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Moroccan Cinema from Below:

Re-Visiting Mohamed Osfour's Film Practice

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Dedication

To the memory of my father, who could not see this work accomplished

To my everlasting teacher: My mother

To my wife, my brothers and my sisters

To my newborn baby: ***Taha***

To the memory of Mohamed ***Osfour***

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Abstract

This dissertation engages thematically with Mohamed Osfour's cinematic experience. The aim here is to demonstrate the significance of such an experience and its contribution to the development of Moroccan cinema. This contribution is apparent in Osfour's clear endeavour to produce a form of cinema that is socially and culturally rooted in Moroccan cultural identity. The main argument of this dissertation is that Osfour's film practice is worth investigating and his filmography is criticizable. This dissertation asks the following research questions: How has Osfour's cinematic experience been critically received by conventional film scholarship? Does Osfour's cinematic experience abide by any stylistic categorization? What types of aesthetics did Osfour try in his cinematic endeavour? Does Osfour's cinematic experience have any intellectual relevance to the development of Moroccan cinema? Are Osfour's films criticizable and do they lend themselves to critical scrutiny?

Despite its historical primacy and contribution to the development of Moroccan cinema, Osfour's film practice has received little notice and has been overlooked by conventional film scholarship. Because it was an informal form of cinema practice, Osfour's experience has been beyond the scope of the critical discourse on film. Conversely, it has been treated as a minor form of cinema, and therefore considered as artistically poor and lacking in artistic merit. Osfour's films have not been critically approached because they have not been considered worthy of critique.

The present study is theoretically approached from the perspective of Cultural Studies and Film Theory. Driven by the desire to re-think and re-visit Osfour's film practice, this dissertation has found Cultural Studies and Film Theory as the most relevant theoretical frameworks to be deployed in such an endeavour. In terms of its stylistic categorization, Osfour's filmography will be identified according to three broad concepts: "A cinema of attractions," "a cinema of narrative integration," and "a cinema of narrative attractions." The two first concepts are borrowed from Tom Gunning (1986) in his endeavour to re-visit the legacy of early cinema, whereas the third concept is my own proposal. Gunning's theoretical framework has been appropriate because of the affinities and similarities between Osfour's film practice and early cinema. Categorizing Osfour's filmography stylistically has been useful in the process of its critical investigation. Seen through the prism of early cinema, Osfour's filmography becomes approachable and criticizable.

ملخص

تتخذ هذه الأطروحة من التجربة السينمائية للمخرج محمد عصفور (1927-2005) موضوعا لها، وتسعى إلى دراستها وفق مقاربة تمحث نظريا من الدراسات الثقافية و نظرية السينما. يعتبر محمد عصفور أول مغربي يلج مجال الفعل السينمائي، وهو المجال الذي ظل حكرا على الأجنبي طيلة المرحلة الاستعمارية. وبهذا، استطاع محمد عصفور أن "يُمغرب" الممارسة السينمائية وأن ينتج صورا سينمائية مختلفة عما أنتجته السينما الاستعمارية ،حيث ظلت أفلامه سياقات إبداعية لتحرير الشاشة المغربية من رواسب المتخيل الاستعماري. وتأسيسا على ذلك، يمكن الإقرار أن أفلام مثل ***"الإبن العاق"*** (1956)، و ***"اليتيم"***،(1957) و**"الهارب"**(1962) قد تضمنت الإرهاصات الأولى للسينما الوطنية، وهو القول الذي يتأسس على ثلاث معطيات: أولا، من خلال الاحتفاء بالمكون المحلي، ثانيا عبر بناء الشخصية الوطنية، ثالثا من خلال توظيف جماليات بديلة. يعود الفضل لمحمد عصفور في التأسيس للبدايات الأولى للسينما المغربية، ولعل ما يميز تجربته السينمائية هو وجودها خارج رعاية الدولة وخارج المدار التجاري الذي لطالما سيطر عليه القطاع الخاص. مند فيلمه الأول **"إبن الغابة"** (1941)، وهو لازال طفلا لا يتجاوز عمره 14 سنة، واظب عصفور على إنتاج وإبداع وترويج أفلامه خارج المدار التجاري وفي استقلال تام عن المؤسسة حيث اعتمد كليا على إمكانياته المادية المحدودة واستعان بأصدقائه وأفراد عائلته بل وأسس بنية ترويجية خاصة لتوزيع أفلامه.

لكن رغم كل ما قام به محمد عصفور من أجل المساهمة في بناء سينما مغربية، ظلت تجربته السينمائية خارج اهتمامات النقد السينمائي الذي انتج موقفا متعالما ومتعاليا حول هذه التجربة، حيث أن اللافت للنظر هو أن أفلام عصفور لم يتم التعاطي معها نقديا وذلك بسبب هذه النظرة التي اعتبرت أن هذه الأفلام تفتقد للإبداعية وللوعي الفني. وبخلاف مع هذه النظرة المتعالمة، تطمح هذه الأطروحة أن تبين أن تجربة عصفور السينمائية تستحق الدراسة نظرا لفرادتها ، كما تسعى أن تؤكد أن أفلامه قابلة للمحاورة النقدية لما تشكله من إبداعية. ولعل من بين المحددات التي سيتم التأكيد عليها هنا هو أن أفلام عصفور يجب قراء تها انطلاقا من تاريخيتها ووفقا لمقاربة تفصل بين زمن التمثل (الزمن الذي أنتجت فيه هذه الأفلام) وزمن المشاهدة (الزمن الذي تخضع من خلاله هذه الأفلام للدراسة). إن الهدف الرئيس الذي تسعى إلى تحقيقه هذه الأطروحة هو التعريف بالخصوصية الأسلوبية لهذه التجربة السينمائية وإلى رد الاعتبار إليها وذلك من خلال الوقوف على مساهماتها في تشكيل تاريخ السينما المغربية. تحاول هذه الدراسة أن تجيب على الأسئلة التالية: كيف تمثل النقد السينمائي تجربة عصفور السينمائية؟ هل تخضع تجربة عصفور لخصوصيات أسلوبية؟ ما طبيعة الجماليات التي وظفها عصفور؟ هل ساهمت تجربة عصفور في تشكل السينما المغربية؟ هل أفلام عصفور قابلة للمحاورة النقدية؟

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Introduction

Many historical writings[1] dealing with the subject of Moroccan cinema claim that it is a postcolonial phenomenon, and its evolution has undergone two stages: Colonial and postcolonial. According to these writings, the colonial phase is usually characterized by the Europeans' monopoly and dominance over the cinema industry. The postcolonial period, however, is essentially identified by the professional involvement of Moroccans in the process of filmmaking— a process that is often associated with 1968. Historically speaking, this year is known for the production of the first professional Moroccan feature films: *Al-Ḥayātu Kifāḥ* (Life is a Struggle) co-directed by Mohamed Tazi Ben Abdelwahad and Ahmed Mesnawi, and *Indmā Tandoju Attimār (*When the Dates are Ripe), co-directed by Abdelaziz Ramdani and Laarbi Bennani. Film historians have repeatedly considered 1968 as a starting point for the emergence of Moroccan cinema.

Contrary to such an argument, this dissertation asserts that the rise of Moroccan cinema occurred much earlier in the forties, with Mohamed Osfour's attempts to appropriate and "Moroccanize" the film medium. Accordingly, this dissertation thematically engages with Mohamed Osfour's cinematic experience and highlights its distinctiveness as an informal cinema that continued to exist at the margin of the professional film industry. The focus here is to demostrate the significance of Osfour's film practice and its contribution to the development of Moroccan cinema. This contribution is apparent in Osfour's endeavour to produce a form of cinema that is socially and culturally rooted in Moroccan cultural identity. The main argument is that Osfour's cinematic experience is worthy of critical investigation and that his films can be approached critically. This dissertation asks the following research questions: How has Osfour's cinematic experience been critically received by conventional film scholarship? Does

[1] By these writings, I mean especially: Pierre Boulanger (1975), Driss Jaidi (1990), Viola Chafik (1998), Mostapha Mesnaoui (2001), Roy Armes (2005), and Sandra Gayle Carter (2009).

Osfour's cinematic experience abide by any stylistic categorization? What types of aesthetics did Osfour try in his cinematic endeavour? Does Osfour's cinematic experience have any intellectual relevance to the development of Moroccan cinema? Are Osfour's films criticizable and do they lend themselves to critical scrutiny?

It is worth mentioning that my intellectual and academic interest in Osfour's cinematic experience was related to an anecdotal occurrence. Some years ago, before enrolling in this Ph.D. programme, I attended a conference about the history of Moroccan cinema. The presentations were informative, providing a variety of details about colonial cinema and the subsequent involvement of Moroccans in the process of filmmaking. At that time, my knowledge of Mohamed Osfour was limited to the fact that he was a pioneer in the film industry, but with no idea about his films and his cinematic career. The more the presentations stimulated my intellectual curiosity, the more enthusiastic I became about the subject. This enthusiasm was mainly triggered by Ahmed Araib's presentation, which was devoted to the beginnings of Moroccan cinema. As a film historian, Araib was potentially the right man to delve into such a problematic issue because he is well informed about the history of Moroccan cinema and because he was in a privileged position[1] to have access to its archive, an opportunity which might have been more of a challenge for others. In the course of his presentation, Araib mentioned Osfour in passing and discounted his cinema as a "primitive" form of film practice. Because his use of the word primitive sounded pejorative, it left me with waves of questions about its cultural implications. Araib's strong description was the catalyst that provoked my curiosity to explore Mohamed Osfour's cinematic experience. The research proceeded in two directions: Reading what has been written about Osfour and watching his films. Having engaged in both processes, the implication of the word 'primitive' started to fade away gradually and this stimulated my ambition of critical investigation. After reading about Osfour and watching his films, I was determined to academically examine and re-visit his cinematic

[1] Back then, Araib was in charge of the archive at the Moroccan Cinema Centre.

experience. Two initial assumptions accompanied my process of scrutiny: That Osfour's film practice is worth investigating and that his films are worthy of scholarly study.

This project began out of curiosity and was triggered essentially by the absence of scholarly works that investigate Osfour's film practice and critically examine his filmography. With the exception of Ahmad Fertat's *Une Passion nommée cinéma:Vie et oeuvre de Mohamed Osfour - Premier cinéaste Marocain* (2000), little has been written about Osfour, and the literature investigating his cinema experience is meagre, often dealing with the person more than his cinematic achievements. In the best cases, he is briefly described as the first Moroccan to appropriate the film medium, but his films have remained critically unexamined. The question as to why Osfour was not acknowledged for his significance has accompanied the process of conducting this study. Throughout this process, I have had a feeling of discontent to find that other pioneers in other locations were recognizably credited for their contribution to the formation of national culture. For instance, a wealth of printed and visual documents has been compiled about the Lumière brothers, acknowledging their pioneering contribution to the establishment of the worldwide motion picture industry. I have found it inexplicable why, for example, the Moroccan film history does not recognize Osfour the same way that the Lumière brothers are recognized by world cinema history. Often, the Lumière brothers' *La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon (Workers Leaving* the *Lumière Factory*) (1895) is credited as the first moving picture to herald the rise of the film industry. For this reason, it is legitimate to ask why Osfour's *Ibn al-Ghābā (The Son of the Jungle)* (1941) cannot be credited as the first picture to launch Moroccan cinema. Seen through modern eyes, both Lumière's and Osfour's footage represent artistically modest attempts at experimenting with the film medium, but their significance can still only be estimated in their historical precedence.

From the beginning, the engagement in the process of surveying Osfour's cinema trajectory was like entering an undiscovered territory. Nevertheless, the process has always encountered illuminating and

insightful ideas provided by a variety of scholarly works, three of which were seminal: *An Introduction to the American Underground Film (1967), Life to those Shadows (1967)* and *Cinema of Attractions Reloaded (2006)*. Taken together, these books were useful in providing the theoretical framework through which Osfour's film practice could be conceptually and stylistically categorized.

Firstly, Sheldon Renan's *An Introduction to the American Underground Film (1967)* paved the way to the experience of Underground Cinema in the United States of America— an experience that seems to share some commonalities with Osfour's. A fundamental feature which exists between the two sets of film practice is that they operate informally outside the constraints of the establishment. In terms of budgeting, production, distribution, and visual reception, Osfour's films—like underground films—existed outside the commercial channels. By virtue of its cinema technology, its conditions of production and screening, Osfour's cinematic experience seems to abide by identical characteristics of Underground Cinema.

It is generally accepted that Osfour continued to make films independently and beyond the requirements of the commercial circuit. Like underground filmmakers, Osfour's involvement in the cinema enterprise was essentially triggered by the attainment of personal satisfaction and pleasure. With ordinary cinematic devices and the support of his relatives and friends, Osfour engaged in the process of filmmaking and experimented with the minimum tools at hand. In spite of existing in the Hollywood era, Osfour's cinematic experience seems to have deployed film conventions and aesthetics that related to the pre-Hollywood period. By deploying the aesthetics of austerity, Osfour managed to rise above practical hurdles that could have obstructed his cinematic endeavor. In his cinematic career, he was inventive in adapting his shooting styles to the available logistics and conditions of filmmaking.

Secondly, Noël Burch's *Life to those Shadows* (1967) was critically useful in deepening my understanding of the pre-institutional/pre-official history of cinema, extending from the invention of the

cinematograph to the rise of Hollywood cinema. According to Noël Burch, the history of cinema practice has known two modes of representation: PMR (Primitive Mode of Representation) and IMR (Institutional Mode of Representation).[1] Paradoxically, the first mode is less known because it was un-institutional, whereas the second one relates to a dominant and a colossal institution: Hollywood. The pervasiveness of the Institutional Mode of Representation pushed the Primitive Mode of Representation to marginality and eclipse. With the attempt to locate Osfour's film style within the two mentioned modes, this study will show that Osfour practically experimented with conventions of the Primitive Mode of Representation, but he continued to have Hollywoodian artistic aspirations.

Thirdly, *Cinema of Attractions Reloaded (2006)* was equally significant in bringing my attention to early cinema and to the process of critical correction that it underwent by modern film historians. Beyond normative standards of the professional film industry, critics and film scholars looked for the possibility of categorizing early films stylistically according to an alternative terminology. Discussed in the light of historical periodization, films were categorized according to two labels: A cinema of attractions and a cinema of narrative integration.[2] Because Osfour's film practice shares multiple features with early cinema, the two concepts will be used to describe respectively Osfour's films of the colonial and post-colonial period. In an attempt to critically interact with these two concepts, this study will suggest a third label to describe Osfour's last film *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* (The Hellish Treasure) (1970). There are various reasons why this film will be examined separately, but the chief reason is that it melds two modes of visualization. Because it combines attraction with narration, *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* (1970) will be stylistically categorized as a cinema of narrative attractions.

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[1] See Noël Burch, *Life to Those Shadows*, trans. Ben Brewster (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), p. 188.

[2] For an elaborate definition of the cinema of attractions and that of narrative integration, see Tom Gunning, "Attractions: How they Came into the Wold," pp. 31-39, *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded,* ed. Strauven Wanda (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006). See also in the same book: André Gaudreault, "From Primitive Cinema to Kine-Attractography," pp. 85-104.

Because "naming something enables us to shine a light on it, to see features of it that had remained hidden,"[1] this dissertation strongly assumes that the categorization of Osfour's cinematic experience is a crucial step towards its investigation. Because it was not categorized, Osfour's experience either has not been approached critically or examined in the light of professional standards of cinema production and in the two situations, it was misread. Hence, one of the major concerns of this dissertation is to assess Osfour's film practice in terms of its convergence with or divergence from established patterns of cinema production. From the time of the invention of the cinematograph, the motion picture industry has produced three forms of cinema practice with predefined features for each practice. Philip Hall argues:

> The motion picture industry, as it stands today, can roughly be divided into three wildly uneven segments. The first segment is the most prominent: The Hollywood output… The second segment of the motion picture industry is significantly smaller when compared to Tinseltown's output, but in many ways it rivals and often surpasses its intellectual and artistic results. This is the art house circuit, which presents independently-produced American films and imports from foreign film industries … Then there is a third segment of the motion picture industry which is generally unknown to most moviegoers, and is also unfamiliar territory to many players in the industry itself. This is the Underground Cinema, a vast and somewhat unexplored territory consisting of thousands of films which rarely find their ways to audience, media, or industry recognition. In many ways, today's Underground Cinema represents a parallel universe to the motion picture world.[2]

[1] Viva Paci, "The Attraction of the Intelligent Eye: Obsessions with the Vision Machine in Early Film theories," *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), p. 122.
[2] Philip Hall, *The Encyclopedia of Underground Movies : Films from the Fringes of Cinema* (Michigan: Michael Wiese Productions, 2004), pp. xii-xiii.

Accordingly, the cinema industry has roughly been divided into three[1] fundamental segments: Hollywood, the art house and the Underground. In the Moroccan context, the Hollywood model has always been pervasive in dominating the cinema practice. Whereas the second segment, which was associated with the *Sigma 3* and the *Casablanca group*,[2] was a short-lived experience. In what concerns the third, that is Underground Cinema,[3] I argue that it best describes Osfour's cinematic experience. Throughout the history of the Moroccan cinema practice, the majority of Moroccan filmmakers have operated within the standards, the visions and the sponsorship of the establishment, but Osfour remains one of the first filmmakers to produce films independently and within an underground circuit.

It is often argued that the cinema practice in Morocco was a token of the upper and literate classes. Both in the colonial and post-colonial periods, cinema was respectively the concern of Europeans and its assimilated elite to whom the involvement in the filmmaking activity often meant the identification with modern life. As a manifestation of Western modernity, cinema was traditionally associated with the Moroccan bourgeois class and with its aspirations for a European lifestyle. However, this assumption does not hold true for Osfour because he was socially-disqualified and poorly-educated. As the cinema practice had been dominated by the bourgeois class, Osfour continued to exist as a subaltern and as a marginalized voice of Moroccan cinema. By describing Osfour as a subaltern, this paper seeks to show that the critical disinterest in his cinema was not critically-grounded, but rather ideologically-driven. Osfour's films were not critically examined because they lacked artfulness, but because they were

[1] Another division with three segments is provided by Michael F. O'Riley: First cinema (Hollywood), second cinema (European *auteur*) and Third cinema. For more, see *Cinema in an Age of Terror: North Africa, Victimization, and Colonial History* (Lincoln and London : University of Nebraska Press, 2010), p. 36.

[2] Both Sigma 3 and the Casablanca Group were two examples of a form of independent cinema. Sigma 3 was a production house that produced the ever acclaimed *Washma* in 1970. Sigma 3 included the following filmmakers: Hamid Bennani, Abdelmajid Rchich, Ahmed Bouanani and Mohamed Sakkat. On the other hand, the Casablanca group produced *Rmad Zriba* (1977). This group included: Mohamed Raggab, Abdelkader Lagtaa, Nour Eddine Kounjar, Saad Chraibi, Abdelkarim Derkaoui, and Mostaphaaa Derkaoui. For more details, see Hamid Tbatou, *Sinema al-Wataniya bi al-Maghreb: Assilat At-taessiss wa al-Waey al-Fani* [Natioanl Cinema in Morocco: Questions of Foundation and Artistic Consciousness] (Ourzazate: Publisud, 2002), p. 14.

[3] Underground Cinema refers to a form of cinema which is usually made outside the institutional and commercial channels. In the USA, the term Underground Cinema means a cinema practice that exists outside Hollywood.

subject to a misinformed assumption that swept them aside as unworthy of critical consideration. By identifying Osfour with subalternity, the intention is not to mediate his assumed voiceless voice or to speak on his behalf, but rather the concern here is to shed more light on his cinematic experience and introduce it in the academic circle. There is a clear conviction that Osfour pronounced his voice through his films, but unluckily this voice has been drowned out by the prevailing film scholarship, and in the best case it was not heard properly.

In terms of historical primacy, Osfour is often regarded as the first Moroccan to access a practice that was highly considered as a Western enterprise *par excellence*. For many years of colonial presence, cinema in Morocco remained a European phenomenon because films were mostly produced and visually consumed by Europeans. The colonial authorities were extremely sensitive to the natives' involvement in the cinema practice for their fear that cinema could be used in counter-propaganda work. Given the difficult conditions of the colonial time, Osfour had to start from scratch and engage in the process of film practice, challenging all practical hurdles in his way. His involvement in the process of filmmaking initially started in the colonial period (1941) with Ibn Al-Ghaba—as the first footage made by a Moroccan— and continued in the aftermath of colonialism with *Al Kanz Almarsoud* (1970) as his last film. For three decades of cinema practice, Osfour accumulated a distinctive film practice that remains unfamiliar with the prevailing modes of filmmaking in Morocco. A dominant aspect that identifies Osfour's film practice is that it was an amateur form of cinema practice which continued to exist outside the requirements of the commercial circuit.

Osfour's filmography is fuelled with a great sense of cultural commitment which is reflected in the visual fabric, the narrative proceeding, the construction of the national character, and the dominant narrative discourse. Osfour's films came to present themselves as visual alternatives that endorse the cultural specificity and national identity of Moroccan society. For instance, films of the post-colonial period represented a clear shift from the prevailing film stylistics and heralded the birth of a national

cinema. In contrast with the prevailing film scholarship, this dissertation contends that the project of national cinema did not initially start with Hamid Bennani's *Washma (Traces)* (1970), but its initial underpinnings were foregrounded in Osfour's films. Historically, Osfour's cinematic experience was a transitional stage that mediated the move from colonial to the national cinema, allowing the emergence of a distinct form of cinema practice. Osfour was not only the first Moroccan to appropriate the film medium, but he was also the first to break with the modalities of colonial representation and to partly liberate the Moroccan screen from the remains of imperial imaginary. This liberation can be discussed in at least two dimensions: The valorization of national culture and the construction of a national character. Osfour's representation of the cultural particularity of Moroccan society is not ideologically grounded and does not reproduce colonial tropes. In dealing with Moroccan cultural identity, Osfour deploys film stylistics and narrative procedures that cement the social integrity of Moroccan society through the promotion of moral values. Films like *Al-Ibn Al-a'k (The Damned Child) (1956), Al-Yatim (The Orphan) (1957),* and *Al-Harib (The Fugitive) (1962)* constitute visual platforms for the celebration of national identity which is "at its core a story about common origins, common heritage*"*[1]. The construction of the national character is another parameter that shows Osfour's break with the colonial modalities of representation. By deploying alternative film stylistics, Osfour managed to produce alternative images that deconstruct the fixity of the colonial imaginary. For instance, the act of displaying the Moroccan figure through the close-up technique was subversive to the conventions of colonial cinema and concurrently heralded the birth of alternative aesthetics. In the tradition of colonial cinema, the close-up technique is a racial privilege for European characters, whereas natives are usually presented in a multitude as tiny elements that are not worthy of close visibility. The act of capturing Moroccan figures

[1]Dayna Oscherwitz, *French Cinema and the Post-colonial Heritage* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), p. 3.

through the close-up technique can not only question the legacy of the colonial cinema and undermine its accumulated conventions, but it also indicates the birth of a national cinema.

Despite its historical primacy and its contribution to the development of Moroccan cinema, Osfour's film practice has received little notice and has been overlooked by conventional film history. Because it was an informal and non-professional form of cinema practice, Osfour's experience has been beyond the scope of cinematic critical discourse. Conversely, it was treated as a minor form of cinema that was artistically poor and lacked in artistic merit. Osfour's films have not been critically approached because they have not been considered worthy of critique, and that explains why they have remained outside the concern of Moroccan film history. Due to its inability to envisage Osfour's film practice according to proper standards that might conform to its nature as an amateur form of cinema, the Moroccan critical discourse continued to produce an essentialist and elitist view of Osfour's experience. One of the pitfalls of Moroccan critical discourse is that it treated Osfour's cinematic endeavour with a modern eye and according to normative standards that are generally applicable to another form of cinema practice: the professional filmmaking.

This dissertation advocates that Osfour's cinematic experience should critically be assessed outside the conditions and requirements of the modern eye. Conversely, it should be approached in its historicity and as an outcome/product of a historical moment in the line of history. By reading Osfour's films in their historicity, this study has the intention to reach the maximum degree of critical impartiality as it is required by the demands of an academic work. The judgment of films will take into consideration two primordial temporalities: The temporality of representation (when the films were made) and the temporality of reception (when the films were the object of critical scrutiny). I argue that this temporal demarcation is essential for the achievement of an "objective" and impartial critical analysis which is liberated from the conditions of the modern eye.

The theoretical approach adopted in this dissertation is inspired by Cultural Studies and Film Theory. Firstly, deploying Cultural Studies has permitted me to address Osfour's cinematic experience from a multi-layered standpoint. Due to its interdisciplinary character, Cultural Studies encompasses a variety of disciplines ranging from the analysis of post-colonialism, gender issues, ethnicities, to marginalized identities.[1] In principle, it provides a range of variations that are concerned with providing an ensemble of visions to subjects related to the production of cultures, identities, and meanings. Driven by the desire to re-think and re-visit the Moroccan film history, this dissertation has found Cultural Studies as the most relevant theoretical framework for the involvement in such a process.[2] Secondly, Film Theory has also served in many ways, but it mainly served in the stylistic categorization of Osfour's film practice and filmography. Henceforth, Osfour's films will be identified according to three broad concepts: A cinema of attractions, a cinema of narrative integration and a cinema of narrative attractions. The two first concepts are borrowed from Tom Gunning (1986) in his endeavour to re-visit the legacy of early cinema, whereas the third concept is my coinage. The significance of adopting Gunning's theoretical framework finds its due relevance in the affinities and similarities between Osfour's film practice and early cinema. Thus, categorizing Osfour's filmography stylistically has been useful in the process of its critical investigation. Seen through the prism of early cinema, Osfour's filmography has become critically approachable.

[1] Tony Bennett defines Cultural Studies as: "[A]n interdisciplinary field in which perspectives from different disciplines can be selectively drawn on to examine the relations of culture and power," and which "seeks to develop ways of thinking about culture and power that can be utilized by agents in the pursuit of change." For more, see Chris Barker, *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice* (London: Sage Publications, 2004), p. 7.

[2] About this point, Douglas Kellner (1995) argues:"Crucially, Cultural Studies subverts the high and low culture distinction—like postmodern theory and unlike the Frankfurt School—and thus valorizes cultural forms like films, television, and popular music dismissed by previous approaches to culture which tended to utilize literary theory to analyze cultural forms, or to focus primarily, or even solely, on the artifacts of high culture." For more, see Douglas Kellner, *Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics between the Modern and Postmodern* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 32.
The same point is similarly discussed by Jonatahn Culler (2001), who maintains: "Cultural Studies in this tradition is driven by the tension between the desire to recover popular culture as the expression of the people or give voice to the culture of marginalized groups, and the study of mass culture as an ideological imposition, an oppressive ideological formation. On the one hand, the point of studying popular culture is to get in touch with what is important for the lives of ordinary people—their culture—as opposed to that of aesthetes and professors. On the other hand, there is a strong impetus to show how people are shaped or manipulated by cultural forces."[2] For a deeper discussion, see Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory* (New York: Sterling, 2009), p. 59.

Accordingly, the cinema of attractions refers to films of the colonial period, ranging from 1941 to 1956 and includes *Ibn Al-Ghaba (1941), Issa Al-Atlas(1951), Joha/charletto (1952), Amok L'Invincible(Amok, the Unbeaten) (1954), Boukhou Najjar (1956)*. Operating through the mechanism of *showing*, films of this category are more presentational, placing much importance on attraction as a main mode of visualization. Intending to solicit the spectator's attention, Osfour was conscious to experiment with the chase and comedy film because cinema at this stage was regarded as a powerful medium for visual pleasure. However, the cinema of narrative integration refers to films of the post-colonial period that were made between 1956 and 1964. These films, which include *Al-Ibn Al-a'k (1956), Al-Yatim (1957)*, and *Al-Harib (1962* came to reflect the post-colonial temporality and to reproduce it visually. As a form of social cinema, films of this period are a visual platform for the promotion of moral values, reflecting Osfour's new conception of the film medium as a tool for education. With storytelling as an overriding stylistic feature, these films are more representational engaging narrative integration as a mode of visualization. By capitalizing on the act of *telling*, Osfour placed much importance on the narrator's voice to display the filmed world, and in order to communicate his ideas. Finally, I have suggested the label cinema of narrative attraction to describe Osfour's last film of the post-colonial period *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* (1970). The reasons why this film is examined separately in a single chapter are various, but the major reason is that it deploys two modes of visualization. Osfour ended his cinematic career with a cross-genre film where he blended aesthetics, styles, themed categories, and arts. Noticeably, *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* unobtrusively combines attraction with narration and operates through two mechanisms: *Showing* and *telling.* The voice of the film narrator works continually in a progressive intersection with the presentational aspect of the cinematic image. Mostly, the act of showing is used at the service of narrative transitivity, orienting the spectators' attention and preparing them for upcoming filmic situations.

This study investigates Osfour's cinematic experience in terms of three main levels: Historical, critical, and analytical. By the historical parameter, the study draws on the general atmosphere that accompanied the introduction of cinema in Morocco. Concerned with the interrogation of conventional film scholarship, the critical dimension is useful in enhancing the argument that the dissertation seeks to advocate. Finally, the analytical aspect will enhance the process of critical investigation and confirm its chief argument. It is through the methodology of film analysis that the criticizabilty of Osfour's films is tested.

Osfour's films will be critically analyzed in the light of Walter Benjamin's conception of criticism as it is theorized in "The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism." According to Benjamin, criticism is not only a court of judgment for the critical assessment of art forms, but it is a work of reflection that contributes to the completion and infinitude of the work of art.[1] By virtue of a dialogic paradigm, the two sets of practice horizontally engage in a systematic interrogation through which the work of art reveals its hidden mysteries. Therefore, "criticism in its central intention is not a judgment, but on the one hand, the completion, consummation, and the systematization of the work and, on the other hand, its resolution in the absolute."[2] Osfour's films will be subject to critical interpellation with a strong assumption that they are worthy of critical scrutiny. Accordingly, Osfour's films will be analytically addressed outside the exigencies of the institutional normality and its normative standards. Aware that these films should be examined beyond the conditions of the modern eye, the ambition here is to seek the possibility of their critical interrogation through the deployment of proper methodological tools that can conform to the nature of Osfour's film practice. Recognizing the films' criticizabilty is implicitly recognizing their perceived artfulness because" if a work can be criticized, then it is a work of

[1] Walter Benjamin, "The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism," *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings*, Vol 1, 1913-1926, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: The Belknad Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 151.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 159.

art."[1] Based on a strong conviction that Osfour's films are works of art, the process of critical scrutiny will address the films with the intention to let them reveal their secrets, hidden intentions, and artfulness.

The central objective of this dissertation is to throw a pebble into the still waters of the Moroccan film history, seeking to interrogate its accumulated conceptions and myths. By reversing the angle of vision, the present study seeks to enlarge the scope of critical scrutiny to incorporate those muted and forgotten voices of Moroccan cinema practice that were speaking in an undertone. This dissertation calls for a new approach to the history of Moroccan cinema, an approach which is intended for the investigation of its obscure part, invoking its historical significance for the evolution of the Moroccan cinema. Critically concerned with Osfour's cinematic experience, this dissertation seeks to show that Osfour was not properly recognized by the institutional film scholarship because he continually existed outsides the industry.

This dissertation is arranged in a way that displays a nuanced connection among its three parts. Through the investigation of historical records, the first part will deal with the historical context that accompanied the introduction and transplantation of cinema in Morocco. By placing much importance on the political context, this part seeks to show that the emergence of cinema in Morocco was mainly associated with the process of colonialism and was constituted as a response to its propagandistic demands. The idea is that cinema was hired to serve at least three main objectives within the colonial strategy: Political, economic and social. Additionally, this part will shed light on the experience of colonial cinema with regard to the representation of the native reality. By virtue of its position within the colonial project, colonial cinema will be studied in terms of two distinct visions: First, it concerns films that entirely aligned themselves with the atmosphere of colonial expansion through the deployment of an established imperial imaginary. Second, it deals with films that artistically kept some distance from the context of colonialism through the representation of natives according to alternative conventions and

[1] Walter Benjamin, "The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism," p. 160.

modalities. Due to its non-involvement in the promotion of an explicit pro-colonial discourse, this second category will be categorized as non-colonial cinema. Finally, the last component to be addressed in this part is the cinematographic infrastructure implemented in the colonial period. Much focus will be placed on the Moroccan Cinema Centre (CCM) and movie theatres. The central idea to contend here is that the inauguration of such an infrastructure was truly located within the colonial strategy that aimed at preparing the ground for the production and consumption of colonial cinema.

The second part tries to trace Osfour's trajectory and to investigate the entire process of his involvement in the filmmaking activity. By addressing biographical information, this part displays the general context that conditioned Osfour's endeavour at accessing a practice that had been regarded as a European enterprise *par excellence*. The focus will be on tracing the practical conditions that Osfour had to encounter in his process of appropriating the film medium. To assess the critical reception of Osfour's cinematic experience, this part tries to interrogate the prevailing film scholarship, analyzing its discourse and maintaining its assumed pitfalls. The silencing of Osfour's voice remains the main shortcoming of this scholarship. For this reason, Osfour will be regarded as a subaltern figure within the field of cinema production in both colonial and post-colonial Morocco. In addition to that, the categorization of Osfour's film practice is another concern of the second part. By identifying its dominant features, this part will show that Osfour's film practice can be categorized within the traditions of Underground Cinema. Like underground filmmakers, Osfour continued to exist outside the requirements of the establishment and its commercial impositions. Operating informally, he continued to experiment with alternative aesthetics that were related to a mode of representation which is described by Noël Burch as the Primitive Mode of Representation. Because it fell back on this mode of representation, Osfour's cinema will be treated as a primitive form of cinema, but not in the same sense as described by Ahmed Araib. It is primitive in terms of its cinematic tools, its production conditions, and its visual reception. The last concern of this

part is to show that Osfour's cinema was a real contribution to the development of Moroccan national cinema. This dissertation argues that Osfour has the merit of foregrounding the initial underpinnings of national cinema through two operations: The valorization of national culture and the construction of a national character. By adopting this perspective, this part seeks to undermine the myths created by the institutional film scholarship which repeatedly argued that the project of national cinema is associated with Hamid Bennani's *Washma* (1970).[1]

The third part is practical and deals with Osfour's films. This part seeks to categorize Osfour's filmography stylistically, mainly by critically engaging with it along the lines of the conventions of early cinema. Having assumed the criticizability of Osfour's filmography, the act of its categorization is implicitly a confirmation of its artfulness and artistic merit. Therefore, Osfour's films will be examined in the light of three broad concepts: A cinema of attractions, a cinema of narrative integration, and a cinema of narrative attractions. By periodically grouping these films according to two temporalities (colonial and post-colonial), the aim is to assess the extent to which the historical context determined the shooting styles and thematic choices that Osfour had opted for. Osfour's deployment of the film medium was shaped by the dictates of the political climate alongside the cinematic technology in use. This explains why, for instance, he resorted to the comedy genre in the colonial period, whereas he fell back on the social problem film in the post-colonial period.

The process of conducting the present study has encountered a range of practical difficulties that rendered the process more challenging and enduring. At least two of these difficulties deserve to be mentioned here. First, the meagre literature investigating Osfour's cinematic experience was a real predicament in the face of the study. With the exception of Ahmad Fertat's *Une Passion nommée cinéma: Vie et oeuvre de Mohamed Osfour - Premier cinéaste Marocain*(2000*),* little has been written about

[1] Nourddine Afaya (1988) and Hamid Tbatou (1999) are good exapmles here.

Osfour. Osfour's cinematic experience has not been critically approached by Moroccan film critics and historians because it had been conceived of as unworthy of critical consideration. Second, the inaccessibility of Osfour's films has been a real challenge that practically rendered the survey more arduous. Given the fact that Osfour's Filmography is now the ownership of the Moroccan Cinema Centre, the process of its critical analysis has not been an easy task; sometimes it faced bureaucratic dealings, and at other times, the conditions of their visual reception were not ideal.

> Between the moment of the invention of the cinematograph (say, 1895) and the moment of cinema's institutionalization (say, 1915), the world of the cinematograph was an open field of enquiry and experimentation. Our task is to convince ourselves that the fundamental point of rupture in film history was not the invention of the moving picture camera in the 1890s (the Kinetograph, the Cinématographe) but rather the constitution of the institution "cinema" in the 1910s, an institution whose first principle was a systematic rejection of the ways and customs of early cinema, of a past to which the institution no longer owed a thing (which, moreover, is not entirely untrue). From this perspective, we must insist upon what I have called elsewhere early cinema's *alien* quality, a properly irreducible alien quality which traditional film historians have always tried to paper over. (André Gaudreault, *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, p. 99).

Part One:

The Colonial Rise of Cinema in Morocco: The Film Medium and the Colonial Agenda

By investigating historical records, this part seeks to trace back the first origins of cinema in Morocco. It is known that cinema reached Morocco as early as it had appeared in Europe and inventors of the cinematograph were eager to spread their invention beyond borders so as to look for potential markets for the circulation of their products. The main argument to be advanced here is that cinema was introduced to Morocco to serve colonial propaganda. Due to its instrumentality in the process of cultural penetration, the colonial authorities continued to provide European filmmakers with the needed help in order to shoot films in colonial Morocco. From a historical perspective, it is evident that cinema played a great role in consolidating the colonial project and in defending its legitimacy. During the colonial period, Morocco was the backdrop for the production of a variety of films which are largely described under the label of colonial cinema. By colonial cinema, it is meant films which were made by European and American filmmakers in the colonial period and which depicted Moroccan reality through an extrinsic vision. Because it articulated a colonial imaginary, colonial cinema was often regarded as an integral part of the colonial project. However, colonial cinema will not be treated here as a homogeneous corpus and will not be seen from a monolithic perspective. By extension, this dissertation argues that within the category of colonial cinema, there exists a sub-category which can be labelled "*non-colonial cinema*." This sub-category concerns films which were made by European filmmakers in the colonial period, but which did not reproduce the colonial ideology. In a related vein, this part will question the political reasons behind the inauguration of a variety of procedures and regulations relative to the cinema industry in the forties. The focus will be on the creation of the Centre Cinématographique Marocain (the CCM) and movie theatres.

Chapter One:

The Colonial Rise of Cinema in Morocco

It is unequivocally evident that the literature investigating the history of cinema in Morocco is still insubstantial. Up to the present, what has been written does not cover all aspects of cinema production and does not constitute a comprehensive historiography. Nevertheless, written works[1] about the history of Moroccan cinema often associate the rise of cinema in Morocco with the colonial experience and with the first cinematographic attempts made by European filmmakers and photographers who visited the country. The encounter with Western powers was critical for the transplantation and circulation of the motion picture as early as it had appeared in Europe. Historical records maintain that Morocco was one of the first African countries to embrace the spectacle of the screen and to witness initial discoveries of the cinematograph. Noticeably, Moroccan film historians did not invest much in looking for affinities that may relate the invention of the cinematograph to the Moroccan context. For instance, that ontological question[2] which preconditioned research on Moroccan theatre was not reproduced in studies dealing with Moroccan cinema. From the beginning, the work of investigation started from the premise that cinema is a Western product[3] which emerged in a capitalist and industrial context in the late 19th century. Hence, "the film medium was invented in the West at the end of the late nineteenth century, by

[1] Pierre Boulanger (1975), Driss Jaidi (1990), Viola Chafik (1998), Mostapha Mesnawi (2001), Roy Armes (2005) and Sandra Gayle Carter (2009) are good examples.

[2] Studies in Moroccan theatre have reproduced the same question: Did Morocco know theatre in its Western form before the advent of colonialism? Such a controversy resulted in three standpoints: The first acknowledges that Morocco knew theatre many years before the advent of colonialism through the existence of "pre-theatrical forms." However, the second standpoint associates the emergence of theatre in Morocco with the colonial period. The third opinion argues that Moroccan theatre has a hybrid character, existing between "East and West." For more, see Hassan Lamnii (1974) and Khalid Amine (2000).

[3] In a section entitled "Arabs and forms of self-expression," Abdellah Laroui talks about forms of expression which existed in the Arab culture, but he excludes cinema from his discussion. For more see, Abdellah Laroui, *Al-Idyouloujiya Al-Arabia Al-Moua'ssira* [The Contemporary Arab Ideology] (Casablanca: Al-Markaz At-takafi Al- Arabi, 2006).

which time significant parts of the Middle East and the Maghreb were already considered as British or French protectorates."[1]

This chapter sheds light on the origins of cinema in Morocco and attempts to reflect on the vital reasons that conditioned the arrival of the moving picture in the Moroccan context. The argument to be defended here is that cinema existed in Morocco within the colonial perspective and in the heart of its propagandistic and commercial motives. Initially, cinema appeared in Morocco as a new medium promising financial profit but subsequently was used as an effective instrument in the process of cultural penetration and pacification. During the colonial period, cinema was effectively dynamic in reflecting the interests and values of the dominant players in the process of the filmmaking activity: Europeans. As a Western product, cinema in colonial Morocco was more to the benefit of the Europeans rather than to the natives who, at best, were consumers of the moving images or tiny elements in the system of signification and representation.

Arguably, cinema and colonialism are intertwined on the basis that they served each other. The context of colonialism was so crucial in the spread of the film medium beyond borders because the owners of this new technique were highly engaged in the spirit of the age and enthusiastic about opening new markets that could provide the platform for the circulation of their films. On an international scale, the birth of cinema in the West is largely associated with the colonial phenomenon and with the overseas scramble. The colonial context was potentially pertinent to the spread of the cinema technique beyond borders, allowing the film industry to fully engage in the promotion of the colonial project and in the legitimation of its military acts. Early films were overtly in favour of expansion and were inevitably linked to the process of imperialism led by European empires in far-flung locations, namely in Asia and Africa. The invention of the cinematograph in the West fundamentally coincided with the highest stages of Western imperial expansion, a reason that pushed many to argue that early films reveal an

[1]Viola Shafik, *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity* (Cairo: the American University in Cairo, 1998), p. 9.

unconscious spirit of expansion and reinforce the drive of expanding the Western gaze far beyond European territories. In this respect, "the fathers of cinema, the Lumière brothers, were also the fathers of cinéma colonial, which is as old as cinema itself."[1]Two films of the Lumière brothers, which appeared shortly after the first public screening of films in 1896, reveal "a colonial unconscious" incorporated in the clear inclination to expansion and dominance. Both, *Baignade de négres* (July 1896) and *Coolies à Saigon* (December 1896) articulate the empire's ideals and reproduce the colonial tropes as already displayed in colonial writings and paintings. Along with that, George Méliès' *A Trip to the Moon* (1902), often recognized as the first fiction film, is regarded to embed imperial insights packaged in its narrative discourse. The idea of stretching control over an undiscovered territory (outer space) is indicative of the pervasive use of the *"no man's land"* trope which was largely theorized by the colonial ideology. Therefore, *A Trip to the Moon,* which "is unconsciously emblematic of the conquering spirit of the time,"[2] was repeatedly accused of its clear imperial inclination. As Ella Shohat argues:

> The film is structured like a colonial captivity narrative: spear-carrying skeleton creatures burst from the moon's simulacral jungle and capture the explorers, only to be defeated by the male explorers'gunlike umbrellas, which magically eliminate the savage creatures. Such a film, not in any obvious sense "about" colonialism, can thus be read as analogizing imperial expansion.[3]

The context of colonialism was not only inspiring for filmmakers to engage in representing the given reality and screening it for visual consumption, but it also provided them with the due potential to display their filmic products overseas. Filmmakers and photographers were encouraged by the colonial

[1] Elizabeth Ezra, "Empire on Film: From Exoticism to Cinéma Colonial," *Francophone Postcolonial Studies: A Critical Introduction*, eds. Charles Forsdick and David Murphy (London: Arnold, 2003), p. 57.
[2] Dina Sherzer, ed. *Cinema, Colonialism, Postcolonialism: Perspectives from the French and Francophone Worlds* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), p .3.
[3] Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 110.

administration in their process of dispatching early footage from the already colonized countries or the ones which were considered for colonial ambitions. It is evident that the gun and the camera were simultaneously introduced into non-European countries, sometimes, as in the case of Morocco, the camera preceded the gun. It had mapped the field and prepared the ground for military invasion many years before the official "protectorate."

