in California. When Gregory calls her from California, he understands that their connections are severed forever:

Il en avait des larmes aux yeux, se sentait profondément humilié, bégayant en écoutant l'employée lui répéter que le numéro de Mme Francoeur était désormais *confidentiel*. "Mais je suis son mari !" avait-il beau affirmer, la téléphoniste ne démordait pas, se disant probablement, devant sa colère enfantine, que Suzanne avait eu raison de débrancher leurs relations. *Over and out*.²⁴

The use of the English expression at the end underscores the major change in his personal life.

The clash between the two cultures – the American of the host, and the Quebecois of the guest – is shown by the use of American English words and expressions in the French narrative. The novel is an example of *translanguaging*, one of the phenomena of the contemporary contact

²² Godbout, 41.

²³ "Dans la maison qui dégageait des odeurs de cadavre j'allais d'une pièce à l'autre comme une araignée. Je jouais des rôles, changeant le timbre de ma voix, déplaçant des meubles beaucoup trop lourds pour moi, me répondant de la salle de bains au salon. J'étais la Femme de ménage, le Plombier, l'Architecte, l'Ensemblier, le locataire déçu, l'Enfant perdu. A nous six nous avons bien travaillé. [...] Quel plaisir c'eût été de travailler ensemble !" Godbout, 37.

²⁴ Godbout, 55.

zones. I consider translanguaging the phenomenon of the same person switching from one language to another in order to better express an idea, an action, a notion, or, when he changes the language because he is in a different situation that requires this conversion. Compared to bilingualism, translanguaging requires a higher degree of mastery of the non-native language. As many Quebecois, Gregory is fluent in both French (his native language) and English.²⁵ Thus, the English language in Gregory's case is not an obstacle in itself, but living in the new space is a question of culture and code. As a newcomer, he is always marked by the lack of previous cultural experience in the contact zone, and thus he is always an "Other" in it.

In the following pages, I will analyze the role of the English language in the novel that leads to translanguaging. The group of American English expressions consists of a set of common phrases: clichés and a set of expressions coined after them. For example, before finding a place to stay, Gregory has a drink for the first time with a Californian:

A la fin du deuxième jour, Gregory Francoeur alla s'écraser dans une salle du centre-ville, le *Santa Fe Bar & Grill*, où on servait des ballons de chablis frais dans un décor de chemin de fer. Le premier Californien avec lequel il trinqua ("*Have a nice day!*"), un ivrogne qui vidait des gallons de Gallo ("*Have a nice drink!*"), lui présenta un ami qui avait solution à tout.²⁶

The greeting "*Have a nice day!*" from this passage is one of the most common American greetings. This greeting is in italics and is at the beginning of a group of expressions in English (all in italics as well). In the novel, we cannot hear the Quebecois accent, but we see the italics.

²⁵ From the story that Gregory tells to Terounech, it becomes clear that he is fluent in English, "Ce midi-là, un gang d'adolescents m'a attrapé et traîné dans une ruelle pour me faire un mauvais sort. J'ai eu très peur et je me suis mis à crier dans leur langue qu'ils se trompaient de victime. J'avais un accent impeccable. Ils m'ont relâché." Godbout, 158.

²⁶ Godbout, 29.

The italics underscore the conflict between the protagonist and his ambiance. This suggests an opposition to integration. The next expression, “*Have a nice drink!*”, is also in italics and in parentheses. The two expressions share the same structure and sound very similar. However, the change of the word “day” to “drink” suggests a change in the protagonist’s situation. Gregory’s intention for a serious activity transforms into a recreational activity. The change brings an ironic perspective of his stay in California.

From this point on, the wish, “*Have a nice day!*”, launches a chain of expressions all with the verb “have.” They keep the initial structure, “Have a nice...” of the greeting. The expressions match Gregory’s personal pursuit of happiness, as well as his academic research of happiness. However, the expressions parody Gregory’s expectations for a dream life in California. His personal and academic failures produce an ironic effect and underscore Gregory’s status as a misfit in the contact zone. For example, one expression with “have” appears when Gregory finds a place to stay. Maritain, the landlord, wishes him the common, “*Have a nice evening.*” As the previous expressions, it has a humorous effect since the good wishes contradict what happens to Gregory:

Maritain, avec sa bonne tête poupine, était convaincant. Puis, pour me rassurer sans doute, il ajouta que Berkeley restait une communauté ouverte et que je m’y sentirais chez moi. “*Have a nice evening*”, il me tendit les clefs.²⁷

Based on these everyday American greetings, the author coins other expressions with “have” that produce comical, sometimes sarcastic effects. When Gregory goes for first time to the university

²⁷ Godbout, 31.

with his cat Lucifer (an unusual act that singles him out of the professors' communities), the author uses the expression, "*Have a nice dog.*"²⁸

Gregory s'habilla ensuite pour aller à l'université. La plupart des professeurs, écolos vieillissants, se rendaient sur le campus à bicyclette, accompagnés d'un chien fidèle qui courait et jappait jusque dans les corridors sonores. Certains laissaient les bêtes garder leur bureau, d'autres les amenaient en classe.

Statistiquement, c'était dit Francoeur, Berkeley a la plus forte densité de chiens savants aux Etats-Unis. *Have a nice dog.*²⁹

This invented expression is a step further of the use of greetings with "have." It imitates the structure and rhythm of the traditional greetings. In addition, the expression fits the concrete moment when Gregory is at the university and functions as a caricature of the situation. Later, in his journal, Gregory invents more greetings that add sarcasm to the concrete situations. One such expression is, "*Have a nice war*": "Au loin, sur le terrain de football du campus, des officiers cadets de la marine scandaient au pas de gymnastique des chants de guerre. Quel Vietnam nous préparaient-ils? *Have a nice war.*"³⁰ This sarcastic remark evokes the U.S.'s unfortunate participation in the Vietnam War. When Gregory describes his first lecture that happens the day after he has assisted in the transport of the illegal activists, he invents another American greeting for the ending of the story:

²⁸ Godbout, 75.

²⁹ Godbout, 75.

³⁰ Godbout, 78.

Ce n'était pas un succès ! Il faudrait trouver autre chose pour jouer à guichets fermés. Je ne voulais pas d'un coup de marteau qui mît fin à ma carrière de conférencier. J'avais la langue sèche et la salive amère. *Have a nice sleep!*³¹

Gregory's state of mind contradicts the phrase's wishes. The sarcasm points to the character's awkward position in California.

These greeting-like expressions function as accent points and construct an invisible framework for the protagonist. Their imperative structure contrasts the whole story in indicative mood. The imperative, and the word choices above, underlines the difference between Gregory's expectations and reality. For example, at some point, Gregory buys a car and is hit on the head by an unstable person in People's Park. He then goes to the hospital that is too expensive, and thus he needs to leave. He explains that "N'eût été la qualité de la couture médicale, j'aurais attrapé une inondation du cerveau. *Have a nice flu!*"³² The sarcasm conceals the unpleasant situation of being in an American hospital where Gregory realizes the vast difference in medical costs between Quebec and California. His greeting-like phrases contain his judgment of a space where he is disposed and invisible. In using them, Gregory expresses his disagreement with the way of living in California.

Later, in his journal, he mentions the reaction of his students and is ironic à propos the political life in America and its slogans:

Je vis même les Asiatiques de la classe desserrer les lèvres quand je racontai la manipulation infantile que font les médias du spectacle politique, à partir d'anecdotes vécues et de quelques théories personnelles sur la démocratie

³¹ Godbout, 97.

³² Godbout, 107.

électorale. Les étudiants, visiblement, étaient moins intéressés à comprendre le pourquoi des choses qu'à en apprendre le fonctionnement. Politique, mode d'emploi. *Have a nice election!*³³

The ending of the paragraph with this expression emphasizes Gregory's disapproval of the parliamentary life in the United States. The expressions-greetings form a gradation that begins with the seemingly uncharged and common, "*Have a nice day!*", and ends with the created phrase-wish, "*Have a nice life!*" By the end of the story, Gregory talks to himself:

La politique a tué ton affectivité et te voilà incapable de fantaisies. Tu ne sais plus vivre, oser, rire. Tu vas rentrer sagement à Frisco-boulot-dodo. Un travail t'attend, une enquête sérieuse sur le bonheur, n'est-ce pas plus riche qu'une petite joie personnelle ? Des enfants seront en classe jeudi prochain, tu as le sens du devoir et de l'histoire, il ne faut pas les décevoir. L'ordre des choses ? Les choses en ordre ? *Have a nice life !*³⁴

For the protagonist, the wish carries a message that life in California is the opposite of "nice." The use of "Frisco-boulot-dodo," coined after the vernacular French expression, "metro-boulot-dodo," makes the statement funny, but also judgmental. The proper name, "Frisco," replaces the word, "metro," and brings the local color of California. To summarize, we see that the gradation of the expressions using "have" corresponds to the development of the protagonist's story. At the beginning, Gregory wishes to live in California; at the end, he is eager to leave it. The different font signals a conflict between the protagonist and the contact zone. The protagonist employs the

³³ Godbout, 144.

³⁴ Godbout, 170.

language of the contact zone, but his translanguaging condemns the contact zone's way of life and reveals his position of an outsider.

In parallel to the expressions with “have,” additional set of expressions in English conjure the specific atmosphere of California in Gregory's journal. For example, by the slogan “Peace `n love,” the narrator evokes the American reality from the 60s:

N'ayant aucune provision pour un animal à deux pattes, il quitta le Château des chats et descendit paresseusement la pente naturelle des trottoirs, se retrouvant rapidement sur la plus célèbre des artères marchandes, l'avenue Telegraph, qui elle-même débouche sur l'université et semble pour toujours figée dans un décor hippie des années soixante. *Peace `n love.*³⁵

This popular slogan has become a signature statement of an entire period. By using this motto, the author goes back to the time of the hippies without the need of description. Other slogans function, in similar ways, underlining specific traits of the American way of life. For example, when the narrator describes the activities of Allan Hunger, he points to the *Free speech* characteristic of the American society, “Sur le campus, il travailla dans les salles de rédaction des journaux d'étudiants. *Free speech*. Puis, ce fut le Vietnam, les manifestations bruyantes, les groupuscules.”³⁶ Mentioning this particular characteristic signals that there is an exaggeration in the “free speech” affirmations. Later, upon the arrival of Terounech, Gregory uses the greeting-cliché, “*Welcome to California!*”, “Puis il lanca un “*Welcome to California!*” qui aurait fait rougir de joie tout président de la Chambre de commerce.”³⁷ The expression is very common, but in the text, it sends a contradictory message. Against the backdrop of the story, the greeting

³⁵ Godbout, 38.

³⁶ Godbout, 118.

³⁷ Godbout, 132.

highlights Gregory's impasse since he is not welcome, and worse, he is considered a criminal. The expression, "*Welcome to California!*", is in combination with the similar expression, "*Greetings from California.*"³⁸ The "*Greetings from California*" phrase contrasts with the death of Professor Hunger:

Francœur ne pouvait concevoir de s'arrêter à Los Angeles sans faire, comme en pèlerinage, une visite dans cette petite rue tranquille où des maisonnettes basses et roses en *stucco* arborait chacune un palmier nain en fleur. *Greetings from California* [...] Il voulait examiner le décor qui avait servi de cercueil au professeur.³⁹

The narrative describes a vibrant picture as if from a postcard that is in opposition to the death of the professor. Thus, the constant translanguaging underscores the threatening invisible side of California. Translanguaging also points to the two psychological spheres in which Gregory lives. One is his expectations, and the other is the reality he tries to understand since arriving in California. This decoding of reality unfolds over the entire story.

Furthermore, sometimes Gregory produces a play on words. For example, when he imagines how the events could unfold, he creates the expression, "*Write Aid*," that is a homonym of one of the big commercial American chains, *Rite Aid*:

J'imagine déjà Suzanne, robe mauve, collier de perles au cou, debout devant la table de la bibliothèque où je rédige depuis deux semaines ce texte pour ma défense. *Write Aid*. Roenicke nous aura laissés en tête à tête. Elle feuillètera le

³⁸ Godbout, 163.

³⁹ Godbout, 163.

manuscrit du bout de ses doigts, puis elle me regardera dans les yeux comme autrefois.⁴⁰

Both homonyms, “*Rite Aid*” and “*Write Aid*,” are also homonyms of “Right Aid.” Gregory’s use of the words evokes the message that his writing process is the right tool for going out of the prison and of the situation, and that it is as useful for the everyday life as is the well-known drug store.

In addition to the gradation with the expressions with “have,” there is a gradation with other American English expressions in italics. This second gradation begins with, “*Do not pass go*,” and its culmination is the idiom, “*spaced out*,” in chapter 12. Then, Gregory is with Terounech and she poses the question, “C’est votre propre mort qui vous effraie?”⁴¹ Gregory retells his thoughts:

Ce n’était pas tant une question cruelle qu’une constatation logique. Irréfutable. Implacable. Que me resterait-il à vivre ? La carrière tranquille d’un zombie californien ? *Spaced out*?⁴²

The choice of words reminds one of the technological power of California that is emphasized in the book. However, the idiom that Gregory uses, “spaced out,” brings a comical effect and gives the impression that he does not belong in this space. The passage shows the drama of the individual who is “*spaced out*” in the contact zone of California just as a small particle would be lost in the universe. The idiom, “spaced out,” reminds one of the huge stellar space where Gregory is an invisible speck floating in space without making any difference. His trouble originates not only from the new space, but also from his loneliness. Surprisingly, California,

⁴⁰ Godbout, 140.

⁴¹ Godbout, 166.

⁴² Godbout, 166.

with the multitude of various people and communities, becomes a Sartrean “L’enfer, c’est les autres” for Gregory, since he has troubles with most encounters.⁴³

The path of the protagonist Gregory from the novel *Une histoire américaine* contributes to the image of the newcomer in a contact zone already discussed in the analysis of *Blanc*. If Karol from *Blanc* does not understand and does not speak the language of the contact zone, the picture of Gregory in *Une histoire américaine* describes a stranger who does understand the language of the contact zone, but refuses to use it for communication and even for writing his journal-defense. Gregory’s use of English through translanguaging expresses his detachment from the contact zone. In order to thoroughly analyze the phenomenon of bilingualism in the contact zone, I will examine in the next section a case of a newcomer who wants to become part of the host society and who willingly communicates in its language.

2.3 SILENT BILINGUALISM IN OLIVIER MASSET-DEPASSE’S *ILLÉGAL*

The two phenomena of bilingualism and translanguaging analyzed in the previous pages underscore “the asymmetrical relations” in the contact zones and show the discrimination of the newcomer by the State Apparatuses. While the protagonists in *Blanc* and *Une histoire américaine* use their native languages in the contact zone, they both depend on and are forced to deal with the language of the host society. Thus, the language of the contact zone exercises a “dictatorship of language” in this space. The film *Illégal* (2010) by Belgian director Olivier Masset–Depasse depicts a different relationship between the protagonist and the language of the

⁴³ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Huis Clos* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Pearson, 1962).

host culture. The main character, Tania, is Russian, but her role is played by Belgian actress Anne Coesens. She is a French teacher from Russia, who resides in Belgium. Her accent, vocabulary, and register when speaking French, contributes to her blending into Belgian society. Through this choice, the director creates a character who has an impeccable French and is culturally well-adjusted in the Francophone Contact Zone of Molenbeek. In opposition of Karol and Gregory, Tania accepts willingly the “dictatorship of language” in the Francophone Contact Zone and uses it as a shield against the RSA. If Karol from *Blanc* and Gregory from *Une histoire américaine* want to return to their native spaces, the protagonist Tania from *Illégal* wants to fit in and remain in Belgium.

The opening black frame of the film indicates the time of the story, October 2000, and suggests suspense and psychological intimidation. The storyline has a short prologue (about three minutes long) that condenses a relatively long period between 2000 and 2008, the time when Tania and her young son, Ivan (Milo Masset-Depasse), live in Belgium undetected by the authorities. The prologue shows Tania going back home, talking with her babysitter, and reading a letter from the Belgian authorities. The letter announces that Tania’s application for permanent residence has been denied and it requests her immediate expulsion, “Décision de refus de séjour avec ordre de quitter le territoire [Permanent residence denied, order for immediate expulsion].” The notice is the only document mentioning Tania’s real name, Mlle Tatiana Zimina. Tania is supposed to go back to Russia, but instead, she burns her fingertips in order to avoid identification if fingerprinted. While burning her fingerprints is an act of extreme self-inflicted violence, it is also a voluntary act that erases her identity. From this point on, Tania acts under a false identity. She is the only one who can tell her story and her silence maintains her identity as

secret. The title of the film appears after the prologue, suggesting that the thus far legal status of Mlle Tatiana Zimina might change to illegal.

The protagonist's impeccable use of the language of the host country is a central point in the film. The question of using French versus using Russian is raised in the opening scene when Tania tells her young son to respond in French.⁴⁴ The same point is made again (eight years later) when Tania and the already 13-years old Ivan (Alexandre Golnitcharov) commute by bus from school to home. It becomes clear that this day is Ivan's birthday. He tells his mother in Russian that he would like her to forget about her psychosis of persistently speaking French, at least on this particular day.⁴⁵ Ivan calls his mother's aspiration "psychosis," revealing her constant longing to become a part of the host society. Their family story is not told, but mother and son seem to communicate perfectly in their native language.⁴⁶ Speaking a foreign language in the Francophone Contact Zone turns out to be an obvious mark of an otherness, and soon, Tania's "psychosis" is justified. At first, at the bus stop, the presence of two men in plain clothes seem to be an insignificant part of the frame. However, the two foreign language speakers are immediately interpellated as foreign subjects and they are stopped for an identity check by the

⁴⁴ Once home, Tania speaks Russian with her son's babysitter, but speaks French with her son. She tells him, "S'Il te plaît, répond en français!"

⁴⁵ - Мам, я тебя никогда с мужиком не видел.

- Vanуа en français!

- Мам, сделай мне подарок на день рождения? Давай хоть сегодня без твоего психоза обойдемся, ладно?

- Видел. С отцом.

- Мам, мне было всего 4 года. Я тебе о мужчине говорю, о настоящем, а не о нашем отморожке.

- Хватит! Ты же знаешь, что это война виновата.

- Мам, я тебе мужика найду.

⁴⁶ From the dialogue, it becomes clear that the family had lived in Russia before moving to Belgium. Tania mentions that there was a war that negatively impacted Ivan's father. See note 45.

two men. Tania screams to Ivan to run away and is detained by the agents. She is sent to a detention center for illegal immigrants where she remains silent.⁴⁷ This choice hinders her identification and classification since the needed information is sealed away by her silence. In remaining silent, she protects Ivan from being identified as well. Tania's silence makes it impossible to associate her with a state or region. It prevents the authorities from potentially deporting her since her future destination depends on her background and identity.

The film constructs two different spaces that are marked by two languages. One is the "Center for Women and Families" where Tania is held. Naturally, the detention center is also a contact zone where many people meet and interact in various languages (for example, French, Spanish, and Russian). What happens there depends on the rules of the detention center, the RSA. The RSA interpellates everyone as an intruder and expulses the inmates according to their background. During the stay at the prison, the inmates turn from subjects into objects, following the regulations as if on a conveyor belt. They pass through the prison system as items, the same way as we see Karol's suitcase travelling on the conveyor belt at the beginning of the film *Blanc*. The closed space of the prison is visible, but Tania is silent about who she is. At the beginning of her stay, Tania is assigned a number 9648 by the authorities and is treated as a file. She is bilingual, but, there, she speaks French only, never breaking into Russian with the other Russian speakers. Tania's prison time (about 43 days of narrative time) takes up most of the film, representing approximately 76 minutes of the film's 90 minutes. There, Tania undergoes about five interrogations by different representatives of the RSA. She is constantly pressured by the RSA agents to state her "nom, prénom, date de naissance, pays d'origine." Ironically, the lawyer

⁴⁷ From this point on, I will use the words, "detention center" and "prison," as synonyms since the detention center is a prison for illegal immigrants.

who is supposed to defend her is also trying to get the very same information. He remarks, “Donc, vous gardez votre identité secrète. Je ne peux pas vous aider.” He is assigned to represent his client’s case, but he is appointed by the RSA and acts according to its rules. Practically, the lawyer does not help Tania, and she does not trust him. Revealing her identity would not only hurt her, but she thinks the truth would automatically disqualify her request for residency in Belgium. As a whole, the lawyer’s function in the detention center is a false one.

The other space is the outside world. In contrast, this second space is audible but invisible. It is marked by Tania’s constant telephone calls from the prison. She calls Ivan and her friend, Zina (Olga Zhdanova), giving them hope that the ordeal will be over soon.⁴⁸ These calls are also in one language only, her native Russian.⁴⁹ She speaks mostly with Ivan, but often with Zina, and once with Novak who runs a mafia operation that produces false papers. Thus, Tania communicates with two opposite forces in the outside world. On one side are Ivan and Zina, and on the other is Novak, whom Tania avoids. Henceforth, while in prison, the protagonist has two different identities, an “undeclared” one when speaking only French, and her true, but secret identity when speaking with the people who are outside of the closed prison space.

The perfect French Tania speaks conceals her nationality, but it does not help her in the fight with the RSA. The investigators and agents of the RSAs constantly threaten Tania that they will send her to the tribunal if she continues to hide who she is. Desperate, she adopts her friend’s Zina identity who is from Belarus, hoping that she will get political asylum since Belarus is a dictatorship state and, thus, she would qualify for asylum seeker status. The pressure

⁴⁸ Most of the phone calls are shown when Tania is making them. There are two phone conversations that take place in the background of other activities. In one instance she recalls a phone call while trying to fall sleep, and in another, she participates in a soccer game in the prison yard.

⁴⁹ Over the phone, Tania speaks Russian because she is unsupervised by the interrogators.

of the RSA on Tania is so intense that when Tania finally adopts her friend's name, she needs to vomit (as does Karol after the French court proceeding). However, breaking her silence in prison does not help Tania. Instead, it brings her additional troubles. It turns out that there is an existing record that Zina had already applied for political asylum in Poland, and the case is automatically classified as a "Dublin case." According to the European Court of Human Rights' rules, this means that the case must be reviewed in the first state where the migrant or refugee has sought asylum.⁵⁰ Since Zina has previously asked for asylum in Poland, according to the guidelines, Tania's case needs to be reviewed in Poland. Thus, the process requires her deportation to Poland. This development shows that the procedures function as a vicious circle, and any shared information only accelerates the expulsion process. Before having an identity in the eyes of the prison, Tania is marked as an unclassified number. When she chooses an identity by speaking, she is automatically classified and "reduced to a body" that needs to be expelled away from the contact zone's space.⁵¹ Her lawyer summarizes the situation: "Tout est contre vous." The rules of the RSA serve the contact zone and hinder the newcomers' acceptance into it.

Tania's prison friend, Aïssa, gives her advice on how to avoid extradition to Poland. The first time, she resists vehemently and is returned to the detention center. The authorities prepare a second deportation procedure, putting Tania on a plane to Poland against her will. Just before departure, Tania screams that she is not a criminal and that she is being forced to go to Poland against her will. Since her capture by Belgian authorities, this scene is the only time and place when Tania tells her true story. Still, she does it in a few sentences and without statements that

⁵⁰ "European Court of Human Rights - ECHR, CEDH, News, Information, Press Releases," European Convention on Human Rights, accessed July 8, 2017, <http://www.echr.coe.int/Pages/home.aspx?p=home>.

⁵¹ Mireille Rosello, "Olivier Masset-Depasse's *Illégal*: How to Narrate Silence and Horror," *SubStance* 43, no. 1 (2014): 20.

identify her: “Aidez-moi! On veut me forcer à partir. Je vous en supplie, mon fils m’attend, mon fils a besoin de moi, s’il vous plaît! Je ne suis pas un criminel, je vous en supplie!” The crew and the passengers stand up for her, Tania and her escort are ordered to leave the plane. In the small dark space of the police van, the agents beat Tania severely. Legally, her treatment contradicts Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights that states, “No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”⁵² For a few seconds, a black soundless screen shows that Tania has lost consciousness. Her story demonstrates that the rules that initiate expulsion are respected, but the ones that assure the migrants’ safety are not. Tania awakens in a hospital bed with bruises and in pain. Her lawyer visits her and tells her that, after the death of Aïssa and Tania’s recorded ordeal on the plane, Tania’s chances for a better outcome of her case increase. Once more, Tania stays silent, and when alone, she quietly sneaks out of the hospital. With difficulty, Tania reaches her son’s school area and sees him from a distance. The film ends when she calls him and they reunite happily.

As already mentioned, *Illégal* is a counter example of the trajectories of Karol from *Blanc* and Gregory from *Une histoire américaine*. For all three protagonists, the French language functions as a tool in their encounter with the Repressive State Apparatuses. Like Karol and Gregory, Tania is at an impasse, framed by the repressive system of the state toward the newcomers, but, unlike them, Tania is not in a linguistic impasse. In addition, whereas *Blanc* and *Une histoire américaine* have humorous elements, *Illégal* is a drama and, due to the constant psychological pressure and violence in the prison, the film can be considered a thriller. Sounds of metal doors and barriers in the prison complement the sound of the film’s opening, as well as the dramatic musical score by André Dziezuk and Marc Mergen. The violence in the prison is

⁵² “European Court of Human Rights - ECHR, CEDH, News, Information, Press Releases.”

omnipresent. Rectangular structures and closed spaces, various fences and nets, somber background music, dark blue lighting, narrow corridors, surveillance cameras following the inmates, threats of being sent to isolation cell, metal detectors, scratching and drawings on the walls of the cells all imply the prison's violence. The psychological tension of the closed space is emphasized by Tania's three attempts to escape the detention center. All her efforts end in failure, indicating the facility's close surveillance and control. According to French philosopher Michel Foucault, the ultimate function of the prison as an institution is to punish delinquents. The detention center, a contemporary prison, where Tania is held, has an additional function: it is a part of the politics of surveillance. It identifies individuals and regulates their movements, but it also helps expel intruders from contact zones, in this case from Belgium. Telling the story of one of the detention center's subjects gives an inside picture of how the prison system works in a contemporary Francophone Contact Zone.

From a broader theoretical perspective, the detention center in Belgium can be perceived as a natural consequence of earlier prisons and camps. Writing about the question of refugees, Giorgio Agamben explains that "It would be well not to forget that the first camps in Europe were built as places to control refugees, and that the progression internment camps, concentration camps, extermination camps represents a perfectly real filiation."⁵³ From this perspective, the Belgian prison is a contemporary continuation of the politics of exclusion of the RSAs. The director Olivier Masset-Depasse depicts the prison using a documentary-like approach and highlights language as an instrument of repression. The Hermalle-sous-Huy detention center located in Engis, a Walloon municipality, provides the setting for the

⁵³ Giorgio Agamben, "We Refugees," *Symposium: A Quarterly Journal in Modern Literatures* 49, no. 2 (June 1, 1995): 117.

protagonist's prison time. The story is shot entirely in existing locations in Wallonia, the French-speaking area of Belgium. Some scenes are filmed in impoverished neighborhoods in Liège, others are shot at its Bierset airport. In an interview, Olivier Masset-Depasse states that the film retells stories that have happened before. He explains how "One day I found out that I was living about fifteen kilometers away from one of these holding centers [...] I carried out an investigation. We were often in the field, meeting illegal immigrants but also speaking with female guards and the police [...] It was important to allow myself this objectivity [...] I wanted the film to be realistic and well-researched: everything that is seen in the film has happened at least once in real life."⁵⁴ The documentary approach reflects the language use and demonstrates that the language proficiency of the subject does not change the RSA's politics of exclusion of the newcomers. Tania is interpellated as an Other. Her story illustrates that the more the subject tries to avoid the interpellation of an outsider, the harsher measures the RSA apply.

2.4 CONCLUSION

The analysis in this chapter shows that all three protagonists initially go willingly to a new space that functions as a contact zone. Although the three protagonists differ in their ability and desire of using the language of the dominant culture, they all need to interact with the RSA. From the outset, both Karol and Gregory are interpellated as cultural outsiders in the contact zones, France and California. Due to her ability to speak perfect French and to use it in Belgium, Tania is not interpellated as an outsider in the contact zone at first. However, the three protagonists are

⁵⁴ These are excerpts from an interview with director Oliver Masset-Depasse from the cover of the film's DVD.

treated similarly by the RSAs when interacting with them. All three are framed by the RSAs at an impasse and are forced to exit the FCZ. Under the circumstances, Karol desperately wants to go back to Poland, and Gregory is happy to be banned from entering the United States if he can go back to his native Quebec. From this perspective, Tania is in an opposite situation, since she wants to stay in Belgium. However, using the language of the dominant culture well does not put her in a privileged position; she is scheduled for deportation, regardless of her language proficiency. Taken together, these examples show that mastery and proficiency of the dominant language is not sufficient to successfully navigate the existing asymmetrical power relations in contact zones. Although the contact zones are not closed spaces, their RSAs impose limitations that serve the dominant culture only. This setup reveals that, in the contact zones, the process of social integration is hindered by the RSAs which try to expel the newcomers.

