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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Reimagining Gender and Nation in Androman: Patriarchal Hegemony and Alternative Masculinities in Moroccan Cinema

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## ABSTRACT

This article examines *Androman: De sang et de charbon* (2012), directed by Az El Arab Alaoui, as a critical intervention in Moroccan cinematic representations of gender, patriarchy, and national belonging. Set in a geographically and politically marginalized Amazigh village in the High Atlas Mountains, the film narrates the story of a young girl forced to live as a boy in order to survive within a rigid patriarchal system. Drawing on postcolonial theory, feminist and queer theory, masculinity studies, and spatial analysis, this study argues that *Androman* exposes the fragility of hegemonic masculinity and articulates alternative ethical forms of masculinity from the margins of the nation-state. Through close textual and visual analysis, the article positions the film as a postnational cinematic text that critiques domination while imagining new possibilities of gendered and national belonging within contemporary Moroccan cinema.

## KEYWORDS

Moroccan cinema; gender performativity; hegemonic masculinity; patriarchy; spatial marginality; national identity

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## 1. Introduction

Since its early efforts to produce locally grounded cinematic narratives, Moroccan cinema has consistently engaged with national, cultural, and political questions, particularly those surrounding gender relations, the construction of national identity, and the tension between tradition and modernity. Scholars have extensively examined how Moroccan films negotiate these concerns, especially through representations of women and shifting gender dynamics within a society situated between conservative cultural frameworks and the pressures of globalization (Armes, 2006; Martin, 2011; Orlando, 2009). Within this body of scholarship, cinema is understood not merely as a representational medium but as a critical site where social hierarchies, cultural norms, and ideological tensions are both reproduced and contested.

In recent decades, growing public and institutional attention to women's rights and gender equality in Morocco has encouraged filmmakers to address issues of gender discrimination, patriarchal authority, and social exclusion more directly. However, while many films explore women's experiences within patriarchal contexts, relatively few engage simultaneously with gender manipulation, psychological trauma, and national marginality with the level of complexity found in *Androman: De sang et de charbon* (Alaoui, 2012). Directed by Az El Arab Alaoui, the film offers a stark portrayal of an Amazigh village in the High Atlas Mountains, where geographical isolation, political neglect, and patriarchal control converge to shape everyday life.

*Androman* presents the story of a young girl forced by her father to conceal her biological sex and live as a boy in order to survive within a rigid patriarchal system. This imposed identity produces profound psychological and emotional consequences,

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revealing how gender functions not as a natural attribute but as a socially enforced survival strategy. Through this narrative of secrecy and coercion, the film interrogates patriarchal hegemony while exposing the ideological contradictions that sustain it. The father, depicted as psychologically unstable and emotionally fractured, emerges as a symbolic embodiment of a collapsing patriarchal order, one that is unable to adapt to shifting social realities and modern pressures.

Despite its critical resonance and festival circulation, scholarly engagement with *Androman* remains limited. Existing responses have largely taken the form of media reviews, festival commentaries, and informal essays that privilege symbolic interpretation or narrative summary over sustained theoretical analysis. In contrast to films such as *Adam* (Touzani, 2019) or *Razzia* (Ayouch, 2017), which have attracted significant attention in gender-oriented film studies, *Androman* has yet to receive comprehensive academic treatment. This absence reveals a notable gap in Moroccan film scholarship—particularly regarding rural spaces, alternative masculinities, and the intersection of gender politics with national abandonment—that this article seeks to address.

A close reading of the film reveals a deliberate juxtaposition between two competing models of masculinity. On one hand, the father and several male villagers embody a form of masculinity grounded in domination, silence, and repression. On the other hand, figures such as the shepherd and the *fqih* (religious scholar) represent alternative masculinities rooted in compassion, ethical responsibility, and resistance to violence. Their outsider status within the village creates a critical vantage point from which patriarchal authority and national narratives can be questioned. Through these characters, the film critiques dominant conceptions of masculinity that equate national belonging with military service while marginalizing voices from the geographical and political periphery.