It is worth mentioning that the introduction of cinema in Morocco should be analyzed in terms of three motives: Political, economic and social. Firstly, cinema was introduced to Morocco within the colonial perspective which envisaged this sophisticated medium as an effective pedagogical tool in the process of pacification and cultural penetration. The camera was hired to play a vital role in opening the Moroccan land for visual interpellation and in articulating propagandistic activities that worked in favour of the colonial ideology. Filmmakers were requested to represent and signify the notion of "the civilizing mission" and reproduce it as a "historical necessity" for the country to get out of its "civilizational backwardness." Secondly, cinema was also seen in terms of financial revenues and Morocco was considered a promising market that might provide the material platform for the circulation of European cinematic works. As a virgin land in the domain, Morocco continued to attract the attention of European companies which had been motivated to profit economically from the introduction of cinema in Morocco. As cultural commodities, films represented a new dimension in the economic activities led by European settlers in colonial Morocco. Thirdly, cinema was imported and used as an entertaining art, especially for Europeans who came to settle in Morocco during the first years of colonial presence. The context of movie theatres provided a form of social belonging to the Europeans who, for many years of colonial rule, ultimately constituted the audience of the spectacle of the screen. Film screenings represented a social ritual for sharing the adherence to the aspects and manifestations of European life. Being displaced in an alien context, European settlers in colonial Morocco found relief in visual

pleasures, which allowed them to share a particular sense of their belonging with*"the imagined communities.*"[1]

In *Le Cinéma colonial: de 'L' Atlantide' à 'Lawrence d'Arabie'* (1975),[2] Pierre Boulanger provides the due referential details about the practice of cinema in North Africa and nurtures the project of surveying the first contacts of the camera with the aforementioned territory. For many years, the book was an established reference which was often used by critics and researchers in their attempt to address the issue of cinema in North Africa. In this regard, Boulanger informs us that Morocco knew the introduction of cinema through the Lumière's company and its envoys that were eager to circulate their invention beyond borders. France is largely credited with the accolade of organizing the first commercial show in the world, an event that occurred on 28th December 1895 in the Indian Salon of the grand café in Kapossin Street.[3] Being under the French colonial gaze by this time, Morocco was somehow privileged to receive the Lumière Brothers' invention as early as it appeared in Europe.

Indeed, the Lumière's first-run pictures spread across frontiers through leading operators whose itinerary is of great relevance to the advent of cinema to non-European countries. According to Boulanger, one of these prominent figures, who are historically involved in the introduction of cinema in Morocco, is Felix Mesguich (1871-1949). Historical records recognize Mesguich as one of the best operators sent by the Lumière's company to shoot in North Africa. Mesguich's experience is regarded as foregrounding for a momentous event within the process of circulating the motion picture particularly in Morocco and generally in North Africa. As a new market that might be seen promising for economic profits, North Africa was an ideal destination for the envoys of the Lumière's company to report images

[1] In his discussion of nationalism, Benedict Anderson develops the concept of "imagined communities" to analyze how people adhere to the nation by showing a certain sense of belonging, which is usually fostered by media. In this sense, the nation becomes a socially constructed community. For more, see *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1993).

[2] Pierre Boulanger, *Le Cinéma Colonial: d*e '*L' Atlantide'* à *'Lawrence d'Arabie'* (Paris: Seghers, 1975).

[3] Graeme Turner, *Film as a Social Practice* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 20.

and visual documents from this territory which was highly considered for colonial concern later on. After so many journeys in Spain, Germany, Russia, North America, and Italy, Mesguich set foot in North Africa in 1905. Just two years later, Mesguich reported footages from Morocco and his journey coincided with the massacre of Casablanca led by the French troops in July 1907. As a documentary, *Reportages des événements de Casablanca* (1907) opened up early the Moroccan soil to the colonial gaze. The captured images were part and parcel of a colonial activity reflecting an experience that was mingled with a desire to document and dominate. The camera was hired to play a significant role at the forefront of colonial expansion establishing its marriage with the gun. This assertion consolidates my argument about the interlocking relationship between colonialism and the filmmaking enterprise; this interconnection is much clearer in Mesguich's assessment of his adventure as presented in the following passage:

> Quand nous arrivons, la ville [Casablanca] fume sous le bombardement. Un détachement de marines nous conduit au consulat de France où nous sommes retranchés. Je "tourne" quelques passages de troupes dans les rues dévastées et jonchées de cadavres, d'où monte une odeur pestilentielle et des nuages de mouches, puis des scènes de bivouac avec les tirailleurs algériens et la légion étrangère.[1]
>
> On our arrival, the city [Casablanca] was being bombarded. A marine detachment takes us to the French consulate where we are entrenched. I "shoot" a few passages of troops in the devastated streets strewn with corpses, from which rises a pestilential smell and clouds of insects, then scenes of bivouacs with Algerian skirmishers and the foreign legion.[2]

[1] As quoted in *Le Cinéma Colonial: d*e '*L' Atlantide'* à *'Lawrence d'Arabie,'* p. 25.
[2] Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Arabic and French are mine.

The moving pictures, of the unmoving corpses, shot by Mesguich were projected the same year in Paris as a propagandistic activity for the adventures of the white man. The show can be seen as a new step within the strategy of the colonial enterprise which would make use of this new technique/medium to link the metropolitan audience with "the work of the civilizing mission." Now, the colonial authority would fully depend on the new role the image could play in inducing and convincing the French general public. In addition to the traditional roles of the traveler, anthropologist, missionary and ethnographer, the photographer/cineaste would deploy his/her camera in the service of colonial propaganda. In this respect, the work done by Mesguich is a pertinent example fostering the interlocking aspect that relates cinema to imperialism.

As they inwardly embed a clear imperial intention, Mesguich's images were decisive in foregrounding the nature of cinematic practice in colonized Morocco. The images, which mark a particular departure, reinforce the instrumentality of the camera in the process of pacification and assimilation taking place under colonial rule. Therefore, it is not only the historical background that determines the images' "value" but mainly the vision that conditioned the work of the photographer. While the first was a colonial moment, the second was a colonial eye/I. "The historical value" of Mesguich's scenes does not only lie in the images themselves, but also in the discourse about them. Mesguich's images are of particular significance for the historiographical writing of cinema in Morocco, and their significance stems from "the historical precedence" they realize within the process of introducing the motion image in the Moroccan context. Within this framework, the aforementioned images can 'historicize' for the early contact of the camera with the Moroccan land. Initially, 1907 saw the rise of cinema as a practice, and indeed it was a colonial rise. What follows, resonated within the predefined and pre-established functions already set out by the colonial administration for the work of the photographers. Abdelkader Ben Ali states:

> Le documentaire investit très tôt les pays du Maghreb, allant jusqu'à exercer son influence sur les démarches et l'approche des premières fictions. Ainsi, les premiers courts-métrages de fiction réalisés par Camille de Morlhon sont un exemple significatif de cette volonté d'explorer le Maghreb par l'image mouvante.[1]
>
> The documentary invests very early in the Maghreb countries, going so far as to exert their influence on the process and approach of the first fictions. Thus, Camille de Morlhon's first fictional short films are a significant example of this desire to explore the Maghreb through a moving image.

It is true that Mesguich's scenes were preliminary practices that initiated the colonial expansion. Historically, it was not until 1912 that Morocco came under the direct colonial rule, and the terms of the Treaty of Fes recognized Morocco as a 'French Protectorate,' allowing France the exercise of power over the Cherifian Empire. The first year of the Protectorate (1912) witnessed the projection of the first public show which took place in Fes, the capital city of Morocco at that time. Due to this momentous cinematic event, the Moroccan audience was able to see the moving pictures for the first time. Since there were no movie theatres then, the Moroccan audience mainly from Fes and its surroundings could see the projections in a large open-air square where the screen was installed. Historically speaking, the projection of films at that time could be seen as the advent of film distribution in Morocco.

However, it should be mentioned that this show was previously preceded by private projections which had taken place in the royal palace in 1902. At that time, the sultan Moulay Abdelaziz (1878-1943) had been showing tremendous passion for the Western industry and he was reportedly curious about its updates and innovations. In his *Dans L'intimité du Sultan (2010)*, Gabriel Veyre reports that Moulay Abdelaziz was vigorously concerned with introducing the latest inventions to his royal palace.

[1] Abdelkader Ben Ali, *Le Cinéma Colonial au Maghreb : L'Imaginaire en Trompe- L'oeil* (Paris : Cerf, 1998), pp. 28-29.

The arts represented a curiosity, and the sultan was primarily interested in learning painting in the first place and the art of photography and the cinematography in second place.[1] Gabriel Veyre himself directed the sultan's first lessons in the art of photography while the American M. Shneider gave him lessons in painting.[2] In a short period of time, the sultan was already trying his hand at the camera and crafting his skills with the interior life of the palace where he captured images of female figures of the harem. Progressively, the sultan himself became a teacher and transmitted his basic knowledge to the women of the palace. *"Non seulement il les a beaucoup photographiées, mais il leur apprit à opérer elles-mêmes, et elles s'en tirent fort joliment, ma foi. Il leur donne des séances de cinématographe."*[3] (Not only did he photograph them a lot, but he taught them to operate on their own, and they did very nicely, my faith. He gave them cinematographic sessions).

From the early years of the protectorate onwards, the French colonial authorities were meticulous at utilizing cinema in the works of propaganda and in the process of assimilation targeting the indigenous community. In a manner of speaking, they were conscious of its function and influence as a medium within the colonial strategies of cultural penetration. As cinema was regarded as an effective medium in the colonial propaganda, the colonial administration was scrupulous at achieving full control over film production. The ideological and colonial conception of the mission of cinema is seemingly manifested in the words of one of the very influential figures of the colonial presence in Morocco. Addressing a message to the Department of Cinematography on December 31st, 1920, General Lyautey openly recognized the good profit to be gained from the instrumentality of cinema in disseminating the colonial precepts among individuals of colonized communities, making it clear that cinema should be hired to serve propaganda:

[1]Gabriel Veyre, *Dans Lintimité du Sultan* (Casablanca: Afrique Orient, 2010), p. 115.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 110.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 134.

> On ne peut douter des heureux résultats qu'on est droit d'attendre de l'emploi du cinématographe comme instrument d'éducation de nos protégés. Des vues et des films appropriés laisseront certainement dans l'esprit neuf des marocains des traces profondes, quant à la vitalité, la force, la richesse de la France, la perception de ses moyens de travail et des articles qu'elle fabrique, la beauté de ses sites et de ses produits... Mais sans aller jusqu'à répondre d'un tel bouleversement dans des habitudes auxquelles les marocains sont si attachés, on peut espérer que cette compagne est susceptible de faire naître en lui un sentiment d'admiration pour la France, qui augmentera certainement sa confiance en nous.[1]
>
> We cannot doubt the satisfying results that we are entitled to expect from the use of film-making as an educational tool for our young generations. Suitable views and films will undoubtedly have profound effects on the new minds of Moroccans, as to the sparkle, strength, wealth of France, the perception of its working methods and the articles it manufactures, the beauty of its sites and products... But without going so far as to cause such a disruption in habits to which Moroccans are so attached, we can hope that this campaign will stimulate among them a feeling of admiration for France, which will certainly increase their confidence in us.

The colonial authorities continually engaged in supplying considerable support to photographers and filmmakers, encouraging them to shoot films in Morocco. Early groups of French filmmakers were received by the General Lyautey, who promised to provide them with the due support they would need in the production of their films. As Ahmed Araib and De Hullessen state:

[1] Quoted in Driss Jaidi, *Histoire du cinéma au Maroc: Le cinéma colonial* (Rabat: Almajal, 200), p. 24.

> Le maréchal Lyautey accueillit chaleureusement les premiers cinéastes. Quelques copies de ces rencontres sont gardées soigneusement par les archives du centre cinématographique marocain. Lyautey met à la disposition de ces cinéastes les locaux de sa résidence pour certaines vues.[1]
>
> Marshal Lyautey extended a warm welcome to the first filmmakers. Some copies of these meetings are meticulously kept by the archives of the Moroccan Film Centre. Lyautey provides these filmmakers with the premises of his residence for certain views.

In another context, Henry David Salvin (2001) endorses this view claiming that the French colonial authorities deployed this strategy within the overall countries of North Africa. The act of supporting the filmmaking activity reverberated within the colonial ideology and mainly operated through the manipulation of films' contents so as to consolidate colonial propaganda. Thus, Salvin (2001) confirms:

> French film companies of the 1920 and 1930 produced dozens of films about the Foreign Legion and other colonial themes. The films reflected the usual tension between art and commerce, but because they were made in North Africa, the task of attracting a mass audience and financial backing was complicated by an equally urgent need for logistical support. French authorities in the Maghreb provided such support but exacted a price, influencing content and manipulating the message to promote their policies over competing colonial stratagems. This interplay is one aspect of the overall role of colonial cinema as an expression of the interaction of cultural hegemony and political power.[2]

[1] Ahmed Araib and Eric de Hullessen, *Il Etait une fois Le cinéma au Maroc* (Rabat : EDH, 1999), p. 14.
[2] David Henry Slavin, *Colonial Cinema and Imperial France, 1919-1939: White Blind Spots, Male Fantasies, Settler Myths* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. xi.

Due to the welcoming atmosphere and the inducements offered by the colonial administration, interest grew significantly among Western filmmakers who were eager to tame the Moroccan land and open its 'mysteries' for visual interpellation. With its natural potential, Morocco continued to attract the attention of a large number of Western filmmakers who embarked on Moroccan soil very early after the crystallization of the Treaty of Fes. After the first scenes run by Mesguich, already revealing a colonial spirit, J. Pinchon and Daniel Quintin are thought to be the first to inaugurate the process of shooting fiction films in Morocco.[1] In 1919, J. Pinchon and Daniel Quintin shot *Mektoub,* which is considered the first fiction film set on the Cherifian Empire during the colonial period. According to Boulanger (1975),

> Deux ans plus tard [after 1917] sur un scenario d'Edmond Doutté, J. Pinchon et Daniel Quintin tournaient au Maroc : *Mektoub* (C'était écrit), joué par Mary Harald… [L]a troupe, accueillie là-bas à bras ouverts, mena quelque temps une existence nomade, enregistrant à Tanger, Casablanca et surtout à Marrakech. *Mektoub* a pour titre de gloire d'avoir été le premier film de fiction réalisé dans l'Empire Chérifien.[2]

> Two years later [after 1917] on a scenario of Edmond Doutté, J. Pinchon and Daniel Quintin were shooting in Morocco: *Mektoub* (It was written), played by Mary Harald... Welcomed there with open arms, the troupe led a nomadic existence for some time, recording in Tangiers, Casablanca and especially in Marrakech. *Mektoub* is distinguished to have been the first fiction film made in the Cherifian Empire.

The process of shooting films steadily proliferated and Morocco continued to attract the attention of French filmmakers who were attracted by its natural beauty as incorporated in its lights, settings, and

[1] Pierre Boulanger, *Le cinéma colonial: d*e '*L' Atlantide'* à *'Lawrence d'Arabie'*, p. 28.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 28.

folk stories. Three years after the production of *Mektoub*, four groups of French filmmakers embarked on Moroccan soil and shot four films:[1] *Le Sang d'Allah* shot by Luitz-Morat, *Inch Allah* by Franz Toussaint, *Antar* by Jean Leune, and *Les Hommes Nouveaux* by Donatien and Edward-Emile Violet. A point in common among these films is that they were shot in the south of Morocco; especially in Marrakech. Some of them, as it is the case of *Le Sang d'Allah*, received considerable support from Haj T'hami Laglaoui, who was generous enough to offer his private residence and his harem to the convenience of the film crew. It is interesting to argue that these four films are located within the orbit of the colonial machinery and reflect the imperial aspirations of the colonial administration. Perhaps the best example which expressively engages in an outward work of propaganda is *Les Hommes Nouveaux*. The film promotes the theory of the "civilizing mission" by paying a particular tribute to one of its leading figures in Morocco: General Lyautey. Ben Ali admits:

> Ce film [*Les Hommes Nouveaux*] dédié ouvertement à la mémoire de Lyautey (générique) ne cache pas sa visée propagandiste quant aux circonstances de l'installation du maréchal au Maroc et au processus de *"pacification"* du pays. Cependant, ce qui est particulièrement remarquable, c'est l'interaction du couple fiction/documentaire servant de mise en place historique à la *" pacification"* au sein de laquelle la fiction va prendre place.[2]

> This film [Les Hommes Nouveaux] overtly dedicated to Lyautey's memory (credits) does not hide its propagandist intent with respect to the conditions of the Marshal's installation in Morocco and the country's *"pacification*" process. However, what is most noteworthy is the interaction of the fiction/documentary pair, serving as a historic set-up to *"pacification"* in which fiction will take place.

[1]Pierre Boulanger, *Le cinéma colonial*, p. 43.
[2] Abdelkader Ben Ali, *Le cinéma colonial au Maghreb*, p. 55.

The connecting link between cinema and colonial propaganda in *Les Hommes Nouveaux* is not only manifested in the narrative discourse of the film, but also in the deployment of two genres: Fiction and documentary. The significance of non-fiction (documentary) lies in its ability to impress the viewers. Having the power of presenting 'real-life', the documentary is more effective in giving a sense of credibility to the process of narration. It is for this reason that the non-fiction part of the film, which is clearly devoted to the work of propaganda, takes up a substantial amount of time within the film's narrative. In the same context, Ben Ali adds:

> Les vingt premières minutes du film sont consacrées à l'arrivée de Layautey au Maroc et à la répression de la "dissidence" jusqu'à la "pacification" totale du pays. Le traitement filmique de cette partie est doublement intéressant: tout d'abord, il concède à cette partie une autonomie presque totale par rapport au reste de la fiction (elle peut en effet constituer à elle seule un film à part entière)...[1]
>
> The first twenty minutes of the film are devoted to Layautey's arrival to Morocco and the suppression of "dissent" until a thorough "pacification" is established throughout the country. The filmic handling of this part is of twofold interest: First, it accords this part nearly total autonomy compared to the rest of the fiction (it can indeed constitute a full-fledged film on its own)…

From the early years of the French colonial rule, Morocco was the backdrop for the distribution of European films, allowing the Western film industry access to a new market which was promising financial profit. With the appearance of the first movie theatres, films from different nations were imported and screened to the audience. In the beginning, moviegoing was purely a European concern,

[1] Abdelkader Ben Ali, *Le Cinéma Colonial au Maghreb*, pp. 55-56.

but later, on the magic of the cinematic image managed to induce, in particular, the assimilated Moroccan elite from cities such as Fes, Marrakech, Tangier, and Casablanca. For this elite, the ritual of movie going was indeed a form of integrating with modern life and a way of adhering to its liberal-oriented style.

Morocco continued to exist as a favoured backdrop for the Western production companies which profited from the great potential that the country had to offer. Throughout the colonial period (1912-1956),[1] dozens of films were made by Western filmmakers. The engagement with colonial propaganda was typically the dominant feature that defined the majority of these colonial films. Largely criticized for their colonial vision, these films have often been the source of controversy among Moroccan film historians and critics. Whether to consider these films within the achievements of Moroccan cinema or not was the central question of post-colonial Moroccan film criticism. Film critics such as Ahmed Sijilmassi, Hamid Tbatou, and Mostapha Mesnaoui, to name but a few, have all acknowledged the impossibility, or at least, the difficulty of establishing the epistemological rupture with the legacy of colonial cinema. They agree that colonial cinema was conditioned by an extrinsic vision, whose main concern was to exhibit the exotic aspect of Moroccan culture. The following chapter addresses the construction of the natives and draws on the degree of their presence or absence in the narrative structure and the filmic discourse of colonial cinema.

Chapter Two:

Colonial Cinema: The Presence/ Absence of the Natives and the Grammar of Otherness

As mentioned before, the filmmaking activity in colonial Morocco undoubtedly functioned within the frame of serving the colonial presence and control. The context of colonial dominion inspired European filmmakers to represent the Moroccan reality and later on to display it for colonial visual consumption. This process worked in parallel coordination with the guidance and dictates of the colonial administration which continually supported the work of filmmakers and backed up their endeavours. In return, the colonial administration profited from the instrumentality of cinema within the process of cultural penetration. Cinema played a conspicuous role not only in consolidating the colonial discourse and in defending its ethics, but also in reinforcing the legitimacy of "the civilizing mission" ideology. Under colonial rule, Morocco provided the backdrop for a large number of films which were shot by European and American filmmakers. These films, which go under the label of colonial cinema, are often regarded as an extrinsic attempt at representing native reality. Due to their colonial vision, colonial films have generated an intense controversy that has been about the politics and poetics of representation in its connection with the native reality.

In an attempt to reflect on this controversy, the present chapter seeks to study the degree of presence/absence of natives and the extent to which they were misrepresented in colonial films. By reflecting on the grammar of representation, this chapter examines how colonial cinema has displayed the encounter between native and European characters. To understand how colonial cinema operates stylistically, it will be appropriate to analyze it in the light of Edward Said's theorization of the concept of representation with respect to the dichotomy of self and other. Henceforth, "it is impossible to ignore the contribution of Edward Said's 1978 book *Orientalism* to the current discourse on the cinematic

Middle East."[1] By virtue of the sheer connection that historically related Orientalism to colonialism, it might be of intellectual relevance to see how Orientalism was instrumentally deployed as a pedagogical tool by colonial cinema. This assumption may hold true if we understand that Orientalism "connotes the high handed executive attitude of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century European colonialism."[2] Because colonial cinema is essentially about the extra-European reality, it reproduced a Eurocentric vision whereby the native is orientalized and regarded through a rigid hierarchy that structurally reduces his/her presence to a subordinate position.

A fundamental aspect that identifies colonial cinema is its involvement in the process of representing the encounter between the West and its Other; a representation that often resonates within a binary opposition by which the two poles (Occident/Orient) are assessed on asymmetrical grounds. By engaging an orientalizing discourse, colonial cinema has inherited discursive patterns and behaviours that have seen the relationship between the self and other in terms of a power structure. Edward Said's ground-breaking text, Orientalism, explicitly shows that the Western discourse, tending to represent the Orient, ended by inventing that Orient through a knowledge that is contradictory to its reality. Said demonstrates that the Orient is "a Western invention" of the literary and cultural canon which, instead of representing the orient, misrepresented it through a systematic strategy of "cultural stereotyping."[3] For this reason, "the Orient that appears in Orientalism, then, is a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and later Western empire."[4] Colonial filmmakers indeed deploy the discourse of Orientalism to visually mediate the Orient to European audiences. As a system of representation and signification, colonial cinema has incorporated an orientalizing vision whereby the Orient is represented as a land of mysteries waiting for

[1] Lina Khatib, *Filming the Modern Middle East: Politics in the Cinemas of Hollywood and the Arab World* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), p. 5.
[2] Edwards Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Penguin, 1995), p .2.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 26.
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 202-203.

the adventures of the white man, who is repeatedly seen as a discoverer and a bringer of light. In his discussion of Western cinema, Abdelmajid Hajji (2013) maintains that "Western cinema dealing with Oriental themes has been greatly influenced and was in part shaped by Orientalism."[1]

The Western discourse, Said argues, others the other and misrepresents him through discursive practices and by disseminating a false knowledge about both the Occident and Orient. In trying to link Orientalism and colonialism Said shows how colonial hegemony is implicated in Orientalism because "the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of dominion, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony."[2] By rendering the other more exotic and his land more desirable, Orientalism is often accused of legitimizing the ideology of "the civilizing mission" and of displaying a discourse that inwardly embeds colonial intentions of control and domination.

From the outset, it should be emphasized that the discussion around the issue of colonial cinema is often faced with a conceptual ambiguity. As a problematic concept, colonial cinema has often been hard to define and has remained beyond the reach of any unique identification. Critically, the concept has been approached differently and investigated within a range of disciplines ranging from film criticism, sociology, post-colonialism to historical studies. Numerous questions have been asked with the purpose of looking for affinities that might exist between this term and other concepts such as "third cinema," "alternative cinema," or "postcolonial cinema."

Within the Moroccan context, the controversy about colonial cinema has been a prime concern of the post-colonial film criticism, and this is reflected in two seminal books: Abdelkader Ben Ali's Le Cinéma colonial au Maghreb: L'Imaginaire en trompe-l'oeil (1998) and Driss Jaidi's Histoire du cinema au Maroc: Le cinéma colonial (2001).[3] The two books attempt to unravel the ambiguity that arises out of the concept of colonial cinema by providing a comprehensive overview that relates this form of cinema to its

[1] Abdelmajid Hajji, *Arabs in American Cinema (1894-1930): Flappers Meet Sheiks in New Movie Genre* (California: University of California Press, 2013), p .7.
[2] Edward Said, *Orientalism*, p.5.
[3] The two books were preceded by Pierre Boulanger *Le Cinéma Colonial: d*e '*L' Atlantide'* à *'Lawrence d'Arabie'* (1975).

context of production: The colonial period. The two books proceed from different perspectives in their process of approaching and understanding how colonial cinema operates. Unlike Driss Jadi's historical approach, Abdelkader Ben Ali tends to blend history and criticism through an approach that is both historical and critical at the same time. Due to its critical discourse, Ben Ali's book is of much relevance to the core argument of this chapter. Because colonial cinema has often been a source of conceptual ambiguity, Ben Al is concerned with this ambiguity by asking: *"s'agit-il d'un genre cinématographique, d'un courant esthétique ou d'un simple stock d'images et de sons témoignant d'une certaine idéologie du passé colonial."*[1] ("Is it a cinematographic genre, an aesthetic movement or a simple stock of images and sounds reflecting a certain ideology of the colonial past?")

Inteding to reflect on Ben Ali's questions, I argue that it is hard to consider colonial cinema as "an aesthetic trend" and it is even harder to see it as a 'genre' for the simple reason that it does not constitute distinctive features that may set the permissible limits of its identity. Still, the third implication (in Ben Ali's questions) as a "stock of images" may serve as an adequate definition. For the interlocking affinities that link it to the colonial project, colonial cinema can be regarded as a visual representation of the colonial ideology through film and as a form of cultural hegemony that has promoted the white ideals and defended the West as a hegemonic block. In terms of its connection with the colonial temporality, colonial cinema remained loyal to its age and the dominant modes of thought that had shaped the colonial period. By virtue of its involvement in colonial propaganda, colonial cinema reproduced communicative codes of the colonial discourse that entirely functioned in terms of what Edward Said called "cultural stereotyping." Because it was about the colonial experience, colonial cinema resonated within a discursive and visual structure that engaged a paternalistic vision where the native reality was displayed through a Eurocentric mode of representation.

[1] Abdelkader Ben Ali, *Le Cinéma colonial au Maghreb*, p. 16.

Significantly, the fundamental trait unifying its large and diverse corpus is its depiction of the native reality from the colonizer's perspective. Within this perspective, the process of narration in colonial films is biased, subjective and vulnerable to the demands of the colonial ideology. Colonial films become visual vehicles of colonial propaganda by articulating a systematic discourse that functions in terms of a predefined set of tropes, images, and metaphors. Given that the colonial film is a binary structure, its narrative discourse usually hovers between two asymmetrical signifiers: The colonizer and the colonized. Often, the colonizer (the white man) is identified with positive values; however, the colonized (native) is always portrayed through stereotypes and clichés. The white man is always the superior, the dominant and the civilized, whereas the native is perpetually regarded as inferior, subordinate, and backward. It is at the borderline of this binary thought that the colonial phenomenon was given certain legitimacy.[1]

Like other forms of expression that had flourished within the colonial context, colonial cinema resonated within the dominant ideology that shaped the colonial time. The colonial context was an inducement to a variety of art forms that engaged in the process of consolidating the colonial ideals and of legitimizing expansion and imperialism. For instance, colonial literature, with its vast corpus, provided the platform for the allocation of a colonial discourse that was overtly in favour of colonialism. According to Boehmer, "Colonial literature, which is the more general term, will be taken to mean writings concerned with colonial perceptions and experience, written mainly by metropolitans, but also by creoles and indigenous, during colonial time."[2]

Boehmer's definition can be useful in addressing the dynamic character of the concept of colonial cinema. Based on Boehmer, I suggest that colonial cinema can be identified in terms of three parameters. As such, it refers to a substantial body of films: 1) Films that are made by metropolitan filmmakers during the colonial period, 2) Films that present an extrinsic and colonial representation of native reality,

[1] Ella Shohat, "Gender and Culture of Empire: Towards a Feminist Ethnography of the Cinema," *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film*, eds. Mathew Bernstein and Gaylyn Studlar (New Brunswick and New Jersey : Rutgers University Press, 1997), p. 27.
[2] Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 2.

3) Films that are highly concerned with the colonial phenomenon and experience. Colonial cinema refers to films which are made by non-native filmmakers in the colonial period, and which depict native reality through the perspective of stereotypes and clichés, with the purpose of promoting the colonial ideology. One of the most pervasive aspects of colonial cinema is the work of misrepresentation by which this discourse exhibits an asymmetrical relationship between the West and its Other. Dina Sherzer states that,

> The films, which took place in North Africa, presented the colonies as the French directors imagined them, as territories waiting for European initiatives, virgin land where the white man with helmet and boots regenerated himself or was destroyed by alcoholism, malaria, or native women. They 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.[1]

Because it functioned as a visual vehicle for the circulation of colonial imaginary, the colonial film inherited traditions and modes of representation that had already been deployed by preliminary colonial writings of the epoch. Hence, the "Colonial film borrowed themes and images from precursors. These included orientalist painting, illustrated magazines, colonial novel, dioramas and panoramas, and tourist postcards."[2] In fact, the correspondence between colonial cinema and other forms of expression can particularly be more expressive through the mediation that is achieved between this cinema and the novel. To some extent, colonial cinema inherited not only the novel's modes of representation and its discursive patterns, but also represented a continuity to the traditions being foregrounded by examples

[1] Dina Sherzer, ed. *Cinema, Colonialism , Postcolonialism,* p. 4
[2] Henry David Salvin, *Colonial Cinema and Imperial France 1919-1939,* p. 17.

such as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899*)* and E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924). Colonial cinema deployed the same colonial discourse and the same colonial tropes that the novel had deployed, especially in demarcating between natives and Europeans. Like the novel, colonial cinema was a powerful tool within the process of cultural hegemony, whereby the film became a semantic field for the promotion and dissemination of the colonial ideology. Historically, both art forms met at the point of serving the colonial propaganda and played a great role in the promotion of a homogeneous and stereotypical discourse that was often qualified as binary in structure and imperialistic in vision. About the link between the two forms of expression, Ella Shohat maintains:"If cinema partly inherited the function of the novel, it also transformed it. Whereas literature plays itself out within a virtual lexical space, the cinematic chronotope is literal, splayed out concretely across the screen and unfolding in the literal time of twenty-four frames per second..."[1]

Although they were different—especially in their mechanisms, tools, and effectiveness—colonial cinema and the novel converged in defending colonialism and in reinforcing colonial fallacies about the West and its other. Within this logic, they continually visualized the West as the centre of power, knowledge, and reason and concurrently represented natives as the antithesis of such images. Repeatedly, natives and Europeans are demarcated and consistently envisioned in terms of a binary relationship. One point in common between colonial cinema and the novel is that they both share a common history; they both emerged in the midst of colonialism and evolved within the historical context that subsequently accompanied the project of expansion and imperialism. According to Ferdous Azim (1993), the context of colonialism was crucial for the novel's roles and functions, and especially for the transmission of the colonial imaginary. As she maintains, "The relationship between the novel and the imperialist project is many-faceted, and can be viewed at least from three vantage-points: of themes, of the formation of

[1] Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, p. 103.

subject-positions, and of the formation of a pedagogical subject."[1] The novel was an adequate terrain for the circulation of the colonial thought and the consolidation of the legitimacy of the colonial act. Hence, Ferdous Azim argues:

> The birth of the novel coincided with the European colonial project; it partook of and was part of a discursive field concerned with the construction of a universal and homogenous subject… The novel is an imperial genre, not in theme merely, not by virtue of the historical moment, but in its formal structure—in the construction of that narrative voice which holds the narrative structure together.[2]

Along with that, Edward Said (1994) advocates the same idea by acknowledging the dialectical affinity that relates the novel to imperialism. According to him, the two referents are inseparable and can only exist in total dependency to each other, and by this dependency, Said is "not trying to say that the novel—or the culture in the broad sense—'caused' imperialism, but that the novel, as a cultural artifact of bourgeois society, and imperialism are unthinkable without each other."[3]

It is true that "colonial cinema like colonial writings, from which it derives most of its narratives,"[4] inherited themes that recreate the natives as exotic, mysterious and the source of traumatic contradiction. As a consequence of the colonial encounter, the representation of the natives often occurs through a rigid and fixed dichotomy of inclusiveness/exclusiveness, acceptance/disavowal, and desire/fear. The natives are the object of total ambivalence; they are desired because they serve as a mirror through which the white man proves his superiority and dominance, but in the meantime, they are feared because they are thought to be threatening. The white man's identification with himself is equally similar to what Jaques

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[1] Ferdaws Azim, *The Colonial Rise of the Novel* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 31.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 30.
[3] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 84.
[4] Abdelmajid Hajji, "Oriental Women in Early Hollywood Films," *Women and Writing* (Meknes: Faculty of Letters, 1995), p. 171. Here, I am using Hajji's expression with modifications so as to fit with the content of this chapter. Hajji's expression goes:"Hollywood cinema dealing with the Orient, like Western literature from which it derives most of its narratives …"

Lacan names *the mirror stage*[1] whereby the Other becomes significant in the process of self-image and self-definition/self-identification. Within the framework of Said's Orientalism, John Maier argues:

> Orientalism is a mirror by which the West constructs itself in images. We are used to thinking of mirrors as reflecting an undistorted (and unmediated) self: We look into a mirror and see our self… The Orient is mainly a projection of our fear and desires, but it constructs a cultural self for us.[2]

The white man identifies himself as a superior subject only through his contact and encounter with the natives. In colonial films, this process of identifying the self and the Other results in a rigid hierarchy that is established through the articulation of two poles that are structurally envisioned in terms of inequality and demarcation. The demarcation between the natives and the European characters within the narrative structure of the colonial film should not be understood as a mere aesthetic device that is reserved for the act of representation, but it stems from the colonial logic. Within this colonial logic, the act of bringing the two poles together is impossible because it is culturally and racially perceived as inappropriate. Historically speaking, the colonizer creates the structural divide between the natives and the Europeans, and defendes it as a reminder of its assumed cultural supremacy and as a marker of hierarchy that is tied it to its other (the natives). This divide is not merely psychological, but it is transmitted into behavioral patterns and reflected in many aspects of life. Starting from language to the inhabited locations, this divide is a reality that is materially lived, promoted and regenerated. On the ground, this demarcation is established through the juxtaposition between two contradictory spaces, and then, created in the form of two dissimilar zones that are cut into two compartments: One for the natives and the other for the Europeans. This demarcation is reflected through the spacing of otherness as

[1] Jaques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanlytic Experience," *A Cultural Studies Reader : History, Theory, Practice*, eds. Jessica Munns and Gita Rajan (London : Longman, 1995).
[2] John Maier, *Desert Songs: Western Images of Morocco and Images of the West* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 178.

incorporated in the clear demarcation between the old medina and the new colonial city. The latter, unlike the native zone, is the location that embraces the modern/urban life in all its manifestations. The new city is the centre of politics, commerce, and modern life. In this respect, Franz Fanon contends:

> 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...[1]

Like colonial discourse, the narrative structure of colonial cinema is built upon binarism and oppositionality. In dealing with the encounter between the natives and the European characters, colonial films function structurally in terms of binarisation of subjects and, then, articulate almost the same fixed images that depict the Europeans on a hierarchical and asymmetrical basis. Henceforth, the Europeans are repeatedly associated with positive connotations that delineate the images of modernity, civilization, superiority, progress, rationalism, whereas the natives are presented as the antithesis of such values and they ultimately stand to signify totally the opposite. Therefore, they stand to represent tradition, primitiveness, inferiority, backwardness, and spiritualism. However, Derrida maintains that "there is always a relation of power between the poles of binary opposition."[2] Likewise, Stuart Hall insists that this power and hierarchy should be marked even in the written form: "we should really write **white**/black,

[1] Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 30.
[2] Quoted in Stuart Hall, ed. *Representation: Cultural Representations and a Signifying Practices* (London: The Open University, 1997), p. 235.

men/women, **masculine**/feminine, **upper class**/lower class, **British**/alien to capture this power dimension in discourse."[1]

Because cinema is a visual expression, this power (the demarcation between the white man and the natives) is not written in bold letters, but it is reflected through a variety of filmic elements and techniques. As an example, the deployment of the close-up technique contributes to representing both European characters and natives on asymmetrical grounds. As a filmic code, the close-up, which is the process of projecting characters from a sense of proximity, aims at transmitting the psychological and emotional aspects of the actors. The close-up presents the traits of characters by displaying them as recognized subjectivities. Because the use of the close-up is fully intended for the individualization of characters, colonial cinema's deployment of this technique can only be understood within the framework of colonial ideology. With its power to impress and affect a potential audience, the close-up is significant in this effect because "what was more important, however, than the discovery of the physiognomy of things, was the discovery of the human face. Facial expression is the most subjective manifestation of man, more subjective than speech."[2] Deleuze's discussion of the close-up in its association with the face is very pertinent for understanding how this technique can suspend individuation by presenting the face and in the meantime effacing it. By associating the representation of the face with the use of affect, Deleuze assumes that "there is no close-up of the face. The close-up is the face, but the face precisely in so far as it has destroyed its triple function- a nudity much greater than that of the body, an inhumanity much greater than that of animals."[3]

It should be mentioned that the close-up is used in the colonial film from a "racialized" perspective. It is a film technique that is strictly bound to the European character and his/her presentation and

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[1] Stuart Hall,"Why Does Difference Matter?" *Representation: Cultural Representations and signifying Practices.*Ed. (London: The Open University,1997), p. 235.
[2] Bela Balazs, "The Close Up," *Film Theory and Criticism*, eds. Mast Gerald and Marshell Kohen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 257.
[3] Jenny Edkins, *Face Politics* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 70.

representation. Conversely, natives are mostly projected in multitude and constructed as tiny elements in open spaces such as the squares, the souks, the deserts, the dunes, and the labyrinths. Within the signifying chain, natives do not express themselves as full individuals or subjectivities, and they are hardly the focal point of the camera's manipulation. In spite of this, there are some films in which natives are "individualized" and presented through the close-up technique, but the use of the close-up in this sense is meant to convey the total opposite of what it means for the European characters. In contrast with the individualization of the European characters, the visibility of the natives' facial aspects contributes more to their deformation and de-individualization. This process is described by Abdelkader Ben Ali as forged individualisation (*la fausse individualisation*).[1]

In his analysis of colonial cinema, Ben Ali[2] lists some of the very few films which project the natives through the close-up, showing that the use of of this technique—for both the natives and European characters—signifies differently. In *Baroud (1932), Les Cinq Gentelmen Maudits (1932), L'Atlantide (1921),* and *Sirocco (1930),* the technique of the close-up assumes diametrically opposing interpretations and meanings. For example, Si Amarock in *Baroud,* the sorcerer in *Les Cinq Gentalemen Maudits*, Segheir Ben Cheikh in the second version of *L'Atlantide*, and Malika in *Sirocco* are characters that are presented through the "close-up," but their proximity serves their deformation. The proximity of the camera is not a way of transmitting their subjectivities, as it is the case with the European characters, but it is rather a way of displaying their "ugliness." Likewise, it is a way through which these characters present themselves as exotic, mysterious, and most interestingly, threatening.

On another level, the natives' absence is very obvious in colonial films. In spite of depicting native reality, colonial films remain exclusively the space of European characters. Thus, "they are assigned

[1]Abdelkader Ben Ali, *Le Cinéma Colonial au Maghreb*, p. 149.
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 149-150.

secondary roles since they can never function as heroes."[1]The natives are repeatedly denied visibility, and on many occasions, even native roles are played by Europeans. Colonial films marginalize the natives and reduce their images to mere silhouettes that hardly have any effect on the dramatic structure of these films. Therefore, the natives' images are susceptible to oblivion since they are made to leave no imprints sustaining their contribution to the history of colonial cinema. In many colonial films, even the better ones which recognize some space for natives as it is the case with *Itto (1934),*[2] native roles are played by European characters. Within the convention of colonial cinema, "Arab characters are often played by Western actors. Moreover, as Lagny, Sorlin and Ropars note, actors who play Arab characters are frequently unnamed or otherwise marginalized in the posters and credit sequences of the films…"[3]

Even when they are present, natives are pushed to invisibility, and they hardly reach the status of full characters. As they are often de-individualized, the natives become part of the natural décor of the film, and their presence is only relevant to the implication of exoticism and mystery that they are supposed to stand for. The natives are also often silenced and projected as voiceless creatures who are, though human beings, represented as non-vocal. They do not speak because they are thought to be voiceless. In the few cases when they are heard, their language is rather seen as 'murmur' or mimetic sounds of the natural order. As Shohat argues, "in most European features set in North Africa, Arabic exists only as a background murmur, an incomprehensible babble."[4]Therefore, the denial of the native language is subsequently substituted by the colonizer's language which is defended as the most appropriate means of communication. Conversely, the vernacular is devalued and reduced to the very intimate and limited circles. In this regard, Albert Memmi notes that "[t]he colonized mother tongue, that which is sustained

[1] Khalid Bekkaoui, *Signs of Spectacular Resistance : The Spanish Moor and British Orientalism* (Casablanca: Najah El Jadida, 1998), p. 19.
[2] The role of Itto is played by Simone Berriau (Colonel Berriau's widow). See Pierre Boulanger, *Le Cinema colonial,* p. 118.
[3] Matthew Bernstein and Gaylyn Studlar, eds., *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Films* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), p. 222.
[4] Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, p. 252.

by his feelings, emotions and dreams, that in which his tenderness and wonder are expressed, that which holds the greatest emotional impact, is precisely the one which is least valued."[1]

According to David Spurr, the fact of denying the native language stems from the historical accumulation of Western thought and its fundamentals that date back to ancient Greece. It is the same process that originated from the intellectual underpinnings of Greek thought, and which was reproduced in massive ways during the colonial time. Accordingly, Spurr asserts:

> We know that for the ancient Greeks the barbarous, or barbarian, was literally one who babbled, who did not speak the language of the civilised humanity. The incoherence of barbarians was linked to their lawlessness and homelessness, their incapacity to master the instincts and passions of the body.[2]

In a connected vein, he continues:

> I have cited Aristotle and Rousseau in order to provide a context for the rhetorical tradition in which non-Western peoples are essentially denied the power of language as mute or incoherent. They are denied a voice in the ordinary sense—not recognized as capable of speech. Throughout the history of this tradition, the degraded or inadequate condition of language signifies a corresponding degradation in the political and social order of the other.[3]

Within the framework of Western thought, the natives are envisioned in terms of gaps and absences, and thus it is the "*White Man's Burden*"[4] to fill in these absences/gaps by bringing order, civilization, and culture. As Hegel states:

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[1] Albert Memmi, *The Coloniser and the Colonised* (London: Souvenir Press, 1974), p. 107.
[2] David Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration* (London: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 102.

[3] *Ibid*., p. 104

[4] Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden," *Kipling Rudyard: Selected Poems* (London: Penguin,1992), p. 127.

> Africa is no historical part of the world, it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it -that is in its northern part--belong to the Asiatic or European world… What we properly understand by Africa, is the unhistorical, undeveloped spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature.[1]

In fact, the linguistic parameter in the colonial film may be seen in the light of two perspectives. The first one stems from the racialized conception by which the native is perceived. Within this conception, the natives are thought not to reach the level of human beings, and thus are supposed to lack language--the most common human property. The second, which finds its continuum in the first, is motivated by a colonial strategy that worked at eclipsing the local language in order to substitute it with the colonial language. The natives were pushed to abandon their own language and to identify with the master's/colonizer's language; they were even punished for speaking their languages. In this context, Ella Shohat maintains:

> In films set in North Africa, for example, Arabic is an indecipherable murmur, while the "real" language of communication is the French of Jean Gabin in *Pépe le Moko (1936)* or the English of Bogart and Bergman in *Casablanca (1942*). In Lean's *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), which pretentiously, even ostentatiously sympathetic to the Arabs, we hear almost no Arabic at all but rather English spoken in a motley of accents, almost all of them (Omar Sharif being the exception) having little to do with Arabic…[2]

In the same context, Fanon tries to make the link between eclipsing the native language and the project of deforming national culture and identity. Fanon argues:

[1] Quoted in Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, p. 89.
[2] Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, p. 192.