3.0 THE SCHOOL AS A REPRESSIVE STATE APPARATUS IN FRANCOPHONE CONTACT ZONES

“L'égalité des chances ne signifie plus seulement l'accès de tous à la scolarisation, mais la lutte contre l'échec scolaire, car les familles n'attendent plus seulement de l'école l'instruction de leurs enfants, mais aussi leur promotion sociale.”

Vincent Troger and Jean-Claude Ruano-Borbalan,
*Histoire du système éducatif*¹

In any society, the institution of the public school reflects this society's features and contradictions. The school is a space of conflict, a state institution where equality and inequality, cultural exclusion and inclusion are evident. This applies to the Parisian banlieue school and the Quebecois public schools at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries (depicted in the films discussed in this chapter). During the 20th and the onset of the 21st centuries, one of the consequences of postcolonial processes is the migration from the third world to the European industrialized West, the United States of America, and Canada.² Migration processes toward Paris and Quebec occurred in different periods, and for different reasons, but the flow of migrants turned both territories into Francophone Contact Zones (FCZs). As a result of the

¹ Vincent Troger and Jean-Claude Ruano-Borbalan, *Histoire du système éducatif*, 4e édition (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2015), 25.

² The majority of the African and Asian states became independent in the period 1945-1970.

French and the British colonization of Northern America in the 16th century, Francophone and Anglophone communities began coexisting in Quebec. The differences between these communities still persist. In Europe, the influx of migrants, who were not able to integrate immediately to the new setting, created cultural and social conflicts between them and the local population. The contradictions were also economic and political since the newcomers didn't have the same work opportunities as the locals. Being economically deprived and culturally different, the migrants and their families were marginalized in all spheres of life.

One of the purposes of state educational institutions – schools – is to facilitate the integration of foreigners, to enable them to function in the society, and to promote their social mobility. At the same time, public schools are often a reflection of the social processes in the societies they serve. The Parisian banlieue school as well as the Quebecois public school are located in suburban spaces where marginalized populations live. These schools emulate the social hierarchy of the contact zones in the neighborhoods and act as miniature contact zones themselves. Focusing on the schools in Quebec, mostly controlled by the Catholic Church, it is important to note that they preserve the conservatism of the Francophone community that originated in 16th century. In order to survive, French Quebecois families relied on child labor. Children participated in virtually all family work.³ As a result, the young Francophone population in Quebec in the 19th century was less educated than young people in the rest of the Canadian population. In the 1960s, the school in Montreal, Quebec, still used an antiquated methodology of teaching and the percentage of the students graduating from high school was

³ Chad Gaffield, "History of Education," The Canadian Encyclopedia, accessed June 4, 2016, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/history-of-education/>.

very low.⁴ The social function of the schools in the poor neighborhoods in Montreal is similar to that of schools in other FCZs. They “produce” pupils who will soon join the working poor in the culturally mixed Francophone communities of the big cities. The schools in the FCZs preserve the social division between the working and less educated poor and the intellectuals who belong to the dominant part of society (the bourgeois).

If in the first chapter the protagonists were all foreigners and, in some way, perpetrators who had to deal with the judicial institutions of the FCZ, in this chapter the young protagonists are part of an FCZ. Most of the main characters are born and raised in it.⁵ The students in the FCZs are related to, and are impacted by, social changes that occurred previously in Quebec, or are happening in France and Quebec since the end of the 20th to nowadays. Paris’ impoverished arrondissements and their schools were impacted by decolonization processes and the subsequent labor migration to France in the 1950s and 1960s. The fact that, in the 20th century, the Francophone community in Quebec continued to be marginalized shows the long-lasting impact of the historical clashes between Anglophones and Francophones in this Canadian province. In this chapter, I will analyze the linguistic interactions of some young protagonists -- all students -- with the public school system in marginalized suburban spaces in Paris and Montreal.

An analysis of the representation of the school in the three films: *Le thé au harem d’Archimède* (1985) by French Maghrebi director Mehdi Charef; *Léolo* (1995) by Quebecois director Jean-Claude Lauzon (1953-1997); and *Entre les murs* (2008) by French director Laurent Cantet, will show that, regardless of the geographical location and historical period, the schools

⁴ According to Marc-André Éthier, “Au début des années 1960, 14% des élèves inscrits en 1^{ère} année atteignaient la 11^e année.” Marc-André Éthier, “Andrée DUFOUR, Histoire de l’éducation au Québec,” *Recherches sociographiques* 40, no. 2 (1999): 388.

⁵ Souleymane from *Entre les murs* is the only young protagonist who was not born in a contact zone. Nevertheless, as a son of immigrants, he has been raised there.

in the Francophone Contact Zones operate as Repressive State Apparatuses (as the prison and the court did in the previous chapter).⁶ While the status of the prisons and courts as RSAs is relatively self-evident, the schools are less so. If the court and the prison are institutions that one avoids, the school is an institution open to all children who live in the state. Procuring an education is a right that opens lifelong opportunities. Thus, as an institution, the school is a desired destination versus the court and prison that often trigger punishment and work through repression. While Althusser considers the school to be an ISA because it does not use physically abusive methods on the students, this chapter will show that the schools within the FCZs, as represented in these films, work differently and, thus, come closer to being RSAs.⁷ It seems that the school carries the features of the ISA, but inside “entre les murs,” it functions as an RSA. Henceforth, the public school in the FCZ has hybrid characteristics.

Comparing schools in Quebec and Paris, two geographically distant and culturally different Francophone Contact Zones, will allow their shared characteristics to emerge. One is that the students use their native French language as a tool for survival and resistance against the injustice in the FCZs. Thus, the main character, Léolo (in the film, *Léolo*), writes in a journal, while the class from the film *Entre les murs* argues vehemently with their French teacher. In opposition, sometimes verbal communication is replaced by silence as in a flashback in the film *Le thé au harem d'Archimède* and during a school hearing when a student refuses to speak in his defense in *Entre les murs*. The interactions between the school system and marginalized youth reveal the “asymmetrical relations” at work in Francophone Contact Zones.

⁶ Althusser's term.

⁷ Althusser, “Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'Etat,” 102.

My argument in this chapter is twofold. On one hand, the students' descriptions of the educational system and their interactions with it offer a different perspective from that of the adults. These films provide the youths' viewpoint on their school from the inside, and their perspective contrasts with the one that the adults have. I will use the young protagonists' expressed thoughts (their behaviors, reactions, thoughts in the classroom, and writing) as a method to discover their particular point of view. This methodology will allow me to show that the students use language and silence as tools to resist the school power structure. On the other hand, the works discussed are based on the personal experiences, of the screenwriters and/or directors, in the FCZs they lived during their adolescence, and I will treat them as autoethnographic accounts depicting their schools' power hierarchies.

3.1 FICTIONAL FILMS AS AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC ACCOUNTS

The autobiographical stories are part of ethnographic description since they reflect a personal experience that is common. Whereas autobiography is often understood as the story of a self, autoethnography focuses on the relationships between selves and society and tells the stories of a community. Although the films treated here are not traditional examples of autoethnography, they can be usefully analyzed from this perspective because the authors, screenwriters, and directors use "their own experiences" in a given economic and cultural setting. These accounts arguably offer an autoethnographic and/or an ethnographic point of view of the communities they represent. From the protagonists' interactions, we can reconstruct the perspective of an entire community. The film, *Le thé au harem d'Archimède*, is an adaptation of the book, *Le thé*

au harem d'Archi Ahmed (1983) by Charef.⁸ The book is based on Charef's personal account of life in the Parisian banlieue. The film shares some features of beur cinema. As I explained in the dissertation's introduction, beur cinema is produced by filmmakers, as Charef, who are of second-generation Maghrebi descent. Jean-Claude Lauzon is the screenwriter and director of the film, *Léolo*. The film draws on his memories from his unhappy childhood in a poor neighborhood in Montreal. Indeed, one can find a similarity between his name, Lauzon, and Lozone, his protagonist's name. The film, *Entre les murs*, is based on an eponymous book by François Bégaudeau, published in 2006.⁹ In the novel, Bégaudeau describes his observations as a teacher of the students from his French class. If, in the book, Bégaudeau is a writer and an observer, in the film, he is a writer, an observer, and an actor who plays himself. This mixture of roles turns the personal account into an ethnographic account since his goal and the goal of the film are not simply to show the personal experience of one of the teachers, but to show the collective experience of the class and what school life inside the walls is. I consider all three screenwriters (Charef, Lauzon and Bégaudeau) ethnographers since they recreate their own experiences. In addition, I consider the protagonists ethnographers as well, since their points of view coincide with the point of view of their classmates and of the students from the same school districts in an FCZ.

In order to understand the importance of their decisions to write semi-fictionalized autoethnographies, I will adapt Norman Denzin's account of the politics of autoethnography in his book, *Interpretive Autoethnography*. Denzin argues that "autoethnographic work must always be interventionist, seeking to give notice to those who may otherwise not be allowed to tell their

⁸ Mehdi Charef, *Le thé au harem d'Archi Ahmed* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999).

⁹ François Bégaudeau, *Entre les murs* (Paris: Verticales, 2006).

story or who are denied a voice to speak. This [...] kind of writing [...] reproduces the struggle for voice of those on the wrong side of the power relationship.”¹⁰ In any contact zone, not only does the more powerful part of a population express its position, but it uses a system of Apparatuses (ISAs and RSAs) that impose its interests. Denzin’s point of view is relevant to my work since I am looking at the verbal interactions of the weaker party in the contact zone, the people whose voice is mostly unheard. Nicholas L. Holt’s definition of autoethnography points to the formal aspects of these texts. For him, it is

a genre of writing and research that connects the personal to the cultural, placing the self within a social context (Reed-Danahay, 1997). These texts are usually written in the first person and feature dialogue, emotion, and self-consciousness as relational and institutional stories affected by history, social structure, and culture (Ellis & Bochner, 2000).[...] Whatever the specific focus, authors use their own experiences in a culture reflexively to look more deeply at self-other interactions.¹¹

Holt considers both personal experience in a cultural and social frame and its reflective process to be key elements that define the autoethnography. Tami Spry calls autoethnography “a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self and others in social context.”¹² Such a perspective accentuates the interrelations between personal experience and social frame, stressing the constant connection between individual and society, and it shows that the individual is inevitably influenced and shaped by the social conditions. Carolyn Ellis thinks that the autoethnographer is

¹⁰ Norman K. Denzin, *Interpretive Autoethnography*, 2nd edition (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, Inc, 2013), 6.

¹¹ Nicholas L. Holt, “Representation, Legitimation, and Autoethnography: An Autoethnographic Writing Story,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 2, no. 1 (December 11, 2008): 19.

¹² Denzin, *Interpretive Autoethnography*, 19.

“the person at the intersection of the personal and the cultural, thinking and observing as an ethnographer and writing and describing as a storyteller.”¹³ Ellis considers an autoethnographic account to be a point of crossing between personal experience and the cultural frame where the individual moves and functions. According to her, the autoethnographer is also an ethnographer who tells stories of the space he lives in. As during the time of oral tradition, the autoethnographer preserves the stories of the neighborhood in his tales. All of these definitions connect the interrelations between personal, social, and cultural. Based on them, I will understand autoethnography in this chapter as a depiction of the personal, intertwined with the social and the cultural, in a given time and space.

An analysis of the films *Le thé* and *Léolo* will construct a picture of the school in two distant FCZs, the one in Montreal in the 1960s and one in Paris’ banlieue in the 1980s. In the film *Léolo*, the twelve-year old protagonist, Leolo, represents the Francophone community in Montreal. He lives in a very poor neighborhood where the already mentioned contradictions between Anglophone and Francophone communities are part of daily life. Léolo’s perspective, described in his journal (an autoethnographic account) and his and his brother’s interactions with the school system, function as ethnographic accounts. In *Le thé*, the main characters, Madjid and Pat, are trying to fit into society after their school years. In Charef’s film, I will look at the single school flashback scene which shows the protagonists’ point of view. The thirteen- or fourteen-year old protagonists from *Entre les murs* represent the marginalized youths from the 20th arrondissement, one of the poorest neighborhood in Paris, at the beginning of the 21st century. In *Entre les murs*, the students’ reactions construct a picture of their schools. There, I will look at the conversations between teacher and students, as well between students and students.

¹³ Denzin, 19.

According to Denzin, “The languages of autobiographical and biographical texts [...] cannot be taken as mere windows into the ‘real’ world or ‘real’ interacting subjects. These languages are only devices, tools, or *bricolages* for creating texts.”¹⁴ The language used by youths is not the official French language, but a sociodialect with a particular vocabulary and set of structures. Thus, the word *bricolage* corresponds to the protagonists’ manner of verbal expression. Through a specific use of the French language, the characters seek to challenge the power of the school to function as a RSA. Moreover, the protagonists challenge and revolt against the seemingly normal order at school that adults do not always call into question. The protagonists in the three films have not yet chosen a fixed identify with respect to the society and are in search of one. Their verbal interactions at school reconstruct the psychological climate in the public schools in FCZs.¹⁵

¹⁴ Denzin, 12.

¹⁵ French films about school have a long tradition of criticizing society. The school in French cinema reflects the problems of the community it serves and, frequently, is a space where these problems are sought to be solved. The representation of the schools in French films has common thematic and ideological elements, one being the school depicted as a space of tensions that often lead to expulsion of inconvenient students. If the judicial institutions from the first chapter deal with individuals, at school there are confrontations between groups whose clashes signal the major social divisions of the period. The following examples show that the school in French cinema has been explored from various perspectives. The film *Zéro de conduite: Jeunes diables au college* (1933) by Jean Vigo describes the contradictions in a French boarding school. The climax of the story is a school party when four boys organize a revolt, thus revealing the inadequacy of the school’s rules. Toward the end of the film the students metaphorically escape toward freedom from the roofs of the school buildings. The school in the film *Le corbeau* (1943) by Henri-Georges Clouzot is a starting point for solving the mystery of the anonymous letters signed by Le Corbeau. The school is also a space where the tensions of the community transpire. In Clouzot’s thriller, *Les Diaboliques* (1955) the plot develops mostly at school as well. If, in Clouzot’s films, the school is related to mystery and suspense in small communities, the school in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (1959) by Nouvelle vague director, François Truffaut, evolves into a space of tensions between the young protagonist and the educational system. *Les Quatre Cents Coups* depicts a middle school in Paris, and, in addition, describes the correctional institutions for the youths. It echoes Vigo’s film *Zéro de conduite* pointing to the treatment of the young offenders. In order to show the injustice at the correctional institutions for youths, the film

3.2 SYMBOLIC OPPOSITION BETWEEN FRENCH AND ENGLISH IN *LÉOLO*

The school plays a significant part in the young characters' lives in the neighborhood in *Léolo* (1992). The film continues Lauzon's exploration of the daily life in Quebec in his films, *Piwi* (1981) and *Un zoo la nuit* (1987). The story follows the path of a twelve-year-old boy named Léolo Lauzon (played by Maxime Collin). Léolo is torn between two worlds, the unhappy everyday life at home and the neighborhood, and an imaginary one, expressed in his journal, where he states, "Parce que moi je rêve, je ne suis pas." The sentence evokes Descartes' famous dictum "Je pense, donc, je suis."¹⁶ If, for Descartes, the ability to think determines life, for Léolo the ability to dream makes his life possible, saving him from the grim reality in the neighborhood. Dreaming is a necessity for Léolo. His signature phrase "Parce que moi je rêve, je ne suis pas" also echoes André Breton's thoughts in his *Manifestoes of Surrealism* (1924). Breton writes that "Everything tends to make us believe that there exists a certain point of the mind at which life and death, the real and the imagined, past and future, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low, cease to be perceived as contradictions."¹⁷ Dream and

creates a juxtaposing of open and closed spaces, an approach that later influenced a number of other films. One of these films is *Le thé au harem d'Archimède* by Charef. In *Le thé*, the adventures of the two protagonists, linked by the society's rejection, are a reminder of the exploits of Antoine and René in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* and their disengagement with the school. One of the final scenes on the beach in *Le thé*, in which the protagonist is in a catatonic state, evokes the final scene in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (when Antoine feels free at the seaside). Both films use the antithesis of freedom versus social restrictions and show the repressive approach of the seemingly nonviolent school institution. Lastly, in Micheal Haneke's *Caché* (2005), the final scene takes place in a high school where the sons of the antagonists meet. The scene suggests a solution of the mystery. Even though the dialogue is not audible, the meeting on the school grounds implies a strong connection between the social problems and the school as a public institution.

¹⁶ René Descartes, *Discours de la méthode* (Paris: Livre de poche, 1973), 54.

¹⁷ André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen Lane (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), 123.

language create a beautiful world for Léolo. As in a surrealist space, his illusory world connects the real and the imaginary. He is able to function in the spaces of neighborhood, home and school, until this connection no longer exists.¹⁸ By dreaming, Léolo reinvents himself as an Italian, conceived in an unusual way (by contaminated tomato). According to him, his Italian origin is reflected in his name, and he insists on the accent, Leoló instead of Léolo.¹⁹ At his home, as well as in the neighborhood, the use of French language is limited to verbal communication only. He is the only family member who shows interest in reading and writing, saying that “à la maison, je n’ai jamais vu personne lire où écrire.” Leolo preserves his sanity by reading the only book in the household, *L’avalée des avalés* by Québécois novelist Réjean Ducharme,²⁰ and by writing in a journal.²¹ In his journal, Léolo is a storyteller who relates an ethnographic account of the community using his unique point of view. The neighborhood shelters the Francophone population and operates as a social district with its own rules. The families there share the same problems of survival and the life paths of the youths are similar. Thus, we can understand Léolo’s journal as an ethnographic account of Montreal, a longtime Francophone Contact Zone.

The French language in Léolo’s neighborhood is a mark of belonging to a community. The dispute between Léolo, his brother Fernand (Alex Nadeau), and an English speaking young man (Lorne Brass) has a symbolic meaning. The argument seems to be a quarrel over a work opportunity, but it evokes the centuries-old contradictions between Francophones and

¹⁸ At the end of the film, when Leolo stops dreaming and is unable to cope with reality, he joins members of his family in a psychiatric institution.

¹⁹ Leolo states many times, “Leoló, je m’appelle Leoló Lozone.”

²⁰ Réjean Ducharme, *L’Avalée des avalés* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982).

²¹ At the same time, Léolo is in love with his neighbor Bianka, a girl from Italian descent. Also, he tries to kill his grandfather who, he thinks, is responsible for the hardship of the family.

Anglophones in the shared space of Quebec. The English-speaking young man behaves like a bully and attacks Fernand, telling the boys that this part of the neighborhood belongs to him. This behavior points to the division in Montreal. The fact that Fernand's tormentor wins corresponds to the historical fact that the Anglophone community is more powerful in Quebec. The meeting changes Fernand and, from this day on, he becomes obsessed with weight lifting.²² Fernand's choice of weight lifting has a symbolic meaning as well. He hopes that the strength gained would make him unbeatable. Léolo summarizes this hope in his journal, "Plus jamais Fernand n'aurait peur de personne. Et quand mon frère sera une montagne, moi aussi je n'aurais plus peur." This statement reveals that the fear has always been present in the life of the brothers. The encounter is a life-changing experience or an *epiphany*, to use Denzin's term.²³ The impact of the epiphany moment in the film is shown by the transformation of Fernand from a teenager to a man. In six years, he becomes big and strong -- "une montagne" -- as Leolo hoped. Fernand's physical transformation requires a change of actor as well.

Years later, Fernand and Léolo meet the same person in the same neighborhood and Léolo hopes that his brother will get revenge. Instead, regardless of his physical stature, Fernand is beaten and humiliated again. The simple appearance of the Anglophone and his sarcasm are enough to defeat the much stronger Fernand. This second confrontation with Fernand's English-speaking enemy functions as a new epiphany for both brothers. Léolo understands there are deep psychological obstacles that are difficult to be overcome. He comprehends that courage is a state

²² Léolo writes "Depuis ce jour, la peur avait donné à mon frère Fernand une raison d'être."

²³ Denzin defines epiphanies as "interactional moments and experiences which leave marks on people's lives. In them, personal character is manifested. They are often moments of crisis. They alter the fundamental meaning structures in a person's life. Their effect may be positive or negative. They are like [...] 'luminal phase of experience, the person is in a 'no-man's land betwixt and between ...the past and the ...future.'" Denzin, *Interpretive Autoethnography*, 52.

of mind and not a physical force, and he writes in his journal, “ce jour-là, j’ai compris que la peur vivait au plus profond de nous-mêmes et qu’une montagne de muscles ou un millier de soldats ne pouvait rien y changer.” Fernand’s second defeat symbolizes the impact of the past when French-speaking Canadians were overcome by the Anglophone community. It reflects the historical misfortune of the Francophone community and its lack of psychological strength in the present. During the second confrontation between Fernand and the Anglophone bully, Fernand is reduced to the helpless boy he was when they first met. The Anglophone bully illustrates the presence of the Anglophone community that imposes the rules in the FCZ. The two epiphany scenes are personal stories, but they have symbolic meaning and reveal the defeatist mood and the hierarchy in the neighborhood.

Fernand’s failure on the street is paralleled by Fernand’s failure at school. The film reflects the atmosphere in Quebec public school at the beginning of the reforms introduced by the Quiet Revolution movement. The education was one of the priorities of the Québec Liberal Party under Jean Lesage. When the liberals came to power in 1960, one of their first steps was to start modernization of the Quebecois schools. The education was no longer dependent on and related to the Catholic Church. Mathieu Pigeon writes that,

Education was no longer considered to be a luxury, but rather a right, and the government wanted everyone to have the same opportunities to benefit from it. With this end in mind, the provincial government placed greater emphasis on free education and the building of new schools. To achieve these objectives, it took over control of the educational system and began secularizing it.²⁴

The film recreates the secular character of the school and its rigid methods of instruction. Although, the school does not follow the denominational dogmas of the religion, it imposes its new code of rules and functions as a different instrument of repression. Fernand's story illustrates the path of students from underprivileged background who are forced to leave the school since they do not make the expected academic progress. Léolo says of his brother, "Plus jeune Fernand avait beaucoup de problèmes à l'école. En cinquième année, il avait été mis dans une classe d'attardés qui regroupait des schizophrènes, des psychopathes, deux jumeaux épileptiques, un travesti et un albinos. Même dans cette classe, il avait échoué les examens de fin d'année pendant trois ans." The list describing the classmates -- "schizophrènes," "psychopaths" and "épileptiques" -- brings a mood of desperation. It shows the unhealthy atmosphere at school, and the stigma regarding the ailing pupils. The fact that Fernand fails, even in this class, indicates that his intellectual abilities are very low, but also that the school abandons him in an impasse.

One of the scenes depicts Fernand and his mother at school, waiting for an appointment with an advisor. During the meeting, it becomes clear that Fernand has drawn a white rabbit on a white paper, and the actual drawing is invisible but for Fernand. The advisor states that this situation cannot continue and Fernand is expelled from school (as Souleymane is from *Entre les murs*). The scene shows that there is no effective language communication between the mother and the school representative. The mother's question, "Ben, mais, vous pouvez, peut-être, m'orienter. Me dire quoi faire avec un garçon de quatorze ans qui va pas à l'école?", is left unanswered. The French language usage in school disconnects those from different social groups

²⁴ "Education in Québec, before and after the Parent Reform," accessed May 30, 2017, http://collections.musee-mccord.qc.ca/scripts/explore.php?Lang=1&tableid=11&elementid=107__true&contentlong.

(as it is in *Entre les murs*). The school official leaves the room without offering advice or even saying goodbye. During the same meeting, Fernand is present, but does not speak. His silent attendance underscores his lack of agency. Fernand is transferred between the institutions as an *object*, not as a *subject*. This illustrates the “disposable” status of the marginalized pupils in the FCZs and how the school pushes them outside of its territory. Only three days later, Fernand begins working at a “Dominion Glass” company, thus joining the class of uneducated workers. The scene at school shows the disconnection between students and teachers, and the inability of the school system to foster the students’ learning. The scene is an example of inequality between the working poor and the bourgeois. As a part of the bourgeois, the school intellectuals reproduce the social disparity by the rules created by their class. The scene represents a class division that cannot be overcome since the school does not allow a change of students’ social status.

Lauzon points to the unproductive methods of education by depicting a foreign language class and by giving details about French language literacy. The film offers a scene of Léolo’s English class, and since it depicts the time before the Quiet Revolution in Quebec, the instructional methods are based on repetition. The episode opposes the two languages of the contact zone, French and English. The lesson is only in English while Leolo’s thoughts are in French. It begins with the camera panning across the roofs of the school. Through the window, it passes inside a boys’ only classroom. The pupils repeat body parts in English, “John has ...” The English language represents formal education; the French language, the informal communication in the neighborhood. The two languages do not interact in the same way that the urban poor and bourgeoisie do not interact. The scene suggests that the school’s pedagogy is ineffective and that there is a detachment of the learning process from life outside the school. There is no

communication exchanged between teacher and students either. The students would retain something from the lesson but their second language skills are not developed beyond the very repetitive sentence of “John has...” As in the previous scene, when Léolo describes his brother, we see the twelve-year old Léolo, but we hear the narration of old Léolo. The image of the boy and the voice of the old man put into perspective the path of the young generation in Quebec:

à l'école il me semblait que je suis le seul inquiet, le seul angoissait parce qu'il manquait des détails [...] A douze ans je savais que 'nose' voulait dire 'nez' en anglais. Et le Congo était une ancienne colonie belge de l'Afrique Equatoriale, mais personne ne parlait de cette queue qui gonflait entre mes jambes. Elle était absente sur le tableau des organes de John. Je connaissais ni le nom anglais, ni le mot français de cette chose. Et pendant longtemps j'ai cru que les anglais n'en avaient pas.

The formal education that the adolescents receive in school leads to confusion. Léolo's misunderstanding creates one of the comical moments in the story. His confusion is one of the educational outcomes before introducing the reforms following the Quiet Revolution in Quebec.

In addition to the passivity of the pupils at school, the film sheds light on the teacher's role through the dialogue between the young Léolo's teacher and old Léolo. Through the presence of the old Léolo at the school of the young Léolo, the film juxtaposes present and future and the questions of the old man underscore the problems in the educational system in Montreal. In this scene, the old Léolo, who is the narrator of the story, appears in person at school. We see him talking to the young Léolo's teacher, asking about Léolo's performance. Although the teacher is not interested in the visit, he gives his perspective on school life and mentions some specifics about it. The spectator understands that the teacher is a martial arts instructor trying to

survive the school year and does not teach language arts or literature. The teacher says that he is responsible for 40 students and has no time for a careful reading of their writings. The lack of language arts learning implies that Léolo's school hinders the unprivileged students from integrating into a field other than manual labor. These facts transform the anecdote into a comic account of life in the Quebecois school. The teacher states that all of the boys are expected to join the labor force, "En toute façon, tous ceux qui sont ici se dirigent vers l'école du meuble, ou de mécanique automobile. Les plus intellectuels vont finir par écrire des tickets." The near future that the teacher describes echoes Fernand's fate who has already joined the labor force. There is no effective verbal communication between teachers and students, between parents and teachers, or between parents and students. The students are silent figures in the school system and cannot deviate from the norms or express their viewpoints. The film suggests that the school does not promote the youths' development and that many may end up in psychiatric institutions, which is what happens to all of Léolo's siblings and Léolo. Instead of a natural transition between school and life in society, there is a transition from one public institution (the school) to another public institution (psychiatric hospital). The paths of Léolo, Fernand, and their siblings show that school reproduces social divisions. The school does not lead the students to a better future; instead, it leads them to a predetermined, hopeless situation.

In order to convey the atmosphere of desperation in the neighborhood of the Quebecois youths, the film makes repeated use of dark colors and enclosed spaces. It mainly shows Léolo's home and the school, but it also passes through a fish shop and the narrow streets of the neighborhood. The enclosed spaces of the neighborhood contrast with Léolo's dreams of Italy where bright colors and open spaces are used to describe his dream world. In short, the real

spaces are narrow, claustrophobic and somber; the imaginary ones are bright and open.²⁵ The dark visuals combine with geometric forms. During their conversation, the old Léolo and Léolo's teacher pass through rectangular doors while walking in the school's hallways. The open and closed spaces' framing helps to dramatize the "asymmetrical relations" at school. The use of rectangular forms and dark colors parallel the images of the school in *Entre les murs* and *Le thé*, as well the prison in *Illégal*. Visuals and sound create the atmosphere of 1960's Quebec: a depressing school building, a poor neighborhood, and a crowded family space.

