La Haine (Directed by Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995, Le Studio Canal+), frame grab.

Hip-Hop Aesthetics and La Haine

STEVE SPENCE

Studying *le hip hop* in a hardscrabble French neighborhood at the turn of the century, dancer and professor Felicia McCarren discovered an almost dialectical tension:

> Even in class, there is a kind of rage in the form: some of the moves are outrageous. We are taught to move frenetically, not just to the beat. We learn to crawl on the floor and skim over it backwards. We all try to spin on our heads. But these moves are all at the service of a performance that is disciplined, skill that is acquired, and dancing that is not only for oneself but also for others. It is not jazzercise and it is not gym; it is a dance class with a recognizable format.[1]

As McCarren and many others have noted, *le hip hop*'s artists and interpretive communities are thriving, multi-generational, and increasingly autonomous.[2] French artistic practices are often quite distinct from those of their American cousins. However, *le hip hop* also honors its roots in New York City in the late 1970s, within the aesthetic system created and nurtured by African-diaspora youth in America. In dance, for example, these debts are expressed not just through the (seeming) contradiction of "outrageous" moves pursued with discipline and extraordinary skill, but also through a preference for the aerial. McCarren notes that this Africanism manifests itself in the emphasis on upward movements during the initial, "top-rock" stages of a hip-hop performance, so that feet seem barely to touch the ground.[3] And it is most clear in the form's "air moves" and "power moves," including its distinctive head spins and windmills. By defying gravity in this way, hip-hop dancers are making gestural statements about the

radical possibilities of life within the worlds in which they find themselves. France's hip-hopeurs have developed a movement vocabulary that is rooted in U.S. models, and in rage, but that is bound by neither. Though still very much an art form of the dispossessed, McCarren writes, "… this dance has come to speak about other things: to figure its dancers as something or someone else…."[4]

In this essay, I examine another artistic statement with a similar project: the brutal, elegant, and widely celebrated film *La Haine*, directed by Matthieu Kassovitz and released in 1995. As I demonstrate, the parallel sensibilities that link *La Haine* to *le hip hop* are no coincidence. In ways that have not been fully appreciated, *La Haine* is a hip-hop film.

At the level of mise-en-scène, of course, few could miss *La Haine*'s passion for hip-hop. Shot on location

