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Roots and Routes: The Politics of Reconfiguring Identity and Home in Moroccan Diasporic Cinema

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all the beautiful people in my life who always have faith in me, believe in my potentials, and encourage me to achieve my goals and never ever give up on my dreams whatever circumstances are.

A great debt of gratitude is owed to my dear parents Mohamed Zerrouki and Habiba Addali, and my amazing sisters: Kaoutar, Hajar and Salma for their unconditional encouragement and support over the years. Their faith and love made everything possible for me. Special thanks go to all my friends who showed so much support and trust throughout this journey especially Aziza Bya and Nidal Chebbak. Thank you for always being there for me.

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تمثّلات الهوية والوطن في السينما المغربية لمخرجي المهجر

مقتضب

تقدّم هذه الأطروحة دراسة تحليليّة نقدية لمجموعة من الأفلام لمخرجين مغاربة، قاسمهم المشترك تجربة الهجرة والاعترا ب خارج الوطن. تتضمّن الدراسة الأفلام التالية: "طنجة" لحسن ال لثرولي (2014)، "الرحلة الكبرى" لاسماعيل الفروخي (2004)، "ماروك" ليلي المراكشي (2005)، "كازانيثوا" لنور الدين الخماري (2008)، "الرا لث" لياسمين القصري (2005)، بالإضافة إلى "نامبروان" لزكية الطاهري (2008). في الواقع، تُعدّ أفلام هذه الفئة من المخرجين حقلاً خصباً لدراسة إشكالية الهوية وتمثّلات مفهوم الوطن، كونها متفرّعة عن منظور مشبع بإيديولوجيات مختلفة ومتنوّعة. ومما يضاعف أهميّة هذه التمثّلات يبقى أنّها تظلّ محلّ استفهام، باعتبار أنّ من جسّدوها يتخبّطون في دوامة من عدم الاستقرار، مرتبطة بنهائية هويّتهم وانتمائهم. وعليه، كثيرة هي الأسئلة التي تظلّ تحوم حول طبيعة الصور التي ينقلونها.

لقد شكّل الحديث عن الهوية والوطن قضية مركزية في سائر التجربة السينمائية لمخرجي المهجر، لكنّ الملفت في معالجة هاته المواضيع أنّها آلت إلى تجسيد خطابات مركّبة ومعقّدة تعكس صراعات داخلية لدى هؤلاء المخرجين، مرتبطة بالمنطق التحليلي، مما حوّل أفلامهم إلى ترجمة لمجموعة التناقضات التي يعيشونها شخصياً، بين غربتهم خارج الوطن وغربتهم عنه.

إلى ما سبق، تناقش هذه الأطروحة كيف استطاعت هاته الفئة من المخرجين استغلال محيطها في الغربة لمعالجة العديد من القضايا الطابوهات بحريّة أكبر، كما استخدمت عدسات كاميراتها لتصوير قضايا الوطن بطريقة جريئة، لتقدّم هاته الأفلام إلى السوق العالمية. لكنّها، بهذا الشكل، قدّمت مجموعة من الخطابات المعقّدة، الحاملة للعديد من الرسائل والرموز التي تعكس بالأساس حيرة المخرجين وتُعدّ صدىً لتجاربيهم. فإذا كان البعض من هؤلاء المخرجين قد ركّز على الصراع الدائم بين ثقافتين مختلفتين، فهناك آخرون قد ركّزوا على نقل صور النوستالجيا والحنين إلى الوطن، بينما قدّم قسم آخر صوراً "متخيّلة" إلى جانب رسم هويّة مغربيّة جديدة تجمع بين مكوّنات وخصائص الشرق والغرب. والواقع أنّ شخصيات هذه الأفلام كلّها إنّما تعيش نفس الغموض والتناقض التي يعيشها مبتكروها، ونفس تجربة غربتهم سواء في الوطن الأمّ أو خارجه، ممّا يحوّل عملية ابتكار هذه الشخصيات إلى استراتيجية تهدف إلى تأكيد هويّات مخرجيها ووجودهم في المجتمع المغربي، حيث يسعون إلى تصويره على أنّه غير مختلف تماماً عن محيط غربتهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السينما المغربية، سينما المهجر، الخطاب السينمائي، المغرب، الوطن، الهوية، الذاكرة، الغربة

ABSTRACT

This dissertation reconfigures the representation of identity and home in six Moroccan diasporic movies: Hassan Legzouli's *Ten'ja* (2004), Ismail Ferroukhi's *Le Grand Voyage* (2004), Laila Marrakchi's *Marock* (2005), Nouredine Lakhmari's *Casanegra* (2008), Yasmine Kassari's *L'enfant Endormi/ Errag'd* (2005), and Zakia Tahiri's *Number One* (2008). This study offers an investigation to the way diasporic filmmakers feel about and operate their identities through their cinematic narratives. It also endeavors to understand the way this category of filmmakers represents the Moroccan identity and the homeland from a position that is already characterized by instability, displacement and *hybridity* as well.

Those representations of identity and the homeland in diasporic movies reflect filmmakers' inner struggle caused by mobility and crossing borders. Their films, therefore, serve as a space where they negotiate the homeland and the hostland polarities. This study argues that diasporic filmmakers are empowered through their diasporic space which grants them more freedom to tackle issues, including taboos, freely and to use their camera's gaze to visualize the homeland in a daring and more challenging manner while producing films for a global market. They, however, produce intricate discourses imbued with codes and symbols that capture their dilemma and echo their diasporic experience. Some stress that everlasting struggle between two different cultures, others present continuous scenes of nostalgia to the roots, while others produce *imagined* images of the homeland and project a new Moroccan cultural identity that is composed of various components of the East and the West and which goes beyond the boundaries of the nation state. Their characters live their same liminality and ambivalence and experience the same estrangement. It is, however, a way to assert their identities within a Moroccan framework that they believe is not very different from their own diaspora space.

Key words: Moroccan cinema, Diasporic filmmakers, Diaspora space, Identity, Home, Politics, Memory, Cinematic Representations

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INTRODUCTION

Moroccan cinema has witnessed many transformations in recent years, which has attracted considerable attention on the part of scholars, researchers, cinema makers and critics alike. This absolute change has revealed itself in a variety of forms, including its output, the nature of topics dealt with in Moroccan movies and the way filmmakers address their audience. Representations of the homeland, and particularly by diasporic Moroccan filmmakers, have stirred a lot of criticism and reactions for their unusual and daring approach. Indeed, those movies are part of new cinema interests that recognize a diversity of identities and cultures, and which also discuss heated topics quite differently, including taboos. These taboos, most of the time, relate to the representations of the homeland, culture and identity, the issue which this study takes as its starting point.

This dissertation deals with the filmic representations of identity and the construction of home in Moroccan cinema through a diasporic optic. The movies include Hassan Legzouli's *Ten'ja* (2004), Ismail Ferroukhi's *Le Grand Voyage* (2004), Laila Marrakchi's *Marock* (2005), Noureddine Lakhmari's *Casanegra* (2008), Yasmine Kassari's *L'enfant Endormi/ Errag'd* (2005), and Zakia Tahiri's *Number One* (2008). They all deal with various thorny issues that deeply affect the way Moroccan identity is portrayed and reflect the way diasporic filmmakers perceive home, identity, and culture. Other necessary references shall be done to other movies by diasporic Moroccan filmmakers so as to enrich the analysis of the topic and sustain my arguments. Those movies incorporate Hakim Belabbes' *Khit Errouh/ Threads* (2003), Noureddine Lakhmari's *Burnout* (2017), Laila Merrakchi's *Rock the Casbah* (2013), Narjis Nejjar's *Les Yeux Secs/ Dry Eyes* (2003), and Nabil Ayouch's *Zin Li Fik/ Much Loved* (2015), along with documentary films such as Hakim Belabbes' *Boujad: A Nest in the Heat* (1991) and Yasmine Kassari's *Quand les Hommes Pleurent/ When Men Weep* (2001).

This study derives its significance from approaching the effects of crossing borders in determining the way identity and homeland are portrayed in cinematic discourses, bearing in mind that the movies under study are made by hybrid subjects

influenced by life on cultural boundaries. Here, I mainly refer to the effects of immigration on individuals' views, values, visions, and lifestyle as a whole. Immigration is, undoubtedly, a process that blends cultures, identities, and ways of life in such a way that brings all these aspects together to shape new perceptions of the *Self/Other* dialectics. All these elements are considered to be rich and promising for research and analysis in order to study filmic discourses in a deeper and more appealing way. In line with this, a number of issues shall be scrutinized to come up with better resonances to hidden discourses behind diasporic subjects' representations to diaspora issues that flow in the same purpose of reconfiguring Moroccan identity, culture and land on the screen.

The choice of the two concepts of identity and home is mostly because they both overlap and are inextricably linked to each other and most importantly because identity is constituted in and through culture and home. I argue that identity and culture are more understandable through mobility, immediate contact and juxtapositions of differences. It is, therefore, via a diasporic lens that we could manage to come up with some understandings of diasporic identities and their relationship with their homeland culture and the way diasporic filmmakers visualize it. This dilemma of identity arises when one is not sure where to belong or where to place oneself among others. It is this experience of displacement which has a profound impact on artistic cinematic productions of diasporic filmmakers.

Diasporic life is surrounded by a heterogeneous space where entirely different cultures and ways of life intermingle, which certainly reflects on immigrants' self-perception to an extent that reaches beyond the first generation to those that come afterwards. This study aims at discussing the way in which immigration conditions diasporic filmmakers' vision of and relationship to their homeland and culture of origin through films they have directed, and which are most of the time based on their film script. Therefore, this paves the way for tracing points of convergence among discursive elements in Moroccan diasporic cinema. This goes beyond an analysis of the experience of people's displacement, to one that forms a meeting zone of

contradictions, diversity and richness in what Paul Gilroy¹ defines as the collision between “roots and routes”².

In order to set a clear framework for this research, this study treats the issue of the Moroccan identity in movies through the eyes of both male and female filmmakers. This is not supposed by any means to confine the scope of this work to the limits of a comparative study. It rather endeavors to probe the ways in which Moroccan identity can be similarly or differently portrayed through the lenses of both genders. This diversity enriches the potential of the corpus under study and gives it more possibilities by approaching it from different perspectives and angles to discuss and analyze the representation of the Moroccan identity in Moroccan diasporic cinema. The choice of the films dealt with in this research is based on the fact that diasporic filmmakers might be looking at issues related to home and identity from a more creative perspective, as Amine Maalouf argues in his book *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*: “the more you steep yourself in the culture of the host country, the more you will be able to steep yourself in your own.”³

My approach starts from the common view that movies are “pictorial” or “visual” texts governed by a certain discourse that is subject to ideology and relies on codes and messages. They are highly constructed and need to be deconstructed in order to unfold their hidden discourses on its internal structure and rules. This means that texts are not monolithic; they are rather rich in meaning which justifies their complexity. What is, actually, worth scrutinizing is this multiplicity of voices in a given work of art.