> [T]o speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization.… Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country.[1]

Overall, the natives are ambivalently portrayed in colonial cinema; they are both present and absent, and even when present, they have minor roles. In the words of Abdul R. Jan. Mohamed: "Even though the native is negated by the projection of the inverted image, his presence as an absence can never be canceled."[2]Accordingly, natives never reach the status of heroes/heroines since it is only the white Westerner who is usually supposed to have the potentialities of playing heroic roles. The hero 'should' always be a European character that is constructed as totally different and essentially superior to the non-European. Although colonial cinema is about the native reality, it turns a blind eye to the colonial experience and the process of subjugation led by the colonial machine. By using almost the same colonial tools that were largely used by other forms of expression, colonial cinema proves its loyalty to the colonial project. For this reason, it seems that it is of more relevance to the Europeans/colonizers than it may be for natives/colonized. However, is colonial cinema a homogeneous corpus that is finite in its themes and approaches? This question remains the central focus of the coming chapter.

[1] Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 1952), pp. 8-9.
[2] Abdul R. Jan Mohamed "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonial Literature," *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 18.

Chapter Three:

Colonial Cinema: Two Visions and two Definitions

Having reflected on the general traits identifying the representational act of colonial cinema with respect to the natives' visibility and presence, the previous chapter has argued that colonial cinema, as an organic extension to colonial discourse, has deliberately deployed similar communicative patterns to those of Orientalism. By deploying a variety of techniques and aesthetic conventions, colonial cinema has worked at eclipsing the natives' visibility and reduced their presence to insignificance.

However, the main argument of the present chapter is to advance that colonial cinema is not a homogeneous corpus which can be identified in terms of an essentialist vision. By contrast, the purpose here is to maintain that it is a range of variations that are informed by a multiplicity of voices, experiences and representations. In spite of its heterogeneous character, colonial cinema has often been considered as a unified corpus. As Charles O'Brien maintains:

> …[D]espite the impressive diversity of films, the colonial cinema has been construed as a relatively unified corpus. The most systematic accounts, informed by structuralist semiology, note that narratives of the films are typically structured according to a contrast between the representation of a modern metropolitan France and that of a 'primitive' Africa or Orient.[1]

Essentially, the core idea of this chapter is to discard such a view by arguing that colonial cinema is a multiplicity of experiences which allocates *"discourses of difference*."[2] Engaging these discourses, I

[1]Charles O'Brien, "The 'Cinéma Colonial' of 1930s France: Film Narration and Spatial Practice," *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Films*, eds., Matthew Bernstein and Gaylyn Studlar.(New Brunswick and New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1997), pp. 208-209.

[2] Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference*: *An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1993).

contend that colonial cinema allows for the existence of a sub-category which I prefer to label as *"non-colonial cinema."* By non-colonial cinema, I mean a category of films which are located within the achievements of colonial cinema, but which partially remain unfamiliar with the colonial consensus. It is a category of films that have kept distance from the colonial imaginary by not reproducing colonial film styles and aesthetics which were prevailing during the colonial period. These films could fall apart from the politics of representation eminent to the context of their production. By articulating a distinct perspective, which can be seen as a "violation" of the traditions of colonial cinema, this film practice deserves to be examined separately. They are indeed few in number when compared with the entire output of the colonial filmography, but these films deserve to be critically addressed.

Although this category of non-colonial cinema was made during the colonial period, it did not align artistically with the dominant film texts of this period. In its representation of the natives, non-colonial cinema did not reproduce the dominant modalities of representation that had shaped the colonial period. Produced at different times in the colonial period, this category of non-colonial films represented natives differently and made them visible within their narrative structuring. Considerably, Jacques Séverac's *La Rose du souk* (1930) was the first film to launch this new trend of non-colonial cinema. As the first Arabic-speaking film in colonial Morocco, the film was adapted to cinema from a folk story told to the filmmaker by Mohamed Maamri. When watching the film, Maamri was satisfied with the decent representation of the natives and his satisfaction was transmitted in a letter which he sent to the film director. He says:

> Je vous renouvelle toutes mes félicitations. Car, je vous le répète, *'La Rose du Souk'* est un des rares films qui ne choquent pas la dignité d'un musulman. Vous avez su éviter un écueil, celui de mêler des personnages européens a des personnages indigènes. Jusqu'à présent, le beau rôle a toujours été donné aux premiers et c'est aussi compréhensible que regrettable.

> Votre film se maintient dans un cadre marocain avec des personnages marocains. La légende en est vraisemblable et la présentation très artistique. A mon avis, quelques petites questions de détails apart, rien n'est à reprendre dans ce film.[1]
>
> I would like to reiterate my congratulations to you once more. Because, I repeat, "La Rose du Souk" is one of the few films that do not undermine the dignity of a Muslim. You have managed to avoid the pitfall of mixing European and indigenous characters. Until now, the beautiful role has always been given to the first, and this is both comprehensible and unfortunate. Your film is maintained in a Moroccan setting with Moroccan characters. The caption is realistic and the presentation is very artful. In my view, except for a few small questions of detail, nothing is to be repeated in this film.

This letter is pertinent because it raises a central question about the process of representation in colonial cinema. Discussing the projection of native characters, Maamri was aware that *La Rose du Souk* displayed the encounter between European and native characters in a different manner. Because colonial cinema was firmly loyal to cinematic conventions relative to the representation of Otherness, it was startling that the filmmaker disassociated himself from the prevailing colonial modalities of representation. By implicitly reflecting on the natives' representation in *La Rose du Souk,* Maamri seems to raise a central issue that subsequently would remain one of the preferred questions of the post-colonial Moroccan film criticism. From an impressionistic standpoint, Maamri's letter is undoubtedly embedded with a critical discourse which blends aesthetic review and thematic evaluation.

Additionally, two other films can be considered in this category of non-colonial cinema; the two films are respectively *Le Grand Jeu* (1934) and *Itto* (1934) by Jack Feyder and Jean Benoit and Marie

[1]Quoted in Pierre Boulanger, *Le Cinéma colonial,* pp. 55-56.

Epstein. The production of these two films was seen as a landmark of a conspicuous shift within the representational process of colonial cinema. To many critics, the two films are acclaimed because they remained unfamiliar with the colonial phenomenon. Both Boulanger (1975) and Jaidi (2001) seem to agree that *Le Grand Jeu* and *Itto* represent a new phase in the evolution of cinema in colonial Morocco, and this evolution can be critically assessed with respect to the films's representation of the native reality. Jaidi confirms that,

> L'année 1934 fut déterminante dans l'histoire du cinéma au Maroc. Elle vit la réalisation de deux films importants: "*Le Grand Jeu*" de Jacques Feyder qui traduisait l'atmosphère de la légion avec le maximum de vérité sans jamais faire appel à l'héroïsme conventionnel, et "*Itto*" de Jean-Benoit Lévy et Marie Epstein qui a le mérite d'approcher la réalité marocaine, malgré sa tendance apologétique.[1]

> The year 1934 was decisive in the history of cinema in Morocco. It witnessed the making of two important films: *Le Grand Jeu* by Jacques Feyder which portrayed the atmosphere of the legion with an unparalleled reflection of reality, without ever appealing to conventional heroism, and *Itto* by Jean-Benoit Lévy and Marie Epstein which has the merit of approaching the Moroccan reality, despite its apologetic tendency.

Crucially, *Itto* is largely seen as a moment of transition in the colonial cinema because it managed to produce different images of what constituted the colonial imaginary at that time. The film marked a shift from the traditions of colonial cinema, and this is manifested in the construction of the native character. Mostly important, *Itto* remains one of the very first films where the Berber language is used and transmitted almost on an equal footing with French. In judging *Itto,* Boulanger succinctly maintains that,

[1] Driss Jaidi, *Histoire du Cinéma au Maroc: Le cinéma colonial* (Rabat: Almajal, 2001), p. 119.

> Au sein de la production coloniale d'alors, *Itto,* avec ses défauts aujourd'hui bien visibles, et ses qualités incontestables, fut en tout cas une sorte de havre. Un accident. Car ce film unique n'eut pas de descendance, ne fit pas école et, très vite, les cinéastes en revinrent à leurs thèmes favoris.[1]

> Within the colonial production of that era, Itto, with its visible defects today, and its indisputable qualities, was in all cases a sort of haven. Something unexpected.Because this one of a kind film had no descendants, it was not a school film and, very quickly, the filmmakers returned to their favorite themes.

Although *Itto* was made in a turbulent period when politics promoted colonial expansion, it articulated alternative images to the spirit of the age. Due to its non-colonial discourse, *Itto* did not appeal to the expectations of the colonial authorities. In the words of Lyautey, *"Il n'est pas de fait plus solidement établi que le rôle du médecin comme agent de pénétration, d'attirance et pacification."*[2] ("There is no more firmly established fact than the role of the physician as an agent of penetration, attraction and pacification.") As stated by Henry David Salvin (2001), *Itto* represented a moment of difference not only to preliminary experiences, but also to subsequent cinematic works. Salvin recognises that the film was an impressive and stunning experience within its pure context because it provided room for a form of resistance to the colonialism to figure out. In this respect, Salvin admits that,

> Lyauteisme breathed its last with *Itto,* a stunning film that chronicled Berber resistance to French colonialization. Made in 1934, it was the last and arguably the best of the Moroccan-

[1] Quoted in *Le cinéma colonial,* p. 119.
[2] *Ibid.,* p. 115.

based productions, but it was also a film with differing if not conflicting agendas. Its backers and writers were enlightened imperialists of Lyautey's coterie, interested in celebrating his strategy for colonial social control.[1]

It is generally accepted that *Le Grand Jeu* and *Itto* created a shift towards non-stereotypical images about natives and provided space for them to make themselves more visible to the eye of the viewer; something which had not been possible before. More precisely, the representation of the natives is at least displayed as sufficiently as distinct from colonial tropes. Discussing this point, Boulanger argues:

> Pour la première fois, en effet, le cinéma nord-africain osa nous montrer des musulmans de près, des êtres de chair et de sang, des hommes et des femmes, enfin, avec leurs faiblesses, leur courage et leur dignité. Et non plus des silhouettes perdues au loin sur les collines, ces rudes guerriers faisant parler la poudre de leurs moukhalas lors de photogéniques fantasias. Neuve entreprise qui ne montrait le peuple marocain sous son vrai visage, et noble, et généreuse.[2]

> In fact, North African cinema dared to show us Muslims at a close range, flesh-and-blood beings, men and women, with their weaknesses, their courage and their dignity for the first time, at last. And no more lost figures in the distance on the hills, these rough warriors making the gunpowder of their traditional rifles speak during photogenic fantasias. A new company that did not show the true, noble and generous face of the Moroccan people.

[1] Henry David Salvin, *Colonial Cinema and Imperial France, 1919- 1939,* p. 114.
[2] Pierre Boulanger, *Le cinéma colonial,* p. 110.

These films were appreciated by French viewers, and were in particular admired for the visual space they allotted to Berber characters, allowing them to express themselves as full subjects and to voice their Berber language. Pierre Sorlin explains:

> These French viewers were receptive to the Berber characters and identified with them. They were delighted to learn how the Chleuh lived and hear the Berbers speak their own language. Since dubbing was available but despised in France as spoiling the actor's personality, *Itto'*s avoided Séverac's pitfall by using subtitles.[1]

From the production of *Itto* onwards, colonial cinema continued to spawn its favoured themes of exoticism and expansion; this explains why the film is often considered as *"a voice crying out in the wilderness."*[2] For Sorlin, Marie Epstein "infused the film [*Itto*] with feminist hope and power. She holds the best claim to having made it democratic, anti-white supremacist vision of the future."[3] In spite of this, Sorlin adds:

> … Epstein's was a voice crying out in the wilderness. Cinéma colonial found new sponsors among the military defenders of the settler regime in Algeria. Dark and ominous visions of the West menaced by fearsome African hordes, ghastly tropical diseases, and Asiatic Bolshevism took hold of filmmakers as they revamped images and scenarios to project the face of race war.[4]

As a matter of fact, the "post-*Itto*" era is significantly characterised by the production of the so-called Moroccan cinema of the forties. Between 1946 and 1948, the colonial administration engaged in

[1] Pierre Sorlin, "The Fanciful Empire: French Feature Films and the Colonies in the 1930s," Henry David Salvin, *Colonial Cinema and Imperial France, 1919- 1939,* p. 127.
[2] Salvin, *Colonial Cinema and Imperial France, 1919- 1939,* p. 137.
[3] *Ibid.,* p. 137.
[4] *Ibid.,* p. 137.

producing a dozen Arabic-speaking films which were particularly intended for Moroccan audiences. With the production of *Yasmina* in 1946, John Lordier was the first filmmaker to launch this series of films. In the same year, Mark Maillarky and John Bastia respectively made *Ibn Alkader* and *El Majnoun*. Highly encouraged by the colonial administration, other French filmmakers were motivated to adhere to such an initiative which was meant to reconcile the Moroccan audience with French cinema. In 1947, seven films were made in different shooting locations: Marrakech, Fes, Casablanca and Tafillalt. These films are the following: *Cheddad Le Justicier* (1947) by Charles Boulet, *Kenzi* (1947) by Vichy Ivernel, *Maarouf, Savetier du Caire* (1947) by John Mauran, *Minuit, Rue de L'orloge* (1947) by John Lordier, *Serenade* à *Meryem* (1947) by Norbet Gernolle, and *La Septième Porte* (1947) by André Zwobada, who also made *Noces de Sable* in 1948. The aim behind the production of these films was to counteract the popularity of Egyptian cinema among Moroccan audiences. For the colonial authorities, Moroccans' identification with the Egyptian film represented a disturbance to the undertaken process of pacification. In this way, the dismissal of the French cinema was considered as a form of resistance against the authority of the colonizer and its sovereignty.

In terms of its distribution, the so-called Moroccan cinema of the forties was a failure because it failed to attract the Moroccan audience, to whom it had been intended. The films' colonial vision remained one of the main reasons behind this failure. Because they were made by French filmmakers, who were affiliated with the colonial project, these films fall into the category of colonial cinema. In spite of the the use of Arabic, which was indeed dictated by communicative objectives, the so-called cinema of the forties represented an organic extension to the achievements of colonial cinema in its entirety. Conditioned by its extrinsic vision, this form of cinema did not present itself as a visual alternative that could compete with the vigorous spread of Egyptian cinema. According to Guy Hennebelle, *" Le refus du réalisme social et l'incapacité de récupérer les 'vertus' du mélodrame*

égyptien : telles sont à mon sens deux raisons de l'insuccès de la 'politique cinématographique arabe' de la France."[1]

However, this assertion does not hold true for all films. At least, Zwobada's *La Septième Porte* (1947) and *Les Noces de Sable* (1948) are appreciated and esteemed by European and Moroccan critics alike. Boulanger acknowledges the significance of Zwobada's films by arguing that "seuls, deux films de cette période, dus à André Zwobada, méritent de l'intérêt. Ils feront l'objet d'une étude particulière." [2] In the same vein, Ahmed Fertat maintains:

> La conjugaison de ces volontés donna des œuvres sincères aux qualités artistiques et humaines indéniables, respectueuses des réalités du pays et du peuple mis en scène et atteignant par là une dimension universelle, comme "*La Septième Porte*" et "*Les Noces de Sable*", réalisés par André Zwobada.[3]

> The combination of these wills gave sincere works with undeniable artistic and human qualities, respectful of the realities of the country and the people being showcased and thus attaining a universal dimension, such as *La Septième Porte* et *les Noce de Sables*, directed by André Zwobada.

Due to their impartial representation of the native reality, these films are regarded as exceptional examples within the entire achievements of colonial cinema. As they were not affiliated with colonial propaganda, Zwobada's films artistically responded to the expectations of the native viewers. By virtue of their non-colonial discourse, *La Septième Porte* and *Les Noces de Sable* seemed to embed aspects of a native cinema. Ben Ali briefly expresses this view in the following extract:

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[1] Guy Hennebelle, "Avant- Propos," *Le cinéma colonial: de L'Atlantide à Lawrence d'Arabie*, p. 12.
[2] Pierre Boulanger, *ibid*., p.161.
[3] Ahmed Fertat, *Une Passion Nommée Cinéma*, p. 158.

> La disparition du discours pragmatique colonial dans ces deux films (*La Septième Porte* and *Les Noces de Sable*) va de pair avec l'intention manifeste à cette époque chez André Zwobada de créer un cinéma autochtone. C'est la raison pour laquelle *Les Noces de Sable* est une des premières tentatives de production proprement marocaines, et en plus des rôles multiples attribués à ses acteurs marocains.[1]
>
> The disappearance of the colonial pragmatic discourse in these two films (*La Septième Porte* and *Les Noces de Sables*) goes hand in hand with André Zwobada's clear intention to forge an aboriginal cinemaduring this era. This is why *Les Noces de Sable* is one of the first properly Moroccan production attempts, in addition to the multiple roles attributed to its Moroccan actors.

However, there are numerous reasons why Zwobada's films can be relevant to the history of Moroccan cinema, but the involvement of natives remains a central reason. Instead of having a minimal presence and contribution, Moroccans were partners in the production of these films. The natives' involvement in Zwobada's films can be analysed in terms of three dimensions: First, it was clear that the director worked outside the exigencies of the colonial imaginary and this was reflected in his impartial adaptation of local narratives. Second, native characters were attributed central roles and were represented on equal footing with Eurpean characters. Hence, the viewer comes across Moroccan names such as Gabsi and Kaltoum *(La Septième Porte)* and Itto Bent Lahssan, Larbi Tounsi, Hmidou Brahimi (*Les Noces de Sable*). Third, the production of *Les Noces de Sable*, received a substantial financial contribution from Mohamed Laghzaoui (the director of the Cherifian Office of Phosphates at that time).

[1] Abdelkader Ben Ali, *Le Cinéma Colonial au Maghreb*, pp. 332-333.

In addition to Zwobada's films, there exists another example to be critically considered within this category of non-colonial cinema. Orson Welles' *Othello* (1949), which is an adaptation of William Shakespeare's play, is also relevant for the history of Moroccan cinema. The film was presented in Cannes film festival under Moroccan colours in 1952 as a good gesture of recognition on the part of the filmmaker to Moroccan people for their support during the production of the film. *Othello* was awarded the *"palme d'or"* prize in this highly reputed international film festival, allowing Morocco to receive this valuable prize[1] for the first time. Due to the representation of the Moor, *Othello* can be assessed differently from colonial cinema. The film opens with the following sequence: "There was in Venice a Moor. Othello, who for his merit of war, was held in great esteem. It happened that he fell in love with a young noble lady called Desdemona who drawn by his virtue became equally enamoured".

It should be mentioned that the narrative structure of the film proceeds through the development of a love affair which eventually ends in marriage. In spite of their different racial and cultural backgrounds, Othello and Desdemona can to love each other and to have an inter-racial marriage. The significance of the act of marriage lies in its subversion of an intermittent trope in Western and colonial cinema, according to which the inter-racial sex or marriage is considered as culturally inappropriate. As Abdelmajid Hajji argues:

> The film industry, when dealing with non-white races, has traditionally adopted a double standard regarding miscegenation.The prohibition of inter-racial sex or marriage was strictly observed in regard to a white female and non-white male. However, a white male's sexual exploitation of non-white female was viewed in more permissive light. [2]

Perhaps the last film to close the discussion around this category of non-colonial cinema is Jean Fléchet's *Brahim ou le collier de beignets* (1957). With its intrinsic vision in representing Moroccan

[1] Up to the present time, no Moroccan film has been awarded such a prize.
[2] Abdelmajid Hajji,"Oriental Women in Early Hollywood Films," *Women and Writing* (Meknes: Faculty of Letters, 1995), p. 176.

reality, the film constitutes fundamental features identifying a Moroccan film. First, the film is entirely funded by the ministry of information and produced by the Centre Cinématographique Marocain (the CCM). Second, it is enacted by Moroccan actors, namely Fatima Abdelmalek, Latifa Kamal Mustapha Amal, Bachir Laalaj, Teib Saddiki, Mohamed Lazrag, Larbi Tounsi, Brahim Ouazani, Larbi Doghmi, Ahmed El Alaj, Mohamed Rifi, Zaki Houari, Abderazak Hakam, and the child actor Ahmed Gharbi. Third, the central role is played by the veteran Hassan Skali. Lastly, the music is composed by Abderahim Sekkat.

Apart from the fact that the filmmaker does not hold the Moroccan nationality, a parameter which is decisive in identifying a Moroccan film, *Brahim ou le collier de beignets* has the merit of being considered as a Moroccan film. In its dramatic structure, the film sincerely engages in reflecting issues and preoccupations that encountered the newly liberated Morocco. In spite of its relevance to the history of Moroccan cinema, *Brahim ou le collier de beignets* has not been critically acclaimed. For many years, the film continued to receive little notice and remained visually inaccessible to both cinema practitioners and the larger audience alike. But as Boulanger notes,*"Pourtant, présenté au festival cinématographique de Berlin,il ("Brahim ou le collier de beignets") revint à Rabat pour ne plus sortir de ses boites*,"[1] ("*Yet, presented at the Berlin Film Festival, he* ("Brahim or the Olive of Doughnuts") came back to Rabat to not leave his boxes again,) and it was not until 2005 that the film made an appearance in the eighth edition of the national film festival in Tangiers.

In the following chapter, I will address another aspect of colonial cinema: The cinematographic infrastructure which was inaugurated during the colonial period. More precisely, the focus will be on the Centre Cinématographique Marocain (CCM) and movie theatres. The chapter asks the following questions: What were the real motives behind the inauguration of a cinematographic infrastructure in

[1] Pierre Boulanger, *Le cinéma colonial,* p. 168.

colonial Morocco? Were the motives commercial, political or both? Why were film schools excluded from such an infrastructure?

Chapter Four:

The Colonial Cinematographic Infrastructure: The Centre Cinématographique Marocain (CCM) and Movie Theatres

The purpose of the previous chapter was to examine the heterogeneous character identifying colonial cinema. However, the present chapter approaches another facet of colonial cinema, namely the cinematographic infrastructure which was inaugurated during the colonial period. This chapter questions the political timing and the motives behind the inauguration of this cinematographic infrastructure in a specific phase of colonial rule (the 1940s). The argument is that the inauguration of such an infrastructure was essentially dictated by political/colonial and commercial motives. Endowing Morocco with different apparatuses relative to the cinema sector should be seen as part and parcel of the colonial strategy of pacification. This strategy was fully concerned with the exercise of an authoritative gaze over the cinema industry. Put differently, the regulation of the cinema sector, through the creation of various bodies, had a central and strategic purpose: The control of the cinema practice.

With regard to the political context that characterized the period, the forties represented a turning point in the history of Morocco and in shaping its future. From a political perspective, the period determined a new phase in the process of resisting the colonial presence, a process that resulted in the declaration of independence in 1944. From a cinematic perspective, the forties marked a clear shift in the cinema policy of the colonial administration. During this period, Morocco saw the inauguration of a variety of cinematographic projects which encompassed the creation of a "Moroccan" cinema which was intended for Moroccan audiences, the idea of an African Hollywood, the establishment of new regulations, and finally the inauguration of a cinematographic infrastructure. These projects were governed by a colonial agenda and were affected by the prevailing political conditions. For instance, the creation of what was known as the Moroccan cinema of the forties occurred with the sole objective of

blocking the pervasive spread of the Egyptian film. The colonial authority was antipathetic to the Moroccan audiences' identification with Egyptian cinema. Likewise, the regulatory procedures were motivated by an implicit will to monitor and monopolize the functioning of the cinematic activity. Considering the importance and instrumentality of cinema as a sophisticated means of propaganda, the colonial authority was concerned about extending its full control to the entire field of cinema production.

It was the "Moroccanization" of the cinema practice that strongly marked the 1940s. It was in the course of this period that Mohamed Osfour[1](1927-2005) experimented with the film medium. Using only the most basic equipment and relying on his friends and relatives, Osfour engaged early in the process of making moving pictures. After many years of regular film viewing, Mohamed Osfour managed to produce his first film, *Ibn Al-Ghaba (1941),* which is often regarded as the first moving picture made by a Moroccan filmmaker. The footage marked a rupture with the legacy of colonial cinema and heralded the rise of Moroccan cinema.

During this period, the colonial administration was concerned about the use of cinema in counter-propaganda activities by nationalist groups and was sensitive to the natives' appropriation of the cinematic practice. For this reason, it worked at issuing regulations to its benefits more than serving the inauguration of a true Moroccan cinema industry. Prior to the early years of the Protectorate, the colonial administration managed to regulate film screenings through strict measures imposed on film distribution and exhibition. Henceforth, the decree of 1916, one of the very early juridical procedures, stressed that movie theatres could not open without the colonial authorities' permission. Maillot (1961) argues that*"l'ouverture d'une installation cinématographique fixe ou foraine, a une autorisation délivrée par l'autorité administrative sur demande écrite."*[2] ("The opening of a fixed or fairground cinema installation shall have an authorization issued by the administrative authority upon written request.") In a

[1] Mohmed Osfour is the first Moroccan to appropriate the cinema practice.
[2] Quoted in Driss Jaidi, *Le Cinéma au Maroc* (Rabat: Almajal, 1991), p. 13.

connected vein, he notes that "[a] very strict regulation of cinema activity touching even the exercise of the profession, notably conveying the imperative measures by which distributors and exhibitors are constrained to conform themselves in contractual relations."[1]

Accordingly, exercising more control over the cinema sector was achieved by launching a series of regulations in parallel with the inauguration of a cinematographic infrastructure that would respond to the needs of French and Western companies dealing with the cinema production in colonial Morocco. In 1939, the colonial authority established the first "Moroccan" laboratory (Ain Chok Studio) in Casablanca. Six years later, the Souissi Studio was created in 1945 in the capital city of Morocco. Both studios (of Casablanca and Rabat) were initially intended to provide the required facilities to the European filmmakers who took advantage of shooting films in Morocco or neighboring countries, such as Algeria and Tunisia. Along with this mission, the studios were also useful for the production of what was called the "Moroccan" cinema of the forties. Finally, the creation of these studios should be regarded as an integral part of the French policy that aimed at competing with the Egyptian cinema industry.[2]

However, the most remarkable phase of cinema regulation in Morocco was achieved with the creation of the Centre Cinématographique Marocain (CCM) in 1944. For Moroccan film historians, the inauguration of this state apparatus has largely been regarded as a turning point in the history of the cinema industry in Morocco. It has been considered as an interesting step in the process of endowing the country with an infrastructure which was concurrently useful in the colonial and postcolonial periods. As a legacy of the colonial period, the CCM has existed as the sole institution charged with the promotion of national cinema that would reflect the image of Morocco internationally. From the colonial period onwards, the CCM has played a variety of roles and executed a number of missions.

[1] Quoted in Sandra Gayle Carter, *What Moroccan Cinema? A Historical and Critical Study*, 1956-2006 (Lanham: Lexington Books), p. 45.
[2] See Pierre Boulanger, *op.cit*., p. 154.

Historically, the creation of the CCM was preceded by a multiple set of organisms. Early in 1940, the colonial authority created "L e Groupement de l'Industrie Cinématographique"*"pour faciliter l'application de la législation en temps de guerre."*[1]*("to facilitate the enforcement of wartime legislation")*As a public organisation having *"*a cooperative status,*"*[2] *Le Groupement de l'Industrie Cinématographique* had an ephemeral existence that lasted only four years (from 1940 to 1944). During the period between 1941 and 1944, Le Groupement *"apparait comme un instrument de politique économique, plus étatique que professionnel, ayant pour fonction essentielle de veiller au respect de la réglementation posée par les autorités administratives du protectorat …"*[3] ("it appears to be an instrument of economic policy, more state-based than professional, having as its essential function the monitoring of compliance with the regulations laid down by the administrative authorities of the protectorate").

Within the context of regulating the cinema sector, the "*Service du Cinema*" was created by the Dahir of April 20th. This newly created apparatus, which was later re-organized in 1944, was supposed to transfer the cinema practice in Morocco from its cooperative to more an administrative status. According to Maillot:

> This service's mission is to study the general questions of interest to the body of the cinema industry and to solve the problems posed by this industry. In this respect, the chief of the cinema service has the power to edit, in the form of organic texts, a regulation of the exercise of the profession…. The chief of the Cinema Service formulates equally advice and recommendations in the form of circulars addressed to members of the profession. Quite

[1] Driss Jaidi, *Le cinema au Maroc,* p. 16.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 18
[3] Driss Jaidi, *Diffusion et audience des médias audiovisuels* (Rabat : Almajal, 2000), p. 13.

> close to the profession that it controls, this service is also the counsel to the State on the politics to follow and the regulation to elaborate in cinema matters.[1]

The CCM was created by the decree of January 8th., 1944, with the ambition of enhancing the already existing infrastructure. The creation of the CCM was one of the significant achievements of the colonial presence because this now apparatus would be of relevance to both the colonizer and the colonized. Nevertheless, the creation of the CCM should not be seen in isolation from the concerns of the political and colonial agenda of the French administration, but rather as an extension to its entire colonial strategy which reverberated within the scope of propaganda and pacification. As outlined earlier, the colonial authorities' will to regulate the cinema industry in Morocco was triggered by its desire to extend its full sovereignty to the realm of cinema production and control the new cultural sphere. In an atmosphere characterized by political tension, the colonial authority was sensitive to the natives' appropriation of the cinema technique and showed its concern about the use of the film medium in the nationalist struggle. In the last years of colonial occupation, France was urged to retain its position as the only player and monopolist of the cinema industry. According to Sandra Carter:

> The climate in Morocco during the last years of French occupation was, as would be expected, somewhat tense and conflictual. France used media such as film and radio to try to crush the independence movement but also to create a notion of Morocco as a unity, united under the Protectorate. The Protectorate led to cinema being housed under the Ministry of the Interior because the French saw cinema as a propaganda tool to direct the population in a way more in tune with the mission of the Interior… The State needed constantly to monitor but

[1] Quoted in Sandra Carter, *What Moroccan Cinema*?, p. 46.

> also to support activities, and thus filmmaking tended through the protectorate period to remain a State enterprise...[1]

The citation above reinforces the core argument of this chapter which argues that there was an interlocking aspect that related cinema in colonial Morocco to the demands of the colonial propaganda. In particular, the colonial reasons behind the creation of the CCM were clearly manifested at least in two dimensions: The political timing and the roles attributed to this institution. In the first instance, the appearance of the CCM at a highly febrile moment might be regarded as a reactive response to the growing of a nationalist consciousness, as incorporated in the manifesto of January 11th, 1944. This assumption has credibility when verified alongside the creation of the CCM, which occurred only three days before the circulation of the Manifesto (the CCM was created by the Dahir of January 8th, 1944). For the second instance, the colonial authorities insisted on entrusting the CCM with numerous roles, all of which would serve a prime and strategic mission: Propaganda. By this time, the colonial authorities needed a state agency that would be legislatively and financially qualified to produce propaganda films. Gayle Carter sums up the roles of as follows:

> After 1944, the CCM was responsible for licensing producers and productions; controlling importation, export, production and distribution; controlling the proceeds of film exhibitions with the Ministry of Finance, preparing and distributing tickets among exhibitors, organizing professional and technical training, contributing to deciding how much tickets and rentals should cost, arbitrating between different branches of the cinema field, organizing national and international festival to encourage Moroccan films, creating a national library of films, encouraging the creation and development of cinema clubs,

[1] Sandra Carter, *ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

> circulating Moroccan experimental films, producing and distributing filmed news, making films for public institutions, and building studios and labs for filmmaking.[1]

In addition to the administration of cinema activities, the CCM was in charge of film production. The laws regulating the CCM's functions (the decrees of 1944 and its modified version in 1977) precisely determined the formal status of this institution, one which ultimately resulted in its cementing national and cultural identity. At this time, the CCM had the status of being a producer, a distributor and an exhibitor of films. Jaidi explains:

> Désormais l'Etat ne se borne plus à exercer un contrôle politique et professionnel sur l'industrie cinématographique, il devient producteur. Non content de réglementer et d'administrer, il exploite. C'est une véritable formule de gestion-participation que l'Etat met en œuvre. Les raisons de cette nouvelle orientation sont multiples. Les besoins de l'information et de l'éducation comme les impératifs politiques de propagande et de prestige imposait à l'administration du protectorat la création d'un organisme susceptible de lui fournir les éléments d'une action en profondeur.[2]

> Henceforth, the State no longer confines itself to exercising political and professional control over the film industry, it becomes a producer. Not only does it regulate and administer, but it also exploits. It's a real management-participation formula that the state implements. There are many reasons for this new focus. The needs of information and education, as well as the political imperatives of propaganda and prestige, required the administration of

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 47.
[2] Driss Jaidi, *Le Cinema au Maroc*, p. 19.

theprotectorate to create an organization capable of providing it with the elements of in-depth action.

The laws related to the creation of the CCM insisted upon the autonomous status of this new apparatus. Financially speaking, the CCM was generally "funded by: [T]axes on exhibitions, contributions from administrations that needed cinema production services, and grants from the State."[1] Within the same framework, the regulation of the cinema practice through the acquisition of a professional card might also be understood within the perspective of extending absolute control over the cinema activities. This control, Maillot argues, reached not only films' content and institutions, but also individuals:

> The French realized that they had not only to control contents and institutions, but the individuals within the domain as well. They implemented the process of issuing identity cards to practitioners of filmmaking, exhibition or distribution, or even projection, as a measure of control... [2]

Starting from the fact that cinema was situated at the heart of propaganda activities, the CCM was hired to play a tremendous role in defending the unity of Morocco under colonial rule. Very early in its existence, the CCM engaged in producing newsreels and *"timidly funded only short films and documentaries"*[3] to disseminate the achievements of the Protectorate. In actual fact, the first work produced by the CCM was a short cut film, *Aux Portes du Monde Saharien* (1947),[4] by Robert Vernay, and subsequently followed by dozens of films (short cut), all of which were made by French and European filmmakers. Within the same vein of disseminating propaganda, the CCM started producing

[1] Quoted in Sandra Carter *What Moroccan Cinema*? p. 47.
[2] *Ibid.*, p.45.
[3] As quoted in Orlando Valzerie K., *Francophone Voices of the New Morocco in Film and Print: Representing a Society in Transition* (New York: Palgrave Macmilan, 2009), p. 189.
[4] Souheil Ben Berka, *50 ans de courts Métrages Marocains* (Rabat : Centre Cinématographique Marocain, 1998), p. 7.

"Les Actualités Marocaines" (newsreels) in 1953. These informative short films were at first under the direct administration of French newsreel houses[1] and were projected together with French newsreels, but in 1958 the CCM took complete hold of their production. *"Les Actualités Morocaines"* of the post-independence period was called to disseminate the spirit of the newly independent and liberated country, to cement national identity and display the image of Morocco as a moderate society. Les Actualités Marocains, which were the footage of official activities with an informative purpose, were distributed throughout Morocco and reached even rural locations through the tradition of cine-caravans. In this regard, Carter maintains:

> In the first years [of independence], newsreels lasted about 3 minutes and treated only national news, while in the early 1960s the "journal" would last 6 minutes and cover issues such as weekly highlights, weekly magazine, world news, and Moroccan and world sports. Finally, by the end of the decade, the news would last 15 minutes.[2]

The CCM also responded to the demands of different ministries which engaged in producing informational films. Hence, the Ministry of Health, Tourism, Agriculture, and Education, to name but a few, made didactic films and distributed them for Moroccan audiences. Equally, the production of short films steadily proliferated throughout the decade (1960s) to the extent that this period is largely considered as the golden age of documentaries in Morocco. And the first Moroccan short cut in this period is Laarbi Benchekroun's *Notre Amie l'école (1956).* The film was a co-production of CCM and the Ministry of Health. However, it is only towards the end of the decade (precisely in 1968) that the CCM established the move towards the production of professional feature films. Respectively, the CCM entirely produced Mohamed Tazi's and Ahmed Mesnaoui's *Al-Ḥayātu Kifāḥ* (1968), Abdleaziz

[1] Les Actualités Francaises, Pathé Journal, Fox-Movietone, Eclair Journal, and Gaumont Actualités. For more, see Carter (2009), pp. 50-51.
[2] Sandra Gayle Carter *What Moroccan Cinema?* p. 51.

Ramdani's and Laarbi Bennani's *Indama Tandojo Atimar* (1968), and Latif Lahlou's *Shams Rabi' (Spring Sun) (*1969). In order to respond to the imperatives of the filmmaking industry at that time, the CCM, under the presidency of Omar Ghanam,[1] sent the first group of Moroccan students to study cinema abroad in 1963. After completing their studies, these graduate students put their expertise at the disposal of the requirements of promoting a nascent Moroccan cinema; almost all of them held bureaucratic responsibilities in the different offices of the CCM.

Along with the creation of various institutions and apparatuses, the colonial administration adopted a strategy that capitalized on the importance of film distribution. From the first years of the colonial presence, the colonial authorities worked heavily at encouraging the construction of movie theatres to provide a platform for the distribution of the imported films. From the beginning, the colonial administration was concerned about issuing regulations that could monitor the process of constructing cinema houses. With the emergence of the first movie theatres, the colonial authorities were conscious of the necessity of controlling a sector that was promising economic profit. Therefore, the decree of April 22nd, 1916 stipulated that no movie theatre could be opened without a written permit from the colonial authorities. By stressing the importance of a permit, the decree reflected the concern of the colonial administration of extending full control to the cinema activities in colonial Morocco.

The establishment of cinema houses can be analyzed from two perspectives: Economic and cultural. In the first place, the entertainment sector attracted the interest of the European bourgeoisie which was eager to invest its money in a relatively new domain in Morocco. With the facilities provided by the colonial authorities, European entrepreneurs were enthusiastic to construct cinema houses in order to derive financial profit. In the second place, the construction of cinema houses was not separate from the global colonial strategy which considered cinema as a highly sophisticated art in cultural pacification. As a public space, the movie theatre was concurrently a place for visual pleasure and for the promotion of

[1] Omar Ghanam was the first Moroccan director of CCM, after the French Henry Manjaud.

colonial propaganda. The distribution of films occurred within the colonial perspective which regarded cinema as an effective mechanism for the consolidation of colonial legitimacy.

During the period between the two World Wars, Morocco owned "almost 50 movie theatres with 32000 seats."[1] And in the period between 1945 and 1954, there was a clear shift in the number of theatres, allowing Morocco to have 131 cinema houses with a total number of 80000 seats. Cinema houses were centrally located in the urban zone of imperial cities such as Fes, Meknes, Marrakech, and Oujda. In the post-war period, Casablanca became a preferred destination and a site of attraction for entrepreneurs in the entertainment sector. Later on, the pace of building cinema houses steadily proliferated, especially with the funding strategy that the colonial administration launched from 1954 to 1959. Inspired by the French funding system, "*Le Fonds d'Aide était destiné exclusivement à la réalisation des travaux de sécurité, d'hygiène, d'embellissement, de rénovation et d'amélioration technique des salles de cinéma équipées en 35 mm."*[2] ("The Aid Fund was exclusively intended for the performance of safety-related works, hygiene, embellishment, refurbishment and technical improvement of 35 mm equipped movie theatres.") The funding system contributed to the evolution of a nascent infrastructure and allowed an immediate shift in the number of movie theatres.

By 1956, Morocco had inherited 156 cinema houses from the colonial presence. Since then, there was an outstanding progress that allowed the country to reach 244 houses by 1971. The period was characterized by the "Moroccanisation" of the entertainment sector; and with the departure of the Europeans (former owners of movie theatres), the Moroccan bourgeoisie would take over the sector. The post-independence period was crucial for the proliferation of cinema houses. With more openness on the part of the Moroccan audience to the spectacle of the screen, the need for establishing more cinema houses increased. The most characteristic that defined this period was the tremendous popularity of

[1] Driss Jaidi, *Le Cinéma au Maroc*, p.74
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

Egyptian and Indian films among Moroccans. With this popularity, movie-going became a social ritual for many Moroccan families, who found cinema a captivating world. Different generations showed a huge interest in the spectacle of the screen. As Jaidi explains: "Sur le plan socio-culturel, la salle de cinéma constitue un espace des plus privilégiés de l'échange film/spectateurs. C'est le point de rencontre du produit culturel qu'est le film, qu'il soit d'importation ou élaboré localement, et les spectateurs d'horizons divers." [1] (On the socio-cultural level, the movie theatre is one of the most privileged areas for film/viewer exchange. It is the melting pot for spectators from diverse backgrounds and the cultural product that is the film, whether imported or locally produced).

In brief, the colonial administration's attempt to inaugurate a cinematic infrastructure, together with the regulatory procedures, represented a response to the demands of colonial propaganda. Although it was established in Morocco, this cinematic infrastructure was more useful to the colonizer than to the natives, and what is remarkable is that it did not encompass the inauguration of film schools. The systematic absence of film schools in the colonial policy was intended to preclude the natives from appropriating the film medium. This explains why the involvement of Moroccans in cinema production was belated and occurred only after three decades of colonial rule. Historical records often consider Mohamed Osfour as the first Moroccan to access the filmmaking activity. The following part addresses Osfour's attempt to appropriate the film medium and draws on the general atmosphere that accompanied his endeavour.

[1] Driss Jaidi, *Diffusion et audience des média audiovisuels*, p. 22.

"The history of early cinema, like the history of cinema generally, has been written and theorized under the hegemony of narrative films." (Tom Gunning, *The Cinema of Attractions*, 381).

Part Two:

Mohamed Osfour's Cinematic Experience:

From Underground to Eclipse

The present part deals with Osfour's cinematic trajectory and draws on his attempt to access the filmmaking activity. Osfour's appropriation of the film medium will be addressed as a self-made endeavour. With the absence of film schools in colonial Morocco, Osfour took advantage of the production of international films and acquired minimum knowledge about filmmaking. Determined to achieve technical mastery, he regularly attended the shooting of international productions and learned the cinematic technique on the spot.

The critical reception of Osfour by the conventional film scholarship will also be invoked here. By interrogating this scholarship, the purpose is to see how Osfour's film practice has been assessed, and the extent to which it has been critically credited. Given the fact that Osfour informally engaged in the cinema enterprise, his filmmaking activity has been overlooked and his voice has been muted. For this reason, he continued to exist as a subaltern figure of Moroccan cinema.

With the aim of categorizing it stylistically and artistically, Osfour's film practice will be studied in the light of its convergence with or divergence from the dominant cinema models of his time. Due to some commonalities which exist between his practice and underground filmmaking, it will be appropriate to categorize his cinema experience within the framework of Underground Cinema. A fundamental feature which is shared between the two forms of cinema is that they both operate outside the auspices of the establishment. Osfour continued to make his films independently and he managed to create his own channels where he distributed his films to his audience.

In terms of the cinematic technology, Osfour relied on the most basic equipment and deployed primitive devices which were intended for amateur use. In making films, he made use of techniques that had been used by early filmmakers in the silent era. To adapt his shooting styles to his practical conditions, he resorted to exterior cinematography because his primitive devices could not provide him

with artificial lighting. Unable to provide this requirement of interior cinematography, he alternatively relied on flat lighting by shooting most of his films in Sidi Abderahman's forest in Casablanca.[1]

Finally, the relevance of Osfour's film practice to the history of Moroccan cinema will be highlighted. By virtue of an intrinsic vision, Osfour managed to produce alternative images and to partially liberate the Moroccan screen from the remains of the colonial imaginary. Due to their cultural and social engagement with Moroccan reality, Osfour's films break with the colonial modalities of representation and embed initial underpinnings of national cinema.

[1] See Ahmed Fertat, *ibid.*, p. 94.