In addition, the constant oppression in the neighborhood is implied by the use of various languages, the mixture of voices, and several musical pieces. We hear French, English, Italian, and Yiddish. The Italian language is the language of Léolo's imaginary world, while Yiddish hints at the presence of other small ethnic groups in the Quebecois neighborhood. Although the use of English is little, it is very important. The French-English bilingualism in the film corresponds to the hierarchal structure of the society. The use of English points to the power relations in Quebec and shows the weaker Francophone community in an "asymmetrical relation" in the FCZ. The subordination of the Francophones is implied by Fernand's defeat at the hands of his Anglophone tormentor, by the fact that the only taught lesson that we observe is an English lesson, and by the fact that Fernand finds work in a company with an English name, *Dominion Glass*. The predominant use of the French language reflects the presence of a large Francophone community. The youths in the Quebecois neighborhood in Montreal suffer a double repression. On one side is the Anglophone community that dictates the rules in the shared space. On the other side is class subordination. The Francophone youths are repressed by the

²⁵ This approach reminds Truffaut's artistic choices in *Les Quatre Cents Coups*.

Anglophone community culturally, but this suppression has class significance and indicates power relations.

Another important characteristic of the film is its blending of past and present through the mixture of voices. We hear the young Léolo's voice and the old Léolo's voice. This merging of voices brings a transition in time. We watch the story through the eyes of the young Léolo, but we hear it narrated by the old Léolo. The time difference thus validates the young protagonist's experience. Léolo's story demonstrates the path of the youths from the neighborhood. In addition, the visual style of the film is combined with the soundtrack composed of six diverse musical pieces.²⁶ Most of them are popular songs of the 1960s and serve to recreate the atmosphere of the time. The refrain, "You can't always get what you want," one of the pieces performed by *The Rolling Stones*, points to the lack of opportunities in the neighborhood. The mixture of comical scenes and the dramatic moments situate the film genre between drama and dark comedy. On one hand, we witness shocking images of violence; on the other, there are amusing episodes with unexpected twists. The depiction of the Quebecois school magnifies the impasse of the youths in Quebec in the 60s, and the theme of the repression at school and the story of students' expulsion are echoed in the French films *Le thé au harem d'Archimède* and *Entre les murs*.

²⁶ The soundtrack contains six short pieces: "Cold Cold Ground" and "Temptation" by Tom Waits; "You Can't Always Get What You Want" written by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, performed by "The Rolling Stones"; "The Lady of Shallott," lyrics by Alfred Lord Tennyson and music by Loreena McKennitt; and "L'orange" by Gilbert Becaud.

3.3 SUBJECTIVE FLASHBACK IN LE THÉ AU HAREM D'ARCHIMÈDE

One of the reasons for the failure of the public institution in Montreal is the lack of integration of troubled students. The Quebecois school does not work against the students' expulsion; instead, it facilitates it. In Charef's film, *Le thé au harem d'Archimède* (1985), the role of a Parisian suburb's school is similar.²⁷ However, if the film *Léolo* shows the school's inefficiency and the youths do not or cannot react against its practices, the film *Le thé* shows a student running away from school repression. The main story follows two unemployed eighteen-year olds, Madjid (Kader Boukhanef), a beur, and Pat (Remi Martin), an illiterate Frenchman, and it recounts their adventures with a gang of youths in Paris' banlieues. Pat and Madjid live by petty crimes, spending their days stealing, pimping, wandering the streets, and picking up girls. Madjid is trying to find a job, but he has no success. He needs French nationality, something his mother objects to. Alternately, he does not qualify for the position because of his medical record. In both of Charef's works, his book, *Le thé au harem d'Archi Ahmed*, published in 1983 and his film, *Le thé au harem d'Archimède*, released in 1985, the group of friends serve as an additional character.²⁸ The group is shown as one place in which racial and other differences between the young poor are not accentuated. It symbolizes the diversity of the weakest part of the hierarchy

²⁷ Charef's first film received various prestigious awards. First, in 1985, at the Cannes festival, it won two awards, *Prix de la jeunesse* and *Un certain regard*. The same year, it earned another award, the *Prix Jean Vigo*. In addition, in 1986, at the Césars ceremony, it won *Cesar de la meilleure première œuvre*, while the young actor, Kader Boukhanef, received an acting nomination for his role as Madjid. The film also won the following awards: *Hugo d'argent* in Chicago (1986), *Prix SOS Racisme* (1986), and *Prix du meilleur film* à Madrid.

²⁸ In Charef's book *Le thé au harem d'Archi Ahmed*, the gang is described in details. It includes youths from various backgrounds living in the *Cité des Fleurs* (an ironic name for the neighborhood that serves to underline the hardship in the suburbs).

in the contact zone, the marginalized youths. Ideally, these youths belong to the working poor, but they have no opportunity to work.

It is worth noting that there are some differences between novel and film due to the overall changing social and political situation in France. Charef's film, *Le thé au harem d'Archimède*, released in the mid-1980s, reveals a historical moment of beginning integration and solidarity between French youths from different backgrounds. Thus, the film gives a more optimistic picture of the life of the younger banlieue generation. Danielle Marx-Scouras points out that the youths from Cité des Fleurs face ethnic and cultural divisions imposed by the official institutions, but their friendship becomes a political tool against the injustice in the FCZ.²⁹ We see later the same solidarity between the marginalized in *Entre les murs* when the entire class stands up for Souleymane, a student who is expelled from school. In *Le thé*, the group of friends steals a car and travels to the beach of Deauville. Madjid's discovery that his love interest, Chantal (Pat's sister), is a prostitute sends him into a catatonic state during the friends' adventure. The open space of the seashore and the friends' joy contrasts the closed spaces of the neighborhood and the school, two spaces of social repression. Shortly after the arrival at the beach, the police arrest Madjid who purposely does not escape as his friends do. The film ends with Pat getting inside the police car that carries Madjid to again be with his friend.

Charef's film points to a huge cultural gap between the two generations of Arabic descent in France in the 1980s.³⁰ The youths converse in the slang of the banlieue while the exchanges

²⁹ Danielle Marx-Scouras, "Thé au harem d'Archimède: un peu de couleur dans la grisaille," *LittéRéalité* 12, no. 1 (2000): 63.

³⁰ The mise en scène in Madjid's apartment is realistic and reproduces the atmosphere that Charef remembers from his childhood. In the film, mother and son are shown (most often in medium shots) speaking to each other, but Madjid does not understand Arabic. Instead, he prefers the slang of the banlieues and communicates easily with his friends.

between Madjid and his mother are characterized by constant verbal and cultural miscommunication. The first-generation immigrant parental figure who does not speak the language of the host state while their children, second-generation immigrants, are native speakers is a common phenomenon.³¹ In opposition to their parents, the youths in *Le thé* use the language of the banlieue as a way of resistance and opposition to the standard French language of official institutions. Anna Maria Mangia calls the youths' language a "langage de frontière" because it implies their marginalization and carries their protest against the official language and the institutions it represents.³² As with the school in *Léolo*, the school in *Le thé* does not allow the students to change their low social status. Although Charef's film is not about the educational system, the plot demonstrates that the school has marked the lives of the youths by not preparing them to compete for a better social status after graduation. The stories of students' expulsion in *Léolo* and *Le thé*, and of Souleymane's troubles in the film, *Entre les murs*, show that the school system produces "disposable people" with a disposable status.³³

The title of the film mentioning a *harem* and the Greek name, *Archimède*, suggests an exotic story, but it is a humorous reference to the only flashback scene that takes place in the main characters' school.³⁴ Shot in black and white, the scene is a visual contrast to rest of the film. The choice of black and white evokes the distant past of silent films when actors did not speak. It also evokes the adventures of Antoine Doinel in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* in the limited space of his school in 1950s Paris and the rectangular forms of the closed spaces in *Léolo* and

³¹ We encounter a similar situation in Cantet's film *Entre les murs*. There, Souleymane's mother is not able to communicate in French and needs a translation during her meeting with school authorities.

³² Mangia, "La langue de banlieue de Mehdi Charef: Le thé au harem d'Archi Ahmed," 73.

³³ Brown, Iordanova, and Torchin, *Moving People, Moving Images*, 103.

³⁴ The title is misleading, and it is a linguistic trap, something that Carrie Tarr calls a "mischievous title."

Entre les murs. The only source of sound in the flashback is an old projector which is not seen. This creates the feeling that the scene has happened in the past. Balou, a classmate of Pat and Madjid, is called to the blackboard where it is written, “Tout corps plonge dans un liquide subit une poussée verticale, dirigée de bas en haut, égale au poids du fluide déplacé et appliqué au centre de gravité de ce fluide.” Balou is asked to perform a seemingly simple task, to name the postulate, “Le theoreme d’Archimède.” It becomes clear that he is not aware of the name of the theorem. His classmates try to help him, whispering its name, but he cannot decipher what they tell him and he writes what he hears. The outcome is writing that is phonetically correct, but spelling that is incorrect. Balou renders the word “thé” as “té” and the word “harem” appears as “arem” (a phenomenon called *malapropism*). Thus, the name of the postulate, “Le théorème d’Archimède” appears on the blackboard as “Le té au arem d’Archimède.” The mistake reveals not only that Balou does not know the famous theorem, but also that he is not able to write elementary French words. The class’ immediate reaction is humiliating laughter. The student is sent to the principal’s office. Then, he is sent back to the classroom and degraded again. In response, he runs away from the school and never returns. The fact that Balou never speaks and cannot write underscores his lack of linguistic abilities. His escape points to the gap between the school’s expectations and the ability of the students.

The one-minute flashback appears as a memory of both Pat and Madjid after the group of friends meets Balou in a car filled with money and a prostitute. When the car leaves, the camera shows Pat and Madjid looking sadly after it. Pat says, “Et lui, non plus, sait pas lire,” and then the flashback follows. After the flashback, we see a shot of Pat who silently leaves the frame. The juxtaposition of present and past provokes thoughts of the two protagonists’ dire situation.

The complete lack of sound in the flashback, framed by the nostalgic melody in the rest of the film, accentuates the abyss between the school and real life later.

The autoethnographic accounts in the three films (in this chapter) allow for the directors and/or screenwriters to expose the systematic reasons behind the school's failure to integrate students from marginalized parts of society. The school does not try to integrate the students in trouble; instead, it tries to expel them. Thus, the scene shows the shifting of the school from an ISA to a functioning RSA. In *Le thé*, Balou's silence and his leaving the school accentuates the revolt of the youths against the school. The camera follows him from above, crossing the rectangular school yard and jumping the fence at one of its right angles. Charef uses geometrical forms to point out that the youth from the banlieues try to function between straight institutional rules that act against them (as do Cantet and Lauzon). In *Le thé*, Charef uses rectangular forms, just as Lauzon does in *Léolo*, to describe school and neighborhood.³⁵ The reaction of humiliation expels the student from the school ground and, thus, the school functions as a RSA indirectly. Theoretically, the school does not expel the student, but, practically it fosters an atmosphere that expels him. Balou's revolt continues the theme of school expulsion in French films. It is clear that Balou becomes a pimp. This development shows that he is pushed into a different sphere of life, a shady business that produces a good income, but still, he cannot change his class belonging. The film is a critique of the institutions that drive away the FCZ's already-marginalized youths. Compared to the path of the youths in *Léolo*, who accept their predestined

³⁵ Tarr points out that visually the film *Le thé* shows "the exteriors and interiors of the blocks of flats and the other spaces frequented by the young people – streets, cafés, discos, trains and cars." Tarr, *Reframing Difference: Beur and Banlieue Filmmaking in France*, 53. From this perspective, *Le thé* echoes the "carceral" and open spaces in Truffaut's *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, as discussed in the article: Anne Gillain, "The Script of Delinquency: François Truffaut's *Les 400 Coups* (1959)," in *French Film: Texts and Contexts*, ed. Susan (ed. and introd.) Hayward and Ginette (ed. and introd.) Vincendeau (London: Routledge, 2000), 144.

fate, the youths in *Le thé* revolt against the social injustice. Balou leaves the school grounds, Pat and Madjid act out against class divisions.

Although the film *Le thé au harem d'Archimède* is generally regarded as a *beur* film, it touches on problems of the French society as a whole.³⁶ *Beur* films are generally realistic narratives; they represent the path of characters of French and Maghrebi ancestry who live in the suburbs of postcolonial France's big cities. *Beur* filmmakers tell stories of social, cultural and economic marginalization of the protagonists. *Le thé* is a typical *beur* film, but it appeals to a larger non-*beur* audience. The soundtrack and dialogue create an atmosphere of Frenchness. According to Subha Xavier, the film's stylistic choices emphasize its national character. A powerful element is the soundtrack, "dominated by a keyboard-synthesizer rendition of Algerian-born Karim Kacel's 1983 hit song *Banlieue*, a melancholy piece about the difficulties of immigrant life in the suburbs, set to French *chanson*-style music reminiscent of Brel and Brassens."³⁷ The fact that the soundtrack is composed of two melodies, an Algerian song and a French *chanson* evoking two emblematic French musicians, is a symbolic integration between *beur* youths and the French. The notion of Frenchness deeply connected to the marginalized youth and their misfortunes with the French educational system is one of the reasons for the success of *Le thé au harem d'Archimède* in the 1980s and of *Entre les murs* at the beginning of

³⁶ Carrie Tarr summarizes the changing situation in France in her book *Reframing Difference*: "the production and success of Charef's film can be linked to the historical moment of early years of Mitterand's presidency, at the time of growing visibility and media hyping of the *beur* generation, following the 'March Against Racism and for Equality' in March 1983. The slogans of the period 'J'y suis, j'y reste' (in response to the deportation of young offenders) and 'Touche pas à mon pot' (launched by SOS Racisme) touch on two fundamental issues for the period – the *beurs'* claims to right of residency in France and the need to combat the growth of racism and the Front National." Tarr, *Reframing Difference: Beur and Banlieue Filmmaking in France*, 50.

³⁷ Subha Xavier, "Mehdi Charef and the Politics of French Immigration," *The French Review* 84, no. 2 (2010): 336.

the 21st century. Cantet asks a similar set of questions in his film twenty years later, but its protagonists do not stay silent. Rather, they are outspoken against injustice.

3.4 THE SCHOOL AS A REPRESSIVE STATE APPARATUS IN *ENTRE LES MURS*

The film *Entre les murs* is about the tensions between the French educational system and its students. In opposition to the misleading title of *Le thé au harem d'Archimède*, the title *Entre les murs* announces that its story is *for* and *in* a closed space, that is, the action takes place only inside between the walls of the school building.³⁸ The outside world is implied, but never shown. The title evokes a prison-like story and, behind the walls, the teachers act as a united institutional force against the students. If in *Léolo*, the youths are victims of the educational system, and in *Le thé*, a student leaves the school in a silent revolt, in *Entre les murs*, the students of an entire class unite and openly challenge the school system. The youths from the three films use the French language to react against injustice and humiliation, but they used it in a different way. As time progresses, we see the protagonists' transformation from passive participants in the school system to active respondents to its injustice.

The film represents a year in the life of a *quatrième* class in a *collège de ZEP* in north-eastern Paris.³⁹ From November 2006 to March 2007, the work on the film consisted of workshops in *Françoise Dolto* High School in the 20th arrondissement in Paris. At the beginning

³⁸ The expression “entre les murs” has its origin in latin “intra-muros.” According to *Le Trésor de la langue française 2009* the expression *intra-muros* designates the space of the city that is between its walls and its center.

³⁹ James S. Williams, “Framing Exclusion: The Politics of Space in Laurent Cantet’s *Entre Les Murs*,” *French Studies: A Quarterly Review* 65, no. 1 (2011): 61–73.

of the project, forty students were chosen, and twenty-five of them form the class in the film. Mixing elements of fiction and documentary, *Entre les murs* shows an ethnically diverse class formed by black, Arab, white, and Asian students in its “everyday-ness.”⁴⁰ The characters are played by non-professional actors, all students from the school. Although the film is based on a fictional book, the action takes place in a local school where most of the student actors keep their real names and behave as they do in a regular school setting. The script of *Entre les murs* is an adaptation by Laurent Cantet and Robin Campillo of a novel by François Begaudeau of the same name.⁴¹ The book is a fictionalized ethnographic account of the life and attitudes at a Parisian banlieue school. The film is based on the book and it can be regarded as an ethnographic account as well. The script was only a basis for shooting, giving the students freedom to convey everyday situations through improvisation.

The situations in the classroom underscore the cultural and social differences between the teacher, a representative of the school system and the students. They illustrate French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s point of view that

⁴⁰ Kyung-Hwa Kay Yang, “Reading Urban Education through The Class: Between Paris and Montreal,” *Changing English: An International Journal of English Teaching* 16, no. 3 (September 2009): 333.

⁴¹ The title in English is *The Class*. Abdoulaye Gueye gives an interesting account of the film’s success in his article “The Color of Unworthiness”: “*The Class* did not garner the ‘best foreign movie award,’ for which it had been nominated at the Oscar (Academy Awards) ceremony, but, in the wake of its successful harvest at Cannes, the film drew a reported 1,039,096 moviegoers during its first three weeks of screening in France. After seven weeks of screening, over 1.5 million people were reported to have seen the movie.” Abdoulaye Gueye, “The Color of Unworthiness: Understanding Blacks in France and the French Visual Media through Laurent Cantet’s *The Class* (2008),” *Transition: An International Review* 102 (2009): 160. At the 2008 Cannes Film Festival, *Entre les murs* unanimously received the highest recognition, Palme d’or. This was a huge success for the French cinema since the last time when a French film received a Palme d’or was in 1987 for the film *Sous le soleil de Satan* by Mautice Pialat. In February 2009, at the Césars awards ceremony, *Entre les murs* received another award, *César Award for Best Writing* (le César du meilleur scénario d’adaptation).

Even in the classroom, the dominant definition of the legitimate way of appropriating culture and works of art favours those who have had early access to legitimate culture, in a cultured household, outside of scholastic disciplines, since even within the educational system it devalues scholarly knowledge and interpretation as ‘scholastic’ or even ‘pedantic’ in favour of direct experience and simple delight.⁴²

The teachers consider the students incapable of appreciating artistic representations outside of their *arrondissement* and unable to learn the school material. According to Bourdieu, the educational institution is not a space of equality and social reforms. Instead, it is a space for the reproduction of social classes and, thus, of social inequality.⁴³ As in *Leolo*, although language is a means of communication, in *Entre les murs*, it fails to connect the two conflicting sides of the school hierarchy. On the school grounds, the teachers speak standard French, while the students speak in an urban slang. The students think that they are taught useless rules in their French class. For example, Khoumba points out that only the bourgeois use the imperfect subjunctive. The teacher, Marin, needs to explain what “mettre la puce à l’oreille” means, and the students also need to explain some of their expressions. In one scene, one of the teachers bursts into anger against the students. His monologue culminates with imperatives that sound like a grim premonition: “Restez bien dans votre quartier pourri!” This phrase reminds us of the statement of Leolo’s teacher that the students would stay in their poor surroundings with no options for a

⁴² Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 2.

⁴³ Roy Nash, “Bourdieu on Education and Social and Cultural Reproduction,” *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 11, no. 4 (1990): 432.

change.⁴⁴ From a theoretical point of view, this situation corresponds to Althusser's ideas that the inequality between teachers and students is a norm. According to the teachers, the students are *causa perdata*. The film shows the confrontation between teacher(s) and students as unavoidable.⁴⁵ The French language of the students in *Entre les murs* is, as the language of the gang in *Le thé*, a "langage de frontière" and reflects the social tensions of the society that the adolescents will join soon.⁴⁶ In addition, the film is an indirect and subtle representation of the social contradictions of the 2005 riots in the French suburbs.⁴⁷

Although the school's methods look soft compared to the violent methods of the prison in *Illégal* and the strict rules of the court in *Blanc*, the school applies its rules strictly to generations of youth who are in search of identity. The school as an Apparatus has an impact on many more subjects than the RSAs. Through the school system, the trend of exclusion from the contact zones is applied on a greater scale. As in Lauzon's and Charef's films, the students in *Entre les murs* don't have various ways to stand up for their rights and dignity. While the students in *Léolo*, and *Le thé* are an insignificant part of the "asymmetrical relations" in their neighborhoods

⁴⁴ Jean-Luc Douin writes "Dans *Entre les murs*, la difficulté à être ensemble, à se comprendre et à refuser la résignation sans provoquer la violence et l'exclusion, est vécue des deux côtés de l'estrade." Jean-Luc Douin, "'Entre les murs' : la guerre des mots au collège," *Le Monde.fr*, 2008, http://www.lemonde.fr/cinema/article/2008/09/23/entre-les-murs-la-guerre-des-mots-au-college_1098573_3476.html.

⁴⁵ As the film's director, Laurent Cantet explains, "The film we wanted to make had to be a reflection of French society – multiple, many-faceted, complex. Sometimes also with frictions that the film does not try to cover up." Quoted in Gueye, "The Color of Unworthiness: Understanding Blacks in France and the French Visual Media through Laurent Cantet's *The Class* (2008)," 161.

⁴⁶ Mangia, "La langue de banlieue de Mehdi Charef: Le thé au harem d'Archi Ahmed," 73.

⁴⁷ According to the sociologist Hugues Lagrange, "The participants in the riots were mainly youth of African ancestry [...] Adolescents belonging to large families, living in areas where close to 50 per cent of the population is under 25 years-old dominated the 2005 riots." Hugues Lagrange, "Youth Unrest and Riots in France and the UK," *Criminal Justice Matters* 87, no. 1 (2012): 32.

and schools, and are rather *objects* than *subjects*, the students in *Entre les murs* are active part in these relations and become *subjects*.

Entre les murs also shows the teacher as part of the educational system. Despite Marin's best intentions to help Souleymane, a disruptive student, at the teachers' meetings, Marin cannot fight or change the power of the system. He tries to alleviate Soulymane's situation when the students' progress is discussed, but the class representatives, Louise and Esmeralda, misunderstand the discussion and use it against Marin. During the next class, without providing context, Louise and Esmeralda disclose that at the meeting Marin called Souleymane "scolairement limité." In response, Marin calls the two representatives "pétasses" and the girls complain to their chief education adviser (conseiller principal d'éducation). Angry, Marin goes in the school yard to talk to the two students. The scene is less than three minutes long, but it is powerful and it depicts the confrontation between the teacher representing the system and the students. Marin's intention to talk only to the class representatives, Louise and Esmeralda, evolves into an antagonistic dispute between him and the entire class. The dispute focuses on the consequences of Souleymane's actions and everybody stands up for Souleymane against Marin. Khoumba, who has been accidentally hit by Souleymane, defends him saying that Souleymane did it by accident. Even Carl, who has opposed Souleymane in the previous scenes, stands up for him. Circled by the whole class, Marin switches to the urban slang of the students, saying that Souleymane "a pété les plombs." In Souleymane's defense, Carl says that everybody can "péter les plombs." Moreover, Carl adds that "les profs qui excluent les étudiants sont des enculés." The students clap their hands in approval of the vulgarity. The rudeness of the language better expresses their disappointment than standard French. Khoumba's reaction, "On sait déjà que tout

est calculé.... C'est toujours pareil." suggests that actions against the students are a regular school practice. The scene illustrates another of Bourdieu's insights:

the clash of generations often takes the form of a showdown over the very foundations of the social order. More radical, less self-confident than the usual form of political contestation, and reminiscent of the mood of the first Romantic generation, this disenchanted temperament attacks the fundamental dogmas of the petit-bourgeois order-'career', 'status', 'promotion' and 'getting on.'⁴⁸

The teacher-student conflict is serious incident in the school yard. It is an illustration of the deep social division existing in society and reproduced by the school. The reaction of the whole class shows that regardless of the internal contradictions in the classroom, there is a class solidarity that connects the students against the school rules (that defend the status quo of the FCZ). If, there is no active revolt in *Léolo*, in *Le thé* there is a class solidarity demonstrated in the friendship between the teens. The same class solidarity is at a higher level in *Entre les murs*, it is obvious and strong.

The scene in the school yard depicts the antagonism between the two groups in the hierarchy-teachers and students. It is framed by two middle shots of Marin. At the beginning, Marin is filmed exiting the school building and going in the yard to meet the class representatives. At the end of the scene, we see him entering the building and leaving the untied group of students behind. The scene suggests that the class is stronger in the yard, while the teachers are stronger in the building. The school building symbolizes the hierarchy, while the yard is a buffer space between school and city life. The rules of the school function in the yard but there they are not imposed so strictly. In the yard, the students prevail. At the beginning of

⁴⁸ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 147.

the scene, the class representatives – Louise and Esmeralda – are shown in a close-up at the middle of the screen. The students think that if the teachers can complain about their students, then the students can complain about their teachers.⁴⁹ Marin objects, saying that “Non, ça marche pas dans les deux sens figure-toi, ben non,” symbolizing Althusser’s point that the school is an institution with hierarchical power relations, and, thus, the teacher is always in a stronger position.

As in the prison, in *Illégal* and in *Léolo*’s school, the colors are mostly dull. The conversation between students and teacher is shown by shot-reverse shot. The filmmakers use mostly close-ups, but they show Marin and the students differently. The students who speak are shown in the middle of the frame and facing the camera while Marin is at one side of the frame and is shown in profile. The different position of the faces (profile of the teacher and straight on the students) creates an impression of power for the students. The pressure on Marin increases with every line of dialogue coming from the students. When Koumba speaks, she is shown in the middle of the screen. After Koumba, Carl is filmed in the center of the screen.⁵⁰ His language is ruder than Souleymane’s previous language, but Marin, in the middle of the angry class and outside of the school building, is helpless. In addition, the extreme close-ups show only part of the faces of the students on the screen. This cinematic choice conveys a threatening physical proximity and tensions between Marin and his students. The scene is unique, because, in the yard, the hierarchy order is overturned; the teacher is the weaker party in the dispute.

⁴⁹ Esmeralda states, “Ben... quand un élève... un prof il s'plaint d'un élève il va voir le CPE, on a l'droit d'faire pareil, non ?”

⁵⁰ In the classroom, there was a rivalry between Carl, a student of Caribbean descent who joins the school in the middle of the year, and Souleymane, who is from Mali. The feud continues in the school yard during a football game. The two offend each other verbally (e.g. “maliak” and “caribbean shit”). However, the confrontation between Carl and Souleymane takes a new twist at the end of the film following the incident with Koumba.

Marin needs to go back into the school building where the hierarchical power relations will resume.

Many critics consider the scene of the Disciplinary Board crucial for the plot since the fate of the class troublemaker, Souleymane, is decided there.⁵¹ The decision of the Board to expel Souleymane from the school has a symbolic effect. Expelling him from the school ground means expulsion from the neighborhood, and the state. In short, it means an expulsion from the FCZ. This important scene is prepared by, and related to, two previous scenes. The first scene is when Souleymane's mother and his brother are at the parent-teacher conference with Marin. If in *Léolo*, there is a meeting between a school representative and family without effective communication, the school in *Entre les murs* tries to integrate the parents into the educational process of their children.⁵² The meeting happens at the end of November and seems to be a regular practice. In the closed space of the classroom, two small camps form, Souleymane's mother and brother, and his teacher. Souleymane's mother is not able to communicate in French. Her situation contrasts the situation of Wei's parents who are also newcomers in the FCZ but are able to converse with the teacher. Souleymane's brother translates for his mother and the teacher, and the French language becomes a connection between the two parties. We see that Marin praises Wei who is a nonnative speaker of French while, in opposition, he points out that many teachers complain of Souleymane's behavior.⁵³ From Souleymane's brother, we learn also that Souleymane stays mostly in his room, cut off from the rest of the world. This fact signals an additional and significant cultural gap, this time between Souleymane and his family. It reminds

⁵¹ Disciplinary Board is a translation of *Conseil de discipline*. It is a teacher-council charged with resolving school disciplinary matters. It includes parents' and student's representatives.

⁵² This is shown by the organized parent-teacher conferences and the parents' representatives at the Disciplinary Board meeting.

⁵³ Souleymane goes to school without belongings, and he is regularly late or absent.

us of Madjid's behavior at home when there is no productive communication between him and his mother. As James Williams writes, "the rebellious Malian boy, Souleymane, like all Cantet's male protagonists (Franck in *Ressources humaines* (1999), Vincent in *L'Emploi du temps* (2001)), finds it increasingly hard to discover his niche. Hypersensitive and seemingly indifferent to any attempts to improve his behavior, he appears lost between two cultures."⁵⁴ The parent-teacher conference scene indicates a problem, but at this point it does not suggest a conflict. The scene connects the representatives of the two sphere of life of the adolescent: the home space and the school space. In both spaces, Souleymane distances himself from the people around him. Although the goal of the parent-teacher conference is to establish a connection between the two alternative spaces where the students function, the meeting fails to reach its aim since Soulaymane's attitude does not change. As Bourdieu points out, "The relative weight of home background and of formal education (the effectiveness and duration of which are closely dependent on social origin) varies according to the extent to which the different cultural practices are recognized and taught by the educational system."⁵⁵ There are no ties between Soulaymane's home and his school and the initial misunderstandings between him and the teachers evolve into his ultimate exclusion from the school.

