

2 Narrative, style and ideology in *La Haine*

Everything had to seem real and yet be graphically interesting.

Mathieu Kassovitz¹

Tension and randomness: the narrative structure

La Haine follows a day in the life of a group of three ethnically diverse young men – a *Beur*, Saïd, the Jewish Vinz and Hubert, who is black – from a deprived suburban *cit *. The film starts the morning after riots provoked by the police accidentally wounding a young *Beur*, Abdel. It then charts the bored, aimless life of the three protagonists – who are neither at school nor at work – in a series of more or less violent encounters, in particular with the police, first in the *banlieue* then in Paris, ending in a decisive episode of shocking violence (for more details, see the detailed Synopsis at the beginning of this book and a breakdown of sequences in Appendix 2).

At the time of the film's release, Mathieu Kassovitz put forward the notion that his film was 'unstructured', a series of disconnected scenes in a film in which 'nothing happens'.² He claimed that 'each scene constitutes a short film in itself'³ and that, in the Paris section in particular, 'there is no real continuity, so we could do anything we liked'.⁴ This is, to some extent, the experience of the first-time viewer, and this style of narration appears appropriate to the fragmented, random lives of the protagonists. Close scrutiny, however, shows that *La Haine* is, on the contrary, a minutely structured and classically coherent film.

La Haine is, first of all, structured around a strong geographical and temporal dichotomy, between daytime *banlieue* and night-time Paris – a division that many writers have, rightly, seen as symbolic. For Martine Beugnet, for instance, this duality alone makes the film an 'allegory of the *fracture sociale*'.⁵ Secondly, there is the cyclical aspect of the narrative, whereby the televised documentary violence that opens the film alludes to the 'cycle of violence' in the real-life *banlieue* – at the same time as it prefigures the fictional violence that concludes the film the next morning, thus looping back to the beginning. In plot terms, a police *bavure* (the accidental shooting of Abdel) provoked the fictional riots that took place before the film opens, and another *bavure* – the shooting of Vinz – concludes it, again suggesting a loop, an endless repetition of such events. This cyclical structure is itself duplicated at the level of the smaller units that make up the narrative.

Internally, episodes are organised around a series of mini-climaxes, followed by periods of calm in the *cit * section, while in Paris virtually all the scenes end with some violent occurrence. After the credits sequence over the opening montage (sequence 1 – numbers refer to the breakdown in Appendix 2) the first half of the film, set in the *cit *, is organised in eight sequences, which can themselves be grouped in three larger units, of roughly equal length. The first block, made of sequences 2 and 3, in which we meet Saïd, Vinz and Hubert and follow them on the rooftop (c. 13 minutes), ends with the police disbanding the youths. In the second block – sequences 4, 5 and 6 (c. 14 minutes) – we follow the heroes hanging around and telling stories, discover Vinz has stolen the gun and watch their attempt to visit Abdel in hospital, ending with Saïd's arrest, his release from the police station and an argument between the three friends about the gun. Block 3 – sequences 7, 8 and 9 (c. 13 minutes) – has us follow Hubert at home, listen to a DJ, see Vinz go for the shopkeeper and botch Saïd's haircut, watch break-dancing, and finally witness a violent fight provoked by Abdel's brother and brutally quashed by the CRS* (riot police), our heroes escaping through the cellars and jumping on a train to Paris. Each of the three blocks ends up in violence and police involvement. In the Paris section, the first sequence (10) is the only peaceful one, during which the three young men listen to an old man telling his story. After that, all the sequences end in, or are structured around, violence (fighting (11, 16), shooting (13, 16), arguing (14), fleeing the police (15), being assaulted by them (12)), thus preparing the spectator for the truly violent climax of the end (17). This narrative organisation calls for further scrutiny.

First, despite the fact that it is the *banlieue* that is supposed to be violent, the frequency of violence increases in the Paris section – although

it is individual violence as opposed to the collective violence of the *cit *. The second half thus shows the three heroes 'carrying' *banlieue* aggression with them to Paris, highlighting their greater exclusion from the city centre. But this feature is also a function of classical dramatic construction. The first half of the film needs to spend more time establishing the protagonists and their environments – thus sequences 2, 4, 5, 7 and 8 depict the boys 'hanging out' and meeting a variety of characters. The handling of time is interesting. While the two halves in the *cit * and in Paris are of roughly equal screen time, the compression of time within some sequences is occasionally unrealistic: sequences 6, 7 and part of 8 allocate just over one hour of 'real' time (15:57 to 17:04 according to the clock that regularly appears in the film) to a substantial series of events: the hospital visit, Saïd's arrest and release, Hubert at home, the DJ scene, Vinz cutting Saïd's hair – practically impossible in one hour and seven minutes. Similarly, between 17:04 and 18:22 (just over one hour and a quarter) the heroes are supposed to hang out and watch break-dancing, fight with the CRS, escape through the cellars and make their getaway to central Paris. This may seem like nit-picking, but it shows that the point of the clock is not to provide a realistic account of time passing but to serve other functions, which we will turn to shortly.

A clock, a gun and stories

We have seen that the film is strongly structured along a dichotomy in space and time and according to a cyclical logic at various levels. Cutting across these patterns, *La Haine* follows traditional causality: an event (the riots of the night before) supplies the initial motivation for the three protagonists' journey – their desire to see Abdel in hospital, Saïd's brief imprisonment, Vinz's desire for revenge. Later, Abdel's brother rekindles this plot by firing at the police, triggering off a mini-version of the riots and propelling the protagonists to Paris, and, finally, Abdel's death leads indirectly to the violent finale. Under this major line of causality, other more subtle ones operate: the visit to the fence Darty sends them on to Ast rix (since Darty does not have the money Saïd needs to collect); the encounter with Santo in the break-dancing episode initiates Vinz's visit to the boxing match, and – in his imagination – the killing of the nightclub bouncer. Thus we can see that, contrary to Kassovitz's assertion that 'there [is] no plot, it's like a diary or a news report', *La Haine* is extremely tightly plotted.

The journey of the protagonists also follows a familiar kind of cinematic plot, that of the road movie. Although their journey is geographically short, our three heroes, as in a road movie, are constantly on the move (walking, running, on the train), passing through diverse locations and having

numerous encounters on the way: they clash with relatives, officials, policemen, journalists, a shopkeeper, a neighbour, a concierge, patrons at an art gallery, a taxi driver, a man on an escalator, skinheads, not to mention each other. Many of these encounters are dramatic or violent. As Myrto Konstantarakos points out of the *banlieue* film in general: 'The trip [to Paris] is never easy, as if the distance between the two places were immense.'⁸ Clearly the physical journey of the protagonists is meant to have other – social, psychological or moral – kinds of significance, in this case leading to a tragic ending. In this respect, it is worth noting an interesting difference between *La Haine* and similar youth-oriented American films, especially *Hangin' With the Homeboys*, in which, as we have already discussed, an ethnically mixed group of young men (two blacks, two Latinos) from the Bronx spend a night 'on the town' and encounter various forms of exclusion – such as being thrown out of a party and getting into trouble with the police. The journey of the heroes into Manhattan through the night parallels a moral trajectory: each has a 'problem' that the narrative will solve. For instance, one of them hesitates between improving himself by taking up a scholarship or continuing a life of fun with the 'homeboys'; he opts for the scholarship. This ending, as is traditional in American cinema, offers the characters a moral redemption. In *La Haine*, however, no such personal redemption, learning or problem solving occurs. The heroes have no personal goal and they start and end in the same place (Hubert's hopes of progress through boxing are shown to be already shattered in one of the first scenes of the film). Vinz gives up his gun but is still caught in violence. The tragic ending has a collective social dimension, rather than an individual moral one.

Finally, I want to note three narrative devices that contribute to the fine narrative mesh of the film: the clock, the gun, the telling of stories. As hinted above, the time counter is more testimony to the film's manipulation of time than a realistic account of the characters' movements, and a certain amount of adjustment is taking place. The counter appears arbitrarily and corresponds neither to regular blocks of time nor to the film's internal structure (some sequences contain two appearances of the clock, others none). This apparent randomness contributes to the realistic effect of the film: 17:04 seems more improvised and therefore more 'real' than 17:00. The clock, with its loud ticking, gives the film urgency, the impression of a 'countdown'⁹ exacerbated at the end, where, for the first and last time, we see the digits move, from 6:00 to 6:01. In *La Haine* as in Agn s Varda's 1961 *Cl o de 5   7* (a film that also does not correspond to its proclaimed 'real time'), apart from quite obviously foregrounding the *theme* of time the material appearance of a clock at certain intervals, by rupturing the fiction, exhibits the author's signature on the film text.

We are introduced to the gun – a Smith and Wesson 44 Magnum lost by a policeman during the riots – early on in the film, in the *cité* rooftop sequence (3). Thematically, the gun obviously foregrounds violence and a host of related themes. As a cop's gun, it is symbolic of many police *bavures* (Makome M'Bowole – the trigger for Kassovitz's script – was shot in the head). It whips up Vinz's latent aggression, as the symbol of the violent patriarchal power he and his friends feel oppressed by and (ineffectually) try to appropriate. The gun is also endowed with a purely cinematic mystique – the boys on the rooftop discuss it in terms of Mel Gibson's *Lethal Weapon* series¹⁰ – and it is, clearly, symbolic in gender terms. For the moment, however, I am more concerned with how it functions structurally. The gun is a classic motivating device: being lost, it has to be found, and then it has to be used. Vinz announces that he will 'waste a cop' in sequence 5. He proves unable to do so, but Hubert will carry out the deed on his behalf. The gun structures the film by reappearing at regular intervals: in the tunnel, at Astérix's, with the skinheads, in the fantasy killing of the traffic wardens, in the final shoot-out. Throughout, it reinforces Vinz's centrality as well as the iconic power of the gun: the recurring image of Vinz brandishing it has become an emblem of the film.

