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Migrant to Marseillais: Engaging the *quartiers nord*

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Abstract

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The framing of the migrant communities of Marseille's *quartiers nord* as a precarious periphery presents space as a stratifying tool of supremacy. This honors thesis studies the interactions between Algeria migrant communities and their lived spheres, from their origin (Algiers) to foreign society (Marseille). This work applies sociological perspectives of Abdelmalek Sayad and Alain Gillette to observe colonial rupture of space. Visual markers of French supremacy are examined through the critical theories of Homi Bhabha and Madeleine Dobie. These scholarly perspectives are applied to architecture analyses (Zeynep Çelik), photojournalism (Philippe Pujol, Gilles Favier, Teddy Seguin, Youssouf Djibaba, Arnau Bach and Tobias Zielony), rap music (IAM and 13 Organisé) and documentary (Franceinfo) to observe the socio-spatial asymmetries between 'foreignness' and 'Frenchness'. This work is divided into four parts, the first being an introductory probe into the one-sided narrative of migrant communities. The first chapter begins in Algiers, where the colonial architecture reconfigures the colony as a marker of French sovereignty. The second chapter parallels 'Frenchness' as the dominant cultural paradigm in the housing estates of Algiers and Marseille. The final chapter observes the conflict between the confined life of alienated communities in the *quartiers nord* and the fluidity of the migrant existence. Overall, this work observes the performance of dominion in a spatial dimension.

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Introduction

The Dangers of Singular Narratives

When we discuss the experiences of migrants, we often look at their position within the host society—inherently initiating a *travail d'assimilation* upon arrival on foreign soil. Migration—immigration and emigration—is a social state of existence that weaves in the fabric of the *patrimoine* to the Fabric of the host society in a cyclical fashion. The distinction between ‘fabric’ and ‘Fabric’ must not be understated, as the former is the bedrock of the latter. Just as Edouard Glissant presents ‘histoire’ as the collective consciousness that makes up the foundation of ‘Histoire’ over time, the distinction between ‘fabric’ and ‘Fabric’ draws on this concept in a cultural and physical understanding of space (Glissant, 227). The *quartiers nord* is arguably the heart of the Marseillais megalopolis. It is one of the prominent gateways between the *métropole*, North Africa, West Africa, and East Africa (Hoad). A glimpse into the migrant communities of Marseille’s *quartiers nord*, through the foggy lens of popular news media, reveals a narrative of precarity above all else. A google search of the keywords “quartiers nord and Marseille” generates results including the following words: cité, violence, zone, risque, crime, pauvreté, trafic, urbain etc. This list is by no means exhaustive, as synonyms of these words are etched into the northern district with each news headline. They do not, however, tell us all that there is to know about the *quartiers nord* its inhabitants. The imagined story about migrant communities in popular media ignited a curiosity that fueled the analyses of this thesis. By finding a way to enter inside the *quartiers nord*, we can find ways to observe what goes on beyond and behind the news headlines.

When probing the Maghrebi case, Algeria appears as an obvious starting point¹. The *quartiers nord* district is largely populated by migrants, of which a fifth hail from the Maghreb² (Sherwood). Growing from 211,000 to 350,000 between 1954 and 1962, Algerian migrants constitute the largest population of

¹ Algeria is the largest country of the French-colonized Mahgreb region (i.e. Tunisia and Morocco); it is also the largest country in the continent (BBC).

² Besides from the Maghrebi migrant population in the *quartiers nord*, there are migrants from West Africa (Senegal, Mali), East Africa (Comoros Island), Italy, Armenia etc (Hoad). Acknowledging that there was more than one migrant route to Marseille prevents the metonymic reduction of Marseille to only Algeria.

Maghrebi heritage in Marseille (Stora, 101). In various mediatic reports on the *quartiers nord*, less attention is paid to the interaction between migrant communities and their lived experience, than to murders, violence and drug trafficking. By supersaturating news media in the district with the headlines of violence and risk, the *quartiers nord* frames migrant communities in pejorative generational terms like “fils d’immigrés”. This appellation designates inhabitants of the *quartiers* as non-native to the Republic, even when they are born in France. Beneath the smokescreen of sensationalist headlines, lies over 2600 years of rupture and disorder implanted by French power in Marseille. The violence now paraded as a migrant prototype is and has been a colonial heritage that dates to the conquest that made Massilia, the Phocaeen city into Marseille. Furthermore, in the Algerian case, it transcended the Mediterranean, through a shared history of conquest and mobility between colonizer and colony. Of all the spheres of French influence in Africa, Algeria represented the epitome of French sovereignty. This was achieved by the destruction of life and brutal expunging of pre-existing ways of social life.

Instituting markers of dominion into every layer of social life by reconfiguring spheres of native existence, the French presence during the Algiers expedition of 1830 revealed itself as far more ruthlessness than any military weaponry alone can tell. One of the greatest consequences of this expedition was the expulsion of people from their place of inhabitation, making them foreigners in their own land. Algeria was redrawn through exclusionary tactics that defined the Algerian as an outsider in the French colony. This peripheralization performed a literal and physical marginalization, by visually relegating the life of the colonized to the ends or the fringes of a new colonial society. In this regard, the notion of the periphery appears as “structurally embedded conditions” that diminish the “scope of autonomous action” (Kühn, 371) for those living in them. That is the peripheralization of a people in their own land, is both a physical and psychological casting aside of native populations. The configuration of colonial Algeria to alienate its own people then foreshadowed the framing of Algerian migrants as non-integrable to French acculturation in Marseille some decades later. A similar trend continued through trans-Mediterranean migration, where Algerian migrants were and are still relegated to the margins of Marseille by selective systems of integration.

The colonial paradigm of supremacy in Marseille makes Algerian communities invisible by calling them *asocial* and antipodal to euro-normativity. The individual exists in limbo--he or she is *ni d'ici, ni de là*. What he or she once defined as origin has been changed and made foreign. This individual then becomes stuck in the middle. Psychology professor Urmitapa Dutta describes this as a “damage-centered analysis” that frames “poor urban communities, native communities and communities of color as sites of endemic disinvestment and dispossession” (Dutta, 273). In order not to “reproduce [colonial] relations of structural domination and rob people of their complex personhood” (Dutta, 273) we must look at the systems that marginalize these migrant communities in Marseille. How are they established and maintained? How do they resist ‘Franco-normative’ efforts reminiscent of the ancient-colonial society? A disposition towards stagnancy leans into the spatial dimensions of migrant identities and lived spheres themselves emphasize perceptions of foreignness. The failure to acknowledge the numerous nuances of a diverse people results from different forms of colonial palatability. That is, the colony is designed to the taste of the colonizer. The colony was thus molded as though a blank slate. This erasure continues through migration between Algeria and France, and life is said to begin only after arrival to French soil. Just as Algeria begins at colonization, so the Algerian migrant life starts at immigration. What I propose to do here, in studying the interactions between migrant communities and their imposed living experiences, is to confront their under-represented discursive presence in popular media and literature. While there are representations of the poor living conditions of migrant populations in Marseille, there is still little exploration on how those who live in such conditions grapple with this unjust, imposed marginalization. By shifting away from the homogenizing discourse of popular media on the *quartiers nord*, this thesis explores the ways in which recent art forms, namely photography, photojournalism and documentary, illuminate the opacity of the *quartiers* and amplify the frustrations of those who are confined to false representations of stagnancy and alienation.

Literature review

The ignorance of the emigrant status of the immigrant--the culture, norms, and beliefs that they bring with them on this transcultural journey--positions the host society as the protagonist to the migrant

story. In the preface to *The Suffering of the Immigrant*, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu writes: “Like Socrates as described by Plato, the immigrant is *atopos*, has no place, and is displaced and unclassifiable.” (Sayad, xiv). Sociologists such as Abdelmalek Sayad and Pierre Bourdieu have provided social scientific and theoretical approaches to the narratives of migration. Sayad writes:

Any study of migratory phenomena that overlooks the emigrants’ conditions of origin is bound only to give a view that is once *partial* and *ethnocentric*. On the one hand, it is only the *immigrant*--and not the *emigrant*--who is taken into consideration, rather as though his life began the moment he came to France...the problematic, both explicit and implicit, is always that of adaptation to the ‘host’ society...When compared with the behavioral modes of the dominant society--the society of immigration--which are thus constituted as norms, the behavior of the immigrant inevitably seems deviant. (Sayad, 29)

The seemingly deviant dispensation of the migrant is due to his or her ambivalence and the diversity of their origins. The behavioral modes of the dominant society would be grouped under assimilationist tactics imbued into lived spheres of the Algerian migrant in Marseille. These differential processes are explained through the manipulation of space as a colonial tool that institutes markers of dominion, both in France and Algeria. The concerted effort of French society to enforce adaptation on to the immigrant and bestow upon them a new life that begins upon arrival suggests an inversion of the *mission civilisatrice*. This neo-civilization is one in which the host society no longer exports its civilizing bodies to the origin (ex-colony) of the migrant but performs the mission under the pretext of assimilation and adaptation.

Methodology

The studies of sociologists Abdelmalek Sayad, Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Gillette will be here used as a theoretical framework to understand how colonial violence created and enacted a persistent rupture of space, both in the colony of Algiers and abroad in Marseille. The study of the construction and imposition of visual markers in Algiers and Marseille will be informed by the critical theories of Homi Bhabha and Madeleine Dobie. Establishing Algiers as the starting point of the migrant to Marseille, however, is insufficient to access the *quartiers nord*. This thesis consults art forms such as journalist writing,

documentary, photography as unique points of entry to an otherwise barricaded world. Written works by Philippe Pujol in *La fabrique du monstre, Marseillais du Nord: Les Seigneurs de Naguère* and Youssouf Djibaba in *Castellane* are anchored in biography, thus providing access into the *quartiers nord* through the footprints of its inhabitants. Djibaba's autobiographical text presents primary source material that engages with Teddy Seguin's photographic interpretations of La Castellane. Additionally, in *La fabrique du monstre*, Pujol provides a brief autobiography detailing his connection to the *quartiers nord*. In his exploration as a journalist, he documents testimonies of other inhabitants of different estates in the district. Interestingly, the cover photograph for this work appears in the later collection *Marseillais du Nord*, where he engages the dwellers of the Hérodote estate captured by photographer Gilles Favier.

History is often told through written articulation, but it can be argued that the pulsating veins of a city provide a much richer point of view that words may not be able to encapsulate. Hence, this work will examine photography of the cités in the *quartiers nord* to engage with the visibility versus invisibility of the migrant dwellers. Documentaries by France info will be highlighted as a medium to physically hear the vocalized experience of the inhabitants of the cités shown in the photographs. While Seguin is from Marseille, Favier and Arnau Bach are from Roanne and Spain respectively. Seguin presents the perspective of an insider already familiar with the district, while Bach and Favier are positioned as outsiders looking in.

Chapter summaries

In the first chapter of this thesis, I focus on colonial violence in Algeria and the manipulation of space in Algiers to create a new meaning and order in the colony. Concepts such as conformity, the colonial unconscious and mimicry are engaged to understand 'urban renewal' in Algiers as an archetype of French sovereignty. Colonial meaning will be analyzed through the dichotomy of what is essentially the 'legible' modern colony versus the 'illegible' primitive pre-colony in the French colonial imaginary. By examining the intervention of French architects like Le Corbusier, this chapter presents the topographical exploitation of Algiers to institute markers of dominion that reshape the social fabric of the colony. The deployment of

an aesthetic of conformity to guarantee French supremacy can be understood as the architectural colonial legacy of the mass housing estates in Algiers and Marseille.

A second chapter probes the Republican idea of an undifferentiated citizenry. Here I connect the trend of carved out and isolated spaces for these communities to mass housing reform in Algiers and the *quartiers nord* in Marseille. The concept of the social versus asocial is further used to explain exclusionary housing policies that relegate migrant communities to the margins as racialized spaces that define them as non-integrable. The disequilibrium between the *immigrant* and *emigrant* finally points towards questions of legibility and associability. In studying the manifestations of assimilationist tactics, this chapter revisits space as a conceptual tool of colonial domination. The mass housing projects (or the *grands ensembles*) in Algiers and Marseille, I argue, are visual markers of these communities' illegitimation. Within these confines, this chapter also considers the ways in which dwellers of the margins operate within these enclosed domains.