This article argues that *Androman* redefines both gender and nationhood by foregrounding alternative forms of masculinity that challenge patriarchal norms and destabilize exclusionary nationalist discourses. Rather than reproducing rigid gender binaries, the film proposes a critical reimagining of gender as contingent, embodied, and shaped by socio-political conditions. Drawing on postcolonial theory, feminist and queer theory, masculinity studies, and spatial analysis, this study positions *Androman* as a pivotal cultural text that contributes to a more critical and inclusive discourse within Moroccan cinema, one that interrogates systems of domination while envisioning alternative modes of gendered and national belonging.

The article is structured into five interrelated sections. The first examines the village as a heterotopic space of political and spatial abandonment. The second analyzes the father's psychological instability as a manifestation of hegemonic masculinity under threat. The third explores *Androman*'s ambivalent embodiment as a challenge to binary models of gender performativity. The fourth focuses on moments of revelation and refusal as disruptions of patriarchal and national interpellation. The final section examines how the shepherd's refusal of military service articulates an alternative, ethical conception of patriotism. Together, these sections offer a layered analysis of how *Androman* reimagines power, identity, and resistance from the margins of Moroccan society.

## 2. Literature Review

Moroccan cinema has long reflected the country's political, cultural, and social transformations, functioning as an aesthetic space through which national identity has been negotiated in the aftermath of colonialism. Early filmmakers such as Ahmed Bouanani and Moumen Smihi played a pivotal role in developing a national cinematic language that foregrounded social realities, marginalized communities, and rural landscapes. Their work sought to disengage Moroccan cinema from colonial representational frameworks and to articulate indigenous perspectives rooted in local histories and cultural experiences. Contemporary films such as *Androman: De sang et de charbon* (Alaoui, 2012) extend this tradition by addressing questions of gender, spatial abandonment, and political exclusion within peripheral regions of the nation.

A substantial body of scholarship has examined gender dynamics in Moroccan cinema, with particular attention to the representation of women's bodies, the operation of the male gaze, and the spatial division between public and private spheres. Studies by Dwyer (2004) and Limbrick (2006) demonstrate how Moroccan filmmakers often stage the tension between modernity and tradition through gendered narratives, revealing the persistent conflict between patriarchal authority and female agency. Within this critical framework, cinema emerges as a contested terrain where gender relations, political power, and national identity are continuously negotiated and redefined.

The construction of female identity in Moroccan film has frequently been theorized as the product of intersecting forces, including patriarchal control, spatial confinement, and symbolic resistance. Fatima Mernissi's (1985) conceptualization of the harem as both a physical and psychological space of female segregation has proven particularly influential in feminist readings of Moroccan cultural production. Her work offers a framework for understanding how women's mobility and visibility are regulated

within both domestic and social spheres. In *Androman*, the enforced performance of masculinity operates as a survival mechanism within a community that associates femininity with dishonor and vulnerability, thereby extending Mernissi's insights into a rural and politically abandoned context.

Despite the film's thematic richness, academic engagement with *Androman* remains limited. To date, no peer-reviewed studies have been published that focus exclusively on the film. One notable scholarly intervention was delivered by Mostafa Rifaat (2025) in a university lecture at the Faculty of Letters in Kenitra, titled *Journeys into the Film Androman, of Blood and Coal*. Rifaat's analysis approached the film from a cultural and philosophical perspective, emphasizing its poetic symbolism and spatial aesthetics. While insightful, this contribution did not develop a sustained theoretical analysis of gender or masculinity within the film.

In addition to academic commentary, cultural critics and media outlets have offered interpretive responses to *Androman*. Abdeljabbar Zahir (2014), writing in Arabic for *Anfasse.info*, situates the film within the discourse of "deep Morocco," highlighting the tension between nature and culture in the High Atlas region. His reading foregrounds the film's engagement with rural ontology and marginal space, though it does not explore in depth the roles of the shepherd and the *fqih* as alternative masculine figures. Mainstream media reviews have similarly addressed the film's feminist dimensions and symbolic narrative. Al Jazeera (2012), for example, examined the film's portrayal of women's resistance in isolated patriarchal settings, while *Al Ghad* (2012) emphasized its critique of masculine dominance and social silencing. Coverage by *Bayane Al Yaoume* focused on the film's reception at the Tangier Film Festival and its innovative narrative form.