To maintain the openness of the movies as discursive “texts” and expand the richness and potential of analysis, my research adopts an eclectic approach as it is framed by a number of theoretical considerations that are relevant to the main concern of this work and promising in terms of their capabilities. Yet, this research is mainly

¹See Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

²This term was coined by the cultural theorist Paul Gilroy and introduced in his *The Black Atlantic*; and it has been borrowed while giving a title to this work.

³Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, trans. Barbara Bray (U.S.A.: Arcade Publishing, 2000), p. 41.

framed by postcolonial politics and their interplay to construct and define identity as visualized by diasporic postcolonial subjects.

The issue of identity politics and the representation of home is a point of concern to postcolonial theories and criticism. A common denominator between the theories used in this research is their validity in subverting the conventional assumptions within a changing society to prove the extent to which they are able to destabilize the status quo. Postcolonial theory has asserted its credibility and capability as its revisionist position is geared towards recovering silenced and oppressed voices, namely of displaced individuals, who are relegated to the periphery of the society in both their homeland and hostland. Thus, the study proposes the use of Postcolonialism as a transferable theoretical platform serving the comparative investigation of these two areas. In order to perform a thorough scrutiny of the identity reconfiguration situations that the male and female diasporic narratives depict, the investigation takes conceptual support in the gender theory as well. This combination between the two allows possibilities of dismantling different hidden discourses so as to reconfigure identity in Moroccan diasporic cinema by both genders. Therefore, this justifies and explains the use of these theories to unfold the movies' codes and messages. While reference to some of these theories may be explicit in the dissertation, others are implicitly present when relevant and needed.

Undoubtedly, many Moroccan filmmakers have problematized Moroccan identity in their movies through covering different themes and within various contexts, such as border crossing, social problems, gender issues, religion and cultural issues. We can even claim that Moroccan identity has always been confined to a circular debate. This can be even more clearly noticeable in films by diasporic filmmakers, including the movies suggested for study. Diasporic filmmakers share a common view towards their origin, identity and land, yet each of them approaches the issue and deals with it according to a particular worldview. Some put emphasis on that everlasting struggle between two different cultures, the East and the West; others translate their ideas into continuous scenes of nostalgia to the homeland and others produce *imagined* images about the homeland. There are a variety of themes approached by diasporic filmmakers differently such as journeys, death, politics, religion and sex. Some of

them consider diaspora as a liberating space that allows challenging traditions and authenticity, while others believe it is a real adventure towards self-knowledge and discovery.

Interestingly, this category of filmmakers gives us a chance to explore the representation of the Moroccan identity in more depth, for their diasporic experience and position provoke various dimensions and visions through which the Moroccan identity in movies can be portrayed, approached, and therefore, analyzed. The understanding of diasporic filmmakers' representations shall be examined within what Avtar Brah defines as a "diaspora space"⁴ which mirrors the diasporic intricacy. It is that space where cultures and identities are being reshuffled and rethought by diasporic individuals and which accordingly allow diasporic filmmakers to produce and reproduce identities and intricate images of home.

I argue that this has mainly to do with the projection of inner struggle ignited by their experience of what can be described as 'hybrid life' and 'double identity' between 'here' and 'there', 'us' and 'them', and 'the homeland' and 'the hostland'. This duality or *hybridity* in Bhabha's words is what significantly empowers diasporic filmmakers to produce discursive cinematic patterns that challenge static views of identity and reshape images of the homeland. This, hence, constitutes the starting point of my approach to these movies as this inner struggle may serve as a catalyst against which those representations are tested and deciphered.

Diaspora people usually occupy a *glocal* position as they tend to affiliate to the locale and produce movies about it while having a global outlook. My argument emanates from this position as they produce global identities that they are often characterized with crossing different types of borders: physical, metaphorical, psychological and cultural. Reference should be made here to Stuart Hall who calls for transcending fixed and static representations of identities challenging essentialized discourses and considering them rather fluid and always in flux. A defining element of diasporic identities is their call for "the recognition of necessary heterogeneity and

⁴See Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora Contesting Identities* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996).

diversity.”⁵ For this reason, they are continually “producing and reproducing themselves anew along itineraries of migrating”⁶, which influences diasporic filmmakers’ vision and shapes their cinematic patterns.

It is of a specific pertinence to this research to draw attention to the period these movies were produced. This period is known as “the New Era” that is marked by the accession of King Mohamed VI to the throne and the beginning of a series of political, economic, and social reforms. This has opened the horizon to these films to be more critical about socio-cultural and political issues in Morocco than in the past. There is no doubt that all societal and political transitions that have taken place in Morocco affected the representation of identity and the land on the big screen and affected the filmmakers’ visions too.

My work is divided into four parts. The first introduces the theoretical background upon which representations of identity and home can be deconstructed and understood in diasporic subjects’ works. I find it of pertinent importance, though, to address the proliferation of some key terms related to this study and clarify my own use of them throughout the dissertation. I first opt to define the word diaspora, examine the concept and explore the shift in its meaning and perception over time. I mix up the work of a variety of scholars since the concept of diaspora necessitates an interdisciplinary approach for a nuanced understanding of the topic. I use William Safran from political science, Stuart Hall from cultural studies, Avtar Brah and Robin Cohen from sociology, and James Clifford from anthropology. This eclectic approach, dealing with various disciplines, reveals the perplexity of the term as well as the many overlaps and interrelations that comprise the experience of diaspora. Homi Bhabha’s theoretical insights are also a point of departure to unfold the intricacies that pervade diasporic works.

Intertwined with the theorization of diaspora is the question of identity and home that has been redefined in the light of ongoing transformations with regard to diasporic experiences. In this context, it should also be noted that concepts like homeland, host

⁵Stuart Hall, “Introduction: Who Needs ‘Identity’?,” in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, eds., S. Hall & P. Du Gay (London: Sage, 1996), p. 17.

⁶Ibid.

land, journeying and crossing borders become highly problematic, a fact that a whole part is devoted to.

The second part provides a brief historical framework to world diasporic cinema. It is an endeavor to justify the emergence of this cinema and to highlight common conditions and specificities of it. Then, the scope is narrowed down to investigate North African cinema in the context of diaspora. This is meant to contextualize the research and to demonstrate when and how this category of cinema has appeared, flourished and expanded. The shift goes later to address Moroccan cinema specifically and provide a brief historical background of Moroccan cinema or cinema in Morocco which can be divided into three main phases: colonial cinema, postcolonial cinema and the new millennium, where diasporic filmmakers emerged. This flows into the appearance of diasporic filmmakers' works which challenge questions of affiliations, and propose representations of identity and culture in a more daring and challenging way on the big screen. A point in common is how filmmakers dare to touch sensitive issues of sexuality, religion, and politics. Besides, the last section addresses characteristics of diasporic cinema theoretically speaking with the use of a variety of works of scholars and critics, such as Hamid Naficy, Will Higby, Laura Marks and Desai Jigna.

The two last parts of this research are devoted to a thorough interpretive study of the six aforementioned movies based on discussed theoretical frameworks. Part three entitled "Migrating Subjects: The Politics of Negotiating Identities" investigates the portrayal of the Moroccan identity by displaced filmmakers while unveiling some pertinent determining conditions. It basically examines a set of negotiations between binary oppositions that shapes diasporic life and, thus, affects this category of filmmakers' views to the Moroccan identity. This process of negotiations, accordingly, is equally challenged and disrupted to reshuffle and reshape new forms of identities in an *interstitial space*⁷ as Bhabha calls it. Bhabha theorizes a third space that is a form of resistance and negotiations of contradictory differences which migrants reconfigure

⁷ See Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994)

their identities in accordance with. It is a “productive space of the construction of culture as difference, in the spirit of alterity or otherness”⁸.

What defines these diverse groups of diaspora is their common experience of living through *cultural differences* in Stuart Hall’s words. It is that set of contradictions that diaspora lived/lives which shapes their identities as they are torn between two different cultures, using two different languages, living the present life and keeping memories of the past. Constructing one’s identity in a foreign land is quite difficult and challenging, which makes the person’s identity vulnerable and insecure. The diasporic person is lost between building his own identity and his fear of losing that identity. This dual discourse is most of the time reflected on the screen which distinguishes their cinema. It is their identity which “prevents them from being identical to anybody else.”⁹ Their films mirror their identity crisis and bring up to the fore issues of identity constructions within cultural differences.

I argue that the process of migration and diaspora empower diasporic filmmakers to approach issues related to identity and home differently as they are allowed to scrutinize issues from a unique perspective, for it is in diaspora where different cultures, values and interests intersect. They revisit static views and traditional understanding of national identity, home and culture and challenge conventions of being purely belonging to one specific land and with one unique affiliation. Diasporic Moroccan filmmakers, as a case study, challenge what it is meant to be Moroccan. They project a new Moroccan cultural identity that is composed of various components of the East and the West, but still, their representations are different. While some of them represent this amalgam in harmony, others produce conflicting discourses. Most importantly, male and female diasporic directors’ representations are different.

Since this work deals with an analysis of identity via both genders’ lenses, I find it tremendously significant to study how those male and female filmmakers approach the notion of identity based on who is behind the camera. This part shall also discuss

⁸ Ibid., p. 209.

⁹ Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, p. 2.

gender issues in relation to space in cinematic discourses, gender roles and female bodies' representations.

"Revisiting Home and Culture through a Diasporic Optic" is the title of the last part of this dissertation. As the title indicates, it is a study of representations of the homeland as depicted in diasporic movies. It is concerned with an analysis of some of the most common and recurring thematics that shape diasporic cinema including journeying and border crossing. It also endeavours to debate some metaphorical intriguing themes in their movies like death to unfold hidden codes upon its representations. One other important point that has been noticed and shall be highlighted is the discussion of diasporic films of taboo issues. The preliminary-argued claim is to attract audiences' attention and to position themselves among their national cinemas since they already feel marginalized and they look for whatever ways to penetrate the center of attention.

Diasporic subjects are othered and marginalized by their home of origin and their country of settlement. When diasporic individuals come back to their native land, they are called 'migrants' and they are looked at as strangers. Also, when they are at the hostland, they are dealt with as intruders. They neither fully belong 'here' nor 'there'. Consequently, this makes diaspora space viewed as a place of unsettlement where diasporic individuals are in perpetual struggle to find a position between their place of origin and place of displacement. This, therefore, affects their choice of topics, their characters and their views and perceptions of the homeland and the hostland as well. Displaced filmmakers, thus, and as Naficy suggests "produce their own self-representational films"¹⁰ which are a reflection of their inner side. That is to claim it is cinema which is mostly regarded as "the means of self-representation for long-silenced diasporic subjects, and therefore, is considered auto-ethnographic and accented."¹¹

Undoubtedly, diasporic films construct and send images about the homeland to a large audience. I shall argue that there is a handy link between the circulation of

¹⁰Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 88.