A third and final chapter considers representations of the periphery. The *quartiers nord* is interpreted as a world of its own. Herein lies the inscription of the migrant into lived spheres that are cut off from the larger social fabric of Marseille. The frustrations of this confinement are amplified through musical lyrics that highlight the problematic of alienation. The migrant as fluid and not static challenges the fixed world of the *quartiers nord*. By consulting art forms such as the music of IAM (Akhenaton and Shurik'n) and 13 Organisé as well as the photography of Gilles Favier, Teddy Seguin and Tobias Zielony, space as a concept of dominion is undone from the inside out, once again exposing its artifice as a violent tool of fragmentation and supremacy.

Chapter 1

The Aesthetics of Conformity: French urban renewal in Algiers

Introduction

Colonization imposes itself in the meaning of space. As Achille Mbembe writes in *On the postcolony*, life in the pre-colonial era is devalued as “a mixture of the half-created and the incomplete, strange signs, convulsive movements...a bottomless abyss where everything is noise, yawning gap, and primordial chaos” (Mbembe, 3). The self-given responsibility of the colonizer to ‘organize’ a continent that ‘wallows’ in “primordial chaos” was the rationale for French urban planning in Algiers. Through deeply enmeshed hegemonic practices within colonial urban design, the story of the colony became *l’Algérie c’est la France* (Lejman, 251). In the blueprint of colonial Algeria, there has been extensive focus on Algiers (Sobin, 189; Lorcin, 3; Ackley, 2006; Çelik, 1997:22; Imane and Boussora, 68) in comparison to the cities of Oran, Constantine and Setif (to name a few). Surrounded by the Sahel with a population of 1,997,663 people, Algiers is the largest city in the country (Karabenick, 1991:88). This chapter will examine space as a tool manipulated by French urban planners in Algiers to visually render colonial sovereignty. This is the most insidious type of violence, whereby topographical exploitation inherently made Algeria the new battleground for colonial imposition and cultural dominion.

To interpret the concept of ‘urban renewal’ is to acknowledge its creation of archetypes of dominion. For Algeria to become the prototype of the Republic, it was ascribed meaning by a “psychosocial and geospatial marginalization” that cemented the colony as France’s “apparatus of power” (Brown, 2). If we understand that the colonial objective is the establishment and reinforcement of hegemony, it is not surprising that space is manipulated to achieve this end. In *L’Immigration Algérienne en France*, Abdelmalek Sayad and Alain Gillette characterize the destructiveness of colonial rule as “désintégration de l’armature de la société originelle” (1984 : 18). The words “rupture profonde” and “désintégration” evoke a sense of perturbation in the social fabric of the colony. Additionally, the authors’ use of the word “equilibrium” and “original” implies Algiers and its people had an authenticity that was extirpated by the French. In his article “Space and Social Order”, Murray Edelman discusses the use of space to objectify

meaning for a group of people. He argues for space as an interface for its inhabitants to “take the role of the other and invoke shared meanings in one another” (Edelman, 2). The case of colonial Algiers is antithetical to Edelman’s definition. The Algerian people could not accede to the role of French supremacy, less so invoke shared meaning—space became the tool of stratification instead of confluence. This chapter focuses on how the colonial carving of Algiers gave rise to the violent rupture of antecedent socio-spatial framework. From this fragmentation, the colony became a stage upon which colonial ‘magnificence’ was performed. Through space, Algerian values had to become French ones, and all the physical manifestations of Algerian values (i.e., through architecture for instance) had to be made *anew*.

Order and meaning making

When order is discussed in Africa, it is often in reference to the colonial era or less often, the postcolonial era (Mbembe, 3). The omission of the pre-colony reflects the colonial understanding that Africa before ‘civilisation’ existed in an “unreality”, as the “figure of what is null, abolished...the very expression of that nothing whose special feature is to be nothing at all” (Mbembe, 4). Establishing order in a spatial dimension is then a form of hegemonic meaning-making; wherein the Ottoman rule preceded the French in Algeria. Algiers, is a city “shaped by Islamic life” since the year 944, when it was still called “el-Djezair”(Grabar, 392). Looking into the Algerian pre-colony, as scholars like Madeleine Dobie (2001), Zeynep Çelik (1992:1997:2002:2020), Abdelmalek Sayad (1984, 2004), Alain Gillette (1984) and Philip Naylor (2000) do, reveals an evolving topography shaped by different regimes. This involved the Phoenicians in 5th century BC, the Romans in the early AD centuries, the Imazighen settlers, the Spanish in the fifteenth century, then the Ottoman Empire from the early sixteenth century until Algiers 1830 (Hadjri and Osmani, 3; Shuval, 44). Each of these regimes introduced their own forms of organization, making this part of the Sahel no stranger to changes in colonial order.

Before the arrival of the French, the Almohad caliphate created the Algerian *deylik* (or Algerian Regency) to entrench Ottoman order into the socio-spatial infrastructure of the nation (Evans and Phillips, 11; Hadjri and Osmani, 3; Naylor, 6). The Regency not only cemented “Ottoman power in the western Mediterranean” but created the Algerian identity as a totem of Turkish order, visualized through “vernacular

architecture” (Hadjri and Osmani, 3). Historians have argued that the *deylik* was “the first Algerian state” created for the perpetuation of Ottoman presence and the defense of Islam; even to the extent that the *bey* of Constantine viewed the French as a threat to Ottoman order in Algeria. Hence, the transition from Ottoman rule to the French deployed space as a battle ground for supremacy.

Moreover, the institution of meaning and order is justified through the implication that nothingness must be made into somethingness. In *France and Algeria*, Philip Naylor presents Marshall Louis de Bourmont’s rationale for the Algiers 1830³ expedition as a cause “for humanity” to develop “a new people beneficial to the civilized world” (Naylor, 13). Marshall de Bourmont’s perspective evinces Mbembe’s claim of Africa being viewed as an uncivilized unreality (Naylor, 13; Mbembe, 4). Hence, colonial rule in Algeria was rationalized by the feigned creation of novelty, while eliminating exhibitions of non-western social life. Naylor writes:

An array of literature extolled the civilizing mission while directly and indirectly repudiating the idea of a precolonial Muslim history or the very existence of a cultured and sophisticated people. Signaling the existential obliteration faced by the native population, metropolitan literature often presented Algeria as a virgin, even vacant, territory offering spectacular opportunities for France. (Naylor, 15)

The words “virgin” and “vacant” suggest that the Algerian territory was little less than an empty and unexplored canvas on which to create newness. Naylor’s critique of colonial literature on Algeria aligns with Mbembe’s critique of Western colonial narratives of Africa as a ‘clean-slate’. Both scholars discuss how the colonies are reduced to primitivity to justify the self-appointed mission of the colonizer to “illuminate the world” by obliterating pre-existing ways of life (Naylor, 16). If such were the pretensions of the ‘metropolitan’ pen on paper, what was to follow on the ground was the physical rendering of French values in spatial form.

³ Algiers 1830 is in reference to the beginning of French colonial occupation in Algeria, whereby the strategic port of Algiers was occupied by French troops (Swain, 359) in “the summer of 1830 and the final days of Charles X’s reign” (Osborne, 160).

Perpetuating colonial meaning through topography

The spatial obliteration of the previous Algerian story to become ‘Algérie-France’ took the form of monumentalizing sovereignty in Algiers, where structures such as the al-Sayyida mosque (Fig. 1) were demolished to erect the *place du Gouvernement* (Fig. 2) (Çelik, 28; Hadjri and Osmani, 4) and the statue of Duc d’Orléans for instance (Çelik, 147; Grabar, 392).



Fig. 1 The Runoman. *Ruins of the al-Sayyida mosque in Algiers. 2018.* © Shutterstock



Fig. 2 Osmani, Mohammed. *Place du Gouvernement. 2003* © Mohammed Osmani

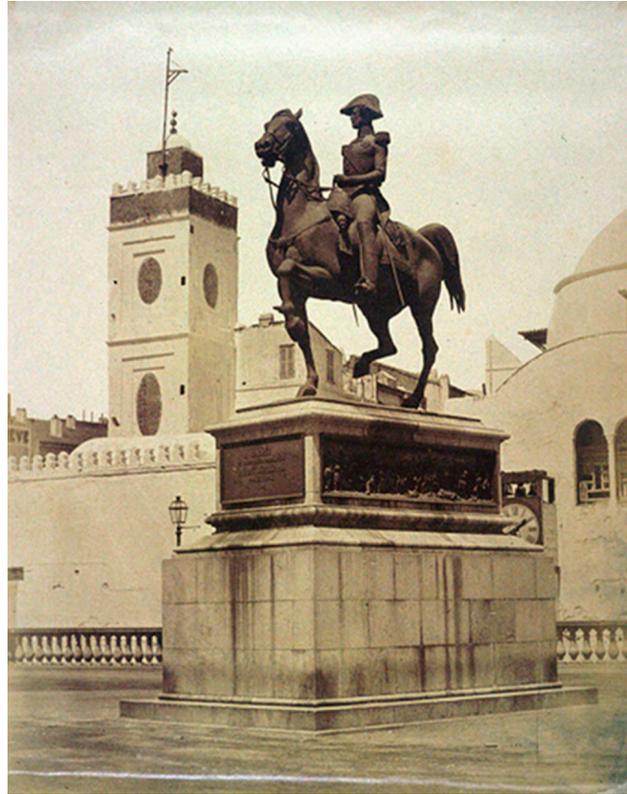


Fig. 3 *Duc d'Orléans*, 1990. Image from author's postcard collection. © Zeynep Çelik

(Çelik, 2020:714)

The statue of the Duke of Orléans in the foreground of Fig. 3 contrasts with the al-Djadid mosque in the background of the photograph to symbolize the grandeur of French supremacy over the conquered colony. Additionally, the statue of the duke blocks the mosque in French opposition (here literal) to Algeria's Islamic heritage which was the bedrock of its social organization since the onset of Turkish rule in 1518 (Hadjri and Osmani, 2). Karim Hadjri and Mohamed Osmani argue that Christianization was part of the new order imposed by the French, the strategic placement of the statue of the duke in front of the al-Djadid mosque corroborates this symbol a "Christian commercial town" against a "pirate capital" (Hadjri and Osmani, 3). Turkish architectural historian Zeynep Çelik analyzes this observation of the statue's placement:

Elevated on a high base and contrasting the serene mass of the white mosque in its blackness and dynamic shape, and with its back to the mosque, it conveyed a straightforward message about the

power structure in Algeria. The gaze of the Duc d'orléans, turned...to face the Casbah, underlined the statement about French control over Algerians. A public art form that was totally foreign to local norms, the statue dominated the major perspectives...thereby reiterating its message. (Çelik, 2002:148)

Such effigies of French power are erected in these specific historical locations to reinforce the colonial concept of a new nation. The aim of the French was to permeate the fabric of the city (and eventually the country) through a type of hypervisibility, by wiping out all threats to their sovereignty. Order, however, is only effective when it is ingrained as meaning.

The colonial unconscious and spatial manipulation

In the colonial era, the paradigm of supremacy was birthed in a “mediation that enabled the West to accede to its own subconscious and give a public account of its subjectivity” (Mbembe, 4). This colonial subconscious is the blueprint upon which ideals of supremacy are created. Recognizing the imposition of meaning as violence requires a distinction between the subconscious and the unconscious. The former refers to the unawareness of parts of the conscious, while the latter refers to an unawareness completely out of the conscious (Diften). The unconscious is arguably more potent than the conscious in the creation of meaning, as it is the root of all that is manifested in the conscious. In *General, Psychological Theory*, Sigmund Freud argues that “without any special reflection, we impute to everyone our own constitution and therefore our own consciousness, and this identification is a necessary condition” (Freud, 119). The unconscious is the root of an ego that can be extended to an external party as “constitution”—that which is justified as exactitude according to the ego. This constitution can be read as the manifestation of the colonizer’s subconscious into the tangible consciousness of space. Therefore, the establishment of colonial order can be interpreted as the creation of colonial meaning. Additionally, Hudson’s interpretation of Frantz Fanon’s psychoanalysis depicts the colonial unconscious as “habit and not instinct (biological or cerebral)” (Hudson, 269). This shows that the colonial unconscious is not innate, it is an extrinsic effort to engage the subjective and transform it into dogma.