In *La Haine*, people tell stories that are in themselves significant but that also constitute a structuring device. The stories form part of the quiet/crisis pattern of the film, which we have already mentioned, occurring principally in sequences 2 (Saïd tells Vinz a joke about 'killing for nothing'), 4 (a young *Beur* tells a story about candid camera), 10 (the old man in the toilets) and 15 (Hubert to Vinz about 'society falling'). The latter is the most important structurally, a framing story that opens and closes the film. On the soundtrack Hubert's voice talks of 'a man who falls from the 50th floor of a building and keeps saying: "So far so good... so far so good" – what matters is not the fall but the landing'. At the end, the word 'man' is replaced by 'society'. As he tells the story to Vinz on the rooftop, the latter says he knows the same story but with a rabbi – a joke on Vinz (whose automatic retort to any story this seems to be) but also a way to point out that it is the structure of the story as much as its contents which counts. It may also serve as a cinephilic reference to *The Magnificent Seven* (John Sturges, 1960), in which a similar story is told. This framing story has prompted interestingly split responses. Many commentators have argued that *La Haine* is 'about' the ending, the tragedy of violence in the *cités*; Kassovitz claims, 'I knew the ending before I knew the storyline. Everything is about the end, the last five seconds.'¹¹ But it is also the case that, as critic Roger Ebert perceptively noted, 'The film is not about its ending. It is not about the landing, but about the fall.'¹² We can see a *mise en abyme*¹³ of this emphasis on *process* rather than ending within the



The revelation



Vinz admires it



Fooling around



Astérix



Vinz and his 'fake gun'



Threatening the skinhead



Notre-Dame triumphs



The Mexican stand-off

The gun as structuring device

film, as it is the telling and the listening to stories that is the point rather than their contents. In fact, crucial elements are often missing, such as the name of the central character in the candid camera story. The 'ending' of the framing story is the link between the film and the social issue it addresses; but the 'fall', the process of telling the story, is the possibility of making artistic meaning out of it; in other words, it signifies the film itself.

Virtuoso noir: the aesthetics of *La Haine*

The opening sequence

La Haine begins with a grainy image of a young man, seen from the back, facing a line of police and shouting at them: 'You are nothing but assassins. It is easy for you, you have weapons. We only have stones' (as he throws one). His looks and accent immediately establish him as from the *banlieue*. The images – possibly shot for the film, since there is synchronised sound – are extremely grainy. There is no music. There follows a black screen with the beginning of the credits, and then a man's voice (Hubert's) telling a story about a man falling from a 50-floor building, over a terrestrial globe that bursts into flames as a home-made 'bomb' (in a bottle) is thrown at it. These images were initially in colour, but they are now in black and white, both on the DVD and the print re-released in 2004 (more on this later). In those few seconds several themes are planted: the uneven confrontation between young people and the police, violence and the *banlieue*, and the notion that this situation is (a) global and (b) will lead to an 'explosion' – in a nugget, the 'message' of the film. Immediately afterwards, a montage of newsreel images begins, over which the credits are superimposed. On the soundtrack we can now hear Bob Marley's 'Burnin' and Lootin', a song that is as cool in musical style as it is political in its lyrics. Marley asks, 'How many rivers do we have to cross, Before we can talk to the boss', and warns that 'We gonna be... burnin' and a-lootin' tonight', referring to the police as 'uniforms of brutality'.

This opening sequence lasts altogether five minutes and nine seconds. For it, Kassovitz watched dozens of hours of material,¹⁴ mainly composed of newsreel footage of events over the ten years leading to the making of *La Haine*. The sequence, on first viewing, appears as a blur of images of police and young demonstrators, moving extremely rapidly: the average shot length is just over four seconds, even though some of the footage has been slowed down. Looking more closely, there is, however, a clear structure and progression to the montage, which can be roughly divided into three sections.

The first section alternates shots of CRS police and young people (reminiscent of the student riots of May 1968, in particular with a close-up of a CRS bludgeon). It contrasts the serried ranks of police uniforms against the softer shapes of the students, whose actions begin with quiet marching and dancing but end in looting (possibly of a bank), directly echoing Marley's words on the soundtrack. Section two moves on to individual violence, evoking in particular Malik Oussekiné and Makomé M'Bowolé (two victims of police violence) with images of the demonstrations that followed their deaths, more explicitly in the case of Oussekiné: we see the entry code of the building where he was fatally beaten, and his body which medics are trying to revive. A poster says 'Don't forget the police kills' and 'CRS = SS' (a favourite May 1968 slogan), and graffiti ask that 'justice be done for Makomé'. The two deaths, seven years apart, are merged into one by the relative anonymity of the images¹⁵ and their rapid flow.

Whereas sections one and two contain images of Paris shot during the day, the third section moves to the night-time *banlieue*, starting with the burning of a shopping mall. Young people's violence is more extreme, suggesting (perhaps subliminally) retaliation for police violence in the preceding sections and/or that the *banlieue* is intrinsically more dangerous than the city centre. Though the geographical order is reversed (Paris, then the *banlieue*), the temporal shift from day to night prefigures the film to come. About one-third through this last section, the sound level of the Marley song decreases and diegetic noises begin to be heard (young people shouting, breaking glass, thuds). Then, towards the end, the voice-over of a television presenter commenting on the riots can be heard. The section ends with the television presenter talking to camera, and, finally, a picture of Abdel, reportedly in a coma in hospital. The montage we have just seen is identified as 'television' when it is 'switched off' and fades to a white spot before the film proper begins.

This opening montage is not simply a 'documentary' thematically preparing us for the fiction to come; in structure and progression it contains the shape of the film to come: towards greater violence, from day to night, and a contrast between city and *banlieue*. In a more subtle way the opening blurs the boundary between 'reality' and 'fiction', in image and sound: Marley fades slightly to give way to diegetic sounds and the voice of the presenter, but it then bridges the gap into the fictional opening, over which it will be faintly heard, for a short while. The move from montage to fiction also creates a contrast between the grainy, 'dirty' and blurred figures of riots at night, and the sharp, elegant black and white daytime pictures, as we switch from 'television' to 'film'.

Black and white in the age of colour

Making a black and white film in 1995 is a statement. Since colour became ubiquitous in the 1970s, a few filmmakers have continued to make black and white films. Famous examples include Woody Allen (*Manhattan*, 1979; *Celebrity*, 1998), Spike Lee (*She's Gotta Have It*, 1986) and Martin Scorsese (*Raging Bull*, 1980). Various justifications have been put forward for this choice. In the case of *Raging Bull*, it has been argued by Scorsese that black and white makes the blood less disturbing and that, technically, it fades less than colour.¹⁶ Black and white also gives a period feel to a film set in the 1940s and 1950s.

Insofar as colour contributes, in V.F. Perkins' words, to 'an ideal conception of a cinema complete with natural sound and colour',¹⁷ then black and white (today) appears particularly non-realistic. In fact, such is the perceived distance between naturalism and black and white that the Dogme movement, perhaps the index of naturalism in contemporary cinema, 'banned' it. Rule 4 of the Dogme manifesto (which, incidentally, appeared the same year as *La Haine*) states that 'the film must be in colour'; black and white is 'an indulgence'.¹⁸ Black and white could be considered such an 'indulgence' for *La Haine*; it certainly gives the film a superficial resemblance to 'cool' music videos. It also confers an aura of cinephilic homage, for instance to *Raging Bull* and *She's Gotta Have It*, two films Kassovitz particularly admired. As in these two films, black and white also allows for a more overt play on the heroes' skin colours and in particular Hubert's. The first time we see him, boxing, his naked torso and face have clearly been oiled to reflect light – a common practice to overcome the 'problem' of black skin's lesser refraction of light, as discussed by Richard Dyer.¹⁹ In the range of stylistic references afforded by the use of black and white, film noir is also drawn upon, in particular in the sequences where Vinz goes to the cinema and the boxing match. These make use of classic noir photography, with *chiaroscuro* and backlighting – for instance in the cinema scene with its baroque smoke patterns. The scene of Vinz and his friends in the BMW shows him looking moodily at the street, streetlights reflecting in the car window. In these moments, black and white constructs a noir mood of urban edginess and expectancy. The fact that these are all focused on Vinz confirms his privileged status. Another function of black and white is to distinguish *La Haine* from the other *banlieue* and *beur* films (which are virtually all in colour)²⁰ as well as from television reportage – indeed, it is interesting how 'ordinary' the colour scenes that have been cut out of *La Haine*²¹ look by contrast with the film we know. Using black and white enables Kassovitz, on a relatively



Noir on black: light reflecting on Hubert



Moody urban photography: Vinz and Santo in the BMW



Noir lighting: Vinz smoking in the cinema

modest budget, to make the architecture of the *cit * 'very beautiful [and] graphic'.²²

And yet black and white in *La Haine* also retains the value of realism because of its link with genres connoted as realistic (newsreels, archival footage, *cin ma v rit *, neo-realism, the new wave), especially so as the film has a clear social angle. Ultimately, the brilliance of *La Haine* is that it draws equally on the realist and anti-naturalist connotations of black and white, making the film appear both 'gritty' and 'cool', drawing us into the topic and at the same time giving us an aesthetic distance from it.

Camerawork

Together with the use of black and white the most striking features of *La Haine's mise en sc ne* are the mobility of the camera combined with the use of long takes, and some self-conscious, flashy effects. There are several remarkable *plans-s quences* – defined as a 'long take articulated to represent the equivalent of a sequence' (in the sense of a succession of events)²³ – especially in the first half of the film, particularly noticeable in black and white and wide-screen (the film's ratio is 1:85:1), producing strong horizontal and diagonal compositions and a sophisticated play on the gaze.

La Haine is made of (by my count) 352 shots. For a total length of 87 minutes, this gives – excluding the montage sequence – an average shot length (ASL) of almost 15 seconds (14.95 to be exact – 13.75 if one includes the montage). If this is not unusual for a French film, it is remarkably slow compared to American movies, whose ASL in the 1990s, according to David Bordwell, typically averaged between three and six seconds.²⁴ The average figure of 15 seconds, however, disguises huge differences: *La Haine* alternates long takes lasting 40 seconds or more (some more than one minute) with clusters of very short ones. For instance, action scenes use very rapid cutting: the exchange between the three boys and the television journalists (38 seconds in nine takes: ASL 4.2 seconds), the car theft (two minutes 22 seconds for 24 takes: ASL 5.9 seconds) and Vinz's imaginary shooting of the traffic wardens (28 seconds for 14 takes: ASL 2 seconds).