¹¹Ayca Tunc Cox, "The Use of Music in Turkish-German Diasporic Cinema," in *Border Visions: Identity and Diaspora in Film*, ed. Jakub Kazecki (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2013), p. 142.

movies and of cultures basing my argument on what James Clifford defines as “travelling cultures.”¹² Diasporic filmmakers tend to circulate a spectrum of cultural, societal and political discourses regarding their homeland. Their movies are considered more circulated than their non-diasporic filmmakers’ counterparts, for they address audiences in the West and their home country’, hence, the Moroccan culture is more represented through their lens. I shall be arguing how diaspora turns to be an empowering space where concepts of identity and culture are being reconfigured. Diasporic filmmakers take advantage of their dislocation that authorizes them towards enjoying more freedom and less censorship compared to their native land. They, consequently, generate new modes of production, develop innovative ways of seeing, inspire new aesthetic styles and promote new artistic visions.

Significant questions must be addressed as to how those filmmakers can ever theorize for a Moroccan cultural distinctiveness detached from the West and make films that serve the representation of identity and home on the screen. This is mainly because they represent the Moroccan identity from a position that is already characterized by instability, displacement, and hybridity that describe this act of constructing home away from home. In the same vein, this study endeavors to show how such discourses in diasporic films produce “new” modes of shaping and representing identity through the visual medium. This helps us understand the complexities of discourses on identity and home in diasporic cinema and how these discourses are repeatedly resisted and twisted by the filmmakers.

¹² James Clifford, “Travelling Cultures,” in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson & Paula A. Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 96-112.

**PART ONE: METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS:
STUDYING DIASPORA FROM WITHIN**

1. Theorizing Diaspora: Mapping Diaspora in Cinematic Discourses

The term “diaspora” has been applied for many years to a number of different contexts and disciplines resulting in a noticeable intricacy that could not limit the term to a specific definition or scope. A number of scholars from different domains and areas, such as William Safran, Robin Cohen, Stuart Hall, James Clifford, Avtar Brah and others provided definitions of diaspora depending on different circumstances and from various perspectives. Because diaspora is a key term that the whole work revolves around, I find it crucial to study and discuss how such term has been defined and redefined by different scholars, as it is also necessary to frame and clarify the concept of diaspora in relation to other pertinent diverse range that will be of great use while studying and analyzing cinematic representations by Moroccan diasporic filmmakers under study. Those concepts include “displacement”, “migration”, “hybridity”, “multiculturalism”, “globalization” and inevitably “identity”, “home and nation”. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to adapt an eclectic path that converges different disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, politics and cultural studies, since the concept of diaspora entails an interdisciplinary approach for a comprehensive understanding. Hence, the following section draws attention to the heterogeneity around the conceptualization of the term “diaspora” as an attempt to contextualize and clarify the use of diaspora in this research.

When dealing with such topic of diasporic cinema, I find it indispensable for my analysis to initially provide a theoretical framework to the concept of “diaspora”; its history, first appearance, use and implications. It is needless to say that diaspora is a recent emerging interdisciplinary area of research that has proliferated in the last decade. It has attracted a lot of attention lately and has stirred a lot of controversial issues especially in relation to identity, culture and home. But when did this concept first appear and how was it developed throughout the years to stand for a huge category of displaced people around the world, and much more specifically, how can filmmakers too be categorized as diasporic and even produce work arts with a diasporic touch that speak of diaspora and its people’s issues?

Generally speaking, 'Diaspora' first referred to people's dislocation from their home country, yet, theorists have found this definition too board and tried accordingly to define the term based on a couple of characteristics and while taking many historical and cultural contexts into account. According to Rogers Brubaker, there was a clear interest in diaspora studies only since the late 1980s as the word diaspora appeared as a key term only once or twice a year in dissertations in the 1970s. After that, the number has increased to thirteen times a year in the late 1980s and about 130 times in 2001 alone.¹ Intellectually, the growth of diaspora studies emerged starting from the 1980s thanks to the evolution of globalization, transnational and cultural studies as well, and especially because of the 'posts'- post-structuralism, postmodernism and post-colonialism. This was also in parallel with the organization of a large number of conferences, debates, courses and publications on diaspora studies.²

In *Diasporas*, Stéphane Dufoix argues that diaspora is basically a Greek word derived from the verb *diasperio*. Its use goes back to the early fifth century B.C. by Sophocles, Herodotus, and Thucydides. Then, the modern usage of "diaspora" comes from its appearance as a neologism in the translation of the Hebrew bible into Greek by seventy Jewish scholars in Alexandria in the third century B.C. In the so-called Septuagint Bible, "diaspora" is mentioned twelve times, but according to Dufoix, diaspora does not refer to any historical event and it does not precisely refer to the historic dispersion of the Jews³ where they were taken as captives after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.⁴

Contrary to what has been said, "diaspora" was not used to translate the Hebrew terms *galut*, *galah*, and *golah*. These were extracted in "the Septuagint by several Greek words: *apoikia* (emigration), *paroikia* (settlement abroad), *metoikia* (emigration) or *metoikesia* (transportation), *aikhmalosia* (wartime captivity), or

¹Rogers. Brubaker, "The 'Diaspora', Diaspora", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 28 (2005), p. 1.

²Gabriel Gabi Sheffer, "Is the Jewish Diaspora Unique? Reflections on the Diaspora's Current Situation," *Israel Studies, Israel and the Diaspora: New Perspectives*, vol.10 (2005), p. 5.

³Many scholars have associated the first use of the term "diaspora" to the Jewish people as will be discussed later on.

⁴Stéphane Dufoix, *Diasporas*, trans. William Rodarmor (London: University of California Press, 2008), p. 4.

apokalupsis (revelation).”⁵ Instead, Dufoix writes that: “Diaspora always meant the threat of dispersion facing the Hebrews if they failed to obey God’s will and it applied exclusively to divine acts.”⁶ According to works by other historians of religion such as Willem Cornelius van Unnik, Johannes Tromp, and Martin Baumann, it was only in later Jewish tradition that the meaning of ‘diaspora’ transformed to include both the scattered people and the locale of their dispersion.⁷

Although “diaspora” is an old Greek word, it was rarely used in other languages before the nineteenth century. Diaspora was often used in Germany, England and the United States during the nineteenth century. It referred either to the Bible or to non-biblical cases of dispersed group of people but united by religion, such as the Armenians.⁸ However, diaspora in European languages was related only to theology or the study of religions until the middle of the twentieth century. Until the 1950s, “diaspora” had no possible meaning except religious. Yet, in the 1931 edition of the *American Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, historian Simon Dubnov, the author of the entry “Diaspora” and who wrote about the Jewish diaspora as the paradigmatic case and who also considered the Armenian and the Greek diaspora as noteworthy, argues that:

Diaspora is a Greek term for a nation or part of a nation separated from its own state or territory and dispersed among other nations but preserving its national culture. In a sense Magna Graecia constituted a Greek diaspora in the ancient Roman Empire, and a typical case of diaspora is presented by the Armenians, many of whom have voluntarily lived outside their small national territory for centuries. Generally, however, the term is used with reference to those parts of the Jewish people residing outside Palestine.⁹

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid., p. 5.

⁸Ibid., pp. 15-16.

⁹Quoted in Stéphane Dufoix, *Diasporas*, trans. William Rodarmor, p. 17.

Following the quotation, Simon Dubnov asserts that although the term “diaspora” is mainly equated with the Greek and the Armenian later on, it is basically still associated with the Jews. Actually, the Jewish diasporic experience created a lot of controversy that many scholars reflected on. Dufoix, accordingly, believes that it is important to examine two examples of diaspora that are both strongly linked and opposed: “the Jewish diaspora” and “black diaspora” so as to understand the increasing popularity of the term during the second half of the twentieth century.¹⁰ There are two opposing opinions regarding the Jewish diaspora: scholars who see the term ‘diaspora’ as restricted to the case of the Jews and others who, on the contrary, consider it as an opening to diaspora studies.

Defining ‘diaspora as a concept that has its roots in notions around the Jewish experience has been pointed out by a number of scholars: one of which is Khachig Tololyan. He is the editor of *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* and he has made a study of the origins and the historical development of the term. Tololyan also discussed how Jewish diaspora turned to be the paradigm of the diasporic phenomenon.¹¹

The same definition linked to the Jewish people is provided by Webster’s *Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* stating that “diaspora is capitalized when referring to Jewish people living outside of Palestine after the Babylonian exile.”¹² Zerboski asserts that “diaspora, after all, is often forced and signified exile.”¹³ He argues that when talking about diaspora, one should acknowledge this sense of forced and violent expulsion and violence. Claiming so, I believe that Zeroski’s association of diaspora with violence limits the scope of diaspora and eliminates a lot of categories such as labor diaspora, students and intellectual diaspora groups.

While such definitions associate diaspora exclusively with the Jewish people, in his *Accented Cinema*, Hamid Naficy argues that diaspora was originally referred to a

¹⁰Ibid., p. 5.

¹¹Khachig Tololyan, “Rethinking Diaspora(s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment,” in *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, vol. 5 (Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

¹²Quoted in James Thoms Zeroski, “Theory in the Diaspora,” in *The Journal of Advanced Composition*, vol.25:4 (2005), p. 676.

¹³Ibid., p. 677.

variety of groups starting with the dispersion of the Greeks after the destruction of the city of Aegina, to the Jews after the Babylonian exile, and to the Armenians after Persian and Turkish invasions and expulsion in the mid-sixteenth century.¹⁴ In the light of these definitions, it seems that the term was linked to displaced people from different parts of the world. Yet, based on other discussions of the etymology of the word, it is the Jewish diaspora which was more highlighted. It is still interesting to note that what is common between all these definitions and classifications of diaspora groups is their similar reference to the diaspora experience of departure from their countries and their association with traumatic dispersal and dislocation.