When thinking of Algeria through the colonial unconscious it reveals itself as the source of a French fantasy of the country as *un miroir de l'Hexagone*. Within this imaginary, Algeria was a blank paper upon which the French creation of “an empire, a society and a new people” (Naylor, 16) could be actualized. It was not that the French did not see evidence of a pre-existing social organization, but the result of a calculated choice to “imagine Algeria as a social laboratory for their utopian plans of colonization” (Naylor, 17). The colonial fantasy of creation is expressed in Edouard Glissant’s *Discours Antillais*, where he defines History:

L’Histoire est globalement un fantasme fortement opératoire de l’Occident, contemporain précisément du temps où il était seul à faire l’histoire du monde. (Glissant 227)

Glissant’s proposition that Western perspective on history echoes Mbembe’s earlier allusion to the colonial unconscious. The words “fantasme” and “opératoire” delineate the constructive abilities of the unconscious, while the word “seul” represents the bias of upholding a single narrative as History. In this colonial fantasy, the colonized acquiesces to the imposed fantastical new order. Herein, space is constructed according to an architecture of acquiescence and conformity to French Algeria as France’s fantastical apparatus of power in Africa. Thus, when we pay attention to each building, each statue, each monument, we witness the story of space, its creation and recreation over time.

Mirroring and mimicry

Space, defined as the “keystone of social order” (Sayad and Gillette, 16), was applied to Algeria through the metaphor of a “door” (Naylor, 16). French Algeria was designed to be a colonial utopia that mirrored the “political, cultural, moral power, grandeur and independence” of France (Naylor, 16). Hence, architectural conformity made Algeria into a mirror of sovereign power. This analogy is deepened through Homi Bhabha’s discourse on colonial mimicry, a process where the colonizer manipulates the colonized to create a prototype:

Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Mimicry is the sign of a double articulation...which “appropriates” the other as it visualizes power. (Bhabha, 126)

From Bhabha’s illustration, the appropriation and configuration of Algerian topography to be “almost the same” as those in France presents a “strategic limitation within authoritative discourse” (Bhabha, 127). No matter how spatially similar it is made to be, the colonized cannot accede to the hierarchy of the colonizer. French colonial architecture is fixated on creating visual markers of its sovereignty; this deploys an aesthetic that feigns a shared spatial heritage. This is emphasized in Grabar’s comparison of the Rue Abane Amdane in Algiers (top) to the Rue de Rivoli in Paris (bottom):



Fig. 4 Grabar, Henry. *Rue Abane Amdane*. July 2011. © Henry Grabar (Grabar, 393)



Fig 5. *Rue de Rivoli*. (Image by Kopp Corentin, Flickr, Creative Commons) (Grabar, 393)

The strikingly similar windows and columns beneath the buildings on the left side of both images and the blue-white color scheme present both streets as identical. In this case, Rue Abane Amdane can be viewed

as a product of French colonial mimicry, where it has been constructed as a prototype of Rue de Rivoli. Additionally, Rue Abane Amdane can be viewed as a metonymy for French presence, as this was “an eccentric strategy of authority in colonial discourse” (Bhabha, 131). It is also important to note that there is almost no indication of what the Rue Abane Amdane looked like before. One can suppose it once reflected the influence of the Turks, but this uncertainty evinces the violent erasure of pre-colonial structures to show only French colonial space. This was the goal of “urban renewal” that began as early as Algiers 1830 (Grabar, 392). The word christening is most fitting in this urban project, given the French attribution of primitivity to Muslim Algerian communities, and the need to integrate the Catholic apostolate (Naylor, 16; Grabar, 392).

Overall, the colonizer’s ability to transmit and entrench their unconscious within an already existing system of meaning was the most powerful display of violence. By weaponizing mimicry, the French were able to rid Algeria of the “disturbances of cultural, racial and historical difference that menace the narcissistic demand of colonial authority” (Bhabha, 129). This narcissism is emblematic of the ego and the colonial unconscious. As a result, France rendered Algerian topography legible to itself through the exploitation of land and the architectural renovation of the country as a symbol of sovereignty.

Exercising legibility through ‘urban renewal’

The imposition and reconfiguration of *space* in French Algeria began at the behest of the Swiss-born French architect Le Corbusier, regarded as one of the “most influential [architects] in the 20th century. He visited Algeria for the first time upon his travels to Algiers in 1931, a century after French conquest (Sobin, 187). Maurice Rotival was an urban planner involved in the “establishment of zoning regulations and city embellishment in Algiers (Casciato, 382). Urban modification of Algiers is best understood in the Obus plans of Le Corbusier, in which attention was placed on the skyscraper and the displacement of working-class communities to the periphery. The blueprint for topographical reconfiguration even prior to its execution was a glaring example of how the carving of lived locales led to the dislocation of people in colonial Algeria.



Fig. 6 Le Corbusier’s Plan Obus for Algiers showing an “elevated highway bypassing the Casbah” that would connect the periphery to Algiers (Ackley, 1). © Bidoun. Image obtained from article.

The plan was created between 1931 and 1942 and included “two thirty-one story, intricately configured, barbed projectiles that shattered the existing dense fabric” of the Marine quarter, and “suspended the working-class apartments by a viaduct or superhighway” (Fig. 6) (McKay, 5).



Fig. 7 *The Ancient Marine Quarter. Chantiers, March 1935.* © Chantiers (Çelik, 1997:50).

The ancient quarter, located near the Casbah (Fig. 7), was of cultural significance to social life in Algiers, through its connection to the Algiers harbor and the commercial relationships between traders of the Casbah (Çelik, 1997:51). This relationship between the Algerian people and the quarter socially and economically impacted the collective personality of its inhabitants and frequenters. However, French urban planners

described it as “a small town, bastard, neither Moorish nor entirely European” and “unresponsive to aesthetics” (Çelik, 1997:50), thus exposing their inability to confer meaning to its organization or beauty to its structure. The word “bastard” transmits the *atopos* status described by Plato which echoes displacement and unclassifiability of an unrecognizable aesthetic lineage. The demolition project that ensued led to the forced displacement of people into an already densely populated Casbah (Çelik, 1997:58), disrupting social life and inducing the inevitable process of local and later transnational migration.

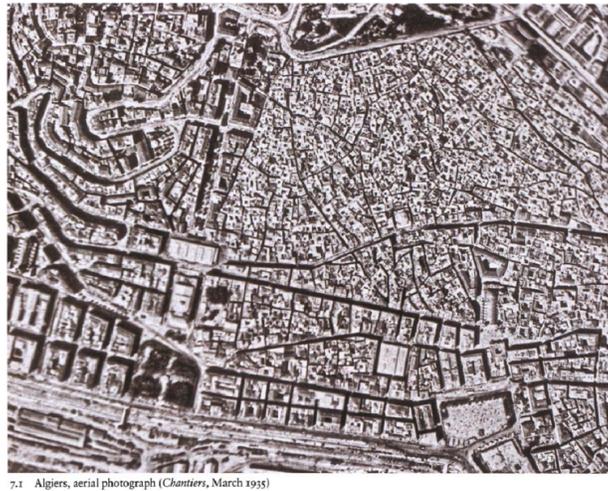


Fig. 8 “The distinction between the Marine Quarter’s grid and the Casbah’s irregular form”.

Chantiers, March 1935. © Chantiers (Stanley, 80)

Additionally, the demolition of the Marine Quarter and sequestration of the Casbah by the bridge reveals an indifference for the “human condition of the Algerian quarters” of the working class as it created “an urban apartheid” (Pouliot, 7). The bridge shown in Fig. 6 evinces the physical and cultural sequestration that this thesis argues would eventually transcend the Mediterranean all the way to Marseille. It is thus evident that this architectural blueprint organized Algiers in a manner that was legible only to the colonizer. The proliferation of this city as a mirror of Paris would then serve the function of the desired *phoenix* of French Africa.

Erasing the feminine

“The naked man for me is architecture.

When I no longer make architecture,

I see everything as women.”

(Le Corbusier cited in Brooks 1997:375, cited
in Hooper, 57)

Prior to the onset of French urban intervention, Algiers functioned socially in a “decentralized Ottoman system” that bolstered its cosmopolitan population (Çelik, 1997:13). As large as Algiers is, the Casbah represents the “ancient core”; it is a “triangular shaped town carved into the hills facing the Mediterranean” (Çelik, 1997:12). The construction of this “citadel” as translated into Arabic stays true to its name by having a “citadel at the summit” of this triangular shaped town which was built in 1556 (Çelik, 13). Çelik highlights the historical roots of the Casbah as a settlement founded by the Arab Zirid dynasty in the tenth century and named *al-Jaza'ir* (the islands)” (Çelik, 1997:12) in relation to the Mediterranean waterfront. Sobin describes Le Corbusier’s drawings of “the urban fabric and the architecture of the Casbah” with delicate imagery of “great sensuality and strong flowing contours” (Sobin, 190). The *douceur* of these drawings echoes the orientalist fantasy, whereby focus is placed on the Casbah (Fig. 3).



Fig 9. “Le Corbusier, sketch showing the Casbah as a veiled head”. Le Corbusier. *Poésie sur Alger*.

1997. © Fondation Le Corbusier. (Çelik, 1997:23)

In the relic of European curiosity, the Algerian woman remains at the epicenter. This interaction between femininity, space and its representation, or the hyper feminization of ‘unplanned’ space works its way into male colonial fantasy. Perhaps, this is the *fantasme* that Glissant speaks of too, spatial creation is based on the subjective obsession with what it should look like, rather than what it looks like.

The fantastical perspective of the Casbah is predicated on the colonial assumption that unconquered space is unresistant. On the contrary, Çelik details the intransigence of the Casbah, whereby the “high population densities, concentration and form of the built fabric, topography, and sociocultural texture...accompanied by a growing consciousness of historic preservation” (Çelik, 1997:26) present an impermeability to foreign insertions into a functional socio-spatial framework. On the contrary, Rotival attributed the impenetrability of the Casbah to the absence of urbanism that introduced “a new civilization” (Gerber, 165). Hence, Çelik and Rotival’s observations expose mimicry as creation to ensure conformity within non-conformity; limited thus as it is unable to fully overcome resistance.

French urban *renewal* in Algeria is fueled by Orientalist curiosity, whereby heteronormative objectives to ‘uncover’ and ‘unveil’ it are executed by stripping the Algerian veil and replacing it with the French cloak over the “vernacular buildings of North Africa” (Sobin, 190). This was executed by Le Corbusier through the technique called the *brise soleil*, which draws inspiration from the enchanting veil to become the “architectural veil” (Sobin, 192) of French colonialism:

In much the same way as the veil’s original, primary religious/cultural function (concealment of a woman’s face and body) also possesses a secondary parallel quality (darkness, mystery, allure), the *brise-soleil*, alongside its original functions (more humane thermal and luminous indoor environments through shade and glare control) also, in its external effect, confers on building façades a whole new set of new, secondary, purely aesthetic qualities (shadow, layering, richness, depth) (Sobin, 190).

Veiling the Casbah implies an unpredictability and secrecy that resists the creation of a single meaning; that is, a Western orientalist fantasy. Hence, French urban *renewal* attempts to confer legibility to the secrecy of the Casbah by feminizing Algerian vernacular architecture. Scholars of the Orient and Orientalism like Madeleine Dobie and Meyda Yegenoglu probe the Western concept of the ethnographic feminine ‘Other’ versus Western concepts of modernity. Yegenoglu discusses this conflict:

The metonymic association between the Orient and its women, or more specifically the representation of woman as tradition and as the essence of the Orient, made it all the more important to lift the veil, for unveiling and thereby modernizing the woman of the Orient signified the transformation of the Orient itself. (Yegenoglu, 99)

In *Foreign Bodies*, Dobie presents the body as “the ultimate source of human perception” (Dobie, 110), and Yegenoglu argues that the epistemological availability of the veiled woman to the Western gaze allowed her to become the cultural representation of the Orient’s “backwardness” (Yegenoglu, 98). Hence, unveiling the woman--both figuratively and literally--would allow the woman and the colony she represents to accede to a modern ‘urban’ legibility.