A lot has been made, including by Kassovitz, of the different ways of shooting the *cit * in the first half of the film as opposed to Paris in the second half: 'The idea – though it's hard to bring off – was that on the estate we should use short lenses, to fix people against the background, and then much longer lenses in Paris, to detach them and really have them stand out.'²⁵ Kassovitz also asked director of photography Pierre A im to make sure 'that the Paris shots should be more grainy'.²⁶ One reason why the different treatment is less noticeable than Kassovitz wished is that there are more

indoor scenes in Paris and they virtually all take place at night. The graininess therefore seems 'natural', and the relationship between the characters and the wider spaces is both less developed and less visible than in the *cit *. More noticeable is the larger proportion of long mobile takes in the first half: in the *cit * section there are 18 shots of more than 45 seconds, against eight in the second, and, strikingly, ten shots of over one minute in the first half against only one in the second half. Some of these qualify as *plans-s quences*. These kinds of shots are normally considered difficult to shoot and therefore evidence of skill. Kassovitz has – not very convincingly – claimed he likes doing them because he is 'lazy'²⁷ and does not like editing. A more likely reason is that, as he also says, he likes 'actors to be in the same shot'.²⁸ Indeed, in the most remarkable *plan-s quence* of the film, in which we follow the three heroes walking through the *cit *, 'the actors' performances must adapt to this very precise mechanism'.²⁹ The trick is to make this 'precise mechanism' appear 'natural'.

Let us examine this *plan-s quence* in detail. It is the most extreme in both length (one minute 54 seconds) and spatial span. It is also a key shot in its articulation of the heroes' relationship to the *cit *. The camera (on Steadycam) starts from behind three policemen walking towards Vinz, Sa d and Hubert. The similarity in numbers highlights the differences: to the uniformity and anonymity of the cops (whose faces we don't see) the camera contrasts the diversity of the three friends. The choreography of people and camera at this point offers a *mise en abyme* of the film, illustrating the dynamic confrontation between youth and police. The camera then 'loses' the cops and picks up the three friends, following them between two buildings. As they reach a small square they pause, trying to identify the noise of a motorbike, while the camera circles round them in medium close-up. The identification of the noise points to their aural familiarity with their environment. They start walking again, talking about a woman; they pass a group of young blacks and *Beurs*, who greet Vinz – demonstrating again their familiarity with the *cit * and its racial hybridity. We move on again to a more open space, where Hubert detaches himself from the group to meet a young *Beur* whom he sells drugs to. The neatness of this pause – a trifle facile, perhaps – is in the echo between Hubert and the young man touching hands in the foreground (exchanging drugs for money) and a mural in the background reproducing the famous image of two hands meeting from Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel. The friends gather again and move into a building.

The next scene, which follows the three boys on the roof of the block, is composed of 11 shots, including three over one minute long. As in the *plan-s quence* analysed above, the long and fluid takes that follow our heroes



Three moments in the *plan-séquence* in the *cité*

among a gathering already in full swing (with music and barbecue), impart to the spectator the energy of youth and the dynamism of the relationships. The young people's mastery of space, symbolised by the elevated position and the expanses visible from the rooftop, is short-lived (the gathering is interrupted by the police) but it is real. By contrast, in Paris the camera shows them dwarfed by architecture (for instance, in the empty Gare Saint-Lazare) or boxed in, as in the art gallery or the police station, as if to emphasise their 'out-of-place-ness' and lack of prospects in the metropolis.

Two other noticeable sets of long takes are those that depict Vinz and Hubert at home. The scene in Vinz's home (sequence 2) is dealt with in just three long takes: one around his bedroom (46 seconds) one with the rest of the family (35 seconds), and one of him talking to himself in the mirror (31 seconds). Similarly, Hubert's home environment in sequence 7 is dealt with in just two long takes: the first one follows him through the flat into the kitchen with his mother (one minute three seconds) and the second one around the dining table (one minute three seconds). In both cases, the length and mobility of the takes establish a relationship between characters and environment, both the chaotic warmth of Vinz's home and the relative calm in Hubert's.

The virtuoso aspect of the camerawork, especially in the first half of the film, is enhanced by flamboyant effects, which contribute to the youthful, dynamic image of the film and are testament to Kassovitz's precocious talent. These effects fall into five categories.

(1) Mirrors and confined locations

The most notorious mirror moment in *La Haine* is a trick. The scene in which Vinz, in front of his bathroom mirror, imitates Robert De Niro in *Taxi Driver* was shot... without a mirror, with an extra standing in for Vinz's back, in order to avoid the problem of the camera reflecting in the mirror in such a small location.³⁰ As the camera approaches the 'mirror' the extra dips down, and we get close to Vinz supposedly looking into a mirror, but in reality looking straight at the camera. By contrast, the scene in which Vinz cuts Saïd's hair was done conventionally. The most remarkable use of mirrors is in the café toilet scene, where several mirrors reflecting on each other enlarge the visible space and produce a sense of disorientation. The screen is split by the divisions between mirrors, so that the boys seem isolated from each other while they are physically very close. One shot, which has the camera pointing at a mirror and then rapidly tracking to the 'real' characters, produces a particularly dizzying effect and an extended play on the gaze: the characters seem to be looking straight at the camera when they are not, or to be looking away from each other when in fact they are facing

each other. This scene, like that of Vinz imitating De Niro, quite classically uses mirrors as a means of depicting a reflection on the self, in this case the heroes' shattered identity. It should be saluted, equally, as an illustration of Kassovitz and Aim's skilful exploitation of confined locations and reflective surfaces.

(2) Editing juxtapositions

Incongruous or shocking images are inserted with no device indicating that they are 'fantasy' – for instance, the cow in the *cit * seen by Vinz and the spectator but not by Saïd, and Vinz dancing to Jewish music. Most disconcerting (on first viewing) is Vinz's 'shooting' of two traffic wardens in Les Halles. As with images of the gun, we note that these textual flourishes, apart from their purely spectacular value, privilege Vinz by building up his subjectivity.

(3) Striking camera positions

There are many of these, of which I will mention three. The first is the lateral tracking shot along the line of police cars that opens the film after the montage. The shot starts from Saïd's point of view, with the back of his head visible, then 'loses' him, then finds him again, surprisingly, at the end of the long line behind the police car. Thus, Saïd is both observer and participant, a position the film assigns to the spectator through him. Secondly, as Vinz and Hubert come down from Asterix's flat in sequence 11, the camera looks straight up the middle of the stairwell while rotating on itself, counter to the movement of the boys coming down, producing a dizzying effect. Finally, most noticeable (and famous) is the helicopter shot that accompanies the DJ's music over the *cit * in sequence 8. For this Kassovitz used a Belgian team specialised in shooting from low-flying aircraft, although it seems the shoot was difficult: 'There was too much wind and the blokes could not control the machine. We did it three times, we got insulted but we got there in the end.'¹¹ Other accounts suggest that the shot was truncated, a supposition supported by the fact that the shot has been slightly slowed down (as can be seen by the gait of the passers-by below) and yet is 'only' 46 seconds. Either way, the shot produces a strange, oneiric effect, giving the impression that we are floating unsteadily over the *cit *, like the DJ's music.

(4) 'In-camera' tricks

This most memorable of these is the 'compressed zoom' on the three heroes as they arrive in Paris (standing on Montparnasse station terrace – here

Kassovitz played with verisimilitude, since their trains in reality arrive at Saint-Lazare, as we see when later they try and catch it). This type of shot has a long lineage, from Hitchcock's 1958 *Vertigo*, where it expresses the protagonist's (James Stewart) mental dislocation; here it suggests the boys are 'out of place' in the city centre, particularly so as the street behind them, Rue de Rennes, leads to Saint-Germain-des-Pr s, the heart of bourgeois-bohemian Paris. Also remarkable is the scene outside the nightclub, which shows Vinz's face in close-up on the left and the (fantasy) killing of the club bouncer in long shot on the right. This was filmed in a single shot but the effect, obtained with contrasted lighting,¹² suggests two different spaces in the frame and thus hints – again – at Vinz's mental disorder.

(5) Tricks done through processing

La Haine is punctuated by a series of 'white flashes', in which a brief whitening of the screen is accompanied by a violent, swishing sound. This occurs, for example, in the garage, as Vinz reveals the hidden gun, and when the BMW slams into reverse in sequence 13. In the garage scene the image is also speeded up, accompanied by a bullet-like noise. The impact of these



Vinz imagines the killing outside the night-club

sound/image effects is to generate a sense of speed, of energy, as well as giving the impression of 'magic'.

On occasion, the combination of fluid camerawork, striking compositions and flashy, 'mannerist' effects recall the *cinéma du look* of Jean-Jacques Beineix (for instance, *Diva*, 1981) and Luc Besson (*Nikita*, 1990). If at times we can agree with Kassovitz that 'it's all too much, almost complacent, like a music video,'³³ on the whole the effects are well integrated into the rest of the *mise en scène*. In this way, *La Haine* presents its socially oriented story of 'ordinary' young men in non-glamorous *banlieue* surroundings, but makes them and their decor exciting. For example, the helicopter shot gives us an aesthetically pleasing, yet 'documentary', view of the *cité*, while the unusual shape of the buildings is more visible without the distraction of colour. Kassovitz also makes the decor 'speak'. During the 'candid camera' joke (sequence 4), the walls behind the characters are sprayed with tags saying 'force' and 'energy', when the characters are particularly listless; in the garage there is a tag saying 'La haine' behind Vinz as he pulls the gun out. By providing a visceral, oral and visual excitement such devices contributed to the success of the film, and outside France they helped compensate for the 'handicap' of a foreign-language soundtrack – especially for a young audience with low tolerance for subtitles. In this respect, the film's use of sound and music was also crucial.