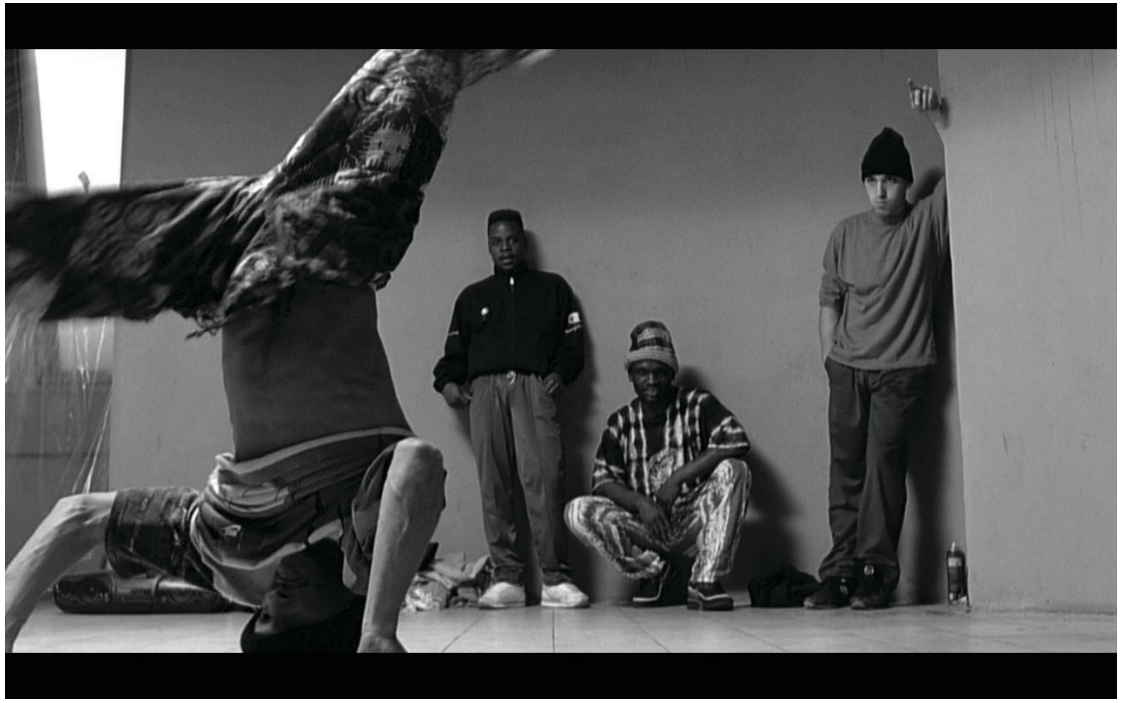

Figure 1. B-boys dancing in a wrecked train station in *La Haine* (Directed by Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995, Le Studio Canal+), frame grab.

"TO SHOCK AND TO PLEASE" OFFERS A USEFUL SUMMARY OF THE AIMS OF HIP-HOP AESTHETICS

in a working-class suburb of Paris, the film showcases the artistry of the neighborhood's graffiti writers and b-boys, and it also includes a cameo performance by DJ Cut Killer (Anouar Hajoui), a renowned Parisian DJ. For a great many critics, however, hip-hop's appearances serve at best as evidence of the film's ethnographic impulse or, worse, of Kassovitz's efforts to tart up the story with imposed signifiers of an Americanized, commodity culture.[5]

In both cases, *La Haine*'s ostentatious style poses a problem. Although the film flouts the codes of journalistic realism, *La Haine* clearly shares a mission with the wave of TV exposés and "sociological" films that preceded and followed its 1995 release. Its makers framed *La Haine* as a "message film"—a stark examination of contemporary life in France's embattled banlieues, the suburbs that ring major cities like Paris and Marseilles. Like many inner cities in the U.S., the banlieues are home to Black and Brown communities of the African diaspora—most with roots in former French colonies in the Maghreb, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Antilles.[6] And while white supremacy and anti-black racism of course have distinct histories and manifestations in France, in some cases their workings are grimly familiar: as are many U.S. cities, the banlieues are plagued by ongoing police violence.[7] What are called police bauvres (blunders) routinely cause serious injuries and deaths among banlieue residents, and *La Haine* was conceived specifically as an indictment of both this violence and public indifference toward its persistence.[8] Kassovitz asserts that he began the script in 1993, on the day that police shot and killed a 17-year-old Zairian, Makomé M'Bowole, while he was handcuffed to a radiator in a police station

house. M'Bowole had been arrested on suspicion of stealing cigarettes. The film's narrative culminates in a similar bauvre, and its fictional story is framed by a complex set of devices that undergird the film's claims to realism. The narrative's opening shot, for example, is preceded by an intertitle—spare, plain text on a black background, with no music—that dedicates *La Haine* "to those who died while this film was being made." A similar title card follows the final shot, thanking the residents of the cité (public housing project) in which *La Haine* was filmed. As this suggests, the filmmakers presented *La Haine* as an exposé on life and death in Paris's trouble banlieues, and French audiences embraced this claim to realism.

Nevertheless, *La Haine*'s flamboyant style seems to point in other directions. Ginette Vincendeau, for example, notes that since the 1960s the banlieues have served as backdrops for the experimental and highly personal work of many French auteurs, including, for example, *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1966) and *Le Camion* (Marguerite Duras, 1977).[9] Many reviewers within France's cinematic establishment drew similar comparisons. Cahiers du Cinema, no fan of the "sociological," praised Kassovitz for his ability to "escape naturalism," and *Le Nouvel Observateur* compared *La Haine* favorably with *A bout de soufflé* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1960).[10] Vincendeau argues that *La Haine* deviates from the "dreary" and "rough" form of contemporary sociological films, and therefore, should be understood as a hybrid: "From the 'sociological' films it takes a genuine interest in the working-class suburb as setting and topic, and from the 'aesthetic' films a stylistic distanciation from it."[11] Unlike its sociological contemporaries, Vincendeau notes, "…*La Haine* is polished and seductive. It aims to shock and please…."[12]