Oriental femininity does not submit to imposed meaning, rather it resists through its “alterity” to Western status quo (Dobie, 140). This opposition implies autonomy, and when applied to the layout of the Casbah, we can understand its ability to shape itself against the colonial prerogative to dismantle its “cultural forces” by ‘unveiling the woman’ (Dobie, 111). In her essay on “Urban space, modernity and masculine desire” architecture critic Barbara Hooper discusses isomorphism between the fantasy of modernity and urbanism as a utopian desire. From this essay, curvature is a prevalent theme used to link the body of the Algerian woman to the topography of Algiers, specifically the Casbah. This fluidity of the city opposes Le Corbusier’s “firm” layout of vertical straight roads that represent the ‘proper’ architecture of the “naked man” (Hooper, 57). The conflict between curved and the firm shows that French urbanism in Algiers is a phallic colonial creation to ‘correct’ the disordered “loose feminine animality” (Hooper, 66). Erasing the feminine ‘disorder’ to institute masculine ‘order’ in Algiers is accurately described as the “architecture of modern masculinity and the modern masculinity of architecture” (Hooper, 57). This means that the feminine, first imagined, then becomes a threat that must be obliterated for Algiers to be rendered (legible) to the colonizer. Hooper writes that “the feminine presents for Le Corbusier what disfigures orthogonal forms of modern architecture”, thus making it the biggest threat to white, male, heteronormative, abstract configurations of space.

To transcend the resistant curvature requires a violence that ensures its elimination. The topographical violence of French urban *renewal* in Algiers was a violation of the feminine by the erection of phallic symbols. An example of this is the skyscraper in the Le Corbusier’s Obus plan (Fig. 4) that penetrated the existing dense fabric of the city. Hence it can be inferred that that ‘urban renewal’ is subsumed in the violation of native topography to perpetuate hegemonic ideals of modernity.

Conclusion

The architectural story of Algiers exemplifies a well-rehearsed dichotomy between the modern and the primitive as defined by colonial power. The asymmetry between both exists due to the inability for the ‘primitive’ to conform to the modern, even when *made* to do so. Simply put, urban planners like Le Corbusier categorized as primitive that which is illegible to Western definitions of aesthetics and modernity.

This is particularly why French urban design obliterated manifestations of Algerian social life that were resistant and unresponsive to French spatial ideas and norms. For example, Çelik notes that “the citizens of Algiers took pride in the cleanliness of their streets, where they boasted one could sit on the ground, even to eat” (Çelik, 15). This practice of eating on the ground betrays another usage and inhabitation of streets altogether, one where city roads are inseparable from the people who occupy them, their cultures and livelihood. They become part and parcel of each other shaping social behaviors and culture, one through the other⁴. Simply put, the colonial idea of space differs from such a social configuration in its disregard for and fracturing of the nuances that connect a place to its people. The remaining chapters will investigate how the imposition of colonial space caused disturbances in the social behaviors of Algerian people through a comparative analysis of Marseille’s *quartiers nord* and Algiers. The architecture of Le Corbusier in both cities shows the conflict between the aesthetics of French conformity/non-conformity in migrant-populated estates of the *quartiers nord*. Peripheralization in Algeria became a colonial legacy that followed Algerian emigrants to Marseille. In the *quartiers nord*, what can in turn be observed is a metamorphosis of this peripheralization into spatio-racialization, where race becomes a marker for who lives in the Quartier Nord and the subsequent stereotypes that confound the interactions between race and space. To an extent, we can argue that the *quartiers nord* is an annex of the Algerian postcolony, where remnants of colonial perturbation are proliferated in the architectural design and urban planning of the *cités*.

⁴ In the book *Food Cultures of the World Encyclopedia*, Ken Albala notes the Algerian tradition of sitting on the “floor, carpet or cushions” for meals (Albala, 7).

Chapter 2

Spatializing Heritage: Migrant Housing in Marseille

Introduction

The Republican ideals of neutrality that view citizens as abstract and undifferentiated individuals collapses in the context of migrant communities. Upon entry into Marseille, the migrant identity in motion is split in two, and the migrant becomes *immigrant*. There is a death and rebirth that occurs, whereby the emigrant is nullified for the *immigrant* to be legitimized. The migrant is reborn, heretofore baptized *immigrant*, a prescribed identity that is solely defined in relation to the host country and the foreignness that the migrant embodies. In *The suffering of the immigrant*, Abdelmalek Sayad discusses this absence of autonomy in the “discourse on emigration” (Sayad, 118), which reinforces the quick extermination of the émigrée personhood. This ‘nomadic’ disequilibrium explains why *immigration* is categorized as an “adjustable, controllable and manageable” presence; while *emigration* is an absence that is “masked, compensated for and denied” (Sayad, 120). Reframing migrant communities to fit the ideals of an undifferentiated population was anchored in a spatial dimension. The creation of annexes, satellite cities and housing estates (Viard, 83) represents the redefinition of the migrant as he or she who lives in a perpetual state of conformity to the host society. Joseph Inwood and Robert Yarbrough discuss the contemporary recreation of race ideologies, whereby “the social construction of race is related to the construction of particular places and racial relations” (Inwood and Yarbrough, 299). In the migrant case, contact with the larger society leans to “a socially shared system of exclusion and inclusion” (Lipsitz, 12). This leads to a view of him or her as too ‘foreign’ to be French and too asocial to be socialized. Therefore, the dwellers are shut out from the citizenry, presenting the limits to the Republican citizens generalized within the country. Hence, mass housing projects erected by French authorities are racialized as visual markers of non-assimilation into the host society.

Social spheres of living outside the projects were selectively permeable to those who fit ‘Euro-normative’ criteria of Frenchness and whiteness. Consequently, those originating from the ancient colonies like Algeria were termed *asocial*, “an urban populace deemed unfit” and “distinctly foreign” (Nasiali, 38).

Indeed, these were restrictive tactics to define the *social* versus *asocial*. In *Native to the Republic*, Minayo Nasiali shows how the “normative understanding of citizenship”, and social rights (Nasiali, 3) were exclusionary, alluding to who has access (or not) to social citizenship in Marseille. The citizen as defined by the Republic clashes with the diverse residents of the periphery, who represent “the crystallization of categorized differences” (Nasiali, 17). Moreover, these individuals were viewed by nineteenth and twentieth-century French society as those “immutable cultural and social differences” (Nasiali, 5). The word “immutable” attests to the incapability of this host society to acknowledge the legibility of foreign identities. By materializing this aphasia for foreignness through space, the lived spheres reveal a socio-cultural shortcoming through space.

Furthermore, the framing Algerians as *asocial* in French society was underscored in the 1960s as metonymy for “foreign North Africans” as “unFrench” individuals who “conform to habits imported from their country of origin” (Nasiali, 38). According to Algerian historian Benjamin Stora, 78,056 Algerians out of 132,321 North Africans were in France from 1915-1918 (Stora, 95). This number would skyrocket from 211,000 to 350,000 “souls” between 1954 and 1962 who were major occupants of dilapidated housing estates across the outskirts of the country (Stora, 101). I argue that the term *immigrant*, applied to the Algerian identity in France euphemizes the term *asocial*. The institutionalization of social citizenship within the confines of the Republic created room for this rigid exclusion. In this framework, to be *asocial* means to not have the social citizenship that affords one the right to comfortable modern living (Nasiali, 5), such that the individual is bound to the run-down apartments of the *grands ensembles* as the cloistered border of existence in foreign society.

By framing the periphery as the disassociated fringes of society, the migrant is inherently classified as an unintegrated ‘Other’ in the “depth of the worst slums” (MacMaster, 84). In this case, space as a dominating tool reframes itself for socio-cultural sequestration and confinement. Observing this spatio-racial interaction through “who has the ability to own homes that appreciate in value” (Lipsitz, 12) reveals “a process of constructing particular geographic landscapes that help define and reinforce racialized social hierarchy” (Inwood and Yarbrough, 299). By examining the evolution of mass housing for migrants in

Marseille from the 20th to the 21st century, this chapter presents them as archetypes for racial and social asymmetries in Marseille.

The politics of belonging in Marseilles

Mass housing in Marseille represents the weaponization of ‘sociability’ against the migrant, by deploying space to ‘contain the asocial’. The movement of people from shantytowns and slums to ‘reduced norm housing’ instead of the HLMs was a way to distinguish people who were deemed as unfit for modern living according to Marseille’s municipal officials (Nasiali, 76). These transitory places represented a structural tool to sequester North African groups to the margins of the city. The self-identification of slum dwellers who indicated their city of birth as “Algiers or Tunis” (Nasiali, 74) evince this claim. It can be argued the ambivalence towards the North African nationality contributed to this “taxonomy of asocialness” (Nasiali, 76). Local Marseillais technocrats like Ferracci studied the slums at the brink of the city (Nasiali, 72). However, there were inconsistencies in the categorization of those who live in them between the northern and southern parts which demonstrate perceptions of race as a marker of sociability. The invocation of nationality or birthplace as a category for rehousing continues to weaken the idea of the *abstract citizen* of the republic; such status alienates a significant part of the state fabric. The reference to migrant groups as a “mobile and poorly defined population” evokes the polemic of legibility that negates migrant communities. Since their identity is not palatable as a foreign emigrant, the officials insist that they need to be “set aside from the general citizenry” (Nasiali, 40). This reveals the limitation of the Republican ideal of the citizen as exclusionary, and how this definition catalyzes the relegation of ‘non-citizens’ to the periphery.

Revisiting the aesthetics of conformity: Les grands ensembles in Algiers

The *grands ensembles* are the most prevalent archetype of French spatio-racialization that links the periphery of Algiers to that of Marseille. It represents the distinction between assimilable versus non-assimilable, French versus ‘not French enough’ and opulence versus desolation. Urban policies in this mass housing era promoted “a progressive assimilation of European habits” (Çelik, 1997:115) by designing structures of “acculturation” (Çelik, 1997:117). It is from these lived areas that we can trace the steps of

the Algerian directly into the *quartiers nord*, by observing how the construction of the *grands ensembles* in both cities had a shared objective of exclusion.

The housing reform in Algiers was one of expediency, a “humanistic facade” to ensure the “fidelity” of the people by “raising their material living conditions” (Çelik, 1997:114). The 1948 *Plan d’urbanisme* was the blueprint for the peripheralization in the capital city, whereby “peripheral residential sectors” would constitute the zoning of the Algerians to the outskirts of the city. In this new *medina*, the buildings were erected in the location of previous shantytowns and near industrial zones. One of the first residential developments was by French architect and urban planner Fernand Pouillon who was commissioned to design the *Diar el-Mahçoul* (Fig. 12):



Fig. 1 Pouillon, Fernand. *Diar el-Mahçoul*. 2001. Architecte Méditerranée © Marseille: Éditions Imbernon (Crane, 2017:191)

Although the layout of this estate was integrated housing, its structure shown in Fig. 1 contradicts this objective through the division “by means of a main road”, and the categorization into the “*cité simple confort*” and “*cité confort normal*” on the left and right side of the road respectively (Çelik, 1997:145). This configuration emphasizes how housing reform was a colonial tool to reinforce hierarchy in Algiers, whereby better housing was reserved largely for non-Algerians. The *cité simple confort* were

“comparatively diminutive” low-rise buildings “tightly clustered along narrow streets”, markedly different from the “prominent” and “monumental” positioning of the *cité confort normal* (Crane, 2017:191). This social scaling of the estate underscored the evolution of the *indigène*, a pejorative term for the Algerian people. Hence, the estates became visual markers of those who were adaptable to French acculturation.

