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Reframing Difference: 'Beur' and 'banlieue' Film-Making in
France (review)

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(Review)

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most resonant question of the book is a measure of its significance, and also of its intellectual strength and honesty.

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Reframing Difference: 'Beur' and 'banlieue' Film-Making in France. By CARRIE TARR. Manchester – New York, Manchester University Press, 2005. ix + 230 pp. Pb £15.99.

Films made by second-generation immigrants of Maghrebi descent — 'beurs' — and about the problems endemic to the *banlieue* have been the focus of much interest over the past twenty or so years, and the recent outbreaks of rioting have shown that a decade after Kassovitz's *La Haine* their relevance is as great as ever. Tarr presents the first book-length survey of this important corpus in either English or French, and her volume is an admirably thorough and well-researched overview, demonstrating a good grasp of film theory, French social and political history, and gender issues that will make it of interest to those working in a variety of fields. 'The fault lines in the universalist discourses of French Republicanism' (p. 1) become plain in a variety of ways, through the films' diverse ways of negotiating space as well as through their articulation of memory, gender and history. The unavailability of many of the films in English-speaking countries, frustrating though it inevitably is, is to some extent palliated by lucid plot-summaries and analyses along with a judicious choice of illustrations. From time to time there may be a sense that the author is 'ticking boxes' or awarding marks to films on the basis of their ideological acceptability. Thus, while Chibane's *Hexagone* does much to 'engage pleasurably with a *beur* audience' (p. 60), it also receives a mild rap over the knuckles for failing to 'problematise the dominant culture's construction of French national identity' (p. 61). This is perhaps an inevitable consequence of, on the one hand, the fact that the essays that go to make up the volume were written, and sometimes previously published, separately, thereby requiring separate individual conclusions, and on the other, the problems inevitably associated with so ideologically fraught an area as Tarr is tackling. It is unfortunate that the lay-out of the filmography is periodically marred by glitches, but this is a minor criticism of a book that will certainly become a standard resource in its field and could indeed profitably find a French publisher.

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Montreal-Glasgow. Edited by BILL MARSHALL. University of Glasgow French and German Publications, 2005. xiv + 262 pp. Pb £15.00.

This well-edited volume deals with the culture (in the broadest sense) of two great cities and is divided into several sections: Architecture, History, Literature, Theatre, Film and Television, and Exchanges. The approach is largely but not exclusively comparative. Holly Kinnear shows how personalities involved with both cities were responsible for the impact made on their urban landscapes by the