As it happens, "to shock and to please" offers a useful summary of the aims of hip-hop aesthetics, evident in the outrageous moves of b-boys and b-girls as well as the smooth flow of hardcore rappers. Hip-hop artists rarely feel a need to choose between commitments to form and commitments to realism. "So many people can't see," the U.S. artist Jay-Z observes, "that every great rapper is not just a documentarian but [also] a trickster."[13] As Will Higbee notes, during the 1980s and early 1990s Kassovitz immersed himself in Paris's emerging hip-hop scenes, and their influence is quite evident in the soundtracks of his early shorts and his first feature film.[14] By 1993, when he began work on *La Haine*,

the 26-year-old director was already fluent in hip-hop forms and the possibilities that they offered for cinema. In sum, then, the best models for *La Haine*'s complex form are not to be found in the traditions of French auteurism. A better guide is *La Haine* itself, which highlights hip-hop artistry in its content precisely in order to pay homage to its most important formal influence. In what follows, I investigate two intertwined ways that hip-hop's formal system contributes to *La Haine*'s achievements: in the kinetic beauty embodied by its camerawork, and in its densely layered intertextuality.

Defying Gravity in the Cité

> The Steadicam allows for multiple points of view while never committing to one of its own….It can go anywhere—indeed, it's built to be able to go anywhere….and it's also never fully anywhere. It never lands. It hovers. — Eric Hayes[15]

La Haine's narrative is framed by a joke, told in voiceover, about a man in free-fall. The device signals a larger truth about the narrative: it exists in a moment of suspension, in spaces of relative calm that are pregnant with the possibilities of violence. The film's story begins on the morning after an uprising has engulfed a cité in Chanteloup-les-Vignes, a banlieue located northwest of Paris. It ends in another spasm of violence. In between, *La Haine* follows 24 hours in the lives of three young friends from the cité: Hubert, Saïd, and Vinz. For much of the film the friends move through the wreckage left by this violent confrontation with the police that includes burned-out cars and businesses, smashed windows, wrecked police and train stations. This mise-en-scène contributes to the film's palpable tension, which is reinforced by the voiceover joke, told by Hubert:

> It's the story of a guy who falls off a skyscraper. On the way down past each floor, he keeps telling himself, 'So far so good; so far so good; so far so good.'

Hubert repeats the joke midway through the film, and it appears a final time in voiceover during the film's concluding scene, after the police have shot Vinz in the head, and as Hubert confronts his killer. Each time, Hubert follows the punch line with a dénouement: "But it's not how you fall that matters. It's how you land."

One of the joke's implications, of course, is a sense of inescapable doom. It sketches a kind of dangerous limbo, a freedom that might feel like flight but that must end in catastrophe. This sense of impending disaster is certainly a

STEADICAM SHOTS … REMAIN GROUNDED IN THE PROPRIOCEPTIVE PERSPECTIVES OF THE EMBODIED HUMAN SUBJECT

critical aspect of *La Haine*'s vocation. Like the final version of Hubert's joke, *La Haine* served as a kind of alarm cry regarding France's fracture sociale.[16] And yet both the joke and *La Haine* as a whole convey much more than this. The film's brutal portrait of the banlieue is also shot through with exuberance, warmth, and humor—qualities often neglected by critics, but which nevertheless give lie to any radical pessimism. In other words, both the joke and the film raise the possibility of landing differently. However, these possibilities are not clearly conveyed through *La Haine*'s narration. Instead, they are most vibrantly expressed by the film's form.

In many interviews, Kassovitz claims that he set out to make the banlieue beautiful.[17] He succeeded, but it is a kinetic sort of beauty—more akin to dance than photography or painting. It results from the fluid integration of the characters into their social/material world, an effect supported by the intricate social connections revealed as the three friends move through their neighborhood. Kassovitz's choice of a densely layered soundtrack also plays a role. The sonic world of the cité is teeming with life: dogs barking, children playing, music, traffic, helicopters, and conversations all flow around the friends as they make their way through their home. But *La Haine*'s kinetic beauty largely can be credited, in addition to the director, to the talents of four people. Three are the film's principle actors—

Figure 2. Performance by DJ Cut Killer [Anouar Hajoui] in *La Haine* (Directed by Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995, Le Studio Canal+), frame grab.

all athletic young men who move with an easy grace and vitality. The fourth is the film's veteran Steadicam operator, Jacques Monge.[18]