The scene of the Disciplinary Hearing of Soulaymane is preceded also by a scene of the teachers' meeting where they discuss Soulaymane's performance as part of an evaluation process of the class. The teachers decide that Soulaymane's attitude toward school is unacceptable and the meeting is an additional step leading toward the Disciplinary Hearing of Souleymane. These two scenes are important since, with the scene of the hearing, they form a chain. The first two

⁵⁴ James S. Williams, "Framing Exclusion: The Politics of Space in Laurent Cantet's *Entre Les Murs*," *French Studies: A Quarterly Review* 65, no. 1 (2011): 63.

⁵⁵ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 1.

scenes point to contradictions between Souleymane and the school representatives. In the last scene, the contradictions are obvious: no solution is found and he is expelled from school. The actual hearing demonstrates the power of the educational system. The meeting happens in the closed space of the conference room. Most of the objects therein -- bookcases, tables, and a poster on the wall -- reflect rectangular shapes reinforcing the strict rules of the institution. Cantet placed the camera inside the room, next to the door. This camera position allows the spectator to observe those entering the classroom from behind. The first to enter are the chief education adviser and the principal, followed by two parents' representatives, the students' representatives, and the teachers. The adult participants greet each other by shaking hands. Following the professional etiquette, Souleymane and his mother are the last to enter the room. However, they do not shake hands with the others, a subtle fact that signals a division.

The mother-son duo symbolizes two of the social layers of the French society: the immigrants from the old French colonies and their offspring, a whole new generation that swings between their parents' past and the present of their adopted country. Mother and son have different ways of expression. Soulaymane's mother is dressed in a traditional Malian costume showing her respect toward the teachers and the institution. At the same time, her traditional costume distinguishes her from the rest of the people in the room. In opposition, her son is dressed casually and this difference shows a generational gap. During the principal's reading of the report, the camera shows mother and son filmed in a medium shot facing the camera (Figure 7). At some point, Marin turns and looks toward Soulaymane (Figure 8). He is filmed in a close up and in profile at the left side of the frame versus his position at the right side of the frame when he was confronted by the students in the yard. This opposition between Marin's place in

the frames while in the yard and during the disciplinary hearing corresponds to the different power relations in the two spaces.

Although Marin previously tried to excuse Souleymane's inappropriate behavior, at this very important meeting he does not defend him. Marin behaves as an intellectual from a higher class in the social hierarchy. Thus, he becomes a part of the Repressive Apparatus. Moreover, although Marin is involved in the accident under discussion, he does not leave the room and is even allowed to vote. This is a flagrant violation of the fairness of the process, but the only participants who point to it are the parents' representatives. The students' representatives never speak at the hearing. The teachers disregard the remark, a fact that implies that the teachers choose and impose the procedures. In a reverse shot, the camera shows Souleymane in the middle of the frame (Figure 9). He refuses to talk in his defense. His silence evokes Tania's silence from *Illégal*, but the reasons for her silence differ from his. Tania's silence is a protection mechanism; it can shield her from the RSA (the prison) and eventually from deportation. Souleymane's silence expresses his position that everything is already decided beforehand; as he says before the hearing to Marin, "Vous m'avez cassé." His attitude corresponds to what Khoumba said in the yard, "On sait déjà que tout est calculé." The only person who defends Souleymane is his mother who does so in a language other than French. She explains that he is a good son but the teachers insist that Souleymane is not a good student.⁵⁶ The mother apologizes for her son, but the lack of communication undermines Souleymane's impasse. She and Souleymane are again in the middle of the frame facing the camera, while all teachers are on the left side of the frame, shown in profile and in a row. This frame composition suggests that the

⁵⁶ As described by one of Marin's colleagues, what happened when Khoumba was hurt was "le tutoiement, ensuite la bagarre avec une blessée, et enfin il s'enfuit en quittant le cours sans [...] permission."

teachers align with Marin and are united against the student (Figure 10). This time, the liaison between the two sides of the hierarchy -- uneducated poor and the teachers -- is Souleymane who translates reluctantly the conversation. Thus, Souleymane symbolizes the severed connection between the African immigrants in France and the French bourgeois class represented by the school and the teachers.

Souleymane's use of language is flexible. He does not speak in his defense at the hearing, but, in class, his brazen way of talking back to Marin triggers the reaction of the school officials. His silence at the hearing functions as critique and protest. The scene sheds a light on how the ISA functions behind closed doors. The Disciplinary Board becomes a *no exit* space for Souleymane and it gives him a contemporary zero for conduct (*zéro de conduite*). The vote that decides Souleymane's fate is in a plastic transparent urn that can be seen as standing in for the French educational system. It seems transparent, but the decision for the student's expulsion is not made clear, not showing the votes for and against the expulsion. His punishment is pronounced in a very bureaucratic style. The principal's statement that the school will transfer Souleymane to another school sounds useless.⁵⁷ This fact shows that the educational system acts against the best interest of its subjects and as an effective RSA. It shows also that the softer power of the ISA can be more effective than the obvious power of the RSA. The school's action is one of an obvious and definitive exclusion.

If we look at Souleymane's behavior, we notice that the ultimate reason for his expulsion is his disrespect for the teachers and the rules of the educational system. The involuntary incident of hitting his classmate is judged very harshly by the teachers. The teachers behave as

⁵⁷ We already know, from a conversation between Marin and Koumba that Souleymane will be sent back to Mali his native country.

representatives of the Repressive State Apparatus and they demand respect. The behavior of the teachers is justified by Althusser who supports the division between teachers and students.

According to the students, the teachers do not have to be respected simply because they possess more knowledge, or because they demand respect. The students' position corresponds to their search for equality at the beginning of the 21 century.

In opposition to *Léolo* and *Le thé*, *Entre les murs* does not continue the binary approach of open and closed spaces that, according to Anne Gillain Truffaut, uses in *Les Quatre Cents Coups*.⁵⁸ Instead of binary oppositions, the film *Entre les murs* uses only closed spaces. The school, by way of visual representation (shot in rectangular forms and closed spaces), looks like a prison that expels the undisciplined. The camera creates the impression of an impasse for the students. The school's function is to produce docile students and if they don't comply, the school has the power to exclude them. Filming in a perpetual closed space accentuates the feeling of being watched. In addition, the filmmakers use close-ups and medium long shots when showing the characters in the classroom. High-angle shots follow the students in the yard. After the disciplinary board's decision, the camera follows mother and son in a long shot as they cross the empty school yard. The long shots contribute to the feeling of being watched from a distance, the only sound coming from their steps. This combination of visuals and sound creates a grim perspective for the young protagonist. Moreover, in *Entre*, there is no soundtrack. The sounds are the voices of the characters and the noise of the school settings. The lack of music enhances the tense atmosphere between the walls. The sound of the school bell is a signature sound reminding

⁵⁸ Gillain, "The Script of Delinquency: François Truffaut's *Les 400 Coups* (1959)," 144. In the film *Léolo*, the young protagonist is unhappy in the closed spaces such as home, the school, and the neighborhood, yet he is happy in the imaginary open spaces of Italy. Balou, from *Le thé*, runs away from the closed space of the classroom. Crossing the school yard, he disappears from the school grounds forever.

us of the traditional order at school. According to Foucault, public institutions such as factories, military bases, hospitals, and schools resemble prisons. Foucault's ideas help suggest why the filmmakers of *Léolo*, *Le thé*, and *Entre les murs* might have chosen to depict the school as a prison. Cantet's film goes further than the other two in that we see a change in the students' position. The students in *Entre les murs* express their agency and voice through language.

3.5 CONCLUSION

The filmmakers Lauzon, Charef, and Cantet portrayed school life in three different time periods and in three Francophone Contact Zones: a Quebecois neighborhood of Montreal in the 1960s, a fictional suburb of Paris in the 1980s, and the 20th arrondissement of Paris at the beginning of the 21st century. This chapter demonstrated that the French language used by the students reflects the social tensions and conflicts in FCZ during their respective time periods. I have showed that Mangia's term "langage de frontière" can be used to characterize the language of all marginalized youths.⁵⁹ The students' "langage de frontière" reveals both their reaction to the school rules as well as their belonging to the FCZ. The use of language also evokes Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope. Although Bakhtin used the term for literature, it can also be used for films as the language of the young protagonists recreates a specific time and space. According to Bakhtin, the chronotope is "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed" through language.⁶⁰ Thus, in *Léolo*, we see the school in the 1960s, at the beginning of the changes brought by the Quiet Revolution in Quebec. *Le thé* depicts the

⁵⁹ Mangia, "La langue de banlieue de Mehdi Charef: Le thé au harem d'Archi Ahmed," 73.

⁶⁰ Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 84.

atmosphere in the 1980s, a time of rising immigration in France when the youngest generation is in a quest for identity. The students in *Entre les murs* are aware of themselves as underprivileged participants in the educational system who, in turn, fight for change. On the one hand, the chronotope that the films create correlates a specific time and space in a FCZ, and, on the other, it gives an autoethnographic account that describes the relations between community and school. Therefore, the examination of language of the young protagonists in these three films might be used as a general paradigm for understanding and analyzing social struggles and conflicts in FCZs.

The representation of the school in French cinema is not new. This chapter shows how cinematic representations of these schools reveal how educational institutions shift from ISAs to RSAs when they face the unprivileged youths' disobedience and discontent. As previously mentioned, the objectives of the school in the FCZs are to preserve the social divisions between the working and less educated migrant poor and the teachers and intellectuals who belong to the dominant part of society (the bourgeois). Moreover, as a part of the bourgeois, the school officials reproduce the social inequality by rules created by their class. The school does not allow a change of students' social status. This insight is described by Bourdieu when he states that

The specific contradiction of the scholastic mode of reproduction lies in the opposition between the interests of the class which the educational system serves statistically and the interests of those class members whom it sacrifices, that is, the 'failures' who are threatened with *déclassement* for lack of the qualifications formally required of rightful members.⁶¹

⁶¹ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 147.

Bourdieu challenged the common perception that the educational institution is a space of social reforms and equality and the films illustrate his point by showing stories of students' "failures." While the goals of the school as a State Apparatus remain the same, there is an evolution in its repression procedures. In the films I analyzed, whose three stories stretch over some fifty years, the methods of the school become more sophisticated. The teachers in the films do not treat their students as equals, but their methods evolve from overt mistreatment in *Léolo* and *Le thé* to a more subtle, but no less effective, display and projection of power in *Entre les murs*. The punishment of Soulaymane in *Entre les murs* was not because of an incident in class, but because his behavior undermined the authority of the teachers. The teachers act together, as a RSA, to reaffirm their authority and punish the student by his expulsion. At the same time, the students' reaction to the schools' repression methods has also changed. In the 1960s, neither Léolo nor Fernand in *Léolo* question their fate in school, while, later, both Balou in *Le thé* and Soulaymane in *Entre les murs* use silence to express their discontent. If, in *Léolo* and *Le thé*, students do not fully understand how the school system subjugates them, in *Entre les murs*, the students openly object to being treated with contempt. Their verbal reactions indicate a rejection of the notion that the underprivileged are supposed to accept the status quo. The films show a transformation in the perception of inequality at school on the part of the students. By reproducing the language of the adolescents from marginalized neighborhoods, these three films contribute to the exploration of schools as spaces of social conflicts and add to our understanding of power hierarchies in contemporary FCZs.

4.0 LANGUAGE AND SPACE IN BELLEVILLE

“We can be sure, at any rate, that an understanding of language and of verbal and non-verbal systems of signs will be of great utility in any attempt to understand space.”

Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*¹

Some of the most distinct Francophone Contact Zones are the marginalized neighborhoods of the French cities. In this chapter, I will explore the connection between the shared common spaces of these neighborhoods and their languages. As a case study, I will look at Belleville, a diverse Parisian quartier of newcomers from various locations. With its mixture of nationalities, religions, and races, Belleville’s population is a mix of migrants and French citizens, and it is also a distinct geographic, cultural, and economic space that is a part of a larger city. The people of the community share similar social status, as well as ways of living, and cultural values. In most cases, these marginalized residents have fewer opportunities for employment, are less educated, and reside in less favorable circumstances as compared to the rest of the society. Thus, their cultural integration and self-realization into mainstream society is stalled by their poor living conditions and different cultural backgrounds.

¹ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 131.

Located in the 19th and 20th arrondissements in Paris, Belleville has been depicted by many Francophone authors. Indeed, as Alastair Pennycook and Emi Otsuji point out, Belleville “has become in popular imagination not only a working class and artistic area [...] but also ‘the archetype of the cosmopolitan district ... this magical place where extremes live together without apparent strife.’”² Belleville has been studied from various perspectives. While Belleville may frequently be depicted as a seemingly conflict-free space, strife occurs when the neighborhood’s residents interact with the rest of Paris, and especially when they do so through their particular use of language. Tania da Rocha Pitta has written about the changes of the neighborhood of Belleville:

L’image donnée de Belleville postérieurement à la Commune de Paris en 1870, est l’image d’un quartier isolé et maudit; depuis, il a accueilli des “exclus” de la ville de Paris, des provinciaux et aussi des immigrés qui venaient des quatre coins du monde. Son image aujourd’hui est plutôt celle d’une “Babylone”, elle est mêlée, composée par une population diverse et une multiplicité de langues.³

According to Tania da Rocha Pitta, one of the primary signs of the neighborhood’s multiculturalism is its multitude of languages. The language of Belleville is a blend of deformed French and the numerous languages of its residents. In this chapter, I will explore the ways in which three fictional works represent the relationships between their space of the neighborhood and the use of language there. Indeed, as Michael Lucey and Tom McEnaney explain, “language

² Alastair Pennycook and Emi Otsuji, *Metrolingualism: Language in the City* (London: Routledge, 2015), 104.

³ Tania da Rocha Pitta, “Belleville, un quartier divers,” *Sociétés* 97, no. 3 (2007): 43, <https://doi.org/10.3917/soc.097.0039>.

is a social object” and it is related to and represents a space.⁴ The language of the neighborhood is a sign of belonging to the space of Belleville, but it is also a sign of exclusion from the larger space of Paris. To prove my point, I will examine three works in which the action occurs mostly in the neighborhood and the protagonists speak its language. I will analyze the language of the characters in the novels *La vie devant soi* (1975) by Romain Gary and *Le petit prince de Belleville* (1992) by Calyxthe Beyala, and in the film *Salut, cousin!* (1996) by Merzak Allouache. The protagonist of *La vie devant soi*, Momo, is an Arab boy, raised by Madame Rosa, an old Jewish prostitute of Polish origin and a survivor of Auschwitz. In *Le petit prince de Belleville*, Loukoum, a ten-year old boy and his father, Abdou Traoré, are newcomers from Mali. Mok, the protagonist in *Salut!*, is a beur living in Belleville, and Alilo, his cousin from Algeria, is his guest. This selection will allow me to explore five different types of verbal expression that show how Belleville relates to the rest of Paris.

It is worth noting that the three works offer fictional representations of the neighborhood during a specific and relatively short period of time: the second half of the 20th century. As a result of globalization and migration, Europe, and France and its cities have changed dramatically in the last 50 years. Being, traditionally, a space that welcomes newcomers, these changes have affected the space of Belleville. Carolyn Stott explains that its residents share “a collective *Bellevillois* identity that is rooted in its culture and history.”⁵ However, at the same time, fast urban and cultural changes are reshaping the neighborhood.⁶ According to Stott, whose research extends from Belleville’s past to its recent gentrification, the neighborhood is today

⁴ Michael Lucey and Tom McEnaney, “Introduction,” *Representations* 137, no. 1 (February 1, 2017): 8, <https://doi.org/10.1525/rep.2017.137.1.1>.

⁵ Carolyn Stott, “Migration, Public Policy and Gentrification in Belleville, Paris,” *Australian and New Zealand Journal of European Studies (ANZJES)* 6(2)-7(1) (2015): 9.

⁶ Stott, 9.

“perceived as the largest, most dynamic and most cosmopolitan of the Parisian *quartiers populaires*.”⁷ Stott further writes that “the residential issues observed throughout north-eastern Paris are noticeable in Belleville and partially linked to its cosmopolitan heritage.”⁸ Her research demonstrates that Belleville, for a long time, has functioned as a unique FCZ. However, at the beginning of the 21st century the quartier has become a part of Paris. Thus, today, Belleville needs to be viewed as a part of the larger FCZ of Paris and not a separate FCZ as it was some decades ago. This transformation illustrates the rapid changes occurring in contemporary FCZs.

4.1 SPACE AND LANGUAGE IN *LA VIE DEVANT SOI*

Romain Gary, the only novelist to win the Prix Goncourt twice, was born Roman Kacew in 1914. In 1956, he first earned France’s top literary prize for his novel, *Les raciness de ciel*, and in 1975, under the name of Emile Ajar, he won the prize again for *La vie devant soi*. Gary was of Lithuanian and Jewish descent and immigrated to France from Eastern Europe at an early age. In his lifetime, he has published more than thirty books using at least four pseudonyms and writing in three languages.⁹ The story in *La vie devant soi* is divided into thirty-one untitled parts and is told from the point of view of the protagonist, Mohammed, who prefers to be called Momo. Momo has a strong wish to explain the world around him and *La vie devant soi* presents his subjective insider’s perspective of the neighborhood. His story is framed by the moment when his father left him in the care of Madame Rosa, “Je devais avoir trois ans quand j’ai vu Madame

⁷ Stott, 9.

⁸ Stott, 9.

⁹ Timothy Williams, “Identity and Marginalization in Romain Gary’s *La vie devant soi* and Moshe Mizrahi’s *Madame Rosa*,” *Philological Papers* 55–56 (Fall 2012): 96.

Rosa pour la première fois,” and, by the time of her death, when Momo grieves three weeks next to her body.¹⁰ Momo’s language reveals his belonging to the space of Belleville and it disconnects him from the space of Paris. Sharing his story has a therapeutic effect on him: “Ça me fait du bien d’en parler, tiens, c’est comme si ça sortait un peu. Vous voyez ce que je veux dire ?”¹¹ In Belleville, there are no language standards and everyone speaks different language(s) based on their background and social connections. Henceforth, Momo’s language is an example of a language from Belleville and is unique compared to the languages of all other characters from the neighborhood.

Marginalization in *La vie devant soi* has been a recurring theme in the scholarship on the novel. For example, Vina Tirvin explores the characters created by Gary before and after adopting the pseudonym Emile Ajar. She explains that “Les personnages ajariens [...] sont des êtres plus réalistes, dénués des atours de perfection; au contraire, ils sont pour la plupart des êtres inadaptés et marginaux qui vivent à la frontière de ce qu’on pourrait qualifier de normalité.”¹² Tirvin examines the paths of the marginalized characters created by Ajar in *La vie devant soi*, arguing that the author identified himself with the marginalized. Anne-Charlotte Östman similarly discusses the differences between Gary’s early and late works, but investigates his style and his later protagonists’ first-person narratives.¹³ David Bellos has examined the language of the protagonist, the onomastics in the novel, and its connection to the history of France.¹⁴

¹⁰ Romain Gary, *La vie devant soi* (Paris: Gallimard, 1982), 9.

¹¹ Gary, 56.

¹² Vina Tirvin, “Image des marginaux dans Gros-Câlin et la vie devant soi, deux romans de Gary signés Ajar,” *South Carolina Modern Language Review* 7, no. 1 (Fall 2008): 35.

¹³ Anne-Charlotte Östman, “La vie devant soi-une supercherie littéraire,” *Moderna Språk* 91, no. 2 (1997): 188.

¹⁴ David Bellos, “Ce que Momo veut dire: la mémoire de la Shoah dans *La vie devant soi* de Romain Gary,” *Perspectives: Revue de l’Université Hébraïque de Jérusalem* 6 (1999): 59.

Bernard Laland argues that the book is a social critique of the life in Belleville in the 70s.¹⁵ He writes that “*La v.d.s.* repose à chaque ligne sur la grande métaphore d’un langage qui est une perpétuelle translation dans le domaine des mots d’exclusion des misérables hors de la société.”¹⁶ Timothy Williams analyzes the identity of the marginalized stating that “Gary’s point seems to be that the rigid adherence to fixed identity is the truly marginalizing fact of a person’s life.”¹⁷ Marie-Diane Clarke focuses on the world’s perspective of the protagonist, as well as his experience and verbal expressions.¹⁸ However, these previous studies of the novel have not adequately explored the link between the protagonist’s language and the space of Belleville where he lives.

The novel begins in the top floor of a building on Bisson street in Belleville. In Momo’s tale, everything is related to this building where Madame Rosa lives. Her apartment has become a safe space for children of prostitutes and Momo is one of them. The building lacks an elevator and has created an internal hierarchy where the least privileged, Madame Rosa and the children, live on the top floor. The stairs connect the uppermost floor and the underground level where Madame Rosa’s secret space -- her *cave* or cellar -- is, which Momo calls a “trou juif.” Since Madame Rosa confuses past and present, she considers all institutions equally dangerous and draws a parallel between Nazi practices and the French institutions of the 1970s. In her mind, the cellar is her escape from the Nazis, the French police and French social workers. For Momo, rue Bisson is an extension of Madame Rosa’s home and is like his home. The building and all the

¹⁵ Bernard Lalande, “Ajar: Pour une lecture de *La Vie devant soi*,” *Le Français dans le Monde* 158 (January 1981): 37.

¹⁶ Lalande, 59.

¹⁷ Williams, “Identity and Marginalization in Romain Gary’s *La vie devant soi* and Moshe Mizrahi’s *Madame Rosa*,” 98.

¹⁸ Marie-Diane Clarke, “Visions enfantines, enfants visionnaires dans trois romans contemporains” (master's thesis, Acadia University, 1985), 83.

spaces in Gary's Belleville are connected. The oral culture of the neighborhood serves to bond all the neighbors. News in the neighborhood circulates by word of mouth, travelling to the local grocery store which functions as a news agency. Momo explains, "la nouvelle que Madame Rosa n'allait plus jamais descendre s'est répandue dans l'opinion publique jusqu'à l'épicerie tunisienne de Monsieur Keibali où toutes les nouvelles se réunissent."¹⁹ The neighborhood's news spreads quickly, but does not trespass its boundaries. When describing the tenants of the building where Madame Rosa lives, Momo specifies the exact borders of Belleville, "Le reste de la rue et du boulevard de Belleville est surtout juif et arabe. Ça continue comme ça jusqu'à la Goutte d'Or *et après c'est les quartiers français qui commencent.*"²⁰ In *La vie*, there are boundaries between Belleville and the adjacent neighborhoods of the city. Belleville's news stops being news outside the quartier; no one cares about the area and the news has no relevance. The orality of the text is reinforced from the beginning of Momo's tale. His story is a first-person narrative, however it also using the "vous" form, and thus Momo directly addresses his listeners. He retells his adventures in a spontaneous way, for example, "Alors maintenant je vais vous dire, parce que vous n'allez pas me croire."²¹ For the reader, it is unclear who the "vous" refers to. It could be someone from the quartier because he explains that Madame Rosa, "savait l'arabe *comme vous et moi,*" and Arabic is mainly spoken in Belleville.²² Or, Momo's listeners could be the young couple, Nadine and Ramon, who have previously offered him help. In addition, Momo's direct listeners are also the novel's readers.

¹⁹ Gary, *La vie devant soi*, 148.

²⁰ Gary, 12, italics mine.

²¹ Gary, 26.

²² Gary, 12, italics mine.

Momo does not have a formal education. Madame Rosa sent him to school once, but, because of inconsistencies between his real age and the age he pretends to be, he was sent back home. He can read and write thanks to one of his neighbors, Monsieur Hamil, who is a carpet seller. Thus, Momo is able to read the receipt for his care by Madame Rosa, “*Reçu de Monsieur Kadir Yoûssef cinq cents francs d’avance pour le petit Mohammed, état musulman, le sept octobre 1956.*”²³ Momo explains, “J’ai lu ce que j’ai pu grâce à Monsieur Hamil, à qui je dois tout. Sans lui, je ne serais rien.”²⁴ The note clarifies Momo’s past and is key information for him. The boy copies his neighbors’ way of speaking, and some of his expressions (“comme j’ai eu l’honneur de vous dire” and “croyez-en ma vieille expérience”²⁵) are borrowed from Monsieur Hamil. The bond between Momo and Monsieur Hamil illustrates an alternative form of education in the neighborhood. Momo has his own vocabulary and one of the words he uses most is the verb, *se “défendre,”* in the meaning of “*se prostituer.*” One such example is, “Quand une femme est obligée de *se défendre*, elle n’a pas le droit d’avoir la puissance paternelle, c’est *la prostitution qui veut ça.*”²⁶ The verb, “*se défendre,*” evokes the harsh way of living for the prostitutes who must fight for survival on a daily basis. Frequently, Momo’s phrases contain incompatible lexical fields. He tells a story of Madame Rosa going to her cellar one night. The boy recalls, “Quand Madame Rosa a pris cet escalier, j’ai cru vraiment que c’était la fin des haricots elle était devenue macaque et j’ai voulu courir réveiller le docteur Katz.”²⁷ He uses a vegetal image with the expression, “c’est la fin des haricots,” meaning that this is the end of

²³ Gary, 185.

²⁴ Gary, 185.

²⁵ Gary, 40.

²⁶ Gary, 19, italics mine.

²⁷ Gary, 37.

everything, and “macaque” instead of crazy. The blending of incompatible lexical fields is one of the principal characteristics of Momo’s verbal expression.

An additional characteristic of his speech is the mixture of two past tenses: *passé composé* and *passé simple*. The *passé composé* is part of informal conversations, whereas *passé simple* is associated with a formal speech register and writing, and, in most cases, these two tenses do not appear together. One example of the two verbal tenses in Momo’s speech patterns is the description of Dr. Katz’s office and Momo’s reflections on the wall drawing, “*Il y avait derrière le docteur Katz un bateau à voiles sur une cheminée avec des ailes toutes blanches et comme j’étais malheureux, je voulais m’en aller ailleurs, très loin, loin de moi, et je me suis mis à le faire voler, je montai à bord et traversai les océans d’une main sûre.*”²⁸ Using the *passé simple* creates the atmosphere of a fairy tale and implies Momo’s wish to drift away from the everydayness of the quartier. Moreover, his language is full of grammar and syntactical errors. For example, he does not use subjunctive after the locution, “avant que,” and says, “avant que M. Kadir est venu” instead of “avant que M. Kadir soit venu.”²⁹ When recalling his adventures, he does not change his questions in direct speech into indirect speech and says, “je ne sais pas [...] qu’est-ce qui s’est passé” instead of “je ne sais pas ce qui s’est passé.”³⁰ On occasion, Momo incorrectly uses the plural of nouns, pronouncing, “des cannibaux,” when the plural is “des cannibals.”³¹ In short, Momo has developed his own mode of speaking.

Another example of his particular use of language is the sentence “j’étais payé.” He recalls the moment when he understood that the Assistance public was paying Madame Rosa

²⁸ Gary, 30, italics mine.

²⁹ Gary, 217.

³⁰ Gary, 13.

³¹ Gary, 50.

monthly for caring for him and explains it in his way, “Au début, je ne savais pas que Madame Rosa s’occupait de moi seulement pour toucher un mandat à la fin du mois. Quand je l’ai appris, j’avais déjà six ou sept ans et ça m’a fait un coup de savoir que *j’étais payé*.”³² On a different occasion, Momo wishes to say that his birth date is unknown and describes the moment as, “En ce moment je devais avoir sept ans ou peut-être huit, je ne peux pas vous dire juste parce que *je n’ai pas été daté*.”³³ The malapropism, a phenomenon of using correct words in the wrong context, is an additional characteristic of his speech. Such is the case when he utilizes the word, “amnistie,” instead of “amnésie” for describing Madame Rosa’s psychological state: “C’était *l’amnistie* et le docteur Katz m’avait prévenu qu’elle allait en avoir de plus en plus, jusqu’au jour où elle ne se souviendra plus de rien pour toujours et vivra peut-être de longues années encore dans un état d’habitude.”³⁴ In this example, Momo’s expression, “état d’habitude,” replaces the correct one, “état d’hébétude.” Occasionally, he pronounces some of the words he has heard incorrectly. The author marks Momo’s mispronunciations by a word’s misspelling in the text. Such examples include: “le nez signalitique” instead of “le nez typique” des Juifs,³⁵ “qui a eu des alcooliques” instead of “qui a eu des coliques,”³⁶ “proxynète” instead of “proxénète,”³⁷ or “niches” instead of “miches.”³⁸ Sometimes, Momo unintentionally modifies some of the terms he has heard (e.g. “une travestite” for “travestie,”³⁹ or “sénilité debile” for “débilité senile”⁴⁰).

