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| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Intercultural Encounters in Colonial North Africa: the Unmorphed Imagery of Colonial Cinema, the Narratives of Legitimatization, and the Inchoate Politics of Broken Subjectivities

Khalid El Aatefi
Assistant Professor, English Department, Faculty of Languages, Letters, & Arts, Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra, Morocco
Corresponding Author: Khalid El Aatefi, **E-mail**: khalid.elaatefi@uit.ac.ma

| ABSTRACT
The representational politics of European colonial cinema was effectively decisive in shaping the values and ideologies of the articulated discourse of colonialism in representing cultural encounters and racial differences. This article attempts to analyse and explore how the colonial cinema of the early twentieth century produced a biased politics of representation and persistent modes of constructing North Africans within the confines of an orientalising colonial imaginary that turns cultural encounters into a display of power and superiority. It addresses the ways cinematic representation of North Africans accentuates the homogenising discourse of domination, the legitimization of conquest and the articulation of intercultural encounters on a stereotypical and judgmental basis. While a part of this cinema kept (re)visiting the same classical tropes of exoticism and racial inferiority of the native cultures, favouring the stereotypical portrayals and racial prejudices of "others" that blatantly rest on the "us and them" dichotomy, the other part tried to introduce a sort of paradigm shift that complicates the unquestionable presence of colons in North Africa and interrogates the parameters of their colonial identity. This article argues that colonial cinema of the 1930S has introduced a range of Western protagonists and colons with complex forms of identifications, questionable moral consciousness, and conflicted colonial subjectivities.

| KEYWORDS

Colonial cinema, legitimization, intercultural encounters, subjectivities, exile, rescue

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Cinema as a form of expression has contributed substantially to the visualization of foreign cultures, geographies and people. Like the photography of the nineteenth century, European cinema of the late 19th and early 20th century played a decisive role in shaping African "realities", recording exotic landscapes and visually remarking tropes of borders between cultures and communities. By conceptualizing African "otherness", colonial cinema used the heritage of colonial photography, visualizing and recounting colonial stories within the confines of the geographical discourse of alterity. Under the imperial gaze of colonial cinema, pioneer orientalist films openly reinforced the process of imperial expansion, where the cinematographic experience contributed substantially to the promotion of colonial propaganda, legitimatization of invasion, and celebration of colonial achievements overseas. The film, as a colonial medium, was not only meant to represent the native reality and transfuse it to the screen for popular consumption and entertainment, but it also provided a step forward in mapping the ground for smooth invasion and annexation of foreign lands many years before colonization took place. European cinema, particularly the French, has contributed to the containment and indoctrination of native people, persuading them with the civilizing nature of colonization and its "good faith" within a historical context when great Western powers were in a frenzy race and clamber for empire.

"Cinema colonial" did not only use propaganda but played an effective role in leading the "native masses astray" by initializing a rupture in their homogeneous identity and carving out a ground of trust towards identification and fascination with the culture of the colonizer (Jaidi, 2001, 24). Prospectively, cinema was seen as an ideological medium that reproduced an overt "colonial unconscious" intended to achieve the consensus of the natives and to represent a morally correct 'civilizing mission' that looked like saving the colonized countries from backwardness and 'cultural inferiority'. In addition, British and French colonial cinemas played a substantial part in strengthening imperial allegories to demonstrate their alleged cultural "superiority" and rationality in comparison to the so-called colonized cultural 'inferiority', which have been a soft mapping of dominance to facilitate Western colonial enterprise. However, the cinema of the 1930s has made a shift in its tropes of representation by getting away from the exorcist traditions of superiority and by introducing marginal protagonists and colons with broken subjectivities, transgressive and in conflict with the values of bourgeois perfection.