This classic definition of diaspora as basically linked to the Jewish model will be questioned by the same scholars along with others as will be discussed later. Dufoix argues that despite the link between the Jewish and black people established by the idea of a return to the land of origin, none of those theorists used the word “diaspora”. Until now, scholars and theorists all argue that the first written reference of the terms “African diaspora” and “black diaspora” and the use of “diaspora” to refer to the situation of blacks living outside of Africa dates from 1965.¹⁵ The African and the Jewish historical experiences had obvious parallels. Servitude, forced migration and exile and the development of a return movement are all similarities mentioned by a number of writers of African descent in the Americas in the nineteenth century as well as by early West African nationalists.¹⁶ One of the differences, however, between the Jews and the African diaspora is that the Jews did not arrive in the New World as slaves. This made it easier for them to be accepted by the white populations and therefore face less discrimination.¹⁷ For Cohen, the origins and ‘the first’ African diaspora based on the slave trade was across the Atlantic and Indian oceans. Africans ended up in Asia and the Mediterranean, and America.¹⁸

¹⁴Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 13.

¹⁵Stéphane Dufoix, *Diasporas*, trans. William Rodarmor, p. 11.

¹⁶Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: an Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 39.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 42.

By time, this term of diaspora has proliferated and its meanings have been expanded to accommodate a variety of intellectual, cultural and political agendas. According to Brubaker, this resulted in what one might call a “‘diaspora’ diaspora’- a dispersion in meanings of the term in semantic, conceptual and disciplinary space.”¹⁹ ‘Diaspora’ will take various interpretations and adoptions of a number of definitions as discussed in Robin Cohen’s *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*; he examines four phases of diaspora studies in which the Jewish diaspora appears at the beginning.

In the first phase, Cohen writes that “the classical use of the term, usually capitalized as “Diaspora” and used only in the singular, was mainly confined to the study of the Jewish experience.”²⁰ The Greek diaspora was however excluded. This definition of diaspora given upon the Jewish experience, according to Robin Cohen, can only be seen as a starting point for diaspora studies rather than regarded as the paradigm of the diaspora phenomenon as will be elaborated later on. Then, from the 1960s and 1970s, the classical meaning of diaspora was extended becoming more common as a description of the dispersion of Africans, Armenians, the Irish and Palestinian.²¹ Starting from the 1980s and onwards, regarded as the second phase of diaspora, the meaning was used to describe different categories of people including expatriate, expelles, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants and ethnic and racial minorities.²²

The third phase, then, starting from the mid-1990s, came as a reaction to the previous phase by social constructionist theorists. Although there was an agreement on the proliferation and the evolution of the term, they “were still seen as holding back the full force of the concept. Social constructionists sought to decompose two of the main concepts confining the diaspora idea, precisely ‘homeland’ and ‘ethnic/religious community.’”²³ Cohen further explains this claiming that:

¹⁹Rogers. Brubaker, “The ‘Diaspora’, Diaspora”, p. 1.

²⁰Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: an Introduction*, p. 2.

²¹Ibid., p. 1.

²²Ibid., p. 2.

²³Ibid.

In the postmodern world, it was further discussed that identities have become deterritorialized and constructed and deconstructed in a flexible and situational way; accordingly, concepts of diaspora has to be radically rendered in response to this complexity”.²⁴

The last phase came as a reaction to social constructionist critiques who were considered as in danger of emptying the concept of diaspora of much of its critical and descriptive power. For that reason, it was identified as a consolidation phase to a modified reaffirmation of the diasporic idea including its core elements, common features, and ideal type.²⁵

After that the phenomenon of diaspora was dealt with only in connection with the Jews, the term has proliferated and its meaning has been stretched to accommodate the various intellectual, cultural and political agendas in the service of which it has been enlisted.²⁶ It is as Khachig Tololyan asserts:

The term that once described Jewish, Greek, Armenian dispersion now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest worker, exile community, overseas community, and ethnic community.²⁷

In 1991, the American political scientist William Safran made his first attempt to construct a closed conceptual model with multiple criteria. He suggested limiting the term “diaspora” to minority expatriate communities whose members shared several specific characteristics. In his article, “The Jewish Diaspora in a Comparative and Theoretical Perspective”, Safran lists criteria based on the definitive model of the Jewish history to judge the varieties of diasporization in other communities.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 1- 2.

²⁵Ibid., p. 2.

²⁶Rogers Brubaker, “The Diaspora ‘diaspora’”, p. 1.

²⁷Tololyan, Khachig 1991 “The Nation-State and its Others: in Lieu of a preface’, *Diaspora*, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 4.

Safran argues that the concept of diaspora is linked to those communities that share some or all of the six following characteristics: 1) the dispersal of “expatriate minority communities” or their ancestors from a specific original “center” to two or more peripheral, or foreign, regions. 2) Retention of a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland. 3) The belief that they are not welcomed and accepted in the host country. Therefore, they feel partly estranged and insulted from it which consequently affects their relationship with the dominant element of society in the hostland. 4) Aspiration to return to their “ancestral homeland” emphasizing the image of an “ideal home”. 5) They continue to relate to the homeland in one way or another and they are committed to the maintenance or restoration of the original homeland. 6) Derivation of collective consciousness and solidarity from the continuing relationship with the homeland. 7) The last characteristic clarifies that their cultural, religious, economic and/ or political relationships with the homeland are reflected in a significant way in their communal institutions.²⁸ Having noted such characteristics based on the Jewish diaspora connotes that it is original and superior to others. For that reason, Safran refers to the Jewish diaspora as the “ideal type” and considers it as the heart of diaspora studies, but this claim has been challenged by many scholars.

Elaborating upon Safran’s list, Roben Cohen proposes that perhaps these features provided by Safran need to be adjusted and four other elements should be added to the list proposed. In his *Global Diaspora: An Introduction*, Cohen thinks that the list provided by Safran needs to be widened and other elements should be incorporated. He suggests that “groups that scatter for aggressive or voluntarist reasons” can also be included in “the category diaspora”.²⁹ He further argues that not all ethnic migrants can be counted as diasporians given that a “strong tie to the past or a block to assimilation in the present and future must exist in order to permit a diasporic consciousness to emerge or be retained”. He emphasizes that there should be more

²⁸William Safran, “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return,” in *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, vol.1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), pp. 83-84.

²⁹Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: an Introduction*, p. 24.

recognition of the positive virtues retaining a diasporic identity than is implied in Safran's original list.³⁰

Accordingly, to those criteria provided by Safran, Cohen then appends four more: voluntary migration (for business, work, or colonization); an enduring ethnic awareness; the emergence of new creativity, and a feeling of empathy and solidarity with "fellow ethnics" in other countries. As a result, Cohen produces a list of nine "common characteristics of diaspora" coupled with a typology victim (Jews, Africans, Armenians, and Palestinians) labor (Indian), trade (Chinese), cultural (The Caribbean), and imperial (British, French, Spanish and Portuguese)³¹. Robin Cohen builds on this definition by amending some of Safran's components and by widening the list even further. Thus, the definition becomes more comprehensive and allows including non-Jewish communities and contemporary diasporas, and most importantly, liberates the term from being strictly linked to trauma and negativity.

In his *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, Cohen argues that the departure from homeland does not necessarily need to be traumatic as the case of the Jews, but one can merely leave one's country for pragmatic reasons and a better future. He also suggests that even if the idealisation of the homeland is sustained, diasporic communities stand a chance of overcoming their troubled relationships with host societies. In this vein, Cohen clearly provides a more positive approach to the conceptualisation of diaspora than of Safran's. By amending and expanding Safran's components of diaspora, it becomes possible for some scholars to use the term diaspora to define diverse minority groups. It also acknowledges the heterogeneity and the specificity underlying the term diaspora. Cohen's attempt to divide diaspora into types can be considered as a way to expand the comprehensiveness of the term diaspora. He writes:

When considering the most prevalent concept of diaspora, the Jews have been selected to illustrate the argument. Africans and Armenians are shown to be analogous victim diasporas. The British have been represented as an

³⁰Ibid., p. 1.

³¹Stéphane Dufoix, *Diasporas*, p. 31.

imperial diaspora, the Indians as a labour diaspora, while the trading diasporas have been typified by the Chinese and Lebanese. Finally the peoples of the Caribbean abroad are, I suggest, usefully characterised as a cultural diaspora³².

In spite of the rather inclusive nature of Cohen's definition, theorists see that neither of the lists is universally applicable to all diasporic communities, and one should not expect all the criteria listed to apply to all diasporas either. Even the Jewish diaspora, which is generally addressed as the "ideal type", may not precisely correspond to all of the features enumerated by Safran and Cohen.

Similarly, like Cohen, James Clifford questions Safran's based criteria upon the Jewish diaspora exclusively. In terms of that definition of diaspora surrounding the "ideal type",³³ Safran writes:

We may legitimately speak of the Armenian, Maghrebi, Turkish, Palestinian, Cuban, Greek, and perhaps Chinese diasporas at present and of the Polish diaspora of the past, although none of them fully conforms to the 'ideal type' of the Jewish diaspora.³⁴

In his "Diasporas", Clifford writes that large segments of Jewish historical experience do not meet the test of Safran's last three criteria, one of which is a strong attachment to and desire for literal return to a well-preserved homeland. Clifford has criticized what Safran called "centered diaspora model, oriented by continuous cultural connections to a source and by a teleology of "return". Clifford argues that the Jewish diaspora itself does not qualify, because Safran states that the belief of return for Jews

³²Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, p. 1.

³³In his 2001 article, "The Jewish Diaspora Comparative and Theoretical Perspective", Safran writes: "I used the term "ideal diaspora", I now hesitate to use it since it has been misconstrued by some as implying an "ideal" situation."

³⁴William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," p. 84.

“is often an eschatological or utopian projection in response to a present dystopia”.³⁵ Moreover, he adds that there is little room in his definition for the principled *ambivalence* about physical return and attachment to land which has characterized much Jewish diasporic consciousness, from biblical times on.”³⁶ African American, Caribbean, British do not also qualify then. He suggests that these histories of displacement fall into a category of quasi diasporas, demonstrating only some diasporic features or instances. Likewise, the South Asian diaspora is not so much preoccupied with a return to a specific place and desire for return as around an ability to recreate a culture in diverse locations, and this falls outside the strict definition.³⁷

Clifford, therefore, asserts that we should be able to acknowledge the strong entailment of Jewish history on the language of diaspora without necessarily turning that history a definitive model.³⁸ Jewish diasporas can rather be approached as non-normative starting arguments for a discourse that is traveling or hybridizing in new globe conditions. Diaspora discourse is being extensively appropriated for different reasons correlated to decolonization, growing immigration, global communications, and transport- a whole range of phenomena that boost multi-locale attachments, dwelling, and travelling within and across nations.³⁹ Clifford too argues that no society is expected to qualify on all counts throughout its history whatever the working list of diasporic features is. He believes that discourses of diaspora will inevitably be adapted as it is translated and adopted.⁴⁰

Like Robin Cohen and James Clifford, who have criticized Safran’s characteristics of diaspora, Rogers Brubaker too has provided a set of arguments to help define the scope of the concept. In his “The ‘Diaspora’ diaspora”, Brubaker thinks that even though there is a wide range of dispersion of diaspora in semantic and conceptual space, there are mainly three core elements – dispersion, orientation to lose

³⁵James Clifford, “Diasporas” in *Cultural Anthropology* (US: Blackwell Publishing, 1994), p. 305.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid., p. 306.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

its significance and its power to make distinctions.⁴¹ Brubaker adds: “If everyone is diasporic, then no one is distinctively so.”⁴² He argues that the term loses its discriminating power; the fact that makes from “the universalization of diaspora, paradoxically means the disappearance of diaspora”⁴³. In this light, diaspora has been overused and thus loses its meaning.