Chapter Five :

Mohamed Osfour: The Appropriation of the Cinema Practice and the "Moroccanization" of the Text/(Con)text

As previously mentioned, film schools were systematically excluded from the cinema policy in colonial Morocco. The undeclared purpose behind this exclusion stemmed from the colonial authorities' insistence on sustaining the French monopoly over the filmmaking activity. With regard to its significant instrumentality in the front of cultural pacification, cinema was highly regarded as a sophisticated and effective medium in justifying the colonial act. To this end, the colonial authorities were seriously concerned about the natives' deployment of films in the process of anti-colonial struggle and in producing counter-images that would undermine the colonial presence and sovereignty.

Accordingly, the political and social climate in colonial Morocco was not ideally in favour of the appropriation of the cinema practice by Moroccans. For a long time, cinema was a European enterprise[1] and was exclusively conceived of as a token of the white man who was altogether the filmmaker, the actor and the viewer. At the level of performance, the Moroccans' visibility in colonial films was minimal and reduced to minor roles; whereas, the filmmaking activity remained a European matter *par excellence*.

From a historical perspective, the first attempt at accessing the film industry by Moroccans is traditionally associated with Mohamed Osfour. As he was born in a rural area (Douar Bakhti) just near Safi in 1927, Osfour's first contact with the moving picture occurred only when his family moved to live in Casablanca in 1934. Due to the family's socio-economic frailty, Osfour was forced to leave the warmth of childhood and to try odd jobs in order to earn his living and help his family cope with the

[1]This is quite true for many countries which were formerly under colonial rule. Talking about Iranian cinema, Hamid Naficy asserts :"In those days, cinema screens were monopolized by the West, particularly by American films, and the Third World people were more consumers of these films than producers of their own narratives." Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, p. 3.

financial difficulties and demands of urban life. Two of these jobs significantly impacted his future career as a filmmaker: Selling French newspapers to a European community in Hay Maarif and working as a waiter at *le Titan* café.[1] As his contact was mostly with European customers, these two jobs offered him the opportunity to embrace two aspects of Western modernity: The French language and the cinematic art. As he never submitted to formal education, his discovery of the public space helped him deal with the shock of encountering a totally different space from that of the *Bled*, because the city was large and its inhabitants were from different ethnic, racial and social backgrounds. Discussing the importance of the public space in Mohamed Osfour's life, Fertat notes:

> Mohamed Osfour se forma à la dure école de la rue parmi des enfants adultes auxquels, pour la plupart, la vie n'avait pas fait de cadeaux. Il apprit à lutter, au coude à coude, parfois avec âpreté pour conquérir un territoire, le défendre et se faire respecter par ses pairs. Il apprit aussi beaucoup en vendant les journaux et en bavardant avec les clients. Ainsi s'ouvrit-t-il très tôt au monde à travers les événements les plus importants que rapportait la presse. En plus, cette activité lui facilita l'apprentissage du français. Etant naturellement d'une curiosité très vive, il n'arrêtait pas de poser des questions. Il tenait à connaître les contenus de sa "marchandise," se faisait épeler les manchettes et se mettait à les crier. Il devint vite un bon vendeur et arrivait généralement à écouler son lot de journaux avant les autres. Son temps libre, il le consacrait, en plus du bricolage, à deux autres activités pour lesquelles il avait un puissant penchant : jouer au football et voir des films.[2]
>
> Mohamed Osfour was formed at the hard school of the street among adult children, the most of whom were not born with a silver spoon in their mouth. He learned to fight, neck and

[1] "*Le Titan*" is both a café and pub in Pomeyron Street in Casablanca that was owned by Mrs Benjamin, a French woman. For more see, Ahmed Fertat *Une Passion nommée cinéma*, p. 73.
[2] Ahmed Feratat, *ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

neck, sometimes with fierceness to conquer a territory, to defend it in order to be respected by his peers. He also learned a lot by selling newspapers and chatting with customers. And so he was open to the world very early through the most important events that were reported in the press. Besides, this activity made it easier for him to learn French. Being of a very lively curiosity, he did not stop asking questions. He was keen to know the contents of his "merchandise," had his headlines spelled out and started shouting them. He soon became a good salesman and usually managed to sell his batch of newspapers before the others. In his spare time, he devoted himself, in addition to crafts, to two other activities for which he was very fond: Playing football and watching movies.

Figure 1: The young Osfour, working as a waiter at *Titan* café

From the first days of his arrival in Casablanca, Osfour showed an immense fascination with the spectacle of the screen, and his frequent access to the movie theatre was triggered by the desire to

discover the enigmatic world of cinema. Adopting a regular habit of film-viewing fostered his ambition to understand and discover the secrets of what was happening beyond the screen. At an early age, 'Tchikio'[1] had his first contact with the magic of the moving picture, and quickly became fascinated by its captivating world. The first seeds of this fascination with the screen's spectacle occurred in cinema *Mondial*[2]. In vogue at that time, Tarzan films were the first images that initiated Osfour's entry into the world of cinema, and this first contact was remarkably influential in shaping his imaginary later on. Hence, Fertat affirms : "*La première salle qu'il [Osfour] a fréquentée, et qui restera longtemps pour lui le lieu vivant du cinéma, c'était le Mondial, une salle située au beau milieu de l'avenue Jura, et dont la devanture était devenue le centre de ralliement de l'enfance laborieuse du quartier*. "[3] (The first cinema he [Osfour] frequented, which would remain for him the living place of the cinema for a long time, was the *Mondial*, a cinema located in the middle of Avenue Jura, and whose front had become the rallying center for the working children of the district).

From his first years of settling in Casablanca onwards, Osfour became regular at almost all movie theatres of the city, and his day was devoted to three main activities: Selling newspapers in the morning and playing football and watching films in the evening. It was within the space of the movie theatre that Osfour's fascination with visual pleasure took its full shape as this space served in two ways: First, it was the appropriate place where he could indulge his childhood curiosity. With his regular film-viewing, Osfour managed to amuse himself and respond to his curiosity for visual pleasure. Second, the movie theatre equally served as the "institute" where he acquired his initial knowledge about the technical aspects of the cinema industry. With the absence of film schools in colonial Morocco, Osfour had to resort to other alternatives in order to develop himself technically about the functioning of the film

[1] 'Tchikio' was Osfour's nickname during his childhood.
[2] *Mondial* was the first movie theatre that Osfour entered in his first days of settlement in Casablanca.
[3] Ahmed Feratat, *ibid.*, p. 55.

medium. One of these alternatives, Ahmed Fertat reports, was the projectionist who played a great role in Osfour's initial knowledge about the cinematic practice. Given his inquisitiveness to know about the technical aspect of the filmmaking activity, Osfour regularly asked the projectionist questions after each film screening. The projectionist's illuminations often represented a stimulus that drove Osfour's curiosity to know more about the process of film production.[1]

In addition to his fascination with the moving picture, Mohamed Osfour discovered cinema only by chance. After *la cascade de Tarzan* [2] (*the Waterfall Incident*), which intensified in him the interest to know beyond the world of the grey screen, there was another incident which marked a new horizon in his trajectory. Mohamed Osfour remembered with great passion the first time he learned about the functioning of the camera. As a newspaper seller, he was astonished one day in 1941 to hear the word *"film"* or *"filmer"* pronounced inside the doors of a villa in Hay Maarif in Casablanca during the daily delivery of newspapers. His astonishment grew stronger to discover that it was a "theoretical" lesson on the art of photography conducted by a French father for his children. He was enthused to learn precisely what the father had been telling his children. As he approached the villa's gate, he heard the loud voice of the father responding to his kids' disinterest, and while he rang on the bell to hand in the newspapers, he stood still as if he were waiting for something. The boy, who got the newspapers from Osfour was wondering and cried "*c'est le marchand du journaux*." The father immediately replied, *"qu' il les déposes! Prends-les*" [3] still the boy added. *"C'est que… je crois qu'il veut quelque chose."* "*Donne-lui quelques sous, c'est peut être une de leurs fêtes*, [4]" the father continued. However, Osfour strongly

[1] See Fertat, *ibid.*, p. 60.
[2]During the course of watching one of Tarzan's films, a drop of water fell on Osfour's head. To his naivety, he thought the drop had come from behind the screen. However, he shortly after discovered that it was a viewer sitting next to him, who had opened a bottle of lemonade. This incident intensified Osfour curiosity to know how the films were made. A similar anecdotal occurrence happened to Lumière's viewers during the screening of *L'Arrivée d'un train à La Ciotat*. According toNoël Burch, traditions claim that "spectators leapt up from their tables in terror at the train rushing towards them." quoted in *Life to Those Shadows*, p. 204.
[3]Ahmed Feratat, *Une Passion nommée cinéma,* p.71.
[4] *Ibid,* p. 71.

protested that he wanted something "*non, non…pas de sous…je veux voir le cinéma. Je veux savoir comment on filme s'il veut plait*." [1] Thus, Osfour was accepted in, and unlike the two kids, he listened attentively trying to retain all the information provided by the man. Addressing Osfour, the man said: "*Tu vois, lui expliqua--t--il, ceci est une caméra. Ici tu as le viseur, c'est par-là que tu vois l'image. Une fois ton image au centre, tu fais tourner la manivelle et tu continues à viser ce que tu as choisi de filmer jusqu'à l'épuisement du rouleau de pellicule*." [2] ("You see," he explained, "this is a camera. Here you have the viewfinder, that's where you see the image. Once your image is in the center, you turn the crank and you keep aiming at what you have chosen to film until the film roll runs out.")

This anecdote was significantly important in his process of discovering the world of cinema because the act of touching a camera was rewarding for his gradual entry into the field of filmmaking. Immediately after this incident, Osfour started seriously seeking a camera similar to the one recommended by the man in the villa. However, and in addition to its expensive cost, the camera was not available in the local market at that time. As he could not afford a new camera, Osfour regularly searched in second-hand shops until he bumped into an old one in the shop of a Moroccan Jew in Casablanca. He was overjoyed to find that it was a Pathe-Baby 9 mm, and to know that its owner could sell it to a chaper price. Beriro says:

> J'ai acheté cette caisse avec un tas de ferraille, elle contenait d'autres objets, pour le cinéma. Mais jusqu'ici personne n'en veut, de ces bidules. Tu vois, celui-là n'a même plus de lampe. Tiens, je te laisse ce truc pour cent francs, mais à une condition : tu ne viens pas me le rendre ou faire de réclamations. Si tu veux du neuf, tu n'as qu'à aller l'acheter aux galeries Lafayette ! Et tu peux même prendre les autres trucs dans la caisse.[3]

[1] *Ibid.,* p. 71.
[2] *Ibid.,* p. 71.
[3] *Ibid.,* p. 76.

I bought this container with a scrap metal pile; it contained other objects for the cinema. But so far no one wants these widgets. You see, this one does not even have a lamp anymore. Here, I'll leave this thing for you in exchange for a hundred francs, but on one condition: you do not return it to me or make any complaints. If you want something new, all you have to do is go buy it from Lafayette galleries! And you can even take the other stuff in the box.

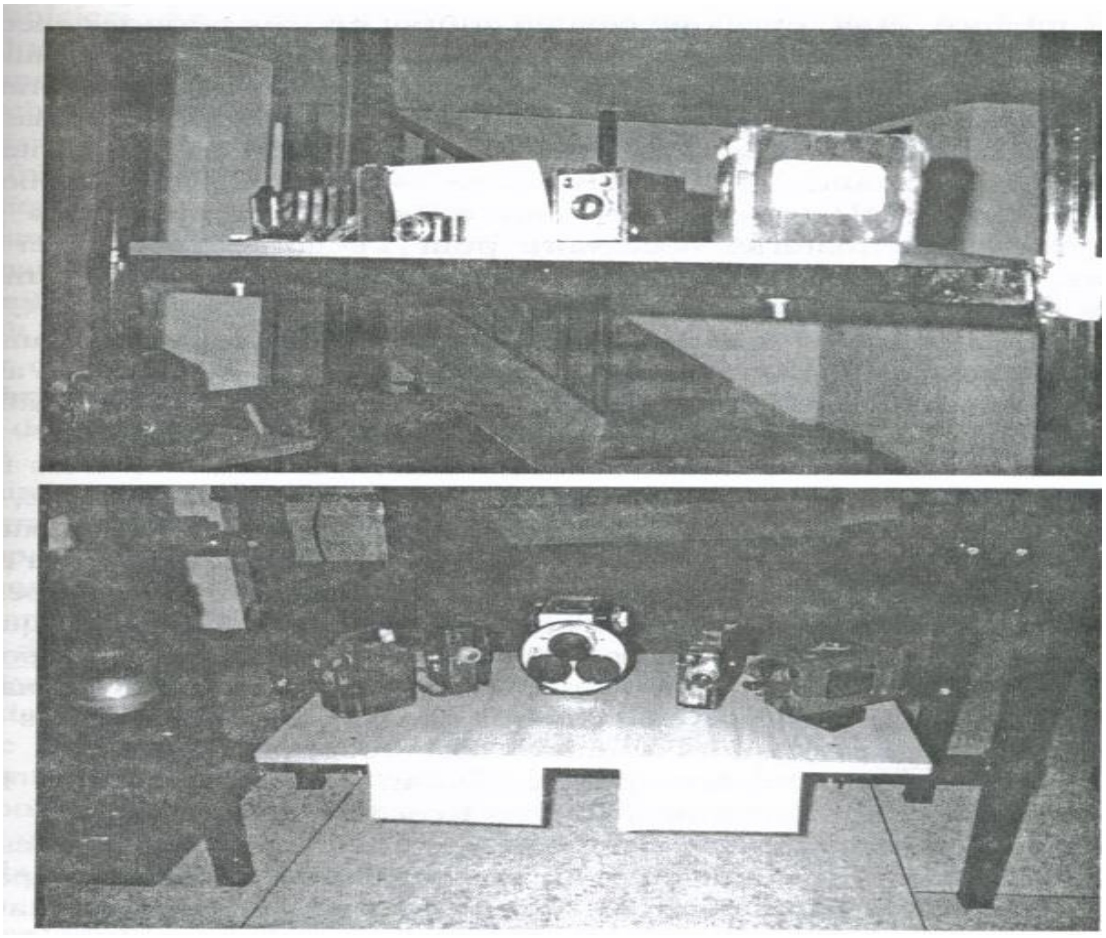

Figure 2: Materials used by Osfour during the 1940s and 1950s.

Determined to obtain technical mastery, Osfour persisted in introducing himself to the production companies which were shooting foreign films in Morocco. As he was aware that technical mastery was

primordial in the filmmaking activity, Osfour devoted much time to attend the shooting of professional productions made by Western filmmakers. During the period between 1941- 1951 between his first film *Ibn Al-Ghaba* (1941) and his second *Issa Al-Atlas*(1951), Osfour maintained his regular attendance on film sets. His first entry into the professional context of filmmaking dates back to 1946—namely with the production *Ibn Al Kadr* directed by Mark Maillaraky. The film, which was shot in Casablanca, included the participation of some Moroccans as extra. Osfour reports his first contact with the shooting of a professional film in this manner:

> Dès qu'il sut que des tournages de films se préparaient, il se renseigna et se rendit aux studios de Cinéphone à Ain Chok. C'était en mars 1946… Osfour fut ébloui par l'ambiance et la profusion de matériel, de câbles, d'échafaudages, de projecteurs et d'appareils qu'il voyait pour la première fois… Mais ce qui attira son attention et la fixa, ce fut une grosse machine qui ne pouvait être qu'une caméra, d'après sa configuration et sa ressemblance avec ce qu'il avait vu sur des photos. Elle était, vue de près et *vivante*, énorme par rapport à sa Baby. La tête d'un bonhomme, happée par le viseur, s'y engouffrait comme dans la gueule d'un lion. "Voilà avec quoi on obtient de si belles images, se dit-il", et il se prit à rêver. Osfour restait debout au milieu de tout ce monde, les bras ballants et le regard perdu. Quelqu'un s'avisa de sa présence et lui demanda ce qu'il faisait là. Il dit qu'il avait appris qu'on cherchait des techniciens et des machinistes et se présenta en faisant valoir son expérience de caméraman, de mécanicien et d'électricien. Le personnel qualifié était si rare qu'il fut engagé sur le champ comme aide-électricien. En fait, on l'utilisa un peu partout pour aider les techniciens. Ce qu'il fit de bonne grâce, car il se rendait compte qu'au stade

d'initiation où il était, il apprendrait ainsi bien plus de choses sur la fabrication d'un film qu'en restant confine dans une seule occupation.[1]

As soon as he knew that film shoots were being prepared, he asked around and went to the Cinéphone studios in Ain Chok. It was in March 1946.... Osfour was amazed by the atmosphere and the profusion of equipment, cables, scaffolding, projectors and devices he saw for the first time... But what caught his attention and stunned him was a big machine that could only be a camera, from its configuration and similarity to what he had seen in the pictures.It was seen closely and lively, huge compared to his Baby. A man's head, caught by the viewfinder, rushed into it like a lion's mouth." That's what you get with such beautiful images," he said to himself, "and began to dream. Osfour remained standing in the middle of all these people, his arms dangling and his eyes lost. Someone noticed his presence and asked him what he was doing there. He said he had learned that technicians and machinists were being sought and introduced himself by highlighting his experience as a cameraman, machinist and electrician. Qualified personnel were so rare that he was recruited on the spot as an assistant electrician. In fact, he was used almost everywhere to help technicians. Which he did willingly, because he realized that—at the initiation stage where he was— he would benefit him far more about making a film than if he remained confined to a single occupation.

From 1946, Osfour started working as a technician in the newly-founded Studios Cinéphone in Ain Chok. Regarding the initial experience he took from his participation in *Ibn Al Kadr (1946)*, Osfour was asked to work with John Lordier in *Minuit, Rue de L'Horloge* (1947). As another example of the so-

[1] Ahmed Fertat, *Une Passion nommée cinéma*, pp. 136-137.

called Moroccan cinema of the forties, the film included many Moroccan, Algerian and Egyptian actors. With his involvement in these two films, Osfour started to gain a reputation among the international production houses that were shooting films in Morocco. Due to this initial reputation, Osfour was lucky to participate in films that were made by renowned filmmakers of that time. In 1948, he participated in André Zwobada's *La Septième Porte*. As mentioned before, *La Septième Porte* (1948) was one of the early films of the colonial period which gave much space to natives and attributed them central roles. The role of the hero was performed by Gabsi and Mohamed Laghzaoui[1] was one of the producers of the film.

Thanks to the quality of skills, which he had acquired from his involvement in the previous films, Osfour became in greater demand. In 1949, he attended the shooting of *La Rose Noire*; a film that is widely considered as one of the first American super productions in Morocco. Directed by Henry Hataway, the film represented an added value to Osfour's cinematic profile and allowed him close contact with the American style of film production. Added to that, his participation in *La Rose Noire* was also significant because it paved the way for his contact with Orson Welles, with whom he would work in *Othello* (1949). Osfour's involvement in international cinematic works of the colonial period ended with Jack Becker's *Ali Baba et les Quarantes Voleurs* (1952) and Alfred Hitchcock's *The Man who Knew too Much* (1955).

By making *Ibn Al-Ghaba* in 1941, Mohamed Osfour marked his initial entry into the field of cinema practice. Shortly after its production, the film was presented at Si Rabah café in Casablanca for an audience, which was eager to see the first footage made by a Moroccan filmmaker. By its distribution, *Ibn Al-Ghaba* represented an outstanding moment in the history of the motion picture in Morocco because it heralded the birth of a native form of cinema. Osfour was aware that the projection of *Ibn Al-Ghaba* was a turning point in the history of Moroccan cinema when he presented the film this

[1] Laghzawi was the director of the The Cherifian Office of Phosphates

way: "*Chers amis, dit-il, j'ai l'honneur de vous présenter un spectacle inédit. Il s'agit d'un film entièrement marocain que j'ai réalisé moi-même, avec mes propres moyens et dans lequel jouent les enfants du quartier*."[1] ("Dear friends", he said, "I am pleased to present to you a unique show. It is an all-Moroccan movie that I directed myself with my own resources, and in which the children of the neighborhood play.")

In 1951 Osfour shot his second film, trying to put to practice the technical knowledge he had accumulated from his involvement in international film productions. The influence of his participation in the production of international films was clearly manifested in *Issa Al-Atlas*(1951) through the elaborative costumes, the technical development and the presence of women. By having a unified uniform for the gang, Osfour made an observable innovation at the level of costumes. He also managed to overcome the technical problems of framing and camera movement that were visible in *Ibn al-Ghaba*. More than that, he convinced his wife[2] and two women (Fatima and Khadouj) from his neighbourhood to participate in the film. The women's participation should be seen as an avant-garde act because Moroccan society was still too conservative to accept the appearance of women on the screen. For instance, female roles in theatre were enacted by male actors at that time. By engaging female figures, Osfour should be credited with the accolade of being the first Moroccan filmmaker to allow women access to the cinema industry and to significantly involve them in his filmmaking activity subsequently.

Influenced by the cinematic style of Charlie Chaplin, Osfour made *Joha/Charletto* in (1952). Due to their huge popularity, Chaplin's films continued to supply Osfour with cinematic conventions and principles which had already been familiar to his audience. Although *Joha/Charletto* was a mere

[1]Ahmed Feratat, *Une Passion nommée cinéma,* p. 26.
[2] Osfour was married to a Belgian woman, whose name is Magdaléna. She was the first camerawoman in Morocco.

duplication of Chaplin's films, Osfour managed to give it a Moroccan flavour by reproducing the trope of Joha and his cultural implications as a common figure of the local repertoire.

By making *Amok L'invincible* (1954), Osfour preferred to identify with the Western melodrama. As an action film, *Amok L'invincible* depicts the story of Amok and his struggle to liberate a group of Europeans who were abducted. Shot in the forest of Sidi Abderahman in Casablanca, the film goes through the rhythm of contesting actions and culminates in a happy ending by Amok's victorious intervention and his ability to liberate the abductees.

By extension, Osfour's identification with Charlie Chaplin is also reproduced in *Boukhou Najjar* (1956). By engaging physical comedy, *Boukhou Najjar* replicated comic situations and placed much emphasis on humour as a tool for impressing the audience. As a three-shot film, *Boukhou Najjar* tells the story of a man whose leg is broken, and instead of the doctor, it is the carpenter who comes to his treatment.

Osfour's involvement in the cinema enterprise took a new direction in the post-colonial period, allowing his film practice to reach a certain level of artistic maturity. During this period, Osfour accumulated considerable experience which allowed him to make film texts that were clearly detached from the impact of his preferred film models. With their intrinsic and committed vision, films of this period were culturally redolent of Moroccan society. Defined by their length, these films were longer and could be seen as personal statements, where Osfour reflected his committed understanding of the film medium's mission. Impacted by the political climate of Independence, Osfour turned his interest to the social cinema and made films that promoted moral values and taught the audience. This drive towards social cinema was seemingly reflected in three films: *Al-Ibn Al-a'k* (1956), *Al-Yatim* (1957) and *Al-Harib* (1962). In 1970, Osfour ended his cinematic career with a film that conformed to the standards of professional film production. *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* (1970) remained Osfour's only film which was

made in 35mm, and which—due to its length—could be treated as a professional feature, where Osfour blended a variety of film styles, genres, and aesthetics.

Chapter Six:

Can Mohamed Osfour Speak/be Heard? Questioning the Critical Reception of Osfour's Cinematic Experience

The previous chapter has argued that Osfour's appropriation of the cinema practice essentially occurred out of a sheer passion for the cinematic image and its magic. Osfour's endeavour to give a Moroccan spirit to the moving picture was a fundamental aim of his film practice. In contrast with many opinions, I argue that Osfour managed to break up with the colonial modalities of representation and to leave behind a unique cinematic experience that continued to exist on the margin of the mainstream cinema in Morocco.

However, the core argument of the present chapter is to contend that Mohamed Osfour has traditionally been cut off from the lines of access to the centre. Despite the fact that he was a pioneer, Osfour has continued to be ignored by film historians and, when discussed, he remained a small voice speaking in an undertone. More precisely, Osfour's cinematic experience has been subject to epistemic violence and a systematic eclipse by both colonial and postcolonial historiographies. Informed by the theories of Subaltern Studies, this chapter addresses the critical reception of Mohamed Osfour's cinematic experience and the thoughts developed about it by conventional film scholarship. For the purpose of this discussion, this chapter engages with the writings of Pierre Boulanger (1975), Driss Jaidi (1990), Viola Chafik (1998), Mostapha Mesnawi (2001), Roy Armes (2005) and Sandra Carter (2009). Henceforth, I begin by asking the following questions: How has Osfour's cinematic experience been critically assessed by these historiographies? Has Osfour's filmography been approached analytically?

I start from the premise which considers Osfour as a subaltern figure of Moroccan cinema practice. My understanding of the term subaltern in the first sense is associated with its conventional meaning as

defined in the Concise Oxford Dictionary.[1] According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, the word subaltern defines three states: 1) 'an officer below the rank of a captain in British Military', 2) 'of inferior in rank', 3) particular, not universal. However, the use of the term subaltern in this chapter will also be associated with its connotative meaning which entails subordination and subjugation. The word is used to describe the relationship of power between the dominant discourse (represented by the elite) and the marginal voices from within the field of Moroccan cinema. More precisely, I use the term subaltern to describe the case of Mohamed Osfour and to show the extent to which his cinema experience has incorporated clear traits of subalternity. As a poor and 'illiterate' person, Osfour has continued to exist as a marginalized subject within a field that has traditionally been defined as the sphere of bourgeois and educated elite. Therefore, the objective of this chapter is to shed more light on Osfour's experience and the insights articulated about it in the literature investigating the history of Moroccan cinema so far. I start by uncovering the etymology of the term subaltern and the variant shifts and uses that it has gone through.

1-The Etymology of the Word Subaltern

It is widely accepted that the term subaltern has a long history. Likewise, it has usually been conceived of as a fluid concept which offers a variety of meanings and implications, depending on the discipline or area of research in which the term is used. Henceforth, there is a general consensus that the term subaltern was first used by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci notably in his work on cultural hegemony. In a parallel vein, the term subaltern continued to gain critical interest and reached the field of academia with the theoretical speculations proposed by scholars like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Ranajit Guha.

[1] R.E. Allan, ed. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 1213.

Given the fluidity of the concept, the subaltern in Gramsci's perspective has been associated with and identified as integrally bound to the Marxist conception of history as a form of class struggle. Within the Marxist perspective, the conflict between the upper-class and lower-class is potentially a continuing conflict between the haves and have-nots, and between those who rule and those who are ruled. Drawing on this logic, Marxists believe that the ruling ideas are the ideas of the ruling class. Therefore, it is within this framework that Gramsci's definition of the subaltern is established. Drawn from a class-based approach, Gramsci's conception of the subaltern has come to stand for the term proletariat in Marxist terminology. Critics say that Gramsci deliberately used the term subaltern so as to escape the prison censors. So, following Gramsci's definition, "the subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of the ruling groups."[1]

On her part, Spivak proposes her own speculation on the issue of subalternity, and her theory provides a new avenue which leads to another field of thought. Indeed, Spivak appropriated the concept of subaltern and shifted it to a more contemporary debate about subjectivity and gender. Spivak's speculation engages in defining and defending the subaltern from a feminist perspective. Having asked that provocative question "Can the subaltern speak?", Spivak recognizes that "for the true subaltern group, whose identity is its difference, there is no unrepresentable subaltern subject that can know and speak itself."[2] Therefore, she concludes by affirming that "the subaltern cannot speak."[3]

It is worth mentioning that "Ranajit Guha remains undoubtedly the most famous name among all Subaltern Historians."[4] Guha's adoption of the concept of subaltern has given the term alternative implications and has contributed to its wide-spread use in the academic circles. Furthermore, Guha's

[1] Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, trans. Quintin Hoare and Georgy Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1999), p. 55.
[2] Spivak Gayatri Chakravorty, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reade*r, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (London: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 80.
[3] Ibid,. p.104.
[4] Amrita Biswas, "Research Note on Subaltern Studies," *Journal of Literature, Culture and Media Studies.* Vol.1, Num 2, Winter- July/December, 2009, pp. 200-205

theory of the subaltern is based on the principle of contesting the elitist perspective as articulated by former discourses of colonialism and nationalism. In this respect, Guha recognizes the existence of an organic affiliation and affinity between the two discourses, especially in drowning and silencing what he calls "*small voices."*[1] As far as Guha is concerned, the two historiographies fail to acknowledge the contribution of masses to the making of the Indian history. He claims:

> The historiography of Indian Nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism-colonialist elitism and bourgeois elitism—colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitisim… Both these varieties of elitism share the prejudice that the making of the Indian nation and the development of consciousness— nationalism—which informed this process, were exclusive or predominantly elite achievements. In the colonialist and neo-colonialist historiographies these achievements are credited to British colonial rulers, administrators, policies, institutions and culture; in the nationalist and neo-nationalist writings--to Indian elite personalities, institutions, activities and ideas.[2]

Guha's ideas contributed to the emergence of a discipline which is centrally concerned with the issue of subalternity, and his speculations seemed effective in shaping the project of Subaltern Studies. In this respect, historical records suggest that the term subaltern has first moved to academia at the end of 1970s through the implementation of Subaltern Studies anticipated by English and Indian historians.[3] Subaltern Studies began as a promising project among several historians who were dissatisfied with the prevailing and conventional versions of India's history as described by colonialist and nationalist perspectives. It was premised on the argument that colonialist and nationalist historiographies were elitist in orientation. It is quite true that the Subaltern Studies group managed to set up a clear horizon to its

[1]For more see, Ranajit Guha, "The Small Voices of History,*" Subaltern Studies IX: Writings on South Asian History*, eds. Shahid Amin and Dipesh Chakrabarty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 1-11.
[2] Ranajit Guha, "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India," *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*, ed. Chaturvedi Vinayak (London: Verso, 2000), p. 1.
[3] David Luddin, ed. *Reading Subaltern Studies: Critical History, Contested Meaning, and the Globalisation of South Asia* (New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001), p. 1.

project through the views expressed in the journal of *Subaltern Studies,* which has appeared annually since 1982.

The perspective of Subaltern Studies was foregrounded on the basis of re-visiting and re-exploring both the colonial and nationalist historiographies, with the purpose of deconstructing their essentialist and elitist discourse. As an emergent form of scholarship, Subaltern Studies made its primary concern to produce a counter-narrative and to contest the conventional history. With the aim of re-visiting "those small voices" and providing new historiographies that should be anticipated from below, Subaltern Studies offered alternative versions of history to the state-centered perspective. As Luddin suggests:

> The originality of Subaltern Studies came to be its striving to rewrite the nation outside the state-centered national discourse that replicates colonial power/knowledge in a world of globalization. This new kind of national history consists of dispersed moments and fragments, which subaltern historians seek in the ethnographic present of colonialism. Writing such history constitutes subversive cultural politics because it exposes forms of power/knowledge that oppress subaltern peoples and also because it provides liberating alternatives. In this project, historians and post-colonial critics stand together against colonial modernity to secure a better future for subaltern peoples, learning to hear them, allowing them to speak, talking back to powers that marginalize them, documenting their past.[1]

As it is evident from the passage above, Subaltern Studies engaged in the process of re-reading history and the nation outside the legacy of the state-centered version of history. Conversely, subaltern studies aimed at re-theorizing and re-imagining the nation, with the purpose of developing alternative insights about those small voices that were misplaced and misrepresented by former historiographies. Henceforth, the prime concern of subaltern studies was to re-position these voices and show the extent to

[1] David Luddin, *Reading Subaltern Studies*, p. 20.

which they have traditionally been subject to exclusion, subjugation, and negation. Additionally, it aimed at giving them the chance to speak, to tell their own (hi)stories and to make their voice heard most appropriately.

It should be remembered that Subaltern Studies represented a vigorous challenge to elite narratives. Most significantly, it managed to make a radical change in the traditional outlook to history and to the positions from which the process of documentation was carried out. Put differently, it shifted the concern from centre to periphery and from formerly dominant voices to the small ones that have continually been overlooked by the statism's history. Arguing against conventional historiographies, Subaltern Studies recognized the subaltern as an agent of his/her history and a maker of his/her own destiny. For such a commitment "We are indeed opposed to much of the prevailing academic practice in historiography… for its failure to acknowledge the subaltern as the maker of his own destiny. This critique lies at the heart of our project."[1] Reacting to colonialist, Marxist and nationalist historiographies, Guha (1984) tries to show that subaltern insurgency, for example, is not to be seen as a pre-political activity or a backward consciousness. Rather, he suggests that those forms of rebellion—conducted by peasants in colonial India—should be regarded as political acts, and should be analyzed as obviously shaped by a non-elite political consciousness. According to Guha:

> Insurgency, in other words, was a motivated conscious undertaking on the part of the rural masses. Yet this consciousness seems to have received little notice in the literature on the subject. Historiography has been content to deal with the peasant rebel merely as an empirical person or member of class, but not as an entity whose will and reason constituted the praxis called rebellion.[2]

[1] Ranajit Guha, "Preface," *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, vol. 3 (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984), vii.
[2] Ranajit Guha, *Subaltern Studies II: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 2.

It is interesting to note that Subaltern Studies first developed as a critique of history. However, it has shifted its concern from a specific interest in the history of India to encompass other interventions and uses. As a methodological perspective, Subaltern Studies expanded the scope to reach a variety of disciplines and areas of research. The term subaltern now appears with growing frequency in studies on Africa, Latin America, and Europe, and subalternist analysis has become a recognizable mode of critical scholarship in history, literature, and anthropology.[1]

Currently, Subaltern Studies is equally regarded as a postcolonial project that engages in analyzing forms of subordination relative to the effect of the colonial experience. It reached the academic spheres of many countries that were formerly affected by colonialism. But, *"*how did a project which began as a specific and focused intervention in the academic discipline of (Indian) history come to be associated with postcolonialism…?"[2] Indeed, "the articulation of Subaltern Studies as a postcolonial project, first expressed by Edward Said in his "Foreword" to Selected Subaltern Studies, marked yet another internal shift."[3]In fact, both historiographies (post-colonial and subaltern studies) share almost the same intellectual burden: To bring marginal voices into the centre of concern and to recognize their contribution to history. Likewise, both are concerned with the deconstruction of the binary thought that establishes asymmetrical relationships between the Self and Other by representing a critical response to the dominant discourse and criticize its failure at recognizing the subaltern/Other outside the colonial legacy. For Edward Said:

> The work of subaltern scholars can be seen as an analogue of all those recent attempts in the West and throughout the rest of the world to articulate the hidden or suppressed accounts of

[1] Gyan Prakash, "Subaltern Studies as a Postcolonial Criticism," *The American Historical Review*, Volume 99, Issue 5 (Dec., 1994), pp. 1475-1490.
[2] Dipesh Chakrabatry, "Subaltern Studies and Postcolonial Historiography," *Nepantla: Views from South*, Vol 1, Issue 1 (2000), pp. 9-32.
[3] Vinyak Chaturvedi, "A Critical Theory of Subalternity: Rethinking Class in Indian Historiography," *Left History*, Vol 12, Issue 1. (Spring/ summer 2007), pp. 9-28.

> numerous groups—women, minorities, disadvantaged or dispossessed groups, refugees, exiles, etc.[1]

Given the globalized nature of the world at the present time—and due to the changing conditions identifying its political, economic and social structures— the urge to rethink the issue of subalternity has presented itself as an intellectual imperative. Along with the new characteristics that predefine the power relations in modern times, the forms of subordination and marginalization have taken new shapes. Currently, the subaltern is a globally marginalized subject, and the dominance which is exercised upon him/her is effectively operating within the logic of a globalized power. For this reason, the subaltern as suggested by Spivak—should be redefined to incorporate these new implications. Spivak suggests:

> Today 'the subaltern' must be rethought. S/he is no longer cut off from lines of access to the centre… The new subaltern is produced by the logic of a global capital that forms classes only instrumentally, in a separate urban sphere, because commercial and finance capital cannot function without an industrial component.[2]

Despite the variant mobilizations and uses of the term subaltern, the Subaltern Studies project has remained unchanged, and it still defends itself as a critique of history. It is still conceived of as an attempt to re-think and re-read history from the perspective of the subaltern, aiming at producing a counter-hegemonic discourse whose prime concern is to destabilize conventional historiographies.

2- Mohamed Osfour: A Subaltern Voice of Moroccan Cinema Practice

Despite his historical precedence, Osfour continued to receive little notice and his cinematic experience has often been seen from a vertical perspective. Henceforth, the prime concern here is to

[1]Edward Said, "Foreword," *Selected Subaltern Studies,* eds. Guha Ranjit and Gaytri Spivak (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). vi.
[2]Gaytri Spivak, "The New Subaltern," *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 233-234.

address Osfour's critical reception in this scholarship which falls under two labels: 1) the *orientalist*[1] *film historiography* and 2) *the nationalist/elitist film historiography*. By the orientalist film historiography I mean Pierre Boulanger (1975), Viola Chafik (1998), Roy Armes (2005) and Sandra Gayle Carter (2009), whereas the nationalist historiography refers to Jaidi (1990) and Mesnaoui (2000).

A-The Orientalist Film Historiography: Pierre Boulanger (1975), Viola Chafik (1998), Roy Armes (2005) and Sandra Gayle Carter (2009)

It is worth noting that the history of Moroccan cinema has been an attractive subject to many Orientalists. Pierre Boulanger was one of the first film historians who were concerned with the origins of cinema in Morocco in particular and North Africa in general, and his *Le Cinéma colonial: de L'Atlantide à Lawrence d'Arabie (1975)* was considered as a founding text. For many years, Boulanger's book was heavily used by Moroccan film critics and historians in their attempts to investigate the history of Moroccan cinema. Early Moroccan texts dealing with the beginnings of cinema in Morocco were strongly influenced by Boulanger's perspective, and this influence is clearly reflected in their view of Osfour's film practice.

In spite of its critical and historical value, the book appears to be hostage to a Eurocentric vision. The author's endeavour to trace back the cinema activities relative to the colonial period in North Africa was influenced by an Orientalist discourse. As a historical text, *Le Cinéma colonial: de L'Atlantide à Lawrence d'Arabie (1975)* was expected to provide conceptualizations and factual descriptions of events that had occurred in the past. At least, the reader expects a thick description of how the rise of Moroccan cinema in Morocco was configured. Because history is often told from the perspective of the victorious,

[1] I am using the term orientalist in its academic sense as it is suggested by Edward Said. According to Said, an orientalist is "Any one who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient—and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, a sociologist, historian, or philologist—either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism". For a more useful definition of Orientalism see, Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Penguin, 1995), p. 2.

Boulanger's version of history was not an exception and his narrative reiterated the colonizer's point of view. Paradoxically, even when he devotes a section entitled *"Rêves et réalités d'un cinéma autochtone"* to address the native cinema, he turns a blind eye to Osfour's attempt at establishing this cinema. By native cinema, Boulanger means a dozen Arabic-speaking films which were made in the forties by French filmmakers and performed by Moroccan actors. As mentioned earlier,[1] this body of films—which was produced between 1946 and 1948—should not be seen beyond the framework of the colonial propaganda. It is no need to remind the reader again that the colonial authorities launched such an experience only for the purpose of counteracting the Egyptian cinema, which managed to induce Moroccan audience at that time. However, the label *"un cinéma autochtone*" can properly fit the description of Osfour's film practice and his process of appropriating the film medium. Because it was made, performed and watched by natives, it was Osfour's cinematic experience that was eligible for the label "native cinema." At that time, the first seeds of this form of cinema were already in circulation, but in an underground circuit and beyond the gaze of the colonizer. Osfour's first film *Ibn Al-Ghaba* (1941) was produced some years before the production of the so-called Moroccan cinema of the forties (1946-1948). Yet, Osfour's attempt is overlooked by Boulanger and the first remark that strikes the reader of this book is the absence of indigenous filmmakers. As outlined in the book's preface, Guy Hennebelle observes:

> Le premier élément qui frappe à la lecture de ce livre [*Le Cinéma colonial: de L'Atlantide à Lawrence d'Arabie*], c'est l'absence dans les génériques des films de réalisateurs autochtones. Si l'on excepte le cas du Tunisien (de la communauté juive) Albert Samama, dit *"*Chikly*"*, qui tourna en 1924 un long métrage intitulé en Arabe *Ain el Ghazal* et en Français *La Fille de Carthage*, et quelques cas particuliers comme l'Algérien Mustapha

[1] Mentioned in part one, chapter three.

> Gribi qui tourna vers 1952 deux courts métrages, ainsi qu'une poignée de réalisateurs de télévision, aucun cinéaste maghrébin d'origine non européenne n'avait eu réellement accès à la caméra durant l'ère coloniale.[1]

> The first striking element in reading this book [*Le Cinéma colonial: de L'Atlantide à Lawrence d'Arabie*] is the absence of films by aboriginal directors in the generics. With the exception of the Tunisian (from the Jewish community) Albert Samama, also known as "Chikly", who shot a feature film in 1924 entitled in Arabic *Ain el Ghazal* and in French *La Fille de Carthage*, and some special cases such as the Algerian Mustapha Gribi who shot two short films around 1952, as well as a few television directors, no Maghreb filmmaker of non-European origin actually had access to the camera during the colonial era.

As it is clear from the passage above, no reference is made to Osfour. With the exception of the Tunisian Jew Albert Samama and the Algerian Mustapha Ghribi, no other native filmmaker is recognised. In his discussion of the cinema practice in colonial Morocco, Boulanger implicitly maintains that *"des gens qui n'entendaient rien aux problèmes de l'écran s'improvisèrent producteurs, et pourquoi pas, techniciens, ce qui leur valut d'amères déconvenues."*[2] ("People who could not hear anything about the problems of the screen became producers, and why not, technicians, which caused them bitter disappointments." In fact, one can infer from Boulanger's phrase *"des gens"* an implicit reference to Osfour, and this assumption may sound reasonable if one believes that Osfour was the only Moroccan involved in the filmmaking activity at that time. Nevertheless, Osfour is unnamed and his voice is muted. There are a variety of reasons why Osfour's voice is silenced, but the major reason behind the

[1] Pierre Boulanger, *Le Cinéma colonial*, pp. 5-6.
[2] Pierre Boulanger., *ibid.* p.158.

muteness of Osfour's voice is related to the author's Eurocentric vision. It might be true that Osfour's films were not accessible to Boulanger, but his critical disinterest in Osfour's film practice can also be due to an orientalist vision, which conceived of cinema as an exclusive practice of the white man.

In a connected vein, Viola Chafik's *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity* (1998) provides a reductionist investigation of the history of Arab cinema and thus, comes up with an a-historical conceptualization. By arguing that no native filmmaker in the Maghreb was involved in the cinema practice in the colonial period, Chafik seems to articulate an ungrounded judgment. Deploying a monolithic and essentialist discourse, Chafik turned a blind eye to Osfour 's contribution to the early Moroccan cinema of the colonial period. Chafik's a-historical attitude is seemingly manifested in the following claim: "In Algeria—which in 1933 already had 150 theatres, more than Egypt in the same period—not a single feature film was shot by a native director before independence in 1962. The same is true of Morocco before independence in 1954[1][sic]."[2]

Similarly, Roy Armes *Postcolonial Images: Studies in North Africa* (2005) seems to reproduce the same Eurocentric conception whereby natives are denied the credit of access to the cinema practice in the colonial period. Almost in the same manner as did Boulanger and Chafik, Armes argues that the natives' involvement in the cinema practice is a postcolonial act.[3] With a tone of overgeneralization, he insists that filmmaking in North Africa in colonial time was a European activity that was practiced only by one native figure: Albert Samama. Thus, Armes agrues:

> In the period up to independence there is just one pioneer figure in Maghreb film making, the Tunisian Albert Samama, also known as Chikly (1872-1934), who made a pioneering

[1] Viola Chafik, *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press), p. 15.
[2] Morocco was independent from French colonialism on November 18, 1956.
[3] Armes briefly mentions Osfour, but his reference is limited to *le Trésor Infernal* (1970)

short, *Zohra* (1922), and a longer fictional piece, *Ain al-ghazal* (*La Fille de Carthage/The Girl from Carthage*, 1924), both starring his daughter Haydée Chikly.[1]

In another context, Armes adds:

> Filmmaking in Africa by Africans is fundamentally a postcolonial activity and experience, and nowhere is this more the case than in the two contiguous but variously colonised geographical areas dealt with in this book. The first area comprises the North African countries from the Maghreb: Tunisia and Morocco, which both became independent in 1956, and Algeria, whose independence was achieved only after a long bloody war of liberation in 1962.[2]

Correspondingly, Sandra Gayle Carter's *What Moroccan Cinema? A Historical and Critical Study, 1956-2006* (2009) is also concerned with the postcolonial history of Moroccan cinema. It is apparent that the book is informative and provides a comprehensive overview of the entire aspects relative to cinema activity in postcolonial Morocco, but it is more apparent that it overlooks Osfour's contribution to the formation of that history. Carter mentions Osfour only in passing, and her reference does not exceed a short description of his first attempt at experimenting with the cinema practice. Because Carter's study contextually covers the postcolonial period (1956 - 2006), Osfour's experience is curtailed, marginalized and cursorily discussed.