2. Interfacing Narratives of Propaganda, Politicized Tropes of Unmorphed Exoticism and Gendered Topographies of Redemption

Cinema went hand in hand with the European colonialism of North Africa because the latter served the imperial assumption and the ideology of the colonial forces as a means of legitimatization of expansion in a similar tone to that of the Nazis and the Soviets (Jaidi, 2001, 10). Visions of North Africa from the "superior" gaze of European cinema effectively offered a representation of colonial territories in colonial visual projects called "actualities", which sponsored and produced both fictional and documentary films. This genre of productions, which was financed by colonial administrations, had the significance of documenting colonial achievements and administrative decisions. Thus, "the task of attracting a mass audience and financial backing was complicated by an urgent need for logistical support. French authorities in the Maghreb provided such support but extracted a price, influencing content and manipulating the message, reflecting the worldview and mind-set of Europeans, colonial and metropolitan". (Salvin, 2005, 5) As an ideological apparatus, the voyeuristic rhetoric of European cinema has brought Africa 'primitive' and 'savage' to a thirsty metropolitan audience by constructing narratives of wilderness, primordial customs and unfamiliar religious rituals. Most films portrayed natives in their immutable or unmorphed state as slothful, savage, exotic, primitive, enslavable and, sometimes, resistant. Yet, when colonial cinema assumed objectivity and leant on a positive attitude towards the colonized, he/she was pictured this way: "If there was a 'good' African in the film, he was defined by the characteristics admired in servants: honesty, courage, submission and unflagging loyalty." (Murphy, 2000, 247).

The geographical imperative of early twentieth-century cinema has embraced a gendered discourse of primitive North African geographies as virgin lands and barren landscapes, waiting for fertilization and fecundation of western masculinist colonization to save it from "waste" and bringing it back to life from an imposed death. This gendered trope of male European symbolic cultivation of native lands has constituted a dominant essentialist European narrative of colonial penetration and "engendering of civilization", which ideologically fused both the divine right of Christian Europe to civilize the "other" and enacted a possession of what the European called *Terra Incognita*. This metaphor or trope is what Ella Shohat calls *Prospero Complex*:

The revivication of wasted soil evokes a quasi-divine process of endowing life and exnihilo, of bringing order from chaos, plenitude from lack. Indeed, the west's "Prospero complex" is premised on an East/ South portrayed as Prospero's isle, seen as the site of super imposed lacks calling for Western transformation of primeval matter. The engendering of "civilization, then, is clearly phallo-centric, not unlike mythical woman's birth from Adam's rib" (Shohat, 1997, 21).

Ella Shohat prioritizes the role of sexual difference in the construction of both colonial tropes and discourses. North Africa has always been a source of sexually manipulative metaphors in Western cinema and a location of permissive human delight, reflecting both European desires and fears of racial difference. Both D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1934) and Cecil. B de Mille's *Cleopatra* (1916) (Shohat, 1997, 24) represents the Orient as degenerate ancient corporal pleasure with visual scenes, decors and architecture that bear a resemblance to the paraphilia of Eugene Delacroix's *Femmes d'Algiers*, its parading odalisques and nostalgic colonial postcards. The figure of Cleopatra as a feminized and archaic Orient/ Egypt/ North Africa was focalized by the extensive exploitation of oriental architecture and writing like captivating yet exotic Hieroglyph and Hebrew scripts. Henceforth, the Orient was allegorized as a bazar of culture or time that brings to the screen a colorist ethnographic authority of colonialist discourse; a quest for ancient civilization and antiquity by celebrating the role of masculinist Western colonization engaged in rescuing other cultures that were on the edge of perdition or extinction:

> The cinematic Orient, then, is best epitomized by the iconography of papyruses, sphinxes, and mummies, whose existence and revival depend on the "look" and "reading" of the Westerner. This rescue of the past, in other words, suppresses the voice of the present and thus legitimates by default the availability of the space of the orient for the geographical maneuvers of the Western power. (Shohat, 1997, 26).

In addition to the fact that colonial myths subsume the imperial agendas of conquering the frontier and dominance over waste lands, the Western cinematic use of science/ technology had the echoes of the "last frontier" as feminized geography being explored by the powerful male penetration of feminized "terra incognita". It used many techniques that structure scenes and camera shots that equate the female body to that of a geography that needed a complete grasp and comprehension in order to be fully possessed, cultivated and civilized. Ella Shohat comments that "the genealogy and the topography of the land, then, are explicitly sexualized to resemble the physiology of female" (Shohat, 1997, 29). The concepts of scientific discourse and capitalistic exploration in Western colonial consciousness, which started as early as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe,* Joseph Conrad*'s Heart of Darkness (1899) and E. M. Forster's A Passage to India (1924),* were sort of narratives that launched a map-based adventure and treasure hunt backed up by the western archaeological knowledge and topography, which claimed the appropriation of empty lands, oceans and islands discovered by western pioneers (Shohat, 1997, 28).