Çelik writes:

For the "evolved" Muslims, the "normal HLM [habitations à loyer modéré] formulas" in mixed settlements were seen as preferable to isolation, because a "politics of contact" would bring the indigenous people and the Europeans together. For the nonevolved sectors of the Muslim community (rural, but also urban—bidonville residents and newcomers to the casbah), low-rise housing was the best solution. (Çelik, 1997:117)

This conflict between the assimilable (or “evolved”) and “non-evolved” represents the politics of proximity when it comes to the discourse of integration in French society. The elevation of housing conditions of evolved Algerian Muslims lived in “European-type flats or villas” produced a stratified populace according to integrability (Çelik, 1997:116). Consequently, there was an increase in the number of the homeless or *sans-abris* who were displaced from the *bidonvilles* that were razed down to create the *Diar el-Mahçoul* but were never rehoused (Safar-Zitoun, 1996 cited in Crane, 2017:193). Five decades later, *Diar el-Mahçoul*, maintains its monotony (Fig. 2):



Fig. 2 Poudou. *Diar El-Mahçoul, Alger, Algérie. 2010* © Wikimedia Commons

The blue skies settle over spatially similar buildings. Although only three people are captured in the image, the clothes outside the many windows suggest an existing population. The varying heights maintain Poullion’s blueprint in Fig. 1 and allude to the distinctions between the “cité confort” and “cité confort normal”. As shown in the image, housing projects of Algiers were carved vertical spheres of uniformity (Crane 2017:191). This foreshadows how pluralities in Algerian identity were woven into monotonous spatial dimensions, a trend that continued to the migrant-populated *grands ensembles* of Marseille.

Alienation and hierarchy: The grands ensembles in Marseille

The mass housing projects in Marseille were populated by a “multiplicity of [cultural] differences in conjunction with one another” (Inwood and Yarbrough, 300). However, the homogeneity of these residential areas engulfed this diversity and rendered it invisible from the outside looking in. In *La fabrique du monstre*, French journalist Philippe Pujol engages with the permeability of the estates of the *quartiers nord*. His Corsican origins provide him access within as an insider to the margins, who also grew up in a cité. As a fellow “déraciné” (Pujol, 2016:10), Pujol enters as an insider to portray the interior life to the reader or ‘outsider’.

Oui, je viens les regarder jusqu’ici, dans ce trou de poussière... (Pujol, 2016 :10)

A hole as an entry point into one of the housing estates presents a metaphor for the enclosure of those who live there, and the reference to dust emphasizes their alienation from those who live towards the center of the city. The *quartiers nord*, composed of multiple arrondissements, is one of the most racialized districts in the country. It reveals a cloistered population restricted in *zones d'habitation*. One observes how ethnic heritage is inscribed and then contained in a spatial dimension to separate it from the larger society. Furthermore, Pujol presents the estate *Le Vieux-Moulin* as the backdrop to an anecdote on his research on the Berrouag family after the murder of their son Abdelkader Berrouag. The illustration of the estate by Pujol shows an auto-putrefaction of a poorly designed shelter by authorities who viewed its target demographic as “mobile and poorly defined” (Nasiali, 40):

La cité du Vieux-Moulin s’est dégradée tranquillement dans la zone urbaine sensible de Saint-Barthélemy (Pujol, 2016 :66).

The *bidonvilisation* of the estate is underscored by the reflexive verb “se dégrader” and suggests a decadence caused by a construction “à la va vite” (Pujol, 2016:65). Through this imagery, Pujol reiterates Nasiali’s argument about the disdain of Marseillais municipal authorities for the kinds of communities that lived in Le Vieux Moulin, a migrant microcosm that was lastly occupied by people of Maghrebi origin. Between the post-second-world war period discussed by Nasiali and the turn of the twenty-first century in Pujol’s work, there is not much change in the estrangement of migrant communities. Pujol firstly notes that the Berrouag family lived in Souk Ahras, Algeria, and their *bled* represented “baraquements sordides” (Pujol, 2016:64). The word “baraquements” is associated with shacks, which are in close proximity to shanties, which was the ‘urban nightmare’ in colonial Algeria, while the word “sordides” evokes a sentiment of misery for its inhabitants. It is also interesting to note a similar description between the lived spheres of Souk Ahras and the *quartiers nord*:

“Baracca...Comme Obama...Non, comme une maison.” (Pujol, 2016:10)

One of the definitions of a barracks is “housing characterized by extreme plainness or dreary uniformity—usually used in plural” (Merriam-Webster). The *Vieux-Moulin* estate shown in Fig. 3 embodies these

characteristics; the simplistic off-white color and the alternating narrow and wide windows are emblematic of the symmetry of barracks.



Fig. 3 Aerial image of the *Vieux Moulin* residence in 2022 captured from Google Earth.

The superimposition of migrant population to lived spheres attests to how ‘foreign’ heritage is divorced from a larger social Fabric of Marseille. Therefore, disparities arise between the opulent population and the ostracized ‘non-integrable’ one. French journalist Marie Vaton describes the features of the residences in *Le Roucas Blanc* of the 7th arrondissement-- also known as the ‘Beverly Hills’ of Marseille:

Ici, la richesse se devine aux détails : des maisons d’architecte immaculées, des bardages de bois qui dissimulent de vastes garages, un bout de bleu turquoise qui dépasse d’un mur et indique la présence d’une piscine. (Vaton)

From the imagery of architectural splendor to the synesthesia of tranquil waters evoked by the blue reflections on white walls of the water (Fig. 6) show no signs of decadence that prevails in the residential districts of the *quartiers nord*.



Fig. 4 Béchet, Benjamin. *Le Roucas Blanc*. 2022 (Vaton) © L'Obs Magazine



Fig. 5 Marseille Tourisme. *Le Roucas Blanc*. © Marseilletourisme.fr 2015-2022

The aerial photograph shows houses of different styles, which evidently contrasts with the uniformity shown in the image of *Le Vieux-Moulin* (Fig. 3). If municipal authorities oversee housing across the city, the distinction between an asymmetric affluent layout in the center and a symmetric one in the outskirts begs the question of selectivity. In other words, perceptions of ethnic heritage are coalesced and pronounced spatially. *Le Roucas Blanc* is described as a “lair of the super-rich”, populated by musician Jean Jacques-Goldman, President Macron, and on-air personality Laurent Ruquier (to name a few) (Vaton). Evident from its population make-up, the identity inscribed into this district is rich, white, and French. These are all characteristics that fit Republican normative views of the *social* population, which is the opposite of the *asocial* confines of the periphery.

Engaging spatio-racialization in the quartiers nord

Racialized places are characterized by their construction (uniformity), inhabitants (migrants), detachment, and interaction. Honorary reader Neil McMaster aptly describes these areas as “enclaves”, noting their centrality to the “social, political and economic organization” of migrant communities in France (MacMaster, 84). An enclave is defined as a “distinct, territorial, cultural or social unit that is enclosed within” (Merriam-Webster). In the photography collection, *Marseillais du Nord: Les Seigneurs de Naguère*, Philippe Pujol introduces the reader into the cité Hérodote as an enclave in the 13th arrondissement of northern Marseille. Through the images captured by co-author and photographer Gilles Favier in 1990 (Gilles), an “exterior world” (Pujol, 2016:97) to the rest of Marseille is brought to light. In his article on Favier, Benoît Gilles describes Saint Jérôme as a “cité d’urgence décatie, flanquée d’un bidonville” (2016), underscoring the neglect of this neighborhood. The images are captured in black and white, which allows for a greater focus on remote life in the estates of the *quartiers nord*.

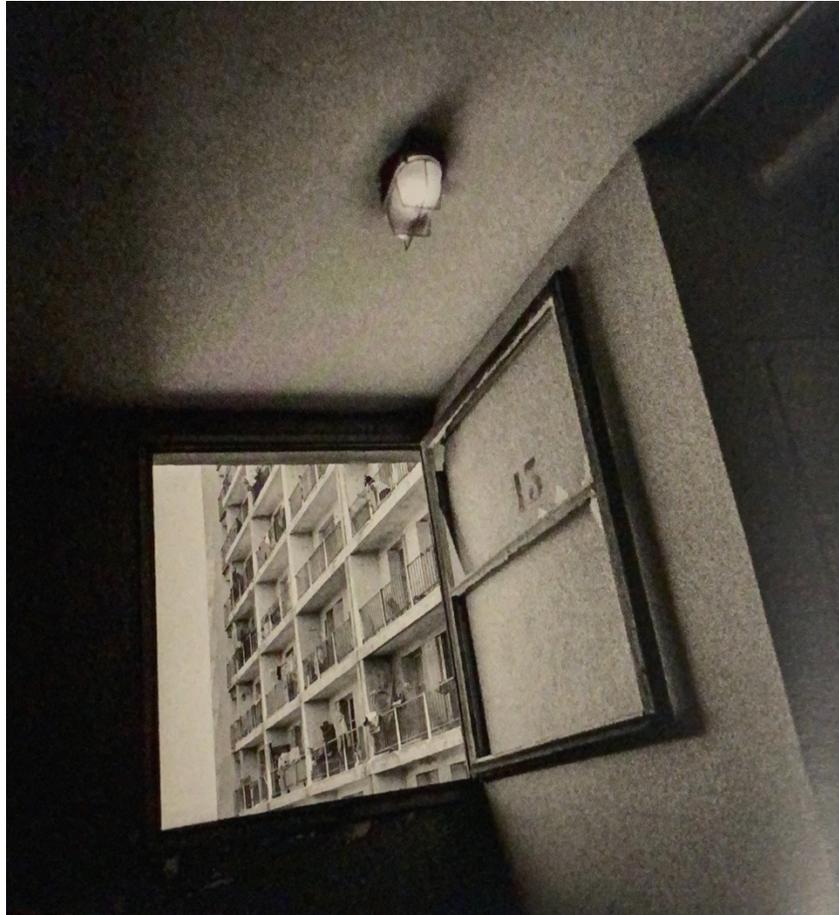


Fig. 6 (Pujol and Favier: 2016) © Le bec en l'air

In Fig. 6, the vantage point of the photographer directs the eyes to the exterior of the window. On one hand his perspective suggests a gaze to the exterior world that is obstructed by invariable ‘barracks-style’ apartments. Conversely, the opening by this broken window could suggest Favier’s call for the reader’s attention, to look within from the exterior. The number “13” is marked on the wall to the right, perhaps as a symbol of the 13th arrondissement but also as a subtle differentiating factor between this apartment and the others shown. The dark shadows within the apartment transmit a feeling of emptiness, almost as though the photographer is the only person in the room. This is echoed by Pujol’s allusion to an “obscurité silencieuse” (Pujol and Favier, 106). The gradation of light delineates an asymmetry between the exterior as freedom, and the interior as confinement.

Even in the absence of captions, the photographs juxtapose the obscurity and the winsomeness of these communities. Upon his encounter, Pujol employs imagery to describe what is seen at first glance:

Hérodote compte trente-quatre habitations d'un étage, toutes sur un plan similaire. Des constructions déjà bien usées, râpées, fendues, rafistolées...On entre par une cour privative que chacun aménage à sa manière : lieu de vie pour les uns, espace de stockage de toutes sortes d'objets pour les autres, avec des poules et parfois des lapins. (Pujol and Favier, 99)

The words “usées”, “râpées” and “fendues” accentuate the decadence of the building, while “rafistolées” conveys neglect of this dilapidated state. Pujol highlights the re-appropriation of the assigned space. The dwellers have taken up the sphere and even transformed it into storage space. The interaction between them and the space suggests an autonomy on the inside as shown by Pujol. From the outside of Hérodote (Fig. 6) and Vieux-Moulin (Fig. 3), the rigid monotonous structures imply a restrictive life for the inhabitants. However, this contrasts the interior effervescence of people living a life on their own terms. By redefining a previously defined space, interactivity in cité Hérodote resists the Euro-normative social conformity imbued on the estates of the *quartiers nord*.