Brubaker suggests that rather than speaking of a ‘diaspora’ or ‘the diaspora’ as an entity, a bounded group affiliated to a specific homeland, an ethnodemographic or ethnocultural fact, it may be more useful and practical to speak of diasporic stances, projects, claims, idioms, practices and so on.⁴⁴ He writes:

We should think of diaspora not in substantialist terms as a bounded entity, but rather as *an idiom, a stance, a claim*. We should think of diaspora in the first instance as a *category of practice*, and only then ask whether, and how, it can fruitfully be used as a category of analysis. As a category of practice, ‘diaspora’ is used to make claims, to articulate projects, to formulate expectations, to mobilize energies, to appeal to loyalties. It is often a category with a strong normative charge. It does not so much *describe* the world as seek to *remake* it.⁴⁵

In a similar vein, in the attempt to argue against essentialist concepts of diaspora that reify notions of belonging and the roots of migrants in places of origin, Sokefeld interprets diasporas as the outcome of specific processes and practices of identity building.⁴⁶ He argues that ‘sentiments of belonging, attachment to a home and ideas of a place of origin, which is the key diaspora features, do not constitute the “substance” from which diasporas – like other identity groups – are made’, and he considers diasporas as ‘discursive constructions of imagined [transnationally dispersed]

⁴¹Rogers Brubaker, “The Diaspora ‘diaspora’”, p. 3.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 13.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 12. (Emphasis is mine).

⁴⁶Martin Sokefeld, “Mobilizing in Transnational Space: a Social Movement Approach to the Formation of Diaspora”, in *Global Networks* 6:3 (2006), p. 652.

communities.’⁴⁷ Both Brubaker’s and Sokefeld’s definitions of diaspora underline the need to rethink already provided criteria lists and invite us to look at diaspora as a dynamic process, as a claim and an articulated project. In addition to this, Brubaker notes that diaspora discourse is often the discourse of a minority:

[...] not all those who are claimed as members of putative diasporas themselves adopt a diasporic stance. Indeed, those who consistently adopt a diasporic stance [...] are often only a small minority of the population that political or cultural entrepreneurs formulate as a diaspora.⁴⁸

Brubaker’s insight can be taken a step further. Diaspora should not be seen as a static notion since diaspora itself is established because of mobility and movement. It should rather be examined as the result of dynamic process of continuous making and remaking of diaspora with no fixed affiliations.

Significantly, starting from the 1980s, a new vision of “diaspora” developed which was radically different from the open definition and the categorical definition of diaspora in Stéphane Dufoix’s words⁴⁹. The author of *Diasporas* has divided three kinds of definitions that can be distinguished throughout history which are open, categorical and oxymoronic. The first type -the open definitions- offers a loose and non-discriminating view of the object of study and leaves the door open to an undetermined number of a priori cases. The second type,⁵⁰ as referred to as the categorical definitions:

are the ones which place the object of study within a matrix of strict criteria that must be fulfilled for it to warrant the scientific designation as a “diaspora”. The criteria are designed to differentiate between “true” and “false” diaspora.⁵¹

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 672.

⁴⁸Rogers Brubaker, “The Diaspora ‘diaspora,’” p. 12.

⁴⁹Stéphane Dufoix, *Diasporas*, p. 24.

⁵⁰This is the case of Safran’s and Robin’s provided criteria.

⁵¹Stéphane Dufoix, *Diasporas*, p. 22.

At that time, according to Dufoix, some studies' main concern was to examine and ask whether a given population is diaspora or not. Then, the last type and the most recent one is known as "the oxymoronic definitions". These definitions are rooted in the appearance of the postmodern thought in the 1980s as well as the appearance of the English "Cultural Studies" movement, which studies subaltern or postcolonial subcultures (workers, minorities, immigrants and so on).⁵² In that setting, a new vision of diaspora developed that was radically different from the open and categorical definitions. Where those definitions stress reference to a point of departure and maintenance of an identity in spite of dispersion, postmodern thought instead gives pride of place to paradoxical identity, the periphery, and hybridity. Three distinguished authors have contributed in establishing this vision: Stuart Hall, James Clifford and Paul Gilroy. This new approach puts greater emphasis on identifying a set of experiences. It believes that 'diaspora' as a phenomenon has more to do with one's practices, state of mind and identity as well. Stuart hall wrote in this context:

I use this term metaphorically, not literally: diaspora does not refer us to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all costs return, even if it means pushing other people into the sea. This is the old, imperializing, hegemonizing form of 'ethnicity.'[...] The diaspora experience as I intend it here is defined not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity.⁵³

Dufoix states that this postmodern vision introduced a break between modern forms of diaspora, whose archetype is the Jewish model, and its new forms, whose archetype is the "black diaspora." In this regard, *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy's 1993 book on the "black diaspora," has become a cultural studies classic. "In a 1994

⁵²Ibid., pp. 21- 24.

⁵³ Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* reprinted in *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader*, eds. Patrick Williams & Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 235.

article, he insists on the “plural status” that can be seen in the world’s history, where “diaspora- dispersion” and “diaspora-identification” have coexisted in opposition, with the first tending to the end of dispersion, unlike the second, which is written in living memory.”⁵⁴ Taken in this second sense, the diasporic idea” allows one to go beyond the simplistic view of certain oppositions (continuity/rupture, center/periphery) to grasp the complex, that is, the joint presence of the Same and the Other, the local and the global—everything that Gilroy calls “the changing same.”⁵⁵

Indeed, the term ‘diaspora’ has been used in a fuzzy and untidy way throughout the years. Thus, this terminological diversity has resulted in providing some vague different meanings of diaspora used in various discourses. In her “Rethinking the Concept of Diaspora”, Roza Tsagarousianou also argues that ‘ethnicity’, ‘mobility’ or ‘displacement’ are not sufficient parameters to make sense of diasporic phenomena. It should be better regarded as relying so much on connectivity rather than displacement. To clarify this further, she writes:

Diaspora should be seen not as given communities, a logical, albeit deterritorialized, extension of an ethnic or national group, but as imagined communities, continuously reconstructed and reinvented. I argue that it is in the context of this intersection of connectivity and cultural reinvention and reconstruction that media technologies and diasporic media become crucial factors in the reproduction and transformation of diasporic identities.⁵⁶

I too agree and argue that diaspora should not be confined or limited just to dislocation and dispersals conditions. Diaspora, as will be argued throughout this whole work and based on postmodernist views, is a lived experience that allows processes of remaking and reshaping individuals’ identities formation and their belongings as will be amply discussed in the analysis of Moroccan movies by

⁵⁴Stéphane Dufoix, *Diasporas*, pp. 24-25.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶ Roza Tsagarousianou, “Rethinking the Concept of Diaspora: Mobility, Connectivity and Communication in a Globalised World,” in *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 1(1) (2004), p. 52.

diasporic filmmakers. Paul Tiyaambe Zeleza summarizes these points about diaspora in her article “The Challenge of Studying the African Diaspora” as she argues that diaspora:

[..]refers to a process, a condition, a space and a discourse; the continuous processes by which diaspora is made, unmade, and remade, the changing conditions in which it lives and expresses itself, the place where it is moulded and imagined, and the contentious ways in which it is studied and discussed. It entails a culture and a consciousness, sometimes diffuses and sometimes concentrates of a ‘here’ separate from a ‘there’, a ‘here’ that is often characterized by a regime of marginalization and a ‘there’ that is invoked as a rhetoric of self-affirmation, of belonging to here differently.⁵⁷

In short, although there is no evident consensus over the definition of diaspora, this research departs from the premise that ‘diaspora’ is a discourse that goes through different processes of change and that celebrates diversity and richness. It is “a space and a discourse” that permits reshaping individuals’ identities to contribute in their constant formations.

⁵⁷ Paul Tiyaambe Zelza, “The Challenges of Studying the African Diasporas,” in *African Sociological Review*, vol.12:2 (2008), p.7.

2. Moroccan Diasporic Films in the Age of Globalization: Diaspora and Globalization: What Relations?

In the previous section, it has been demonstrated how studying diaspora before and now helps to shape an understanding of the process this phenomenon has gone through throughout the years. Specificities and features encompassing the term “diaspora” have been highlighted to make its use clearer in this work. The following paradigm still proposes a glimpse on this concept summarizing what has been discussed previously.⁵⁸

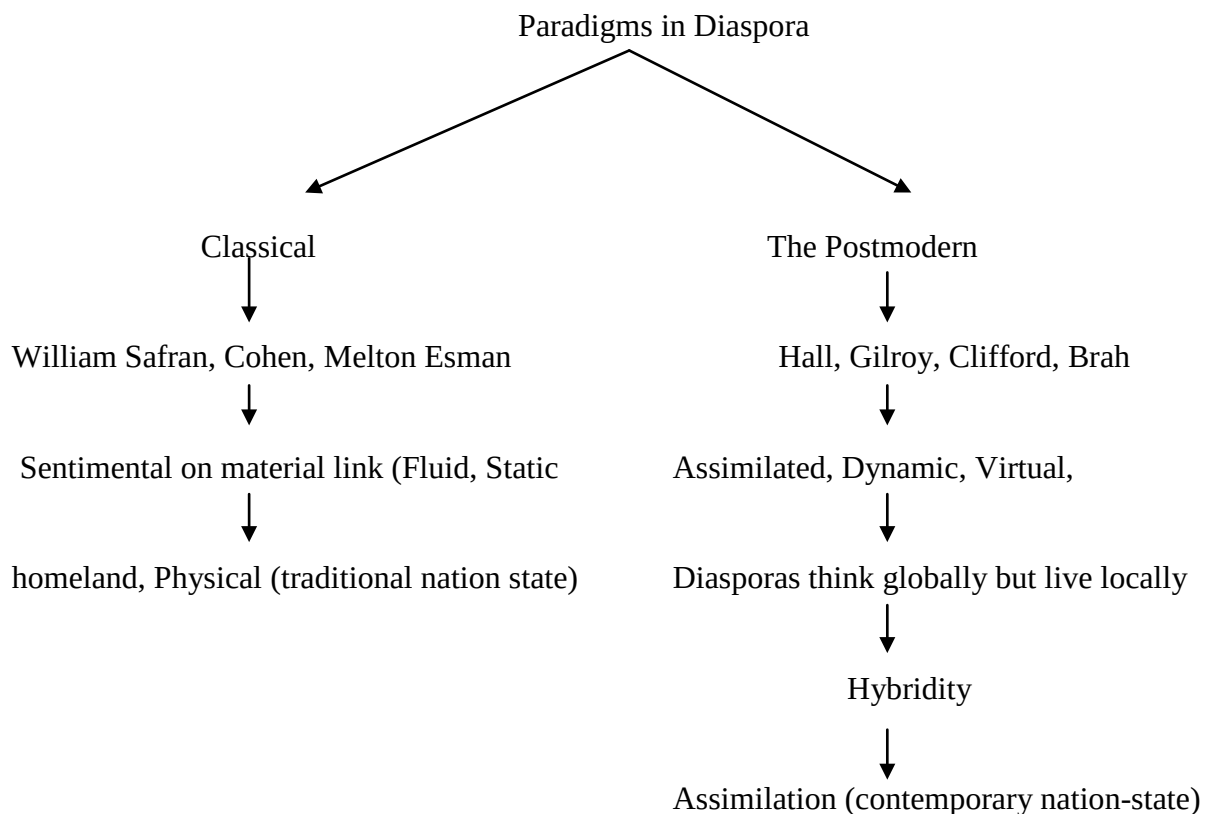


Figure1: Paradigms in Diaspora

⁵⁸Nushrat Tashmin, “Diaspora and Multiculturalism,” *World Scientific News*, 28 (2016), p. 16.