In addition, the visualization of North Africa and the Orient in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century European cinema has fashioned an aesthetic of representation that is based on a Manichean notion of juxtaposing the dominant European self that embodies qualities of good and moral triumph with the native 'other' as evil, uncivilized, savage and easily defeated. One of the most dominant practices of colonial cinema is its overuse of clichés and stereotypes that asymmetrically structures the encounters between the European and the native around a discourse that falsifies reality to justify conquest and to enhance its cultural hegemony. Dina Sherzer argues that colonial films:

> Displayed the heroism of the French men, along with stereotypical images of desert, dunes, and camels, and reinforced the idea that the Other is dangerous. They did not present the colonial experience, did not attach importance to colonial issues, and were amazingly silent on what happened in reality. They contributed to the colonial spirit and temperament of conquest and to the construction of White identity and hegemony. (1996, 4).

European cinema has relied on an exotic parade of unknown cultures, which persuades Western audiences to identity with the biased gaze of the Western camera that renders whole cultural traits and social codes into a mere spectacle devoid of history and consciousness. Basing his notion of behaviorism in cinema Image-Act of Deleuze, Merlopontey argues that cinema does not enlighten or give us ideas but changes/influences our behavior in looking up to the conduct of the protagonist as a model; that is why audiences are persuaded to reproduce the same visual content, gestures and stereotypes of the dominant character. If Walter Benjamin states that cinema emancipates people from critical thinking and shocks/fascinates him with the deceptive motion of the image, theorists of the Frankfurt school of phenomenological criticism like Amedie Aver sees cinema either as a mean of propaganda for the dominant ideology or as sensual content addressing audience desires, focusing on eroticism and distracting his concentration (Ahmed, 2011, 148).

Serving the propagandist agenda of the dominant ideology, European cinema, as a colonial mechanism, has reproduced almost the same 'truths' of early orientalist literature and interweaved the claims of archeology and anthropology to turn non-western geographies to minimized /reduced identifications such as Africa as a dark continent, a dessert or obscurity. This topographical reductionism and metaphors in European cinematic traditions erected the image of foreign places as the anti-thesis of Europe, being associated with barrenness, primitiveness and wilderness, while the West is represented as redemption, exploration and masculine production. This unveiling of non-western cultures is not only limited to the unveiling of oriental females and their liberation but also symbolizes the masculinist power of re-appropriation of an ancient heritage through recovering the suppressed. The hidden past of Pharaonic and Babylonian civilizations is possessed by its real owner, not only by rescuing it but also by restoring it to the real owner:

> Not only the Western imagery metaphorically rendered the colonized land as a female be saved from the environ/mental disorder, but it has also projected a rather more literal narrative of rescues of Western and non-western women from Africa, Arab or Native American men. The figure of the Arab assassin/ rapist, like that of the African Cannibal, helps produce the narrative and the ideological role of the Western liberator as integral to the colonial rescue fantasy (Shohat, 1997, 39).
>
> Tropes of exoticism and eroticism, which have overwhelmingly dominated the visual discourse of the European cinema and remained unchanging and unmorphed for centuries, were adopted to allegorize the relationship between the center and the periphery that unconsciously underpinned the West's ambivalent substructures of attraction and repulsion /otherness. Most films associate North Africa and its people with an array of traditional jewelries, furniture, architecture

> and folklore. Moreover, when the native is granted a sense of authenticity, he/ she is allowed to appear in "illegible crowds or rendered tolerable only on the folkloric level" (Shohat, 1997, 48).