While these journalistic and cultural responses provide valuable insight into how *Androman* has been received within Moroccan intellectual and media circles, they remain largely descriptive and lack sustained theoretical engagement. To date, no comprehensive academic study has analyzed the film through an integrated framework drawing on postcolonial theory, feminist and queer theory, masculinity studies, or spatial analysis. This article addresses that gap by offering a theoretically grounded reading of *Androman* informed by the work of Foucault, Bhabha, Connell, Althusser, Law, Butler, and Ahmed. In doing so, it contributes an original perspective to Moroccan cinema studies and advances broader discussions on gender, space, nationhood, and identity in contemporary Moroccan film.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

This study analyzes *Androman: De sang et de charbon* (Alaoui, 2012) through an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that brings together postcolonial theory, feminist and queer theory, masculinity studies, and spatial analysis. Set in an isolated Amazigh village, the film narrates the story of a girl compelled by her father to live and perform as a boy in order to survive within a rigid patriarchal system. This narrative configuration offers a productive site for examining gender performance, national abandonment, and embodied resistance as they are articulated through cinematic form.

One of the principal challenges in analyzing *Androman* lies in the absence of a single theoretical model specifically designed to account for the film's intersection of gender manipulation, spatial alienation, and political marginality within Moroccan cinema. Given the scarcity of sustained academic engagement with the film, this research adopts an eclectic and integrative approach. Drawing on the work of Homi Bhabha, Judith Butler, Michel Foucault, R. W. Connell, Louis Althusser, Lisa Law, and Sara Ahmed, the study develops a flexible analytical framework capable of addressing the film's symbolic language, spatial logic, gendered embodiment, and national discourse.

#### ***3.1. Postcolonial Theory: Third Space and Ideological Interpellation***

Homi Bhabha's (1994) concept of the Third Space provides a crucial lens for understanding the tension between national authority and village-based patriarchal power in *Androman*. The Third Space is not merely a physical or geographical site but a zone of cultural negotiation where competing discourses—such as tradition and modernity, state law and customary authority—intersect and contest one another. In the film, this space emerges at the point where national narratives of citizenship and masculinity encounter the village's ritualized systems of gender control. Rather than resolving these tensions, the Third Space exposes their instability and contradiction.

This postcolonial reading is further enriched by Louis Althusser's (1971) theory of ideological interpellation. *Androman*'s enforced masculine identity can be understood as the result of a process through which the subject is "hailed" into a socially prescribed role. However, unlike classical Althusserian models that emphasize state ideology, the film depicts a localized, non-state form of interpellation rooted in tribal and patriarchal authority. This distinction allows the analysis to foreground how ideology operates in spaces marked by state absence, where traditional power structures assume regulatory functions.

### 3.2. Spatial Theory: Power, Surveillance, and Gendered Space

Spatial theory plays a central role in this analysis, particularly through the work of Foucault (1986) and Law (1997). Foucault's understanding of space as a medium of power informs the reading of the village as a heterotopic site—one that exists outside the normative structures of state governance yet remains deeply regulated by social surveillance and discipline. Although the village is geographically peripheral and politically neglected, it is far from unstructured; instead, it is governed by rigid gender norms that shape bodies, movements, and identities.

Lisa Law's analysis of gendered space complements this perspective by emphasizing that space is neither neutral nor passive. In *Androman*, the protagonist's movement through fields, caves, forests, and markets—while disguised as a boy—reveals how spatial access is gendered and policed. The moment of revelation, when Androman's femininity is exposed, renders her body "out of place," thereby exposing the territorial logic through which gender is enforced. Space, in this sense, actively participates in the production and regulation of gendered subjectivity.

### 3.3. Gender Performativity and Embodied Disobedience

Judith Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity offers a foundational framework for analyzing Androman's coerced masculinity. Butler conceptualizes gender not as an innate identity but as the effect of repeated acts that sediment into the appearance of naturalness. In the film, Androman's masculine identity is imposed through repetitive practices—clothing, labor, speech, and bodily comportment—that seek to stabilize her position within a patriarchal order. However, her eventual refusal to sustain this performance disrupts the performative chain, revealing the constructed nature of gender norms.