This section further examines the concept of diaspora and diasporic subjects in this era of globalization. It endeavors to show how diaspora is currently affected by globalization while examining diasporic filmmakers' cinematic discourses. It is appropriate to emphasize that diaspora and globalization are two interrelated concepts that share a lot of similarities and raise several questions that flow in the same concern. Key questions are about how identities, particularly of diasporic subjects, are affected due to both displacements and the world transformations? The concept of diaspora, hence the experience, have been greatly rethought due to what the world knows of constant changes that is affecting relationships and interactions. This section demonstrates how the term diaspora has been altered and adapted in academic studies in relation to globalization considering both of them at the cross-roads of academic research debate. Besides, it specifically seeks out to examine how globalization has affected cinematic Moroccan diasporic productions in shaping the image of identity and home on the screen.

Diaspora, as an old concept, has recently known dramatic alterations. Originally, the word was limited as it only referred to historical dispersals of specific minority groups, such as the Jewish and the Armenians. Later on, it has been extended to include other religious group minorities in Europe. After that, it came the phase when the word flourished, expanded to embody different interpretations and implications, and thus, included other segments and groups such as expatriate, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants and ethnic and racial minorities as what Robin Cohen discusses in his *Global Diaspora: an Introduction*.

Thomas Faist argues that the most definitions of diaspora can be summed up in three main characteristics and each of these can too be subdivided into older and newer diaspora. "Older notions of diaspora refer to dispersal, and this is rooted in the experience of the Jews, but also- more recently- of Palestinians. Newer notions of diaspora refer simply to any kind of dispersal."⁵⁹ Cohen talked about this providing examples of labor (Indian), trade (Chinese), cultural (The Caribbean), and imperial

⁵⁹Rainer Baubok and Thomas Faist, eds., *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), p. 12.

(British, French, Spanish and Portuguese)⁶⁰. The second characteristics have to do with diasporic relationships with their homeland. Older diaspora, as discussed by Safran, emphasized the notion of a return to an imagined homeland, newer uses of diaspora, however, “often replace return with dense and continuous linkages across borders, as in the migration-development nexus.”⁶¹ The third characteristic refers to the diasporic integration in the host society. That is to say, if older diaspora states that diasporic individuals are not fully integrated in the hostland, newer diaspora, yet, stresses “cultural hybridity in the wake of ‘dissemination.’”⁶²

In his *Diaspora at home*, Gabriel Sheffer argues that there are certain characteristics of contemporary diasporism that are similar to those that characterize diasporas that were established in earlier periods. He summarizes the most important features of historical diasporas and modern diasporas as follow: Diasporas have been formed because of voluntary or imposed migration. Decisions to join or set up diasporic entities only happen after migrants have settled in their host countries. Diasporans have been able to maintain their ethnic identities. Those identities have been significant bases for promoting solidarity within diasporic entities. As a result, they have established intricate support organizations in their host countries. That is to say, they have been engaged not only in economic activities in the host societies but also in important cultural and political exchanges with their homelands and other diasporic entities of the same national origin.⁶³

I suggest that those features do clearly intersect with diasporic filmmakers living abroad who, through their art, have been able to establish links between the homeland and the hostland regardless of the fact that their discourses are characterized by ambiguity and ambivalence. Gabriel also adds that diaspora have maintained contact with their homelands and other dispersed segments of the same nation. In some cases, discussing the side effects of estrangements, blatant hostility and discrimination have forced individuals and groups to join or establish ethno-national diaspora

⁶⁰Stéphane Dufoix, *Diasporas*, p. 31.

⁶¹Rainer Baubok and Thomas Faist, eds., *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, p. 12.

⁶²Ibid., p. 13.

⁶³Gabriel Gabi Sheffer, *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 83.

organizations.⁶⁴ Gabriel Sheffer argues that diasporas are acquiring additional new features because of social and political changing conditions. This leads to enriching diaspora traditional characters and adding to the great complexity of the diaspora phenomenon generally.⁶⁵

Thanks to globalization, the world has currently become more open and cultures are relatively in dialogue with each other. What characterizes globalization is this “expansion of worldwide interconnection” of trade, business and assimilation of cultural differences.⁶⁶ Cinema, as a medium, is a concrete example on how cultures get in contact with each other. Many countries have been concerned with disseminating their cinematic arts and thus culture, which I both consider as very interrelated and closely bound. Great efforts have been done to expand cinematic arts globally through the organization of film festivals for instance, and there are a number of well-known international festivals that most filmmakers dream of taking part in. In this age of globalization and with the speed flow of information, no one can deny global influences as Natascha Gentz and Stefan Kramer discuss in the introduction of *Globalization, Cultural Identities, and Media Representations*:

In the light of migration and the globalization of economic, political, and cultural processes, and the transnational character of media representation, no community can now effectively protect itself from coming into contact with alien influences.⁶⁷

Moroccan diasporic films’ narrative and aesthetic techniques reveal this influence of Western culture as they depict Morocco and the Moroccan culture as deeply indulged in Western lifestyle. In addition to drawing out Morocco to ‘the global’, diasporic filmmakers have also created an imaginary space where conflicts take place as in Laila

⁶⁴Gabriel Gabi Sheffer, “Is the Jewish Diaspora Unique? Reflections on the Diaspora’s Current Situation”, p. 83.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 84.

⁶⁶ Florian Metz, *Globalization. Advantages and Disadvantages* (Munich: GRIN Publishing, 2012), p. 3.

⁶⁷Natascha Gentz & Stefan Kramer, ed. *Globalization, Cultural Identities, and Media Representations* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), p. 5.

Marrakchi's movies *Marock* and *Rock the Casbah*. They both call for revisiting postcolonial Morocco that is doomed to Western waves in the age of globalization.

Undoubtedly, globalization might have serious effect on the local culture and identity. Various images and messages that cinemas construct do inevitably affect how people conceive themselves and others. Globalization shapes people's everyday life experience, "their mentalities, habits, values, preferences, choices and actions."⁶⁸ Globalization can lead to the transformation of societies changing cultural and religious practices, affecting values and even shaping new ones. Turner affirms this idea when he writes that:

The processes of globalization, including its often negative consequences, have appeared to be inevitable and all-embracing. No society, however small and remote, could escape entanglement with such global cultural, political and economic processes.⁶⁹

Interestingly, globalization, as discussed in *Rock the Casbah* and *Marock*, is not a total erasure of specificities of the local culture. It does rather create a new hybrid space that celebrates differences but also denies authenticity. The filmmaker depicts images of the Moroccan culture while shaping itself in accordance to Western products and lifestyle. In this respect, Turner argues that:

Globalization does not mean the removal or erasure of local culture. Local cultures under the conditions of globality have become as important as global culture itself. Local culture does not surrender itself unproblematically to forces from outside; rather it absorbs as it valorizes its own distinctiveness. At the turn of the twenty-first century, what is local and what is global are becoming increasingly uncertain. The near-erasure of

⁶⁸Brayn S. Turner & Habibul Haque Khondker, eds., *Globalization East and West* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2010), p. 36.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p. 1.

the distinction between the local and the global as spatial categories has given way to a disjuncture between conceptual and spatial polarities.⁷⁰

Turner further argues that “the battle between the local and global is also a struggle for or against the planetary imposition of a system of control based upon hierarchically organized homogenization and administered difference.”⁷¹ Diasporic filmmakers transmit their real life struggle of living between two opposed worlds on the screen. They portray images of Morocco where they highlight this strong impact of globalization on the culture and the people. In *Errag’d* for instance, Yasmine Kassari shows how even those people in a very remote village and in a neglected part of Morocco have not been exempted from the influence of technology, media and globalization. Kassari argues that people are able to receive and send news and information from their own small and closed spaces. The movie emphasizes how the entire world is connected and getting affected by all possible means and at all levels. When the men of the village in *Errag’d* left to Spain, the videotapes sent to the women by their husbands become their essential tools of communication. Thanks to technology, those women, in one of the most remote and isolated areas in Morocco, are connected to the world and their life is getting affected and even altered as a result of that. Technology, hence, has erased their isolation and empowers them to make themselves more visible and make their voices heard.

It is needless to say that thanks to globalization, the circulation of movies resonates positive messages and functions too. Films, significantly, facilitate ways of communication and connection. They also help out in presenting cultures and thus shrinking cultural gaps between societies, particularly the East and the West. But still, questions are raised upon possible ways to depict the uniqueness of local cultures without causing harm to them and despite global influences. Furthermore, globalization has questioned the experience of “diaspora” all together. Dislocation now is not solely responsible for adapting a hybrid lifestyle and for reshaping different

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 33.

⁷¹Alberto Moreiras, “Global Fragments: A Second Latinamericanism,” in *The Cultures of Globalization*, eds., Fredric Jameson & Masao Miyoshi (Durham North Carolina: Duke University, 1998), p. 81.

views and perspectives. This is exactly what most of the diasporic filmmakers prove through their movies as will be demonstrated in the analytical parts.

Some key elements related to diaspora and central in the discussion of this concepts are: multiculturalism, globalization and migration. These concepts allow us to make sense of diaspora as a phenomenon and to evoke the critical edge of the concept.