Natives were also subject to imperial imaginary and visual fantasies of sexual eroticization through filmic practices of associating Orientals with eroticized belly dancing, nudity and rape. Harem or harem's complex, as Prospero Complex, featured a typical European obsession with the intimate life of people, particularly the female. The topoi have stirred the visions of sexual fantasies among many writers, colonizers and filmmakers, most of whom aligned with the dominant discourses of colonialism, which recurrently envisioned the harem as a site of male domination and a nest of female oppression. Although the voyeuristic gaze of Western cinema resided on eroticizing female gestures:

> The camera's omnipresent and mobile gaze… embodies the overarching look of the absent present master that is of both directors/ producers and, vicariously, the spectator. The production members tend to exclude the male presence but all for the fantasies of the spectator, positioning his/ her gaze as that of a despot entertained by a plurality of females (Shohat, 1997, 52).

3. Colonial Cinema: the Continuity of Gendered Rescue Fantasies and the Pedagogical Archeology of Western Knowledge

The European "Cinema Coloniale" was built on an orientalist metropolitan self and peripheral "other" through a spatial and symbolic representation of the familiar and the strange, the civilized and the uncivilized. Exoticism has as well constituted a distinctive trait of European films, which consciously relied on norms of superiority to display to a thirsty audience a faraway North Africa, unfamiliar and savage. The construction of this superiority may take different forms and serve the intended political content of each film. It can reinforce the subordination of native cultures and people to glorify Western values and male power. It can also take the form of bringing knowledge and civilization to the colonies to save them from darkness, 'cultural inferiority' and political misgovernment.

Tripolii Bel Suol d'Amoure (1951) by Forruccio Cerio represents an exoticist piece of art that celebrates the Italian colonization of Libya. The credit sequence takes place in an Italian cafe before the Italian troops move to Tripoli. The scenery is simulacra of a harem with women slaves and dancers with oriental complexion being beaten by dark-skinned men, alluding to the alleged oppression and mistreatment of women in North African colonies (Amodeo, 2009, 171). The Italian soldiers in the concert were dancing and singing propagandist war songs and victorious chanting, which praised the invasion of Libya. "Beautiful soil of love" or "enchanted Tripoli" is a romanticized representation of conquest that brought Libya under the hold of colonization. The film creates a stark juxtaposition between the masculine Italian colonizer and the effeminate Libyan soldiers, who are dressed in female-like uniforms, reflecting a stereotypical binary (mis)representation of the powerful or courageous colonizer and the cowardly or submissive colonized (Amodeo, 2009, 172). (This is obvious in the scene where the protagonist Alberto displays an unquestionable sense of alpha masculinity after entering a fight in the presence of his girlfriend). The exotic dance show and musical lightheartedness are representatives of the celebration of Italian superiority and the glorification of colonial victories in North Africa. Thus, "The colonial discourse and the colonial imagery in this film are clearly interwoven with issues of gender. The images of Africa that this movie produces are highly exoticized" (Amodeo, 2009, 170)

This superior male discourse of the colonizer who saves the natives constitutes the political import of Gabriel Pascal's *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1945). In a majestic splendor and exotic appeal, this movie represents an essentializing moral politics of British imperialism and resonates with the pedagogical trope of the colonial project that legitimatizes conquest under the claim of civilizing native people and bringing political knowledge or wisdom to them. The narrative is imbedded in sexually and culturally biased discourse, which questions Cleopatra's ability to govern because, as a woman and non-European, she lacks the political maturity of a real governor. When Caesar came to Egypt in the pursuit of his rival, Pompey, a Roman general, found Egypt governed by children (Hamer,1997, 274) (Ptolemy, the king, and his sister (Cleopatra). As a result, Caesar's mission or role is to politically educate Cleopatra and teach her the principles of government. In other words, as a wise and benevolent Westerner, he tries to save her from ignorance and enable her to assume the status of the queen as it is perceived by Western knowledge, but she is unable to fathom his political guidance despite his paternal generosity. Thus, "the meeting between Caesar and Cleopatra offered a moment where a wise and skeptical man had a chance to educate an ignorant girl, that is, to transform her by sharing what he himself had learned" (Hamer,1997, 275). Through the forced prisms of ethnicity and femininity, Oriental men and women are constructed in a stark juxtaposition or antithesis to the Western wisdom, the (witty) discourse of political power and cultural superiority, which always seeks not only the rescue of cultural and racial difference but also dreams of brighter visions of humanity from the perspective Western arche. In a broader sense, this imported form of political knowledge and discursive pedagogy that structure the relationship between Caesar and Cleopatra, Rome and Egypt, the West and the East and his instruction or knowledge will rescue Cleopatra from the obscurantism and ignorance of her culture (Hamer,1997, 277). Italian and British films like Forruccio Cerio's *Beautiful Soil of Love* (1951), Gabriel Pascal's *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1945), Enrico Cappellini's *La Via del Sud* (1953), Zoltan Korda's *The Drum* (1938) still uses that far-off in time and a lingering discourse of racial difference to confirm native people's