Sound and music

The two halves of the film are split orally, just as they are visually: 'The estate is done in stereo, with broad sound, whereas Paris is all in mono. Unfortunately, that doesn't really come across.'³⁴ Kassovitz is right, although there is undoubtedly a greater density of sounds in the *cité*, where layers of voices, noises and faint music in the background richly surround the dialogues. The aim was clearly to produce a naturalistic ambience: 'We used city sounds which became a music of our own – a growl, a layer of sound but a natural layer.'³⁵ At the same time, sound is also used in an expressionist manner, where the nature of the sounds and their amplification (trains hissing, cars howling, gun shots resonating or swishing past) contribute to the climate of violence.

Contrary to what most first-time viewers remember, there is surprisingly little music in *La Haine*; so little, in fact, that the CD of the soundtrack is half made up of music from *Métisse*. But the power of association with music, especially rap music, is such that several critics 'heard' a lot of hip-hop music in the film. Olivier Mongin (whose analysis is otherwise often pertinent) even quotes lyrics from several rap songs 'which punctuate the

film,'³⁶ whereas they are not in the film but can be found on the CD of rap music 'inspired' by *La Haine* (see Chapter 3). There are, in fact, only six moments in the film when music is more than a background, and all, apart from the opening Bob Marley song, are brief or very brief. They are as follows (further details can be found on the credits in Appendix 1):

1. The credits ('Burnin' and Lootin', sung by Bob Marley)
2. Vinz's Jewish dance (wedding song medley)
3. Hubert smoking ('That Loving Feeling', sung by Isaac Hayes)
4. The DJ sequence (sampling of rap/funk music and Edith Piaf's 'Je ne regrette rien')
5. Break-dancing ('Outstanding', sung by The Gap Band)
6. Music in the BMW ('Mon esprit part en couilles', sung by Expression Direkt)

La Haine eschews the contemporary tendency for ubiquitous music on the soundtrack. It also avoids the classic use of film music as emotional enhancement. Kassovitz said, 'The editor would try to lay on great layers, which always seemed to work. He tried the music from *Léon* [Luc Besson, 1994] at the end. It's incredible, you can't help crying. I don't like that.'³⁷ Music does however, play the important function of cultural identification in a number of ways. All but the last number listed above are heard in the *cité*, firmly connecting it to a specific kind of music. The number featured in Paris, 'Mon esprit part en couilles', is heard in the BMW, with the boys from the *cité* singing along, stressing their organic relation to it, as if they were transporting it with them (in addition, one of the actors in the car, Solo Dicko, is a rap singer). A self-confessed lover of hip-hop, Kassovitz claims that, while making *La Haine*, 'all the time I thought of rhythm and this comes from rap.'³⁸ Yet rap is far from dominant and the soundtrack also includes reggae, disco-inspired soul, funk, R&B, Arabic music and snippets of French chanson (Edith Piaf).³⁹ This medley – which I suspect reflects Kassovitz's personal taste rather than a plausible version of the characters' music favourites – is culturally hybrid, American-dominated (no French pop) and youth-oriented (no jazz). The faint echoes of Schubert's 'Ave Maria' at Asterix's are clearly ironic, a marker of an alien high culture that is, like Asterix's flat, borrowed. The other key point is that the music is racially mixed, in line with the ideological project of the film. It provides an ethnic rallying point rather than a divisive one, unlike, for instance, *Do The Right Thing*, in which Italian crooners clash violently with African-American music. In this respect the film rather resembles *Hangin' With the Homeboys*, where African-American and Latino music happily mix on the soundtrack, like the protagonists.

Thus, music in *La Haine* establishes a cultural climate, an ambience that suggests a harmonious ethnic blend, social concern and love of American

and American-inspired music. It also, on three occasions, evokes a utopian space: Marley's song on the opening montage, despite its belligerent lyrics, has an elegiac quality; Hubert's dope-smoking scene over soul music is marked by the continuity of music and time passing, signalled by fades; the break-dancing sequence smoothly edits the various dancers over one funky song. All three moments suggest, albeit briefly, the utopian space of the classical musical film, which is in each case brutally interrupted: the sound of a gunshot at the end of the montage, Hubert being called out, a boy bursting into the break-dancing arena with the news that violence has erupted in the *cit  *. In the latter, in particular, the 'reality' of the dystopian French *banlieue* has invaded the semi-oneiric space conjured up by the 'foreign' music. The camera, however, stays in the dream-like, musical space, pointing at the spinning dancer while everyone else decamps, as if it wanted to remain for a moment longer in the utopian 'American' space.

Vinz, Saïd, Hubert: an explosive trio

Looks and performances

A crucial factor in the appeal of *La Haine* is its central trio of protagonists, with whom the film creates strong empathy. Vinz, Saïd, and Hubert are onscreen virtually all the time, strongly contributing to the youth appeal of the film. The trio of young men are part heroes, part villains, all at once social victims, attractive and sympathetic survivors and 'little jerks'.⁴⁰ Constantly bickering, they are nevertheless inseparable; similarly, despite their contrasting skin colour and religious signs (a Muslim Fatma's hand for Saïd, a Jewish Star of David for Vinz, a Catholic cross for Hubert), their shared habitat, clothing and language reinforce their common identity as *banlieue* boys. The naturalistic performance of the three charismatic young actors, whose first names are also those of the characters, contributes substantially to the film's aura of authenticity.

Vinz – the aggressive one

Vincent Cassel, who plays Vinz, was the most experienced actor of the trio at the time, and he subsequently became a star, something that inevitably affects subsequent viewings. But, even without this knowledge, Vinz attracts most attention as the most full-fledged character, whose incongruous or violent fantasies (a cow in the middle of the *cit  *, Jewish dancing, shootings) we have privileged access to.

Vinz is all about aggression, as signalled by the first shot of him, featuring the chunky knuckleduster bearing his name, as if he was thrusting his fist at the spectator's face, even in his sleep. Cassel's long, sharp face is accentuated by his closely shaved head, skinhead-style, for which the director had to twist the actor's arm: 'Vincent said, "I'll look awful." [...] He knows his ears stick out.'⁴¹ His facial expressions delineate the look further: hostile stare, menacing grimaces underlined by thin lips, spitting, grinding teeth. His speech is a mixture of aggression and inarticulacy, suggesting suppressed hatred about to erupt: his occasional stutter makes words even more explosive when they emerge. Cassel uses his tall and lanky body in a highly kinetic fashion, thanks to his ballet training (the Jewish dance was his idea). He projects aggression with threatening arm movements and uncouth gestures, such as picking his nose or squeezing his blackheads (likewise, the first image of him asleep shows him drooling). Cassel's talent consists in making this violent performance graceful as well.

Vinz's clothes complete this aggressive persona. He wears standard sports clothes – a Nike jacket and trainers – with jeans and a black leather blouson, updating the look of 1950s *blousons noirs* delinquents. His room, which contains photos of football players and of Bruce Lee, a large sound system and an impressive stack of trainers, continues the macho, sporty theme. There is a tin of hashish and a poster of a cannabis leaf, as well as a tidy desk and computer. Thus, the character is presented as a 'normal' adolescent with just a hint of rebellion. Olivier Seguret's view that Vinz takes revenge on 'the absolute social denial in which he lives'⁴² is contradicted by this bedroom and what we see of his aggressive but playful relationship to his family. Kassovitz's autobiographically driven depiction of a warm Jewish family to some extent clashes with, or at least complicates, the characterisation of a socially deprived hooligan.

Saïd the 'joker'

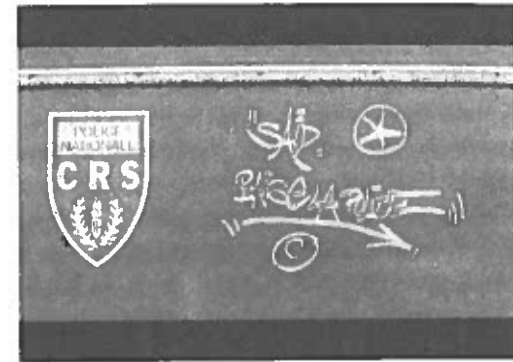
Saïd (Saïd Taghmaoui) is introduced by the graffiti he sprays on the police car, which proudly states his name and says 'fuck the police'. His handsome, chiselled face, sallow complexion and short, dark curly hair – as well as the Fatma's hand pendant – signal him as a *Beur*. Unlike Vinz and Hubert, however, his family environment remains off-screen. We briefly see his sister and his brother Nordine, and he refers to his parents, who would 'tear into him' if he took part in the riots, but we never enter his home. This absence has been controversial. Carrie Tarr believes the film thereby erases Maghrebi culture, while Myrto Konstantarakos argues that Saïd's absence of on-screen home is a positive step, as the film this way avoids singling out

the otherness of *beur* culture.⁴³ As these diametrically opposed views show, this issue, in terms of ethnic inscription, is largely a matter of extra-textual interpretation. But the fact remains that Saïd as a character is denied one layer of depth granted to the others.

Similarly, while Vinz is associated with the gun and Hubert – initially – with boxing, Saïd lacks such a ‘prop’. He is, however, distinguished by his sartorial flash and his gift of the gab. Saïd is clearly fashion-conscious, wearing a Sergio Tacchini tracksuit,⁴⁴ his leather blouson softened by a (presumably fake) fur collar. His woolly hat is a Lacoste, as is his brother’s cardigan. These clothes are plausible, especially among *beur* and black *banlieue* youth, who have made brands such as Lacoste and Burberry into a cult. Saïd Taghmaoui’s performance is also characterised by a lot of energetic movement, partly to make up for his small stature compared with his two tall friends, but unlike Vinz, his gesticulations – his swooping arm gestures in particular – are not aggressive. His attempts to assert his authority (for instance, over his sister and Astérix) end up more as tantrums or provocation, and he lies about women and sex – the film thereby tends to undermine his authority. Nevertheless, his gift for words, his *tchatche* (effusive volubility) and constant jokes are a large contribution to the film’s inventiveness and pleasure. Saïd’s relationship to language is signalled straightaway by his introductory graffiti, and he is the one who alters the ‘Yours’ (to ‘Ours’) in the ‘The World is Yours’ poster with a spray can. His way of sending up learned culture, for instance the exaggeratedly precious tone he adopts to say ‘on y vââ?’ (shall we go?) in front of the art gallery, or ‘merci, Châârles...’ to the waiter, is typical of a certain kind of *banlieue* language, which defensively parodies learned French as both bourgeois and effeminate.⁴⁵ In this respect, one function of his character is to show language as the – ultimately ineffectual – weapon of the dispossessed.