According to Reichardt, the term diaspora was only brought up into cultural debate when the concept of multiculturalism was fully established and begun to be disputed in the field of cultural studies. He writes: “multiculturalism refers to the recognition of the coexistence of different cultures within one nation.”⁷² Accordingly, the purpose was to achieve tolerance of cultural differences within the same nation. He emphasizes that “the main impetus of this “politics of recognition” was to end ascriptions of inferiority to, and denigration of, people of colour and people from other cultures.”⁷³ Multiculturalism in this sense was meant to bound relationships between national boundaries and more importantly to also redefine the nation as “comprising a culturally pluralist population”⁷⁴. The term diaspora is used today in cultural and social studies to allow links and connections.

Diaspora is actually considered, to a great extent, an outcome of globalization as Monika Fludernik argues:

Diaspora is not a consequence of globalization; it is itself determined by the effects of globalization. Emigrating to another country no longer allows one to make a clean break with the past; on the contrary, one’s ethnic affiliation

⁷²Ulfried Reichardt, “Diaspora Studies and the Culture of the African Diaspora the Poetry of Derek Walcott, Kamau Brathwaite and Linton Kwesi Johnson,” in *Diaspora and Multiculturalism: Common Traditions and New Developments*, ed. Monika Fludernik (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi B.V., 2003), p. 289.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 290.

⁷⁴ Karim H. Karim, “Nation and Diaspora: Rethinking Multiculturalism in a Transnational Context,” in *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*, 2(3) (2007), p. 267.

with all its attendant responsibilities re-emerges – a ghost that has followed the emigrant and catches up with him after arrival.⁷⁵

There is no doubt that thanks to globalization, people's displacement and movements have become easier, quicker and more encouraging and comfortable. Migration is not a new phenomenon but the present human world is more tightly integrated than any earlier point in history. Since many years back, people have always left their homelands looking for better living conditions either inside or outside their countries, but "what used to be purely economic reasons for migrating no longer hold in many cases. Globalization of communication technology has affected extensively the original impetus of individuals to immigrate."⁷⁶ In this era of vast technological developments and media revolution, people become more and more willing to immigrate, move to new places and indulge in new experiences. Television, Internet, radio and all other means of communication play a crucial role in sustaining the flow of migration and in pushing and encouraging people to open up on the world. Cultures are being easily exposed through various means and people's curiosity to discover, improve and explore is getting higher. This, however, has vast effects on individuals. It changes their views to themselves as well as to the world. It disturbs notions of belongings, identity, culture and home. It shortens distances and yet questions feelings of affiliations. In his *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Arjun Appadurai gives interesting images of this link between globalization and migration when he writes that:

Turkish guest workers in Germany watch Turkish films in their German flats, as Koreans in Philadelphia watch the 1988 Olympics in Soeol through

⁷⁵Monika Fludernik, eds., *Diaspora and Multiculturalism: Common Traditions and New Developments* (Rodopi B.V.: Amsterdam and New York, 2003), xxii.

⁷⁶Ramuné Ciarniené and Vilmanté Kumpikaité, eds., "The Impacts of Globalization on Migration Process," *Social Research*, 3 (2008), p. 44.

satellite feeds from Korea, and as Pakistani cabdrivers in Chicago listen to cassettes of sermons recorded in mosques in Pakistan or Iran.⁷⁷

By providing such examples, Appadurai attempts to demonstrate the extent to which globalization affects the life of deterritorialized people who meet those moving images. This, hence, according to him, creates “diasporic public spheres”⁷⁸ which are geographically dispersed beyond national boundaries. These spaces are the outcome of the interconnectedness of migration and mass media. Those migrants bring their customs, practices, traditions, expectations and cultures to the host countries. All this has played an important role in shaping the life of diasporic communities. He argues how this deeply affects the immigrants’ imagination and their relationship with nations. Media outlets have been boosted by globalization’s “imagined worlds”⁷⁹ to permit people to create new images about themselves as well as the briskly changing world.

Arjun Appadurai puts a close link between people’s migration and globalization and he further discusses some of the consequences that come out of this. He argues that more people of the world consider wider range possibilities of them or their children living in another place in the world than where they were born. One significant source of this change is mass media which creates series of imaginations as he states:

Those who wish to move, those who have moved, those who wish to return, and those who choose to stay rarely formulate their plans outside the sphere of radio and television, cassettes and videos, newsprint and telephone.⁸⁰

This clearly shows how globalization has shrunk distance between nations and has changed the world dramatically. Those movements of goods, people, and ideas have

⁷⁷ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 4.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 3.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 6.

enabled the creation of transnational spaces and diasporic cultures. The cultural theorist Appadurai has attempted to show what is new about globalization in the last two decades or so on when he wrote:

What is new is that this is a world in which both points of departure and points of arrival are in cultural flux, and thus the search for steady points of reference, as critical life choices are made can be very difficult. It is in this atmosphere that the invention of tradition (and of ethnicity, kinship, and other identity makers) can become slippery, as the search for certainties is regularly frustrated by the fluidities of transnational communication.⁸¹

Globalization has created complex interconnections across the world. People cross borders and travel across cities and nations. Media exchanges are interlinked across the globe and cultures have acquired a mobility that brings about new “civilization of clashes” and struggles between people.

In his article “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy”, Appadurai argues that “the central problem of today’s global interactions is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization.”⁸² The argument regarding homogenization caused by globalization often refers to claims about commodification or Americanization, and the two are often linked together. Yet, Appadurai asserts that these theories fail to take into consideration those various cultural elements which under globalization reach new societies that are often indigenized to the local culture. Besides, Appadurai asserts that fear of cultural invasion is not only limited to Americanization, but rather to every situation in which elements from one culture penetrate another.⁸³

Appadurai argues that “the new global cultural economy has to be understood as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order, which cannot any longer be understood in

⁸¹Ibid., p. 44.

⁸²Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy,” *Theory, Culture & Society*, 7 (1990), p. 295.

⁸³Ibid.

terms of existing center-periphery models.”⁸⁴ He proposes five dimensions of global cultural flow as a way to explore those disjunctures and they are as follow: ethnoscaples, mediascapes, technoscapes, finanscapes, and ideoscapes⁸⁵. Ethnoscaples signify the shifting landscape of moving persons such as tourists, immigrants, refugees, and exiles. By technoscapes, he means the transmission of cultures through the flow of technology, namely the internet, which brings up new cultural interactions and exchanges. It, thus, becomes a powerful tool of disseminating information and presenting cultures globally. Finanscapes, however, imply the global movement of money including trade, currency and commodity which allow freely goods exchange. Moreover, mediascapes refer to the movement of media around the globe and which get cultures closer to each other, and ultimately, ideoscapes signify how ideas are being disseminated via media platforms.⁸⁶ Accordingly, it is through those interconnected disjunctures that individuals’ perceptions of the world are reshaped.

In their study about globalization, Michael Marquardt and Nancy O. Berger have raised a significant question about either globalization is a force for evil or good. They argue that it is a highly controversial issue leading to different opinions. Some view globalization as an inevitable and irreversible process that is beneficial- a fundamental key to the world’s economic growth. Others, however, view it with fear and resentment believing that it increases inequality between nations, and threatens employment and living standards. Proponents of globalization, on the other hand, believe that globalization has made the world a better place, a world that will lead to political freedom, economic growth and advancement.⁸⁷ They add that “a globalized world is one in which there is a free movement of ideas, people, values, and systems across the globe. Globalization has been a prime force for spreading knowledge and technology.”⁸⁸

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 296.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 297.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷Michael Marquardt & Nancy O. Berger, “The Future: Globalization and New Roles for HRD,” in *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 5:3 (2003), p. 285.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 285.

Marquardt and O. Berger talked about four foremost forces which quickly brought us to this global age: technology, travel, trade, and television. These four Ts have laid to a more collective experience for people everywhere:

More and more of us share common tastes in foods (hamburger, pizza, tacos), fashion (denim jeans), and fun (Disney, rock, music, television). Nearly 2 billion passengers fly the world's airways each year and over 1 billion of us speak the global language- "broken English". People are watching the same movies, reading the same magazines, and dancing the same dances from Boston to Bangkok to Buenos Aires.⁸⁹

It is doubtless how globalization is a pervasive tendency affecting the lives of people everywhere on a daily basis. It is not only about the transfer of goods, but also of culture. It is a rapid process of affecting and being affected. Information we are given through different means of media, such as movies, and the opinions of others in society affect who we are as individuals and our perceptions of the world. Globalization, then, is no longer understood as either global or local; it is rather a combination of both in what Roland Robertson defines as *glocalization*⁹⁰. This leads to more questions about what kind of identities all this shapes and what distinguishes diasporic identities having this concept of *glocalization* in mind.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰ See Ronald Robertson, "Globalization or Glocalization," in *The Journal of International Communication*, 18:2 (2012), pp. 191-208.

3. Diaspora and the Question of Identity

The question of identity lies at the heart of many debates. It is, from a cultural perspective, one of the issues that raise varied questions allowing many interpretations and undertakings. It is deemed as a complex notion that cannot be confined to one single study, therefore, it has been examined from different undertakings and dimensions and taking into account several elements. Since the notion of identity is at the heart of this research, it is mandatory to examine how this concept has been defined and redefined by scholars allowing a better understanding of its representation in cinema. Most importantly, it is an endeavor to discuss what happens to identities within the framework of diaspora to understand later on the way Moroccan diasporic filmmakers portray identity on the screen.

In his book *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, Amine Maalouf argues that identity is made up of a number of allegiances, influenced by the surrounding environment, circumstances and people around. In this sense, identity is not fixed and unchangeable. Maalouf argues that a person does not merely grow up aware of his identity, but he acquires it step by step.⁹¹ That is to say, identity is an outcome of a sequence of transformations, made up by a set of circumstances, and built up because of the changes happening to the person's surrounding environment. This definition, therefore, is a call for transcending fixed and static representations of cultural identity. In his "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", Stuart Hall writes:

Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. This view problematizes the

⁹¹Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, trans. Barbara Bray, p. 25.

very authority and authenticity to which the term, 'cultural identity', lays claim.⁹²

Identity, in this regard, is a floating signifier that must always be in a process of change and identification which shows the continuity in our identities' formation. It is a complex structure that cannot be defined in simplistic terms. It does rather raise more questions, such as whether a person is born with some innate features of their cultural identity or they are required and adopted throughout time. It also leads us to ask whether a cultural identity is shared or not? Supposing it is shared, what would make a person's cultural identity different from other masses since, as we know, everyone has their own identity that makes them different from others? Amine Maalouf provides some answers to those frequently raised issues related to identity asserting that:

Identity isn't given once and for all: it is built up and changes throughout a person's lifetime [...] Not many of the elements that go to make up our identity are already in us at birth. A few physical characteristics of course — sex, color and so on. And even at this point not everything is innate. Although, obviously, social environment doesn't determine sex, it does determine its significance. To be born a girl is not the same in Kabul as it is in Oslo; the condition of being a woman, like every other factor in a person's identity, is experienced differently in the two places.⁹³

Maalouf goes further to give examples of color claiming that to be born black is a different matter depending on the person's location; in New York is totally different from Nigeria, as he puts it: "For an infant who first sees the light of day in Nigeria, the operative factor as regards his identity is not whether he is black rather than white, but whether he is Yoruba, say, rather than Hausa."⁹⁴ Maalouf, therefore, assumes that

⁹² Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, eds. *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* reprinted in *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 222.