At the same time, the film exceeds a strictly Butlerian account of performativity. Androman's resistance is not articulated solely through discursive failure but through embodied awareness and affective refusal. Sara Ahmed's (2017) work deepens this reading by foregrounding how bodies orient themselves in space and how disorientation can become a site of feminist resistance. Ahmed's notion of the "feminist snap" captures the moment when a body can no longer endure the violence of normative expectations. In *Androman*, this snap manifests as an embodied withdrawal from imposed masculinity, transforming resistance into an affective and spatial rupture rather than a purely verbal or symbolic act.

### 3.4. Hegemonic and Alternative Masculinities

R. W. Connell's (1995) theory of hegemonic masculinity provides a critical framework for analyzing the father's role as the primary enforcer of patriarchal authority. Hegemonic masculinity, as Connell defines it, represents the culturally dominant form of manhood that legitimizes male power while subordinating women and non-hegemonic men. The father embodies this model through violence, emotional repression, and obsessive control over gender boundaries. His psychological instability reflects the inherent fragility of hegemonic masculinity, which must be constantly enforced through discipline and coercion.

In contrast, *Androman* presents alternative masculinities through the figures of the shepherd and the *fqih*. Both characters occupy marginal positions within the village and are not bound by its genealogical or patriarchal structures. The shepherd's refusal to join the state's military mission and his decision to assist Androman's escape signal a rejection of dominant masculine expectations. These characters exemplify what Connell describes as subordinate or alternative masculinities—forms of manhood that exist in tension with hegemonic norms and offer ethical possibilities grounded in care, empathy, and resistance rather than domination.

### 3.5. Integrating the Framework

By integrating postcolonial theory, spatial analysis, feminist and queer theory, and masculinity studies, this research constructs a theoretical framework capable of addressing the thematic complexity of *Androman*. This interdisciplinary approach supports the central argument of the study: that the film redefines gender representation through its exploration of patriarchal hegemony, gender manipulation, political and national identity, and alternative masculinities. In doing so, *Androman* opens new pathways for theorizing gender and nationhood within Moroccan cinema, particularly from the perspective of marginalized spaces and embodied resistance.

#### 4. Analysis and Discussion

##### 4.1. NATIONAL ALIENATION AND THE HETEROTOPIC VILLAGE: Power, Tradition, and the Politics of Spatial Abandonment



*Figure 1: The opening wide shot establishes the spatial and symbolic isolation of the village.*

In *Androman (De Sang et de Charbon)*, the mountain village is not a passive landscape, but rather a visual representation of national alienation. Through pan left and right technique, and diegetic sound effect, Az El Arab Alaoui constructs a space that is isolated, ungoverned, and semantically abundant of political, economic and cultural implications. To bring this into analysis, I start with Michel Foucault's theory of space as a medium of power.

Michel Foucault argues that modern societies operate in organized and controlled spaces Foucault, M. (1986). In his lecture "Of Other Spaces," he argues that "space is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power." (Foucault, 1984, p. 252). For Foucault, spatial structures like prisons, hospitals, and schools are not just architectural, but they are tools of discipline which produce docile subjects through surveillance and regulation.

The film, unlike the Foucauldian model, displays its setting as an empty space with no surveillance. From the opening shots, the viewer can notice the absence of hospitals, schools or any state institution. In this very vacuum place, social disorder emerges as unjust practices such as patriarchy in our case. This chaos in the social order recalls another Foucauldian notion namely heterotopia. For Foucault there are some spaces that exist outside normative structures where "all the other real sites...are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted."



*Figure 2: state infrastructure is absent, leaving the village in heterotopic suspension.*

This scene (Figure 2) reflects clearly the heterotopic nature of the village not as a site of freedom, as Foucault argues, but as a space excluded from the national consciousness where Patriarchal authority, superstition, and gender control take over the state rationality and law.

The space dialectic is tackled also by Lisa Law. She argues that space is never neutral but rather a “critical terrain” through which power relations are materialized and mediated. Law, L. (1997). The village as a space functions as neatly this sort of terrain whose marginalized nature forces its inhabitants to adopt patriarchy as a survival strategy. It encloses its dwellers in a geographically, and more dramatically, ideological trap which maintains the patriarchal hegemonic structure.