Hubert ‘the wise’

Everything about Hubert (Hubert Koundé) celebrates his blackness (as we saw in Chapter 1, this goes back to Kassovitz’s first short, *Fierrot le pou*, and to his first feature, *Métisse*, the latter also co-starring Koundé). His hair is plaited in an Afro-American style and he first appears with his glistening naked torso on display, an image duplicated in the poster, which shows him in classic boxer posture. Later we see his bedroom replete with images of iconic black athletes, such as Muhammad Ali. In keeping with this introduction, he wears the most sports-oriented clothes, with a hint of the military: combat fatigues, an Everlast T-shirt (another reference to boxing) showing under a sweatshirt jacket and a hood, and Reebok trainers. The



Saïd’s tag



Vinz’s ring



Hubert’s poster

introductory slow-motion boxing is a reference to the credits sequence of *Raging Bull* but it also emphasises control; boxing is a classic feature of American male-oriented genres, especially gangster films, where it serves to display and channel male power, competitive combat and controlled aggression. Accordingly, Hubert is all calm strength, without the chaotic aggression of Vinz or the overheated verbosity of Saïd. The devastation of his gym symbolises an attack on his identity and ambitions – subliminally signified by the *torn* poster that introduces him.

Compared to Saïd and Vinz, Hubert is all calm, cool and consideration. Koundé, who is very tall, seems to tower effortlessly over the others, dominating by presence alone. Although he ignores his sister, Hubert speaks gently to his mother (as opposed to Vinz, who shouts at his relatives) and discreetly supports the household. He is quiet and dignified, his speech containing noticeably fewer obscenities than the others. He repeatedly calms Vinz down, in the hospital, in the café toilet, in Les Halles. All the more paradoxical, then, that it is Hubert, the one most in control of his aggression, who chooses deliberately to use violence in the final shoot-out. After Vinz has surrendered his gun to him and is accidentally shot by Inspector Notre-Dame, Hubert thrusts his gun at the policeman's head. At this moment, Vinz's chaotic aggression gives way to Hubert's reasonable violence, justifying the use of the gun to avenge the police *bavures* against Abdel and now Vinz. 'Hate breeds hate,' Hubert says earlier. There is no mistaking the impact of the final scene: in this finality, we are made to accept violence as rational and inevitable.

Race and gender: black blanc beur ... and macho

Ethnic declension

In the reception of *La Haine* outside France, the issue of ethnicity has proved particularly controversial (see Chapter 3). On the one hand, the film's portrayal of *black blanc beur* harmony has been accused of whitewashing the reality of racism in France, while, on the other, the film is thought to promote a covert racist hierarchy – linked to the white identity of its director. It is thus worth looking at this thorny issue in some detail.

There is no doubting *La Haine*'s anti-racist intent, matching the director's well-known views. For Kassovitz, the brutal police interrogation of Saïd and Hubert in Paris is meant to convey 'how it was with Makomé'.⁴⁶ In this scene, two policemen tower above and brutally manhandle the pair, who are tied to their chairs, while a trainee policeman looks on. Hubert and Saïd's possession of a little hashish is clearly out of proportion with the

gratuitous police brutality, accompanied by a string of racist and sexist insults: as is traditional in French slang, feminised terms of abuse are used to degrade further their target.⁴⁷ Nude posters on the wall confirm the macho culture of the police. The young trainee's look at the scene, a mixture of fascination, revulsion and embarrassment, serves to underline both the institutional nature of this violence – he is 'learning' it – and the role of film and media: his gaze evidently duplicates ours. Later, the fight between the three friends and the skinheads reiterates the film's anti-racist stance, underlined by the skinheads' initial targeting of Saïd. Earlier, the same Saïd had also noted that 'an Arab in a police station does not last two hours', and later recounted an obscene, untranslatable and very funny joke about National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen. In putting these remarks in Saïd's mouth, the film articulates not just racism in France (and its opposition to it) but the awareness that *Beurs* are a special target of it.

Yet these instances of overt anti-racist discourse are relatively isolated. Moreover, despite the religious emblems around the heroes' necks, *La Haine* displays a complete lack of interest in religion: the only time the subject comes up, Vinz's grandmother berates him for no longer going to the synagogue. More strikingly, apart from a few affectionate jokes ('you bogus *Beur*', 'you poor Jew'), race plays no part in the heroes' relationship to each other and, instead, their friendship is repeatedly affirmed. The point of the racial diversity of the central trio is thus not racial conflict but racial cohesion, a key element in Kassovitz's depiction of urban warfare: 'I chose people of three different ethnic groups because I did not want to make a film about "Arabs against the police" or "blacks against the police", but about "young people from the *cités* against the police".⁴⁸ This threesome ethnic declension could be seen as wishful thinking. Yet, in this respect, *La Haine* is close to the approach of many *beur* films, and to sociological accounts of racial relationships in the French *banlieue*, just as it differs from American films such as *Boyz 'N the Hood* and *Do The Right Thing*, where racial conflict drives the narrative. *Hangin' With the Homeboys*, as already mentioned, is an exception, since it also depicts a cohesive, ethnically mixed bunch of friends, although admittedly the group – made of Latinos and blacks – does not include whites. It is also possible to argue, along with Mireille Rosello, that 'black and white binary oppositions are slowly losing their status of obvious relevance. They are being displaced by more up-to-date representations of complex, hybrid, and multifaceted identities.'⁴⁹

If ethnic difference is largely irrelevant among the inseparable trio of heroes, it is also because they are bound by class hatred for the 'establishment', or at least authority figures, whether police, the media, the bourgeois or a shopkeeper. Thus, the scene with the latter, although he is Vietnamese, is one

of simple delinquency, unlike the similar episode in *Do The Right Thing*: Vinz tries to pay less for his grandmother's peppers while Saïd steals biscuits. Furthermore, while, as we have seen, some of the police brutality towards Hubert and Saïd is racist, the police force is itself ethnically mixed. The friendly *beur* community cop Samir (Karim Belkhadra) is not the only non-white policeman; his colleagues at the hospital and in the devastated police station in the *cit  * include *beur* and black members. More conspicuously, one of the two policemen who maltreat Saïd and Hubert in Paris is a *Beur*, played by well-known *beur* actor Zinedine Soualem. *La Haine* contrives to showcase the extra brutality against the non-white characters by having Vinz come out of the building later and run faster than the policeman after him, but overall the message is clear: while there is racism in the police, its violence is institutional rather than racial. *La Haine* does not ignore racism, but it adopts a non-Manichean, non-essentialist approach to ethnic difference.

To take the point further, yet, can we agree with Carrie Tarr⁵⁰ that *La Haine*, despite its good intentions, reinforces a racist agenda, by putting the white character first and marginalising *beur* identity most? Looking closely at the film text, it appears that Vinz does not actually feature in significantly more shots than his comrades but that he is the object of many more close-ups. As we saw above, he is also given a richer, more rounded characterisation than the other two.⁵¹ The gun, which he shows off at frequent intervals, makes him more prominent in visual compositions as well as in the publicity for the film. Thus, Vinz is privileged on a visual, narrative and iconic level. By contrast, although Saïd's irony and humour make a large contribution to spectatorial pleasure, he is less assertive a presence in the film. His gaze opens the film and he is the survivor at the end, but this does not grant him narrative authority and it is at the price of his marginalisation from the main action. More insidiously, Hubert is celebrated according to fashionable cultural criteria but denied social progress. His advocacy of non-violence and desire to escape poverty through boxing come to nothing in the climactic ending. He may, in the final violent blast we don't see, also be its victim, but the fact remains that he uses the gun of his own accord, while Inspector Notre-Dame shoots Vinz by mistake. This finale, while justifying *banlieue* violence, can also be seen to reinforce – unwittingly – racist stereotypes, showing the white character as victim of police violence (although he is the most violent himself), the *Beur* as impotent witness and the black not only linked to drug trafficking but also the perpetrator of violence.

Summing up the points about ethnic declension, we see a number of paradoxes. *La Haine* exposes examples of racism, especially (though not exclusively) on the part of white characters, but it privileges its white leading character. The film worships aspects of blackness (looks, music) and

portrays its black hero as the most dignified, yet it also aligns him with drug dealing and deliberate – as opposed to blundering – violence. Racism against *Beurs* is pointed up as the most virulent, yet one of the perpetrating policemen is himself a *Beur*, and out of the three leads Saïd is, in narrative terms, the most marginalised. It would be reductive to consider these features as de facto 'racist'. At best the film is confused, at worst it is politically naive – as, for instance, when Vinz in the *caf   toilet* compares himself to *beur* victim Malik Oussekine. But these confusions themselves derive from the inherent complexity of the real-life situation. Anyone travelling the French suburbs can see plenty of evidence of ethnically mixed groups of young people, yet there is no denying the racism in the same areas, or in France in general.

Some of this complexity is in evidence in the inclusion of Jewishness, which, as Mireille Rosello points out, 'continues to remain an elusive signifier in French cultures'.⁵² This may be why Vinz's Jewishness has been given short shrift: he tends to be simply seen as 'white'. If, as discussed in Chapter 1, there is an element of self-indulgence in the inclusion of Jewish folklore, it is also possible to follow Kassovitz in seeing a greater purpose to it. The old man's story about Siberia, which evokes the Holocaust, takes place at the centre of the film and it visibly troubles the three protagonists. As directorial intervention it raises the film's awareness of racism to another level of reflection, and most spectators understand Kassovitz's intention: 'This scene asks the question of how far you can go with hatred, Nazi hatred. Because the ghettos were not like Saint-Denis, they were much worse.'⁵³ The story also shares a crucial similarity with the framing story about the 'fall' and the film itself, in that it has a tragic finality: death.