inability to govern themselves and achieve any economic, cultural or political progress without the help and the guidance of the colonizer. To praise the colonial 'civilizing projects' or to meet the exotic tendencies of audiences back home, these films tried to highlight the folkloric and ethnographic aspects of the native cultures and people that are either portrayed as timeless identities or having no influence on their environment.

4. Going Native as an Inevitable Exile: **the Romanticized Construction of Exile between Asymmetrical Intercultural Encounters and Haunting Memories of Nostalgia**

La Bandera (*the Regiment*), a film by Julien Duvivier 1935, is the story of French expatriate, Gilieth in Spanish colonial Morocco, the Rif region. The film represents one of the most exotic movies of colonial cinema and represents one of many stories of an imposed sense of going native in the colonial cinema of the early twentieth century. It traces the fate of a French protagonist, Gilieth, who has been chased by French authorities from Paris to Barcelona to the Rif Mountains in Morocco because of a criminal past (killed a man in France) to end up working there in a Spanish foreign legion. Pierre Gilieth represents the classical theme of refuge, exile and integration (going native) in an alternative environment, where he gets married to a native Aicha, whom he met in a brothel, falls in love and married. For Gilieth, North Africa is both a refuge and protection from his past and exile that entraps him with melancholy and nostalgia for lost time. As a result, France was "physically inaccessible and forbidden, while remaining mentally present during time spent in a new location shown to be starkly different from the one left behind" (Kennedy –Karpat, 2011, 43). Although the film was appreciated for its technical mastery, it represents the ungovernable flow of exotic images, landscapes and tropes that underlie the ideological structures of orientalist discourse. The eroticized image of Anabella delivered a striking message of a low-life harlot who learned French perfectly because of the countless French soldiers whom she had sex with. This sexual confrontation with difference encoded both in exotic and mythical connotations is governed by the eroticized and exoticized discourse of the French colonial vision of North Africa:

> *La Bandera* figures North Africa (Morocco) as a lawless, anonymous zone but as a female body whose contours are veiled, by something larger than law, something like fate, traps those who think to race across its sands or hide in its unstoppable redoubts…this eroticized space, utterly mythological, nevertheless, appear authentic to the French (Dudley, 1997, 234).

Besides the connotative content of North Africa as mysterious dark geography and fate-like entrapment, the film is structured to reveal other tropes like Aicha's loyalty to the French Legionnaire, Gilieth. Aicha symbolizes North Africa, as feminine, as colonizable geography: Conquerable and romantically submissive to European colonialism (Kennedy –Karpat, 2011, 45).

André Hugon 's *Le Marchand de sable* (1931) is a celebration of European civilization and the exoticist ideology of French colonial cinema. It is about the life of a young French lieutenant in Mission to Gharday, Algeria, and a Russian expatriate businessman, Warneskine, who lives suspiciously in a stigmatized polygamous family (Kennedy –Karpat, 2011, 91). Warneskine lives with his wife and two other Russian women after two of his brothers died in the Russian Revolution. He married the two widows and moved to live in North Africa with his Harem. The film is a romanticization of native people/culture in an exotic show of North African music and rituals. At the end of the film, Warneskine is killed by his male Russian servant, Igor, which discursively implies that Western culture does not tolerate cultural differences and "the strange" practices of ethnic otherness, as is the case with polygamy (Kennedy –Karpat, 2011, 98). Besides being the unquestionable locus of primordial rituals and exotic fantasies, the colonies are also constructed as a permissible geography of transgression and moral bankruptcy imported from the West by stigmatized Western nationals who are in a quest for something that is no longer functioning in their homelands for inexplicable reasons. The film equally associates North Africa as savage and antithetical to European civilization in a bare discourse of ethnic superiority and racial purity. Warneskine informs Varniere, the French lieutenant, that he has left Russia in search of a primitive quiet and simple life in North Africa. Warneskine says: "La civilization ! Ah ! je vous jure bien qu'elle n'a rien à expier aux excès cruels des peuplades sauvages" (Kennedy –Karpat, 2011, 95).