Figure 3: The arrival of the state emissaries marks a rupture, framed cinematically through contrasting shot scales.

The snapshot (Figure 3) marks the arrival of the state emissaries who come to extract bodies from the village. The Low-angle close-up camera shots align with the authorial state apparatus which looks at remote areas as sites of extraction rather than inclusion. Reversely, the villagers are captured in wide-angle shots emphasizing their subjection and a less important role in the national main narrative. While this cinematic encounter deepens the chasm between the center and the periphery of the nation state, it offers a third space to borrow Homi Bhabha's terms. For him, the *Third Space* is not simply a geographical or neutral meeting point but a site of cultural negotiation and hybridity, where oppositional discourses such as colonial authority and indigenous resistance, modernity and tradition interact, overlap, and contest each other's legitimacy. Bhabha, H. K. (1994). In the film the third space embodied the national law and the village rituals power dynamics dispute, overlap and contest.

#### 4.2. THE FATHER'S PATRIARCHAL DISORDER: Hegemonic Masculinity and the Fear of Collapse

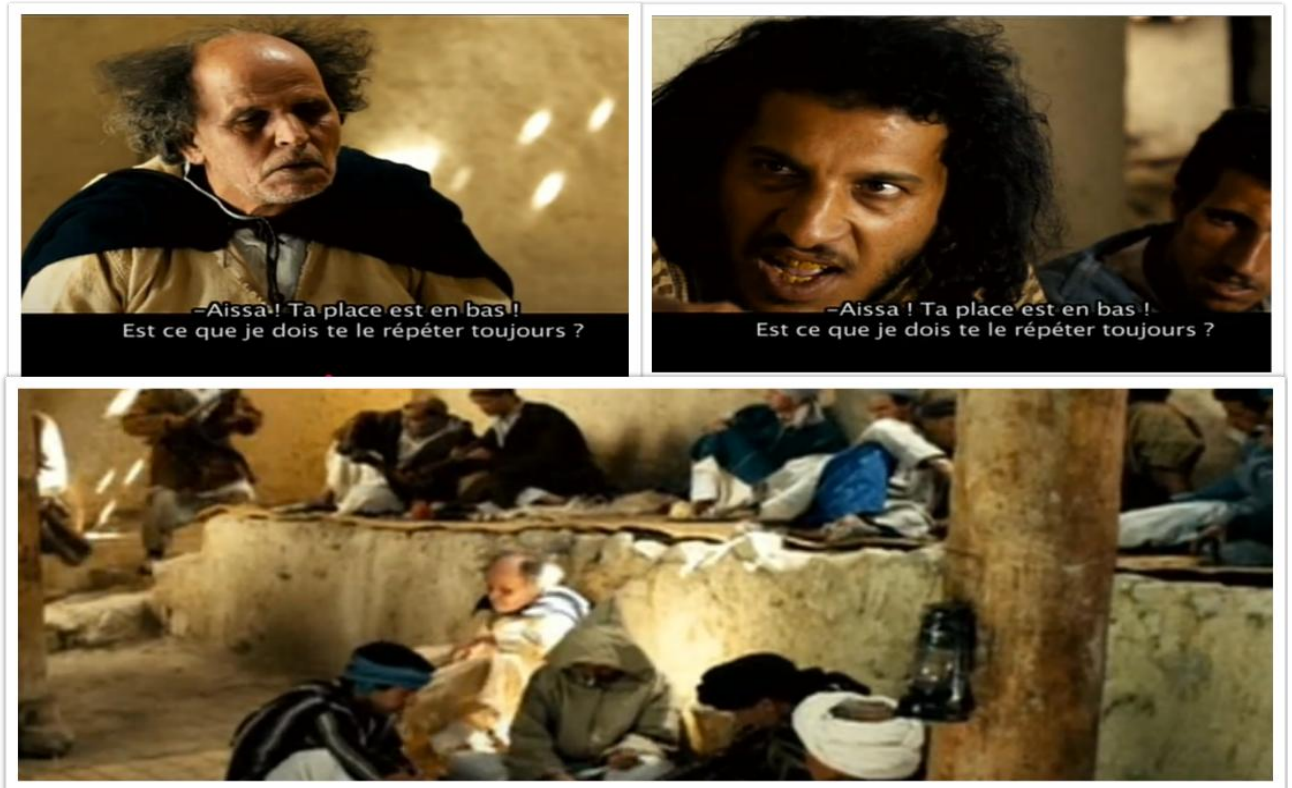


Figure 4: The patriarchal inheritance as a survival strategy

The character of the father is very crucial to understanding the collective psychological disorder of the male villagers. A shot showing Ouchen's father dying in the forest, uttering his last words reminding his son (Androman's father) to give birth to a boy (figure 4) reveals how patriarchy is maintained as a strategy to survive. As this scene asserts the patriarchal necessity in the village,

it exposes the deep fear of collapse in an environment which relies mainly on masculinity to exploit the forest as the only source of life.

R.W. Connell identifies hegemonic masculinity as the culturally dominant form of masculinity that subordinates alternative masculinities and all forms of femininity. The father, along with other male characters in the film subordinates not only women but also some married males who do not have male children.



*Figure 5: Men as victims of the patriarchal hegemonic masculinity*

*This scene (figure 5) demonstrates the rigid nature of the patriarchal regime that subordinate women and men alike. Yet, Connell also emphasizes that hegemonic masculinity is inherently inconsistent. It requires constant performance and reaffirmation and this is exactly what the father tried to maintain by imposing a boy identity on her daughter (Androman). His hegemonic masculinity vanishes in the last scenes of the film when Androman reveals her real identity, and he turns insane.*