³² Gary, 10, italics mine.

³³ Gary, 11, italics mine.

³⁴ Gary, 167, italics mine.

³⁵ Gary, 22.

³⁶ Gary, 113.

³⁷ Gary, 33.

³⁸ Gary, 157.

³⁹ Gary, 16.

⁴⁰ Gary, 166.

His unusual way of speaking reflects the lack of communication in standard French within the neighborhood.

In addition, Momo's verbal expression is characterized by constant translanguaging, a phenomenon that reveals the cultural amalgamations found in the neighborhood. Madame Rosa speaks a mixture of languages: Polish, Yiddish, Arabic, and French. Consequently, Momo also uses Yiddish, Arabic, and French. He explains, "On parlait surtout le juif et l'arabe entre nous ou alors le français."⁴¹ He utilizes Yiddish terms to express typical elements of the Jewish culture. The words *gefüllte fisch* evoke the authentic cuisine of Madame Rosa: "Vingt jours sans bouffer, vous pensez, c'était pour elle la manne céleste et elle prenait un air triomphal quand le ramadan arrivait et que j'avais plus le droit au *gefüllte fisch* qu'elle préparait elle-même."⁴² At times, he uses typical Yiddish exclamations such as, "*Khàïrem*,"⁴³ and, "*Mazel tov*,"⁴⁴ which point to the Jewish principles cherished in Madame Rosa's small residence.⁴⁵ Moreover, when Momo works to calm her, he chants Yiddish prayers he knows by heart.⁴⁶ In the text, the Yiddish and Arabic languages appear in italics. This choice underlines the use of languages not French, and, at the same time, the translanguaging does not interfere with the story. Momo switches languages according to circumstances, because each language corresponds to a particular situation. He has an ability to adapt his way of speaking to different cultural contexts, easily alternating between French and Arabic when relating to the Muslim religion. For example, Momo says, "*elli habb*

⁴¹ Gary, 89.

⁴² Gary, 53.

⁴³ Gary, 62., 183, 226.

⁴⁴ Gary, 190.

⁴⁵ Additional Yiddish words and expressions are "*mensch*," (244) "*mazltov*," (254) "*mittornischt zorgen*," (254) "*blumentag*," (264) and "*Bar mitzwah* et tout. Il a toujours mangé *kasher*, vous pouvez être tranquille" (198).

⁴⁶ Gary, *La vie devant soi*, 263.

allah la ibri ghirhou soubhân ad daîm lâ iazoul... Ça veut dire celui qui aime Dieu ne veut rien d'autre que Lui.”⁴⁷ As Dr. Katz remarks, “Tu dois être le seul Arabe au monde à parler yiddish, mon petit Momo.”⁴⁸ Translanguaging is instrumental in introducing additional cultures and, in Momo’s case, reflects his particular blending of cultures and religions. All of Momo’s speech characteristics are found in lengthy paradoxical statements with unexpected endings. One example is the phrase of the law of large numbers when Momo states, “le père est protégé par la loi des grands nombres.”⁴⁹ The law of large numbers sounds like a mathematical phenomenon. Momo wishes to say that, theoretically, many fathers are possible for the children of prostitutes and practically no one knows who the biological father of a child is. His explanation is amusing for readers since it simultaneously resembles a scientific maxim, yet is simple and naïve.

In Gary’s novel, the space of the language of Belleville coincides with the limits of the neighborhood. According to Momo, Paris is a huge and hostile space. It is made up of smaller spaces and is mostly composed of streets. He states, “Paris, c’est plein de rues, et il faut beaucoup de hasard pour rencontrer quelqu’un là-dedans.”⁵⁰ Later, he repeats Monsieur Waloumba’s description that “dans une grande ville comme Paris [...] il y a des milliers de rues, d’étages, de trous et d’endroits.”⁵¹ Once, while wandering in the city’s space, Momo unexpectedly finds a friend, a beautiful young lady called Nadine, who lives in a wealthy neighborhood. Later, Momo pays her a visit and meets her children. He immediately feels the social gap between him and Nadine’s children. Before going back to Belleville, he summarizes

⁴⁷ Gary, 52. Additional examples of Momo using Arabic include, “Bon, *Inch’Allah*, mais c’est pas vrai, je dis ça seulement parce que je suis un bon musulman” (56), “Ça commençait par *soubhân ad daîm lâ iazoul*, ce qui veut dire que seul l’Éternel ne finit jamais” (138).

⁴⁸ Gary, 254.

⁴⁹ Gary, 73.

⁵⁰ Gary, 112.

⁵¹ Gary, 177.

the situation by repeating twice, “On était pas du même quartier.”⁵² The neighborhoods of the characters are indicators of social status and reveal that Momo does not belong to a space outside of Belleville. The population in Belleville is stigmatized by the majority of society, but its refusal of the norms allows the marginalized to stick together and create a strong community. Belleville is a space of relative poverty, but it is also a space of safety. For its inhabitants, Belleville is like a home space and the mixture of French and other languages connects them. Contrary to the closed spaces of the FCZs, court, prison and school, where the use of standard French is required, the mixture of verbal expressions in Belleville unites its residents, creating an open space of solidarity.

4.2 DOUBLE EXILE IN BELLEVILLE IN *LE PETIT PRINCE DE BELLEVILLE*

Calyxthe Beyala’s *Le petit prince de Belleville* (1992) tells the story of a Muslim family from Mali living in Belleville. The family consists of the father, Abdou Traoré, his two wives, M’am and Soumana, and their four children. One of the children is Loukoum, a ten-year old boy, who is the protagonist in the novel. In Belleville, the Traorés are trying to follow their African traditions, but they live in poverty and a situation that Cheryl Toman refers to as “double exile.”

⁵³ As for many Africans from former colonies, the Traorés have voluntarily left their home country in the hope of a better life in France. However, once there, they reside in Belleville, without communication with the rest of Paris. The Traorés fit the neighborhood, but they do not

⁵² Gary, 223, italics mine.

⁵³ Cheryl Toman, “A Day in the Life of Belleville: The New Face of Contemporary France in a Paris Neighborhood,” in *French Prose in 2000*, ed. Michael Bishop and Christopher Elson (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), 4.

belong to Paris. On the level of plot, *Le petit prince de Belleville* shares some similarities with *La vie devant soi*. Both protagonists are boys not raised by their biological mothers, and both live in an impoverished building without an elevator in Belleville. Thus, they feel inferior when meeting children from the adjacent wealthier French neighborhood. Regardless of the resemblances, the language of the protagonists in the two novels differs greatly. Whereas language for Momo expresses belonging to Belleville, in *Le petit prince de Belleville*, the language of the protagonists, father and son, recreates the spaces where they would like to be. Abdou Traoré dreams about Mali; Loukoum, in contrast, would like to integrate into the Parisian space outside Belleville. Thus, father and son are attached and attracted to opposing spaces. As Alain-Philippe Durant argues, “Le roman de Beyala présente une lutte constante opposant les générations, le conflit que provoque l’exil entre l’espace d’origine et l’espace migratoire.”⁵⁴ Seen in this light, the novel creates the life in the neighborhood from the opposing perspectives of two “Africans in Paris.”

Le petit prince de Belleville is composed by two intertwining narrative voices, the voice of the father, Abdou Traoré, and his son, Loukoum. The whole of the novel is narrated in first person and both narrators use the informal “tu” form to directly address the readers. Father and son relay their personal stories, and, as it happens in *La vie devant soi* for Momo, telling their stories has a therapeutic effect on them. Each chapter highlights both narrative voices, and begins with the father’s voice, marked by italics, and then shifts to Loukoum’s voice. There are twenty-one of Abdou’s meditations that divide the novel in untitled parts. The novel begins with the father’s confessions after moving from his native space, Mali, to France. The father’s voice is

⁵⁴ Alain-Philippe Durant, “Le côté de Belleville: négociation de l’espace migratoire chez Calixthe Beyala,” *Etudes Francophones* 14, no. 2 (Autumn 1999): 62.

lyrical, expressing nostalgia for African traditions and the past from his home country. Abdou Traoré explains, “Je suis si peu de ce monde que je préfère céder.”⁵⁵ Abdou’s reflections are spontaneous and mysterious. His poetic prose evokes the tone and imagery of negritude poetry. In particular, his confessions evoke Aimé Césaire’s *Cahier d’un retour au pays natal* (1939) and *Soleil cou-coupé* (1948). As in Césaire, Abdou’s voice uses African imagery to create an apocalyptic world based on his personal experience. Abdou is torn between the spaces of Belleville and Africa; he wishes that Belleville were Mali. His reflections reveal his alienation and disenchantment in the new space where it is challenging to follow the African customs. His path illustrates Cilas Kemedjio’s observation that “Migrer c’est toujours déstabiliser des certitudes spatiales, mythologiques, identitaires, c’est se mettre dans un non-lieu.”⁵⁶ Abdou longs for an African dreamland and his “noix de cola” is the only item to remind him of the space he has left.⁵⁷ As Loukoum explains, “La cola est le symbole de la concorde, de la paix et du bonheur dans mon peuple.”⁵⁸ Abdou speaks as an African guest to his French host, rejecting French culture. He points out that French and marginalized residents exist in parallel worlds, never interacting. He speaks out against social injustices, and his confessions express revolt against the West. Thus, he indicates one of the main topics of the novel: the segregation in French society. The space of Paris illustrates the Western way of life. Abdou considers Paris to be a detrimental space for its people and a trap for the newcomers. He is concerned with his son’s behavior because Loukoum moves between the city’s different spaces. In the opening of part seventeen, Abdou’s voice repeats the pronoun “il” at the beginning of sentences and

⁵⁵ Calixthe Beyala, *Le petit prince de Belleville*: (Paris: A. Michel, 1992), 8.

⁵⁶ Durand, “Le côté de Belleville: négociation de l’espace migratoire chez Calixthe Beyala,” 53.

⁵⁷ Beyala, *Le petit prince de Belleville*, 23.

⁵⁸ Beyala, 191.

mentions characteristics that differ from Malian traditional behaviors to illustrate deep generational differences:

Aujourd'hui, je vois mon fils.

Il a découvert le vocabulaire de Paris. Des mots griffés de vent et d'hiver.

Il a acquis d'autres manières de dire bonjour.

Il connaît des rituels qui me bouleversent.

Il répugne à manger avec ses doigts.

Il impose d'autres conformismes.

Il importe des goûts, des préoccupations.

Il passe sans s'inquiéter d'un univers à l'autre. Le nôtre, il le juge, il le méprise.”⁵⁹

In this quote, Abdou connects Loukoum's new vocabulary to his effortless movement between the city's spaces. The passage between spaces is one of the characteristics of the 20th century world and it allows for and creates connections between them. Loukoum's voice contrasts with Abdou's voice. The father sees himself as a stranger in Belleville, while Loukoum sees himself as a part of it, torn between the spaces of Belleville and Paris. Loukoum was born in Mali, but is raised in Belleville and is attached to its space. He has no desire to return to his home country and dreams of connecting with French society. The boy's life in Belleville consists of three components: family, community, and school. As Dawn Fulton writes, “Loukoum's voice adopts an informal, argotic language inflected with the various linguistic worlds he enters and also

⁵⁹ Beyala, 214.

addressed to a European listener.”⁶⁰ Similar to Momo from *La vie*, Loukoum uses cliché phrases in inappropriate contexts and plays with stereotypes. For example, the very beginning when readers first meet him juxtaposes two spaces, “Je m'appelle Mamadou Traoré pour la gynécologie, Loukoum pour la civilisation. J'ai sept ans pour l'officiel, et dix saisons pour l'Afrique.”⁶¹ His age is defined once by the French system, “sept ans pour l'officiel,” and then, according to the African tradition, “dix saisons pour l'Afrique.” Loukoum’s vocabulary is composed of words used only in the neighborhood and his way of speaking recreates the atmosphere of the neighborhood for the reader. Examples include “la tronche,”⁶² “tripoter,”⁶³ “jugeote,”⁶⁴ “les chocottes,”⁶⁵ “joyeux luron,”⁶⁶ “ramollo,”⁶⁷ “avoir la trouille,”⁶⁸ “bonne trempé,”⁶⁹ “dépatouiller,”⁷⁰ “trifouiller,”⁷¹ “rechigner.”⁷² His speech, as with Momo’s speech, exemplifies Livingstone’s finding that places are “sites of ‘location and locution.’”⁷³ Describing the cold winter, Loukoum explains, “Dehors il fait froid. Il neige pas. Juste un froid de canard. Vraiment, l’hiver devrait aller se mettre bien au chaud devant la cheminée!”⁷⁴ In this example, he uses the colloquial expression, “un froid de canard,” the negation is lacking its first part “ne,”

⁶⁰ Dawn Fulton, “Global City, Megacity: Calixthe Beyala and the Limits of the Urban Imaginary,” *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 45, no. 2 (April 2009): 181.

⁶¹ Beyala, *Le petit prince de Belleville*, 8.

⁶² Beyala, 46.

⁶³ Beyala, 47.

⁶⁴ Beyala, 62.

⁶⁵ Beyala, 62.

⁶⁶ Beyala, 69.

⁶⁷ Beyala, 91.

⁶⁸ Beyala, 94.

⁶⁹ Beyala, 97.

⁷⁰ Beyala, 24.

⁷¹ Beyala, 24.

⁷² Beyala, 240.

⁷³ Pennycook and Otsuji, *Metrolingualism*, 85.

⁷⁴ Beyala, *Le petit prince de Belleville*, 144.

and he personifies winter. As in the case of his father, Loukoum speaks his native Malinke language and exemplifies the phenomenon of translanguaging. Since he is raised Muslim, he regularly mentions the Koran. He often exclaims, “Inch Allah” and seamlessly switches to Arabic when talking about the family’s Muslim culture and home life.⁷⁵

The generations in Beyala’s novel represent different spaces. In Belleville, the father is at an impasse. In contrast, Belleville represents a point of departure for the son. As Gauch explains:

Despite the calamities of death, scandal, division, separation, and imprisonment, however, his unconventional family endures and Loukoum maintains an endearingly optimistic outlook. Ultimately, it is his amusing misperceptions and misunderstandings of the prejudice that he everywhere encounters that enable Loukoum to maintain his equanimity through crisis after crisis.⁷⁶

Loukoum’s promising future is implied by the fact that the novel begins with the father’s confession, but ends with the son’s description of the national holiday of France: “Aujourd’hui, c’est le 14 Juillet. Les Français ont fait leur Révolution. Toute la tribu a décidé d’aller pique-niquer au bois de Boulogne. C’est férié. Alors les Noirs se réunissent pour faire leur fête à eux.”⁷⁷ The narrative of the son is much longer than the confessions of the father. This author’s choices suggest that the future belongs to the younger generation.

Although Loukoum’s story is told in the language of Belleville, there is one passage when his voice is transferred in italics. This is in a letter that Loukoum writes to President François Mitterrand on his father’s behalf. The father’s thoughts are in his native Malinke

⁷⁵ Beyala, 175.

⁷⁶ Suzanne Gauch, “Sampling Globalization in Calixthe Beyala’s *Le Petit Prince de Belleville*,” *Research in African Literatures* 41, no. 2 (Summer 2010): 207.

⁷⁷ Beyala, *Le petit prince de Belleville*, 261.

language, and Loukoum translates them to French. The letter mixes multiple registers. It preserves Loukoum's usual mode of communication, and, in addition, it contains some formal expressions. For example, he ends the letter in an official way, "*En espérant que vous donnerez une suite favorable à ma requête, je vous prie de croire, Monsieur le Président, à l'expression de mes sentiments distingués.*"⁷⁸ The letter to Mitterrand addresses Abdou's recent past and connects it to present obstacles for immigrants. Although the writing reflects Loukoum's naïve way of thinking, the letter is based on concrete facts. It is openly against the politics of Le Pen and his anti-immigration policy: "*M. Le Pen, notre Ennemi mortel, prétend qu'il va nous chasser tous d'ici. Mais je sais que vous, le connaisseur de l'invisible tout comme du visible, à vous seul les attributs les plus beaux, vous ne le laisserez pas mener à bien son ignoble projet.*"⁷⁹

Describing his father's situation in France, Loukoum shares Abdou's position and the stance of the entire community of immigrants in Belleville who are in a similar situation.

In opposition to Momo, who has no chance for a formal education, Loukoum attends school and, despite his original illiteracy in French, he makes great progress. As a public institution, the school acts as a transitional space between Belleville and the surrounding neighborhoods. It is like a filter space that does or does not allow the Belleville pupils into mainstream society. As Alastair Pennycook and Emi Otsuji write, "The city, and the schools it contains [...] is a place in late modernity where class relations are played out in sociolinguistic interactions. The city, however, remains something of a shadow, a place where labour is distributed, where people settle and live, a backdrop to the dynamics of schooling."⁸⁰ The students' speaking, reading, and writing skills function as a threshold for acceptance in

⁷⁸ Beyala, 26.

⁷⁹ Beyala, 25.

⁸⁰ Pennycook and Otsuji, *Metrolingualism*, 32.

mainstream society. Loukoum's initial lack of language skills initiates a meeting between his mother and the principal. The scene in *Le petit prince de Belleville* echoes the disciplinary hearing scenes in the film *Entre les murs*. Loukoum explains, "Alors, il y a eu comme qui dirait une réunion, avec la maîtresse, et puis avec le Directeur de l'école, et ça chauffait dur avec M'am, qui leur disait qu'elle faisait tout ce qu'elle pouvait et allait plus me quitter jusqu'à ce que je connaisse parfaitement le français."⁸¹ In contrast to Souleymane in *Entre les murs*, Loukoum is given a chance to acquire the skills he does not have at the beginning of the school year. At that time, Loukoum uses the slang of the neighborhood and is not able to read in French. His reading test is a passage from Saint-Exupéry's allegorical 1943 tale *Le petit prince*, and Loukoum summarizes its story : "Ça parlait d'un gosse, un petit prince qui voit un chapeau qui se transforme en serpent et c'était chouette."⁸² The title of the novel, *Le petit prince de Belleville*, adopts Saint Exupery's title, and Saint Exupery's work is pivotal for understanding Beyala's novel.⁸³

In addition, the confessions of Loukoum's father evoke Saint Exupery's story because they are reminiscent of fables and allegories, as does the original little prince' story. However, the influence of Saint Exupery's novella is mostly related to Loukoum's path. As in Saint Exupery's work, the narrator in Beyala's book gives a first-person account written in past tense. The planets that the little prince visits can be considered allegories of human nature, and in a similar way, the spaces that the prince from Belleville visits can be viewed as symbols of the

⁸¹ Beyala, *Le petit prince de Belleville*, 11.

⁸² Beyala, 9.

⁸³ According to Fulton, Exupery's novel is one of the most read French texts worldwide; it is translated in over 160 languages and dialects, and is one of the fifty top-selling books in the world. Exupery's little prince symbolizes the Frenchness and the images of the prince and of the author "were featured on the 50-Franc note for a short period before the shift to the euro." Fulton, "Global City, Megacity," 182.

spaces that are forbidden to the neighborhood's residents. As Gauch explains, "Saint Exupéry's earnest little prince learns about the futility of borders as he roams about a desert-like asteroid far from the chaos of World War II, yet Loukoum, who has immigrated to Paris from the desert-like Mali, discovers the tenacity of borders everywhere around him."⁸⁴ Exupéry's character is emblematic of the French national identity. The power of Beyala's novel is based on the contrast between the original little prince in Exupéry's novel and Loukoum, the little prince from Belleville. Loukoum's physical appearance is different, and, more importantly, his social status is low. Through the contrasting representation of Loukoum, Beyala underscores the social inequality in French society. The use of Exupéry's novel underlines the gap between the students who attend the same school but live in different neighborhoods.

The character who resembles the original little prince is Pierre Pelletier. He is a white French boy from an affluent neighborhood and Loukoum describes him as a copy of Exupéry's character:

Pierre Pelletier a des cheveux blonds un peu rouges. Il est toujours habillé comme on croit rêver, avec des vêtements luxueux, le genre de vêtements qu'on trouve pas boulevard de Belleville. Sa peau est comme du lait transparent et lisse. Il a un visage de petit Français de l'époque des princes, avec ses cheveux tout bouclés... Et un caractère en or. Avant de commencer son premier cours d'écriture, il me regarde. Je suis gêné. Je suis habillé comme un minable.⁸⁵

Pierre's description and the cultural opposition between the two boys at school emphasize the social contrast between them. The two classmates belong to different spaces, two distant Parisian

⁸⁴ Gauch, "Sampling Globalization," 209.

⁸⁵ Beyala, *Le petit prince de Belleville*, 54.

neighborhoods, and the story highlights the dissimilarities between them. The neighborhood is a mark of belonging and social status. As Stacey Weber-Fève writes, the school is “an extension of the State and potentially the most powerful (and subversive) arena for perpetuating colonial discourses.”⁸⁶ Part of Loukoum’s description of the school life is the way the French children are dressed. The students from the French neighborhoods have a dress code that signals their status and Loukoum, as well as Momo, is sensitive to the social division. The children from the wealthier French families look like young aristocrats. At school, Loukoum shows affection to his classmate, Lolita, who is dressed as a princess too: “Elle est habillée comme une princesse avec sa robe en laine bleue et des collants assortis. Elle a toujours un gros nœud dans les cheveux. Qu'est-ce qu'elle est chic! C'est à croire que tous les oiseaux du ciel chantent rien que pour elle.”⁸⁷ Lolita’s name references Nabokov’s character, Lolita, and her precocious sexuality. The birth name of the protagonist is Mamadou, but he prefers to be called Loukoum. Loukoum is a popular word with Arabic origin meaning an oriental (Turkish) delight. Indirectly, the names of the characters create a space of desire that opposes the space of misery where the protagonist lives. At the beginning, Lolita and Loukoum live in different neighborhoods, but go to the same school. When the adults discover their attachment, Lolita is transferred to another school in a distant neighborhood. Henceforth, the plot illustrates that the characters belong to different spaces in Paris and the social gap between them cannot be overcome.

The social opposition between the students from the different neighborhoods is underscored by their language skills and Loukoum is assigned Pierre Pelletier to help him learn to read, write and speak standard French. In the case of reading and writing skills, Loukoum

⁸⁶ Weber-Fève, *Re-Hybridizing Transnational Domesticity and Femininity*, 174.

⁸⁷ Beyala, *Le petit prince de Belleville*, 73.

needs to reproduce certain texts, but while expressing his own thoughts he is lost between the two cultures. He explains that he speaks “le petit nègre” while the school setting requires standard French. He describes his experience with Pierre:

Quelquefois, il essaie de m'apprendre à parler mieux. Il dit que: “je m'ai”, “y a pas”, “c'est pas”, c'est pas vraiment du bon français. Quand j' dis: “j' sais pas”, “pourquoi que”, c'est du petit nègre.

— C'est pas un problème, que j' dis, vu que tu comprends c' que j' veux dire.

— Tu serais mieux dans ta peau si tu t'efforçais de mieux parler.⁸⁸

Adopting the language of the adjacent wealthy neighborhoods is a challenge for Loukoum. At first, he has difficulty speaking the required standard French and states, “Maintenant, chaque fois que j' parle à ma manière, Pierre Pelletier me corrige, pour que je devienne un gentleman, qu'il dit. Après, j'ai l'impression que ma tête est vide, que j' connais plus rien. Tout s'embrouille, alors.”⁸⁹ Dawn Fulton sees Loukoum’s situation as being in a transitional stage:

As a child with fading memories of his years in Mali who moves back and forth between the school and the home in his new Parisian surroundings, stopping often in the streets of Belleville on his way, Loukoum holds a liminal space as both insider and outsider to multiple worlds, both familiar with, and mystified by, mainstream Parisian society and by the West African community of which he is a part.⁹⁰

However, over time, Loukoum makes progress with his reading and writing skills, and he even begins to write a novel. By describing Loukoum’s language skills, Beyala shows how the

⁸⁸ Beyala, 241.

⁸⁹ Beyala, 241.

⁹⁰ Fulton, “Global City, Megacity,” 181.

language is part of a particular space. In this case, the language of Belleville is a manner of communication in the neighborhood, but outside of it, it is a sign of inferiority. Acquiring language skills creates possibilities for the students from marginalized urban spaces like Belleville, but this process means losing part of one's identity. Fulton argues that "The symbol of French national identity that is *Le petit prince* is thus the very medium of Loukoum's cultural assimilation at school."⁹¹ The development of the plot implies that Loukoum can enter Parisian space if he satisfies the school's requirements.

On a regular basis, Loukoum's family lives in the cultural bubble of the neighborhood. They stay in Belleville and do not go into other urban spaces. In Belleville, there are homeless people who live in worse conditions than Loukoum's family (184). While talking about the visits of the social worker, Madame Sadock, Loukoum mentions that Paris' heating system does not reach his neighborhood, "Elle doit peut-être penser que nous sommes minoritaires, vu qu'on a pas les produits de première nécessité comme le gaz de la ville de Paris qui n'arrive pas jusqu'ici."⁹² This domestic detail illustrates Belleville's isolation from the space of the city. When school officials tell Loukoum that if he does not learn to read and write before the end of the semester he will be sent to the remedial Antony school, he is surprised since the only space he knows is Belleville, "A Antony j'ai pensé... Ça m'a paru drôle, vu qu'on y avait jamais mis les pieds, mais je n'ai rien dit."⁹³ Moreover, the only time Loukoum and his relatives decide to go outside of Belleville, they get lost and never reach their initial destination:

Nous sommes partis, mais on s'est perdu dans les embouteillages et on ne savait plus où on était. Paris, c'est beaucoup plus grand que n'importe où. Et il y a

⁹¹ Fulton, 182.

⁹² Beyala, *Le petit prince de Belleville*, 87.

⁹³ Beyala, 13.

tellement de rues et de voitures que si on se met à rouler dedans, on est sûr de dormir là et de crever de faim sans que ça dérange personne. On a pas tardé à se retrouver bloqués dans une rue où il y avait plein de magasins avec des vêtements de luxe.⁹⁴

The above examples show the existing infrastructure disconnection between the adjacent spaces of the city. Loukoum thinks that Paris is dangerous for his family; it is a space without exits for them and with no empathy. The family does not spend time and money on entertainment. They cannot buy luxury clothing and never go to a restaurant. One of Loukoum's mothers explains that going to a restaurant is like a waste of money for the household.⁹⁵ Paris is described as a maze and the family circulates only in Belleville, which is the space of the language of the neighborhood.⁹⁶ As when Exupéry's little prince discovers the new space of the Earth, Loukoum discovers one of the city parks and he is stunned by its beauty:

Tout ça si différent de par où on était passés que ça m'a coupé le souffle. Même le soleil, vous ne me croirez pas, mais on dirait que c'est là son berceau.

— C'est si joli ! Je savais pas qu'il y a des coins comme ça à Paris.⁹⁷

Loukoum's reaction demonstrates his genuine surprise at Paris. Regardless of the grim circumstances of everyday life in Belleville, Loukoum's future seems to be different from his father's fate. While Abdou Traoré seems bound to stay in the community of Belleville and to lose his position in the family, Loukoum acquires the language skills of writing, speaking, and reading and his new abilities open some options for him in the city.

⁹⁴ Beyala, 222.

⁹⁵ Loukoum describes his thoughts, "je marche et j'observe tout ça. Un jour, j'aimerais bien aller au restaurant. Mais M'am dit que c'est comme jeter de l'argent par la fenêtre d'un train" (93).

⁹⁶ The city of Paris is a maze for Momo as well.

⁹⁷ Beyala, *Le petit prince de Belleville*, 65.

4.3 CULTURAL CLASHES BETWEEN BELLEVILLE AND ALGIERS IN *SALUT COUSIN!*

Before starting the work on the film *Salut, cousin!* (1996) Merzak Allouache was already a well-known beur filmmaker. Indeed, *Salut!* is Allouache's sixth feature film and shares some features of beur cinema, as well as some characteristics of his previous feature films.⁹⁸ The stories in his films are related to his homeland, Algeria, and *Salut!* is not an exception.