La Haine's highly mobile camera has been often remarked, but it is the particular affordances of the Steadicam that are primary; the cité in particular is revealed through a series of long and tightly choreographed Steadicam shots. As the three friends make their way through streets, cellars, apartments, and rooftops, Monge's camera engages them in a smooth and intricate dance, imparting the Steadicam's unique sense of human embodiment combined with preternatural fluidity. As Eric Hynes writes in a tribute to the form,

> Steadicam shots are uncanny. They mimic how we move and see, and furthermore they seem to anticipate how we expect to be able to move and see, but

> can't....They do come from a body: a person carrying a machine that's making these images, at human height, usually at human speed, moving and turning and observing....[but] the technique doesn't settle for approximating how we move through the world; it makes improvements, surpassing our capabilities with a precognitive fluidity of movement.[19]

The Steadicam's contributions are most evident during *La Haine*'s elaborately choreographed sequence shots—single takes that often extend more than a full minute. (The longest runs for 1:54.) These shots are "outrageous," like the dance moves studied by McCarren, and for many of the same reasons. Because they are Steadicam shots, they remain grounded in the proprioceptive perspectives of the embodied human subject. And yet they glide and flow and curve and bend, hitting a half dozen marks along the way, upending our expectations, flaunting their technical skill, and conveying a vibrant energy.

The Steadicam's contributions to *La Haine* can be gauged through comparison with a very different sequence that achieves similar results. The scene featuring DJ Cut Killer's performance begins with a high-angle, static camera shot into a busy courtyard playground. The camera pans and tilts as it picks out different groups in the courtyard, eventually arriving at the window in which Cut Killer is setting up his turntables and speakers. The effect resembles surveillance footage—a distanced, objective point of view quite different from the human-scale perspectives that dominate *La Haine*'s cité. The film then cuts to the interior of Cut Killer's apartment, and he begins his performance. The film returns to an exterior shot, but then something quite unexpected happens: the camera becomes unmoored, both from the ground and from any particular point of view. Instead it floats above the treetops, meanders out of the courtyard, down the street, and pans to look out toward the horizon. This fluid, gravity-defying movement suspends the narrative trajectory, transforming surveillance into contemplation. It also functions as a visual analogue to the poetic, pointed, and highly skilled sonic performance by DJ Cut Killer, which dominates the scene's soundtrack.

Sampling, Intertextuality, Generosity

> The major things black art has to have are these: it must have the ability to use found objects, the appearance of using found things, and it must look effortless. — Toni Morrison[20]

La Haine is replete with references to other films and filmmakers, and many critics attribute this to the director's pedigree, as both a second-generation filmmaker and an avowed cinephile.[21] Like the earlier New Wave, Kassovitz was praised for his innovative riffs on Hollywood genre films, and many noted the parallels that connect *La Haine* to U.S. filmmakers including Martin Scorsese and Spike Lee. This reading of the film is fine as far as it goes, but critics also often present *La Haine*'s many cinematic quotations as a claim against the film's realism. Ruth Doughty and Kate Griffiths, for example, suggest that *La Haine*'s viewers find themselves "entrap[ped] in a maze of cinematic allusions, a hall of mirrors reflecting upon other films."[22] Similarly, Vincendeau remarks on

> an interesting slippage in several cinematic references that the film indulges in: Kassovitz makes his heroes inhabit his own cinematic and visual culture rather than theirs. Vinz talking to himself in his bathroom mirror imitates the 1977 hero of *Taxi Driver*, where a similar young man in 1995 would more likely have copied Bruce Willis or Arnold Schwarzenegger....[23]

Vincendeau's readings of *La Haine* are generally sensitive and insightful, but in this case she is simply wrong. A young man like Vinz might well possess an exhaustive knowledge of *Taxi Driver*, along with dozens of other classic films.