B-The Nationalist/Elitist Film Historiography: Driss Jaidi (1990) and Mostapha Mesnaoui (2000)

From the outset, it should be emphasized that Jaid's *Le Cinema au Maroc (1990)* is a crucial text for the investigation of the emergence and evolution of cinema in Morocco. The book provides detailed

[1] Roy Armes, *Postcolonial Images: Studies in North Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), p. 6.
[2] Roy Armes, *African Filmmaking: North and South of the Sahara* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 3.

scrutiny on the entire aspects relative to the cinema practice and the process of cinema institutionalization in Morocco. By delving into historical records, Jaidi displays an extensive overview of institutions, regulations, statistics, strategies, and main facets of cinema production. Nevertheless, the book seems to have its own limitations, chief of which is its critical disinterest in Osfour's cinematic experience. Despite the fact that *Le cinema au Maroc* is concerned with the history of Moroccan cinema, the author's approach seems to be exclusive and neglectful of Osfour's experience. Starting from an institutional perspective which favours professional standards, Jaidi relates the emergence of Moroccan cinema to the production of the first-state-sponsored features: *Al-Ḥayātu Kifāḥ* (1968) co-directed by Mohamed Tazi Ben Abdelwahad and Ahmed Mesnawi and *Indma Tandojo Attimar*, co-directed by Abdelaziz Ramdani and Laarbi Bennani.

In an attempt to understand why Jaidi overlooked Osfour's film practice, the hypothesis is that this critical disinterest arises from the psychological influence of Boulanger's critical text. Jaidi seems unconsciously to be captive of Boulanger's essentialist and orientalist visions and was unable to critically overcome them. In a greater sense, Boulanger's influence in Jaidi's *Le cinéma au Maroc* is seemingly manifested in the monolithic view of its critical discourse.

Equally, the second type of nationalist historiography to be analyzed in this chapter is Mostapha Mesnaoui's *Abhat fi sinima al-Mghrebia (2000)*.[1] Drawing from its title, the book articulates a clear interest in writing the history of Moroccan cinema and surveying its origins. Investigating historical records, Mesnaoui draws on the general aspects identifying the evolution of Moroccan cinema, and his analysis goes on to see such an evolution through two crucial periods: Colonial and postcolonial. The central idea of the book is that the emergence of Moroccan cinema should be considered in the plural and in terms of four fundamental beginnings.[2]

[1] Mostapha Mesnaoui, *Abhat fi sinima al-Maghrebiya*. [Studies in Moroccan Cinema] (Rabat: Zaman Press, 2001), p. 48.
[2]Mostapha Mesnaoui, *Ibid.*, p. 45.

It is significant to note that Mesnaoui's approach is different in terms of its critical assessment of Osfour's film practice. In contrast with Jaidi, Mesnaoui devotes considerable attention to the discussion of Osfour's experience and acknowledges its relevance to the overall history of Moroccan cinema. According to Mesnaoui, Osfour's cinematic experience represents the third stage in the gradual development of Moroccan cinema—a stage that he calls the amateur beginning. What was pertinent about these images, Mesnaoui notes, is that they were achieved with an "intrinsic vision"[1] that looked at Moroccan reality from within.

However, Mesnaoui's insights about Osfour's cinematic experience are ambivalently foregrounded, and his assessment is achieved within the scope of a double vision. Although he recognizes the importance of Osfour's film practice in the shaping of Moroccan cinema history, Mesnaoui seems to be inconsistent in his assessment of the levels of that importance. Having previously described Osfour's visualization of Moroccan reality as "an intrinsic vision," Mesnaoui seems to contradict himself by saying that Osfour's endeavour was a mere duplication of the dominant cinema model. Thus, he argues:

> Despite the fact that it [Osfour's experience] is not a pure Moroccan cinematic vision of Moroccan reality—since Osfour's films are mere Moroccan copies of Western adventure films that Osfour was fascinated by like Tarzan and Robin Hood— it is necessary to recall this "amateur" beginning of Moroccan cinema.[2]

In the same vein, he adds:

> Because Osfour, a young man at that time, did not have an aesthetic and ideological background that made him take his own path in his relationship with Moroccan reality, he sufficed himself with making films through which he imitated what he had appreciated in European films… And he kept up with the same vision, considering cinema as an imitation

[1] *Ibid.,* p. 48.
[2] *Ibid.,* p. 49.

> of previous film-watching; even when he had the opportunity of shooting his first feature *Le Trésor Infernal* (1970). In the film, Osfour presents a mixture of Western films, wrestling, Indian melodrama, and the Egyptian musical film; which renders the film in his view as only a tool for entertainment.[1]

As a critical assessment, the two passages above articulate a monolithic attitude which envisages Osfour's filmography as a homogeneous entity. By arguing that Osfour's films (all films) are copies of European and Western adventure film, Mesnaoui seems to display a generalizing discourse. Saying that Osfour's endeavour was only an imitation of European cinema is not a critically-grounded assertion. Osfour's filmography does not represent one category, but it is rather an ensemble of films which can be arranged according to three broad categories. As it is outlined in the practical part, I have categorized Osfour's films according to three labels: "A cinema of attractions," "a cinema of narrative integration," and "a cinema of narrative attraction." For instance, Osfour's fascination with Tarzan, Robin Hood and Charlie Chaplin does not extend to his entire filmography, but it exists with a greater degree in his cinema of attractions.[2]In the post-colonial period, Osfour was much concerned with making films that were culturally and socially rooted in Moroccan cultural identity. By making films like *Al-Ibn Al-a'k (1956), Al-Yatim (1957),* and *Al-Harib (1962)* Osfour managed to produce typically Moroccan images that responded to the expectations of Moroccan audience. Drawing from the political climate that characterized the post-colonial period—the period when these films were made—Osfour was conscious to put his film practice at the service of national consciousness. Because he was concerned with liberating the Moroccan screen from the remains of the colonial imaginary, Osfour ended up by

[1]*Ibid*., p.34.
[2]Osfour's identification with the dominant film models (Tarzan, Robin Hood, and Charlie Chaplin) is more visible in this category which includes the films of the colonial period. These films include: *Ibn al-Ghaba (1941), Issa al-Atlas(1951), Joha /Charletto (1952), Amok L'invincible (1954),* and *Boukhou Najjar (1956).*

establishing the initial underpinnings of Moroccan national cinema, which visualized Moroccan reality with a high degree of cultural commitment.

In another context, Mesnaoui seems to proceed from a purely professional and institutional[1] understanding of filmmaking to judge Osfour's contribution to the rise of Moroccan cinema. With his inability to critically categorize Osfour's film practice within its appropriate framework, Mesnaoui undermines Osfour's primacy. According to him, Osfour's *Al-Ibn Al-a'k* (1956) can not be considered as the first Moroccan feature because it does not abide by normative standards of professional filmmaking. Thus, he says:

> Some film critics in Morocco intend to say that the production of the first professional Moroccan film feature is made thanks to this filmmaker [Mohamed Osfour] with his *Al-Ibn Ala'k* being presented in "Malaki" movie theatre in Casablanca in 1957. However, it is necessary to correct such a claim for the following reasons: The film's length is less than an hour and a quarter, which makes it closer to the medium than to the feature. Also, it was made with a 16 mm gauge—a fact that makes the film again closer to the amateur rather than professional films.[2]

Consequently, Mesnaoui's adoption of a typically-standardized approach, which capitalizes on norms of the institutional film industry, is apparent in the citation above. In terms of his assessment of *Al-Ibn Al-a'k*'s length and width, Mesnaoui remains captive of the authority of normative standards as they are required by the commercial conditions of distribution. According to this commercial perspective, the film is a cultural commodity whose production and distribution are often connected to an established

[1] According to Mohamed Bakrim, "Les institutionnels, disons ceux qui préconisent une approche plus professionnelle de la filmographie marocaine, avancent pour leur part la date de 1968 avec le film "Vaincre pour vivre" de Mohamed Tazi et Ahmed Mesnaoui." For more see, Mohamed Bakrim, *Le Désir permanent: chroniques cinématographiques* (Rabat: al- Maarif al-Jadida, 2006), p. 60.
[2] Mostapha Mesnaoui, *Abhat fi sinima al-Maghrebiya, p.* 48.

market-driven system. Due to their existence in the industry, "commercial films are usually made a certain length in order to fit certain economic requirements. A feature, for example, must be long enough for a patron to feel he is getting his money's worth..."[1]

Noticebaly, Mesnaoui seems to ignore that Osfour's film practice continued to exist outside the commercial circuit, and it was hardly motivated by commercial motives. Unable to stylistically categorize Osfour's cinematic experience, Mesnaoui fails to see it as a different category from mainstream cinema. In my opinion, Osfour managed to leave behind a unique experience which was greatly different from the prevailing film practice. As the following chapter will show, Osfour's cinematic experience constitutes some aspects of Underground Cinema, among which is its existence outside the institution. To do critical justice to Osfour's film practice, I argue that it should be critically assessed in the light of standards and conventions of the Underground Cinema. According to these conventions, "Underground films are of predictable width but unpredictable length. An Underground film is almost always 16 mm or 8mm wide."[2] And because they are personal statements where filmmakers display their own vision, "Underground films are ruled by other economic requirements, namely production cost, so they are usually under thirty minutes length. Aside from that, they are free to be whatever length their makers wish."[3]

As has been noted above, Osfour continued to exist as a subaltern figure of Moroccan cinema and continued to be ignored by film history. His film practice has often been treated as a minor form of cinema which lacked in artistic merit and artfulness. Either by the Orientalist or nationalist historiographies, Osfour was not fully recognized for his significant contribution in shaping the history of Moroccan cinema. One of the major reasons why Osfour's cinematic experience has been overlooked by the prevailing historiography is because it was not categorized. Therefore, the main concern of the

[1] Sheldon Renan, *An Introduction to the American Underground Film* (New York: E.P. Dutton and CO., INC, 1967), pp. 23-24.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 23.
[3] Sheldon Renan, *Ibid.*, p. 24.

following chapter is to see the possibility of grouping Osfour's film practice according to a particular category.

Chapter Seven:

Mohamed Osfour's Cinematic Experience: From Underground to Eclipse

The present chapter is concerned with identifying the main characteristics which define Osfour's cinematic experience. The aim is to show the uniqueness of this form of cinema and the extent to which it is distinct from the conventional cinema practice in Morocco. Approaching Osfour's cinematic experience initially requires assessing its convergence with/divergence from, or its continuity/discontinuity to already existing segments of the cinema industry. Philip Hall presents these segments as follows:

> The motion picture industry, as it stands today, can roughly be divided into three wildly uneven segments. The first segment is the most prominent: The Hollywood output… The second segment of the motion picture industry is significantly smaller when compared to Tinseltown's output, but in many ways it rivals and often surpasses its intellectual and artistic results. This is the art house circuit, which presents independently-produced American films and imports from foreign film industries … Then there is a third segment of the motion picture industry which is generally unknown to most moviegoers, and is also unfamiliar territory to many players in the industry itself. This is the Underground Cinema, a vast and somewhat unexplored territory consisting of thousands of films which rarely find their ways to audience, media, or industry recognition. In many ways, today's Underground Cinema represents a parallel universe to the motion picture world.[1]

[1]Philip Hall, *The Encyclopedia of Underground Movies: Films from the Fringes of Cinema* (Michigan: Michael Wiese Productions, 2004), pp. xii-xiii.

As it is clear from the passage above, the cinema industry has roughly been divided into three fundamental segments: Hollywood, the art house and the Underground. In Morocco, the cinema industry has been hugely influenced by the stylistic conventions of the Hollywood model. Whereas the second segment seemed to have an ephemeral existence as the only examples referring to such a segment are *Sigma 3* and the *Casablanca group*. Because he continued to make his film beyond the establishment[1], this chapter argues that the third segment of Underground Cinema best describes Osfour's cinematic experience.

It should be made clear from the beginning that the distinctiveness of Osfour's cinematic experience resides in its operation outside institutional circuits. Since Independence, the production of films in Morocco has been partially or fully sponsored by the state or other private institutions. Throughout the history of the cinema practice in Morocco, Osfour has remained the only filmmaker to independently produce, distribute and exhibit his films. As a form of independent cinema, Osfour's film practice has remained a specific segment which shares some common traits with Underground Cinema. To establish the link between this form of cinema and Osfour's film practice, this chapter seeks to answer the following questions: What are the general aspects identifying Underground Cinema? To what extent does Osfour's cinematic experience meet the standards of Underground Cinema?

1-Underground Cinema: A Closer Investigation of the Concept

Surveying the concept of Underground Cinema is like entering a territory that is still undiscovered and unknown. Despite the fact that Underground Cinema is an old tradition that is integrally bound to the cinema practice in general, it seems difficult to agree upon a specific definition of the term. Essentially, "Definitions are risky, for the Underground film is nothing than an explosion of cinematic styles, forms,

[1]In this context, the word establishment can mean a state agency, a business organization, or any public institution which produces, distributes, and exhibits films.

and directions."[1] Following such a perspective, is it accurate to consider Underground Cinema as a separate genre that is defined according to specific aspects? Practically, "if it can be called a genre, it is a genre that can be defined only by a cataloging of the individual works assigned to it."[2]

Given the fact that it emerged in a chaotic context of competing ideologies, Underground Cinema is somehow defined as a political response to the dominant segment in the field of the cinema industry. In terms of its production and exhibition, it continued to exist on the margins of the commercial film industry and beyond the economic requirements of its channels. Departing from ideas relative to popular art, Underground Cinema developed critical attitudes towards the hegemonic nature of the prevailing culture and aimed at producing an alternative form of culture that was primarily informed by a certain sense of resistance. For this reason, Underground Cinema has usually been regarded as an integrated component of the emergent counter-culture. As Duncan Reekie maintains:

> Underground Cinema first developed around the late 1950s as a component of the emergent counter-culture; a heretical and mercurial combination of experimental films, amateur cine culture, pop, beat, camp, radical agit-prop and anti-art. The shift from experimental to Underground was a gradual and disparate process; it was the surfacing of a subculture.[3]

Although the tradition of Underground Cinema practice is not a new phenomenon, the term underground film may have reached the conceptual apparatus of the cinema discourse only recently. As a practice, it was integrally bound to the early years of the cinema industry. Sheldon Renan notes that "The term 'underground film' belongs to the sixties, but the personal film is not a new phenomenon. It goes back almost to the beginning of film, a seventy-year tradition that has had many names,

[1] Sheldon Renan, *An Introduction to the American Underground Film* (New York: E.P Dutton and CO., INC, 1967), p. 17.
[2] *Ibid*., pp. 17-18.
[3] Duncan Reekie, *Subversion: The Definite History of Underground Cinema* (London: Wallflower, 2007*)*, p. 140.

underground being only the latest.[1]Along with that, Parker Tyler argues that the phrase Underground Film was first used by Manny Farber in the November 1957 issue of *Commentary* to describe a type of déclassé Hollywood movie—"the hard-bitten action film that finds its natural home in caves: the murky, congested theaters, looking like glorified tattoo parlors on the outside and located near bus terminals in big cities."[2]

The term underground film first appeared as a response to the dominant modes of the cinema industry. In terms of its production, the underground film represented an alternative form of cinema practice which continued to exist at the borderline of the conventional film industry. As Parker Tyler demonstrates:

> A rubric rich with romantic connotations, Underground Film suggests movies that erupt out of individual libidos and channel beneath the surface of public consciousness, clandestine spectacles produced to be shown in subways or bomb shelters, experiences shared by a deviant (if not an oppositional) subculture, films that might be subject to police harassment, a cinema that is anti-bourgeois, anti-patriotic, and anti-religious, as well as anti-Hollywood.[3]

The distinctiveness of the underground film lies in the fact that it differs radically from existing forms of cinema production. Its distinctiveness is materially realized at the level of production, distribution, exhibition, and narrative discourse. There are four fundamental characteristics that identify the Underground film. First, the underground film is an individual enterprise whereby the filmmaker controls every step of production. Thus, he/she can be at once the actor/actress, producer, editor, distributor, cameraman/woman, etc. Second, the underground film is usually made with limited resources, and it is rarely sponsored by banks or establishments. However, it is usually supported and

[1] Sheldon Renan, *ibid.*, p. 17.
[2] Parker Tyler, *Underground Film: A Critical History* (New York: Ca Capo Press, 1995), p. vi.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. v.

financed by the filmmaker's himself/herself, his/her friends, and relatives. Even actors and actresses are never paid for their work in this type of film, but their participation is understood as a form of benevolence. Third, the underground film is predictable in width but unpredictable in length. Because it is generally a personal statement that reflects a personal vision about the world and because it is not subject to any form of economic loyalty and dependency, the underground film usually subverts the norms restricting the length of a particular film. Unlike commercial films that are ruled by economic requirements, the underground film's length is decisively the filmmaker's choice. In contrast to commercial films, the underground film is rarely made for commercial motives. Illustrating this point, Renan argues:

> Commercial films are usually made a certain length in order to fit certain economic requirements. A feature, for example, must be long enough for a patron to feel he is getting his money's worth, but no longer than he can comfortably sit through. Underground films are ruled by other requirements, namely production cost, so they are usually under thirty minutes in length. Aside from that, they are free to be whatever length their makers wish.[1]

Fourth, the underground film is mostly produced, distributed and exhibited outside the institutional and commercial channels. Often, the underground film does not receive financial support from any source, and distributors are not enthusiastic about its circulation. With these structural hindrances, many underground films continued to have an underground existence as they did not have the opportunity of the exhibition; they were produced, but have never been in front of an audience. Renan defines the underground film as follows:

> The underground film is a certain kind of film. It is a film conceived and made essentially by one person and is a *personal statement* by that person. It is a film that dissents radically in

[1] Sheldon Renan, *An Introduction to the American Underground Film,* pp. 23-25.

> form, or in technique, or in content, or perhaps in all three. It is usually made for very little money, frequently under a thousand dollars, and its exhibition is outside commercial film channels.[1]

As it is clear from the passage above, here we are faced with an alternative form of cinema production that is unique and dissimilar to conventional forms. It breaks up with the standards of the Hollywood model and defends its own standards. Given the fact that the Underground film is related to a different circuit from that of Hollywood, it is usually made with different logistics and equipment. Unlike professional films which are necessarily 35 mm wide, the underground film is always made in 8 mm, 9 mm or 16 mm, and most of the time these cinematic devices were used for wartime newsreels and circulated in second-hand markets. Because of limited resources, underground filmmakers were forced to make use of this equipment since they were cheaper than 35 mm and thus, were the only possibility available at that time.

Due to their dependency on these types of equipment, which are largely qualified as "non-professional," underground films are usually perceived by conventional film criticism as amateurish productions. By being thus labeled, the underground film is conceived of as inferior and lacking in artistic merit. Arguing against such claims, Maya Deren,[2] a prominent and leading figure in the Underground Cinema theory and practice, harshly discards these views. In her "Amateur versus Professional," Deren strongly confirms:

> Cameras do not make films; film-makers make films. Improve your films not by adding more equipment and more personnel but by using what you have to its fullest capacity. The

[1] Sheldon Renan, *ibid*., p.17.
[2] Maya Deren is often called "the mother of Underground Cinema" in the United States of America.

most important part of your equipment is yourself: [Y]our mobile body, your imaginative mind, and your freedom to use both. Make sure you do use them.[1]

2- Mohamed Osfour Going Underground

Having explained the general aspects identifying the Underground Cinema in its international framework, I consider here the affinities that might exist between Osfour's cinematic experience and this form of cinema practice. Put differently, this chapter seeks to assess the extent to which it may be accurate to categorize Osfour's experience as Underground Cinema. For this purpose, this chapter asks the following question: Does Osfour's cinematic experience abide by the general aspects of Underground Cinema listed above?

In fact, there are numerous points of commonality that tie Osfour's experience to the tradition of Underground Cinema. However, the most significant trait that defines Osfour's cinematic experience is that it was an independent form of cinema. As was the case with most underground filmmakers, Osfour produced films informally depending on his own money, and on the benevolence of people working with him. Because his cinema practice was not inclusively part of any commercial circuit, no institution could venture to sponsor his films. Throughout his cinematic career, Osfour continued to make films independently and beyond commercial channels of film production and distribution. Like underground filmmakers elsewhere, he was interested in making films which reflected his personal vision, and which fulfilled his personal satisfaction. Osfour's vision of cinema was barely conditioned by commercial motives, but rather it was shaped by a great sense of cultural commitment. As pertinent tools for education, Osfour's films were purposeful, didactic and socially engaged; and films like *Al-Ibn Al-a'k, Al-Yatim* and *Al-Harib* were real examples that revealed Osfour's concern to combine education with

[1] Maya Deren, *Essential Deren: Collected Writings on Film*, ed. Bruce R. McPherson (New York: McPherson, 2005), p. 18.

entertainment. These films came to reflect the social climate which characterized the newly liberated Morocco and to mirror its will to reach stability and social cohesion.

Another key feature of Osfour's cinematic experience is that it was a peripheral form of cinema. Osfour's films were geographically-bound and did not go beyond the margins of Casablanca. Like Underground films, Osfour's cinematic works did not receive wide circulation, and most of them were not popular with the majority of Moroccans because they hardly had any chance for public exhibition. Because cinema in colonial Morocco was recognizably a Western concern of the European community, Osfour was practically denied access to the centre by normative standards of the filmmaking activity as imposed by the colonizer's cinema model. Alternatively, he resorted to the periphery to escape the colonial authorities' gaze, hoping to give life to a cinema model that could reflect the social and cultural concerns of that location. In that way, two cinema models existed in two separate territories: The first in the centre and the second in the periphery/underground. These two forms of cinema production reflect the notion of "*the two zones*"[1] as theorized by Fanon.

In a connected vein, Osfour continued to work outside the professional norms and requirements of the cinema industry. Over three decades of cinema production, he received no formal training and he continued to exist as an amateur filmmaker, whose self-made experience was essentially fueled by curiosity, passion, and perseverance. Although he made use of the most basic equipment and limited budgets, Osfour managed to make films and distribute them to his audience and family. For example, instead of professional actors and actresses, he resorted to friends, relatives, and children of his neighborhood. Unable to afford sets, he continued to use the real world and this explains why most of his films were shot in Sidi Abderhman's forest in Casablanca and performed by Osfour and his friends. In describing the uniqueness of Osfour's experience, Michel Serceau writes:

[1] See Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 30.

> Mohamed Osfour qui fabriqua pratiquement lui—même dans les années 40 et 50 son matériel de tournage (mais aussi de projection, de développement…), qui fut à la fois producteur, distributeur, exploitant, animateur, qui ne tourna qu'un seul film en 35m/m, peut paraître un personnage anachronique. Mais ce bricoleur de génie, cet "homme--orchestre" comme l'appelle à juste titre Ahmed Fertat, qui créa un club des cinéastes amateurs marocains (les autochtones n'avaient pas accès aux clubs existants), un réseau de salles pour enfants et qui eut toujours à cœur de faire découvrir aux jeunes le cinéma, qui songea à créer une école et un musée de cinéma, est une poignante incarnation, de la foi en une invention qui était en train de bouleverser le siècle et de la volonté d'en doter son payes.[1]
>
> Mohamed Osfour, who in the 1940s and 1950s made almost all his own film-making equipment (including projection and development equipment, etc.), who was at the same time producer, distributor, exhibitor and host, who shot only one film in 35m/m, may seem an anachronistic character. But this genius handyman, this " one-man band " as Ahmed Fertat justly called him, who created a club of Moroccan amateur filmmakers (the locals had no access to existing clubs), a network of cinemas for children and who always had at heart introducing young people to cinema, who envisioned creating a school and a film museum, was a poignant embodiment of faith in an invention that was to revolutionize the century and of his will to provide it to his country.

In the same vein, Fertat adds that:

> Il [Osfour] a été le premier à faire du cinéma comme producteur indépendant, privé, dans le sens économique et libéral du terme. Et il restera l'un des rares à le faire, même après

[1] As quoted in *Une Passion Nommée Cinéma*, pp. 11-12.

> l'indépendance, rivalisant même avec ceux qui bénéficieront de tout ce qui lui fera défaut, qui feront les premiers films et les premiers longs métrages grâce au deniers de l'état.[1]
>
> He [Osfour] was the first to make cinema as an independent private producer, in the economic and liberal sense of the word. And he will remain one of the few to do so, even after independence, competing even with those who would benefit from everything he lacks, who will make the first films and first feature films thanks to the state's funds.

Osfour himself continued to experiment with primitive cinematic devices which were intended to amateur use and that could be manipulated by anyone. He bought these devices from second-hand shops and tried to adapt them to his shooting conditions. Due to his informal involvement in the cinema practice, his films were either 9 mm (films of the colonial period) or 16 mm (films of the postcolonial period), and the only film which was made with professional equipment (35 mm) is *Al-Kanz al-Mrsud (1970).* Added to that, he controlled every step of production: He performed as an actor, a producer, a distributor, an editor, a lecturer and exhibitor. In the words of Ahmed Fertat, Osfour was *"un homme-orchestre."*As most of his films were silent, he accompanied them with simultaneous voice-over during their screenings. In this way, he inherited a tradition that was heavily used by early filmmakers during the era of silent cinema. Adopting the aesthetics of austerity, Osfour used to stand behind the screen to narrate the characters' dialogues in a manner to please and solicit the attention of his audience. In his discussion about the deployment of the lecturer technique in primitive cinema, Noël Burch (1967) argues that it constituted a primordial step in the process of linearising the act of watching. According to Burch, "the lecturer represents the first attempts to linearise the reading of these pictures,"[2] because it "served

[1] Ahmed Fertat, *ibid.*, p. 164.
[2] Noël Burch, *Life to those Shadows,* p. 154.

both to bring order to the perceptual 'chaos' of the primitive picture and to impress on the narrative movement a supplement of 'directional necessity' or concatenatory momentum."[1]

In terms of film distribution, Osfour managed to create his own "commercial" circuit and dispose of a very modest infrastructure, which constituted the platform for the circulation and promotion of his cinematic works. Faced with normative standards of the industrial film distribution, Osfour was forced to alternatively overcome the institutional hurdles imposed by the establishment. By converting his mechanic garages into "movie theatres," Osfour was able to solve the practical problem of distribution and managed to create his own channels, where he could project his films to his audience. What was spectacular was that these garages, which were largely known as "Osfour's movie theatres,"[2] functioned both for film exhibition as well as for the maintenance of logistics and cinematic devices. It was in these garages where Osfour continued to exhibit his films and share his passion for cinema with an audience which was in great part composed of children. Because of the lack of various recreational opportunities at that time, Osfour's spectacles represented a real outlet and a pertinent moment of distraction for many children. Thanks to these spectacles, some of them were convinced to lead their professional careers in the field of cinema practice and to prove their prominence as gifted filmmakers. Both Ahmed Bouanani and Mohamed Reggab, two veterans of Moroccan cinema, received their initial cinema knowledge in Osfour's "movie theatres."

To attend Osfour's projections, the audience had to pay for a ticket for a spectacle which often constituted two main activities: A boxing match and the projection of a film. The price of the ticket was *"un franc et la recette sera partagée en trois parts égales: une pour la boxe, une pour le cinéma et une pour la salle."*[3] (One franc and the recipe will be divided into three equal parts: one for boxing, one for the cinema and one for the gym). Because films were not long enough, the boxing matches were

[1] Noël Burch, *Life to those Shadows*, p. 154.
[2] Osfour owned three garages, which functioned as three movie theatres.
[3] Ahmed Feratat, *Une Passion nommée cinéma*, p. 101.

essentially the real attraction that guaranteed the audience's regular attendance. Eventhough these "movie theatres" were modestly equipped, they were practically efficient enough in providing the platform for the allocation Osfour's films. Given the fact that they did not conform to the requirements of the dominant commercial channels, Osfour's films had only the chance to reach the audience via these "movie theatres;" Except for *Al Ibn Alaa'k* and *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud*, which were projected in a national movie theatre[1] in Casablanca, all other films had a restricted circulation.

Given that the production of film in Morocco was ruled by the elite,[2] Osfour was perhaps obliged to go underground and to work clandestinely. He was rejected by the establishment, and this explains why he continued to produce his films beyond the predefined norms of the dominant film industry. His act of going underground should not be understood as an intentional and a personal decision, but it was imposed by the dominant ideology which has monopolized the cinema industry in Morocco.

[1] They were projected in cinema Malaki in Casablanca.
[2] During the colonial time, it was monopolized by Europeans, whereas in the postcolonial period it was so by the bourgeois and educated elite.

Chapter Eight:

Mohamed Osfour and Primitive Cinema: The Aesthetics of Austerity, Popular Art, and the Popular Mind

The previous chapter argued that Osfour's cinematic experience can be defined as an Underground Cinema model. However, this chapter seeks to identify the types of aesthetics which Osfour experimented with during his process of filmmaking. Assuming the uniqueness of Osfour's experience, this chapter sheds light on the nature of film stylistics and grammar of representation that Osfour deployed throughout his cinematic career. The argument here is that Osfour—though influenced by the Hollywood model—seemed to adopt alternative aesthetics that belonged to a mode of representation which usually existed in perpetual contrast with that of Hollywood. By Hollywood, it is meant:

> [T]he international institutionalisation of certain standards and values of cinema, in terms of both audience expectations, professional ideologies and practices and the establishment of infrastructures of production, distribution, exhibition, and marketing, to accommodate, regulate and reproduce these standards and values.[1]

1-Hollywood Aesthetics and the Primitive Mode of Representation

Cinema historians agree that the development of the movie industry has taken different directions with the emergence of Hollywood. As a turning point in the history of the motion picture, the rise of Hollywood in the 1910s announced the birth of a new era in the history of worldwide cinema. At that time, this momentous occurrence heralded tremendous changes that were to be installed simultaneously with the installation of the studio system. These changes encompassed almost all areas of film

[1] Andrew Higson, "The Concept of National Cinema," *Film and Nationalism*, ed. Alan Williams (London: Rutgers University Press, 2002), p. 55.

production, distribution, and exhibition leading to the establishment of fixed norms and procedures that have been reminiscent of this colossal establishment. In this respect, the Hollywood model has become the most powerful and pervasive style to be adopted, not only by filmmakers working under the tutelage of Hollywood but also by filmmakers attracted to the system.

Generally speaking, the classical Hollywood film is established on narrative principles and procedures which have continued to dominate filmmaking since the inception of the studio system. As a narrative structure in classical Hollywood, cinema is usually described in terms of three pertinent filmic components: *Representation*, *structure*, and *act.*[1] At the narrative level, linearity remains one of the most dominant features characterising the Hollywood cinematic writing. The classical Hollywood film is usually structured into a story that yields to the principle of linear construction, and which develops through a chronological order that conforms to the unity of space, time and action. In this way, the narrative process establishes a certain equilibrium and allows the sequence of events to go smoothly, creating an established order and an organization of the narrative. This 'narrative transitivity'[2] renders the film a homogeneous entity that is governed according to the chain of causation and to the causality of events. It is known that Hollywood screenplay-writing manuals have long insisted on following a particular dramatic formula in which the plot should consist of an undisturbed stage, the disturbance, the struggle, and the elimination of the disturbance (the adjustment).[3]

Another dominant feature that identifies the classical Hollywood film is the ending. Films in the Hollywood tradition usually have happy and satisfactory endings, "allowing the spectator to withdraw 'gently' from the diegetic experience, convinced that he or she has no more business in it and not feeling that the dream had been interrupted by a beating or by being kicked out of it."[4] In the narrative flow, the

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[1]David Bordwell, "Classical Hollywood Cinema," *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Colombia University Press, 1986), p. 17.
[2] Peter Wollen, "Godard and Counter-Cinema: Vent d'Est," *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, p. 121.
[3] See Eugene Vale, *The Technique of Screenplay and Television Writing* (New York: Focal Press, 1998), p. 86.
[4] Noël Burch, *Life to those Shadows*, pp. 193.

closure is essentially an indication of the completion and demise of the film's events. Often, the ending of the films leaves spectators with entertaining dreams and convince them of the cinema's capacity to render the world more pleasurable. In this way, the insistence of Hollywood's filmmakers on creating satisfaction among viewers has contributed to the rise of spectatorship and the popularity of Hollywood films. Due to its visual impact, aura and glamour, the Hollywood film has always been a source of visual pleasure for a large number of people from different walks of life and nationalities.

In a similar vein, Hollywood is fully integrated into the star system which is usually part of the process of image-building that tends towards visually constructing heroic figures and rendering them alluring to the spectator's eye. Particular characters, largely described as classical persona, are centrally effective in the sequence of events and dramatic actions. With their heroic connotations, these characters are not only part of the visual pleasure, but they also become the object of psychological empathy and identification. Because they represent positive connotations, heroic characters are usually a source of identification for viewers, who commonly try to establish with them an emotional sentiment of satisfaction and appreciation. Psychologically speaking, this process of identification is intensified by the spectators' desire of reaching these implications which can implicitly signify moral values (the power to beat evil) or physical attractiveness (usually heroic roles are allotted to good-looking characters).

At the level of cinematic devices, Hollywood productions are largely defined in terms of highly sophisticated materials and high budgeting resources. Filmmakers—working under the auspices of Hollywood—are usually lucky enough to be supported both financially and materially, and their filmic productions enjoy massive promotion and media coverage. Because it exists in an interconnected system of production, Hollywood is often praised for the work conditions which it provides for filmmakers and for the glamour that accompanies the entire process of their filmmaking practice.

Throughout its development as a colossal establishment, Hollywood managed to spread its absolute hegemony over the global world of the moving picture and in defending specific film aesthetics. The cinematic writing of Hollywood film is often structured into predefined ingredients which make up what can be called Hollywood aesthetics. With its dominance over the film industry worldwide, Hollywood managed to impose its aesthetic choices, directional principles, and film styles which reflect its ideological and cultural orientations. Ironically, these aesthetic directions have turned out to be 'the preferred aesthetics' adopted by the majority of practitioners working in the global field of film production. On this subject, David Bordwell maintains:

> By virtue of its centrality within international film commerce, Hollywood cinema has crucially influenced most other national cinemas. After 1917, the dominant forms of filmmaking abroad were deeply affected by the models of storytelling presented by the Americans studios.[1]

However, the rise of the Hollywood system effaced pre-existing film stylistics of the early cinema. The Hollywood aesthetics have not risen in a vacuum, but they were established at the expense of 'primitive' cinema stylistics which had been in operation since the production of the first-run pictures--historically represented by Lumiere's *sortie d'usine*. Henceforth, it is relevant here to remind the reader that cinema aesthetics have been divided into two separate modes of representation, which co-existed from the emergence of the moving picture in the late 19th century. Historically, these two representational modes existed in isolation and had remarkably distinctive features that identified each one of them. Each mode seemed to belong to a particular historical moment and to relate to a specific system with its own traditions, logic and epistemological existence. As elaborated by Noël Burch, these two representational modes are PMR (Primitive Mode of Representation) and IMP (Institutional Mode

[1] David Bordwell, "Classical Hollywood Cinema," *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader,* p. 31.

of Representation). If the IMP is pervasively the most acknowledged by the critical discourse and practitioners in the field of making pictures, the PMR is on the opposite still unknown and unrecognized as a separate mode which is "a stable system with its own inherent logic and durability."[1] It is a mode of representation that is "detectable in very many films in certain characteristic features, capable of a certain development but unquestionably poorer than the IMP."[2] In his attempt to identify the general traits which constitute this mode of representation, Noël Burch confirms:

> What then constitutes this Primitive Mode of Representation ? I have discussed some of its main features at length: autarchy of the tableau (even after the introduction of the syntagm of succession), horizontal and frontal camera placement, maintenance of long shot and 'centrifugality'. These are features that can be detected in the text of a typical film, and they, the ambience of theatres and the possible presence of a lecturer interact to produce what I have tried to define as the experience of *primitive externality*.
>
> But there is another characteristic of the primitive film—really a whole cluster of characteristics—which I have hardly touched on as yet, although it will help us to understand an aspect of the IMP which has been so completely internalised that it is now very difficult to approach it directly. This is what I shall call the *non-closure* of the PMR (in contrast, in other words, to the closure of the IMP.[3]

In the same context, Burch adds:

> One more characteristic of primitive cinema taken as a whole: the prodigious 'circulation of signs' that went on it… Finally, there is the characteristic of primitive cinema most obvious

[1] Noël Burch, *Life to those Shadows*, p. 188.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 186.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 188.

> to modern eyes, a characteristic both of its peculiar forms of narrative and of the rules of direction then in force. I mean the absence of the *classical persona*.[1]

As suggested in the quotes above, here we are dealing with an almost dissimilar system of signification which, by its principles, contrasts with the Institutional Mode of Representation. These two modes of representation are different from each other in many ways, but the definitive characteristic that differentiates them is their relationship with the establishment. While the IMP is integrally linked to the establishment, the PMR is an informal system that traditionally existed on the margin of the establishment. Because of this, it continued to have an obscure existence and remained beyond the scope of the institutional critical cinematic discourse. As it was considered to lack the aesthetic traits of a recognized mode of representation, the PMR has received less critical attention and, in many cases, has been relegated to a secondary position. Films of the pre-history era usually fall outside the critical concern of both academia and the institutional critical discourse. More than that, there have been stereotypical attitudes constructed about early films and their artistic merit. It is for this reason that the majority of films of this period have not been critically assessed, and in the best case when dealt with, they were viewed with modern eyes.

2- Mohamed Osfour: Primitive Aesthetics, Hollywood Aesthetics, or both?

As mentioned earlier, Osfour's cinematic experience has remained a distinct segment that was radically different from mainstream cinema in Morocco. It established its own traits and developed identical aspects which were reminiscent of its very cinematic identity. One of the most distinctive features that identify it artistically is that it was an amateur experience which continually existed as an un-institutional and informal cinema model. Noticeably, it was a form of cinema that centrally

[1] Noël Burch, *ibid*., pp. 196-197.

established its artistic existence on the notion of passion as a driving force within the process of creation. Osfour's involvement in the filmmaking enterprise was heavily nurtured by a great sense of passion and cultural commitment. As a passionate filmmaker, Osfour seemed to have the evidence that the artistic gift, together with passion, were crucially two determining prerequisites for any creative practice. Although he lacked the three main conditions of the cinema practice, namely the professional knowledge, the technical mastery, and the financial support, Osfour was able to engage in a self-made process and he managed to overcome his personal "deficiencies." The absence of the aforementioned requirements— though crucial for any engagement in the filmmaking activity— did not restrict his insistence on making his dream come true. As he could not gain all three together, Osfour made an exceptional effort to develop himself at least technically, because he was conscious that the technical mastery had been a necessity.

Throughout his career as an amateur filmmaker, Osfour continued to experiment with very modest equipment, creating moving images and film contents. Having attended international productions shot in Morocco, Osfour was lucky to acquire his initial professional knowledge through practice and to become familiar with productions of the Hollywood school. There is little doubt that his humble social conditions were a practical hindrance to his aspirations to use sophisticated logistics-- similar to those he encountered in international productions. From his first-run pictures, *Ibn Al-Ghaba (1941)* onwards, Osfour was unable to provide more-advanced materials, and he kept using almost the same primitive cinematic devices that he had bought from second-hand shops. With the exception of *Al Kanz al-marsoud (1970),*[1] the other films were either 9 mm or 16 mm.

It is generally accepted that the world cinema moved to the talkie era at the end of the 1920s with *The Jazz Singer(1927)*. Remarkably, the development of sound remained a radical innovation that has revolutionized the cinema industry and the traditions of film reception. At that moment, the

[1] *Al Kanz al-Marsoud* is 35 mm wide.

accompaniment of sound to the moving image was a ground-breaking innovation that led the cinema industry into a new stage of its development. Since 1927, the soundtrack has become a primordial component and an indispensable filmic element within film composition. Even the traditions of film exhibition changed radically as well as the expectations of the audience, which no longer accepted that old-fashioned method of lecturing.

However, the development of sound did not promise much for Mohamed Osfour because this new cinematic achievement remained beyond his reach. Even though his process of filmmaking started and developed in the talkie era (1941-1970), Osfour continued to produce silent films for the reason that he continued to experiment with almost the same cinematic devices. In film screenings, Osfour inherited techniques and methods that belonged to the pre-cinema period and used them to ensure the smooth reception of the films' content. In addition to his multiple roles in the filmmaking process, Osfour had also an additional intervention during the films' projection. Because the films were silent, he used to stand behind the screen to accompany the projection with funny commentaries. With this immediate voice-over, Osfour managed to add vitality to the screening rituals and draw the attention of the audience into the film's progression. In this way, Osfour inherited a widely used tradition that predominantly shaped the silent era and which met its end with the development of sound. As Geoffrey Nowell-Smith argues:

> Silent cinema is strictly speaking a misnomer, for although films themselves were silent, the cinema was not. The showing of early films, particularly non-fiction, was often accompanied by a lecturer or barker, and in Japan there developed the remarkable institution of the benshi, who both commented on the action and spoke the dialogue.[1]

[1] Geoffrey Nowell-smith, *The Oxford History of World Cinema* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 5.

The lecturer technique was not only useful in facilitating the film's reception, but also in presenting the film as a homogeneous semantic unity that could be subject to re-structuring. By providing meaningful comments, lecturers functioned as 'crutches', simultaneously helping spectators become connected with the film universe and guiding their attention to details included in the internal composition of the film narrative. In the meantime, they played an influential role in the viewers and the consolidation of spectatorship. According to Noël Burch, "The lecturer served both to bring order to the perceptual 'chaos' of the primitive picture and to impress on the narrative movement a supplement of directional necessity or concatenatory momentum."[1]

In the same vein he adds:

> But lecturers were more than crutches for film-goers while they still held their places. In the long term they surely taught film-goers how to read the vast, the flat and acentric pictures I have described. The regular spectator before 1910 surely learnt to be more alert to the screen than the modern spectator, more on the look-out for the surprises of a booby-trapped surface of *bobby-trapped surface*.[2]

By using Moroccan Arabic, Osfour was skillful enough to transmit the film's spirit and its visual universe. Since cinema was a novelty for the majority of Osfour's spectators at the time, the lecturing functioned— in addition to the allure of the moving image—as a stimulus that intensified in them a desire for regular attendance. Given that Osfour's spectators were usually young, the voice of the lecturer represented an aesthetic necessity which enhanced their understanding. For Osfour himself, the technique of the lecturer was 'commercially' effective in the promotion and popularity of his films among his spectators. Due to this technique, Osfour's spectators were able to follow the concatenation of

[1] Noël Burch, *Life to those Shadows*, p. 154.
[2] *Ibid*., p. 155.

events and the interaction among characters without being confused. As a technique of primitive cinema, the lecturer linearised the act of visual reception and ensured the smooth sequencing of narrative development. About this point, Noël Burch confirms: "As I have suggested, the lecturer represents the first attempt to linearise the reading of these pictures, which were often both too 'authentic' to be spontaneously organised into chains and too uniformly 'centrifugal' for the eye to pick its way confidently through them.[1]

Given that Osfour continually experimented with primitive cinematic devices that usually belonged to the pre-history of cinema, he had to look for alternative procedures and techniques in order to substitute the absence of adequate materials. Pressurized by this absence, he had to resort to the most basic techniques and to use the fullest conditions at hand. Unable to provide sets, he resorted to nature and instead of interior sequences, he usually had to opt for exteriors. It is for this logistical difficulty that many of his films were shot in Sidi Abderhman's forest in Casablanca, where the concatenation of events occurred in the open space. Because of the inability of providing professional casts, Osfour could only convince his relatives,[2] neighbours and friends to perform in his films. Enthusiastic to provide help and to discover filmmaking, many individuals—both men and women—were more ready to work voluntarily. Perhaps the only gain that they had to extract from such an experience was their visibility on the screen. What is remarkable about this is the involvement of women in the performance and the entire process of filmmaking, something that could be regarded as socially challenging to the nature of Moroccan society. At that time, society was still too conservative to accept Moroccan women's visibility on the screen, but at least two women (Fatima and Khadouj) managed to convince their families to act in Osfour's films.