If, however clumsily, *La Haine* attempts to depict ethnic difference in the deprived *cit  s* with some complexity, the same cannot be said of its representation of gender.

An infantile macho world

La Haine is clearly a youth-oriented film, centred on three quasi-adolescent men. Moreover, the absence of male authority figures, in common with many *banlieue* and *beur* films, is striking. The few older men who appear – Saïd's older brother Nordine, *beur* local cop Samir, the drunk who helps them in their attempt to steal the car – are all ineffectual. As Roy Stafford points out, apart from the old man in the *caf   toilets*, 'there is no parental/patriarchal figure who tells the youths how to behave'.⁵⁴ Heads of families are female: aunts, mothers, grandmothers. Similarly, society's representatives are female (the television newscaster, the journalist). Yet this

does not mean that the heroes thereby occupy the place of the absent father. They live at home in a state of perpetual adolescence and their cultural discussions are confined to children's cartoons. None of them can drive so the attempted car theft is doomed to failure, an image of their lack of potency. When Saïd tells a story about having wild sex with a woman, the others' instant derision shows it to be fantasy. His story is, significantly, told in a playground, under a giant hippopotamus statue, which dwarfs and seems to mock them. Their disastrous encounter with women in the art gallery is about sexual as much as social ineptitude. In the light of this it is difficult to agree with Olivier Mongin that Saïd is involved in the world of male prostitution through the ambivalent figure of Astérix.²⁷

Yet, at the same time, our heroes inhabit a testosterone fuelled world of boxing, obscene language and gun-toting violence: their favourite insult is 'nique ta mère' (literally, 'fuck your mother'); the rap song in the car is the aggressively macho 'Mon esprit part en couille' by Expression Direkt; Vinz's shaved head and leather jacket, Hubert's fatigues, all connote a macho world validated by the film. The sequence of events around Vinz going to the cinema and the boxing match, as well as the police station scene, make a strong statement about a violent male culture that reproduces itself. The films Vinz sees in the cinema are all violent – among them a Clint Eastwood movie – and, pointedly, a child admiringly imitates his gesture in which his hand becomes a pretend gun, like the trainee cop watching to learn his 'trade'. Like the macho obscenities, it could be argued that the masculinist stance of the three heroes is just that (a posture, which comes to nothing; despite his bravado and imitation of De Niro in *Taxi Driver*, Vinz is incapable of firing a gun), or even that the film offers a critique of this macho world. This point, however, would have more critical force if the film itself did not derive most of its spectacle, and thus pleasure, from images of macho violence. And, as I showed earlier, the most beautiful noir photography showcases Vinz and his gun.

Reinforcing this is the absence of female characters capable of providing a critical perspective on the misogynist obscenities. Women are barely glimpsed at home, cooking, sewing and doing homework. On the rare occasions that they appear in public (Saïd's sister, the women at the art gallery), they are targets for crude aggression and unprovoked macho insults: 'squealer', 'cow', 'fish', 'Wonderbra advert', 'whore'. In this respect, *La Haine* does not simply reproduce the male focus and misogyny of most *beur* and *banlieue* films; it goes further – so much so that even French reviewers noticed. When tackled, Kassovitz has invariably replied with the debatable assertion that his film corresponds to the reality of the *banlieue*, where 'you don't mix genders'.²⁸ Women's perennial association with sexuality supposedly

detracts from the seriousness of the film's purpose: 'I did not want to soften the topic: what would love have to do with this story?' It does not seem to occur to Kassovitz that women have a social identity too: 'Maybe the film lacks a scene with girls among themselves... but that would have been another digression.'²⁹ Thus, women in *La Haine* are denied subjectivity (none of them qualifies as a character), their relation to the males is purely biological,³⁰ and they do not participate in social issues. It is thus surprising that Elisabeth Mahoney, after indicting films such as *Falling Down* and *Night on Earth* for their 'reliance on stereotypes of gender and race' despite their 'reconfiguration of urban space', praises *La Haine* for 'represent[ing] the possibility of reclaiming or re-imagining the space of the city',³¹ but ignores its misogyny. The young men's behaviour and experience are presented as coterminous with the *banlieue*, with as a result, the impoverishment of its social depth, as we will see below.

Image and ideology in *La Haine*

'Social space'

In answer to a question about whether he had a purely visual attraction to the *banlieue*, Mathieu Kassovitz replied, 'No... it is more interesting to film because of the story. I prefer to speak of people in trouble rather than left-wing intellectuals in St-Germain-des-Prés!'³² Having looked at issues of ethnicity and gender, this section asks what kind of social portrayal *La Haine* offers of 'people in trouble' in the *banlieue*.

We saw in Chapter 1 how films and television programmes about the *banlieue* repeatedly converge on a narrow scenario of male youth violence and delinquency, and on a visual vocabulary structured by a contrast between cramped and dark spaces (cluttered apartments, staircases, cellars and tunnels) and anonymous, empty spaces, a no man's land between the buildings. In contrast with other *banlieue* films, the design of Chantelouples-Vignes allows Kassovitz to eschew the straight lines and forbidding heights of brutal 1960s blocks. The dominant visual motif in *La Haine* is that of small, curved blocks with distinctive, 'vernacular' roof designs, children's playgrounds and small squares planted with trees. There are relatively few large, empty spaces. Two exceptions are what looks like an empty car park in front of the building in which Hubert's destroyed gym is situated (sequence 2) and the space in front of the three friends as they sit listening to a young boy's story (sequence 4). We also saw, earlier in this chapter, how the outdoor scenes in the *cit * are characterised by fluid

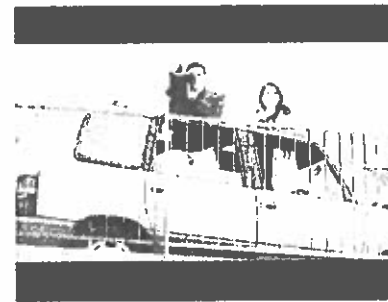
camerawork and long takes, which establish a dynamic interaction between the characters and their environment. *La Haine* thus avoids the alienating look of many *banlieue* films and depicts a more integrated space on a more 'human' scale – see, for instance, the analysis of the *plan séquence* earlier in this chapter.

On the other hand, compared not just to other *beur* films such as *Le Thé au harem d'Archimède*, *Hexagone* and *Raï* but also to American films depicting similar milieux, such as *Do The Right Thing* and *Clockers*, *La Haine* lacks what I would call 'social depth'. Unlike many other *banlieue* films with establishing shots that depict the borders between their *cité* and the rest of the world, *La Haine* never shows us how the *cité* stands in relation to its environment. It presents a self-enclosed world, in which the relentless focus on young men means that few spaces of social interaction are presented to the viewer. Largely because of the all-male focus, the views of 'normal' domestic spaces in Vinz and Hubert's homes are extremely brief (less than four minutes altogether), and, unlike in *beur* films – but also unlike in, say, *Mean Streets* – the three heroes never meet in cafés, restaurants or discos. Even the job centre, which recurs in so many *beur* and *banlieue* films, is absent. They do not belong to a school, gang or workplace; just about the only representation of 'employment' is small-scale dealing in drugs by Hubert and stolen goods (Darty; the fence). The heroes of *La Haine* thus exist in a social vacuum where there are no possibilities of exchange or encounters.

Nor is *La Haine* a film 'about' delinquency or drugs in any conventional sense. Kassovitz claims he wanted to show the smoking of hashish, because 'in the street they smoke a lot and this is never shown in French cinema.'¹⁴ Yet he spends little time on the question. There is a brief shot of Hubert smoking and of syringes on the ground (sequence 4) but the film does not chart the effects of drug taking, detrimental or otherwise – unlike, for instance, its contemporary, *Trainspotting*. More surprisingly, *La Haine*'s treatment of violence is not as extensive as one might think. A comparison with *Clockers*, Spike Lee's story of exclusion and violence among young black males in a Brooklyn housing estate, is illuminating in this respect. Shocking images of blood and torn bodies graphically depict the effect of violence on the community: local people look aghast at the bodies. *La Haine*, on the other hand starts with political struggle in the opening montage. But these images are coded as historical. The ending is shocking in its suggestion of violence rather than its graphic depiction, since it leaves most of it off-screen. Similarly, one might say that *La Haine* is not 'about' the police in the way suggested by Kassovitz's insistence in interviews on the Makome *bavure* (see Chapter 1) and on his film countering police films such as *L627*. Contrary to the common perception of *La Haine* as a trenchant

exposé of *banlieue* life, the social issues in the film are hinted at rather than explored.

It has been argued, with justification, that this lack of social depth is designed precisely to show the social vacuum in which the heroes live. For Mongin, *La Haine* situates its heroes in a space 'beyond any possible identity, whether it be political or cultural. What the film deals with is the impossibility to cultivate any identity (personal or collective).'¹⁵ This is confirmed by the focus on exclusion as a major trope of *La Haine*, which stages scenes of literal exclusion that mirror the social and cultural exclusion of the characters. 'Motherfucker, we are locked in outside!' ('Nique sa mère, on est enfermés dehors!') exclaims Saïd after a taxi driver refuses to take them on with what he rightly suspects is a stolen credit card. Saïd's witticism could serve as a motto for the film, in which the heroes are constantly being thrown out of somewhere: out of the hospital, out of Astérix's flat, out of a nightclub and out of the art gallery. When they try to force their way into Astérix's block of flats, Kassovitz has the concierge pointedly say: 'Do you think the world belongs to you?' – anticipating the bitter irony of Saïd modifying the 'The World is Yours' poster to 'The World is Ours'. These are familiar images of



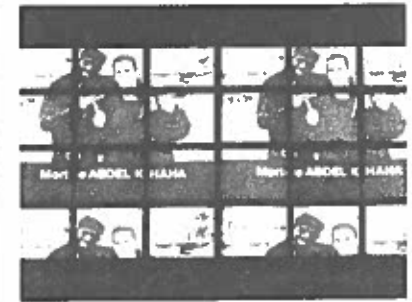
The television journalists



Vinz caught in their camera



The trio in the video entry phone



News of Abdel's death broadcast

exclusion, found in many *banlieue* films, common enough to have become cliché. In *Douce France*, in a good example of stereotype appropriation, the *beur* hero says he curled his hair to look more *beur* so he would be thrown out of nightclubs, 'in order to integrate into exclusion'.