Fig 7. (Pujol and Favier:2016) © Le bec en l'air

Fig. 7 continues the theme of desolation observed in Fig. 6, but now has a subject in front of a plain background. However, it has a more powerful commentary on the conflict between the controlled presence and a masked absence that Sayad parallels between the *immigrant* and *emigrant*. The young black girl is set at the center of focus as a marker of Saint Jérôme. In this monochromatic image, her dress, and shoes blend into the building. The positioning of the girl in relation to this background highlights the presence of her *immigré* identity in this estate--as though she and the building are one and the same. Contrarily, her poignant skin color protrudes out of the page. This signifies the defiance of the *émigré* to spatial erasure by the cité and the society that created it. In the eye contact the girl has with the photographer and the reader, her gaze unmasks the masked absence of the *émigré*. The desolate background accedes to obscurity, as the lighting decreases in a rightwards direction on the image. Notably, the bursting out of the girl's identity heightens the curiosity about who exists behind closed windows, and questions whether they are similar to

the main character of Fig. 7. Moreover, the background of the image presents closed windows, where each level of the building has the same layout. Nevertheless, Favier captures a distance through the composition of Fig. 8 to emphasize the distance between the cité and the camera. In Fig. 8, The cité is located far from view behind the trees and tall grass to underscore its alienation against the backdrop of an abandoned car. Favier scales the image to suggest how far the dwellers are from him but implores the reader to imagine how far these people are from the city-hub.



Fig. 8 (Pujol and Favier:2016) © Le bec en l'air

On one hand, the broken-down vehicle on the path to the estate gives a sentiment of a long journey that was not completed. However, the state of the vehicle—broken windows, no lights and missing tires—suggest its abandonment over a long period of time, so much so that the grass has started to grow around the open door. Through these elements, Favier shows an entry into an atmosphere of oblivion, a road that leads to nowhere that is the housing estates up ahead. In the first vertical half of the image, the sky here suggests

the expansiveness against which these dwellers' lives congregate. The accentuation of the clouds emphasizes opaqueness ascending in a letter 'V' towards the estate building. This image detail points to a confluence of migrant communities that populate estates like Hérodote. Pujol writes :

Toujours en groupe, toujours en famille, toujours en clan, toujours ensemble...Le désir d'indépendance invariablement en ligne de mire, Les habitants d'Hérodote sont ingouvernables. Personne ne les représente, pas de chef, pas de leader, personne pour parler en leur nom. D'où l'obsession des discussions qui structurent ces individualités...Leur vie est un chemin et chacun trace le sien. Si parfois la tradition les freine, elle aide aussi à évoluer. (Pujol, 110)

Pujol highlights the fact that the dwellers represent themselves, independent of a governing structure. The structuring of their individuality is not based on their space, it is based on their diverse heritage. The words "famille" suggests people in Hérodote are linked directly by familial origin, but the words "groupe", "ensemble", and "clan" represent a broader connection. Nevertheless, these words convey a multiplicity to the migrant dwellers of this estate that shapes their collective lives. This community that the reader views from the outside, shows a transitory population whose lives cannot be determined by the space that confine them. The trajectory of the migrant is a cyclical phenomenon, it is an evolving path.

In the Marseillais case, hierarchy is generated by polarizing perceptions of heritage. From the post-second-world war era till the present century, these differences have been imbued in a spatial dimension that ensures a disjunction between migrant communities and the larger society. Racialized spheres of living "construct, structure and reproduce racialized individual identities" (Inwood and Yarbrough, 300). The topographical fragmentation of Algiers persists into the socio-spatial life of the migrant in Marseille. This story writes itself on a transnational canvas--the Mediterranean--that connects Algeria to Marseille. The peripheries become an isolated world that transfixes sentiments of separation. Through art forms such as music, film and photography, the next chapter will explore the consequences of the systematic relegation of migrant communities to the fringes of Marseillais society.

Chapter 3

Planet Mars: Engaging visibility in the *quartiers nord*

Spatio-racial paralysis is a colonial tool deployed to condemn migrant identities to stagnation. These communities in the *quartiers nord* are ascribed, by the Marseillais municipality, to pre-defined spheres of disinvestment that suggests cultural vacancy. The construction of this district exposes space as a stratifying tool that capitalizes on implicit notions of the ‘un-French’ as foreign heritage. A disjunction between the ‘foreign’ and the ‘French’ presents a conflict in Marseille that was foreshadowed in Algiers. As seen in Chapter 1, the reconfiguration of Algiers tattooed the urban text of hierarchy, so to speak, on the body of the Algerian city-dweller. Consequently, his or her identity was thus transformed by the imposed spatial order. Now, migrated to Marseille, Chapter 2 details the severance of the *emigrant* identity for the emergence of the *immigrant*, whereby the latter is more ‘comprehensible’ to order. De Certeau writes that “the ordinary practitioner of a city lives below the threshold of visibility” (De Certeau, 93), which characterizes the positioning of this individual within a larger society. This chapter reads the Algerian Migrant as De Certeau’s ordinary practitioner in Marseillais society. His or her body “follows the thick and thin of an urban text that they write without being able to read it”(De Certeau, 93). The individual is placed beneath the threshold of visibility, in a separate world of the city margins.

In *Articulating identity from the margins*, French historiographer Chris Warne criticizes sociologist François Dubet’s judgment of society’s margins (Warne, 141). Dubet insinuates that those who live in socially marginalized areas are “too shattered” by their “galère” to the point where they cannot “constitute a meaningful community or assemble themselves in purposeful collective action” (Warne, 142). The weaponization of the travails of the margins—also referred to by the French term “la galère”—against those who confront it daily, absolves the culpability of the system that fragmented and dispersed people into such an entrapped reality. Consequently, a ‘hard life’ becomes the label of this northern district, making it easier for the elite population to blame the inhabitants of the *quartiers nord* for their quality of life. This diminutive perspective impedes the ability of this part of the city to tell its own story in its unique way; the headlines full of social vices drown out the isolation and stigmatization faced by the dwellers of the *quartiers nord*.

Despite the development of quick and subpar solutions to contain these groups of people and render them invisible to the rest of society, this lived sphere becomes the vessel through which they will respond. From the buildings that confine them, the voices of the *quartiers nord* will make themselves heard in peculiar forms.

An audio-visual entry into this part of the city reveals places that popular media refuses to enter beyond the headlines of gang violence and drug trafficking. As popular French rapper Youssoupha noted in an interview, rap music from the peripheries of French societies should be known as the “CNN Ghetto”; where the consequences of the social inequalities are told through rhymes and wordplay to be accessible to all that listen (Tatin). As a form of expression, I argue that rap offers a decolonial counter narrative to the reductive stereotypes of the margins of French society. The arrival of rap in the cités of France in 1980 has since then served as a medium to illuminate all that pertains to the shadow of alienated social spheres. Marseillais rap group IAM⁵, arguably the most famous rap group of the French-speaking world, paints the Marseillais picture as a world different from the rest of France in the chorus of their song *Planète Mars*, that repeats the phrase “De la planète Mars...eille” (Philippe ‘Akhenaton’ Fragione, 1991). IAM refers to the turbulent story of invasion and migration that is embedded in the cultural history of the city. In the first verse of the song, Akhenaton sings:

L’invasion immédiate de la France
 Subissez, populations éparses
 Une énorme offensive de la cité Phocéé,
 Mars.eille; elle-même,
 A subi des tentatives d’invasions françaises
 Pour la peine, j’exige une pénalité
 Pour avoir essayé de tuer notre identité

⁵IAM garnered popularity in the music industry during the early 1990s. They “incorporate their North African origins, featuring Egyptian hieroglyphics in their artwork. The group members’ pseudonyms reflect this concern: Shurik’n, DJ Khéops, Akhenaton. They have also constructed a mythology whereby Marseille was once an Egyptian peninsula, before becoming detached and floating across to France.” (Warne, 147)

Just as Algeria was seized from the Turks, Akhenaton uses a play on words to convey how the French annexed Marseille from Phocaean rule. Akhenaton's demand for accountability for the assault on the Marseillais identity that the song extols reveals a tip of a much larger picture of the *quartiers nord*. If Marseille is a planet, the *quartiers nord* represents its inner layer. The dispersal of people because of invasion is a narrative that can be tailored to many territories that were seized by the French, including Marseille. Akhenaton's use of the imperative tense "subissez" alludes to the exigency of dominion by the French at the time of conquest. The creation of this colonial world, as dictated by its defined order, is likened to a planet upon which another sovereignty is imposed, but the populations who inhabit this planet are themselves "identities that separate from implicit notions of Frenchness" (Warne, 145).

Transfixing imagery in written text to a visual canvas highlights the importance of photography in this work. It aids the reader's immersion beyond textual interpretations and facilitates a fact-finding mission from the perspective of the camera. The photographic gaze is recognized for its ambivalence as documentary and surveillance; the former is what can be observed from the image at first glance, while the latter is a probe into how preconceived notions allow us to make conclusions on what we want to see on an image before it is even seen. In his collection "CAPITAL", Photographer Arnau Bach views Marseille as the link between France and her former colonies, an interesting deviation from the typical focus on Paris. His collection contrasts beauty and struggle. As described by journalist Philippe Dedieu, Bach depicts a "muted horizon" (Dedieu) in the city. In the same vein, Stefanie Gerke highlights photographer Tobias Zielony's work in *Living on the Edge?* which focuses on interpreting "structural changes and urban landscapes" through the "visual language" of photography that "portrays a place through its inhabitants" (Gerke, 251). In the collection *Castellane*, Teddy Seguin considers "urban insularities" in the northern districts as "impregnable citadels" that must be approached by the lens with "caution and slowness" (Seguin, 2016). The images of these photographers extricate the implicit aphasia of the district by offering a voice through shadows and lighting and backdrops. These elements work together to illuminate this seemingly distant universe. Photography within the *quartiers nord* reframes the brinks of Marseille's society by challenging the stifling undertones of its spatial configuration.

Understanding the periphery

“Quartiers S, quartiers N tournent pas dans l’même sens que le Globe” (Le Rat Luciano, 13 Organisé, *Je suis Marseille* : 2020)

The periphery is geographically defined as that which is on the outside or on the edge. In Marseille, the *quartiers nord* is presented as an auxiliary arm. However, like a gangrene, the district seems to be cut off from the rest of the city. This alienation is conveyed through the themes of enclosure and detachment that arise in photography and journalism within the parc Kallisté and La Castellane estates of the 3rd arrondissement. Philippe Pujol’s *La fabrique du monstre* is a meticulous documentation by the journalist on the *quartiers nord* of Marseille. Through the portraits of its inhabitants and their personal testimonies, Pujol brings the reader on a fact-finding journey into the dilapidated housing estates, where before unemployment and crime, migrant culture continues to shape the spirit of the district. From his work, we can observe the convergence between identity and topography in lived spheres. One of the examples he discusses is Saint Mauront. The estate is known as the poorest in France and the poorest in Europe. Beyond this generalization, Saint Mauront typifies a ‘periphery’ in the hypercenter of the city.

Saint Mauront. Dans le 3e arrondissement, presque à l’hypercentre. J’ai grandi juste à côté...L’îlot Gaillard y est le plus délabré. S’y côtoient...des travailleurs sans papiers qui squattent l’immeuble des ouvriers d’antan. Les cités et leurs barres ne sont pas les seuls navires de misère. (Pujol, 17)

The demography of the Saint Mauront, implied by Pujol’s allusion to the *sans papiers*, reveal how spatio-racial markers are imbued into this estate. Sociologically, Pujol’s description of Saint Mauront disagrees with sociologist John Galtung’s argument that the center has the highest interaction level with a larger social fabric (McKenzie, 57). He asserts this claim through the verb “côtoyer”, which reveals the carving out of spheres siloed from “structures of interaction” (McKenzie, 57). Notably, Pujol refers to the estates as places with their own “helms” or “barres”, suggesting a separate social fabric carved out of Marseille. In brief, Saint Mauront is a sociological archetype for the margins. Despite its position in the center, it seems disconnected and transcends the definition of the periphery as just “outside” the center.

To conceptualize the extent of marginalization is to view Marseille as two cities in one—the north versus the south. As Le Rat Luciano notes earlier in *Je suis Marseille*, these two operate independently of each other. Pujol observes this is in the parc Kallisté estate apartment (Fig. 1), home to two tenants--Bahuwa and Miyandi. They lived in a crowded seventy square meter apartment occupied by at least four to fifteen people.