[1] Noël Burch, *Life to those Shadows*, p. 154.

[2] His wife (Fatima Nouri) played a crucial role in his cinematic career because she performed various functions in the filmmaking process. She regularly stood behind the camera, but she equally performed other roles as a costume designer, an actress, and she also used to prepare food for the film crew.

It is worth mentioning that the involvement of non-professional actors/actresses in Osfour's films aligns with the traditions of primitive cinema. Along with that, it equally indicates an obvious difference from the Hollywood model, which is usually defined as a character-centered cinema. Osfour's characters hardly stand for any heroic implications and are not engaged in a problem-solving situation where the struggle is perpetual between the forces of good and evil. They are not even extra-ordinary agents who psychologically and physically have the power to lead the narrative development and the concatenation of events, but they are commonly vulnerable in front of the reality they are exposed to. Like many films of the primitive era, Osfour's films are not narratively structured on the centrality of a hero in its classical definition. Often, these characters are not constructed with fictional heroism, but they are usually in the image of ordinary people, with their potential strength and weakness. Due to their vulnerability, Osfour's characters are unlikely to be the object of identification, but on the opposite, they might be viewed with apathetic feelings. An instance of this can be derived from the 'punitive ending' in *Al-Ibn Ala'k* (1956); an ending that contrasts with the satisfactory ending of Hollywood cinema.

Because of the absence of appropriate electrical equipment, Osfour was sufficiently skilled at adopting alternative methods to support his filmmaking activity. Faced with the unfortunate luck of sophisticated electrical materials, Osfour managed to develop his own lighting equipment and techniques, which though modest, were relatively functional in the cinematic experience. In spite of working in a period where artificial lighting was widely used by the majority of cinematographers, Osfour was unable to adopt this innovative technique that was enhancing the aesthetic dimension of films. Like many filmmakers of primitive cinema, he alternatively resorted to flat lighting and relied most of the time on bright daylight as the main source of illumination. This explains his decision to use exteriors and the scarcity of indoor or night-time cinematography in his films. In parallel with this, he tried other techniques such as the bottle dynamo of a bicycle or he used a bunch of light bulbs and tied them together to generate the needed electrical energy. Other primitive filmmakers adopted other

techniques and methods which are somewhat similar to those of Osfour. Billy Bitzer maintains that "On the lot we constructed a large wooden platform and covered this area with white cotton sheets on pulleys, so that we could adjust the amount of sunlight needed for the camera."[1] According to Burch, these practices, which are attributed to technological and economic deficiency, are reminiscent of the primitive cinema model. He argues:

> If we consider the primitive cinema as a system we have to conclude that it was only partly for technological and economic reasons that lighting *as an articulated code* was only introduced into the cinema after some twenty years. It was also because of the overall logic of the primitive system was compatible with a uniform and essentially flat lighting.[2]

Thematically speaking, Osfour's cinema is addressing the lower-classes. Unlike the mainstream cinema which is a middle-class-oriented-experience, Osfour's cinema tackled themes which were relevant to the concerns and aspirations of the popular mind. Traditionally, cinema in Morocco existed as a bourgeois form of art which was initially appropriated, consumed and socially received by the European-assimilated elite. Even the distribution of films has often been associated with urban centres and in locations where the upper and middle classes lived.

Osfour's films revealed a sense of closeness to the layman and reflected his daily concern. Well-informed about the particularities of this social category, Osfour adopted his creative imaginary to the production of visual products that finely met with the demands of his audience. Osfour's universe was that of the socially dis-qualified and the marginal voices that had few opportunities—if any at all— to visual distraction and diversion. With his films, Osfour managed to supply this category of people with tremendous opportunities to embrace an art that might have been beyond their reach. For purely social

[1] As quoted in Noël Burch, *Life to those Shadows,* p. 177.
[2] Noël Burch, *ibid.*, p. 176.

and economic, and sometimes even cultural reasons, cinema was—from the beginning—a bourgeois concern of the European-assimilated elite. Cinema for this category represented integration in modern life and identification with the European life model, which was tremendously alluring. Conversely, the popular class hardly had any chance of accessing the enigmatic world of cinema and was socially deprived of the right to the motion picture. The fact that most movie theatres were located in city centres was a physical hindrance, obstructing the desire of poorer individuals to embrace visual pleasure. Added to that, they were financially disadvantaged and unable to pay the price of entry. By screening films, Osfour managed to introduce the tradition film-viewing to marginal locations and to encourage their residents to enjoy the spectacle of the screen. This was especially true for Casablanca, where Osfour used to lead most of his cinematic activities and adventures.

Overall, it is apparent that Osfour was torn between two choices of direction and two forms of cinema practice. Objectively, his cinematic experience continued to exist in a juxtaposition, where the discrepancy between his aesthetic aspirations on the one hand and the material structure on the other is noticeable in the co-existence of two modes of representation. Having encountered Hollywood productions in his 'training' trajectory, Osfour retained a desire to produce cinematic works that might artistically meet with film conventions of Hollywood. However, the working conditions, paired with the absence of professional knowledge, somehow restricted his artistic aspirations. Even when he tried to experiment with film genres such as the melodrama and the Western—two preferred genres of classical Hollywood—his attempts were artistically and technically poorer. Hence, we can conclude by saying that, in spite of experimenting with primitive cinematic devices, Osfour continually aspired to the Hollywood aesthetic. The following chapter seeks to answer this question: Does Osfour's cinematic experience have any intellectual relevance for the development of Moroccan national cinema?

Chapter Nine:

The Project of National Cinema in Morocco: Investigating Early Manifestations

Osfour's cinematic experience has often been regarded as a minor form of cinematography that hardly had any significance to the overall history of Moroccan cinema. Arguing against this critical assumption, this chapter puts the spotlight on the contribution of Osfour's cinematic experience to the development of Moroccan cinema. This contribution is evident in Osfour's clear endeavour to defend a form of cinema that is socially and culturally rooted in Moroccan cultural identity. Osfour's filmography is fuelled with a great sense of cultural commitment which is reflected in the visual fabric, the narrative structure, the construction of the national character, and the narrative discourse. Osfour's films present themselves as visual alternatives, which endorse the cultural specificity and national identity of Moroccan society.

Contrary to many critical writings,[1] which maintain that national cinema in Morocco is a postcolonial activity, this chapter suggests otherwise. It argues that the project of national cinema initially flourished in the forties, and its early manifestations are incorporated in Osfour's cinematic experience. In a parallel vein, this chapter argues that such a project did not start with *Wachma* (1970), as is repeatedly stated by conventional film scholarship, but it had firstly flourished in Osfour's cinematic experience.[2] It is true that *Wachma* fully represented a radical break with the traditions of its precursors,[3] but it is evident that Osfour's films had been a real contribution to this break.

Due to its multi-dimensional character, the concept of national cinema is always hard to define. To address the term in its multi-dimensionality and appropriate it to the Moroccan context, this chapter will

[1] Nourddine Affaya (1988), and Hamid Tbatou (1999) are good examples here.
[2] This argument can hold true especially for his "cinema of narrative integration."
[3] I mean here colonial and Egyptian cinema.

show how the concept of national cinema was theoretically approached, defined and questioned. To discuss this point in more depth, this chapter asks the following questions: Is national cinema a discursive and textual representation of the nation? Is it about films that screen the spirit of nationalism and defend the nation-state? Is it about films which were a cry against the Hollywood film stylistics and principles?

1- National Cinema: Key Features of an Alternative Cinema Model

By investigating the concept of national cinema, the researcher is usually asked to look for the underlying connection that relates the term "national" to "cinema."As the two words belong to almost two different fields of thought, it is always problematic to understand the relationship that can exist between them. While the word "cinema" is generally associated with the universe of representation and signification, the word "national" is much closer to the field of politics, where it correlates with other terms like nation, nation-state, nationalism, and nationhood. The conceptual ambiguity arises—especially when the two terms (national and cinema) are put forward as a signifying collocation.

Theorizing the concept of national cinema is not as old as the practice itself of producing film texts within a specific territory. "Prior to the 1980s, critical writings on cinema adopted common-sense notions of national cinema."[1] It is worth mentioning that Andrew Higson's article "The Concept of National Cinema" (1989) is often cited as an influential critique that mapped the field and provided critical insights on an issue that had remained beyond the scope of film criticism. Although "the term national cinema is often used to describe the films produced within a particular nation state,"[2] the

[1] Stephen Crofts, "Concepts of National Cinema," *Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, eds. W. John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 385

[2] Andrew Higson, "The Concept of National Cinema," *Film and Nationalism*, ed. Alan Williams (London: Rutgers University Press, 2002), p. 52.

investigation of the concept of national cinema should not be limited to such a narrow description, and it is conceptually inadequate to reduce it to a unique definition.

With a focus on British cinema, Higson argues that new dimensions should be considered while critically approaching the issue of national cinema. By doing so, he implicitly calls for the adoption of a multifaceted approach that takes into account the complex nature of cinema production existing in a national film industry. To investigate the concept of national cinema, Higson suggests at least four mobilizations:

> First, there is the possibility of defining national cinema in economic terms, establishing a conceptual correspondence between the terms 'national cinema' and 'the domestic film industry,' and therefore being concerned with such question as: where are these films made, and by whom? Who owns and controls the industrial infrastructures, the production companies, the distributors and exhibition circuits? Second, there is the possibility of a text-based approach to national cinema. Here the key questions become: What are these films about? Do they share a common style or world view? What sort of projections of the national character do they offer? To what extent are they engaged in exploring, questioning and constructing a notion of nationhood in the films themselves and in the consciousness of the viewer? Third there is the possibility of an exhibition-led or consumption-based approach to national cinema... Fourth, there is what may be called criticism-led approach to national cinema, which tends to reduce national cinema to the terms of a quality art cinema, a culturally worthy cinema steeped in the high-cultural and/or modernist heritage of a particular nation-state, rather than one which appeals to the desires and fantasies of the popular audiences.[1]

[1]Andrew Higson, "The Concept of National Cinema,"*Film and Nationalism*, pp. 52-53.

The passage above reflects the multi-dimensional character of the concept of national cinema and hints to its problematic nature. This conceptual complexity is a mere reflection of the multifaceted nature of the cinema practice itself. The four mobilizations discussed in Higson's quote characteristically identify the nature of almost every domestic film industry. As a cultural commodity, the film is usually envisaged in terms of its existence in the commercial channels (through the process of production and distribution) and in terms of its distribution (through its visual reception by the larger audience). A national film can be called so if it is thematically, visually and discursively associated with a domestic film industry, where the entire process of film production is governed according to standards of that industry.

Another way to approach the national cinema is to consider it in terms of three concepts*: production, representation,* and *audience.*[1] A national film is often governed according to a systematic process which is decisively determined by the three mentioned concepts. Filmmaking primarily involves the act of achieving a visual outcome (production*)* which is part of a system of signification (representation), and which is potentially destined to visual reception (audience). On a national scale, these three dimensions of the film experience are essentially the main aspects that condition the production of films within a particular domestic industry.

In his investigation of British cinema, John Hill (2008) suggests this taxonomy in an attempt to provide a theoretical framework that can help in conceptualizing the idea of national cinema. The first category in Hill's taxonomy is basically about the construction of the cultural aspect of the nation and about the possibility of screening it for visual consumption. According to Stuart Hall (1997),[2] representation is chiefly about the production of meaning and the display of attitudes and points of view. Given the fact that the construction of meaning is usually subjective, national cinema engages in

[1] John Hill, "British Cinema as a National Cinema: Production, Audience and Representation,"*The British Cinema Book*, ed. Robert Murphy (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p.p. 13-20.

[2] For an elaborate discussion of the concept of representation, see "The Work of Representation," *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: The Open University, 1997), pp. 13-74.

producing values that relate to the common sense of the nation. The work of representation concerns films which "have evolved an aesthetic and a way of telling stories which clearly display national-allegorical import."[1]The second category adopts an economic-based approach in which the term *production* is meant to refer to how films relate economically to the nation. Within this framework, a national film can be identified in terms of its budgeting, its geographical setting and its belonging to a national film industry. Whether the film is sponsored financially at a national level or produced with foreign funds is a deciding factor that interferes in identifying the nature of national cinema. Finally, the third category that Hill proposes concerns the last phase of cinema production where the filmic output is subject to visual reception. Essentially, the *audience* is another dimension that conceptually determines the identical aspects of a national cinema. And "the true national cinema is characterised by a strong bond or feedback loop between films and audiences."[2] Films, which are popular and widely viewed within a nation, can be considered as national productions. Like in any national cinema, the audience can be roughly divided into at least two categories: The first includes the general spectators, who usually consume film texts for visual pleasure and entertainment. The second category, however, includes professionals, who are integrally part of the film culture and industry. Within this category, the word audience can refer to film critics, journalists, producers, screenwriters, actors, and others.

Reflecting on the conceptual discussion around the concept of national cinema, Crofts (1998) adopts a similar approach to that of Hill and provides a broader definition. Building on Hill's taxonomy and Higson's definition, Crofts suggests seven categories that— according to him— are essential in identifying the nature of national cinema. These categories are suggested as follows: Production, audiences, discourses, textuality, national-cultural specificity, the role of the state, and the global range

[1] John Hill, "British Cinema as a National Cinema: Production, Audience and Representation," p. 18.
[2] Quoted in John Hill, "The Issue of National Cinema and British Film Production,",*New Questions of British Cinema,* ed. Duncan Petrie (London: BFI, 1992), p. 16.

of nation-state.[1] Crofts' definition came to emphasize at least two things: First, the multidimensional aspect that characterizes the concept of national cinema. Second, which is in continuity with the first, is to stress the difficulty of reaching a unique definition of national cinema. Perhaps, Crofts' approach seems to direct the debate to a more complex and problematic theorization.

2- Mohamed Osfour: The Founder of National Cinema in Morocco

Over three decades, Moroccan cinematic critical discourse dealing with Moroccan cinema has been captive of some fixed ideas. Assumptions about what constitutes national cinema represent one example where Moroccan film criticism has failed to question its own critical approaches and produce counter-arguments. Since the seventies, Moroccan film critics have promulgated the idea that national cinema was a post-colonial activity which was historically associated with Hamid Bennani's *Wachma* (1970). Many critical writings considered *Wachma* as the first film to lay the foundations of the project of national cinema in Morocco and to herald the birth of a native cinema that radically broke up with the traditions of colonial cinema. Arguing against these critical attitudes, this chapter asserts that the initial underpinnings of national cinema were foregrounded by Mohamed Osfour. In watching/reading Osfour's films, the viewer encounters a clear attempt to produce counter-narratives and film texts which differ from their precursors.

To investigate the connection between the project of national cinema and Osfour's cinematic experience, it would theoretically be appropriate to think about it in the light of Hill's taxonomy discussed above. In terms of representation, Osfour's films engaged in maintaining strong ties with issues that were directly related to Moroccan audience's expectations. Targeting an audience which was in great part composed of children, Osfour continued to display visual narratives and stories that

[1] Stephen Crofts,"Concepts of National Cinema," pp. 385–394.

endorsed both the entertaining and the didactic aspects. The marriage between these two components implicitly reflected a committed understanding of the mission of cinema. Within this particular perspective, cinema was conceived of as a pertinent tool for education and consciousness-raising. Due to its social commitment, Osfour's cinematic experience seemed to incorporate the real meaning of cinema as a social function. With regard to the two traditional functions of art,[1] it is interesting to underline that Osfour's films can be categorized in two ways: Films with an entertaining motive and others with a didactic message. At a certain point in his cinematic career, Osfour adopted the conception of cinema as a powerful vehicle of mass distraction and entertainment. During the colonial period, Osfour's view of the mission of the film medium was theoretically consistent with the nineteenth century's idea of art for art's sake. Prior to this conception, Osfour continued to produce films that held the interest of the audience and responded to its curiosity for visual pleasure. Given its significant role in the promotion of the visual product, the audience's expectations were clearly taken into consideration and targeted as a *raison d'être* for the cinematography. To reach popularity, Osfour was skillful enough to consider the comedy genre as an easy way to reach the audience's attention and expectation. Particularly at this stage, it was apparent that comedy was a central concern and an aesthetic choice that governs the creative process in its totality. Adopting the stylistics and directional principles of the comedy film, Osfour's early films put much emphasis on humour as a filmic element to shape the narrative structure of films. Through the excessive use of comic situations, these films were designed to make the audience laugh, be amused and enjoy life in a lively way. Films like *Issa Al-Atlas (1951) Joha/Charletto (1952), Amok L'invincible (1954),* and *Boukhou Najjar (1957)* partly come under the category of comedy cinema.

In addition to its entertaining aspect, cinema was also considered by Osfour as a serious enterprise that had to instruct the audience and contribute to his social awareness. With this idea in mind, films were expected to screen the cultural values of Moroccan society. In the post-colonial period, Osfour

[1] Art has been regarded according to the dichotomy of "teach and delight."

seemed to be conscious that the film should be a reflection of society and a visual platform that mirrored its social struggle, value system and popular narratives. Films like *Al-Ibn Al-a'k (1956), Al-Yatim (1957),* and *Al-Harib (1962)* were social films that displayed moral values such as charity, respect, empathy, and redemption. By endorsing a great sense of "Moroccaness," Osfour's films closely engaged in defending issues which were related to the nation and national identity. Because he was aware of the importance of achieving popularity among Moroccan audiences, Osfour continued to address themes that attracted their attention and responded to their expectations. Osfour's favoured themes tended to be those which embraced the cultural specificities and preoccupations of Moroccan society.

It seems that Osfour was concerned with the need to undermine the traditions of colonial cinema and to produce alternative narratives that could stick to Moroccan identity. Even when he tried to parody film texts during the colonial period, he resorted to the Moroccan cultural repertoire so as to produce Moroccan versions of the imitated films. Osfour was aware that his involvement in filmmaking should initially go through imitatiom before the move to self-assertion. By imitating film models that he had identified with, Osfour had the opportunity to remake films which were popular to him and Moroccan audiences. Hence, films like *Ibn Al-Ghaba* (1941), *Issa Al-Atlas* (1951) *Joha/Charletto* (1952), *Amok L'invincible* (1954), and *Boukhou Najjar (1956)* were examples that thematically and aesthetically replicated Tarzan, Robin Hood, and Charlie Chaplin.

It is worth mentioning that Osfour managed to liberate the Moroccan screen from the remains of the dominant patterns of representation and to create alternative visual narratives that were different from colonial cinema. For instance, Osfour's resistance to the colonial imaginary was clear in his use of the close-up technique to capture native characters, and in his construction of Moroccan characters. In colonial films, the use of the close-up technique was generally restricted to European characters. Contrary to that, natives were de-individualized and represented as a multitude or tiny elements in open spaces such as the desert, squares and desperate locations. Osfour's deployment of the close-up shots,

whereby faces of Moroccan characters became visible and attainable to the eye of the viewer, was particularly more meaningful in films like *Al-Ibn Al-a'k (1956)*, and *Al-Harib (1962)*.

Osfour's cinematic experience was a transitional stage that mediated the move from the colonial cinema to national cinema. Osfour engaged in the process of establishing a nascent cinema, which had to struggle for existence in a context already shaped by two dominant forms of cinema: The colonial and the Egyptian. Faced with the film stylistics of both types of cinema, Osfour was conscious of the need to produce an alternative form of cinema which would derive its narratives and visual meaning from the cultural particularities of Moroccan society. Osfour was indeed impacted by the visual atmosphere of both forms of cinema, but he tried to look for a personal style beyond their stylistic conventions. While he was somehow successful at achieving the epistemological rupture with the colonial imaginary, he otherwise kept reproducing textual conventions of the Egyptian film. Influenced by the narrative writing of the Egyptian cinema, Osfour ended his cinematic career with its favoured genre: The melodrama. *Al Kanz Al-Marsoud* (1970) is often regarded as a reflection of Osfour's fascination and identification with the Egyptian melodrama genre.

"If a work can be criticized, then it is a work of art."

Walter Benjamin

Part Three:

Mohamed Osfour's Filmography between Attraction and Narrative Integration

Having identified the main traits which characterize Osfour's cinematic experience in the previous part, the concern herein is to address Osfour's filmography and approach it critically. This part seeks to respond to the following question: Do Osfour's films lend themselves to critical investigation?

It is worth mentioning that Osfour's film practice—though existed in the Hollywood era—seemed to have characteristics of the pre-Hollywood period. There are many similarities between Osfour's cinematic works and film texts of early cinema. Characteristics encompass film styles, thematic choices, cinematic devices, shooting styles, and representational conventions. Due to a lack of sophisticated cinematic devices, Osfour continued to experiment with ordinary equipment that usually related to primitive cinema. This justifies, for instance, the absence of soundtracks in his films, though most of them were produced in the talkie era. With the exception of *Alkanz Al Marsoud* which was a 35 mm shoot, the other films were either 9 mm (films of the colonial period) or 16 mm (films of the early post-independence).

In terms of its stylistic categorization, Osfour's filmography will be identified according to three broad concepts: A cinema of attractions, a cinema of narrative integration, and a cinema of narrative attractions. The two first concepts are borrowed from Tom Gunning (1986) in his endeavour to re-visit the legacy of early cinema, whereas the third concept is my proposal. By cinema of narrative attractions, it is meant Osfour's last film of the post-colonial period *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* (1970), a film which will be analysed separately in chapter three.

Osfour's films will be critically analyzed in the light of Walter Benjamin's conception of criticism as it is theorized in "The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism." According to Benjamin, criticism is not a court of judgment for the critical assessment of art forms, but it is a work of reflection that contributes to the completion and infinitude of the work of art. By virtue of a dialogic paradigm, the two sets of practice –creation and criticism—horizontally engage in a systematic interrogation through

which the work of art reveals its hidden mysteries. Therefore, "criticism in its central intention is not judgment, but on the one hand, the completion, consummation, and the systematization of the work and, on the other hand, its resolution in the absolute."[1]

Osfour's films will be placed in their historical context and will be analytically addressed outside the exigencies of the institutional normality and its normative standards. Aware that these films should be examined beyond the conditions of the modern eye, the ambition is to deploy methodological tools that can conform to the nature of their aesthetic and stylistic composition. Recognizing the films' criticizabilty is implicitly recognizing their perceived artfulness because "if a work can be criticized, then it is a work of art."[2] Based on a strong conviction that Osfour's films are works of art, the process of critical scrutiny will incite the films to reveal their secrets, their hidden intentions, and artfulness.

[1] Walter Benjamin, "The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism,"*Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings.* Vol-1, 1913-1926, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge: The Belknad Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 159.
[2] *Ibid.,* p. 160.

Chapter Ten:

Cinema of Attractions: Osfour's Films of the Colonial Period

1- Attraction, Presentation and Visual Pleasure[1]

It is generally accepted that the concept of attraction has a long chronology. Etymologically, the English term is said to be adopted in the 16th century from the French *"attraction,"* which itself derived from the Latin *attractio*, meaning "contraction" and grammatically "attraction" (from *trahere*, to pull).[2] According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, the term attraction stands for "the action of drawing or sucking." In a comprehensive definition, Wanda Strauven addresses the term attraction in three levels: The grammatical, the spectacular and the physical. In the first dimension, the term is identified in "its original Latin use referring to the modification of one form under the influence of another form which stands in syntactical relation the first." For the second level, which relates to the field of cinema practice, "concerns the attraction value of different forms of entertainment" as it is derived from peak moments of a spectacle or a show. Taken from this perspective, the work of attraction is often associated with what Eisenstein names as "emotional shocks."[3] However, the spectacular dimension of attraction is literally identified with its physical meaning which stands for "the force that draws or sucks."

Conversely, it should be made clear that the concept "cinema of attractions" is often associated with two essays: Tom Gunning's "The Cinema of Attractions: Early Film, its Spectator and the Avant-Garde" appeared in the discontinuous film quarterly *Wide Angle* and the joint paper by Tom Gunning and André Gaudreault "Le cinéma des premiers temps: un défi à l'histoire du cinéma" published in the Tokyo

[1] Laura Mulvey suggests a different conception of visual pleasure. For more see, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Contemporary Film Theory*, ed. Easthope Antony (London and New York: Longman, 1993), pp. 111-124.
[2] Wanda Strauven, "An Introduction to an Attractive Concept," *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, p. 17.
[3] S.M Eisenstein, "Montage of Attraction," *The Film Sense*, ed and trans. Jay Leyda (San Diego and New York: Harcourt Brace, 1975), p. 231.

journal Gendi Shiso.[1] It is argued that Tom Gunning borrowed the term of attractions from Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein. The concept was first introduced to the film community in the 34th Congress of the International Federation of Film Archives held in Brighton in 1978. The conference was critically a significant event for film critics, historians, archivists, filmmakers, and theorists from different parts of the globe to re-visit films made in the period between 1900 and 1906, a period that is often defined as the pre-Griffith's era.

Critically concerned with early cinema, scholars and film historians bothered to look carefully at pioneering films that were either ignored or misjudged by the traditional film historiography. By shining spotlight on an obscure part of the world cinema history, scholars aimed at producing alternative perspectives on the cinematic works of pioneers. By examining films of these pioneers,[2] scholars intended to advocate new critical attitudes about early films and about their significant role in shaping the general history of world cinema. The conference hit "the starting gun" of a "corrective movement" which managed to shake up certain conceptions of the traditional film history and to call into question some of its inherent fallacies and myths. Through reversing the perspective from top-down to bottom-top, film historians made a breakthrough in the perceived assumptions of the traditional film scholarship and inaugurated an alternative historiographical discourse which is now recognized as new film history.

One of the most contentious discussions that arose out of the work of the conference concerned terminological precisions on the investigated subject. Because the critical concern was oriented to the beginnings of filmmaking, a field which was known for resisting clear definitions, film historians proposed a variety of labels such as *"le cinéma des premiers temps*," *"le cinema des origines," "*primitive cinema" and "early cinema." Due to its critical depth, Tom Gunning's essay "The Cinema of Attractions" provided a theoretical framework for the investigation of the early years of cinema

[1] Wanda Strauven, ed. "Introduction to an Attractive Concept," *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, pp. 11-12,
[2] See André Gaudreault, *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, p. 85.

production. By the cinema of attractions, Gunning means the film practice of early filmmakers that historically extended from the invention of the cinema apparatus to the pre-1907 period.[1] As his work was a critical investigation of Griffith's cinematic career at Biograph Company, Gunning designates the early cinema as the pre-Griffith era.

To re-explore the traditional film history, Gunning and Gaudreault suggested a distinction between two modes of film practice, which was implicitly a distinction between two modes of visualization: The system of monstrative attraction and the system of narrative integration. The two systems related respectively to two successive historical stages of film development, which namely covered the period between 1895-1908 and the period between 1909-1914.[2]

Within the new film history and theory, the word "attraction" is often contrasted with "narration;" a contrast, which by extension, entails a clear distinction between two sets of film practice that have related differently to film history. From an aesthetic-based perspective, the two definitions differ not only conceptually, but also connote two opposing operations and two stylistic choices: *Showing* and *telling*. In general terms, what fully distinguished the cinema of attractions was its total dependence on the attractional aspect of the film medium, where much significance was given to "showing" over "telling." These two modes of visualization are indicative of a particular understanding of the film medium, which oscillated between two conceptions: Cinema as "a vision machine" and cinema as "a storytelling machine." From a historical perspective, these two concepts reflected not only two visions of the cinema's functions, but they also related to two crucial moments of the development of world cinema. This development has often been associated with the transition from 'non-narrativity' (incorporated in films of early cinema) to narrativity (exemplified in the rise of Hollywood). Considered

[1] For more information about this point, see Wanda Strauven in *Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, p. 20.
[2] André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning, "Le cinéma des premiers temps: un défi à l'histoire du cinéma", *Histoire du cinéma : Nouvelle approches*, ed. Jaques Aumont, et al. (Paris: Sorbonne, 1989), pp. 49-63.

as two systems of cinematic representation, attraction and narration are succinctly extricated from each other in the following passage:

> After all, the apparent contradiction between attraction and narration is only the resurgence of what we might think of as the *essential contradiction of the cinema* as a system, the ineluctable contradiction that weighs on the cinematograph, constantly torn between the *momentary* and *linear progres*sion.[1]

In a related manner, Tom Gunning adds:

> The drive towards display, rather than creation of a fictional world; a tendency towards punctual temporality, rather than extended development; a lack of interest in character "psychology" or the development of motivation; and a direct, often marked, address to the spectator at the expense of the creation of a diegetic coherence, are attributes that define attractions, along with its power of "attraction," its ability to be attention-grabbing (usually by being exotic, unusual, unexpected, novel).[2]

Because they were hugely concerned with fostering the astonishment shock, early filmmakers manipulated with the pro-filmic and with the temporal-spatial dimension of the enframed cinematic image. Relying on the spectatorial mode of representation, as a direct and exhibitionist pattern, early filmmakers captured the filmed world in its vivid state and in its reflective aspect as a visualized object that related more to realistic visibility than to imaginary implications. Stylistically shaped by cinematic conventions of the pre-Hollywood era, early films were founded upon temporally discontinuous bursts of presence which were often reinforced by the frontality of the camera. By staging the filmed world – characters and filmic elements—the frontal camera neither broke the spectators'expectation nor took

[1] André Gaudreault, "From Primitive Cinema to Kine-Attractography," *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, pp. 96-97.
[2] Tom Gunning, "Attractions: How They Came to the World," *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* , p. 36

them to a separate world which could be beyond their cognitive conceptualization. Rather, the exposure to the film's structure and the arrangement of sequences was often contextualized within realistic atmospheres of visual reception that were similar to those of theatre. During film screening, the spectators had an undisguised awareness of their active role as members of the process of visual reception and were aware that they were exposed to spectacles which shared plenty of characteristics with the real world. In some films, this realistic sentiment was abundantly enhanced by the technique of the direct address, which closely put the characters in an "intimate" dialogue with spectators, allowing them to break the fourth wall and its perceived illusions. Through its mechanical action, the cinema of attractions presented a copy of the real-life in its permanent vitality as lived by spectators and characters alike.

Cinematic theatricality was another aspect that characteristically determined the aesthetic composition of the cinema of attractions. "Broadly speaking, the early cinema is distinguished by the use of fairly direct presentational modes, and draws heavily on existing conventions of photography and theatre."[1] With its force to create the bursts of presence, the theatrical aspect in the cinema of attraction could be invoked with respect to the plasticity of the enframed image, the physical relationships of the filmed world and characterization. Firstly, the continuity of actions—as achieved through the deployment of successive shots—reinforced the theatrical dimension of early films. Captured in their temporal and spatial homogeneity, actions yielded more to the demands of theatrical expressivity than to that of cinematography as a system of manipulative representation. As some early filmmakers came from a cultural background of theatre, they continued to deploy expressive ingredients that belonged to theatre in their films. With the pervasiveness of theatrical conventions, early films were often treated by film historians as filmed theatre. Secondly, "the photographic reality"[2]—as transmitted in early films—

[1] Quoted in *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, p. 13.
[2] Tom Gunning, *D.W. Griffith and the Origin of the American Narrative Film: The Early Years at Biograph* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), p. 17.

was determined by the mode of visualization which relied heavily on *showing* and on the force of the cinematic image to record the visible and the objects placed in front the camera. By holding the mirror to nature, the camera was considered as the perfect medium which could ensure the unadulterated aspect of the filmed reality. With its reflective power—already determined by a plethora of aesthetic choices such as the tableau style, the stationary camera, the lack of narrative discourse, the discontinuity of the actions—the cinema of attractions proved itself as a form of cinema which was performative by its nature. In this form of cinema, Gunning asserts that "film shows automatically, recording a world of contingent events and unimportant details."[1] Thirdly, the construction of characters was another aspect that stylistically identified the cinema of attractions and distinguished it from subsequent forms of filmmaking. In early films, the psychology of characters was neither shaped by the causality of actions nor by the dramatic conflict which essentially defines the narrative structure of modern films. Characters in early films do not develop dramatically or psychologically, and their physical movement from one space to another is not purposeful and is rarely driven by motivation. As an extension to the pro-filmic, characters do not undergo an inner transformation along the succession of events and sequences, but their effect on the film's progression is often predictable to the spectators. With no complex psychology, characters of the cinema of attractions are two-dimensional because they do not develop throughout the film's events and they do not even affect the film's development. By virtue of this two-dimensionality, characters of the cinema of attractions are similar to E. M Forster's conception of *flat characters.*[2]

Deploying a variety of cinematic conventions, early filmmakers engaged in projecting events, situations and characters in a discontinuous way, creating visual spectacles that responded to the audience's curiosity and appetite for visual pleasure. Thanks to its "*spectatorial model,"*[3] the cinema of

[1]Tom Gunning, *D.W. Griffith and the Origin of the American Narrative Film*, p. 17.
[2] E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (London: Penguin Classic, 2000), p. 73.
[3] Viva Paci, *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded,* p. 123.

attractions could exhibit the world in a non-narrative way by *"making images seen"*[1] to an audience which was visually driven to the magic of the image. Within this form of cinema, spectatorship was hugely considered and filmmakers solicited the attention of the audience by keeping up with the realistic illusion of cinema. Engaging presentational modes, early filmmakers were artistically receptive to the demands of their audience, taking the satisfaction of their expectations as a central motive for the filmmaking activity. As Tom Gunning defines it:

> [T]he cinema of attractions directly solicits spectator attention, inciting visual curiosity, and supplying pleasure through an exciting spectacle— a unique event, whether fictional or documentary, that is of interest in itself. The attraction to be displayed may also be of cinematic nature, such as the early close-ups just described, or trick films in which a cinematic manipulation (slow motion, reverse motion, substitution, multiple exposures) provides the film's novelty. Fictional situations tend to be restricted to gags, vaudeville numbers or recreation of shocking or curious incidents (executions, current events). It is the direct address of the audience, in which an attraction is offered to the spectator by a cinema showman that defines this approach to filmmaking. Theatrical display dominates over narrative absorption, emphasizing the direct stimulation of shock or surprise at the expense of unfolding a story or creating a diegetic universe. The cinema of attractions expends little energy creating characters with psychological motivations or individual personality. Making use of both fictional and non-fictional attractions, its energy moves outward an acknowledged spectator rather than inward towards the character-based situations essential to classical narrative.[2]

In another context, he adds:

[1] Quoted in Tom Gunning, *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, p. 381.
[2] Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction(s): Early Film, its Spectators and the Avant-Garde," *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, p. 384.

> The cinema of attractions, rather than telling stories, based itself on film's ability to show something. Contrasted to the voyeuristic aspect of later narrative cinema analyzed by Metz, this is an exhibitionist cinema, a cinema that displays its visibility, willing to rupture a self-enclosed fictional world to solicit the attention of its spectator.[1]

It is a fact that the cinema of attractions encompasses a variety of cinematic conventions that generally constitute aesthetic motivations and thematic concerns mostly favoured by filmmakers in the pre-1907 era. Repeatedly deployed in film texts of this period, these cinematic conventions contributed to the formation of a certain aesthetic specificity that ended up in foregrounding what can be called as the visual identity of the cinema of attractions. This visual identity was determined by a range of artistic and aesthetic particularities such as visual pleasure, theatricality, the stationary camera, the tableau style, the lack of narrative and editing. In an elaborative manner, Roberta Pearson describes the stylistic particularities of the cinema of attractions as follows:

> Generally speaking, until 1907, filmmakers concerned themselves with the individual shot, preserving the spatial aspects of the pro-filmic event (the scene that takes place in front of the camera). They did not create temporal relations or story causality by using cinematic interventions. They set the camera far enough from the action to show the entire length of the human body as well as the spaces above the head and below the feet. The camera was kept stationary, particularly in exterior shots, with only occasional reframing to follow the action, and interventions through such devices as editing or lighting were infrequent. This long-shot style is often referred to as a tableau shot or a proscenium arch shot, the latter appellation stemming from the supposed resemblance to the perspective an audience member would

[1] Tom Gunning, *D.W. Griffith and the Origin of the American Narrative Film*, p. 41.

have from the front row centre of a theatre. For this reason, pre-1907 film is often accused of being more theatrical than cinematic…[1]

Given the fact that the concept of "cinema of attractions" is meaningfully relevant to early cinema, is it appropriate to apply it to other periods of film history? Wanda Strauven argues:

> Despite the fact that the cinema of attractions was clearly thought of as a time specific category of film practice (and more specifically of spectatorship), its real attraction consists of its applicability to other periods of film history, to other similar practices beyond early cinema (and even beyond cinema).[2]

In a connected vein, Tom Gunning notes: "In fact, the cinema of attractions does not disappear with the dominance of narrative, but rather goes underground, both into certain avant-garde practices and as a component of narrative films, more evident in some genres (e.g the musical) than others."[3]

2- Osfour's Films of the Colonial Period:[4] Identification, Attraction, and Popular Entertainment

The appropriation of Tom Gunning's concept of "cinema of attractions" will be extended to describe Osfour's films of the colonial period, and by these films I mean especially *Ibn Al-Ghaba (1941), Issa Al-Atlas(1951), Joha/Charletto (1952), Amok L'invincible (1954),* and *Boukhou Najjar (1956).* Categorizing these films according to a coherent entity is determined by numerous features that relate to the context of their production, to the cinematic devices with which they were made, and to their stylistic composition. Despite the fact that these films address different topics, the dotted line that connects them

[1] Quoted in *The Oxford History of World Cinema,* pp. 16-17.
[2] Wanda Strauven , *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded,* p. 20
[3] Tom Gunning, *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* , p. 382.
[4] With the exception of "*Boukhou Najjar,"* which was produced in the first year of independence, the films of the colonial period include: "*Ibn al-Ghaba"*(1941), *"Issa Al-atlas*"(1951), *'Joha'* (1952),*"Amok L'invincible*(1954), and*"Boukhou Najjar"* (1956).

is characteristically shaped by popular entertainment and imitation. Starting from scratch, Osfour had to imitate film genres and visual narratives that had attracted his attention during his early contact with the moving picture. Like any amateur filmmaker—lacking technical mastery—Osfour got his initial inspiration from films he had watched during his teenage years. As a dominant cinema at that time, films of Tarzan, Robin Hood and Charlie Chaplin represented archetypal references that conditioned his creative imaginary and oriented his initial process of filmmaking.

Obviously, these films came to mirror Osfour's conception of the function of the film medium and the instrumentality of the cinematic art in the colonial period. As a novelty at that time, cinema was strongly associated with distraction and with its ability to hold the attention of the audience pleasingly. Cinema was often considered as the best form of diversion for the masses. This understanding of the cinema's mission seemed to derive from the nineteenth-century conception of art as a provider of delight. With the ultimate goal of pleasing his spectators and satisfying their appetite for visual pleasure, Osfour continued to fall back on their favoured genres: The chase and comedy film. Pervasive in the cinema of attractions, the chase and comedy films were in greater demand by the audience, who at that time associated the cinematic art with adventure and laughter. In a certain manner, Osfour's resort to the chase and comedy seemed to be beneficial for the evolution of his cinematic carrier. Because they were easily captured by the stationary camera and enacted by characters, these two genres allowed Osfour to progress cinematically.

It is remarkable that Osfour identified with the comedy film and deliberately replicated its visual narratives. Influenced by Charlie Chaplin, Osfour made *Joha/charletto* and *Boukhou Najjar* with a clear attempt to visually link his audience with this film model. Due to their huge popularity at that time, Chaplin's films continued to supply Osfour with cinematic conventions and principles that had already been familiar to his audience. By inspiring the local repertoire—through the figure of *Joha*—Osfour intended to create 'a Moroccan' version of Charlie Chaplin. With a clear sense of intertextuality, Charlie

Chaplin was compared to a well-known character of the Arabian fairy-tales; both Chaplin and Joha/charlletto were commonly envisioned as kind-hearted and inventive, but at the same time dull-witted.

Figure 3: Film still from *Joha/Charletto*

Along with the comedy film, it seemed that Osfour was highly impacted by the chase— a genre that was repeatedly reproduced in films like *Ibn Al-Gahba, Issa Al-Atlas,* and *Amok L'invincible.* Generally, these films are narratively structured as action genre films that typically include a variety of filmic ingredients such as violence, close combat, physical feats, and frantic chases. The films are built upon the abduction/ rescue dichotomy, where the hero, often played by Osfour, is represented as a resourceful protagonist struggling against incredible odds which include life-threatening situations, fighting, pursuit and liberation. Shot in Sidi Abderahman's forest in Casablanca, these films often depict the story of a rescuer who proves successful at liberating people in tight situations. With undefeated power, the hero effectively interferes in different situations and manages to re-stablish the lost order, leading the films' events to culminate in a happy ending. By depicting the struggle between the good and the bad, *Ibn Al-*

Gahba, Issa Al-Atlas, and *Amok L'invincible* seem to adopt plot devices that are conventionally pervasive in the narrative structure of classical Hollywood cinema. One notable device is the technique of *Deux ex machina* incorporated in the film's hero and his victorious interference, which is to be understood as the victory of the good over the bad. Contrary to Hollywood's conception of the classical persona, Osfour's "hero" does not have potential implications in the extra-textual and beyond the narrative structure of the film. Ofour's fascination with the comedy and the chase was equally established, and out of six films of the colonial period, he made three films for each genre. Osfour's adoption of these two genres was another dimension that related his films to the cinema of attractions. According to David Robinson, "in the year 1905-7 the chase film- which typically featured an ever-growing crowd of eccentrics in escalating pursuit of a thief or other male factor- became very popular with audiences."[1]And for the popularity of the comedy film in early cinema, he argues that "[i]n a bare quarter of a century, the silent cinema created a tradition of film comedy as distinctive and self-contained as the comedia dell'arte-from which, however remotely, it seemed to derive something of its character."[2]

Figure 4: Film still from *Ibn Al-Ghaba*

[1]David Robinson, "Comedy," *The oxford History of world cinema*, p. 78.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

By virtue of their production, these films were made in a turbulent period which was characterized by political tension between two opposing forces: The colonial authorities and the nationalist movement. Contextually, Osfour started his career as a filmmaker in a historical context when the struggle against the colonial presence moved from armed resistance to political negotiation. Arguably, this historical context impacted Osfour's view of the mission of the film medium and determined his thematic and aesthetic choices.

During the colonial period, Osfour considered cinema as a provider of entertainment, and thus his attitude towards the instrumentality of the filmmaking was enhanced by his preference of two film genres: The chase and the comedy film. Intending to hold the audience's attention and responding to his curiosity for visual pleasure, Osfour relied upon a variety of filmic ingredients like physical comedy, gag, trick effects, and comic situations so as to please his audience. Because comedy was in constant demand by the audience, Osfour continued to engage in creating images and film contents that took into account the audience's comfort. Well-informed about the preoccupations of his spectators, Osfour had to direct the cinematic universe of his films to the satisfaction of their curiosity for visual pleasure. Furthermore, it seemed that Osfour resorted to comedy so as to escape the gaze of the colonial administration which was so vigilant at controlling films' contents. By deploying humour as a communicative strategy and as a way of expressing his ideas, Osfour was intelligent enough to rise above the conditions of censorship. Due to the political sensitivity of the period, Osfour was aware that sombre films, dealing with serious topics, were not welcomed by the colonial administration. Because he was not ready enough to go against the impositions of the colonial period, he continued to make socially-disengaged and politically-free films. However, this view would radically change in the post-colonial period, when he completely deployed the film medium as a tool for social change and consciousness-raising.