#### **4.3. BEYOND PERFORMATIVITY**

Judith Butler's (1990) prominent work on gender performativity which she developed in *Gender Trouble and Bodies That Matter* is very crucial to understanding the way gender identity is created and maintained. Butler argues that gender is developed by a certain repetitive set of acts usually shaped by cultural, social and political norms.<sup>9</sup>for her, these frequent acts not only build the gender identity, but they constitute its main essence.

Androman was forced to adopt a boy identity from her birth, and trained to walk, speak and act accordingly. Yet, the applicability of Butler's theory in this respect is disrupted by Androman's constant attempts to retrieve her lost female identity.

Unlike Butler's claim that the subject is formed entirely through discursive repetition, Androman maintains self-awareness, and refuses to fully indulged in the already exist subject.

Throughout the film, Androman shows, what I call, an ambivalent or double performativity. Her performance of masculinity, though seemed natural, does not erase her femininity. In contrast to Butler's model insisting that identity is fully constructed by external norms, Androman does not entirely adopt either male or female identity, creating not a biological but a cultural androgynous identity.

In one significant scene, Androman looks at the reflection of her face on the water's surface while she fetches water. The scene comes directly after she was busy helping her father in the forest doing male job. These successful scenes make her ambivalent identity clearly visible. In the heart of performing masculine roles, her femininity interferes to subvert the linear gender performativity.



*Figure 6: Femininity is not erased but preserved beneath the labor of performance.*

Throughout the film Androman occasionally is put against a mirror or a reflecting object to remind her of her femininity, and to make visible her embodied resistance. These moments can be understood through Sara Ahmed's notion of "embodied refusal" which she defines as a form of unconscious resistance. Unlike Butler, Sara Ahmed argues that the body is not a passive product of repetitive performance of social or cultural norms, but it is a site of emotions, tensions and corporal resistance<sup>10</sup>. For Sara, this

resistance does not occur in public, but rather through a quiet, embodied persistence. So the body in this case does not accept what it is ordered to do or how it is told to be.