As in his earlier films, Allouache himself wrote the script for *Salut!* in which the protagonists, two cousins with Algerian roots, Mokrane (Messaoud Hattau) and Alilo (Gad Elmaleh) meet in France. Although the characters are both from the same generation and of Algerian origin, they come from two distant geographical spaces – the opposite sides of the Mediterranean – and thus have contrasting perceptions on the world around them. Regarding the film *Salut!*, in an interview, Allouache states that he did not want to accentuate the emigrants' problems in France. Rather, his goal was to point to the different perceptions of the protagonists who represent two distant geographic spaces. As he explains, "Ce qui m'intéresse dans ce film, c'est la rencontre entre un jeune de "là-bas" et un "d'ici" [...] *Salut cousin!* n'a pas la prétention de poser les problèmes de l'émigration...mais représente un essai d'intégrer mes personnages dans la société française, tout en les montrant dans leur spécificité."⁹⁹ Regardless of Allouache's initial intentions, the film can be considered from multiple aspects. On the one hand,

⁹⁸ Previously, Allouache directed *Omar Gatlato* (1976), *Les Aventures d'un héros* (1978), *L'homme qui regardait les fenêtres* (1982-1983), *Un amour à Paris* (1986) and *Bab el-Qued City* (1993). In addition, he is the filmmaker of four documentaries, *L'Après Octobre* (1988), *Femmes en mouvement* (1989), *Voices of Ramadan* (1991) and *Jours tranquilles en Kabylie* (1994), and of three short films, *Interdit de caméra* (1996), *Donyazad et Mordjane* (1996) and *Dans la décapotable* (1996).

⁹⁹ Merzak Allouache, *L'Avant-Scène Cinéma: Salut Cousin ! De Merzak Allouache*, vol. 457 (L'Avant-Scène Cinéma, 1996), 3.

it emphasizes the territorial and cultural division between France and its former colonies. On the other, it recreates a neighborhood of marginalized citizens that functions as a self-regulated space. It also shows the connectedness between Belleville and Paris' outdoor spaces. These spaces are interconnected and function as FCZs. The verbal communication of the two protagonists is a confrontation between two different points of view and two different modes of expression using the French language. In her article about the film, Mireille Rosello examines the host-guest relations of the two cousins. She writes that "*Salut cousin!* suggests that the extension of hospitality necessarily entails an element of linguistic flexibility that raises the issue of the relationship between hospitality and language."¹⁰⁰ Here, I will offer an additional reading on the clashes between the protagonists. I consider marginalized neighborhoods in general and Belleville in particular to be an example of what Homi Bhabha terms a third space. The cultural confrontations, revealed by the linguistic misunderstandings between the protagonists, illustrate the hybridity of the space where their frictions happen. According to Bhabha, the third space is a hybrid space – both product and outcome of postcoloniality. He writes that:

It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory [...] may reveal that the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an *international* culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*. To that end we should remember that it is

¹⁰⁰ Mireille Rosello, "Merzak Allouache's 'Salut Cousin!': Immigrants, Hosts, and Parasites," *South Central Review* 17, no. 3 (2000): 111, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3190096>.

the 'inter' – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *in-between* space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture.¹⁰¹

The protagonists' paths in *Salut!* illustrate Bhabha's notion that hybridity and ambivalence are related to the "complex intersections of multiple places, historical temporalities, and subject positions."¹⁰² The protagonist Mok was born in France and has received a French upbringing. He is proud to live in Paris, but has cut off contact with his family and has no connections to their homeland, Algeria. The huge generational gap between beurs and their parents is shown by the verbal miscommunication between generations and has been depicted by many beur authors. For example, in Chapter Two, I examined *Le thé au harem d'Archmède*'s lack of communication between Madjid and his mother. A similar cultural gap has also been portrayed in works where the protagonists are not beurs. One such example is represented in *Entre les murs* during the disciplinary hearing that I also analyzed in Chapter Two, when Souleymane needs to translate the deliberations for his mother who does not speak French. The generational gap is obvious in Loukoum's and his father's perceptions of the world. In *Salut, cousin!*, in addition to disconnected family ties, Mokrane's troubles with the rest of society exemplify the ambivalent postcolonial situation of beurs in the 1990s. Pretending to be cosmopolitan, he behaves as a citizen of the world by mixing various cultures: he prepares "spaghetti à la mode Thaï," he roller-skates because "c'est zen", and regularly goes to a psychiatrist.¹⁰³ In order to hide his Algerian origin, Mokrane prefers to be called Mok. His path exposes his wish to fit into dominant society and his failure to do so. Although he is a young adult, his behavior appears to

¹⁰¹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 38.

¹⁰² "Interview with Homi Bhabha," by W.J.T. Mitchell, accessed November 10, 2016, <https://prelectur.stanford.edu/lecturers/bhabha/interview.html>.

¹⁰³ Mok states, "Ecoute, il faut que je me casse chez mon psy."

be childish. He has no stable job or occupation, and differs from the younger Momo and Loukoum who care about their loved ones and take responsibility for their actions. In an interview for *Figaro*, Allouache states that he wanted to create Mok as a complex character.¹⁰⁴ Mok's behavior and verbal expression reflect the third space's ambiguity. Mok's perception of the neighborhood reveals his desire for a creative environment and he insists that Belleville is a great place for multicultural artistic production. By imagining a wonderful space to live where he would not be marginalized, Mok tries to reinvent his low social status. According to him, artists, an American novelist, a Shakespearean actor, some intellectuals, and a great pianist live on his Moskova street. Mok explains to Alilo that "C'est un quartier super-classe, tu sais... Tout Paris cherche à habiter ici" and "Le XVIIIe, c'est un arrondissement vachement métissé... C'est l'avenir de Paris!" However, Mok's neighbor, Fatoumata (Magaly Berdy) describes Belleville the way we see it on the screen. Her image of Belleville contradicts Mok's perception and she explains to Alilo, "Ici, c'est la Moskova, c'est le quartier de la misère." The contrast between reality and Mok's belief indicates his illusions about the space he belongs to.

Mok's cousin Alilo becomes one of Belleville's new faces. His arrival in the neighborhood demonstrates the movement of people between spaces, and the exchange between places and economies. He is discovering life in Belleville and Paris, and is in a process of constructing an image of these spaces. Culturally, the neighborhood is defined by a variety of verbal expression and Alilo brings the language of Algiers to its shared space. He speaks very simple French and makes grammar mistakes (ex. "J'ai endormi" instead of "je me suis endormi").

¹⁰⁴ Allouache explains that Mok was "Le personnage le plus difficile pour moi. Je voulais en faire un être contradictoire, un peu hystérique, irréal. J'ai choisi un acteur non-professionnel. Je voulais sortir des banlieues, montrer quelqu'un déjà rentré dans Paris, qui se croit Français, perdu par son imaginaire de la France." Allouache, *L'Avant-Scène Cinéma*, 457:67.

According to Mok, Alilo “apprend la vie parisienne” and he needs to learn the language of the city. Mok says “C’est ça! Tu ferais mieux d’apprendre à parler...” Mok pretends to speak perfect French and states, “J’ai pas fait arabe première langue, moi!” but, in fact, he uses the urban slang of Belleville. He calls the cops “les keufs,” and regarding the false marriage he is involved in, he explains, “La grosse elle a besoin de papiers... Alors, son père il casque et moi je ramasse la thune en jouant le rôle du mari, tu piges ?” The cultural misinterpretations between the cousins show up as verbal misunderstandings.

The communication between them demonstrates the clash between Belleville’s vernacular and Algiers’ vernacular. Often, the cousins need to clarify what they mean while speaking to each other and sometimes they blame each other for the confusions. Mok gets angry when Alilo does not understand his urban French, but he is not aware of the cultural specificities of the space Alilo comes from. For example, Mok thinks that the Algerian word “trabendo” means a person, while “trabendo” is a conversational term for illegally imported products for sale in Algeria. The misadventures of the characters, who are ordinary people, create a comical story. The misfortunes of the protagonists determine the genre of the film and the critics define it as a “comédie populaire” or “Italian comedy.”

Small details related to language highlight the contrasting perceptions of the cousins and bring a humorous effect. One amusing detail is that the cousins project the perception of themselves on the name of Mok’s pet. Mok associates his pet fish with himself and calls it “Personne,” as he feels unimportant and invisible in Parisian society. In contrast, Alilo calls the fish “Monsieur Cousteau” implying Jacques-Yves Cousteau’s adventures, since his own journey to Paris is a time of discovery. Later, the film offers two contrasting endings for the cousins’ paths, a happy one for Alilo and a sad one for Mok. The title of the film and the story emphasize

Mok's misfortune. Both words in the title "Salut, cousin!" have ambivalent meanings. We hear the word "cousin" only twice, once in a conversation between the cousins and once during the fictive wedding. There, Alilo asks the waiter for a phone, saying, "Dis-moi, cousin! On peut faire le téléphone d'ici?" The sentence refers to Alilo's pending "trabendo" mission. At the same time, his way of asking suggests that the marginalized in Paris share the same unstable status of postcolonial newcomers and from this perspective they are like relatives, or cousins. One hears the title of the film only once, at the end of the story, when Alilo leaves a message on Mok's answering machine. Since, in French, "salut" means "hi" and "bye" the title embodies Mok's ambivalent position in the space of the neighborhood. The above examples demonstrate Martine Delvaux's point that connects humor to Bhabha's term "colonial mimicry." According to Bhabha, we observe the phenomenon of "colonial mimicry" when in a given society an individual imitates a cultural attitude of the dominant part of the society because he thinks that he can become a part of that society. Delvaux explains that the questions raised in Bhabha's scholarship often combine with "motifs tels que le jeu, le déguisement, le masque et le mensonge, met en scène la problématique développée par Homi Bhabha."¹⁰⁵ This applies mostly to Mok who pretends to be an outgoing Parisian, but is constantly misunderstood and lonely. Doris Ruhe also connects Mok's attitude to the colonial mimicry. She writes that "As a kind of spin-off, Mok's mimicry presents the viewer with a caricature of the big-city dweller with all his

¹⁰⁵ Martine Delvaux, "L'Ironie du sort: le tiers espace de la littérature beure," *The French Review* 68, no. 4 (1995): 688.

idiosyncrasies, subversive in tendency, as described by Homi Bhabha.”¹⁰⁶ Mok’s colonial mimicry is evident in his verbal communication as well.

In opposition to Alilo’s simple business, Mok describes his occupation as a sophisticated one, based on creative work with rhymes and music. Mok compares himself to famous French singers, explaining that he has a career of an aspiring singer, “J’attaque une carrière de chanteur...Et crois-moi, grâce à Gérôme, ça va cartonner! Dans un an, Bercy et le top 50...Et là en ce moment, je travaille sur les textes de Jean de la Fontaine. *La Cigale et la fourmi*, tu connais?” For his rapping performance, Mok uses some of La Fontaine’s fables (e.g. *Le corbeau et le renard*, *Le Rat de ville et le Rat des champs*, *Le loup et l’agneau* and *La cigale et la fourmi*). Allouache’s choice of *Le Rat de ville et le Rat des champs* fable is a symbolic one. It describes a meeting between the city rat and the country rat and corresponds to the story of the cousins. As the country rat does, Alilo visits his cousin Mok in the city, but behind the image of a prosperous life in Paris, he finds him living in poverty and loneliness. The fable is a key element of French cultural patrimony and of the French educational system. Similar connections between the fables and French marginalized youths are depicted in the novels *Beni et le paradis privé* by Azouz Begag, and *Les A.N.I. du “Tassili”* by Akli Tadjer, and in the film *Games of Love and Chance* (2003) by Abdellatif Kechiche.¹⁰⁷ Mok’s reference to La Fontaine expresses his wish to integrate into the French culture. He hopes that the language and literature of the 17th century will connect him to the French society. As Doris Ruhe explains, his rap fusion “articulates the wish to overcome the contradictions between French tradition and modern youth culture, between

¹⁰⁶ Doris Ruhe, “Myths of Passage: Urban Space in Rachid Boudjedra, Michel Tournier, and Merzak Allouache,” *L’Esprit Créateur* 41, no. 3 (June 24, 2010): 59, <https://doi.org/10.1353/esp.2010.0073>.

¹⁰⁷ Michel Laronde, *L’écriture décentrée: La langue de l’Autre dans le roman contemporain* (Paris: Editions L’Harmattan, 1997), 190.

national cultural heritage and the internationally influenced music scene.”¹⁰⁸ The fables contain universal moralities and Mok hopes that they would appeal to his young audience. However, the classical French text does not connect him to the youths. Instead, the youths relate the fable to the school curriculum and consider it outdated. They are sensitive to the school curriculum; they associate it with the educational system, and perceive the school to be a space of repression. Instead, the youths relate to the recent postcolonial changes that affect the young urban poor in France. During the soiree, Gwana, the singer before Mok’s appearance, raps about the FLN (Front de Libération Nationale) and the FIS (Front Islamiste de Salut) and is loved by the young audience. This indicates that the young French people react to the recent social events. Their response to the performances underscores the ambiguous relations between language and culture in the spaces of the marginalized neighborhoods such as Belleville. Mok’s rapping failure underlines all his unsuccessful endeavors in the city.

In opposition to the novels, Belleville in *Salut cousin!* is a space without visible borders; it is a part of Paris. The marginalized neighborhood is an essential part of the contemporary world, as it is both linked to the city’s spaces and it contains its own spaces. Ruhe points to the interrelations between the city center and its periphery, where Belleville geographically belongs. According to her, “Allouache shows a city that has become hybrid to a previously unknown extent. The periphery has undermined the center in all spheres and made itself at home in it. [...] On the other hand, the center has also penetrated the periphery.”¹⁰⁹ One intriguing space that symbolizes the connectedness between spaces is the neighborhood’s phone booth. Some of the important twists in the story happen there. In the small space of the phone booth, in a medium

¹⁰⁸ Ruhe, “Myths of Passage,” 60.

¹⁰⁹ Ruhe, 60.

close-up, we see Alilo for first time and his cousin, Mok, who is waiting outside. From this point on, finding the information that Alilo needs for his “trabendo” mission becomes an important part of the plot. Unfortunately for him, he cannot recover the address since his boss is out of the country. The missing address predetermines Alilo’s time to stay in France. The accomplishment of the task depends on a small piece of information that can be received by a technological device connecting the spaces. The phone booth is a small hybrid territory; it is a public and a personal space. For Alilo, it becomes an extension of Mok’s small place where he is staying (as the streets are for Momo and Loukoum). Thus, when the booth is taken by an unknown African woman, Alilo insists on using this particular booth, saying, “J’habite ici. Je veux faire ici.” The phone booth is also a space of struggle. The skinheads threaten Fatoumata when she is inside. Later, she cries there after being discarded by his boss and lover. Lastly, at the end of the story Alilo calls Mok from a phone booth to tell him that instead of going back to Algeria, he will stay in France. The development of the plot shows that when (phone) connections work, the protagonists advance toward their goals; when connections don’t work, the characters’ plans are stalled. For example, when the police do not allow Mok to answer Alilo’s incoming call, the connection between the cousins is lost.

Belleville is a vibrant space that contrasts the generic public spaces that Marc Augé calls non-places. By the term “non-place” he means contemporary public spaces associated with communication and transportation where the people are anonymous.¹¹⁰ Examples of non-places are airports, hotels, highways, supermarkets and transportation centers. In the novels, the action takes place mostly in Belleville, as its borders are clear and Momo and Loukoum rarely go

¹¹⁰ Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, trans. John Howe (London: Verso, 1995).

outside the neighborhood. Belleville in *Salut cousin!* illustrates the free movement between neighborhood and downtown. For Mok's performance, the cousins go to Aubervilliers, a neighborhood that is located in the adjacent 19th district of Paris. Separately, Alilo wanders in the urban spaces where he knows he will find some Algerian friends. He goes to the Algerian restaurants of the Boulevard Barbès and the banlieue where his relatives live. Later, Alilo and Fatoumata enjoy a walk in Paris. As Lefebvre writes about the contemporary cities, including Paris, "Formal boundaries are gone between town and country, between centre and periphery, between suburbs and city centres, between the domain of automobiles and the domain of people."¹¹¹ In *Salut cousin!*, the city's open spaces (Barbès street, Belliard street, Sentier street, the city, the market, on the bridge – pont de Trocadero, place Pigalle, public garden, Seine river bank) are extensions of Belleville. The characters move between Belleville and the city's non-places without trouble. Moreover, contrary to the frustrating journeys of the protagonists in the novels, the characters' travels in the film imply connectedness and movements between all kinds of spaces. The trip of Alilo's boss to Morocco at the same time when Alilo is in France exemplifies the travel between distant spaces. The journey of Alilo's cousin who travels overseas, in pursuit of a better life, is an additional example of connectedness of the spaces.

The non-places function as egalitarian FCZs. The story is framed by two scenes that take place in the non-place of the train station. Non-places contrast the neighborhood of Belleville, because they lack cultural specificity. At the non-places, people of all backgrounds, classes and races meet, mix and separate. The first meeting of the protagonists at Paris' train station relies on the sounds of the place and on the verbal interaction between two men. The camera focuses on their feet and before seeing them, we learn that there is lost information. One of them says, "Tu

¹¹¹ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 97.

sais cousin...j'ai un problème...C'est très grave!...j'ai perdu une adresse...Je sais pas si c'est dans le train ou dans le bateau.” One of the last scenes is also at a Paris train station, the Gare de Lyon. Allouache creates the atmosphere of this non-place by generic background sounds. The speaker at the train station sends a standard security message to all travelers, “Mesdames, Messieurs! Pour préserver votre sécurité, SNCF vous invite à ne laisser aucun objet ou bagage sans surveillance. Nous vous demandons de nous signaler tout bagage abandonné.” There, we see Alilo and Fatoumata who, ironically, forget the suitcase that is the reason for Alilo’s trip. The camera follows the couple going away and leaving the luggage behind. The suitcase gradually takes over the frame. Later, we learn that the police have destroyed it. The film ends up with an unexpected shift in the characters’ location. Mok, who pretends to be a seasoned Parisian, will be expelled from Belleville and France, and sent to Algeria where he has never been and does not speak Arabic. Alilo, who intended to go back to Algeria is staying with Fatoumata in France. As Rosello explains, “In *Salut cousin!*, the system exceeds its own logic by deporting a perfectly integrated ‘Beur’ and by creating the conditions that, paradoxically, force Alilo to become an illegal immigrant.”¹¹² Allouache creates the switch of the characters’ paths by juxtaposing the love scene at the train station and the scene of expulsion in Mok’s apartment. Mok’s expulsion contradicts the cheerful message on his answering machine and highlights his impasse situation:

Bonjour! Vous êtes bien chez Mok... “Qui veut voyager loin ménage sa monture...moins ne sert à courir il faut partir à point...” Je ne suis pas là ...Mais je reviens bientôt ne vous inquiétez pas...Entre temps, si vous avez un message, parlez après le signal sonore...A tchao!

¹¹² Rosello, “Merzak Allouache’s ‘Salut Cousin!’,” 116.

The scene mixes up humor and sadness because of Mok's unfortunate fate. He will be deported from his space of origin due to his violations of the state's rules. The motif of expulsion alludes to Tania's fate from *Illégal*, it evokes Souleymane's expulsion from *Entre les murs*, and it echoes Karol's initial impasse in *Blanc*. The protagonists from the works of the previous chapters, Tania, Karol, Gregory from *Une histoire américaine* and Souleymane are all newcomers in a shared space, a FCZ, and all are forced to leave it. These expulsions demonstrate that the newcomers are not readily accepted in the space of the FCZ. Mok's language skills and his wish to blend into the French society do not secure his integration. Moreover, his case stands out as extreme since he is expelled from the space where he has resided all his life. Belonging to Belleville and speaking its language not only hinder integration into mainstream society, but they are sufficient conditions for expulsion from the FCZ.

4.4 CONCLUSION

The analysis in the third chapter shows that the existing connection between space and language in the marginalized neighborhood of Belleville, as represented in the three fictional works, *La vie devant soi*, *Le Petit prince de Belleville*, and *Salut, cousin!* is very strong. The language of the protagonists is a social code, a convention that links them to the space they live and move in. The space-language connection in Belleville has its distinct qualities. One of them is that the language of the neighborhood corresponds to the hybrid culture of its open space. The language of Belleville is a multitude of verbal expressions that depend on the cultural background of the newcomers. This linguistic richness of the quartier is an outcome of the postcolonial processes in

the second half of the 20th century and the migration from the former French African colonies to contemporary France.

An additional feature of the language of Belleville is that it is extremely flexible tool for communication. The languages of the protagonists symbolize the belonging to the space of Belleville and, at the same time, they function differently in the space of the city where the characters are outsiders. From this point of view, the verbal expression of the protagonists illustrates belonging to the neighborhood and unbelonging to the city. As David Bellos explains, “la valeur d’usage de la langue n’est pas *dans* la langue elle-même, mais dans les rapports sociaux qui l’encadrent.”¹¹³ The language of the protagonists is one of the social markers of their social relations. The language-space link is flexible, and the characters are able to transform their language skills in order to upgrade their social position in the city. For example, Loukoum from *Le petit prince de Belleville* acquires new language skills and even begins writing the tale of his family. From this perspective, the language of the marginalized postcolonial quartier Belleville is not only a tool for communication in an open multicultural space. It is also a tool for adaptation in the changing urban settings and even, it is a tool for survival.

¹¹³ Bellos, “Ce que Momo veut dire: la mémoire de la Shoah dans *La vie devant soi* de Romain Gary,” 56.

5.0 PARADOXES OF THE POSTCOLONIAL HOME IN FRANCOPHONE CONTACT ZONES

“As a space of belonging and alienation, intimacy and violence, desire and fear, the home is charged with meanings, emotions, experiences and relationships that lie at the heart of human life.”

Alison Blunt, *Domicile and Diaspora: Anglo-Indian Women and the Spatial Politics of Home*¹

In addition to the closed institutional spaces -- court, prison, school -- and the open space of the neighborhood already analyzed in the previous chapters, in this last chapter I will explore the closed private space of the postcolonial home. Since home is an essential space of human life and of the community, many scholars have analyzed it from various perspectives. Stacey Weber-Fève offers a helpful point of entry when she writes that “the home manifests a deeply personal and highly political symbol that often underlies diverse artistic narratives of different cultures and languages.”² She considers the space of the home to be one that links the personal and the political. Moreover, according to her, the home is connected to national and global spaces. She argues that the home has “permeable walls” and is an intersection of the personal, national and

¹ Alison Blunt, *Domicile and Diaspora: Anglo-Indian Women and the Spatial Politics of Home* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), 5.

² Weber-Fève, *Re-Hybridizing Transnational Domesticity and Femininity*, xix.

global.³ In a similar vein, Rosemary Marangoly George explains that “the primary connotation of ‘home’ is the ‘private’ space from which the individual travels into the larger arenas of life and to which he or she returns at the end of the day.”⁴ According to her, home is not always a physical space. It can be a personal mental construction.⁵ As with Weber-Fève, George also finds a connection between home and nation, stating that “Homes and nations are defined in the instances of confrontation with what is considered ‘not-home,’ with the foreign, with distance.”⁶ Traditionally home is considered a space of comfort, but it can, instead be a space of complication and discomfort. Thus, homes are often spaces of conflicts, “places of violence and nurturing.”⁷ In addition, George considers home to be an antithesis of travel.⁸ Taking a slightly different perspective, Sara Upstone explores the connection between the domestic space and the colonial order and indicates that the postcolonial home is a space that also embeds a politics of gender.⁹ Taken together, these scholars show the space of home to be an important personal space related to the city, the nation and the global. It is also a space of individual, generational and social conflicts. Home is, as Douglas Porteous summarizes, a “territorial core” of all societies.¹⁰ We can thus say that home is (1) a micro space, a part of the global whole and (2) a space of oppositions that reflect the tensions of the FCZ where home is located.

³ Weber-Fève, 210.

⁴ Rosemary Marangoly George, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 11.

⁵ George, 11.

⁶ George, 4.

⁷ George, 9.

⁸ George, 2.

⁹ Sara Upstone, *Spatial Politics in the Postcolonial Novel* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2009), 146.

¹⁰ George, *The Politics of Home*, 13.

The postcolonial home in particular is an outcome of displacement, migration and movement. In this this chapter, I explore postcolonial homes of individuals from former colonies who needed to leave their homeland and construct a home in the space of the colonizer in France. I understand the postcolonial home to be a closed private space where a family or an individual lives after the displacement of a postcolonial migratory journey. To the ongoing research on postcolonial homes, I will add an analysis of how postcolonial homes interact with the FCZs in which they are located. The postcolonial home carries the features of its original (African or Caribbean) settings, but these reappear in a new cultural and economic context after the journey. Such homes reflect the contradictions of the FCZ and are spaces where the FCZ's conflicts are amplified. I will show that although a micro space, the postcolonial home in a FCZ is also in itself a contact zone in miniature.

The characters in the works I selected are impacted by dislocation, an outcome of their exile. All are related to a postcolonial home. I look at the film *Inch 'Allah dimanche* (2001) by Yamina Benguigui, the novel *L'impasse* (1996) by Daniel Biyaoula,¹¹ and the film *35 rhums* (2008) by Claire Denis. In the film *Inch 'Allah dimanche*, I examine the protagonist Zouina's home. After WWII and especially after the French-Algerian War, the French government invited significant numbers of former male colonial subjects to contribute to the workforce in a modernizing France.¹² In 1974, on humanitarian grounds, the cabinet of the newly elected President Valery Giscard d'Estaing allowed for a policy of *regroupement familial*.¹³ The term describes the policy of allowing the families of North African men, who were already working in

¹¹ Biyaoula, *L'impasse*.

¹² Sharon Olivia Donaldson, "Bordering Bodies, Migrating Selves: A Geo-Textual Exploration of Sex, Skin and Speech in Contemporary Francophone Life Narratives" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2012), 46.

¹³ Donaldson, 44.

France after WWII, to settle in France. Zouina's Algerian family moving to France illustrates this policy in action. I analyze the internal tensions in Zouina's home, which were provoked by the external factors of the French social environment. A second example of a postcolonial home is the home of the protagonist Joseph Gakatuka in the novel *L'impasse* by Daniel Biyaoula. Joseph decides to visit his family in Brazzaville after fifteen years in France. After a three-week uncomfortable stay in Brazzaville, Joseph returns to France. Being black, he is oversensitive to racial insinuations, but he discovers that the people in Congo and in France share reciprocal cultural stereotypes on life and race. The characters of Zouina and Joseph have different cultural and racial backgrounds, but they share the similar status of being subaltern, marginalized and severely criticized at home by their families. In contrast to the home as a space of tension, the one depicted in *35 rhums* is represented as a space without visible conflict. In Denis' film, I will examine the home space of the protagonists, Josephine, a college student, and her father, Lionel. In addition, I will look at the lack of a supportive home of one of the father's colleagues, René. The two men share the same cultural background, occupation and daily routine, but René finds no satisfaction in his way of living, whereas Lionel feels the comfort of the home space he shares with Josephine. The representations of the selected homes will allow me to understand the characteristics of the closed space of the postcolonial home in FCZs.

5.1 PERMEABLE WALLS OF THE POSTCOLONIAL HOME IN *INCH' ALLAH* *DIMANCHE*

Yamina Benguigui is one of the first film directors in France to explore the journeys of exile and displacement from the Maghreb to France. She has won several prizes at international film festivals and also the Prix de la Paix (Florence, 2003). She has also received the Légion d'honneur and is an Officier des Arts et des Lettres. This particular film is as well regarded as its director: it has received no less than twenty-seven prizes.¹⁴ Released in 2001, *Inch' Allah dimanche* (*Sunday, God willing*) follows the path of an Algerian immigrant family in France. The film integrates aspects of both beur and banlieue film, two French genres produced in France starting in the 1980s and 1990s respectively. In Carrie Tarr's view, the two genres are "permeable and overlapping:"

First, they have a common concern with regard to the place and identity of the marginal and excluded in French society. Second, they offer a "touchstone" for measuring the extent to which universalist Republican assumptions about Frenchness can be challenged and particular forms of multiculturalism envisaged and valued. And third, they engender a representation of ethnicity linked to questions of gender and authorship through the comparison of male and female, white and beur-authored films.¹⁵

A characteristic of these films is that, in most cases, the protagonists are young males living in the urban peripheries of the French cities. Thus, Benguigui's film differs from other beur and

¹⁴ Adela Lechintan, "Entretien Avec Yamina Benguigui," *French Review: Journal of the American Association of Teachers of French* 85, no. 4 (March 2012): 730.