In the end, despite the sharp division between *banlieue* and city centre, the lack of social depth in the film means that the heroes are as excluded 'at home' as they are in the metropolis. In the first part of the film they have a dynamic and intimate relationship with the space around them, yet they spend time in liminal spaces such as playgrounds, rooftops and cellars. In sequence 4, a piece of graffiti behind their backs says 'No future'. They are under surveillance, constantly attempting to escape control. This is why the police order the youngsters off the rooftop in the *cité*, despite the fact that, as Nordine points out, they are doing nothing wrong. This surveillance, primarily by the police, is relayed symbolically in the film by CCTV cameras, by intercom, and is echoed and magnified by the ubiquitous eye of television.

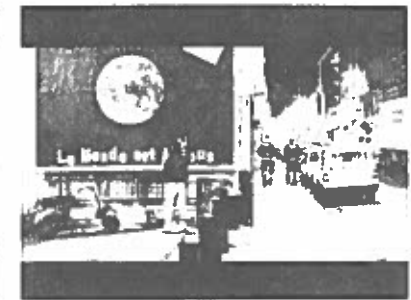
Violence and the media gaze

Events in *La Haine*, especially violent events, are filtered, through film (the montage) and – more frequently – television. The emblematic figure of Abdel is distanced in this way: news of his coma is announced on television while his death is broadcast – immediately following images of Bosnia – on a giant screen in the empty shopping mall of Les Halles (sequence 16). The riots, too, are evoked through the film montage and then on television, rather than 'live'. There are prosaic reasons for not filming the riots themselves, which 'would have cost too much'.²⁶ However, this also enables the film to reflect on the place that violence occupies in contemporary media, especially when it comes to the *banlieue*, a reflection that shows both understanding of a social issue and an ambiguous relation to it.

When Hubert angrily tells the television journalists filming the *cité* that 'this is not Thoiry', he is alluding to a safari theme park near Paris, but also to the self-reinforcing media hunger for *banlieue* violence. In his analysis of space in *banlieue* films Adrian Fielder argues that the three heroes' hostility to the television journalists expresses 'both a consciousness of their confinement within the space delimited by the eye of the camera, and a desire to escape the scrutiny of this reifying gaze'.²⁷ This is true, yet the film also registers the fact that the representation of violence flatters their narcissism: Vinz is obsessed with watching the riots on television, and is annoyed that a friend of his was caught by the camera rather than himself. In other words, he is furious at the television journalists' attempt to portray

him as a delinquent, yet in the next scene (at Darty's) he wishes he had been framed exactly as such. In Chapter 1 we saw how this dilemma informs the representation of *banlieue* 'problems' in real life. As the Marseille-based rap group IAM put it, 'The use of violence among the young is a concrete reality, not a myth. There are guns everywhere. And that's in part because of the stupid stereotypes carried by American films. [...] Yet violence constitutes the surest and most efficient way to be noticed, to come out of the crowd.'

The same argument can be applied both to the characters in *La Haine* and to the film itself. It is no accident that Vinz, the most aggressive of the three leads, is the star of the film, and *La Haine*'s aura of macho aggression undoubtedly contributed to its worldwide success. By contrast, the more 'realistic' but more muted violence of the *beur* films did not export. Michael Medved has argued that dominant cinema favours violent material, even though the most successful films at the box office are 'family films'. As he points out, in 1994, for instance, *The Lion King* made three times more money than *Pulp Fiction*, yet it is the latter that attracted attention. For filmmakers and critics alike, 'respect is often granted to the most violent



References to *Scarface*: the 'The World is Yours' poster and Said altering it



Vinz in the mirror, imitating Robert De Niro in *Taxi Driver*



Reference to *Raging Bull*: 'Your mother sucks bears'

and disturbing fare.⁶⁸ The worth of *La Haine* (like that of *Pulp Fiction*) cannot be reduced to its violence, but undoubtedly the latter helped both films' phenomenal success. Another reason for the success of *La Haine*, unlike other French *banlieue* films, was that it harnessed its 'local' message to international modes of representation.

A transnational film

An international film...

Following in the footsteps of Hitchcock and Godard, Kassovitz playfully inserts a cameo of himself in *La Haine* – as the skinhead beaten up by Vinz. As discussed in Chapter 1, there are other cameos, in particular his producer Christophe Rossignon and his father. For French film and television aficionados, there is also a range of in-jokes. The attempt to 'switch off' the Eiffel Tower (sequence 15) is a reference to a similar scene in Eric Rochant's *Un monde sans pitié*. Saïd's exchange with Vinz's sister at the beginning of the film, when she repeats 'pour quoi faire?' ('what for?') alludes to a sketch by French television comics 'Les Inconnus'. Most references, however, are quite explicitly American.

The protagonists' clothes, music and cinematic references are visibly and audibly American-influenced. Their language, too, includes American imports such as 'bâtard' ('bastard') and American references command respect, from *Lethal Weapon* to haircuts. As discussed in Chapter 3, these and other details – Darty wearing a T-shirt inscribed with 'Elvis shot JFK', the break-dancing scene – have struck American commentators as derivative, comic or passé. Particularly critical is Karen Alexander,⁶⁹ who sees the import of American culture as depoliticising and links the film to 'trendy fashion spreads', while Carrie Tarr⁷⁰ queries Kassovitz's legitimacy in using black American culture, on account of his white bourgeois background. Yet *La Haine*'s 'exploitation' of commodified forms of black American culture is 'political' precisely in showing the extent to which American culture has penetrated French youth culture. Despite struggles to assert French language and 'cultural exception' in the face of American 'invasion', French culture, especially working-class culture, is increasingly Americanised. Additionally, as we saw in Chapter 1, forms of black American culture – hip-hop in particular – have become strong markers of identity for *banlieue* youth. Thus, to a large extent the anxieties around the 'mimicry' of American culture by *La Haine* are expressions of nostalgia for some pure, archaic form of French culture. Additionally, a sense of what French cinema

'should be', steeped in the auteur films of the new wave, is reluctant to accept popular French culture for what it really is. Looking more closely at *La Haine*, we can detect a dual American import: the cinephilic slant of the director on the one hand and the working-class subculture of the characters on the other, but also strong differences between the film and the models it 'mimics'.

Kassovitz's first love was the American cinema of Spielberg, Scorsese, Lee, Tarantino and De Palma, and *La Haine* makes references to a number of their films. The introduction of the three main characters alludes to that of the heroes of *Mean Streets*, whose names are superimposed over their images at the beginning of the film – not surprising for a director who quotes *Mean Streets* as his 'favourite film'.⁷¹ As befits the postmodern era, Kassovitz's homage is filtered through another: 'I found it annoying in *Reservoir Dogs* that [Tarantino] should copy Scorsese. So I tried to do something different, it's a little joke.'⁷² Certainly, Vinz and Saïd's aggressive command of space and verbal delivery recalls Scorsese's heroes. As Susan Morrison has noted, there are parallels: 'Fluid camera; [...] a reliance on idiosyncratic male actors like De Niro and Keitel; a carefully selected and coded soundtrack and a near-hysterical tension lying just beneath the surface, ready to erupt at any moment.'⁷³ Anecdotally, one can also quote details such as the insult tagged on the wall of Hubert's gym ('Your mother sucks bears'), which recalls Joe Pesci's outburst on the telephone in *Raging Bull* ('Your mother sucks big elephant dicks'), and Vinz's Jewishness can be compared to the Italian-Americans of both Scorsese and Lee's films. More generally, violent American genres are referenced, for instance the discussion of the stolen gun in relation to the *Lethal Weapon* series, and the various references to *Scarface*: Astérix's cocaine snorting refers to the 1983 De Palma version, the 'The World is Yours' poster to Howard Hawks' 1932 film.

There are, however, important differences between the way Kassovitz films his situation, characters and – especially – violence and his American 'models' that make his film not an imitation but, like Jean-Pierre Melville's French thrillers of the 1960s, a reworking that bears marks of French tradition. Interestingly, one of the most important differences is the playing down of violence. As Olivier Seguret has put it: 'Where an American film would not have hesitated to spectacularise violence, Kassovitz on the contrary develops a *mise en scène* which while being admittedly "speeded-up", is in the end very sober.'⁷⁴ Indeed, as discussed earlier, actual violence is alluded to and filtered through self-reflexive representation, rather than directly – except in the police station scene, though this is minimal and mediated by the young policeman's gaze. While this could be attributed to the smaller budget, other instances point to a deliberate stylistic choice. For instance,

the beating up of the skinhead is shot in medium to long shot in a dark courtyard at night, the close-up of Kassovitz's bloody face no more than a few seconds. It is also instructive to compare the 'Mexican stand-off' at the end of *La Haine* with the same motif in John Woo's films. In *The Killer* (1989) the Mexican stand-off is repeatedly, lovingly, showcased. The situation of two men holding each other at gunpoint becomes an extended and spectacular *mise en scène* leitmotif that is declined in different registers: surprise, suspense, terror, and – in the scene between the killer and his friend/nemesis policeman with the blind heroine – it even includes a comic element. By contrast, for its only occurrence at the end of *La Haine* it is held for a mere 35 seconds, between two static characters, with no music, before the screen goes black. As we observed earlier in the discussion of the narrative fate of the characters, this indicates that the film's interest lies more with a collective, social and symbolic violence than with individual, bloody infighting.