Hip-hop culture as a whole is marked by its reverence for and homages to past masters, a fact documented in multiple ethnographic studies.[24] "Crate digging," for example, is a foundational skill prized by both DJs and producers. Practitioners spend hours combing through the stock of used record stores, searching for the rare, golden breaks that will distinguish them among their peers. Similarly, b-boys and b-girls insist that newcomers master a repertoire of canonical songs and dance moves. Today, forty years after the form's genesis, the b-boy canon remains grounded in a select group of funk songs recorded in the early 1970s. Justin Williams's argument about hip-hop music applies to the culture more generally:

> [T]here exists an audience expectation that hip-hop is a vast intertextual network that helps to form and inform the generic contract between audiences and hip-hop groups and artists. And in many cases, hip-hop practitioners overtly celebrate their peers, ancestors, and musical pasts, though reasons why this is so may diverge, and how references

> and sources are textually signaled (or not) varies....[25]

This applies to cinema as well. Turn-of-the-century hip-hop maintains a durable appreciation for the movies that shaped the culture at its birth, mostly drawn from early Blaxploitation, Hong Kong cinema, and Hollywood gangster films. Tupac Shakur, for example—arguably the world's most influential rapper when *La Haine* was made and released—shared with his peers an encyclopedic knowledge of Blaxploitation and Kung Fu films.[26] Hip-hop culture always has been marked by a serious and sustained search for a usable past. It is just a different past than the one that is familiar to most scholars writing about *La Haine*. Beyond French auteurism, therefore, it's worth thinking about the film's ostentatious intertextualty in parallel with hip-hop's sampling aesthetic, an entire musical form created from borrowed material.

A contemporary film, also influenced by hip-hop aesthetics, offers a useful analogue.[27] Released three years before *La Haine*, the U.S. film *Juice* (Ernest Dickerson, 1992) also focuses on a group of teenage friends from an impoverished urban neighborhood. As in *La Haine*, the men's friendship is tested as one of their group becomes increasingly enraged, unstable, and homicidal. And like *La Haine*'s Vinz, *Juice*'s Bishop (Tupac Shakur) manifests his instability through an extended riff on a classic cinematic anti-hero. Finally, both films showcase the art of DJ-ing, signaling the inspiration for their cinematic sampling.

Despite their similarities, the two films' use of sampling differs in one important respect, and Serge Lacasse's useful distinction between "autosonic" and "allosonic" quotation

THIS FLUID, GRAVITY-DEFYING MOVEMENT SUSPENDS THE NARRATIVE TRAJECTORY, TRANSFORMING SURVEILLANCE INTO CONTEMPLATION.

can add precision to this discussion.[28] Most hip-hop sampling is autosonic: a producer digitally captures a discrete section from a previously recorded song (e.g., a single drum beat, a melodic line, an extended riff) and then combines this with other elements to create a new composition. Often these quotations retain no explicit connection to their original contexts, though many are quite recognizable. Most within the community certainly will recognize, for example, the 8-bar drum solo from James Brown's 1970 single "Funky Drummer," a sample used in dozens of subsequent hip-hop songs.

Juice uses a form of autosonic sampling, weaving footage from the classic gangster film *White Heat* (Raoul Walsh, 1949) directly into the newer film's fabric. This integration is motivated by an establishing shot that shows the principle characters watching the earlier film on television. Scenes from *White Heat* then fill the movie screen, complete with artifacts signaling its televisual reproduction, akin to the "crunchy" vinyl artifacts prized by hip-hop producers. As they do in music, these media artifacts add a sense of dimension—of temporal and cultural depth—to the film. It is also in this scene that Bishop first "acts out" *White Heat*—demonstrating his passionate identification with the film's psychopathic protagonist, played by James Cagney.

Unlike autosonic borrowing, an allosonic quotation does not directly incorporate previously recorded material. Instead, it borrows from an earlier work by commissioning a new performance of it.[29] Producers often use this technique to explicitly signal the borrowed element's original context, as in parody or homage. Further, producers often modify lyrics, arrangement, and/or contexts in ways that signify on the meanings of the original. A contemporary example is Tupac Shakur's 1992 "Changes," which borrows chorus and melody from "The Way It Is," a multi-platinum single by Bruce Hornsby and the Range. Both songs are about the possibility of racial and social progress, and Shakur uses the sample to challenge Hornsby's facile optimism. As Shakur's chorus insistently repeats, "I see no changes."