Fig. 1 Kallisté estate in the 3rd arrondissement of Marseille

(France 3 Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur)

From the northern and southern windows of the last floor of the Kallisté estate, Pujol introduces an allegory for two separate cities--northern and southern Marseille as he describes his view:

Par la fenêtre nord, une belle bastide coloniale détonne, située pile entre les bâtiments B et H. Il paraît qu'y sont stockées des œuvres d'art. En tout petit, en bas, je peux voir les dealers du H en plein travail. Aller et venir, compter, repartir, glander, courir, attendre, siffler, gesticuler, déguerpir, revenir, saluer, crier, surveiller, se cacher, se monter, manger, s'ennuyer, fatiguer, s'enfumer, vendre, compter, se défaire, examiner...Puis recommencer (Pujol, 13).

This imagery can be extrapolated into the documentary by France info on the H building in Kallisté (Fig. 2). By looking through the window, one can imagine that they are also observing what Pujol sees through a window of an apartment in the same building.



Fig. 2 View from the window of an apartment in building H of Kalliste

(France 3 Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur)

The vast array of action verbs implies a repeated routine for the dealers of the H building of the estate. Pujol notes verbs such as “aller et venir”, “repartir”, “courir”, “attendre”, “revenir”, “se monter” and “se cacher” which illustrate a mechanical way of life, whereby repeated actions become acts of reflex. Additionally, the verbs “s’ennuyer”, “fatiguer”, “siffler” and “glander” convey a state of stagnancy amidst the reflexive movements Pujol observes from the window. The juxtaposition between the languid and the automated dispositions point to a way of life in this estate. Not only do the overcrowded apartments have less space than a “prison” (Pujol, 13), the feeling of incarceration traps its inhabitants into a lifestyle that represents all but bliss. On the other side of the same apartment lies affluence:

Par la fenêtre sud, la plus belle vue de Marseille. Celle sur le port de la ville, avec ses grues, ses ponts métalliques, ses gros bateaux de croisière, ses quais et ses bassins, sur fond de ciel rose matin, bleu l’après-midi et rouge le soir. Celle sur la Bonne Mère qu’on voit décidément de partout, puisqu’elle veille sur la ville. (Pujol, 16)

Unlike the automated, monotonous, and stagnant observations from the northern window, this view from the south reveals a vibrance through the different colors of the sky at different times of the day. There is an air of magnificence in the diction, whereby superlative markers like “la plus belle” and “gros” place the Southern Marseille on a higher echelon. In Bach’s image (Fig. 3) the left-hand side shows a view of the

port and the crane (“grue”) that Pujol describes, and the illumination is heightened at the port area and diminishes rightwards to the housing/estate areas.

Image redacted due to lack of copyright permissions.
See link for image:
<https://www.arnaubach.com/capital/>

Fig. 3 Bach, Arnau. *CAPITAL*. December 2013 © Arnau Bach

The illustration of Pujol and the image by Bach contrasts the desolation of the North, which does not have these quays, basins, and colorful skies. In addition, Pujol notes the sky, which suggests his eye level is looking up at the grandeur of the South; however, he looks down or “en bas” (Pujol, 16) at what he observes from the North. This difference in Pujol’s upward and downward gaze insinuates an imbalanced social scale between both parts of Marseille.

De Kalliste, la plus belle en grec...la cité la plus pauvre de France, on ne voit pas les quartiers riches, très riches, à l’abri du mistral derrière une colline plus au sud. De cette hauteur, on comprend à quel point les populations de ces ghettos du nord sont éloignées de tout...Alors on se construit sa petite vie sur place... (Pujol, 16)

This estate exposes a reality completely different from the name that it carries; its beauty has been cloaked by constraint. Observing these two windows as a representation of two types of Marseilles reinforces how the *quartier nord* is viewed from a perspective of loneliness, isolation, and demotion. It self-births a separate universe, “on se construit sa petite vie”, which restricts the mobility of its populace to begin, continue and even end life in the same “small” place.

The *quartiers nord* was designed for precarity, where it stands as a visual representation of an alienated and invisible stratum that contributes greatly to Marseille’s social Fabric. Despite the impact that migrant communities have had on the port-city, their lived spheres epitomize perceptions of social hierarchy enmeshed with Frenchness. This explains why the desolation Pujol saw in the northern window was starkly different from the South. The documentary *Dans l’enfer de La Tour H de La Cité Du Parc Kalliste* by

French television channel France 3 complements Pujol's analysis of the building's exterior by focusing on the interior of the building H. Thus, instead of looking through a window for instance, the camera enters through the rusted gates shown in Fig. 4:



**Fig. 4 Entry point into the H building of cité Kallisté
(France 3 Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur)**

The documentary, filmed in 2018, reveals a motif of abandonment, and the gate opening into a dark hallway conveys a feeling of emptiness, even though there are tenants within this building. This is indicative of how isolation invokes not only invisibility and silence, as we saw earlier, but also abandonment. It is easier to ascribe definition to what cannot be seen, especially when these spaces are censored ones. Its inhabitants are described as displaced people, typically of migrant origin who have been expelled and rehoused as squatters or tenants from one cité to the other, until the building H. This is reminiscent of Akhenaton's verse in *Planète Mars* where he refers to the "populations éparées" (1991). Moreover, another documentary by France 3—*Enquêtes de région- Marseille la pauvreté au coeur*—reveals the confinement of people in living situations with no other alternative. In response to the stigmatization at play in this building, the people speak out in defense of their perceived identity. For example, some tenants emphasize that they are good and respectable people who do not default on rent but are faced with a situation they seem not to be able to get out of. A common expression amongst many of those interviewed by the reporter was "Je n'ai pas les choix" when asked how they live in these conditions.

Moreover, the dilapidated conditions of the estates suggests a response of the buildings themselves to the municipal disregard for its inhabitants. In Fig. 5, Bach juxtaposes the theme of confinement and a bursting out through the only access point the reader has to this apartment of a *quartiers nord* estate. The lighting of the image is portrayed as though a gloomy cloud hovers the apartment and conveys the gloominess of an imposed enclosure.

Image redacted due to lack of copyright permissions.
See link for image:
<https://www.arnaubach.com/capital/>

Fig. 5 Bach, Arnau. *CAPITAL*. December 2013 © Arnau Bach

The perfect symmetry of the window in this photograph is broken only by the barely perceptible hand that in a type of synecdoche pushes aside the curtain to reveal the partially visible form of a woman. The hand here reaches out as if to break the frame, emerging as part and not part of the woman. The face of the woman is hardly visible behind the curtain, and this limbo between what is seen versus unseen is emblematic of the semi- perceptibility of the *quartiers nord* whereby what is seen is minimal, just enough, and the rest hidden, too much. The locked windows suggest no exit, though one pane has been broken and pieced together with tape. However, the cracks in the window proposes an escape for the insider. One could argue that Bach's camera lens has metaphorically broken this screen that keeps the inhabitant invisible looking from the outside in, by showing the subject's outward gaze from the inside of the apartment. The contrast between enclosure and freedom signals a way photography attempts to puncture the silent bubble of the cités.

Inscribing identity

Je suis l'espoir quand je traverse les frontières invisibles de ma cité. Je
suis le chômage quand la cité tatoue sur ma peau ses stigmates.

Je suis la prison quand tout m'enferme.

(Seguin and Djibaba, 2019).

In Marseille, there is a saying : *on est d'abord Marseillais avant d'être Français*. Warne notes that the city models race relations that are “diametrically opposed to prevailing French notions of national unity, integration and cooperative citizenship” (Warne, 146). In a spatial dimension, these notions anchor perceptions of ethnic heritage to position migrant populations away from locals in metropolitan cities. By impeding the socio-cultural exchange between Marseillais and the Maghrebi identities, the composition of the periphery reinforces the conflict between being French and not being French enough. Notable examples from the previous chapter i.e., reduced norm housing versus HLMs, represented ways that Marseillais municipalities justified the estrangement of migrant-dwellers to the obscurity and muteness of the periphery. This socio-spatial ‘othering’ has developed over time to distinguish the periphery from the rest of the city. In *Où je vis* the tale of a fragmented city is told by Shurik'n:

Mais qu'est-ce que je vais leur dire maintenant qu'ils sont là ?

Bienvenue !

Ça fait longtemps qu'on vous attend, franchement on n'y croyait plus

Vaut mieux que vous le sachiez, je ne sais pas vraiment à quoi vous pensiez

Une chose est sûre, vous n'avez rien à nous envier

Since the rapper is from Marseille, it can be inferred that he illustrates the precarity of a lived experience in this ‘other Marseille’ that his audience may have never been a part of or even seen. This is conveyed through the expression “Bienvenue” suggesting the arrival of guests, or in this case strangers to this unfamiliar place. The expression of disbelief of this audience’s presence by Shurik'n further suggests that they are indeed strangers. Additionally, he introduces a hierarchy of these people in the formal register or

vouvoisement in the repetition of the pronoun “vous”, to suggest a social hierarchy that has been defined by domicile.

Vois où je vis...Certains flirtent avec l’oubli

(Geoffroy ‘Shurik’n’ Mussard in *Où je vis*, 1998)

Flirting with oblivion is presented as an involuntary act, as a price that is paid by virtue of existing in this place. Shurik’n describes the reality between De Certeau’s threshold of visibility--penury and neglect. Through the art form of rap, Shurik’n grapples with the feeling of disjointedness from his audience, who live in more enviable circumstances. He challenges this notion through the imperative of the verb *voir* in the chorus and the relative pronoun “où”. Both words function as directional markers that illuminate the neglect of a place and people beyond the city’s visibility threshold.

Photography articulates entrapment within the estates. In Seguin’s *Castellane*, the images, accompanied by texts of Youssef Djibaba present cité La Castellane as an “insulated urban island” (Seguin, 2016). He parallels the confinement of darkness and freedom of light, which portray the photographer's effort to document the injustices of a trapped history in the periphery. The eyes of the man in Fig. 6 merge with Seguin’s vantage point to reveal photography as an art form of surveillance. Djibaba’s autobiographical text gives personality to the anonymous figures captured in the images and amplifies the voice of those with inscribed identities that tether them to the *quartiers nord*. He writes :

Je suis l’habitant d’une île. Forteresse et prison, des gardiens nouvelle génération en baskets casquette gardent ses bords...Loin de tout, perchés sur la colline, on voit la mer... Assignés à résidence...La cité me colle à la peau. Sans elle je ne suis rien. Je l’aime comme je la déteste... (Seguin and Djibaba : 2019)



Fig. 6 Teddy Seguin, *Castellane*, 2019. © Filigranes Éditions

Djibaba’s self-identification as an islander corroborates the composition of Fig. 6. Seguin sets the tone of alienation through the captured distance of the image subject from the water-view. At first glance, the composition of the image shows the gaze of a black man in the foreground, looking over the homogenous apartments of the cité. Presumably, the man is of young age, as implied by the tennis shoes worn by the cité “guardians”. In this enclosure lies Djibaba’s persona. His use of the verb “assigner”, “colle” and “peau” attests to his identity imbued in a spatial dimension, such that his existence now depends on this inscription. Furthermore, the description of a “fortress” is evoked by the height of the buildings in the foreground, but these estates contradict the safety that a fortress typifies. Instead, Djibaba characterizes these buildings as a “prison”. The estates in the foreground and right-hand side implies the presence of people who could be behind the alternating open and closed windows. However, the absence of people outside these buildings suggests they are cloistered within.

Indeed, photography’s ambivalence erupts through its function as documentary. Seguin enters La Castellane from what seems to be the exterior into one of the estate buildings. The orientation of his lens establishes the reader as an inquisitive outsider.