A common feature shared between Osfour's films of the colonial period and the cinema of attractions is non-narrativity. In a dramatically discontinuous way, Osfour's films present the world and

communicate meanings through the mechanism of presentation. Deploying presentational modes, films engage in exhibiting the real world in a manner that visually renders it more accessible to the spectator's eye. Hence, situations, characters, and events on the screen are meaningfully arranged according to a logic that enhances realistic illusion and reinforces the power of the film medium in creating a realistic atmosphere to be appreciated by the audience. This realistic sense, together with other filmic elements like comedy, can be regarded as an aesthetic necessity adopted by Osfour to please his spectators and gain their self-appreciation. The fact that Osfour engaged in realistic presentation intensified the spectator's fascination and raised its curiosity for visual pleasure. Having himself experienced the water-fall anecdote, perhaps in the same manner as did the audience of Lumiére's *The Arrival of the Train*,[1] Osfour was conscious of the ability of the film medium to articulate the astonishment shock among the audience. In a similar manner to the cinema of attractions, Osfour's films are structured in a non-narrative format, where the importance is given more to showing than to telling. Arranged in a meaningful progression, the procession of images takes into consideration the tempo-spatial continuity of the events' development and its effect on spectators. "The editing strategies of the pre-1907 'cinema of attractions' were primarily designed to enhance visual pleasure than tell a coherent, linear narrative."[2]

[1]"Think of the spectators in the Salon Indien who, tradition claims, leapt up from their tables in terror at the train rushing towards them," quoted in *Life to those Shadows*, p. 204

[2] Roberta Pearson, "Early Cinema", *The Oxford History of World Cinema*, p. 21.

Figure 5: Film still from *Issa Al-Atlas*

Accordingly, another dominant aspect that relates Osfour's films of the colonial period to the cinema of attractions is theatricality. Even the word 'attraction' is traditionally connected with theatre and particularly with Sergei Mikhailovich Eisenstein's attempt *"*to find a new model and mode of analysis for theatre."[1] Despite the fact that there exist boundless differences and sometimes unbridgeable divisions between theatre and cinema, it is always possible that the two arts can mutually or artistically complement each other. "In fact, Einsteinian attraction and the attraction of early times both derived directly from a common source, the culture of popular stage entertainment from the turn of the century."[2] Due to the influence that theatrical traditions had on early cinema, it is usually believed that "the history of cinema is often treated as the history of its emancipation from theatrical models."[3] As a modern art, appearing many years after the emergence of theatre, cinema inherited theatrical conventions and adopted

[1] Tom, Gunning, "The Cinema of Attraction(s): Early Film, its Spectator and the Avant-Garde," *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded,* p. 384.
[2] André Gaudreault, "From "Primitive Cinema to Kine-Attractography," *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded,* p. 94.
[3] As quoted in Kyle Stevens, *Mike Nichols: Sex, Language, and the Reinvention of Psychological Realism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 204.

them cinematically. During the silent era, theatre continued to supply early filmmakers with presentational modes that were considered useful for the work of attraction. As Roberta Pearson says, "the early cinema is distinguished by the use of fairly direct presentational modes, and draws heavily on existing conventions of photography and theatre."[1] Because they were concerned with the projection of the real world more than telling stories, early filmmakers relied heavily upon theatrical modes to capture staged events and situations. With this excessive reliance on the theatrical styles—visible to the spectator's eye in early cinema—many films of the pre-1907 were considered as "filmed theatre." For this reason:

> For this reason, pre-1907 film is often accused of being more theatrical than cinematic, although the tableau style also replicates the perspective commonly seen in such other period media as postcards and stereographs, and early film-makers derived their inspiration as much from these and other visual texts as from theatre. [2]

Figure 6: Film still from *Issa Al-Atlas*

[1] Roberta Pearson, "Early Cinema", in *The Oxford History of World cinema,* p. 13
[2] Roberta Pearson, "Early Cinema", in *The Oxford History of World cinema,* p. 17

Like early filmmakers, Osfour deployed presentational modes that related to theatrical conventions more than cinematography. In spite of the cinematic manipulation of the pro-filmic, Osfour's films of the colonial period seemed to owe much to theatre than to cinema. In these films, theatricality was not only a filmic ingredient, but it was also a communicative technique that consistently related to the spectatorial mode that generally identified the cinema of attractions. For instance, in films like *Ibn Al-ghaba, Issa Al-Atlas,* and *Amok L'Invincible* the theatrical dimension was visibly displayed through the deployment of primitive accessories (wooden swords and arrows); the characters' movement (the capture of the hero); and aesthetic ingredients (the belly dancing and the fire setting).

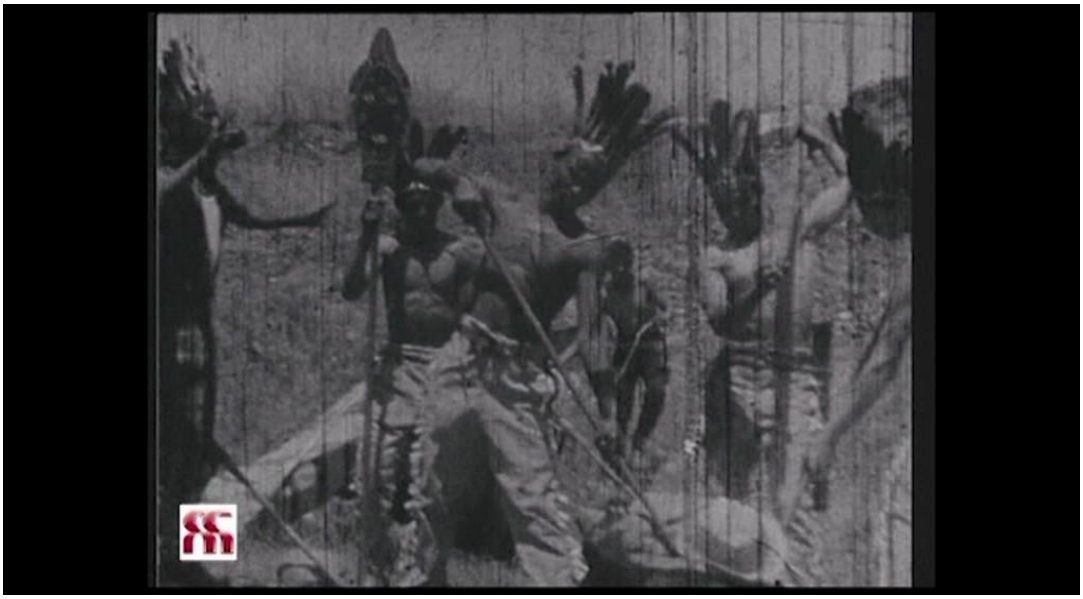

Figure 7: Film still from *Amok L'invincible*

The resort to exteriors and the stationary camera remained two main filmic components that heavily enhanced the theatricality dimension in these films and rendered them more presentational than representational. With its ability to capture the filmed space in its stagnant and unmoveable physical state, the stationary camera was not confusing to the spectators because the projected actions were

extensions of the real world. Because most of them were minors, Osfour's theatrical scenes were more relevant to the establishment of a coherent universe similar to the lived reality.

Perhaps, Osfour's depiction of the everyday was another remarkable parameter that connected his films with theatrical models. With his constant intention to keep up with his spectators' expectations, Osfour continued to address themes that reflected his audience's cultural preoccupations and responded to their collective imaginary. It is for this reason that films of this period were generally about bravery *(Ibn Alghaba),* the conflict between the good and the evil (*Amok L'invincible),* trickery and inventiveness *(Joha/Charletto* and *Boukhou Najjar),* and digging for treasure *(Issa Al-Atlas).*

The reliance on exteriors is another way to associate Osfour's films of the colonial period with the cinema of attractions. It is interesting to mention that actions and events sequencing occurred more in real-world settings than in enclosed locations. With the exception of a limited number of scenes in *Boukhou Najjar,* almost all films of this period were exteriors, and wholly shot in Sidi Abderhman's forest in Casablanca. Additionally, the massive deployment of exteriors contributed significantly to creating a sense of realistic illusion and a real-life atmosphere. In trying to understand the reasons behind Osfours's recourse to natural set (shooting in exteriors), it will be appropriate to see the matter in terms of two implications: Political and technical. Politically, it seemed that Osfour was obliged to escape the gaze of the colonial administration which was excessively concerned about controlling the cinema activity at that time. Faced with bureaucratic impositions of the cinema regulations— implemented during the forties—Osfour had to find alternative locations far beyond the surveillance and the panoptic eye of the colonial authorities. Because he was informally involved in the cinema practice, Osfour's recourse to the real-world setting can be understood as a form of resistance to the colonial gaze. Technically, Osfour's deployment of exteriors was reasonably due to the medium's entirely technological limitations. Crucial was the fact of having primitive logistics for Osfour and his 'choice' of external shooting locations. Henceforth, it must be acknowledged that Osfour fell back on exteriors because his

cinematic devices were not sophisticated enough to allow him to shoot in interiors. With these primitive devices, Osfour was unable to provide one of the essential conditions of shooting in enclosed spaces: Artificial illumination. Conversely, he continued to generate the necessary lighting by depending on flat illumination and by using purely primitive solutions.

Figures 8: Film still from *Ibn al-Ghaba*

Figures 9: Film still from *Amok L'invincible*

Additionally, he resorted to daylight cinematography to overtake the practical obstructions of interiors. It is for this reason that films like *Ibn Al-Ghaba, Issa Al-Atlas*and *Amok L'Invincible* engaged in a cinematic rhythm that could feasibly align with the conditions of the open space. Like early filmmakers, Osfour had to adopt his shooting style to the prerequisites of the practical reality and this justifies his 'preference' of the chase film. Saying this is to stress that "[i]n all producing countries, the chase film was almost shot in exteriors and thus along the lines of scenic with staging in depth."[1]By falling back on these 'aesthetics of austerity', Osfour seemed to be conscious of the importance of trying an alternative mode of representation that should be in accordance with the nature of his cinematic practice. In this way, the choice of exteriors seemed to be consistent with the traditions of primitive cinema-- to which Osfour's films belonged. For Noël Burch, "[d]spite the 'naivety' of film-makers at this time and all that might be said about Haggar's humble origins, I am tempted to hold that this contrast between interiors and exteriors is not an accident.[2]

The link between Osfour's films of the colonial period and the cinema of attractions can also be approached from an aesthetic perspective. Because of the likeliness existing between the two forms of cinema, it is appropriate to investigate Osfour's films in the light of primitive aesthetic. Therefore, it should be emphasized that these aesthetics related more to the nature of film technology used by Osfour than to his "assumed" artistic deficiency. As it is generally known, films are technologically determined by the cinematic devices in use during the filmmaking process. Whether sophisticated or not, film technology is crucial not only for cinematography, but also for the aesthetic composition of the films. For instance, having a more-advanced camera— together with artificial illumination—is decisive in attaining a neat picture that technically and visually respects professional standards. At least, a general point in

[1] Noël Burch, *Life to those Shadows*, p. 172.
[2] *Ibid*., p. 176.

favour of sophisticated equipment is the attainment of variety and diversity in options, scales and the field of vision. In contrast, the deployment of poorly-advanced logistics can delimit the filmmaker's aesthetic freedom and preclude him/her from diversifying his/her visual variables.

In a connected vein, Osfour's films of the colonial period can be linked to the cinema of attraction through two film aesthetics: The long shot and the stationary camera. Because he was unable to afford sophisticated film technology, Osfour had to adopt his shooting styles and aesthetic conceptions to the available cinematic devices. It is for this reason that the field of vision of films under investigation was excessively restricted and shaped by a repetitive shooting style. Osfour repeatedly deployed the long shot and the stationary camera in almost all films of this period, replicating an aesthetic choice that characterized the cinema of attractions. These two filming types went along with the conventions of the tableau style and the theatrical modes. Due to the unsophisticated condition of the cinematic devices in use, Osfour continually captured filmic events and characters through a stationary camera that was usually put in a focal point. The deployment of this filming technique was technically and aesthetically relevant, serving Osfour and his audience alike. Given the fact that he had to simultaneously stand behind and in front of the camera,[1]the stationary-camera technique allowed Osfour to render the visual field under his comprehensive control. As an omnipotent agent, Osfour was able to direct the characters' movement and to supply the camerawoman (usually his wife) with directional instructions needed for the establishment of the films' visual field. Along with that, the stationary camera also helped the audience to establish a realistic feeling with the films' universe and the events' development. With this type of filming, spectators were privileged to control the action and engage in capturing films' contents with the same feeling as if they were watching a theatrical work. Because most of them were children, Osfour's spectators were not confused by the camera being stationed not very far from the action, and were not under the illusion of the moving picture.

[1] Osfour acted in almost all his films, and his wife used also to stand in front of and behind the camera.

Eventually, the close-up is another aspect that can connect Osfour's films of the colonial period with the cinema of attractions. As an aesthetic technique, the close-up was used in many ways and for a variety of reasons, but it mostly served the projection of filmic details and characters from a sense of proximity. Having employed the close-up, early filmmakers intended to psychologically impress the audience and orient their attention. Because they were essentially concerned with displaying visual pleasure, early filmmakers relied heavily on the close-up shot in a manner that allowed them to make their audience live "the astonishment shock." In many examples, the close-up was effectively functional in enhancing the presentational aspect of the cinema of attractions, and the best example was *The Gay Shoe Clerk.* Critically analyzing the film, Tom Gunning argues that the act of focalizing the woman's ankle, while she was trying a pair of high-heeled slippers, strongly served the process of "*pure exhibitionism.*"[1]

Figure 10: Film still from *Issa Al-Altlas*

[1] Tom Gunning, *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded,* p. 384.

Figure 11: Film still from *Issa Al-Altlas*

Figure 12: Film still from *Issa Al-Altlas*

Like early filmmakers, Osfour regularly deployed the close-up technique to convey meanings and in the meantime to address his audience's attention. From his second film[1] onwards, the close-up shot was repeatedly employed for different motives, but principally for the work of presentation. By focalizing filmic elements, a character's face or an object, Osfour often used the close-up to make his audience experience the attractional act displayed on the screen. With its ability to orient the spectators' field of vision, the close-up technique was effective in raising spectatorship and in pushing viewers to undergo the bursts of presence. On another level, the use of the close-up in Osfour's films can also be discussed in its association with the colonial modalities of representation. As mentioned in part one, chapter two, the close-up shot was largely deployed by colonial filmmakers to serve ideological purposes. In the tradition of the colonial cinema, the close-up was completely devoted to the representation of European characters that usually stood to signify colonial tropes and imagery. In contrast, natives were hardly projected through the close-up, but in the few examples where they were, their proximal visibility indicated opposing connotations to those of Europeans.

[1] *Issa al-Atlas*(1951).

Chapter Eleven:

Cinema of Narrative Integration: Osfour's Films of the Early Post-Colonial Period

The previous chapter argued that Osfour's films of the colonial period were more presentational than representational. By engaging the attractional aspect of the film medium, Osfour placed much emphasis on *showing* and on the ability of the moving picture to generate visual attraction. Concerned with the attainment of visual pleasure, Osfour experimented with cinematic conventions and shooting styles that were effective in enhancing realistic illusion. In these films, the world was presented in a non-narrative way, allowing the act of showing to reign over narrative representation. Because they aligned with the traditions of early cinema, Osfour's films of the colonial period have categorized as "a cinema of attractions."

Conversely, the present chapter is concerned with Osfour's films of the early post-colonial period. The emphasis will be put on analyzing whether these films were a continuity or discontinuity to Osfour's previous films, and whether they indicated a certain level of artistic maturity. To invoke the dissimilarities existing between Osfour's films of the colonial and the early post-colonial periods, I have used Tom Gunning's conceptions of "cinema of attractions" and "cinema of narrative integration" to respectively describe these two categories. As the previous chapter has argued that Osfour's films of the colonial period abided by the conventions of cinema attractions, this chapter intends to relate Osfour's films of the early post-colonial period with traditions of the cinema of narrative integration. Within this last category, I include the following films: *Al-Ibn Al-a'k (1956), Al-Yatim (1957),* and *Al-Harib (1962).* Hence, I firstly proceed by uncovering the principal aspects that identify the cinema of narrative integration and differentiate it from the cinema of attractions.

1-Cinema of Narrative Integration: Cinema as a Storytelling Machine and the Rise of the Story Film

The concept of the cinema of narrative integration is often associated with Tom Gunning and his endeavour to chronicle the development of early cinema. His book *D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film: The Early Years at Biograph* traces the ways film styles developed alongside the initial development of the cinema industry. By linking this development to the new economic structures in the early American film industry, Gunning underlines the interlocking aspect that related the interior structure of early films with the reorganization of the American film industry. The transformation from a cinema of attractions to a one of narrative integration, Gunning argues, can not be related only to the interior composition of films, but also to the demands of a nascent industry which gradually appeared in the years 1908-9. Innovations made at the level of film styles and modes of visualization were due to the interactive transaction between creation and the cinematic institution, which re-oriented the traditions of film production, distribution, and exhibition. The role of the film industry was crucial in making the clear interrelation between the enclosed structure of the film (its interior composition) and the outer aspect of the cinematic institution which refers to "the financial investment in cinematic undertakings, the material manufacture of films, their distribution, and their hire to cinemas."[1] At the borderline of this negotiation—held between creation and industry— the cinematic institution provided a new definition of film commodity and determined the process the film needed to go through before reaching an audience. Thus, "changes in the film industry brought new conceptions of the film as a commodity and of the sort of audience for whom films were made."[2]

Given that Gunning's theorization of the concept of the cinema of narrative integration is connected to Griffith's cinematic experience in his early years at Biograph, he asserts that Griffith exemplifies the

[1] Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*, trans. Celia Britton et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 8.
[2] Tom Gunning, *D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film, p. 7.*

changes in the filmic discourse of early cinema. In assessing this transformation, periodization was significantly considered in contrasting between two forms of cinema practice: the cinema of attraction and cinema of narrative integration. The first historically extended from the invention of the cinematograph to the pre-1907 and the second was often connected with the institutionalization of cinema—particularly with the rise of Hollywood. Generally speaking, multiple dissimilarities are existing between these two forms of cinema, but the most apparent difference concerns the mode of visualization. In the cinema of attractions, visualization is presentational and functions through the mechanism of *showing*. However, it is (re)presentational in the cinema of narrative integration and operates through *telling*. In film history and theory, this demarcation is largely described in terms of two broad concepts: Cinema as a vision machine and cinema as a storytelling machine. These two concepts implicitly indicate the clear cut that exists between "attraction" and "narration." Underlying this demarcation, Viva Paci demonstrates:

> Attraction has a temporality of its own; it offers itself up in a tension of the present by erupting on a monstrative level, which is distinct from narrative development, and by alternating between revealing and concealing in a way that is not dependent on the objects or time that precede— or follow— in a cause and effect relationship. Attraction, by and large, is itself sufficient. Narrative, on the other hand, creates a sequence of events in which what occurs is connected by a series of causes and effects which take place in the necessary order of a unique temporal trajectory.[1]

Similarly, André Gaudreault suggests:

> After all, the apparent contradiction between attraction and narration is only the resurgence of what we might think of as the *essential contradiction of the cinema* as a

[1] Viva Paci, *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, pp.121-122.

> system, the ineluctable contradiction that weighs on the cinematograph, constantly torn between the *momentary* and *linear progression*.
>
> The momentary is the attraction, which is inevitably and constantly called into question by the contamination of narrative progression, by the folding of the momentary into progression. By definition, the cinematograph supposes a discourse that unfolds in time and is experienced in its *duration*. What this means is that any film, and my view as well, no matter how short, is made up of a *chain* of signifiers lined up one after the other: momentary signifiers subjected to progression (subjected to the process of creating progression involved in the unspooling of the film strip).[1]

In broad terms, "the system of narrative integration appears to be a system through which the cinema followed an integrated process of narratizavation."[2] The narrativization of film medium, which represented a turning point in the history of the cinema industry, is usually associated with what Tom Gunning calls the post-Griffith period. This period witnessed the initial institutionalization of the film practice through the early installation of professional standards of film production. Very early in this period, professional standards were adopted to differentiate, for example, between a short cut and a feature-length film. With the production of the Australian film *The Story of the Kelly Gang (1906)*, often considered as the world's first feature, the cinema industry moved to a new era of film institutionalization. André Gaudreault writes:

> Within the period leading up to the camera's institutionalization, we identified two successive "modes of film practice." The first of these modes dominated the very earliest period of film history, until about 1908, while the second extended its dominion until about 1914. We called

[1] André Gaudreault, *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded,* pp. 96-97.
[2] *Ibid.,* p. 98.

> the former the "system of monstrative attractions" and the latter the "system of narrative integration."[1]

Despite the fact that the film narrative is usually associated with the institutionalization of the film industry, film historians believe that narrative integration was also a characteristic of early cinema. Donald Crafton's discussion[2] of "micro-narratives" and "mini-narratives" is a pertinent example of the narrative aspect of early films. This assertion does not mean that early films did not tell stories, but were films in which storytelling was secondary. As a novelty at that time, narration was significantly useful for the rise of spectatorship and the popularity of the cinematic art. The integration of the film images into a continual narrative structure, which functioned along with temporal and spatial succession, contributed to the creation of psychological linearity. With narrative integration, films represented the progression of events and the characters'development in a sequential manner, which was usually led by the narrator's voice. Unlike examples of early cinema, films of the post-1907 era are structured according to a diegetic writing which relies heavily on storytelling as a new tool for cinematic expression. According to Tom Gunning and André Gaudreault, storytelling is a dominant feature that identifies the cinema of narrative integration:

> The dominant feature of the system of narrative integration is that an element of cinematic signification is chosen and given an integrational role: that of telling the story. The narrator chooses the various elements of discourse as a function of the story, and it is also through the story that the viewer is led to interpret various forms of cinematic discourse. The structuring of the film narrator and the viewer is guaranteed by the coherence of the process of narrativization. When the system of narrative integration was taking shape, a being was born

[1] André Gaudreault , *ibid.*, 97-98.
[2]Donald Crafton, "Pie and Chase: Gag, Spectacle and Narrative in Slapstick Comdy," *The Slapstick Syposium*, ed. Eileen Bowser (Bruxelles: Fiaf, 1987, p.p. 49-59.

> whose existence is only theoretical but whose task is to modulate and direct cinematic discourse: the narrator, whose "voice" is heard from the beginning of the film to the end, by means of the way it structures, at one and the same time, the pro-filmic, the camera work and editing.[1]

As explained in the passage above, storytelling remains a remarkable component that generally identifies the cinema of narrative integration and differentiates it from other modes of film production. The shift from attraction to narration indicated a progressive development of the film medium, but in the meantime declared the demise of a film practice which placed much importance on the attractional aspect of cinema. It is generally accepted that the 'narrativization' of the film medium heralded not only the emergence of a new form of cinema that capitalized on the diegetic writing, but also indicated the institutionalization of the film industry. Unlike in the cinema of attractions, films in the cinema of narrative integration relied heavily on narrative clarity, which was often woven according to a chronology of the events' sequencing. As a transitional stage of film development, cinema of narrative integration required viewers to direct their focus from the attractional aspect of the cinematic image to the voice of the narrator and the act of storytelling. With this transition in film reception, cinema moved from being a "vision machine," which placed much emphasis on film as an attraction, to cinema a "storytelling machine," whose prime concern was to narrate and make images seen. In pointing out this transition, Tom Gunning notes:

> In contrast to the cinema of attractions, whicha ccented film's ability to present a view of an event curious or astounding in itself, the story became the unifying structure of a film, the center that determined the filmic narrator's choice of elements of filmic discourse. And it is

[1] Tom Gunning and André Gaudreault, *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, p. 374.

> in terms of the story that the spectator understood figures of filmic discourse presented. The bond between filmic narrator and spectator is guaranteed by narrativization.[1]

The shift from the cinema of attractions to one of narrative integration has often been associated with Griffith and with the approach he developed to storytelling, an approach that Gunning designates the narrator system. Hence, "Griffith's revolutionary role in film history consists precisely of committing filmic discourse to the expression of a story."[2] In investigating narrativity in the cinema of narrative integration, Gunning highlights the double nature of storytelling-- an act which involves "both a story to be told and the telling of that story."[3] Theoretically, Gunning builds his argument on Gérard Genette's definition of the story—as a content which is conveyed by the narrative—and on his notion of the narrative discourse which is "precisely the text itself—the actual arrangement of signifiers that communicate the story—words in literature, moving images and written titles in silent films."[4] By the narrative discourse, Genette suggests three definitions.[5] First, it is the language or the means by which the content of a narrative is communicated by the text. The second meaning of narrative can also refer to the content communicated by the discourse according to which the film's sequencing is arranged in order to convey meaning to the audience. The third meaning of narrative refers to the act of recounting a story in its connection with the events presented by the voice of a narrator—a process that Genette names narrating.

In assessing the ways the narrative discourse operates in the cinema of narrative integration, Gunning refers to the three narrative functions of "*tense*," "*mood"* and "*voice"* as proposed by Genette for his belief that these components can apply to any narrative media. By tense, it is meant the temporal

[1] Tom Gunning, *D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film, p.* 43.
[2] *Ibid.,* p. 41.
[3] *Ibid.*,p. 14.
[4] *Ibid.*,p. 15.
[5] *Ibid.,* p. 14.

relations which interfere in the formation of the story as it is arranged according to a psychological chronology. As this chronology can be manipulated by the narrative discourse, the tense often operates in connection with three principles: Succession, duration, and frequency. The relation between the story and the narrative discourse can also be determined by the mood, the way and the perspective that governs the act of narration. Whether in literature or film, the mood is functional in assessing the point of view(s) of either characters or the writer/filmmaker. Because the act of telling a story is often associated with an agent who leads the narrative process, the voice of the narrator plays a deciding role in the dialogic interrelation which operates between the narrated story and spectators. For spectators, the voice of the narrator reveals the inner thoughts and attitudes the film intends to convey, and concurrently allows them to uncover either the characters' or the filmmaker's point of view. Gunning adds a fourth aspect of narrative discourse to Genette's triad of the story, which he calls *narrativization*. For Gunning, "the concept of narrativization focuses the transformation of showing into telling, film's binding of its excessive realism to narrative purposes."[1]This last element, Stephen Heath argues, "is precisely what holds Genette"s three aspects of narrative together."[2]

To understand how the narrative discourse of film operates, it would be appropriate to study it in the light of the interrelation between the two modes of visualization: *Showing* and *telling*. Defining two separate film practices, these two modes are essential in assessing the dynamic forces of the narrative discourse as they are exposed and revealed to viewers. The same way that they existed together in the cinema of attractions—though showing reigned over telling in this form of cinema—they interrelate in the cinema of narrative integration because "the narrative discourse of film involves a unique transaction between showing and telling."[3]In assessing how the narrative discourse functions, Gunning asks for cutting up the filmic text and suggests three levels of the narrative information: The pro-filmic, the

[1] Tom Gunning, *D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film, p. 18.*
[2] Stephen Heath, *Questions of Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), pp. 107-108.
[3] Tom Gunning, *ibid., p. 18.*

enframed image, and the process of editing. The pro-filmic refers to the filmic elements—all elements that constitute the field of vision—which are placed in front of the camera in the process of filming. The pro-filmic is arranged according to pre-existing choices and decisions which are taken by the filmmaker, and mostly the choice of capturing an element is justified by a narrative intention. The enframed image, the second level of filmic discourse, is the projection of the pro-filmic on the screen and its transformation from being a pre-existent object in the real world into a photographic reality. As this process is never impartial, the transformation of the filmed world is often governed by the point of view of the photographer, and functions in accordance with his/her inner intentions. Once the pro-filmic is on celluloid, it moves from the real to the imaginary, and thus acquires an expressive identity within the process of representation and becomes a *sign*. Editing, which is the third level of the filmic discourse proposed by Gunning, is a stylistic innovation that witnessed the transformation from the cinema of attractions to that of narrative integration. Often associated with Griffith and considered as one of his additions to the film language, editing is the act of cutting between shots for the attainment of smooth continuity in the film's events. With its connection to the two dimensions of time and space, editing allowed early filmmakers to manipulate the process of storytelling and to create a coherent continuity alongside the progression of shots. By allowing the act of manipulating the succession of film's events, editing offered filmmakers the possibility of reorganizing the dramatic structure of the film according to a governed chronology. As a stylistic invention at that time, editing was a real contribution to the development of the motion picture and an initial step in the establishment of the "syntax of film narration."[1]With this characteristic, the cinema of narrative integration managed to establish its emancipation from theatrical modes of expression, which were pervasive in cinema of attractions. The latter film practice "relied primarily on a direct relation to the spectator, rather than on the relation

[1] Tom Gunning, *D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film*, pp. 33.

between shots."[1] In contrast to theatricality, narrativity involved "a continuous following of an action freed from the confines of the stage- relying entirely on the dynamic possibilities of editing."[2] The continuity in the film's actions and events, Gunning argues, laid the foundations of the cinema of narrative integration:

> The process of following a continuous action through a series of shots created new relations to the spectators, new approaches to space and time, and a new focus on storytelling. Films based on the physical movement of characters from shot to shot created a synthetic space through freely occurring entrances and exits… When a character exits a shot, he or she does not disappear into a nebulous "off-stage" space but is likely to reappear immediately in the next shot. Appearing around 1903, this new approach to space formed the basis of the chase-film genre and laid the foundations for the cinema of narrative integration.[3]

In addition to storytelling, characterization is also another feature that defines the cinema of narrative integration. In contrast to the cinema of attractions, characters form part of the storytelling and their narrative role is pivotal within the narrator's system. As the dramatic structure of the narrative film is often grounded on the causality chain and the temporal/spatial consistency, characters, through their actions and interactions, are usually the agents that mobilize causal motivation. Based on a transaction between storytelling and performance, "the narrator system centers filmic discourse and narrative development much more strongly on the psychological motivation of characters than earlier cinema."[4] With complex psychology, characters develop dramatically alongside the narrative development; sometimes they affect the story to move forward and other times they are affected by its progression. Thus, "the cinema of narrative integration introduces not only characters whose desires and fears

[1]Tom Gunning, *D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film, p.* 66.
[2] Jean Mitry as quoted in Tom Gunning, *D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film, p. 38.*
[3] Tom Gunning, *ibid., p. 66.*
[4] *Ibid.,* p. 27.

motivate plots, but also a new wholeness and integrity to the fictional world in which action takes place."[1] The logic of causality, which defines the narrative film, determines the characters' motivation, attributes, actions, and goals, pushing them to undergo a series of changes during the development of the story. As dynamic elements within the conflict that arises out of the construction of the dramatic structure, characters encounter recurrent obstacles before they achieve their goals in the film's ending. Usually, the narrative closure is an announcement of the film's finality, but at the same time it provides an answer to the questions posed by the narrative, and a solution to the difficulties characters encountered during the development of the story.

The development of the film industry would know sweeping changes with the rise of Hollywood in the 1910s. During this period, new cinematic conventions and directional principles were introduced, allowing the installation of a massive mode of representation whose "cinematic discourse was put at the service of the story being told."[2] A variety of cinematic conventions were gradually established, but linearity remained a dominant aspect that has characterized the classical Hollywood film. From the installation of the Institutional Mode of Representation onwards, normative standards of cinematic writing have reinforced the urge of adopting linear narrativity. Filmmakers—working under the auspice of Hollywood—have been loyal to a conventional dramaturgy that recreates scenes and film events according to neoclassical criteria. Often, the cinematic writing in the classical Hollywood film follows a restricted formula, where the progression of the events is narratively arranged according to three fixed unities: The unity of time, space and action. Within this classical formula, time is chronologically an intermittent duration, space is a definable locale and action is a cause-effect phase.[3] The construction of the visual narrative is regularly composed of a series of sequences, relating logically and chronologically to a continuous progression that includes a beginning, a climax, and an end. And, "by virtue of its

[1] Tom Gunning, *D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film, p. 138.*
[2] André Gaudreault, *The Cinema of Attraction Reloaded* , p. 98.
[3] David Bordwell, "Classical Hollywood Cinema," *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, p. 20.

handling space and time, classical narration makes the fabula world an internally construct into which narration seems to step from the outside."[1] Due to the principle of "narrative transitivity"[2] that identifies the classical Hollywood film, the narrative flow generally proceeds according to a chain of causation that is usually structured into a problem-solving situation. And the narrative line of the story's progression is mostly woven around a conflict that arises between the protagonist and external factors, which should be defeated at the end so that the film culminates in a satisfactory ending. Thus,

> Every narrative is a movement between two states of equilibrium, which are similar but not identical. At the beginning, there is always a balanced situation; the characters from a configuration which may be in movement but which nevertheless preserves unaltered a certain number of fundamental traits… Then something comes along to break the calm and creates an imbalance… The equilibrium is then restored, but it is not the same as at the beginning; the basic narrative therefore includes two types of episodes: Those which describe a state of balance or imbalance, and those which dscribe the transition from one the other. The first type contrasts with the second as stability with change, as adjective with verb.

2- Osfour's Films of the Early Post-colonial period: Narrativity and the Social Function of Cinema

From the outset, it should be made clear that Osfour's films of the early post-colonial period[3] represent a shift from a mode of visualization that heavily relies on 'attraction' to another mode that capitalizes on "narration" as an alternative tool for cinematic expression. In a narrative line of

[1] David Bordwell, *ibid*., p. 24.
[2] Peter Wollen, "Godard and Counter-Cinema: Vent d'Est," *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, p. 121.
[3]These films are: *Al-Ibn Al-a'k (1956), Al-Yatim (1957),* and *Al-Harib (1962).*

progression, these films display the events'progression and cinematic meanings through a chronological order that abides by the classical logic of narration. The diegetic writing visually flows through a continuous temporality that chronologically contributes to the development of characters, the smoothness of the visual-narrative style and the homogeneity of the representational act. Artistically, this shift also means a certain sense of maturity and growth which is seemingly manifested in the cinematic discourse, the construction characters, the films' contents, and the aesthetic choices. Unlike films of the colonial period, these films are sombre, didactic and serious displaying visual narratives with an educational purpose.

In terms of film genres, it is obvious that Osfour was more concerned to try other types of film narratives that differed from his preceding films. Having tried the chase and comedy film in the colonial period, Osfour was eager to experiment with the social problem film during the post-colonial period. Though thematically engaged with different topics, the dotted line that unifies these films and makes them fit within one category is social realism, which is articulated through social values like parental respect *(Al-Ibn Ala'k)* social solidarity (*Al-Yatim)*, and loyalty *(Al-Harib)*. Osfour's choice of the social genre film was to a certain extent consistent with his conception of the Film medium's function in the post-colonial period. Benefiting from the political and social context of the newly liberated Morocco, Osfour adhered to the liberating climate that characterized Moroccan society in the early years of independence and put his film practice at the service of social issues. By placing much importance on the social function of the film medium, Osfour seemed to have a committed understanding of the instrumentality of filmmaking.

In a similar way to the cinema of narrative integration, storytelling remains a dominant feature that characterizes Osfour's films of the early post-colonial period. In contrast with films of the colonial period, these films rely heavily on the story and narratively progress following the classical diegetic

writing, which is usually based on a three-act format. Influenced by the visual-narrative style of classical Hollywood, Ofsour constructs the progression of events and the development of characters according to a continuous logic of time and space. Usually, the process of narration progresses continuously through a psychological motivation whose chief purpose is to prepare the audience to follow the visual flow and get them gradually involved in the film's universe. Like narratives of classical Hollywood, Osfour's films of the early post-colonial period develop smoothly through a progressive rhythm that often starts with a beginning, progresses with a problematic situation and finally culminates in a resolution. Classical Hollywood film, David Bordwell argues, "presents psychologically defined individuals who struggle to solve a clear-cut problem or attain specific goals."[1]

The narrative construction of these films is established through a definite structure that usually includes a major narrative and micro-narratives. Films progressively develop with a central story that is often intertwined with mini-narratives, whose main function is to serve an intended narrative coherence. The manipulation of these narratives is coherently managed through the *mise-en-scène*. Sometimes, micro-narratives are useful not only for the continuous and homogeneous progression of films' events, but also for the development of characters. The best example of this is the story of the Aloufir's father in *Al-Ibn Ala'k*. To familiarise the reader with the film's visual universe, it is relevant to briefly provide a short description of its main narrative. As the title suggests, *Al-Ibn Al-a'k* is about a young boy who grows up to be bad by engaging in mischievous acts of theft, crimes, and killing. Aloufir's mischievous acts are initiated by stealing his father's money and continued by intercepting passengers and snatching their properties. In a continuous circle, Aloufir enjoys his life in pubs and nightclubs dancing, drinking alcohol and playing cards. Due to an act of murder he committed, Aloufir ends up in prison with a verdict of capital punishment. Narratively, Aloufir's story—as the main narrative—is coherently constructed in parallel with the father's mini-narrative through a consistent work done at the level of scriptwriting and

[1] David Borwell, "Classical Hollywood Cinema," p. 18.

editing. Through parallel editing, the viewer is simultaneously presented with the two narratives that progressively develop in a continuous conjuncture: While Aloufir is squandering money with his disloyal girlfriend, his father is begging and asking people for money. For Osfour, this established parallelism between the two narratives is meaningful for the succession of the events, and the establishment of the film's didactic message. The tragic end of both the father and Aloufir obviously contains moral teaching for the audience.

Figure 13: Film still from *Al-Ibn Ala'k*

Figure 14: Film still from *Al-Ibn Ala'k*

These films establish a meaningful link between the main story and the micro-narratives. By virtue of the causality principle, the events and characters are continually in constant causal interaction and are intertwined within a structure of cause and effect. In a chronological manner that considers the unity of time and space, narratives (the main and mini) are coherently held, creating a progressive development that logically abides by norms of classical narration. For viewers, this progression is essentially decisive in the process of visual reception because it allows them to go smoothly through the continuous line of events' sequencing. Despite the fact that the mini-narratives sometimes do not take a longer time within the procession of film development, they effectively determine the direction of the narrational act. For instance, the death of the father (as a mini-narrative) in *Al-Yatim* is logically significant for the main narrative (the orphanhood of the child) simply because it is its automatic cause. Likewise, the story of the father (as a micro-narrative) is central to the development of the protagonist and for the progression of the main narrative (Aloufir's story) in *Al-Ibn Ala'k*. Similarly, the death of the protagonist's girlfriend and her lover (as a mini-narrative) is significantly important for a logical understanding of the protagonist's state of flight (the main narrative) in *Al-Harib*. The juxtaposition between narratives is

usually significant for the representation of the protagonist. A dominant characteristic of classical Hollywood cinema, the cause and effect structure—that generally governs the relationship between narratives— is also meaningful for the progressive development of the protagonist and his movement from one specific state to another. This judgment also holds true for Osfour's films, where the protagonists' destinies are presented as an immediate result of the conflict that arises between characters and implicitly between narratives.

Osfour deployed cinematic conventions and narrative styles that belonged to the classical Hollywood film model. Nevertheless, it is clear that he tried to get himself artistically detached from the psychological impact of these conventions. The credibility of this argument can be found at least in the nature of the protagonist's representation and in the conflict that arises between characters. Because it was an un-institutional form of cinema, Osfour's films existed outside the conception of the star system—a fundamental feature of classical Hollywood cinema. In contrast with the Hollywood hero, the protagonist in Osfour's films does not stand to the position of a prototype since he is not "the principal causal agent, the target of any narrational restriction, and the chief object of audience identification."[1] Perhaps like Hollywood's hero, Osfour's protagonist is often put in perpetual conflicts and has to encounter a disturbance, but the nature of the conflict is different from classical Hollywood cinema. In both forms of cinema, the hero develops in accordance with external physical forces (other characters or narratives)—but unlike the Hollywood hero—Osfour's protagonist usually leads a conflict inside the self. Evidently, these external forces are only part of the conflict, but they are not its target, and their significance usually serves the progression of the film events. Examples of these are Aloufir in *Al-Ibn Ala'k,* the lover in *Al-Harib,* and to a lesser extent, the orphaned child in *Al-Yatim.* These characters are defeated by these external forces rather than defeating them as is the case in Hollywood cinema. They are

[1] David Borwell, "Classical Hollywood Cinema," p. 18.

even pushed to lead a tragic destiny that culminates in their death at the end of *Al-Ibn Ala'k* and *Al-Harib.*

Additionally, Osfour's divergence from the Hollywood model is also apparent in his adoption of non-linear writing and the deployment of punitive endings. As two dominant characteristics of classical Hollywood, the linear writing and the satisfactory ending are respectively subverted in films like *Al-Harib* and *Al-Ibn Ala'k.* Despite the fact that he was influenced by the Hollywood narrative style, Osfour opted for a cinematic writing that concurrently aligned with the diegetic structure of classical Hollywood and resisted its cinematic conventions. Henceforth, it is obvious that Osfour deployed three types of cinematic writings: A linear (*Al-Yatim*), semi-linear (*Al-Ibn Ala'k*), and non-linear (*Al-Harib).* For instance, the deployment of a retrospective narrative in *Al-Harib* allows the progression of the films' events to subvert the chronological sequencing of narration. In a non-linear format, and through the flashback technique, the film's narrator initiates the process of storytelling from the middle of the film and retrospectively goes back to the past to provide implicit visual clues for the audience. As an aesthetic device, the flashback is defined by Maureen Tourim as:

> [A]privileged moment in unfolding that juxtaposes different moments of temporal reference… In its most general sense, the flashback is simply an image of a filmic segment that is understood as representing temporal occurrences anterior to those in the images that preceded it."[1]

[1] Maureen Tourim, *Flashbacks in Films: Memory and History* (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), p. 1.

Figure 15: Film still from *Al-Harib*

Due to the dramatic significance of characterization in the film narrative, it is often believed that characters make the story. With complex psychology and narrative motivation, characters develop alongside the dramatic action, which is usually structured according to a cause-effect format. Part of the dramatic structure of the films, characters play a pivotal role in the succession of the film's events and the progression of their narratives. Similar to the cinema of narrative integration, characters in Osfour's films of the early post-colonial period also develop according to the chronology of narrative progression. Their destinies are often affected by the conflict they have with external factors and/or with other characters. Based on the dialectical relationship that connects them to the development of the story, characters are dramatically constructed in parallel with the construction of the narrative. In the two[1] films (*Al-Ibn Ala'k* and *Al-Yatim)*, the dramatic structure is built according to the conventional format of scriptwriting, which mainly consists of five stages: Exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and denouement.

[1] *Al-Harib* can be part of this discussion because it is dramatically structured according to a non-linear writing.

In the first stage, characters are introduced allowing the viewers to establish initial contact with them and try to anticipate their gradual development. For instance, the way the protagonist (Aloufir) is introduced in *Al-Ibn Ala'k* seems meaningful because it gives the viewers sufficient clues that help them expect the trajectory that it will go through. From the beginning, the viewers can expect that Aloufir will grow bad and will encounter a variety of obstacles. At least three elements may support the viewers' anticipation: The film's title, the absence of the mother and the psychological construction of the character, which is reflected in his behaviour as a damned child. Early in the film's development, the dramatic construction of Aloufir gives the impression that he will be a naughty person, who will cause trouble to himself and his father. In the very first scenes, Aloufir's appearance on the screen is associated with mischievous acts: He beats his friends at schools, he steals money from his father's purse, and he secretly drinks wine from the bottle his father puts under the pillow. Similarly, the introduction of the principal character (the child) in *Al-Yatim* is significant in providing the necessary elements that can help the spectators preview his dramatic evolution. In the same vein, the title of the film, the absence of the mother and the psychological construction of the character—through attributes of frailty—give the viewers enough information about the principal character's destiny in *Al-Yatim*.

In the second stage, the conflict that arises between Aloufir and his disloyal girlfriend in *Al-Ibn Ala'k* and the father's heart attack in *Al-Yatim* are events that accentuate the narrative development and determine the destinies of the principal characters. Aloufir's mischievous behaviour—exemplified in the act of stealing money and in the conflict he has with his disloyal girlfriend—provides sufficient details about the dramatic fate of the character. Similarly, the child's future life is at stake because it is determined by the father's recovery and survival. At this stage, the narrative development is accentuated by the causal motivation, which defines the dramatic structure of both films.