#### 4.4. THE MOMENT OF REVELATION

The two most tense scenes in *Androman (De Sang et de Charbon)* that mark the climax, and the shifting point in the film main narrative are when Androman's biological sex is discovered, and when the shepherd escapes the military mission



Figure 7: Patriarchal and national disavowal: the collapse of subjectivity

The moment of Androman's sex revelation and the shepherd's escape from military conscription are very significant acts of disavowal which debunk patriarchal and national interpellation using Althusser terms. These moments do not reveal personal truth, but they subvert the entire social structure of the village, where femininity is confined to dishonor. The father's persistence in raising Androman in a boy identity fails to sustain due to her embodied refusal. This disalignment constitutes what Judith Butler defines as a failure of interpellation, in other words a refusal to conform to the gender norms imposed by normative discourse. Similarly, the shepherd's evasion of military service justifies his rejection of the nationalist narrative that confines male bodies to war subjects. His escape is not represented in the film as a sign of cowardice, but as a brave attempt to redefine patriotism which I will be clarifying in the next sections. Both figures, Androman and the shepherd, enact what Sara Ahmed calls *embodied refusal*, that is to say their bodies do not conform with, and do not consent to the ideologies that seek to hail them as social and national subjects.

In *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, Louis Althusser describes interpellation as the process by which ideology "hails" individuals and transforms them into subjects. Androman is interpellated by her father to fit in a boy position for Althusser the subject always already exists as a social mould waiting for individuals to fill in it.

However, once the illusion of Androman's masculinity was unveiled, her ideological subject position collapsed. The scene is filmed with unstatic camera movements and handheld shots. This shooting technique reflects her unstable identity, and a moment of a new identity birth. The villagers react with confusion and fear, not because they have discovered a secret, but because their ideological fabric no longer holds still.

#### 4.5. THE SHEPHERD REDEFINITION OF PATRIOTISM: *The Outsider's Critique of Patriarchy*

In *Androman (De Sang et de Charbon)*, the shepherd's refusal to join the military mission, and his statement that "helping the women of the village is also a form of patriotism" mark a radical redefinition of nationalism. This declaration revisits the traditional definition of patriotism which is often seen through defending the country from external enemies, and establishes a new form of patriotism that promotes internal struggle to liberate its marginalized individuals from the yoke of social injustice. Also, what makes this moment crucial is that the shepherd, like the fqih, is not originally from the village. His subordinated social position, as both non-native and non-dominant male, gives him a critical distance from the village's patriarchal structure.

This position, as a stranger, allows him to dismantle the village social structure and liberate masculinity from patriarchy. The characters of the shepherd and Fqih are very essential to my thesis which argues that patriarchy is not an inherent trait of men, but rather a product of political, economic and geographical conditions embodied in the village's isolation. Thus, patriarchy in the film is not about individual men asserting dominance, but about a collective system of thoughts. The shepherd and the fqih, constitute an exception of men who are not entangled in social structures of the village, which allow them to criticize rather than reinforce patriarchy.



Figure 8: Outsider masculinities observing the village from the periphery: displaced from power but central to critique.

This scene (figure 8) is shot while Fqih and the shepherd are negotiating the possibility of liberating the women of the village through organizing "Sbigha" a traditional horse race. The semantic employment of the horse is very significant since horses were used in ancient wars, especially by Amazighs, to liberate their lands from external conquest. The film's director succeeded in using the horse race as a symbolic act of emancipating women from patriarchal conquest. The horse is used twice in the film, the first time to help Androman escape her father's domination, and the second in the race as a closing scene of the film.



*Figure 8: Riding the horses of emancipation: liberating women from patriarchal conquest*

In *Androman: De Sang et de Charbon*, the horse becomes a symbol of emancipation. The film was able to transform horse riding from an emblem of patriarchy into a vehicle of feminist liberation. By entering and winning the traditionally male horse race, Androman redefines a ritual of masculine honor and reorients it toward liberation, enacting what Sara Ahmed terms an *embodied refusal* of gendered norms. Her triumph interrogates male supremacy and inspires a collective awakening among the village's women. This public disruption in a previous scene was raised when she escaped her father's pursuit of domination. Through these moments, the horse becomes a cinematic instrument of resistance, carrying Androman away from conquest towards liberation.

#### *4.6. THE SHEPHERD AND THE FQIH: Outsider Masculinities and the Critique of Patriarchy*

In the film, as mentioned before in this paper, two male figures stand apart from the village's dominant patriarchal order: the shepherd and the fqih. Both men are not originally from the village. Their social marginal position grants them ideological distance and critical insight. Their roles challenge the assumption that patriarchy is simply a male instinct. Instead, they reveal how patriarchy is produced and sustained by geography, economic deprivation, and political abandonment.