Like Aicha in *La Bandera*, Zinah in Rex Ingram's *Baroud/Love in Morocco* (1932), is in true love with André Duval, but her father (Si Allal) refuses this interracial romance because he arranged her marriage to si Amaro, a leader of violent local bandits, to promote peace between tribes. However, this political marriage fails because of Amaro's ill intent to declare war on their tribe (Kennedy – Karpat, 2011, 147). The film is structured on the colonialist stereotype of African politics as being weak, anarchous and dominated by chaos and rivalry between tribes. The film's inclusion of an interracial romance (Kennedy –Karpat, 2011, 147), recurrent topoi of the colonial cinema of the thirties, between the Moroccan Zinah and the French André, implicitly entails the impossibility of success because of the decadent patriarchal traditions of the native culture despite Zinah's true love to her colonial partner. *Baroud* blatantly essentializes the trope of rescue arrogated to the Western hero. As the narrative of colonial discourse, André is destined to liberate native women and save them from the disasters of tribal/native cultures that celebrate the value of arranged marriage. The film is also reminiscent of Lumiere Freres's Film *Giglos Muselmans* in terms of racial stereotypes of the funny black North Africa.

The funny black Moroccan servant of Zinah exhibits traits charged with sexually deviant behaviour and racially charged comedy or language.

In *Appeal du Silence* by Léon Poirier (1936), after working as a colonial legionnaire in North Africa, Charles de Foucauld returns to France, but he is unable to fit in, missing the quietude and simplicity of desert life in North Africa. Hence, he returned to North Africa, not as a colonial administrator, but as a civilian who wanted to live there after giving up his military career and working as a missionary alone in the desert. Although it represents a kind of counter-memory or nostalgia to homelands, the film is classified as overt pro-catholic and imperialist propaganda as it favors the symbolic hegemony of colonialism through the teachings of the Christian faith. The film openly features the protagonist as showing no regret or nostalgia to leave France forever as the antithesis of other heroes in the colonial cinema of the 1930s, like *Pepé in Pepi le Mokko* and Gilieth in *La Bandera* (Kennedy –Karpat, 2011, 147). The prevailing discourse of the film represents a convergence between the Christian church and cinema in the pacification of North Africans, which insists on the stretching of the French colonial borders and the creation of territory that goes further to catch up with the imperial horizon. *Appeal du silence* is a "work of art of highest moral and spiritual standards concerning a pioneer of French colonization in North Africa"(Kennedy –Karpat, 2011, 147).

Offering both refuge and protection, North Arica as feminine geography still allegorizes tropes of a place being saved and a woman adopted from slavery; yet, they are the only escape and compensation for his lost homelands in asymmetrical parameters of geographical encounters and intercultural romances. This romanticization of exile in the stories of André and Zinah and Gilieth and Aich does not only construct North Africa as colonizable territory, but it also represents a quest for recompensation for inaccessible lost homelands and reconciliation with the self with permissible conduct. Although living as an expatriate and fugitive, the Western protagonist seems to control encounters with others and asymmetrically assume superiority and excellence over them thanks to the overt imbalance of power and despite his status as an outlaw and entrapped loss and nostalgia for his lost time. This sense of 'going native' through the romances between colons and natives reveals the Western protagonist' status in exile is only achieved through a romanticized imbalance of encounters and power relations.