Fig. 7 Teddy Seguin, *Castellane*, 2019. © Filigranes Éditions

Seguin debunks the idea that the estates of the *quartiers nord* are impermeable through the focal point of an open door. On one hand, the key in the door lock shines through to suggest the photographer's access. On the other hand, it could be a commentary on how the door has always been open for those who care to come in, insinuating the neglect of coverage on this part of Marseille. Going into the hallway, the visibility of this image diminishes. The decline in the focus elucidates the interior of the estate as a place beyond the threshold of visibility. Seguin's choice to defocus his lens reveals his critique on the attitude towards blurring out the inhabitants of this peripheral world, as though they do not exist. Djibaba echoes the feeling of living behind this foggy screen:

Ici on est maîtres des lieux, ailleurs on n'existe pas...Entre l'ombre et la lumière, coincé entre deux mondes, je cherche un moyen d'exister. (Seguin and Djibaba 2019)

Nevertheless, there is yet another door at the end of the hallway. Although shut, the eye is immediately directed to this door and elicits curiosity on what may exist on the other side. Djibaba offers a clue between the "light and shadows", which is a play on the dim but lit-up hallway in Fig. 7. He attributes the existence between two worlds, which challenges the fixity of a persona embedded into a single place. This is emblematic of the migrant as the epitome of mobility between origin and destination. The organic cyclical trajectory of this individual presents a conflict between locomotion and inertia.

Stagnancy vs movement

The majority population of the *quartiers nord* are migrants, and thus their trajectory is not designed for stagnancy. The influx and efflux of migrant populations guarantee perceptibility, while constraint cloaks them in obscurity. Through the photographs of Zielony and Bach, elements of entrance, exit and locomotion are motifs that represent responses to a prescribed and immobile life that was designed for the estates of the *quartiers nord*.

Image redacted due to lack of copyright permissions.
See link for image:
<https://www.arnaubach.com/capital/>

Fig. 8 Bach, Arnau. *CAPITAL*. December 2013 © Arnau Bach

In Fig. 8, the young people sitting in the remnants of a vehicle in the foreground contrast with the fenced buildings in the background. In this image, they perform movement despite the spatio-racial paralysis that cuts off their access through the fences that cloister them within. It is interesting to note the car is faced in an opposite direction to the fence, suggesting an attempt to find alternative routes to break through this confinement. Although the remains of this ‘car’ cannot facilitate transit, the photograph still reinforces the parallel between stagnancy and movement. Bach depicts how the dwellers engage with and try to break out of this carved out space. He portrays a resistance to the constraint of the periphery, rather than acquiescence. Fig. 5 is especially provocative in the way it implies that the youth of quartier nord are always and already on their way elsewhere even in a non-functional, synecdoche for a vehicle.

Furthermore, Zielony’s depiction of 4 men at the entrance to the building in Fig. 9 highlights the entrance point in opposition to any sense of enclosure. More specifically, the man who stands in the middle of the entrance is neither inside nor outside the building. This existence in the middle acknowledges the power of the migrant whose trajectory and ability to transmit themselves across spaces and places suggests a type of freedom that is rarely “seen” in popular and cultural depictions of the *quartiers nord*.



Fig. 9 Tobias Zielony. *Quartiers Nord. Entrée-2*, 2003. C-Print, 46 x 69cm (Gerke, 255)

© Tobias Zielony

The men here look as though they are waiting, a type of positioning in space that is set in the interstices of mobility. This creates an opposition with the fixity of buildings and neighborhood spaces that attempt to immobilize those that cannot ever be stripped of their mobile impulse. The power to move--it is precisely this about migrants that is most feared by the former colonizer turned real estate mogul.

Conclusion

Designing spaces that separate people is a way in which societies takeaway agency from these isolated individuals. Migrant life in the *quartiers nord* grapples with this enclosure that breeds an alienation. Confinement to a prescribed place curbs their ability to define themselves and ascribes a reality to them to make it permanent, these personalities are siloed into the invisibility of their estate interior. Therefore, these communities are imperceptible from the outside of their estates. The prescriptiveness of the *quartiers nord* suggests a veiling of the district, as a spatial solution to contain migrant 'foreignness'. This performance of acculturation echoes that which occurred in Algiers at the behest of urban renewal, where Frenchness as the dominant cultural paradigm portrayed Algerians as asocial and 'unFrench' people to be alienated. By paying attention to a life on the inside of these estates we understand how the enclosure casts a mute shadow on the district. This stagnancy of the periphery is what impedes the migrant's fluidity, where (as seen in

chapter 2) he or she must exist within the limits accorded by municipal tolerance for their heritage. However, these communities portray a disposition that illuminates the obscurity they have been confined to by performing movement, both metaphorically and physically. Through this, the periphery is met with resistance.

Through art forms—music, photography, biography, and documentary—this chapter exposes the periphery as an artifice of social hierarchy. The *quartiers nord* as Marseille's periphery transcends its geographical definition into a sociological one, where it portrays migrant communities on a lower stratum to Frenchness. The documentaries and images reveal ways to deconstruct this space by undoing it from the inside out. From this, the injustices of a cut off arm of society is amplified by music which exposes the feelings of those who grapple with this prejudice. By exploring ways in which lived experiences are told, amplified, and portrayed in art forms we can restore autonomy to the inhabitants of these lived spheres. open a wider forum for discourse to promote changes of colonial systems of social invisibility amongst migrant populations of the *quartiers nord*.

Conclusion

Dominion, hierarchy, asymmetry are all concepts anchored in a conceptualization and imposition of space as their principal vector of oppression. Space thus created, defines the dwelling places, and lived experience of migrants to become the uncontestable reality of social function. The perception of the Algerian communities as illegible and undefined carried on to their treatment as migrants. By viewing the spaces they are defined as asocial immigrant domains, we observe the imposition of obscurity and invisibility of what makes the migrant, both emigrant and immigrant. The trajectory of the migrant is a cyclical phenomenon, it is an evolving path and must be acknowledged as such. We observe the obscuring and the rendering invisible of the migrant, where both his/her constitutive parts –as emigrant and immigrant—are annulled. The trajectory of the migrant is an ongoing and cyclical phenomenon, it is a path in constant evolution and development, and must be acknowledged as mobile not fixed, changing not stagnant.

Exploring ways in which lived experiences are portrayed in different art forms allows us to engage with a humanistic outlook on the disenfranchised lived spheres of the *quartiers nord*. Tracing the Franco-Algerian migrant footprint Algiers into Marseille revealed similarities in spatial configurations that positioned migrant-dwellers as outsiders. The aesthetics of non-conformity to French norms appear through a spatial dimension, whereby the outsider is cut off from the large social Fabric. In this regard, the migrant is viewed as deviant, when he or she has norms inculcated from the society of emigration. The construction of enclosed places etches stagnancy into the lived experience of migrant communities. This system of exclusion, firstly entrenched in Algeria and later in Marseille, writes the urban story of the *quartiers nord*.

The goal of this thesis was to challenge the one-sided narrative on the *quartiers nord* by finding ways to access this sequestered part of Marseille society. The methodology most successful in achieving this objective was photography. Initially, these photographs were consulted to examine themes of obscurity that blurred the reality within the estate. In retrospect, the inference of muteness was made before looking at these images. This allowed for reflection on how interpreting photography as a surveillance could be influenced by preconceived notions on what the reader would like to see. Revisiting the images in a later

stage of analysis revealed unexpected aspects that reframed the focus of the thesis. For example, the image of the young black girl in chapter 2 was initially interpreted as an isolated main character set in front of the backdrop of identical apartments. This was a very typical outlook informed by the narratives of desolation in the homogenizing discourse of popular media. This was a very typical outlook informed by the narratives of desolation in the homogenizing discourse of popular media. Restricting the interpretation of this image to this single narrative reproduced the dangers of a single frame that this thesis sought to avoid. Upon a re-attempt of analysis, I noticed the varying elements of light and dark were manipulated by the photographer to comment on the response of the dwellers to the imposed invisibility. Through this discovery, I was able to view photography as documentary, that is captured to undo preconceived notions I had fallen prey to myself.

Moreover, the research into the migrant trajectory was limited by an imbalance between male versus female representation. Most of the evidence provided by MacMaster and Pujol described migrants from Algeria as male workers in Marseille's industrial areas. The absence of women in this discourse points to a way this thesis can further research on the position of migrant women in the *quartiers nord*, and the similarities and differences in how men and women grapple with the periphery. Acknowledging the feminine is a missing portion of the thesis focus on the *quartiers nord*. By bridging the feminization of Algiers to the treatment of migrant women in Marseille versus men, new areas of exploration arise. Examples of these could be found in photography of women in the cités across different generations, as well as the representation of women in films set in the *quartiers nord*. By anchoring these visual elements to the theories of Madeleine Dobie and Assia Djebar, further developments to this thesis can deconstruct the feminine between Algeria and Marseille. Additionally, analyses of film and cinematography can inform how similar themes of female visibility evolve over time, i.e., between the 20th and 21st century. Films that could be explored are *Un, deux, trois, soleil* by Bertrand Blier and *La Bonne Mère* by Hafsia Herzi. Set in 1993 and 2021 respectively, both directors present women of different generations who grapple with life in the northern district.

Uncovering the *quartiers nord*, is to understand that 2,600 years (and counting) cannot be unveiled in a single thesis. There are different layers to the migrant story in this part of Marseille that are governed by topics of gender, race, and class. What this thesis shows is that these different facets are literally and figuratively grounded in a spatial dimension. Space a stage for the performance of exclusion, exposing itself as the artifice of social asymmetries. Within this, lies the contemporary recreations of social relations between migrants, space, and society till the present day urban configuration of social life.

Illustration Credits

Chapter 1

Fig. 1 The Runoman. *Ruins of the al-Sayyida mosque in Algiers*. 2018. © Shutterstock

Fig. 2 Osmani, Mohammed. *Place du Gouvernement*. 2003 © Mohammed Osmani

Fig. 3 *Duc d'Orléans*, 1990. Image from author's postcard collection. © Zeynep Çelik

Fig. 4 Grabar, Henry. *Rue Abane Amdane*. July 2011. © Henry Grabar

Fig 5. *Rue de Rivoli*. (Image by Kopp Corentin, Flickr, Creative Commons)

Fig. 6 Le Corbusier's Plan Obus for Algiers © Bidoun.

Fig. 7 *The Ancient Marine Quarter. Chantiers*, March 1935. © Chantiers

Fig. 8 *Chantiers*, March 1935. © Chantiers

Fig. 9 Le Corbusier. *Poésie sur Alger*. 1997. © Fondation Le Corbusier

Chapter 2

Fig. 1 Pouillon, Fernand. *Diar el-Mahçoul*. 2001. Architecte Méditerranée © Marseille: Éditions Imbernon

Fig. 2 Poudou. *Diar El-Mahçoul, Alger, Algérie*. 2010 © Wikimedia Commons

Fig. 3 Aerial image of the *Vieux Moulin* residence in 2022 captured from Google Earth.

Fig. 4 Béchet, Benjamin. *Le Roucas Blanc*. 2022 (Vaton) © L'Obs Magazine

Fig. 5 Marseille Tourisme. *Le Roucas Blanc*. © Marseilletourisme.fr 2015-2022

Fig. 6 Gilles Favier © Le bec en l'air

Fig. 7 Gilles Favier © Le bec en l'air

Fig. 8 Gilles Favier © Le bec en l'air

Chapter 3

Fig. 1 *Dans l'enfer de La Tour H de La Cité Du Parc Kalliste*, France 3 Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur

Fig. 2 *Dans l'enfer de La Tour H de La Cité Du Parc Kalliste*, France 3 Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur

Fig. 3 Bach, Arnau. *CAPITAL*. December 2013 © Arnau Bach

Fig. 4 *Dans l'enfer de La Tour H de La Cité Du Parc Kalliste*, France 3 Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur

Fig. 5 Bach, Arnau. *CAPITAL*. December 2013 © Arnau Bach

Fig. 6 Teddy Seguin, *Castellane*, 2019. © Filigranes Éditions

Fig. 7 Teddy Seguin, *Castellane*, 2019. © Filigranes Éditions

Fig. 8 Bach, Arnau. *CAPITAL*. December 2013 © Arnau Bach

Fig. 9 Tobias Zielony. *Quartiers Nord*. Entrée-2, 2003. C-Print, 46 x 69cm © Tobias Zielony

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