Figure 9: Positive masculinity emerges outside of the village

This stands visible when one villager says bitterly to the fqih, “**What do you know? You’re not from here.**”(Figure 9) The line is spoken not to invalidate the fqih’s knowledge, but to exclude him, physically and ideologically, from the village where survival has been internalized as rigidity and gendered control. In this moment, the film exposes how social belonging is weaponized to protect ideological closure. The fqih, as an outsider and with his religious knowledge, embodies a positive masculinity who believes that other ways of organizing gender and authority are possible outside the patriarchal system.



Figure 10: Positive masculinity emerges outside of the village

Similarly, in a quiet scene, (figure 10) the shepherd explains to Androman that he escaped from an orphanage in his youth. This story is very crucial to understand that patriarchy is a mere social construct. The shepherd's masculinity was not forged in lineage or inheritance, but rather in the absence of social didactical surveillance. His escape from the orphanage shows not only his outsider status, but also his resistance to any social or national hegemonic domination.

## 5. Conclusion

In *Androman: De sang et de charbon* (Alaoui, 2012), gender is not merely performed but strategically enforced, contested, and ultimately destabilized. Through its depiction of an isolated Amazigh village, the film offers a critical meditation on the production of patriarchy, the fragility of hegemonic masculinity, and the emergence of alternative ethical possibilities within spaces abandoned by the state. By situating gender violence within a landscape of political and spatial marginality, *Androman* exposes the structural conditions that allow patriarchal authority to flourish in the absence of institutional governance.

The film opens onto a terrain of national alienation—a remote village symbolically and materially excluded from Morocco's modern national project. Read through the spatial theories of Foucault, Law, and Bhabha, this setting functions as a heterotopic space where power operates less through state presence than through abandonment. In this vacuum, customary authority assumes regulatory force, transforming tradition into law and gender into a mechanism of social survival. The village thus becomes a site where national neglect and local patriarchy are mutually reinforcing rather than oppositional.

Within this spatial configuration, gender manipulation emerges not as an act of subversion but as a strategy of endurance. The decision to raise Androman as a boy constitutes a form of protective disempowerment that reveals the instability of gender norms under patriarchal pressure. Androman's embodied experience unsettles the limits of gender performativity by sustaining a feminine persistence beneath an imposed masculine role. Rather than resolving into a binary identity, her subjectivity occupies an ambivalent space that resists clear legibility, rendered cinematically through stillness, reflection, and affective restraint.

The father, as the principal agent of patriarchal enforcement, embodies the contradictions of hegemonic masculinity under conditions of social and spatial precarity. His authority, grounded in fear and enforced repetition, ultimately collapses under the strain of the very performance he demands. The climactic moment of revelation does not restore order or moral clarity; instead, it stages a rupture in which identity becomes unreadable and patriarchal power dissolves. This moment underscores the film's refusal of narrative closure and its rejection of redemption through reintegration.

Against this collapse, *Androman* foregrounds alternative masculinities through the figures of the shepherd and the *fqih*. Positioned as outsiders to the village's genealogical and ideological structures, these characters articulate ethical forms of masculinity grounded in care, responsibility, and resistance to violence. The shepherd's assertion that assisting women constitutes a form of patriotism redefines national belonging beyond militarized service, proposing instead an ethic of local solidarity. Their presence demonstrates that patriarchy is not an inherent attribute of masculinity but a contingent structure sustained by isolation, fear, and political abandonment.

Ultimately, *Androman* functions as a postnational allegory that critiques the ways in which state absence enables private forms of domination while simultaneously gesturing toward alternative modes of belonging. Through its aesthetics of ambiguity, silence, and rupture, the film advances a politics of gender that privileges marginality, ethical relation, and embodied refusal over authority and control. In doing so, *Androman* contributes a significant intervention to Moroccan cinema and gender studies by reimagining resistance not as heroic confrontation but as a slow, affective, and relational practice emerging from the margins.

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