La Haine uses a parallel technique, in the form of a disturbing, hilarious riff on *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1976) that erupts at an early moment in the film (Figure 3). Rather than autosonic quotation (e.g., a film poster or television broadcast inserted into the mise-en-scène), the film re-stages one of *Taxi Driver*'s key scenes. Vincent Cassel, playing Vinz, rehearses dialogue spoken originally by Robert De Niro playing

Travis Bickle. Scorsese's version already plays with the homology between mirror and cinematic screen. Kassovitz does him one better, and the scene's blocking reinforces this effect, creating a play-within-a-play-within-a-play that shatters the film's fourth wall. Cassel-as-Vinz, ostensibly practicing the lines in front of a bathroom mirror, stares in direct address at the camera. As Vinz threatens his (imaginary) interlocutor—"You looking at me, motherfucker?"—the audience is pulled through an unstable series of subject positions: we are interlocutor, cinephile, camera, mirror, and Vinz himself. The effect implicates the film's characters, the filmmakers, and its audiences in a web of relationships that signify in multiple directions.

What this playful sampling of Scorsese does not do, however, is undercut *La Haine*'s sociological mission. Instead, by shattering the

Figure 3. Vinz rehearses lines from *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1977) in *La Haine* (Directed by Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995, Le Studio Canal+), frame grab.

Figure 4. Billboard reference to *Scarface* (Brian De Palma, 1983). Graffiti writer Saïd changes vous to *nous*, rendering the tagline, "The World is Ours" in *La Haine* (Directed by Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995, Le Studio Canal+), frame grab.

fourth wall's protective barrier, the performance jerks spectators into unexpected relationships. Vinz/Cassel's aggressive performance is so unhinged that it reads as parody, but it is also literally in our faces. We may laugh, but we do so to cover an atavistic discomfort.

"The World is Ours"

But perhaps the motif that hip-hop sampling can best illuminate is a billboard that *La Haine*'s protagonists encounter twice while in Paris. Dominated by a photorealistic image of a globe, its tagline reads, "The World is Yours" (Figure 4).

This is a direct reference to two earlier films: *Scarface* (Howard Hawks, 1932) and the remake, *Scarface* (Brian De Palma, 1983).[30] In an interview, Kassovitz says this about the motif:

> There are lots of references in the film. Hawks's *Scarface* with the

> poster "The world is yours;" I put that in because in the cités they all know De Palma's *Scarface* by heart. You speak to them about cinema and they tell you: "Yeah! like *Scarface*!" and they don't know the original, of course.[31]

Whatever its provenance, *La Haine*'s incorporation of "The World is Yours" is inspired. Like both versions of *Scarface*, *La Haine* focuses on an immigrant community whose inhabitants are pushed to the margins of their society. In all three films, the protagonists are positioned to "overhear" this advertising pitch, which in each case is attributed to a corporation engaged in international business and tourism. In other words, all three advertisements are targeted at members of the dominant class, the beneficiaries of increasingly globalized capital. In *La Haine*, for example, the billboard advertises a resort in Morocco; it promises "the world" only to those able to finance expensive beach vacations.

As the quote above suggests, Kassovitz was aware of the motif's origins in the 1932 Hawks film. However, it is worth emphasizing the quote's central point: "I put that in because in the cités they all know De Palma's *Scarface* by heart." In fact, it is likely that "The World is Yours" was in the air during the four months that the filmmakers lived and worked on location in Chanteloup-les-Vignes. In April 1994—five months before principle shooting began—the European branch of Columbia Records released *Illmatic*, the debut album by the U.S. rapper Nas. Embraced by the hip-hop cognoscenti on both sides of the Atlantic, the album is now routinely cited as one of the most influential of all time.[32] During their time in Chanteloup-les-Vignes, the filmmakers probably heard Nas more than once. Illmatic includes its own extended riff on *Scarface*, a track titled "The World is Yours." With an insistent refrain—"Whose world is this? The world is yours!"—Nas boldly appropriates the message of *Scarface*'s fictional advertisement. It is worth attending, therefore, to the particular uses that Nas makes of his borrowed material.