In the third stage, characters move into a more complex situation where the conflict reaches a high level of dramatic extension. The climax in *Al-Ibn Ala'k* is represented in the act of murder committed by Aloufir on his girlfriend as a result of the latter's disloyalty. In a way to revenge for his love, Aloufir takes an un-calculated step which will enormously turn his life upside down and contribute to his tragic flaw. Conversely, the death of the father in *Al-Yatim* represents a turning point that will have direct repercussions on the dramatic progression of both the story and the character. Having previously lost his mother (it is not indicated in the film, but understood from her absence), the death of his father accentuates his psychological and social instability. As an effect of this event, the child finds himself exposed to the unknown and to a destiny that brings him discomfort because he is now with no protection. To keep himself protected, he moves out to the street with the hope to find a shelter that can provide him with the needed security and compensate him for the trauma of the father's loss.

In the fourth stage, Aloufir is arrested by the police and taken to prison. In the prison, he belatedly recognizes the degree of his irresponsibility and feels the guilt of his wrongdoing. As his life changes completely and tragically by his current position as a prisoner, it is now too late for him to ask pardon from his poor father whose dream was to see him a hero. In contrast with the tragic future of Aloufir, the protagonist of *Al-Yatim* is lucky to start a new phase in his life in the orphan centre, where he manages to recover social protection and to retrieve one of the fundamental rights of childhood: Education.

In the fifth stage, Osfour closes the two films differently by adopting two narrative closures: A punitive and a happy ending. In *Al-Ibn Ala'k,* Aloufir is sentenced to the death penalty—a verdict that concurrently announces the character's tragic destiny and the film's finality. In opposition, the closure of *Al-Yatim* portrays a dissimilar destiny for the protagonist by showing him in a socially and professionally stable position. The last shot of *Al-Yatim* shows the protagonist, who is now a middle-aged person, hugging a street child he meets in a public garden.

Figure 16: The closure in *Al-Ibn Ala'k*

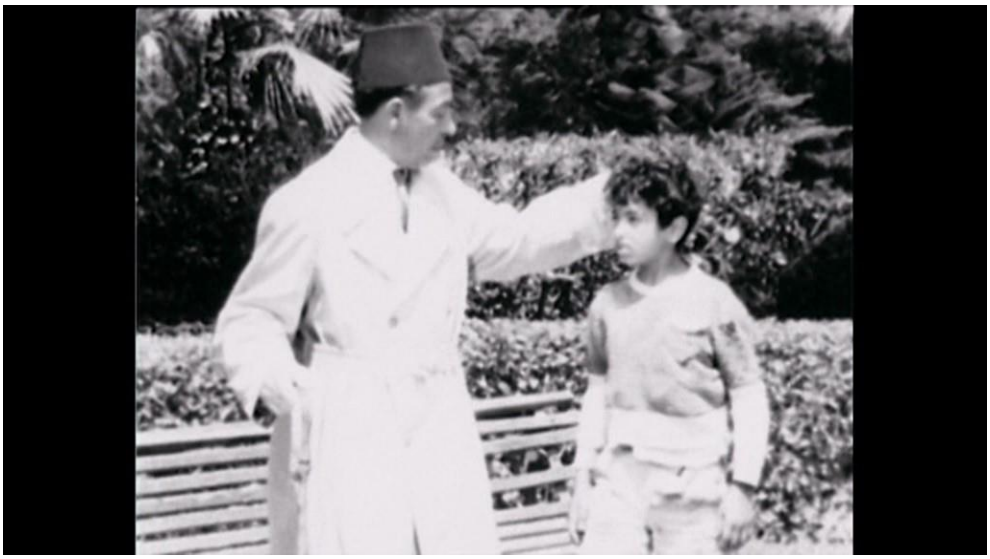

Figure 17: Film still from *Al-Yatim*

In assessing the artistic growth of Osfour's film practice in the post-colonial period, it is clear that his cinematic writing gradually developed and reached a certain level of artistic maturity. From an artistic perspective, Osfour was creative to experiment with new film devices that were consistent with the work of narration. For instance, his deployment of the metaphor was one aspect that implicitly and firmly

indicated Osfour's endeavour to grow artistically. As a visual image, the film metaphor is a composite figure which is recognizably determined by two necessary components: Physical non-compossibility and homospatiality.[1]By virtue of these components, the film metaphor is presented as a recognizably unified entity, whose meaning is encoded within the system of signification. The process of deciphering the contraditions associated with the film metaphor is usually achieved through the productive work of interpretation which is done by the spectators. In the endeavour to interactively reflect on the implicit and explicit discourses of the work of art, the viewer is often asked to make meaningful associations between elements that correlate metaphorically. Because it is part of the system of signification, the metaphor can be analyzed in the light of Roland Barthes' famous dichotomy of *denotation* and *connotation.*[2]

Osfour's use of the metaphor in *Al-Yatim* is reflected through the representation of two filmic elements: The door and the father. To put the reader in the context of the film, *Al-Yatim* tells the story of a little child who—by the recent death of his father—is anew orphaned. Due to the absence of his parents, the child is pushed to the street until he is socially protected by a woman who shelters him in her home and later on takes him to an orphan centre. At the orphan centre, the child can start a new life and to enjoy the fundamental rights of childhood. In addition to sheltering him, the Orphan centre allows the child the opportunity of re-schooling. The first lesson is a reading comprehension which goes as follows:

A door door a father	**باب باب بابا**
The house has a door	**للمنزل باب**

[1] See Noël Carroll's definition in *Theorizing the Moving Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 216-217.
[2] Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (Paris: Seuil, 1970).

Figure 18: Film still from *Al-Yatim*

It is relevant to outline that Osfour's deployment of the metaphor is consistent with the film's subject. Said in other words, Osfour used the metaphor not only for aesthetic necessity but also for narrative and thematic consistency. The correlation between the two filmic elements –the father and the door—has clearly symbolic and cultural implications. Despite the fact that they denote differently (the first is an object whereas the second is a human being), the two components can stand for the same connotation. Regarding the film's main subject, the interrelation between the two filmic elements can be meaningfully established through the notion of "protection" addressed by the film. Metaphorically, they both seem to have the function of ensuring security; the same way that the father's prime mission is to protect the family, the door is a physical manifestation of that protection. By associating the two words together, Osfour beautifully managed to show that the significance of the father for a family is equivalent to the significance of the door for a house. Their presence or absence is practically decisive in allowing or preventing the occurrence of two operations: Accessibility or inaccessibility. Because the father is no longer alive, the child loses protection and the house symbolically becomes a door-less place that may be

easily accessible. Since he cannot protect himself, the child has to look for protection in a walled and 'doored' location; the protection that is only possible in the orphan centre. Through the symbolism of this institution, the film defends the notion of social integrity by portraying Moroccan society as socially unified and linked to a value system that promotes social solidarity.

From an aesthetic perspective, Osfour was eager to experiment with film styles and shooting techniques that seemingly remained different from those deployed in his films of the colonial period. Therefore, it is noteworthy that these films are fairly sophisticated and the remarkable aspect that technically differentiates them is visual acuity. Due to the picture's clarity, it is discernible for the viewers to identify the characters' faces, objects, clothes, and even tiny filmic accessories. The nature of the cinematic technology that Osfour deployed in both periods determined the technical quality of films. For instance, the use of 16 mm in the postcolonial period played a pivotal role in the progressive achievement made at the level of the acuity of the films' visual field.

Additionally, interior cinematography is also a notable aspect that identifies these films. Contrary to the films of the colonial period, Osfour was able to shoot film sequences in enclosed locations and to overcome the challenge of providing the needed illumination. Two fundamental factors were behind his resort to interior shots in the cinema of narrative integration: Political and technical. On the one hand, the political context, which characteriszed Morocco in the early years of independence, encouraged him to consider interior shots in his cinematic writing. On the other hand, the "sophisticated" cinematic devices allowed Osfour to diversify his shooting styles and locations. With the possibility of having advanced cinematic devices, Osfour was able to shoot sequences of his films in enclosed spaces like the house, the café, the orphan centre, the pub, the police station, and the classroom. In this period, Osfour's reliance on interior shots was crucially dictated by the nature of the adopted cinematic writing through which narration reigned over attraction. In the same vein, Osfour did not restrict himself to the stationary

camera but also deployed the moving camera to display presentational shots, which were intended to give a general view about a place. Examples of the moving camera are found respectively in *Al-Ibn Ala'k* and *Al-Harib.* In the first, the film opens with a low angle shot which portrays a mosque from top to down and displays the minaret as a focal element of the field of vision; while in the second, the camera keeps track of the character's movement and portrays his passage through a lined series of stairs.

Figure 19: Film still from *Al-Ibn Ala'k*

Figure 20: Film still from *Al-Harib*

To enhance this aesthetic achievement, Osfour was creative to manipulate the pro-filmic by enriching the aesthetic dimensions of films. In his cinema of narrative integration, the movement of the camera and the choice of angles determine the ways the photographic reality is captured. This dynamic aspect of the cinematic image is reinforced by the multiplicity of the shots and through the exhibitionist power of framing. In parallel with the dramatic action, Osfour relied heavily on the ability of framing to arrange the visual content and display cinematic meanings that graphically formed part of the narrative construction. During visual reception, the viewer is exposed to a dynamic visual field which displays an abundance of film shots that include wide shot, the medium shot, the over-the-shoulder shot, the jump cut shot, the point of view shot, and the close-up shot. This diversity in framing clearly indicates that Osfour benefitted artistically and aesthetically from his involvement in the production of international films in colonial Morocco.

Figure 21 : Film still from *Al-Harib*

Conversely, the most remarkable point about this diversity of the films 'visual field can be signaled through the deployment of the close-up shot. In film history, this technique was first used by early filmmakers as a film device to consolidate the attractional aspect of the cinematic image and to generate

the astonishment shock. As it was used by more than one filmmaker, the origin of the close-up shot has usually been a disputed-upon issue among film historians. As Griffith's filmmaking represented a transitional stage that initiated the move from the cinema of attractions to that of narrative integration, many film historians considered the close-up as one of his stylistic inventions. In early cinema, André Gaudreault[1]argues that the close-up functioned in two ways: It functioned as a *"magnifying glass function"* (in the cinema of attractions) and *"an indexical and indicative function"* (in the cinema of narrative integration).

Osfour's use of the close-up technique seems to be consistent with the two functions proposed by André Gaudreault. In his cinema of attractions, Osfour deployed this cinematic technique to reinforce the attractional dimension of the cinematic image by capturing the filmed world in its physical stability. However, his use of the close-up in the cinema of narrative integration provides a supportive function to the narrator system. The visual proximity of the characters' faces reflects their dramatic evolution within the narrative and displays the development of their psychological construction. In parallel with the progression of the narrative, the practical application of the close-up serves an aesthetic supplement that is intended to reflect the characters' state of mind, their emotions, and their inner life. For example, the choice of the medium close-up in *Al-Ibn Ala'k* to portray Aloufir's dramatic defeat indicates that this filmic technique is used to serve aesthetic as well as thematic implications. In a similar way, the portrayal of the child through the close-up shot in *Al-Yatim* reveals his state of interior anxiety and his insecurity about his future. By capturing the child from a sense of visual proximity, Osfour aims at impressing the spectators and calling upon their identification with the character. Equally, the representation of the principal character in *Al-Harib* through the technique of the close-up aims at transmitting his psychological plight and his state of indecision. Transparently, the character's facial expressions visually indicate the extent to which he is psychologically troubled by the act of murder.

[1] André Gaudreault, *The Cinema of Narrative Integration Reloaded,* p. 98.

In these investigated films, Osfour's camera captures Moroccan characters with maximum visual proximity and presents them as individual subjects who are free, consistent and different. With its ability to closely expose characters from a sense of proximity, the close-up plays a great role in revealing the characters' emotions, their state of mind and their subjectivities. In different dramatic situations, the characters' faces are exposed to the viewers and highlighted in order to generate their identification, empathy, and appreciation. Through the exhibitionist role of framing, the characters' physiognomy becomes attainable to the eye of the viewers because it is presented as a visual focus. By such a portrayal, Osfour's films seem to produce alternative images about the national character and to undermine the cinematic conventions of colonial representation. Whether conscious about it or not, Osfour's deployment of the close-up represented a violation to the traditions of colonial cinema which exclusively restricted the use of this technique only to European characters. In the colonial film, the native characters are often portrayed as part of the scenery and displayed as tiny elements within the visual field. Therefore, Osfour's deployment of the close-up can be considered as a significant element in assessing the maturity of his film practice.

Figure 22: Film still from *Al-Ibn Ala'k*

Figure 23: Film still from *Al-Yatim*

Figure 24: Film still from *Al-Harib*

Chapter Twelve:

Cinema of Narrative Attractions: Osfour's Last Film of the Post-colonial Period

The present chapter deals critically with Osfour's last film of the post-colonial period: *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* (1970). There are various reasons why this film is investigated in a separate chapter, which I entitle "a Cinema of Narrative Attractions." Defined by its length, *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* remains Osfour's only feature film which is longer than one hour. Added to that, it is the only film which abides by professional standards of film production. Unlike Osfour's previous films, which were either 9 mm wide (the cinema of attractions) or 16 mm wide (the cinema of narrative integration), *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* is a 35 film gauge. The other professional aspect of the film resides in its editing, which was performed by Ahmed Bouanani, a veteran figure of Moroccan cinema. Not only that, but *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* is also the only talking film in Osfour's filmography.

However, the major reason for studying *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* separately is because it adopts two modes of visualization. As argued earlier, Osfour's films of the colonial and early post-colonial period have been respectively categorized in terms of two broad groupings: The cinema of attractions and the cinema of narrative integration. Osfour's previous films were identified with these two labels because they engaged two distinct modes of visualization and operated through two mechanisms: *Showing* and *telling*. Conversely, *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* seems to be situated on a different ground *vis-à-vis* Osfour's previous films. By combining two modes of visualization (attraction and narration), *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* seems to exist in an in-between position, where it neither belongs to the cinema of attractions nor the cinema of narrative integration. With the ambition to locate *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* within Osfour's

overall film practice, this chapter argues that it goes through a new category that can be named as a cinema of narrative attractions.

Having experimented with attraction and narration separately, Osfour was enthusiastic to try them both in a single film. Concerned with visual pleasure and narrative motivation, Osfour deployed cinematic writing that combined presentation and representation in a coherent manner. *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* establishes a symmetric relationship between the act of showing and storytelling, allowing for a smooth development of the film narrative. The voice of the film narrator works continually in a progressive intersection with the presentational aspect of the cinematic image. Mostly, the act of showing is used at the service of narrative transitivity, orienting the spectators' attention and preparing them for the upcoming filmic situation. The focalization of a filmic element is a way to psychologically prepare the audience to follow the line of narration, guiding them to details that are usually helpful in understanding the narrative development. For instance, the first shot functions as an announcement for subsequent shots and film events. Contextually, *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* opens with an introductory scene showing a ploughman engaged in turning up the earth, but shortly after, the act of ploughing is obstructed by an iron box that contains jewellery (a treasure). At the very beginning of the film, the camera's focus on the plough—being stuck in the tight soil—is a significant indication in the construction of the narrative development, and its chief function is to psychologically prepare the audience for subsequent shots. In terms of its aesthetic instrumentality, it is only a cinematic pretext deployed by Osfour to initiate the spectators' gradual entry into the film's visual universe. Very early in the process of narrative development, the audience is asked to get in a state of anticipation by making inferences, hypotheses, and guesses about upcoming filmic situations.

Figure 25: Film still from *Al-kanz Al-Marsoud*

Figure 26: Film still from *Al-kanz Al-Marsoud*

Figure 27: Film still from *Al-kanz Al-Marsoud*

In contrast with Osfour's previous films, *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* combined a variety of film stylistics and genres. Intending to commemorate his passion for world cinema, Osfour ended his cinematic career with a cross-genre film where he blended themes, narratives, and film styles. Like a carnival in the Bakhtinian[1] sense, *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* is a blend of various genres that range from the comedy, the Western, the chase, the Egyptian musical, to the action film. A pure example of the hybrid film, *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* establishes a systematic composition of plurality which is achieved at the level of directional principles, film aesthetics, and themed categories. By virtue of its hybrid nature, the film turns to be the locus of a plural identity where the intersection between its diverse and different elements is foregrounded on a dialogic paradigm. Genres are continuously interconnected to each other, allowing the narrator's voice to smoothly and consistently merge with the film's narratives. The shift from one

[1] Mikhail Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 3-40.

genre to another is beautifully structured within the narrative development, and according to a justified visual chronology that solicits the spectators' attention. For instance, resorting to Egyptian melodrama in the middle of the film is consistent with the filmmaker's intention to take the viewers away from the psychological pressure of the chase and the close combat. Because *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* is narratively structured according to a continuous atmosphere of physical struggle and pursuit, the introduction of the stylistics of the Egyptian musical is designed for visual pleasure. At a certain moment of narrative progression, diversity in film aesthetics and genres is highly required so that the audience can get connected with the film's visual narrative. Talking about the pluralistic nature of *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud,* the Tunisian filmmaker Farid Boughdir argues:

> Le trésor infernal de Mohamed Osfour est une production privée très artisanale. Son réalisateur, qui a été régisseur sur de nombreux tournages de films étrangers au Maroc, en déduit une conception au premier degré d'un cinéma où se mêlent les emprunts à tous les genres populaires les plus éculés : westerns, Zorro, Robines des bois, Karaté, mélos hindous et égyptiens.[1]

> Mohamed Osfour's *Alkanz Al-Marsoud* is a very artisanal private production. Its director, who has been a stage manager in the shooting of various foreign films in Morocco, has a first-degree conception of a cinema as an amalgam, where the most popular genres are mixed: The Western, Zorro, Robine Hood, Karate, and Indian and Egyptian melodrama.

In the same vein Janine Fabre adds:

> Le trésor infernal est un film d'action, un western marocain dans les traditions classiques, si on ose s'exprimer ainsi. Personnalisé par le cadre, les costumes et le dialogue en arabe

[1] As quoted in Fertat Ahmed. *Une Passion nommée cinéma* , p. 231.

> dialectal…. [c]e film n'a aucune prétention. C'est un travail honnête, fait avec amour et mesure… Osfour aura payé le prix de sa passion en nous divertissant.[1]
>
> *Alkanz Al-Marsoud* is an action film—a Moroccan Western in the classical tradition— if we dare to conceptualize it this way. Defined by the framing, the costumes and the dialogue in Moroccan Arabic… [t]his film has no pretension. It is an honest work which is achieved with love and precision ... Osfour would have paid the price of his passion of getting us entertained.

In the same manner that genres are interconnected according to a dialogic paradigm, stories are progressively woven in a continuous dialogue. Despite the fact that *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* develops one major visual narrative, its line of narration is structured according to a dynamic polyphony of voices and accounts. Narratively, the film's progression goes through a productive intersection between the main narrative (the ploughman who finds a treasure in the course of turning up the earth) and the story of the bandits, who assault him and take the treasure. The conflict between these two narratives, which later develops by the ploughman's son attempt to get back the treasure, is eloquently woven with the mini-narratives (the celebration of the Rose Day and the marriage procession). Deploying cinematic conventions of classical Hollywood cinema, Osfour opted for a structure of classical narration where the dramatic construction was established through the principle of alternation. Mini-narratives are consistently meant to dramatically serve the progression of the main narrative and to ensure the film's consistency. For the imperatives of visual reception, the alternation between narratives is an aesthetic choice for the attainment of the spectators' engagement and identification. Equally, this plurality is dramatically crucial for the smooth narrative transitivity and in the meantime for a pleasurable act of

[1] As quoted in Fertat Ahmed. *Op.Cit.*, p. 232.

visual reception. To keep the audience emotionally immersed and involved in the context of the film, Osfour created mini-narratives to foster the polyphony of the narrator's voices. Instead of following one single story—that focuses on a specific dramatic event—the audience is exposed to a variety of narratives, voices, characters, and situations.

Figure 28 : Film still from *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud*

Accordingly, the interconnectivity of narratives is reinforced by Osfour's adoption of a linear cinematic writing. A dominant feature of classical Hollywood cinema, linearity is a pervasive aspect which designates the visual style and the narrative development of *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud*. The succession of the film's events goes through a classical continuity that is essentially grounded on the principle of conflict, and within a systematic chain of causality. Although it is structured as a cross-genre film, *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* develops narratively in a Hollywood-film format, where the protagonist is in a perpetual struggle with incredible odds and with the forces of evil. The film's main plot is entirely about the retrieval of the stolen treasure and about taking revenge for a father who is assaulted by looters. In a

progressive line of narration, the film chronologically depicts the ploughman's son (Faris) in his persistence to defeat the looters and get the treasure back. Like a protagonist of the Hollywood film, Faris has to encounter a disturbance (the treasure's deft) and struggle against the antagonism of evil forces (looters and bandits). At the narrative level, the treasure's theft represents the climax and the central enigma by which the dramatic rhythm of the film will subsequently take a new narrative direction. With conflict as a dominant aspect that nurtures the dramatic progression, the film develops according to a narrative logic that operates within a chain of causation. Similar to the Hollywood conception of the goal-oriented protagonist, Faris is represented as a causal agent who is psychologically motivated for the achievement of a predefined and pre-established purpose: Taking revenge and retrieving the stolen treasure. Through the trope of *Deux Ex Machina*—a preferred device of classical Hollywood— the film's protagonist is constructed as an undefeated character that can struggle against dishonourable villains and victoriously smash them. In his endless conflict with looters, Faris is projected as a rescuer who is ready to put his life at stake for the establishment of the lost order. In two filmic situations, Faris's intervention is successful, culminating in the liberation of an abducted girl and the repulsion of the bandits' offense on the celebration of the Rose Day.

By virtue of its hybrid character, *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* is also a visual platform for the combination between forms of the cinematic expression and theatrical modes. In a cinematic structure, the film reproduces theatrical artificiality through a variety of artistic manifestations ranging from staged situations, the tableau style, to elaborate costumes and accessories. An aspect of the cinema of attractions, theatricality is crucially intended to enhance the narrative transition and to create diversity within the film's visual field. With their ability to display realistic illusion, theatrical scenes in *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* are meant to connect the spectators with the real world and with the everyday. In his attempt to enhance theatricality, Osfour deliberately used the stationary camera to project staged actions and

situations through a theatrical rhythm, allowing the audience to experience the static and pre-defined spatiality of theatre. Likewise, the articulate work done at the level of the scenery composition—through elaborate costumes and accessories— is another dimension of theatricality in *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud*. As an essential part of the *mise-en-scène*, the organization of the film's visual space is eloquently furnished by an inventive décor that aligns with the spirit of theatrical vivacity. By extension, the deployment of the theatrical forms like *"al-halka"*[1] is consistent with the dimension of theatricality and with the dialogic paradigm that identifies the film's plural character. In a circular format, and through the use of the long shot, performers celebrate the Rose Day by chanting after a singer and dancing in a lively way. The more this scene is significant for the narrative development— as it breaks the continuous rhythm of conflict and close combat— the more it gives the audience a moment of liveliness where they can themselves become performers in *alhalka's* performance. Even though the performance is mediated through the cinematic picture, the festive atmosphere created in the film's visual field can be transposed to the context of film reception. Like in "*alhalka,"* the audience becomes part of the performance and engages in a dialogic communication with what goes on the screen by chanting after the *alhalka*'s performers. This dialogic communication is fostered by the eloquence of the music and the attractive composition of the dramatic situation which is beautifully manipulated by the *mise-en-scène*. With the potential involvement of the audience in the musical performance, the atmosphere of "*alhalka"* transposes into the movie theatre, where the spectators become themselves vocalists of a parallel performance. And by virtue of this dialogism between spectators and the represented world, borders between fiction and reality are subverted, allowing the filmic to extend towards the real.

[1] SeeHassan Lamnii (2001) and Khalid Amine (2000).

Figure 29: Film still from *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud*

In addition to the combination of the film genres, film aesthetics, arts, and narratives, the hybrid nature of *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* is also established at the level of the filming locations. As previously discussed, Osfour respectively resorted to the exterior and interior cinematography in his previous films. While he entirely depended on exterior locations in his cinema of attractions, he blended exterior and interior shots in films of the narrative integration. This amalgam between locations is also relevant to *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud*, where interior cinematography is intertwined with exterior scenes. Although the exterior shots are dominant—as the film is shot in Sidi Abderhman's forest—interior cinematography has its own share. In fact, the restrictedness of interior shots is reasonably dictated by the nature of the cinematic writing and the dramatic structure of the film. Because *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* is predominantly shaped by the film aesthetics and shooting styles that relate more to the Western genre, it is dramatically understandable why Osfour depended heavily on exterior cinematography. Structured as an action film story, *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* includes the main features that characterize a Western genre such as gunfights, horsebacks running, shoots-outs, abduction and rescue, elaborate clothes and accessories, outlaws and sheriffs, to name but a few. The film's various scenes that include pursuit, close combat and

the continuous struggle with dishonourable villains, can take place only in specific settings like the desolate caves, the ranch houses, the isolated homestead, and the vast landscapes generally.

Figure 30: Film still *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud*

The deployment of music is an aspect that diametrically puts *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* on a different ground *vis-à-vis* Osfour's previous works. As a new filmic element in Osfour's filmography, music is indicative of the filmmaker's identification with the Egyptian musical film and with its leading figures like Samya Jamal, Farid Al-Atrash and Abdelhalim Hafid. In the film, music is a powerful tool in the portrayal of the characters' emotions and the accentuation of their interactive communication. Osfour's deployment of music is often paired with the long shot and through the manipulation of the pro-filmic. With regard to its significance for the work of attraction, music is used in moments when the line of narration is no longer captivating for the audience's attention, or when the progression of events is excessively redundant. Given the fact that the film is structured like an action film that develops through a series of physical combat and chase, music plays a stimulating role in the attainment of the spectators' attention. Music indeed operates in a separate manner, but it is mostly associated with the progression of

the film's narratives, contributing to the enhancement of storytelling. As an aesthetic device, music plays multiple functions in *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud*, but the most central one resides in the creation of a festive atmosphere that centrally allows for the smooth transition between scenes. Along with its deployment in the film's soundtrack, music is used in three main situations of the narrative progression, all of which match with the notion of celebration. It is used when looters are on their way back to their cave with the stolen treasure, when the marriage procession is heading for the groom's house and when villagers are celebrating the Rose Day. Taking a substantial amount of time within the dramatic structure of the film, music plays an interesting role in creating energetic moods and in generating visual pleasure.

Figure 31: Film still *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud*

Music is not the only added value that characterizes *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud*, but the variety of the camera shots remains another point in favour of the film's distinctiveness. Added to the various shots deployed in his previous films, it is visually clear that Osfour experimented with a creative composition of shooting angles in *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud.* Two remarkable shots— that explicitly hint to this productive variety—are the tracking and the aerial shot. Usually associated with exterior

cinematography, the tracking and the aerial shot operate differently, depending on their aesthetic relevance within a visual sequence. Because they have dissimilar aesthetic and thematic functions, the aerial and the tracking shot will be discussed separately. On the one hand, Osfour used the tracking shot in two situations which are both associated with mobility and the movement from one visual rhythm to another. Firstly, the tracking shot is used at the beginning of the film narrative to capture looters while celebrating the act of looting the ploughman's treasure. Deploying primitive devices such as the horse's chariot, Osfour put the camera on a lateral level alongside the return of looters on horseback. Secondly, it is used towards the end of the film to capture the looters' attempt to run away from the fist of Faris, who chases after them to retrieve the treasure. On the other hand, Osfour deployed aerial photography in four different moments of the film development, allowing the camera and the viewers to see the earth as birds do. From a vertical positioning, the aerial shot affords a bird-eye view on the filmed object, rendering its representation to a minimal configuration. Because it is often related to exterior cinematography, the aerial shot opens the scope for the audience to see the vast landscape more than the filmed element because the latter is drowned in the scenery. The use of aerial photography in *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* is often associated with looters, showing them as tiny elements within the film's field of vision and reducing their image to mere silhouettes. By using aerial photography in relation to looters, Osfour aimed at rendering their visual presence negligible on the screen and with no psychological impact on the audience who—for moral reasons—can not identify with them. Concerned with visual reception and with the audience's satisfaction, Osfour used the tracking and aerial shots to implement visual diversity within the film's field of vision. Despite the fact that these two aesthetic techniques require sophisticated cinematic technology—one which Osfour could not afford—he was able to provide the necessary materials needed for this type of photography. Very ordinary and primitive, but these materials were useful and instrumental in Osfour's cinematic endeavour. Because he could not afford a camera dolly for the tracking shot, he instead continued to use the horse chariot; and unable to provide

an airborne device for aerial photography, he alternatively had to fix the camera on a high level of a hill or a wall. The deployment of these two aesthetic techniques seems to be consistent with the nature of the cinematic writing and the dramatic structure of *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud*. Largely used in Hollywood's preferred genre (the Western), the tracking and the aerial photography go along with exterior cinematography, where shots are constructed according to the logic of mobility. In scenes—where Osfour portrayed the chase, physical quarrels and pursuit— mobility could only be enacted in the vast landscape and the open space of the forest.

Figure 32: Film still *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud*

Along with the variety of camera movement, suspense is another aspect of creativity that characterizes *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud*. Relative to the process of visual reception, suspense is generally known as a state of uncertainty, puzzle, expectation, and curiosity to know what will happen next. As an intelligent way of keeping the audience tuned to the dramatic progression of the film's events, suspense creates a psychological state of anxiety that pushes the audience's anticipation to an extreme level of unpredictability. Usually constructed in peak moments of the film's dramatic evolution, suspense is

catchy for the viewers' interest and curiosity, driving them to an endless circle of extrapolation and prediction. In *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud,* suspense is essentially created at the level of the narrative tension, which is fostered within the gradual progression of the film's story and in the way the narrator's voice is manipulating the act of storytelling. In addition to its role in generating the bursts of presence, suspense also serves in the dramatization of the film's narrative. As a new element in Osfour's film practice, suspense is often created by the manipulation of the pro-filmic along with editing. By combining attraction and narration, Osfour managed to create a balanced chronological temporality of narrative development, contributing to a coherent composition of the dramatic events with visual attractiveness. Many examples can consolidate this perspective, but the most thrilling filmic situation that anxiously generates suspense is the scene when the protagonist (Faris) is in an overwrought conflict with looters. The more the conflict takes time on the screen, the more the audience's anticipation grows stronger to know what will happen next. This state of expectation is well-manipulated by the *mise-en-scène* through the introduction of a filmic element that psychologically contributes to the audience's restlessness and uncertainty. To contextualize, Osfour intelligently introduced a snake in the peak moment of the physical struggle between Faris and the looters, letting the audience's anticipation grow limitlessly. Beautifully manipulated, the act of putting the snake as a focal point is meaningful for the narrative development and the spectator's engagement. Accentuated by parallel editing, the correlation between the physical combat and the snake's movement creates a real moment of expectation for the audience. With the beautiful manipulation of the attractional aspect of the film medium (the portrayal of the snake's movement from one situation to another), the audience is curious to know who will be the snake's target. Because the protagonist is usually the source of identification, the audience is implicitly and psychologically prepared to expect the snake's bite to target looters (forces of evil). By working on the manipulative dimension of suspense, Osfour managed to grab the audience's attention and generate a great deal of narrative attraction.

Figure 33: Film still from *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud*

Figure 34: Film still *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud*

Another point in favour of the aspect of creativity in *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* is the film's editing. As a creative and technical composition of visual narrative, film editing includes the act of assembling shots into a coherent sequence, allowing the smooth and meaningful transition of the film events. Because it is

Osfour's only film which undergoes professional editing, *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* is relatively different in the arrangement of the film's events and the narrative tension. For instance, the creation of suspense is aesthetically intensified by editing. With the excessive use of parallel editing, the transition that occurs between filmic situations accentuates the state of expectation, uncertainty, anticipation, unpredictability, and psychological anxiety that characterize many moments of the film's development. Performed by a veteran figure of the Moroccan cinema, the editing represents an added value that contributes to the aesthetic composition of the film and nurtures it with visual attractiveness. Aware that Osfour's cinematic endeavour was overlooked and despised by the conventional film scholarship, Bouanani's symbolic contribution can be understood as a form of recognition for Osfour and an attribute to his cinematic experience. Having initially got the movie bug in Osfour's "movie theatres," Bouanani felt the moral obligation to pay Osfour back the debt of inculcating the passion of cinema on him in his teenage.

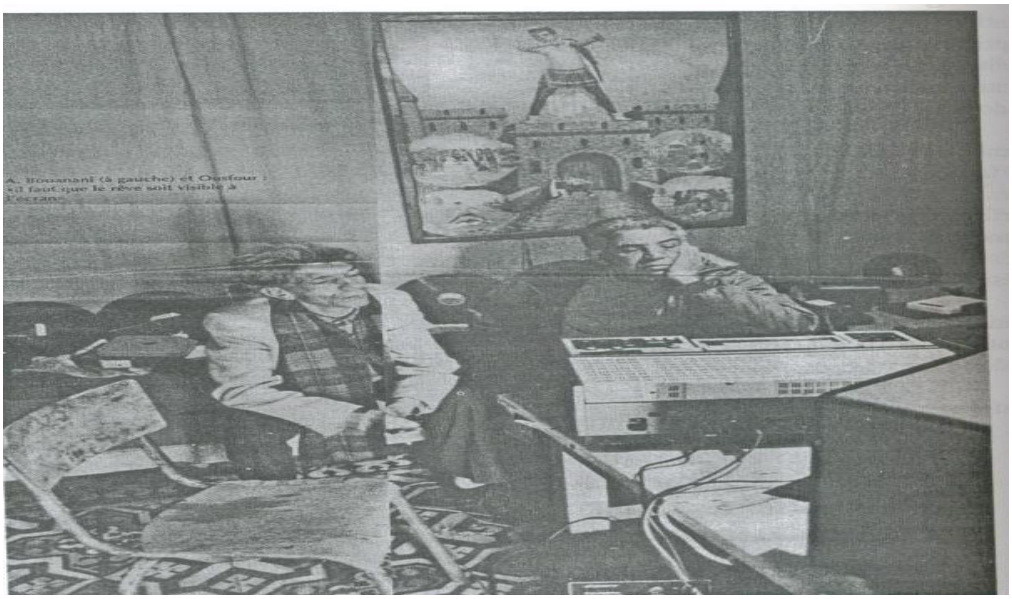

Figure 35: Ahmed Bouanani (on the right) and Mohamed Osfour (on the left)

Perhaps the last element endorsing the aspect of stylistic creativity in *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* is the film's ending. Unlike the satisfactory closure of Hollywood cinema, Osfour opted for an open ending

that did not resolve the plot's major problematic: The retrieval of the treasure. As Parker Tyler suggests, the ending in classical Hollywood film is "purely conventional, formal, and often like the charade of an infantile logic."[1] Although the film's dramatic structure is predominantly woven around the motive of the treasure's retrieval, the ending comes in the form of a visual deception. Given the fact that the progression of the film's events portrays the protagonist's continuous triumphs over forces of evil, the audience expects a satisfactory ending. Nevertheless, *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* beautifully breaks the audience's expectation by an ambiguous and unexpected closure. Viewers leave the film with a feeling of deception and insecurity because they feel that their attention is manipulated by the *mise-en-scéne*. The film closes without the resolution of the central enigma, leaving the audience with an unresolved question: Where is the treasure? The film's open-ending is dramatically consistent with the component of suspense and the narrative tension created by its visual effect. By subverting the Hollywood ending, Osfour tried to overtake the temporality of visual reception and extend its continuity to the off-screen, contributing to the uneasiness of the audience. The film's temporality extends to the temporality of visual reception, allowing for the juxtaposition between the fictional and the real. With this continuity, the audience is no longer interested in the resolution of the treasure's enigma, but probably it will be exposed to a new question: Does the film really come to a closure or is its end a mere declaration of a new beginning? This question may sound logical if it is discussed in the light of the film's last shot which captures the protagonist's departure on horseback. Shot from the back, the capture portrays the protagonist's movement forward to an unknown destination, with a focus on a question mark that emerges along with his disappearance in the darkness of the dusk temporality. In this way, the film's end seems to connect meaningfully and dramatically with its beginning, pushing the line of narration to an endless continuity. The film's temporality indeed culminates in the demise of storytelling and with the withdrawal of the narrator's voice from the screen's space, but its effect continues on the off-screen and

[1] David Borwell, "Classical Hollywood Cinema," *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader,* p. 21.

in the temporality of visual reception. The act of storytelling moves from the hands of the film's narrator to viewers who—by the use of their imaginative potential—are asked to construct their own end, according to their personal experience with the film. By virtue of this open ending, viewers become an active part of the story's completion and the process of meaning construction.

Figure 36: Film still from *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud*

Conclusion

This dissertation has thematically addressed Osfour's cinematic experience and attempted to highligt its distinctiveness as a film practice that was unfamiliar with the prevailing filmmaking in the Moroccan context. This distinctiveness resides in the fact that Osfour's film practice continued to exist outside the demands of the institutional and commercial channels. At that time, cinema in Morocco was exclusively a token of the white man, who was altogether the filmmaker, the producer, the actor, and the viewer. What is remarkable about Osfour's involvement in the cinema practice is that it was a self-made filmmaker who was essentially driven to filmmaking by tremendous passion and self-assertion. Due to the absence of film schools in colonial Morocco, Osfour had to start from scratch and fully depend on himself in order to acquire the technical knowledge about the functioning of the film medium. Having engaged early in the filmmaking activity, Osfour has often been regarded as the first Moroccan to appropriate the cinematic practice and to appropriate an activity which was purely a European enterprise *par excellence*. By virtue of his historical precedence, Osfour should be credited with the aura of "moroccanizing" the cinematic practice.

Throughout three decades of amateur film practice, Osfour continued to function as an independent filmmaker, who managed to create his own channels for the production, distribution and consumption of his film products. Like the conductor of an orchestra, Osfour controlled every step in the process of making films and performed multiple roles. Having established his own cinematic infrastructure,[1] Osfour managed to solve the problem of film distribution, and thus was able to project his films to his

[1] He converted three garages into movie theatres, where he used to distribute his films to an audience, which was in great part composed with children.

audience in his own movie theatres. Except for his *Al Ibn Al-a'k* (1956) and *Al-Kanz Al-Marsoud* (1970)— which were projected in a national movie theatre— all other films were distributed through his own channels. Unlike practitioners of the dominant film practice, Osfour's vision of cinema was not commercially-oriented, but rather, was motivated by personal satisfaction. He continued to make films that responded to his self-appreciation and which met with the expectations of his audience. It is significant to note that Osfour's vision of the cinema's mission reverberated within two conceptions: Cinema as a source of visual pleasure and cinema as a pedagogical tool of education. Based on this committed understanding of the instrumentality of the film medium, Osfour continued to make film texts that were intended to serve both entertainment and education.

Despite the fact that Osfour played a great role in the process of appropriating the film medium and in the establishment of Moroccan cinema, he continued to receive little notice and his cinematic endeavour has been seen from a vertical perspective. Because the filmmaking activity in Morocco has often been associated with the educated and upper classes (either in the colonial or post-colonial period), this dissertation argues that Osfour remained a subaltern figure of Moroccan cinema. His film practice has either been ignored or misjudged by the traditional film history, and his filmography has remained beyond the concern of film criticism. Osfour's films have not been critically approached because they have been considered to lack the artistic merit and artfulness. Starting from a purely institutional perspective, the critical discourse continued to argue that Osfour's films are not criticizable and for this reason, they have remained critically untouched and unapproached. By adopting Cultural Studies and Film Theory, this study has tried to demonstrate that Osfour's cinematic experience is worth investigating and that his films can lend themselves to critical scrutiny. By using a terminology that belonged to early cinema, I have tried to argue that Osfour's filmography can be stylistically categorized according to three broad labels: "A cinema of attractions," "a cinema of narrative integration," and "a

cinema of narrative attractions." I have borrowed the two first concepts from Tom Gunning (1986) in his endeavour to re-visit the legacy of early cinema, whereas the third concept is my proposal. The adoption of Gunning's theoretical framework has been justified by the stylistic similarities existing between Osfour's film practice and the experience of early cinema. Therefore, by "the cinema of attractions" it is meant Osfour's films of the colonial period, whereas the cinema of narrative integration refers to Osfour's films of the early post-colonial period. Because Osfour's last film— *Al kanz Al-Marsoud*—is the only film which was made with professional equipment and because it blended two modes of visualisation, it has been studied separately and arranged according to a different category: The cinema of narrative attractions.

One of the main objectives of this dissertation has been to identify Osfour's contribution to the development of Moroccan cinema. Arguing against the prevailing film scholarship, this dissertation has argued that Osfour's film practice has not only managed to liberate the Moroccan screen from the remains of the colonial imaginary, but also contributed to the establishment of a Moroccan national cinema. By this argument, this dissertation has discarded the fixity of Moroccan critical discourse which has associated the project of national cinema with Hamid Bennani's *Washma* (1970). Conversely, it has tried to maintain that the initial underpinnings of national cinema were foregrounded especially in Osfour's films of the post-colonial periods. In dealing critically with Osfour's film texts, it has been argued that Osfour was concerned with the production of a form of cinema that was culturally and socially rooted in Moroccan reality.

In a related vein, this dissertation has been triggered by the desire to assess Osfour's cinematic experience within its proper framework. By looking for common features between Osfour's practice and other cinema models, this dissertation has realized that it can be categorized within the framework of Underground Cinema. Many similarities exist between these two segments, but the most dominant

feature is that they were informal and un-institutional forms of cinema. By experimenting with the minimum requirements at hand, Osfour continued to make films and share his cinematic achievements with his audience. Like underground filmmakers, Osfour was forced to deploy the aesthetics of austerity so as to adapt his shooting styles to his practical reality. Because his films were silent, he inherited techniques that belonged to the silent era to facilitate the task for his audience during visual reception. In addition to his multiple roles in the process of filmmaking, Osfour used the technique of the lecturer and used to stand behind the screen to communicate the characters' dialogue. Due to primitive cinematic devices, he resorted to exterior cinematography to solve the problem of artificial illumination, and he instead continued to use flat lighting. This explains why most of his films were shot in Sidi Abderhman's forest in Casablanca.

This dissertation has been motivated by the desire to re-think the traditional film history and to interrogate its fixity of thought. By examining Osfour's film practice, the ambition has been to shed light on an obscure part of Moroccan cinema history, which has remained beyond the scope of the prevailing film scholarship. Osfour's voice has not been heard properly because he continued to exist as a small voice which kept speaking in undertones. Because Osfour is not the only subaltern voice of the Moroccan cinema, this dissertation recommends that further research should be done on other subaltern figures like Fatima Nouri[1] (1926), Brahim Sayeh (1925-2015) Laarbi Yaakoubi (1930-2016) to name but a few. The common point that exists among these pioneers is that they represent the forgotten part of the Moroccan cinema history. Each of these figures has his/her own (hi)story with Moroccan cinema, and has his/her own contribution which deserves to be investigated and brought to the fore. Fatima Nouri was the first camerawoman in Morocco and her role was crucial in Osfour's cinematic experience. She accompanied Osfour in his cinematic career and performed multiple roles and functions. Basically, she was a camerawoman but performed other related functions like a costume designer, an actress, an

[1] She is also called Magdalena Osfour, she is Osfour's wife.

advisor, and she even prepared food for the film crew. In a connected vein, Brahim Sayeh was a pioneer of film dubbing in Morocco, and his role was great in the popularity of Indian cinema among the Moroccan audience. Thanks to Brahim Syaeh's eloquent Moroccan Arabic (*Darija*) that many Indian films were popularized among Moroccans in the 1950s, films like *Saqi* (1952), *Sinbad Jahazi* (1952), *Aan* (1953), *Naya Daur* (1957), *Kohinoor* (1960) to name but a few. In the same level of importance, Laarbi Yaakoubi was one of the skillful costume designers in Morocco. Yaakoubi was in great demand by renowned filmmakers who shot films in Morocco, and his career in international productions started in *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962) where he worked side to side with the famous costume designer Phyllis Dalton. Yaakoubi also designed costumes for films like *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988) by Martin Scorsese and *Mohamed, Messenger of God* (1976) and *Lion of the Desert* (1981) by Moustapha Akkad.

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6- *Al-Ibn Al-a'k* (The Damned Son) (1956)

7- *Al-Yatim* (The Orphan) (1957)

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: **Title of the first appendix**

Appendix 2: **Title of the second appendix**

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