¹⁵ Weber-Fève, *Re-Hybridizing Transnational Domesticity and Femininity*, 186.

banlieue films in its focus on women. Indeed, it is a work that offers women's point of view since both the director and the protagonist are women. Based on a novel with same name, the film connects the author's autobiographical story to the "regroupement familial" in 1970s France.¹⁶ According to Isabel Hollis, Benguigui creates an image of the immigrant mother that did not exist before.¹⁷ The picture begins with a brief historical explanation of the French government policy. This short factual clarification situates the story in time and place, and provides the context of the family journey from Algeria to France. The historical explanation is followed by an allegorical scene of a painful mother-daughter separation, symbolizing a detachment from the homeland and a voyage to a new space. We see a big ship, *Zeralda* going into an open sea, carrying away the daughter and leaving behind the crying mother. Evelyne Leffondre-Matthews explains that "La qualité allégorique de la scène est renforcée par un jeu de champ/contre-champ, qui nous donne à contempler alternativement deux perspectives: celle de ceux qui restent, et celle des passagers appuyés aux rambardes du ferry, de plus en plus petits, regardant la ville qui s'éloigne."¹⁸ A non-diegetic sound track featuring a song of the Kabyle artist Idir creates a soothing, nostalgic atmosphere. The credits and the title of the film appear only after the mention of the "regroupement familial" and the painful scene of separation that provides a background for the story. The new home in France depicted in the film is a space where the traditional Algerian culture and the culture of the mainstream French society clash. The paradox of the postcolonial home in the film is that the obstacle for integration stems not from the outside society, but from the cultural expectations imposed within the home space.

¹⁶ Yamina Benguigui, *Inch'allah Dimanche* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2001).

¹⁷ Isabel Hollis, "Gendered Spaces and Wounded Bodies: Yamina Benguigui's *Inch'Allah Dimanche*," *International Journal of Francophone Studies* 15, no. 2 (December 2012): 200.

¹⁸ Evelyne Leffondre-Matthews, "France-Maghreb: Le voyage variations narratives spatio-temporelles sur écran diasporique" (Michigan State University, 2015), 74.

The character of the protagonist Zouina is a reconstruction of Benguigui's own mother. The story unfolds in Saint-Quentin, Northern France, where Benguigui's father immigrated during her childhood in the 1950s.¹⁹ The protagonist, Zouina (Fejria Deliba), travels with his three children and her mother-in-law Aïcha, (Rabia Mokeddem). The family is received by Zouina's husband, Ahmed (Zinedine Soualem), who has been working in France for ten years. The new home is a space of transferred Maghrebi traditions and family hierarchy. Most of the action in the film takes place at the home space where Algerian social mores and the French way of living mix. There is a constant conflict between Zouina and her mother in law, Aïcha. The outside social context amplifies the tensions between the two women. Zouina's home illustrates Weber-Fève's claim that "The home has permeable walls and is a receiver of public languages and values as well as is a space in which national, global, and/or hegemonic discourses speak, are performed, and reproduce themselves."²⁰ Furthermore, regarding Zouina, Weber-Fève indicates that being a second-generation woman in the traditional Maghrebi home positioned her as a "doubly disadvantaged Other, whose needs, interests, and desires come last."²¹ In the conflict between Zouina and Aïcha, Ahmed sides with his mother. Both mother and son try to isolate their home from external French influences, but they are not very successful. Isabel Hollis points out that although Aïcha is a representative of the Maghreb's rituals, Benguigui suggests that it is impossible to maintain "the rigid rules of tradition in the context of migration."²² Benguigui uses different cinematographic approaches to present the space inside the postcolonial home and the spaces outside of it.

¹⁹ Donaldson, "Bordering Bodies, Migrating Selves," 40.

²⁰ Weber-Fève, *Re-Hybridizing Transnational Domesticity and Femininity*, 210.

²¹ Weber-Fève, 202.

²² Hollis, "Gendered Spaces and Wounded Bodies: Yamina Benguigui's *Inch'Allah Dimanche*," 208.

The home from outside is represented by long, establishing shots. The family's home is situated between two apartments with occupants who symbolize opposing attitudes towards the newcomers. The neighbors threaten the stability of Ahmed's home and represent two contrasting sides of the French society, a welcoming attitude and hostile behavior. On one side, Mademoiselle Nicole Briat, a divorced young woman, works in a cosmetics factory. The unattached Nicole is a representative of the rapidly increasing feminist movement in the 1970s in France, and she embodies its aspiration for women's emancipation in all spheres of life. As such, Nicole's view of society and immigration is in stark contrast to that of the neighbors on the other side, a xenophobic and conservative retired French couple, Monsieur and Madame Donze. The closed space of home reflects the impasse of the Maghrebi women that Benguigui has already depicted in her documentary *Memoires d'immigres* (1997). Figuratively, living locked up and isolated at home, women were destined to preserve the traditional cultural values of the homeland that the family had left behind. Instead of a space of comfort, Zouina's home is a space where she is verbally abused by her mother-in-law and physically abused by her husband, Ahmed. Stacey Weber-Fève writes that Zouina's home illustrates the common status quo that "relations between the sexes within the Maghrebi familial hierarchy manifest the crucial conflict, as the place of women (and their roles) within the culture(s) of origin and the culture(s) of residency appears highly incompatible."²³ At home, as is tradition in the Maghreb, Ahmed controls access to all spaces. He delegates the supervision of the home space to his mother, and he regulates Zouina's interactions with the outside world. Thus, the home has its own spaces controlled by Aïcha, and viewers see this in the fact that she possesses the only key for the family's cupboard.

²³ Weber-Fève, *Re-Hybridizing Transnational Domesticity and Femininity*, 199.

Being the protagonist, Zouina is filmed mostly in close-ups or medium close-ups, but her voice is barely heard at home. We only hear it when she is alone and cries while looking at her mother's picture. The rest of the family talk to her, but she rarely answers. The first time we recognize Zouina's voice is when she meets her neighbor, Nicole, and tells her her name. At home, the camera creates a feeling of captivity. The home is relatively small; and there is no space to move. Hollis observes that Zouina "is constantly either crossing or looking across such thresholds, framed, for example, within doors and windows, representing the crossing between the interior and the exterior (or the female and male) spaces."²⁴ Moreover, Zouina is excluded from the family's activities. She does not participate in the search for a sheep for the Big Eid, the Feast of Sacrifice celebration and is completely ignored when Ahmed is playing guitar. Even when guests come to pay visit to Zouina, she is still in the subaltern position of only serving them while Aïcha takes the role of the host.

However, outside the home, Zouina claims agency. As Hollis indicates, "The most crucial of the spatial boundaries that confine Zouina is that between interior and exterior space."²⁵ If, at home, Zouina is silent and obedient, in the yard she is active and defends her children against the hostility of the neighbor, Madame Donze. The yard is a hybrid space. It is a part of the home, but at the same time, it is an open space where the neighbors meet, communicate and sometimes confront each other. For example, Zouina attacks Madame Donze who has destroyed her children's ball. Hollis writes that "This chaotic intrusion into the Donze's garden is a boundary crossing that surely alludes to the broader immigrant crossing into France

²⁴ Hollis, "Gendered Spaces and Wounded Bodies: Yamina Benguigui's *Inch'Allah Dimanche*," 209.

²⁵ Hollis, 202.

as a nation.”²⁶ The yard is a simplified, miniature model of society. It is also a space where the inside rules of the Maghrebi home apply but they are less rigid. Sometimes Zouina’s actions in the backyard provoke laughter and the story becomes comical. For example, in one of the scenes, her children play in the yard and break the neighbors’ cockerel, a symbol of Frenchness. In two other scenes, coffee is prepared on a stove top for Aïcha and a dead dog is secretly buried in the darkness of the night. As a whole, Zouina’s treatment outside her home space contrasts with the one that she receives inside of it.

In fact, Zouina finds comfort outside of her home. In a cemetery, she met Madame Manant, a widow of a French officer killed in Algeria during the French-Algerian war (1954-1962). Although Madame Manant lost her husband in Zouina’s homeland, she offers support to Zouina. The shared historical past connects the two heroines, and, later Mme Manant helps Zouina meet Malika Bouira. In addition, Zouina receives gifts from her new acquaintances. Nicole gives her cosmetic products, Madame Manant brings her a book on Algeria. Her neighbor Nicole invites her to spend time together outside of home. The owners of the local grocery store allow Zouina to buy goods on credit. A bus driver smiles at her each time he passes next to their window, and he even gives her a ride from Malika’s place to her home. Hollis points out that “Within what the spectator assumes is a mere few days from the family’s arrival, Zouina has strangled her neighbour, been in trouble with the police, and has even hitched a lift with the military when she gets lost on one of her escapades.”²⁷ Zouina is thus more active outside of her home space than in it. The paradox of Zouina’s home is that she feels freer and is better accepted outside of it.

²⁶ Hollis, 203.

²⁷ Hollis, 206.

Zouina's escapes on three consecutive Sundays explain the film's title. Her getaways are only possible on these three Sundays when her husband and mother-in-law are in search of a sheep for the religious celebration of Eïd al Fitr. In order to follow the Muslim tradition of offering sweets, Zouina transgresses the rule of not leaving the home space. She goes out looking for Malika Bouira, a woman from Algeria, in order to exchange sweets as a way of celebrating Eïd. On Sunday, Zouina is supposed to stay home, but grasps the opportunity to search for Malika Bouira, presuming that Malika would become her friend. During Zouina's escapes, Benguigui brings into contrast the inside home spaces and the exterior spaces.

Benguigui's color choices underline the major conflict between the home space and the open spaces of the city. She uses the colors to illustrate the imprisonment at home versus the feeling of freedom outside of it. The outside spaces are shown by long shots and bright colors versus the dull shades inside the home. The interior of the closed home space consists of yellow and beige walls and brown furniture. In contrast, during Zouina's first escape, she dresses in lively colors. The crops are in buoyant green and sunshine brightens a huge agricultural field. The outdoor is associated with freedom as opposed to the imprisonment at home. Moreover, Hollis divides the spaces in the film between masculine and feminine. She notes that "the exterior, 'public' space and the workplace are masculine spaces, and the interior and domestic realm are feminine spaces."²⁸ Since in Malika's home, traditional Maghrebi rule function, it is also a "feminine space." We encounter a paradox that, in both home spaces (that of her own home and that of Malika's home), Zouina's behavior is rejected. In the "feminine spaces," Zouina is not accepted, but outside of these private domains, she is acknowledged by the rest of

²⁸ Hollis, 202.

the secondary characters who symbolize French society. Over the course of the film, even Madame Donze's hostility evolves into acceptance.

Malika's home is similar to Zouina's home in which a woman is bound to obey the rules. After a couple of Sunday escapes, Zouina finds Malika's home with the help of Madame Manant. It turns out that Malika's views on life in France are similar to those of Aïcha and Ahmed. Her home also functions according to the same rules that Ahmed and Aïcha want to impose in their home. Like them, Malika is against movement outdoors and listening to the French radio programs on love and sexuality. For Aïcha and Ahmed, many of the activities in the society are signs of immorality and disgrace. Malika perceives Zouina's trip the same way. In addition, the suitcases in the closed space of Malika's home echoes Zouina's home in which we also see piles of luggage. In connection to the piled and cluttered luggage, Evelyne Leffondre-Matthews cites Naficy who points out that "les lieux témoins du voyage de l'immigration ne sont pas uniquement les lieux fixes de transit, comme les ports, gares, hôtels, etc."²⁹ Naficy considers that borders crossings can be embodied in "mobile spaces" that include vehicles and suitcases.³⁰ Thus, the suitcases in Algerian homes in France are silent reminders of both displacement and the hope for return. Zouina's path between private and public spaces is a tale of displacement, but it is also a story about searching for ways to fit into a new context. Her path illustrates the fate of many people from the former French colonies who move to France, yet dream of going back to their native countries.

The film offers a surprisingly happy ending. At the beginning of the story, in the hybrid space of the yard, we see a miniature model of the French society between the neighbors and the

²⁹ Leffondre-Matthews, "France-Maghreb: Le voyage variations narratives," 79.

³⁰ Leffondre-Matthews, 79.

new inhabitants (a mother-in-law, daughter-in-law and her children). At the end of the story, in the public space of the street, we see all the characters in front of Ahmed's home waiting for Zouina and the children. The bus driver takes Zouina and the children from Malika's home and gives them a ride to their home. Hollis sees the bus driver as an antipode to Ahmed, because "The driver attracts Zouina's attention, as he is a facilitator of this free movement. In this sense he is the opposite of Ahmed, who prevents mobility."³¹ However, at the end of the story, for the first time, Ahmed supports Zouina and scolds his mother. The fact that Ahmed defends his wife symbolizes a change in the traditional behavior and norms of the Algerian home. By ridiculing his mother in front of everybody, Ahmed shows a changed point of view. The shift in the character's attitude implies that Benguigui considers the spatial boundaries where cultural codes collide to be flexible and permeable. The transformation in Ahmed's viewpoint shows the ongoing process of integration into mainstream society.

The protagonist's postcolonial home in the film becomes a small space of transculturation. By depicting the postcolonial home, Benguigui presents its internal interactions and its relations to the exterior space. Outside influences erode the traditional way of living that is transferred from Maghreb. The process demonstrates one of the outcomes of migration: ongoing changes in the closed private space of the postcolonial home in France.

³¹ Hollis, "Gendered Spaces and Wounded Bodies: Yamina Benguigui's *Inch'Allah Dimanche*," 210.

5.2 THE POSTCOLONIAL PARIAH OR HOMELESS AT HOME IN *L'IMPASSE*

L'impasse (1996) is the Congolese writer Daniel Biyaoula's first novel and, in 1997, it earns him the *Grand Prix de l'Afrique noire*. A psychological novel, it is a first person narrative and, it describes the protagonist Joseph Gakatuka's thoughts and perceptions. Born in Brazzaville, Congo, Joseph emigrates to France where he lives for about fifteen years in Poury, near Paris. The novel has three parts. The first part, called "La première constriction" follows the protagonist's three-week family visit to his hometown Brazzaville. His return causes ruptures and conflicts between him and his family. The second part, "La deuxième constriction," begins with a flashback to how Joseph met his white, middle-class girlfriend, Sabine, who later leaves him. It depicts Joseph's views on the African immigrant's life in France where he feels unwelcomed and misunderstood by mainstream society. During this section, Joseph is unemployed. He has a mental breakdown and is accepted for treatment into a psychiatric institution. The last part, "La mue," follows Joseph's transformation from a strong supporter of authentic African identity to a person who embodies all stereotypes and expectations of an African immigrant in France.

Like *Inch 'Allah dimanche*, the novel *L'Impasse* is a tale about movement and postcolonial migration. Ambroise Kom and Bernard Mouralis point to the novel's thematic richness.³² *L'Impasse* is a story about the fate of immigrants, the presence of postcolonial elites, the opposition between tradition and modernity, generational conflicts, tensions between individuality and collectivity, cultural clashes, stereotypes, alienation, the search for identity, and interracial relationships. The varied subjects and problems in the novel invite exploration from

³² Ambroise Kom and Bernard Mouralis, "Regards Croisés Sur L'Impasse de Daniel Biyaoula," *Notre Librairie (Paris)* 135 (1998): 21.

multiple angles. If *Inch 'Allah dimanche* depicts a story about exile from Algeria to France, in *L'Impasse*, there are two journeys, first when the protagonist goes back to Congo and a second one when he returns to France from Brazzaville. Thus, the novel is about the complex connection between exile and return. The question of homecoming in *L'impasse* evokes the theme of return in African literature already explored by some Négritude authors.³³ The return in *L'impasse* displays the protagonist's severed connections with his home country. Françoise Cevaër points out that the novel examines reciprocal stereotypes, the ones of Western societies regarding Africans and African stereotypes regarding the French.³⁴ Joseph's impasse is that despite the fact that he is a witness to life in both societies and that he understands the stereotypes' reciprocity, he cannot adopt either of them. My focus in this section is the protagonist's postcolonial home where he temporarily returns after his stay in France. I will show that his home becomes a battlefield of stereotypes and that Joseph does not belong to his home space. Indeed, Joseph is a pariah at home.

At the beginning of the story, Joseph states that he does not want to go back to Congo because of his memories and the way his family treated him as a child: "J'avoue que je ne mourrais pas de l'envie de repartir chez moi. Normal. Quand on a vécu ce que j'ai connu, quand on n'a jamais cessé de vous appeler Kala, "Le Charbon" [...] ça ouvre en vous un précipice infini."³⁵ Although Joseph's childhood has marked him profoundly, the past is not the only reason for his misery during his visit. Like in *Inch 'Allah dimanche*, in *L'impasse*, there are tensions between the protagonist and the rest of the family. Joseph's contradictions with his

³³ One example of such literature is Aimé Césaire's *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939).

³⁴ Françoise Cevaër, "Les stéréotypes, vecteurs de la constriction identitaire chez Biyaoula," *Présence Francophone: Revue Internationale de Langue et de Littérature* 71 (2008): 102.

³⁵ Biyaoula, *L'impasse*, 18.

family begin from the very moment he meets his relatives at the airport. He is expected to demonstrate “French” behavior that the family in Brazzaville has already learned to respect. The image of France that the relatives have adopted requires a display of wealth, a particular way of dressing, and connections to the powerful individuals of the day. Thus, when Joseph appears in a simple short-sleeved shirt, his oldest brother Samuel takes him to “Habits de Paris, le magasin chic de Brazza” to buy him an appropriate suit.³⁶ The costume purchase is an overture to a sequence of confrontations between Joseph and the other family members.³⁷ Traditionally, the family in Africa is united and, at home, all members follow local cultural traditions. Joseph’s family preserves the traditions but also acts according to the new Congolese society’s stereotypes. Joseph’s stay in France has changed him and is the main reason for the tensions with his family. Thus, the closed space of home becomes a space of torture for Joseph who explains:

Je me mets déjà à regretter d’être resté si longtemps à l’étranger. Car, qu’on en soit conscient ou non, ça vous change un peu la tête de rester coupé de votre pays pendant des années et même durant moins de temps que ça. Normal, puisque vous rencontrez des tas de choses, de nombreuses façons d’appréhender la vie. Ça vous amène nécessairement à relativiser votre être, votre propre réalité. Vous ne voyez plus les choses de la même manière qu’avant. Vous avez tendance à les percevoir comme un individu, quoi !³⁸

³⁶ Biyaoula, 45.

³⁷ “Il me dit qu’il y a des règles à respecter, que je ne les aime peut-être pas, les coutumes, mais que je suis un Parisien, que le Parisien a une image à défendre, que pour eux, les gens de ma famille, ce sera la honte insoluble qu’il y ait parmi eux un Parisien qui ne ressemble pas à un Parisien.” Biyaoula, *L’impasse*, 39.

³⁸ Biyaoula, *L’impasse*, 42.

Joseph becomes a product of two cultures, the culture of his country of origin and the culture that he has adopted during his stay in France. His home space, where he returns, becomes a space where the clashes between existing stereotypes of these cultures intensify. As Françoise Cévaër explains, “Joseph est cependant avant tout un individu au confluent de deux cultures et en marge de celles-ci, condamné à porter éternellement son étrangeté au sein des deux sociétés qu’il côtoie.”³⁹ For Joseph, his home is not a space of comfort, it is a space of opposing points of view on the postcolonial reality. The disputes happen in the relatively small closed space of home, but the intensity of the contradictions is high and very harmful for the protagonist.

One of the reasons for tensions between Joseph and his relatives is that, for his African family, France is a symbol of wealth, a space of social success. In contrast, for Joseph, France is a foreign space where he always feels unwelcome. Before returning home, Joseph has had misunderstandings with his younger brother, Denis. Joseph refused to provide Denis with a “certificat d’hébergement” for traveling to and staying in France. In Joseph’s view, African immigrants live in poverty there and it would be better to stay in Brazzaville. Denis does not forget Joseph’s refusal and the incident impacts the relationship between them during Joseph’s visit. Similarly, Joseph’s nephews think that being in France means a life of abundance and prosperity. Zakaria Soumare writes that “L’immigration est vécue dans ce texte comme une porte de sortie à tous les malheurs. Pour ses neveux, il n’y a pas de bonheur possible sans la France.”⁴⁰ For the family members Joseph comes from a coveted space of wealth and they are disappointed to see him not matching their perception of “un Parisien.”

³⁹ Cévaër, “Les stéréotypes, vecteurs,” 103.

⁴⁰ Zakaria Soumare, “L’Impasse de Daniel Biyaoula,” 4, accessed April 13, 2017, <https://www.etudes-litteraires.com/biyaoula-impasse.php>.

Moreover, Joseph realizes that, at home, traditions and modernity's influence combine and produce expectations that he cannot satisfy. Traditionally, Joseph needs to obey his older brother Samuel, but there is an additional reason, the new economic and cultural undertakings in the country. Samuel's position of "Directeur de la recherche sur le développement accéléré et immédiat" in Congo symbolizes the advent of innovations promoted by Western ways of life.⁴¹ Samuel is trying to become a part of the postcolonial elites that live in luxury and he imitates them. The difficulty for Joseph is not only the conflict between the perceptions of his relatives and his point of view. His problem is that these perceptions change over time according to how the two societies of ex-colonized and ex-colonizer negotiate their financial and social contacts. During Joseph's stay at home, his family's expectations are unpredictable for him. Cévaër points out that "l'une des premières originalités de *L'impasse* de Biyaoula est de superposer des stéréotypes raciaux anciens et figés à des archétypes et des pratiques communautaires en pleine mutation, et de montrer comment les deux se rejoignent pour placer le sujet postcolonial dans un carcan et une impasse identitaires."⁴² New rules, which are the outcome of postcolonial processes, have emerged and Joseph faces their consequences at home. For example, one of the conflicts between him and his family stems from their perceptions of the White French population. According to Samuel, Joseph has to avoid "les Blanches comme la peste" because "Ça a une autre manière de penser, les Blancs. Ils ne réfléchissent pas comme nous. Rien que ça, eh bien, ça suffit pour ne pas en épouser une."⁴³ At home, his interaction with family weakens

⁴¹ "Je ne mets pas longtemps pour constater que ce qu'on raconte sur la famille africaine, ce n'est que des fables, qu'elle est seulement de forme l'autorité des anciens. Samuel en a vraiment une grosse dans la famille, lui. Normal, puisque c'est lui qui la sort la monnaie. C'est le pouvoir de banque, quoi [...] ça vous propulse en haut de la hiérarchie familiale." Biyaoula, *L'impasse*, 52.

⁴² Cévaër, "Les stéréotypes, vecteurs," 117.

⁴³ Biyaoula, *L'impasse*, 58.

Joseph physically and psychologically. Talking with relatives causes Joseph strong headaches, nausea, and respiratory troubles. At the same time, he is facing misunderstanding and humiliation. Joseph explains that “Il n’y a qu’à voir leurs fuyants, leurs regards en coulisse, en dessous. La corde au cou que j’ai. J’en ai les jambes molles. C’est atroce, ma situation.”⁴⁴ In the small closed space of home, Joseph is constantly scrutinized and under the gaze of his relatives, his mental state deteriorates.

The pressure in his parents’ home is so intense that Joseph eventually leaves their house and moves to Samuel’s home located in an affluent neighborhood. Then, for similar reasons, Joseph leaves the luxury home of his brother, and goes to his grandfather’s home hoping that he will feel better there. However, this transition does not work out either, and he describes his journeys between his relatives’ homes as suffering. After his visit to his grandfather, he recounts, “Après cinq jours, j’ai envie de repartir à Brazza, je dirais même de fuir, tant je m’y sens alourdi, mal à l’aise.”⁴⁵ He returns to Samuel’s home but suffers from Samuel’s insistence that he attend church as do the Christian families in Brazzaville. Joseph refuses to go to church. Moreover, he does not use the traditional interjection “Ya” in front of Samuel’s name for showing respect for his oldest sibling and the family hierarchy. Joseph’s resistance provokes a scandal between him and Samuel, who accuses him of not respecting the traditions.⁴⁶ Samuel opposes traditions with the immigrant’s experience. Misunderstood again, Joseph cannot stay at Samuel’s home, and he decides to go back to his parents’ home. All verbal communications at the homes where Joseph has stayed exemplify his family’s paradoxal requirement to follow the traditions and, at the same

⁴⁴ Biyaoula, 53.

⁴⁵ Biyaoula, 134.

⁴⁶ “Tu crois que c’est parce que tu as passé quelques années à l’étranger que tu peux te permettre de marcher sur les traditions?” Biyaoula, 137.

time, to fit into their image of a Parisian. During his stay in the Congo, Joseph moves through a maze of homes. The paradox in Joseph's case is that he always has a place to stay, but never finds a supportive home where he belongs. Thus, Joseph has no home in his homeland, and he becomes a postcolonial pariah.

During the time spent in Brazzaville, the conflict between Joseph and his family escalates. Its culmination is at the end of the first part of the novel. All his relatives gather at his parents' home to punish Joseph and to force him to ask forgiveness from Samuel for not respecting the family hierarchy. The family is outraged because of his refusal to follow the old customs and the cultural stereotypes. Joseph is forced to stay in the center of a circle made up of family members who are blaming and disgracing him. He is thus publicly humiliated for his behavior. At this point, Joseph compares his family to a monster:

Ils sont assis en rond. On me dit que je dois me mettre au centre de ce rond. Je marque un instant d'hésitation. Je me rends à l'évidence qu'il m'est impossible de faire marche arrière, que je suis dans la gueule d'un monstre, entre les anneaux d'un boa. [...] Bientôt les autres gens se rapprochent. Je n'ai, posés sur moi, que des silences et des paroles écrasantes. [...] Mort d'avance que je suis.⁴⁷

The family is described as a snake that kills by constriction and the home space is its killing grip. Ironically, after the ritual, the family considers Joseph to be cured of his appalling behavior. In fact, the family's mistreatment of Joseph persists during his stay at home and is the first stage of his downward spiral into self-destruction. The title "Première constriction" of the first part that describes his return to Brazzaville corresponds to his profound conflicts at home. The title originates from the animal "boa constrictor." Joseph's family wants to make him fit into the

⁴⁷ Biyaoula, 140.

Congolese postcolonial society and is the first of the constrictions of the postcolonial immigrant. During Joseph's entire stay, the home space is an enclosure of torture and punishment. Moreover, at the end of his stay, the small home space turns into a burial space for him.

According to Zakaria Soumare the distinctiveness of the novel is related to its style.⁴⁸ Biyaoula conveys his protagonist's thoughts by using characteristics of oral speech such as repetitions, inversions, and everyday language. In addition, the representation of the postcolonial home as a space of constriction is achieved by the specific vocabulary of imprisonment. In the first part of the novel, two semantic fields coexist and oppose to each other. One semantic field is that of authenticity and is related to Joseph's perceptions of the environment. The other is one of artifice and is related to his home. Moreover, Biyaoula uses a vocabulary of the home space to describe Joseph's state of constriction. According to Joseph, the difference between his perceptions of the world and the perceptions of his family creates a wall between them. As he describes it, "On dirait que chacun de mes frères et de mes amis cherche en lui ce qu'il peut bien dire, comment on peut rompre le mur qu'il y a entre nous. Je le sens bien qu'il existe, ce mur. Il est invisible. Mais, il est là, tout immense."⁴⁹ At the end of the first part, during the family reunion when Joseph is publicly humiliated, he says that "Je sens qu'on les fait vivre autour de moi, ces murs. [...] Ils sont froids comme des cadavres, tout visqueux, gluants, gras. Dedans il n'y a que la nuit. On me pousse dedans. Je ne peux les casser, ces murs, ni la soulever cette nuit."⁵⁰ The metaphor of the walls that function as barriers contributes to the depiction of the postcolonial home as a prison. Similarly to the youths from the film *Entre les murs* who are between the walls of the educational institution, Joseph is between the walls of his home. In the

⁴⁸ Soumare, "L'Impasse de Daniel Biyaoula."

⁴⁹ Biyaoula, *L'impasse*, 64.

⁵⁰ Biyaoula, 140.

small space of the postcolonial home, his family imposes a set of contradictory requirements for him. He is supposed to obey the African family's traditional way of living and to embody their representation of a Parisian way of living.

The postcolonial home in *L'impasse* is not a space of comfort; it is rather a space that destroys the personality of the protagonist. Because Joseph does not fit his family's conceptions of the Modern Parisian or the Traditional Congolese he is ostracized and reduced to a postcolonial pariah. Joseph is ultimately an example of what I termed an individual FCZ in the introduction. Namely, his body and movements create a space of interaction between different cultures. My examination of Joseph's journey is, therefore, an examination of the interaction of the individual FCZ he creates with the larger FCZs of home and society.