Scarface's 1983 protagonist, Tony Montana, reacts to the forces arrayed against him with a paranoid and predatory individualism. Nas takes this model and bends it. As James Braxton Peterson observes, "What immediately distinguishes Nas's world from De Palma's is that the motif functions in hip-hop discourse as a call and response rather than as the one-sided text messages in the film. This is a signal distinction."[33] The song recasts the motif as a question, "Whose world is this?" and then offers multiple

answers in multiple voices, including "It's mine!" and "The world is yours!" Nas even name-checks his neighbors, moving from his home base outward through New York's many struggling neighborhoods:

> To everybody in Queens, the foundation (It's yours!)
> The world is yours
> To everybody uptown, yo, the world is yours (It's yours!)
> The world is yours
> To everybody in Brooklyn
> Y'all know the world is yours (It's yours!)[34]

This restructuring of "The World is Yours" into call-and-response, or "antiphonal" form, renders it both multivocal and communal. The change opens Nas's claims "to all of his listeners and by extension an entire generation of black and brown people living in oppressive urban conditions."[35] This is precisely the move made by Saïd, when he uses spray paint to change the billboard's vous to *nous*, transforming the commercial come-on into a defiant "The World is Ours" (Figure 4).

And, as it happens, Nas's move also parallels the turn that *La Haine* makes with *Taxi Driver*. Scorsese's Travis Bickle is the prototypical "lone gunman;" he lives an isolated, solitary existence. Vinz, on the other hand, is immersed within and supported by his community. He lives with his noisy family and spends most of the film in the company of a wide range of friends, including Saïd and Hubert, his closest mates. The three friends tease and bicker, play pranks, and tell jokes. They back each other during multiple scraps, Vinz cuts Saïd's hair, and Hubert works hard to save Vinz from his corrosive, homicidal rage. It is the depth of these friendships that allows Vinz's death to rise to the level of tragedy, unlike the blank nihilism that marks *Taxi Driver*. Like *Illmatic*, then, *La Haine* combines harsh realism with a playful, generous, and endlessly surprising form. And like Illmatic, *La Haine*'s ironic humor and vitality can help to illuminate hip-hop's appeal among the dispossessed in many parts of the globe.

Conclusion

In the quote that opens this essay, Felicia McCarren writes that the discipline called *le hip hop* demands "dancing that is not only for oneself but also for others." The b-girl performs for the greater glory of herself and her crew. Moreover, she dances paradigmatically within the "cipher," or circle, formed by the larger community, and it is this community that affirms or discounts her expressive claims. It provides space for individual achievement, but only within the context of group solidarity. This structure is fundamental to multiple forms of hip-hop culture, but this is often

overlooked by outsiders familiar only with the more individualistic concerns of commercial rap music. Nevertheless, the pattern is also evident in *La Haine*, a story that turns, after all, on the pleasures and responsibilities of friendship.

In sum, hip-hop provides *La Haine* with far more than just flashy production numbers and a modish, subcultural style. Its influence is both thoroughgoing and formal, and the aesthetics of b-boying and sampling undergird the film's most fundamental, forceful themes. In form as well as content, *La Haine* is a hip-hop film.

Figure 5. Another echo of Nas: Hubert framed by graffiti reading "The Future is Us." in *La Haine* (Directed by Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995, Le Studio Canal+), frame grab.

Endnotes

1. Felicia McCarren, *French Moves: The Cultural Politics of Le Hip Hop* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), xxxvii.
2. For Anglophone readers, the best introduction to French hip-hop remains Alain-Philippe Durand, ed. *Black, Blanc, Beur: Rap Music and Hip-Hop Culture in the Francophone World* (Lanham, MD, 2002).
3. McCarren, xx. For more on Africanist elements in hip-hop practice, see Halifu Osumare, *The Africanist Aesthetic in Global Hip-Hop: Power Moves* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
4. McCarren, xvii.
5. Although the film garnered generally excellent reviews, there were notable exceptions, including Karen Alexander, "La Haine," *Vertigo* 1, no. 5 (Autumn/Winter 1995), https://www.closeupfilmcentre.com/vertigo_magazine/volume-1-issue-5-autumn-winter-1995/the-children-of-godard-and-90s-tv/.
6. In recent decades, immigration from the former colonies to the metropole has dramatically altered France's demographic makeup. However, long-standing federal laws prohibit the French census from asking questions about racial or ethnic identity, and as a result the precise makeup of France's population is unknown. Because the state is officially "color-blind," French authorities use euphemisms like "visible minorities" to discuss the country's Black and Brown immigrants and citizens. People with roots in the Mehgrebi countries of Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Libya are widely thought to make up France's largest minority. Crystal Marie Fleming, *Resurrecting Slavery: Racial Legacies and White Supremacy in France* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2017), 9-11.
7. On recent activism challenging past and present racism in France, see Fleming, Ibid., and Charles Tshimanga, Didier Gondola, and Peter J. Bloom, eds. *Frenchness and the African Diaspora: Identity and Uprising in Contemporary France* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).
8. Police *bauvres* have become a political flashpoint, and new incidents often trigger demonstrations and violence. In