5. Colonial North Africa as Labyrinthine Amorphousness: the Impenetrable Dichotomies of Space, the Unachievable Fantasies of Escape and the Narratives of Broken Masculine Subjectivities

Pepe Le Moko is another film by Julien Duvivier starring the same actor, Gabin, in the lead role of Pepe. Like Gilieth in *La Bandera*, Pepe is a French outlaw who escaped his criminal past in 1930s France to settle down in the impenetrable Casbah in Algeirs, which provides him with immunity from colonial police, which is unadminstrable for them as well. Pepe is always contrasted with Salmane, a native inspector, who is represented as double-faced Arab and has little solidarity with his fellow Arabs (Morgan, 1997, 258). Salmane is both accepted in the Casbah and tolerated by the colonial administrator for his special services. The relationship between Pépé and Salmane is characterized by mutual attraction and repulsion, admiration and scorn. While Pepe is represented as a masculine centre, Salmane is strangely presented as a feminized periphery. The camera shots Pepe as holding a central or higher position, while Salmane is presented in a subordinate position, for example, lighting a cigarette for Pepe, which symbolizes a sort of repressed sexuality (Morgan, 1997, 259). This is a persistent trait of cinèma coloniale, where native protagonists are not only marginalized but minimized by the force of mise-en-scene. Extreme close-up shots of the camera focalize the superiority and the domination of white characters in contrast to the inferiority and the subordination of native protagonists, who are conjured up as crowds and chaos. When extreme close-up shots focalize individual natives, they are meant to define them as anti-thesis or in juxtaposition to the positive qualities of white characters in a structure of what Abdelkader Ben Ali calls "fausse individualization" against true "individualization". Of course, "fausse individualization" intentionally reproduces negative connotations of threats, mistrust and fears (Ben Ali, 1998, 149-150).

Pepe is always announced clearly in his positive taste for women –either in the presence of the native Ines or the French Gaby, while Slimane is always associated with a negative warning "On t'aime trop, Pépé, les femmes to perdent" (Morgan, 1997, 259). Pepe's relationship with the native Gipsy Ines and the French Gaby has two different tones. The Gipsy represents both his shelter from the past /reality and his confinement in the Casbah "Deux ans de Casbah, deux ans que je suis avec toi… Tu es pas une femme, t'es un régime," (Morgan, 1997, 262). Gaby, with her pearly whiteness, Jewels and perfumes, symbolizes the glittering of lost homeland and a promise of escape from exile. Gaby and Ines dissimilarly embody a spatial dichotomy that influences the identity of the male protagonist, who is torn between the representativeness of women as Algiers and Paris, the present and the past. Pepé represents neither here-nor-here existence, entrapped in the counters of lost past, its unachievable 'revenance', and a fantasized escape dysfunctioned by misreading the symbolic and cultural coordinates of a territory that eludes the tactics of power and control. Metaphorically, Ines stands for fear of cultural dissolution of European male feminized geography of oriental woman and culture. Gaby, however, represents a fear of the sexual male ego in the geography of the female body (Morgan, 1997, 263). Deborah Linderman states that *Pepe Le Moko* constitutes a bare example of orientalist discourse as "it is a will to power, and an intention to control, manipulate, and finally incorporate a world which is manifestly different, alternative, or novel, and which is implicitly

resistant" (Linderman, as cited in Morgan, 1997, 268). The Kasbah also allegorizes the spatial demarcation between the colonizer and the colonized. Colonial films reproduce the physical and symbolic divide between the natives and Europeans in terms of locations, cultural forms, roles and activities to juxtapose connotations of difference, superiority, inferiority, familiarity, dissimilarity, accessibility, and inaccessibility. While the Kasbah or the old medina reflect the tropes of contamination, inaccessibility and criminality, the new colonial city is the antithesis of misery, disorder and 'crouch-ness':

> The zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. The two zones are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity. Obedient to the rules of pure Aristotelian logic, they both follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity … The settler's town is a well-fed town, an easygoing town; its belly is always full of good things. The settler's town is a town of white people, of foreigners … The native town is a crouching village, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire. It is a town of niggers and dirty Arabs … (Franz Fanon, 1967, 30).

However, the Kasbah features a different form of spatial metaphor, where its identity represents a labyrinth or maze that escapes submission to colonial authorities' desire to decipher and control the native space. Its inaccessibility and amorphousness complicate the dominant gaze of the dominant force and resist the expansionist ideology of the colonizer. It connotes an immunity/disguise for fugitives and freedom fighters as well as a safe refuge for the miserable and the outcast. It represents a space of loss and a state of incompleteness that resist acquisition and taming because of its divergent levels of amorphousness and complexity.