There is also an interesting slippage in several cinematic references that the film indulges in: Kassovitz makes his heroes inhabit his own cinematic and visual culture rather than theirs. Vinz talking to himself in his bathroom mirror imitates the 1977 hero of *Taxi Driver*, where a similar young man in 1995 would more likely have copied Bruce Willis or Arnold Schwarzenegger (similarly, the heroes' discussion of *Pif* and *Hercule*, French Communist comics characters dating back to the 1950s, strikes as relating to Kassovitz's rather than the three heroes' culture). Kassovitz acknowledges this discrepancy when discussing his use of 'The World is Yours' from *Scarface*: 'I put that in because everyone on those estates knows De Palma's *Scarface*. As soon as you mention the movies, they say, "Oh yeah, just like in *Scarface*." Naturally, they don't know the original.'⁷³ (In fact, in De Palma's film 'The World is Yours' is no longer a poster but a garish brass and pink neon statue, which stands over the pool in which the hero collapses after he is shot.) Similarly, the references to Spike Lee are also evidence of Kassovitz's cinephilia rather than *banlieue* tastes.

It is through such a skilful blend of American and French influences that *La Haine* achieved its international impact. While retaining a clear connection to a French social situation and characters, in narrative, stylistic and ideological terms Kassovitz also harnessed this national slant to an international idiom. His subsequent career, which took him to Hollywood, would show to what extent he later successfully mastered the codes of violent American genre cinema (see Chapter 3).

... But also a French film

Having discussed the transnational aspect of the film, it is time to bring it back for the last time to its French context. Set among the inhabitants of a

deprived *banlieue* on the outskirts of Paris, *La Haine* offers a particularly noir vision of its 'proletarian' heroes. In 1930s Poetic Realist films and in 1970s social comedies and dramas, the protagonists – typically played by such actors as the young Jean Gabin in *Le Jour se lève* (1939) and the young Gérard Depardieu in *Les Valseuses* (1974) – related to a proletarian community and were alienated from its establishment, pitted against middle-aged, bourgeois figures in front of whom they represented youthful (and rightful) rebellion. In *La Haine*, 20 years on from *Les Valseuses*, there is no longer a community to relate to or be alienated from.

Beyond hip-hop and sports clothes, beyond admiration for Hollywood, looms another kind of American influence, that of the neo-capitalism and abdication of state social responsibility that created the American ghettos. Though state welfare is still substantial in France (and was at the time the film was made), the most pessimistic predictions saw the 'inverse utopia'⁷⁶ of the American ghettos as the future world order: a growing underclass of *exclus* (excluded people) who, as summed up by François Dubet, 'live in several worlds at the same time [...] in economic exclusion and in a society of consumption'.⁷⁷ The characters in *La Haine* are such *exclus*, caught in this vicious contradiction between disavowal of capitalism and avowal of consumerism, symbolised, for instance, by Santo, Vinz and friends cruising in a BMW but excluded from a nightclub. The beginning of *La Haine* is about 1990s demonstrations that themselves recalled 1960s political struggles. Yet the film's heroes are politically disengaged and have no social conscience: for example, they show zero compassion for a woman beggar in the Métro. Unlike the characters in the Marxist *État des lieux* with a well-articulated political programme, but like many others in the films of the *jeune cinéma français*, they are anomic, helpless and hopeless; this is visualised in the way they sit in an amorphous way, especially in the first half of the film. Their aggression, against the police and other institutions, is visceral, random and self-defeating, as the ending so shockingly shows. We are no longer in the Communist 'red suburbs' of the 1960s; in this respect, *État des lieux* is sadly anachronistic. The neo-capitalist 'malaise des banlieues' of the 1990s is rather a throwback to the 19th-century 'dangerous classes', the hordes of 'savage' *apaches* menacing bourgeois society from the fringes of the city. The film's chilling ending takes place under giant murals representing the *maudit* romantic figures of Baudelaire and Rimbaud, put in place by the well-meaning architects of Chanteloup-les-Vignes. Kassovitz alleges that he 'did not know who [the murals] represented'.⁷⁸ Even if this were true (which I doubt), this symbolic visual placement cruelly underlines the failure of the cultural policies that were supposed to help the *cités*, and his heroes' alienation from the figure of the romantic rebel as well as from any historical change.

The question is: does *La Haine* provide a clear-sighted portrayal of this situation, or is it caught in its contradictions? Does it criticise or celebrate its heroes' ideological alienation and confusion? Does its stylistic sophistication, its spectacular pleasures, undercut its 'authenticity'? The answer, of course, in each case is that it does both. For Vincent Amiel, the *jeune cinéma français* in general tends to 'cut itself off from social representations, through an excess of style'.¹ Many others (as detailed in Chapter 3) have, on the contrary, seen *La Haine* as the indictment of an explosive social situation. If, as I have argued, the contents of the film did not really offer new insight, its style and stylishness do. *La Haine* has an equal urge to enlighten and to entertain, and it does so in a fresh and internationally understandable way. Its stylistic pleasures do not undercut its authenticity but, on the contrary, enable it to travel. Its ideological contradictions – between youth who are excluded and angry and yet enslaved by consumerism, between the lure of media spectacularisation and its traps – are themselves typical of an age where the grand narratives of politics and history have disappeared. We are a long way from the committed cinema Kassovitz's own father was involved in, in the 1960s. There has been a 'return to the political', and certainly to 'the social', in French cinema of the 1990s, but *La Haine* is not at its forefront. With the benefit of hindsight, we also know that this is not at all the direction Kassovitz himself followed (as discussed at the end of Chapter 3). Nevertheless, the energy, youthful zest and brilliance of its style, the charisma of its performers, but also ultimately its sincerity have made *La Haine* an important and unforgettable film.

Notes

- 1 'Interview with Mathieu Kassovitz' in Ciment and Herpe (eds), *Projections* 9, p. 190.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 191.
- 3 *L'Express*, 11 May 1995.
- 4 'Interview with Mathieu Kassovitz', p. 184.
- 5 Beugnet, Martine, *Marginalité, sexualité, contrôle dans le cinéma français contemporain*. Paris, L'Harmattan, 2000, p. 14.
- 6 CRS stands for 'Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité'. The CRS were created at the Liberation to restore order and used to repress strikes and other unrest, for instance during the Algerian war. They acquired a notorious reputation with the repression of the May 1968 student events.
- 7 Ciment and Herpe, 'Interview with Mathieu Kassovitz', p. 189.
- 8 Konstantarakos, Myrto, 'Which mapping of the city? *La Haine* (Kassovitz, 1995) and the *cinéma de banlieue*', in P. Powrie (ed.), *French Cinema in the 1990s*, p. 162.
- 9 Ciment and Herpe, 'Interview with Mathieu Kassovitz', p. 185.

- 10 At the time of *La Haine*, this could have been a reference to *Lethal Weapon 1* (1987), *Lethal Weapon 2* (1989) and *Lethal Weapon 3* (1992) – all directed by Richard Donner.
- 11 Ciment and Herpe, 'Interview with Mathieu Kassovitz', p. 184.
- 12 Hbert, Roger, *The Chicago Sun Times*, 4 April 1996.
- 13 *Mise en abyme* (or *mise en abîme*), initially a term of rhetoric, means the embedding of one story into another, or of one process into another.
- 14 Kassovitz, Mathieu, commentary, Canal+ DVD, *La Haine*, 2001.
- 15 Information for this section comes from Kassovitz's commentary, Canal+ DVD, 2001.
- 16 Taubin, Amy, 'Primal screen', *The Village Voice*, 2–8 August 2000.
- 17 Perkins, V.E., *Film as Film: Understanding and Judging Movies*. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972, p. 45.
- 18 Kelly, Richard, *The Name of this Book is Dogme95*. London, Faber & Faber, 2000, p. 9.
- 19 Dyer, Richard, *White*. London and New York, Routledge, 1997, pp. 98–99.
- 20 A notable exception is Jean-François Richet's film *Etat des lieux*.
- 21 These scenes are visible as supplements on the Canal+ DVD *La Haine*, 2001.
- 22 Boulay, Anne and Colmant, Marie, *Libération*, 31 May 1995.
- 23 Aumont, Jacques and Marie, Michel, *Dictionnaire théorique et critique du cinéma*. Paris, Nathan, 2001, p. 158.
- 24 Bordwell, David, 'Intensified continuity: visual style in contemporary American film', *Film Quarterly*, Spring 2002.
- 25 Ciment and Herpe, 'Interview with Mathieu Kassovitz', p. 188.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 191.
- 27 Canal+ DVD, *La Haine*, 2001.
- 28 Rémy, interview with Mathieu Kassovitz.
- 29 J.D., 'interview du fanzine *Steadycam*'.
- 30 In the commentary on the Canal+ DVD, Kassovitz indicates that he went as far as a painting a plastic bag in reverse to suggest its mirror image.
- 31 J.D., 'interview du fanzine *Steadycam*'.
- 32 Canal+ DVD.
- 33 Ciment and Herpe, 'Interview with Mathieu Kassovitz', p. 189.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 188.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 192.
- 36 Mongin, Olivier, 'Regarde les tomber; à propos de *La Haine*', *Esprit*, August–September 1995, p. 178.
- 37 Ciment and Herpe, 'Interview with Mathieu Kassovitz', p. 192.
- 38 Franchant, Marie-Noëlle, *Le Figaro*, 27 May 1995.
- 39 A brief extract from Edith Piaf's 'Je ne regrette rien', 'sampled' by the DJ Piat's song could be doubly ironic, as a symbol of populist Frenchness, and as the anthem of ultra-right paratroopers during the Algerian war.
- 40 Rémy, interview with Mathieu Kassovitz.
- 41 'Interview with Mathieu Kassovitz', p. 190. Kassovitz elsewhere argues that '[S]omeone who is angry, who has "hatred" because he lives in an estate, has nothing to do with a skinhead who believes in a totalitarian ideology'. But the similarity remains; in Ferenczi, Aurelien, *InfoMatin*, 31 May 1995.
- 42 Seguret, Olivier, *Libération*, 29 May 1995.
- 43 Konstantarakos, 'Which mapping of the city?', p. 166.