5.3 JOURNEYS AND HOMES IN 35 RHUMS

As in the film *Inch' Allah Dimanche* and the novel *L'impasse*, the fate of the characters in Claire Denis' film *35 rhums* (2008) is related to relocation and movement. The film tells the story of a group of people of Caribbean descent living in Paris where some of them work as drivers for the RER regional train network. In an interview, Denis clarifies that "the characters' work in the railway has to be understood as a consequence of the decolonization of the 1960s: when the people of the French West Indies became French citizens."⁵¹ Denis explains that the film is homage to Yasujiro Ozu's 1949 masterpiece *Late Spring* where father and daughter live together,

⁵¹ Michelle Royer and Miriam Thompson, "Mobility and Exile in Claire Denis's 35 Rhums," in *Open Roads, Closed Borders: The Contemporary French-Language Road Movie*, ed. Michael Gott and Thibaut Schilt (Bristol: Intellect, 2013), 190.

but separate when the daughter is pressed to marry. The film also relates to the autobiographical story of Denis' mother and her grandfather who raised her mother by himself. Denis recalls, "My grandfather was Brazilian, so I could tell that he was not from France. Being a foreigner, it was as though his daughter was his only family' (Denis 2011). This long-lasting symbolic father-daughter bond born out of the marginalized effect of exile is the subject of *35 rhums*."⁵² Royer and Thompson explain that "*35 rhums* is infused with displacements, from Brazil to the Caribbean and from Japan to France, by transportation and transfer, but little is explicitly revealed and only traces of this mobility can be detected. This, however, gives a sense of universality to the father-daughter relationship."⁵³ In addition to the father-daughter bond, the film explores another universal question: the role and importance of home. Unlike the families in Benguigui's film and Beyaoula's novel, the family in *35 rhums* is small and functional. Father and daughter have a protective home space that Royer and Thompson describe as "narrow, intimate and hermetic, a space where they feel serene and secure. It acts as a nest-like stage for small, repeated rituals performed ceremoniously."⁵⁴ Such representation of the protagonists' home in *35 Shots rhums* can be regarded as a counter example to the homes in the film *Inach'Allah Dimanche* and the novel *L'impasse*. The cozy home of the protagonists contrasts strongly with the absence of family support for one of the secondary characters in the film, René, who eventually commits a suicide. In my analysis of *35 rhums*, I explore the effects of existence of a supportive postcolonial home versus the lack of family support. The integration into a new space after displacement cannot happen without a space of traditional warmth, support, and

⁵² Royer and Thompson, 189.

⁵³ Royer and Thompson, 189.

⁵⁴ Royer and Thompson, 192.

belonging. As a personal mental construction, home is needed for survival in a new postcolonial setting.

In the story, Lionel, a RER driver in Paris, has raised his daughter Joséphine by himself. Josephine is a college student in the anthropology department, and she works in a music shop. The plot advances according to the rhythms of everyday routines in their home and other seemingly unimportant events that happen outside of their home space: a broken car, a missed concert, a university class, and the death of Noé's cat. One of the characteristics of the film is that, with exception of Noé, all characters are black. The story follows the repetitive schedule of a Caribbean community of RER drivers in Northern Paris. The characters live in a decent banlieue, not in the typical slums and misery of these neighborhoods as seen in other beur and banlieue films. Moreover, while in *L'impasse*, race and "le poids d'être noir" is a major factor in the story, in *35 rhums* race does not appear to be an issue.⁵⁵ Denis explains, "my main desire was to make it simple and solid . . . calm, since all the characters are black, and I wanted to make it very clear that they do not live like clandestines. They have real lives, they are settled, they are French."⁵⁶ In fact, race can be considered an important factor in a nonconventional way: it is there, but it is not a sign of marginality as in most representations. Regarding the style of the film, critics share the opinion that even if the picture lacks the extravagance and scale of Denis' previous films, many of her recurring stylistic features exist in *35 rhums*. One characteristic is

⁵⁵ Biyaoula, *L'impasse*, 198.

⁵⁶ Yvette Bíró, "A Subtle Story: 35 Shots of Rum," *Film Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (2009-2010 Winter 2009): 38.

the poetics of the visuals; another is the relation between motion and impermanence.⁵⁷ Thus, the space of home created in *35 rhums* is an everyday space, but it is also a poetic space.

The home of Lionel and Josephine is a standard French apartment in a typical high-rise building. It consists of a relatively long corridor and rooms on both sides. The setting in the apartment is simple, and the objects in it are conventional. One can consider their apartment a generic contemporary home space containing common domestic objects, such as dishes, a washing machine, slippers, a rice cooker, and a CD player. At home, everyday situations and regular human gestures reoccur. There are no dramatic events, and due to the relative uneventfulness of the plot, it is difficult to define the feelings of the characters. As a whole, there is very little dialogue between Lionel and Josephine and speech in the film, overall, is minimal. For a relatively long time, we do not know the exact connection between them because of the banality of their communication. The camera only observes; it does not provide answers. If Zouina does not speak at home, it is because in the small family space, she is marginalized. By contrast, in *35 rhums* there are no conflicts and the characters do not require many words in order to understand each other. We grasp the connection between the two persons at home only when the woman calls the man “papa.” The repetitions of their actions create a routine and the routine contributes to the feeling of comfort. As Yvette Bíró explains, “Instead of significant plot events, Denis relies on other forms of storytelling order: repetition and ellipsis -- two seemingly opposite structural devices which work together in *35 Shots of Rum*.”⁵⁸ Regardless of the simplicity in the apartment and the sparse communication between the two characters, the home space creates coziness. The pastel colors in the apartment generate an atmosphere of calm. The home’s warmth

⁵⁷ James S. Williams, “Romancing the Father in Claire Denis’s ‘35 Shots of Rum,’” *Film Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (2010): 45.

⁵⁸ Bíró, “A Subtle Story: 35 Shots of Rum,” 39.

originates from the bond between the characters often expressed by silences, glances and some quiet moments. The visuals and everyday sounds at home emit a feeling of a mutual, quiet devotion between father and daughter.

However, Lionel and Josephine's home is not a hospitable space for visitors; it is a space for them alone. Even the neighbors, Gabrielle and Noé, who are almost like family members and are, respectively, fond of father and daughter, are not allowed in the apartment. Father and daughter preserve their space. They have tacitly replaced the missing mother and an additional person would disturb the harmony and balance of their home space. Although the colonial legacy is not overtly noticeable, in the small space of the apartment, it consists in the detail of listening to Radio Tropics and its music.⁵⁹ The domestic life protects Lionel and Josephine from misfortune in society. As Royer and Thompson write, the home space "creates an antidote to exile and displacement."⁶⁰ Both father and daughter travel short distances to the urban destinations related to their occupations. Only once do they undertake an unexpected family trip to Germany. Overall, the home space encapsulates their moments together, and they cherish them.

The film is framed by the coming and going of trains on tracks, and the characters' fates are connected to them. The visual and aural sensations of train movement create a sense of lasting rhythmic journey. Sounds of brakes, horns, and flashing lights contribute to a realistic depiction of train travel. Exterior spaces are also poeticized. Dennis Lim points out that "rhythm

⁵⁹ Outside of the apartment, the colonial legacy persists in the community of the Caribbean RER drivers.

⁶⁰ Royer and Thompson, "Mobility and Exile in Claire Denis's 35 Rhums," 59.

inside a rhythm” is what creates the poetic atmosphere of daily work.⁶¹ He mentions the artful approach of Agnès Godard who filmed the scenes from the driver’s compartment with a hand-held camera and was able to reproduce the movement of the trains and the view from the driver’s seat. Lionel and his Caribbean colleagues seem content by the rhythmic mobility of their urban travels. The only exception is his friend René. Although René is one of the first characters we see on the screen, his importance in the plot is underestimated. At the very beginning of the story, we see him driving an RER train. Later, he is quietly cleaning his locker. In one of the following scenes, he is silently watching the passing trains. René appears episodically and, seemingly, without complicating the plot until the moment of his departure. René speaks for the first time during the celebration of his retirement when he receives gifts from his colleagues. Going home afterward, during the train commute, René mentions to Lionel that he was not prepared for the permanent end of work.⁶² For years, his job defined his life and identity, and his retirement creates a rupture in his rhythmic routine. He reappears sad and lonely in a coffee shop where his former colleagues gather together. Lionel tells René that he thought René had left the city after retirement, but René responds that he has nowhere to go. Afterwards, we see René in the cabin when Lionel is driving the train. Eventually, we understand that René has committed suicide on the train tracks. What sets René apart from the rest of the characters is that he has no home where he can go after work. His daily duties have combined both his work and his domestic space. During his stay in France, his work has not only been his sole occupation, but it provided a space of comfort as well. After retiring, René senses the impact of displacement and loses his attachment to life. His suicide points to a deep psychological void that cannot be filled.

⁶¹ Dennis Lim, “Finding Rhythms Within Rhythms in Parisians’ Lives,” *New York Times*, September 4, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/06/movies/06lim.html?pagewanted=all>.

⁶² “J’étais pas armé et pas préparé”/ “I wasn’t armed and prepared.”

René's fate of a postcolonial citizen without a home space illustrates Rosello's notion of "désappartenance" or unbelonging to the space of the FCZ. In addition, René's path supports McClintock's observation that "Imperialism cannot be understood without a theory of domestic space" because the postcolonial mode of production is related to displacement.⁶³ From this perspective, René's fate illustrates that the feeling of a home space is a necessity for survival. Home is not only a physical space, it is also a mental construction. If missing, the psychological void of a home space hinders the adaptation to a new setting, and in René's case is fatal.

Lionel's fate could be similar to René's destiny if he did not have his home and the affection of his daughter. The father-daughter bond is obvious in two scenes depicting trips taken together. The first scene is when Lionel brings Josephine home from her late evening shift at the music shop. They travel through the city on his scooter, Josephine holding tightly to her father. For a moment, she closes her eyes. The close-up depicts father and daughter relishing the ride home. The second scene depicts an imaginary trip. The scene is slightly longer, about twenty seconds, but still very short compared to the rest of the scenes. It appears after Lionel's conversation with René in the driver's cab of the RER train. In response to René's sorrow, Lionel implies that his daughter and his home keep him stable, regardless of life's exterior troubles. To the distraught René Lionel explains, "Moi, quand j'ai des idées noires, je pense à ma fille." While this is a nice sentiment, it may have reminded René that when he has dark thoughts, he has nobody to think about.

The following scene is a blending between fantasy and reality. We witness a seamless shift to a scene in which Lionel and Josephine are galloping on a horseback. Although the horse is moving on the train tracks, the scene evokes an old fairy tale. The scene pictures Josephine

⁶³ Upstone, *Spatial Politics in the Postcolonial Novel*, 115.

sitting in front of Lionel, her arm around his neck. Both are looking ahead toward an unknown destination. The scene's soundscape consists of echoes of train whistles and tracks, the sound of a horse's gallop, and a musical number by the Tindersticks. According to Yvette Bíró, the section evokes Goethe's poem *Erlkönig* that is based on a traditional Danish legend. The legend tells a story about the death of a child afflicted by a supernatural being while riding in the forest with his father. Although we can find some similarities between the visuals in the film and the legend, the scene underlines the strong father-daughter bond rather than the unfortunate legendary outcome. Together, father and daughter move easily ahead and the scene transforms into a shot of Lionel's actual train driving.

Michelle Royer and Miriam Thompson consider *35 rhums* a road movie. I think that the film is rather a representation of the home space as a space of safety that protects against the insecurity of exile and the emptiness of the present. We do not know if Josephine learns about René's suicide, but she feels that if she leaves her father, without the home space, he would have an empty and possibly tragic life. The paradox in this film is that while the postcolonial home is a space of safety and reassurance, it is also an obstacle for the future. This safe space does not let Josephine marry, create a home on her own, and further integrate into the French society. This idea is communicated in a mostly nonverbal fashion. The father, through his actions, wants to reassure his daughter that he is not likely to fall into an impasse the way his friend René did. He reassures her that he can find meaning and social support from his friends and neighbors and that he is capable of sacrificing his safety for the future of his daughter. Only this change will make him drink the 35 "shots of happiness." The lasting father-daughter bond, "born out of the

marginalizing effect of exile” and René’s fate illustrate that the postcolonial home as physical or mental construction is needed for survival in FCZs.⁶⁴

5.4 CONCLUSION

The chapter demonstrates that contrary to the cliché that the home is a sheltered space, the postcolonial home is seldom a space of safety. The exploration of homes in the three works *Inch’Allah Dimanche*, *L’impasse* and *35 rhums* illustrates that the postcolonial home is an ambivalent space. When it exists, it can be a space of torment as it is in *Inch’Allah Dimanche* and *L’impasse*. While in the film *Inch’Allah Dimanche*, the home space is an enclosure trying to eliminate any external influence of the host society, in *L’impasse*, the home space embodies the Congolese community’s perceptions, or rather misperceptions, of modernity. Zouina’s family is trying to stay away from the cultural norms of the French society and to preserve Maghrebi traditions in the space of their home. Joseph’s adventures in Brazzaville demonstrate that his home symbolizes the painful negotiations between old and new social values at the end of the 20th century. In both cases, these postcolonial homes have “permeable walls” and are influenced by the FCZs.⁶⁵ In Denis’ film, Lionel and Josephine’s home contrasts with the homes represented in *Inch’Allah Dimanche* and *L’impasse*. Their home is a space of comfort. However, it is a purposely sealed and impermeable space so that it can protect them from the outside world. Furthermore, the postcolonial home is not only a material construction, it is also a mental one.

⁶⁴ Royer and Thompson, “Mobility and Exile in Claire Denis’s *35 Rhums*,” 189.

⁶⁵ Weber-Fève, *Re-Hybridizing Transnational Domesticity and Femininity*, 210.

When the absence of home is felt and experienced, as is the case of René in *35 rhums*, the character loses the feeling of identity and belonging, and, therefore, loses interest in life.

These examples of relations between postcolonial homes and their inhabitants show that the home is a contradictory space. It is a necessary space, but when it is related to the outside world it punishes its alienated inhabitants and they become postcolonial Others. Thus, the paradox of the postcolonial home is that some of its occupants feel displaced and punished inside their home, as with Zouina and Joseph. These two residents, being postcolonial Others, are homeless at home. Moreover, for Joseph and René the physical space of their home may provide shelter, but not support. Their real home is nowhere to be found.

Postcolonial homes depend on and vary according to their connections to the outside world. Although the homes analyzed in this chapter differ in terms of location and time period, they all share a common feature. They are micro spaces where the personal and the social coexist and clash. These postcolonial homes are represented as spaces where new cultures meet the resistance of old and traditional cultures and are, in themselves, miniature FCZs. Therefore, the postcolonial home is just as much a place where the power relations of FCZs play out as they do in large-scale, institutional FCZs.

6.0 CONCLUSION

In my dissertation *Impasse in Multilingual Spaces: Politics of Language and Identity in Contemporary Francophone Contact Zones* I focus on the language and culture of marginalized communities in Francophone territories from the 1960s to the beginning of the 21st century. These communities live and move through, what I call, Francophone Contact Zones (FCZs). As I wrote earlier, we need to understand the cultural and linguistic differences and problems in FCZs so we can better deal with the social challenges in them. In the wider frame of contemporary cultural clashes between individuals, communities, and states, my dissertation offers a better understanding of some specific difficulties in FCZs. In his 1993 article entitled “Clash of Civilizations?” Samuel Huntington writes that “the fundamental conflict in this world will not be primarily ideological or economic. The great divisions among humankind will be cultural.”¹ Huntington’s statements refer to his division and definition of what the main civilizations are. While the assumptions he offers are controversial and have been questioned extensively since their original introduction, the article provides a framework for discussion. Although it is clear that there is no easy algorithm for integrating newcomers into a new space and particularly in a FCZ, I see my dissertation as a step toward exploring some major questions of integration in the

¹ Samuel P. Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?,” *Foreign Affairs*, June 1, 1993, 22, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/1993-06-01/clash-civilizations>.

20th and 21st centuries in FCZs. My consideration of the literary and film representations of language as a tool of exclusion can help us understand the challenging social practices in FCZs.

Historically, movement and migration are not new phenomena. The period of time I explore, since the second half of the 20th century to the beginning of the 21st century, is a time of continuous and extensive journeys. The FCZs I research are outcomes of major political and economic shifts that have provoked migration and displacement. In Francophone territories, the term FCZs adequately describes the contemporary world's divisions, movements and displacements. The resulting mixtures of cultures cause deep cultural clashes. Henceforth, many of the protagonists from my corpus are contemporary wanderers. Similarly to the contact zones considered by other scholars such as Pratt and Halle, FCZs are spaces of internal conflicts in which asymmetrical contradictions arise. FCZs are spaces of clashes between a dominant culture and the culture of the newcomers. At the same time, the culture of the newcomers is a collection of the individual cultures of the people from diverse backgrounds who have traveled to a FCZ, stay there, and try to adapt to the new way of life. In my analysis, I focus particularly on the “voice of those on the wrong side of the power relationship” as Norman K. Denzin puts it in a different context.² I concentrate on the socially weaker party in FCZs because its views and interactions are less examined than the role of the stronger party in the same space. By exploring the means of integration and the role of language in the spaces of FCZs, my dissertation contributes to the research on language, space and culture.

In my dissertation, I considered literary and film representations of newcomers' struggles for integration or resistance to integration in a new space. I explored the verbal communication of the protagonists in some institutions' spaces in Francophone states that I view as FCZs. These

² Denzin, *Interpretive Autoethnography*, 6.

government institutions are the court, prison and school and there the principles and the values of the society are most obvious. Further, I examined the open space of the marginalized neighborhood of Belleville in the second half of the 20th century and the private space of the postcolonial home. Investigating these diverse spaces allows me to reflect on the challenges of integration that the newcomers face. Aspects of the characters' use and command of the host culture's language are indicative of their hopes to integrate in mainstream society. At the same time, the characters strive to preserve their own cultural identity and to maintain the social support network provided by traditions, family, and neighborhood.

We could think that language proficiency is a sufficient precondition for integration into a new space. However, the first chapter demonstrates that fluently speaking newcomers have considerable difficulties integrating. Also, contrary to the presumption that the public school establishes equality, the second chapter illustrates that the school is not necessarily a space of equal opportunities. In the films, *Le thé au harem d'Archimède*, *Léolo* and *Entre les murs*, the school is a space that reproduces social inequality. In the closed space of the school, teachers represent the dominant party in the institution and in mainstream society. The language used at school is a tool for imposing rules and procedures that reinforce the position of the teachers as superiors, a paradigm of the social order that the students will see later in the society at large. The third chapter revealed that a newcomer may not have strong motivation to improve his language fluency in the language of the host culture. The language in Belleville has various implications depending on where it is used and such abilities could be both a blessing and a curse for the speaker. For example, in the film *Salut cousin!* by Merzak Allouache, Mok, one of the protagonists performs in front of a young audience in a marginalized Parisian neighborhood,

rapping on La Fontaine's fable *Le Rat de ville et le Rat des champs*.³ The fable created in the language of the 17th century sounds old-fashioned to the adolescents and provoke their discontent. Moreover, the youths connect the fable to the school curriculum. Since they consider the school a space of inequality that imposes the culture of the dominant French society, they reject Mok's participation. In this case, the 17th century fable disqualifies Mok from the event. The vernacular languages of the neighborhood are considered markers of identity. The reaction of the adolescents shows that, according to them, the language of the quartier should not be replaced by a more sophisticated language. The stories in the three works that take place in Belleville illustrate that the mixing of vernacular languages creates solidarity between the inhabitants of the neighborhood. However, outside of the neighborhood, a language spoken in Belleville is a cultural stigma that triggers exclusion. The connection between the space of Belleville and the language(s) of its inhabitants demonstrates that the vernacular languages of the Bellevillois are signs of belonging and of exclusion. It becomes clear that the more sophisticated standard French language has the very same functions. It is a marker of belonging to the dominant society and is a sign that triggers rejection in marginalized neighborhoods.

The last chapter challenges the belief that the postcolonial home is a support for its members and that it promotes their integration in society. The chapter shows that the postcolonial home has "permeable walls" and its space functions as a stage where the home traditions and the norms of the outside society interact or clash.⁴ The home, as is the case in the film *Inch' Allah Dimanche*, can hinder the integration of its members in the outside society. The family follows the traditional rules of the culture of origin and wants to impose them on all

³ Jean de La Fontaine and Mathieu Maillefer, *Le Rat de ville et le Rat des champs* (Paris: Larousse, 2014).

⁴ Weber-Fève, *Re-Hybridizing Transnational Domesticity and Femininity*, 210.

members who live in the home. In contrast, the home of the Caribbean father and daughter, Lionel and Josephine, from Denis' film *35 rhums*, is a safe space without conflicts between them. Their home is a space that evades the turmoil of the large society. However, at the same time, it is a barrier that does not let Josephine into the society and it is the view of the father that the home needs to disintegrate, so his daughter can better integrate in the French society. Josephine's marriage means dissolution of her previous home that has been sealed from outside influences since her early childhood. The ending of the film is a disintegration of the home and a new stage in the life of all characters. Denis does not show the subsequent changes in the characters' lives, but for father and daughter, leaving home is a symbolic towards ending their unique way of life. My work on the three works, *Inch' Allah Dimanche*, *L'impasse*, *35 rhums* where I analyze the postcolonial home as a FCZ in the 20st century suggests further exploration of the postcolonial home's future in the 21st century.

The problems I considered in my dissertation can lead to additional intellectual and research questions related to the spaces I explored. Comparison of the representations in literature and films of the changes and transformations in these spaces will shed some light on how the "asymmetrical relations" in the FCZs evolve in time.⁵ The answers to such questions could have useful applications for the contemporary host societies and the integration of newcomers and migrants in the FCZs. For example, one of the questions that my dissertation poses is related to the new status of Belleville. The three works I investigated, *La vie devant soi*, *Le petit prince de Belleville* and *Salut, cousin!* represent Belleville as a marginalized neighborhood separated from Paris. However, at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st

⁵ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 7.

centuries Belleville has become an integrated part of Paris. The question of how the language of the newcomers in the 21st century impacts the space of the same neighborhood is unanswered.

In addition, some of the protagonists from my corpus, Léolo from the film *Léolo* and Gregory Francoeur from *Une histoire américaine*, are Quebecois. While these characters live in different periods of time, in the 1960s and in the 1980s, their actions and thoughts are marked by and reflect the contradictions between Anglophones and Francophones in Quebec. Similarly to Belleville, as a result of movements between spaces, Quebec from the beginning of the 21st century is no longer a space of such extreme contradictions between Anglophones and Francophones as it was depicted in the fictional works I examine. Today, Quebec is a space where a large percent of the population consists of foreign-born immigrants who are successfully integrating in the Quebecois society. Its linguistic and cultural richness offers a new field for examination. The representation of Quebec in the artistic works of the 21st century will show how the societal changes are represented in the fictional works. Perhaps, this comparison will show that the society has learned some lessons from the turbulent coexistence in the past.

I would like to examine the distinctions between and commonalities among the difficulties in integrating newcomers coming from different cultures. It is worth researching the psychological reasons why some characters hold on to their identity as a way of surviving, while others are hiding it, so their identity cannot hinder their integration in the new space. It seems that adaptation depends on the culture of origin. For example, in *Le petit prince de Belleville*, Loukoum's family and particularly his father tries to follow the African traditions that they respected in Mali. In contrast, Tania from the film *Illégal* wants to blend into the Belgian society, desperately hiding her true identity. She never talks about her past in her home country, Russia, and with the exception of a few phrases in Russian the viewers have no details on her previous

life. Tania physically harms herself by burning her fingerprints, erasing the only physical marks that can identify her. Later, during her interactions with the Belgian authorities she stays silent throughout questionings and punishment. Silence is her protection against expulsion from the FCZ. I found some similarities between Tania's path from *Illégal* and the fate of the protagonist Lorna in Dardenne brothers' film *Le silence de Lorna* (2008). Both heroines are originally from Eastern Europe and live in Belgium. The politics of silence among Eastern European migrants in FCZs is an important avenue of future research.

My dissertation offered a different view on Althusser's research on State Apparatuses, but the question regarding the change of their roles in the future is also open. It would be useful to explore how the closed spaces of the Repressive State Apparatuses (RSA) will change in times of intensified movement between nations and continents. I wonder to what extent the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) will replace the RSAs in the future as we saw it happens in *Entre les murs*. The governments' structures and Apparatuses will adapt to the changing macro frames of the societies. How the court, prison and school that I analyzed, will adapt to the new circumstances and to the use of soft power, rather to, what we traditionally call, hard power is a pending question. Moreover, a future inquiry on the role of the school in the 21st century as a staple institution of the society is needed. While investigating the role of school, it is important to test how Bourdieu's ideas on equality and class distinction will or will not continue to be relevant. The effect of the movement between spaces and cultures on class structure and education is an area that needs more attention in the contemporary world marked by globalization and multiculturalism. Furthermore, we saw representations in which the institutions (court, prison, school) act against the newcomers, but the question of representations of how the ordinary people act toward the newcomers is an additional path for consideration.

Furthermore, in my dissertation, while analyzing the closed space of the school, I considered the concept of autoethnography. In their article “Autoethnography: An Overview” Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams & Arthur P. Bochner describe autoethnography as both “process and product.”⁶ It will be intriguing to study the rest of the spaces, court, prison, neighborhood, and the postcolonial home in my dissertation, through additional autoethnographic works. Analyzing autoethnographic texts can improve the understanding of the process of the newcomers’ adaptation in a FCZ and in some cases it can offer the locals’ perspective on the life there. The personal paths of the protagonists can bring some awareness of the cultural experience of both the dominant party and of the marginalized community in the FCZs.

My work on FCZs reaffirms the use and flexibility of the term “zone” in contemporary Francophone contexts. I offered a distinction of the FCZs that allowed me to analyze the FCZs regardless of their physical, cultural, and social scale.⁷ One of my contributions to the research on contact zones (CZs) is the introduction of a mobile CZ that the protagonists “create” while moving from one space to another. Particularly, I look at the fate of two characters who travel and create small mobile FCZs by entering new spaces. The protagonist Gregory Francoeur from the novel, *Une histoire américaine*, travels from Quebec to San Francisco, California. His actions and Quebecois perception of the life in California construct a miniature FCZ. In the novel *L’impasse*, after a long absence, Joseph returns to his home in Brazzaville, Congo, where his reappearance produces conflicts between him and his family. Thus, the small private space of his

⁶ Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams, and Arthur P. Bochner, “Autoethnography: An Overview,” *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 12, no. 1 (November 24, 2010), <https://doi.org/10.17169/fqs-12.1.1589>.

⁷ As I explained in the dissertation’s introduction, I offer the following division of the FCZs: large FCZs, public institutions as closed-space FCZs, the private postcolonial home as a closed-space FCZ, and the one-person mobile individual FCZ.

home transforms into a FCZ. Other scholars could investigate the representation of individual, mobile contact zones in relation to other cultural and linguistic contexts. The individual FCZs are important since they show the path of travelers in detail. Many of the contemporary wanderers create individual FCZs since they are between at least two cultures.

In my dissertation, I focused on the process of entering new spaces, but it is also important to explore the reverse process when the characters go back to their space of origin. For example, the problem of Joseph is not only linked to integration in one space. His troubles are related to the fact that after being a newcomer in France, his perspective has changed under the influence of the French culture (although he does not feel part of it). My analysis shows that the process of integration leaves the individual very vulnerable. When Joseph returns to the starting point of his journey, Brazzaville, it becomes clear that he is in some ways a newcomer there as well. This shift in the identity of the traveler shows that living in a new space may mean exclusion from the space of origin. Thus, the contemporary travelers can become strangers to all cultures they have been familiar or associated with. In the same vein, we could wonder what may have been the fate of the characters who return to their country of origin. One such example is the path of Mok from *Salut cousin!* who is sent back to Algeria where he has never been. One could wonder what would happen to Tania from *Illégal* if she is expelled from Belgium, or what would happen to Lorna from *Le silence de Lorna* if she returned to her small native Albanian town. Similar to Joseph who is in an impasse in his native Brazzaville, it is possible that these characters could find themselves in an impasse as well. Studying the return of a protagonist from a FCZ to her place of origin is a question that I would like to investigate in the future.

Regardless of the different journeys and transformations of the characters, most protagonists share a major characteristic; their existential struggle and their quest for recognition

in a French-speaking environment. For them, the French language is both a *tool* for integration in the main society as well as a *condition* for survival. In our constantly changing world that generates third spaces, language is a flexible and hybrid tool for communication. My dissertation connects Homi Bhabha's notion of hybridity and third spaces to the hybridity of language. Scholars can build on this while exploring the hybridity of various "soft border" spaces.⁸ The connection between space and language is a resilient one, but it is always changing and depends on the social frame where it exists. Such studies will provide some light on the psychological impact of relocation processes.

My dissertation *Impasse in Multilingual Spaces: Politics of Language and Identity in Contemporary Francophone Contact Zones* is a beginning of an examination of how and why the Francophone authors represent disadvantaged characters and how theorists tackle the pertinent connections between language, marginalization, and displacement in FCZs. I hope that my work has shed some light on the life and language of migrants and newcomers at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries in the contemporary FCZs. While I have dealt with some questions, many more are yet to be answered. It is my hope that looking for these answers will promote more understanding for the scores of wanderers in times of social turmoil and displacement not only in Francophone Contact Zones, but in contemporary contact zones in general.

⁸ Gott, "West/East Crossings: Positive Travel in Post-1989 French-Language Cinema," 2.

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