The film highlights the entrapment of the white working class European male hero by the counters of sexual, cultural and racial differences. Like many protagonists of other movies in the thirties, which configured the start of the desolation of colonial consciousness as a part of a mounting discourse of incipient subjectivities, Pepe represents that inchoate identity of a colon entrapped in unhappy fates and tragedies, broken, incomplete fragmented and on the edge of collapse, allegorizing the great fall of the empire. A nascent narrative of complexity started determining the identity of Western protagonists and the dissolution of their agencies in the French cinema of the thirties, reinforcing an aesthetics of unbecoming or a process of regression that incepted the preliminary signs of the demise of colonial certainties. Warneskine, the main protagonist, is murdered by Igor, his Russian male servant in Hugon André 's *Le Marchand de sable* (1931); rich tourists are killed by other French tourists for their money in Julien Duvivier *Les Cinq gentalmen maudits* (1931), and Jacques Feyder's *le Grand jeu* (1934) focalizes the destructive despair and alcohol-induced madness of Pierre Muller. Pepe also decides to commit suicide after being caught, not because of a lack of cultural knowledge or intelligence but because of cultural compliance between the Arab police and femininity (Ines helped the police to find Pepe). (Morgan, 1997, 267). Many films of the 1930s were predominated by the question of cultural difference and exotic romance, which shows indigenous woman's love for European colonizers. They defend their true love by challenging traditions, religion and patriarchy, as the case of Aicha and laurency in *Le Semon*, Zinah and André in *La Marchand des Sable*, Gilieth and Aicha in *La Bandera*. Equally, colonial cinema has presented European protagonists with preferential status. The protagonist is the most active, superior and outstanding among those who surround him (*La Bandera, Pépé le Moko*):

> Place au sein d'une groupe d'homme divers, mais toujours inferieurs a lui. Gabin est à la fois l'exception de ce groupe et son condensé. Alors que ses amis on complice sont unidimensionnels, il est complexe: chacun d'entre eux est porteur d'une valeur traditionnellement codée comme masculine (force physique) autorité pouvoir sur les femmes, sagesse) tandis qu'il les amalgame toutes. (Vincendeau, as cited in Morgan, 1997, 268)

6. Conclusion

Governed by cultural and ideological order, colonial cinema granted itself the divine right to justify the colonial presence in North Africa and glorify the moral mission of civilizing the world. While some movies remained faithful to the classical paradigms of exoticism and racial difference by reinforcing persistent stereotypical portrayals and racial prejudices that are closely tied up to the ideology of the "us and them", others tried to feature the complex presence of colons in North Africa by questioning their traditional metropolitan identity. An inchoate or incipient discourse found its way to the colonial consciousness of this cinema. A discourse that heralded the gradual waning of colonialism in the wake of liberation wars in the colonies and the ongoing sensitivities and divides among imperial powers between the two great wars. This shift in the classical consciousness of colonial discourse that spread over decades has introduced a different representation of cultural difference, questioning of metropolitan bourgeois values and unfamiliar forms of identifications.

However, colonial cinema of the thirties has brought to the screen Western protagonists with conflicted identities, questionable consciousness and transgressive practices. At the beginning of the twentieth century, French colonial films like *La Bandera*, *Pépé Le Moko*, La Bandera, *le Grand jeu* by Jacques Feyder, *Cinq gentlemen maudits* focus on representing European protagonists in unfavorable tone, in conflict with the mainstream bourgeois norms and at odds with the classical exoticist traditions. No longer able to stay loyal to the traditional assumptions of perfection and reflect the absolute truth of the European colonial identity, these films presented a range of marginal Western protagonists with criminal conduct, anti-social behavior and transgressive politics (like murder, alcohol-induced madness and robbery). In addition to losing their preferential status and being entrapped in haunting nostalgias, many films end up with unhappy fates of Western protagonists like suicide (*Pépé Le Moko*) and funerals (*La Bandera*) [O'Brian, 1991:220-221].

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Author Biography: Khalid El Aatefi is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Languages, Letters, & Arts, Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra, Morocco.
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