2005, a particularly widespread and intense series of uprisings sparked a nationwide reckoning. On the uprisings and their aftermath, see Tshimanga, Gondola, and Bloom, eds., *Frenchness and the African Diaspora.*

9. Ginette Vincendeau, *La Haine*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 20.

10. Cited in Ibid, 88.

11. Vincendeau, "Designs on the Banlieue," in Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau *French Film: Texts and Contexts* 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2000), 313.

12. *Ibid*, 316.

13. Jay-Z, *Decoded* (New York: Spiegel & Grau), 55.

14. Will Higbee, *Mathieu Kassovitz* (New York: Manchester University Press), 32. Higbee's book remains the most thorough discussion of hip-hop's importance within Kassovitz's early films.

15. Eric Hynes, "Center of Gravity," *Film Comment* (November-December 2016), 29.

16. On first appearance, the joke describes a falling homme [man]. By the film's end, the figure falling has become *une société*.

17. Claire Vassé, "*La Haine*, un regard metisse," *Positif* 412 (June): 6–7.

18. Monge was a pioneer Steadicam operator, trained by the rig's inventor, Garrett Brown. After Monge's death in 2017, Brown and many other prominent camera operators contributed eulogies to a professional tribute. "The International Community pays its respects to Jacques Monge," French Association of Directors of Photography. http://www.afcinema.com/The-International-Community-pays-its-respects-to-Jacques-Monge.html.

19. Eric Hynes, "Center of Gravity," *Film Comment* (November-December 2016): 29.

20. Paul Gilroy, "Living Memory: An Interview with Toni Morrison," in Paul Gilroy, *Small Acts* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1993), 175–182.

21. See, for example, Higbee, *Mathieu Kassovitz*, 7–11.

22. Ruth Doughty and Kate Griffiths, "Racial Reflection: *La Haine* and the Art of Borrowing," *Studies in European Cinema* 3, no. 2 (2006): 122–23.

23. Vincendeau, *La Haine*, 74.

24. Excellent ethnographic studies include Joseph G. Schloss, *Making Beats: The Art of Sample Based Hip-Hop* (Middletown, CN: Wesleyan University Press, 2004); Joseph G. Schoss, *Foundation: B-boys, B-girls, and Hip-hop Culture in New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); and Joe Austin, *Taking the Train: How Graffiti Art Became an Urban Crisis in New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

25. Justin A. Williams, "Theoretical Approaches to Quotation in Hip-Hop Recordings," *Contemporary Music Review* 33, no. 2 (2014): 203.

26. *BaadAsssss Cinema*, directed by Isaac Julien (2002; Los Angeles: Docurama, 2003), DVD.

27. I am indebted to my students Kiralfy Kennion and Terrell Barlow for pointing out this parallel.

28. Serge Lacasse, "Intertextuality and Hypertextuality in Recorded Popular Music," ed. Michael Talbot, *The Musical Work: Reality or Invention?* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press), 35–58.

29. Producers often label this technique "interpellation."

30. For a good reading of this motif see Higbee, *Mathieu Kassovitz,* 50.

31. The interview originally appeared in *Positif* (1995), by Thomas Bourguignon and Yann Tobin, 412 (June): 4–13. Translation by Higbee, *Mathieu Kassovitz,* 77.

32. Regarding *Illmatic*'s impact in France, see Brice Miclet, "Pourquoi *Illmatic* de Nas est l'album de rap le plus commémoré de l'histoire," *Slate*, 06.08.2014. http://www.slate.fr/story/90467/illmatic-nas-album-rap-anniversaire.

33. James Braxton Peterson, "It's Yours," in *Born to Use Mics: Reading Nas's Illmatic,* eds. Michael Eric Dyson and Sohail Daulatzai (New York: Basic Civitas, 2010).

34. Nas, *Illmatic*, Columbia CK 57684, 1994, CD.

35. Peterson, "It's Yours," 78.