⁹³ Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, p. 23.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

ethnic origin, race, sex, the environment and its people and location, all of them, have a determining impact on identity. Maalouf considers the crucible of our identity arguing that:

What determines a person's affiliation to a given group is essentially the influence of others: the influence of those about him — relatives, fellow-countrymen, co-religionists — who try to make him one of them; together with the influence of those on the other side, who do their best to exclude him. Each one of us has to make his way while choosing between the paths that are urged upon him and those that are forbidden or strewn with obstacles. He is not himself from the outset; nor does he just “grow aware” of what he is; he *becomes* what he is. He doesn't merely “grow aware” of his identity; he acquires it step by step.⁹⁵

Accordingly, the influence of environment, circumstances and people on individuals' identities formation is more clearly noticeable and inevitable in the “diaspora space”. Immigrants' life is more associated with movements and ongoing sequences of change throughout their life. The real challenge, then, is not only due to people's displacement but rather to what the world knows of transformations caused mainly by technological advancements. These are two main factors that tremendously affect the formation of diasporic identities in specific and the process of alteration they undergo.

The dilemma of identity, hence, arises when one is not sure where to exactly belong and where to place oneself among others, especially for the second generation immigrants who are exposed to different cultures at home and outside it. As a notion to assert, the main movie characters by diasporic filmmakers, for instance, reveal and confirm this argument. Most of them are represented as lost and torn between two different cultures as they are almost always in process of searching for an outlet where to find relief, real affiliation, and belonging.

Through this act of movement to a new location, immigrants are inevitably experiencing a different life, but they are still bringing along with them a set of

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 25.

cultural traits including language, religious, and cultural beliefs and practices. These premises, consequently, stand for a background upon which they start negotiating a new identity. By the same token, Hamid Naficy emphasises this continuity of diasporic identity formation when he claims that “people in diaspora have an identity in their homeland *before* their departure, and their diasporic identity is constructed in resonance with this prior identity.”⁹⁶ This launches debate to the concept of “hybridity” that has been examined by many scholars, among which are Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall and Robert Young.

In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha argues how hybridity deeply affects the subject of formerly colonized societies and most noticeably when these subjects migrate towards the metropolitan centre. A new kind of challenge emerges when migrants settle into the new diaspora. Bhabha states:

The migrant culture of the ‘in-between’, the minority position, dramatizes the activity of culture’s appropriation beyond the assimilationist’s dream, or the racist’s nightmare [...] and towards an encounter with the ambivalent process of splitting and hybridity that marks the identification with culture’s difference.⁹⁷

The process of hybridization leads to embracing differences and to creating new spaces for migrants within the framework of cultural differences or “the location of cultures” as Bhabha describes it. It is a call for recognizing and celebrating differences and complexities of cultures within a multicultural context. Diasporic subjects find themselves negotiating the memory of the old identity and the new one. Bhabha re-examines the question of identity in his *The Location of Culture* and he considers the dislocation as a productive condition. The inbetweeness space that migrants occupy is the place to construct and reconstruct the identity of the individual with all its

⁹⁶Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, p. 14. (Italics is mine).

⁹⁷Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 321.

ambiguities. For Bhabha, identity goes through a process of negotiation and of articulation.

According to Bhabha, this notion of *hybridity* is challenging since its development requires negotiations between traditional binary oppositions (colonizer/colonized, European/non-European, white/black, center/periphery...), and this happens within what Bhabha calls the interstitial space. As he explains in the introduction of *The Location of Culture*, this process of negotiations is equally disrupted and challenged to form new identities in an interstitial space. Bhabha writes:

It is in the emergence of the interstices--the overlap and displacement of domains of difference--that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated. How are subjects formed 'in-between', or in excess of, the sum of the 'parts' of difference (usually intoned as race/class/gender, etc.)? How do strategies of representation or empowerment come to be formulated in the competing claims of communities where, despite shared histories of deprivation and discrimination, the exchange of values, meanings and priorities may not always be collaborative and dialogical, but may be profoundly antagonistic, conflictual and even incommensurable?⁹⁸

As a framework to understand issues of identities, it is of paramount importance to make reference once again to Homi Bhabha's concept of *third space*:

All forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity [...] The importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the "third space" which enable other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom. [...] The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different,

⁹⁸Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 2.

something new and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation.⁹⁹

In fact, the second-generation diasporas find themselves occupying a ‘third space’, which is a space of negotiating two contrasting cultures to reach congeniality. As Bhabha theorizes, it is a space that provides possibilities of the combination of cultures and seeks to reconcile differences and celebrate hybridity to create something new, and where cultural identity can be re-imagined, as he writes:

A transparent norm is constituted, a norm given by the host society or dominant culture, which says, “These other cultures are fine, but we must be able to locate them within our own grid.” This is what I mean by a creation of cultural diversity and a containment of cultural difference.¹⁰⁰

As a consequence, the dominant culture seeks out to control other cultures on its own terms. Accordingly, Bhabha theorizes a third space to disturb this hegemonic relationship. It is a space of resistance and negotiations of contradictory differences where migrants reconfigure their identities in accordance with. It is a “productive space of the construction of culture as difference, in the spirit of alterity or otherness”¹⁰¹. I assume that this negotiation of identity within a set of differences and contradictions is very likely to produce conflicts and clashes and thus affects identities formations.

It has become clear that identity is a complex notion to pinpoint, precisely because it is so fluid under the effect of change and globalization. A change in environment, interests, or experience, for example, will result in changes in identity. As the collective identity alters, so do the individual identities. According to Philip M. Kayal:

⁹⁹ Homi Bhabha, “The third space: An interview with Homi Bhabha,” in *Identity, community, culture, difference*, ed. J. Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), p. 211.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 208.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 209.

Identities formation then, is not a singular process with a definitive end point but an evolving social-psychological experience of self-discovery that changes with events, issues and socio-political circumstances surrounding a person.

In the light of “diaspora”, it goes without saying that the notion of identity is even more complex. A lot of debates have been raised upon what makes a person diasporic and what epitomizes diasporic identities. Thinking about the changes identity undergoes, diaspora seems to be a typical example of the claims previously discussed. Thus, considering diaspora particularly with regards to the formation of a group identity provides the ground for re-examining the meaning and understanding of the term. Since diaspora is related to collectively shared experiences of a diasporic community, it becomes inevitably necessary to deal with the question of belonging and identity raising several questions about diasporic identity and what and how makes it so.

Diaspora theorists have suggestions that diaspora has a changing status as a “construction” and a “process”. In this context, Stuart Hall proposes that identities are social constructions stating that:

Identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language, and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not ‘who we are’ or ‘where we came from’, so much as what we become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we represent ourselves.¹⁰²

Diaspora, accordingly, embodies processes of being and becoming. It is a journey taken by diasporic individuals influencing their networks of affiliations and revisiting their sense of belongings. Diasporic identities are always in process as they undergo constant transformations. Indeed, considering diaspora in relation to the question of

¹⁰²Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay (eds.) *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London: Sage of Publications, 1996), p. 4.

identity requires an acknowledgment of specific lived experiences of people in diaspora which go beyond the generalisation of theory. For instance, speaking about Indian diasporic identity is not like Chinese or Maghrebians. Each group has its own historical experience, culture, and politics that affect it in a way or another. The experience of the Maghrebians in France is different from the experience of Palestinians in the United States and so on. Nevertheless, they share common points of being displaced and deterritorialized, besides having or keeping a glorified image of the homeland. This creates commonalities among all diasporic communities as Hall clarifies:

Diasporic identities are defined by the recognition of necessary heterogeneity and diversity. They are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew along itineraries of migrating, but also re-creating the endless desire to return to 'lost origins'.¹⁰³

In this regard, what define these diverse groups of diaspora is their common experiences of living through cultural differences in Stuart Hall's words. It is that set of contradictions that diaspora lived/lives which shapes their identities as they are torn between two different cultures, using two different languages, living the present life and keeping memories of the homeland.

Constructing one's identity in a foreign land is quite difficult and challenging, which makes the person's identity vulnerable and insecure. The diasporic person is lost between building his own identity and his fear of losing it. This is because diaspora deals with a variety of cultures, languages, histories, memories, values and traditions to form new communities that are referred to as hybrid communities known as diaspora society. They, thus, bring up to the fore issues of identity constructions in cultural differences. It is as Robin Cohen proposes:

¹⁰³Stuart Hall, "Introduction: Who Needs Identity?," in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, eds., S. Hall & P. Du Gay (London: Sage, 1996), p. 17.

Diaspora are positioned somewhere between nation-states and “travelling cultures” in that they involve dwelling in a nation-state physical sense, but travelling in an astral or spiritual sense that falls outside that nation state’s space/ time zone.¹⁰⁴

Accordingly, it is useful to emphasize that what forms diasporic identities is their negotiations of differences between their homeland and the adopted home. It might, however, still remain relative on how diasporic people identify more with as it has been argued by Amin Maalouf in his book *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*. He reflects upon the need to understand how diasporic people think and view themselves; which reveals the dilemma of their hybrid identity in Homi Bhabha’s words. Based on his own personal experience, Maalouf questions his belonging and affiliation as a diaspora person when he states:

Since I left Lebanon in 1976 to live in France, many people asked me, with the best intentions in the world, whether I felt “more French” or “more Lebanese”? I always give the same answer: “both” I say that not in the interests of fairness or balance, but because any answer would be a lie [...]What makes me myself rather than anyone else is the very fact that I’m poised between two countries, two or three languages and several cultural traditions. It is precisely this that defines my identity.¹⁰⁵

Maalouf, later on, concluded that he cannot be half French and half Lebanese. For him, identity cannot be divided into halves or thirds but rather made up of many components in a mixture, claiming that complexity is what characterizes each individual identity and makes it unique. He even argues that each individual without exception possesses a composite identity. The person needs only to ask himself a few

¹⁰⁴Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, p. 135.

¹⁰⁵Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, p. 1.

questions to uncover forgotten divergences and unsuspected ramifications, and to see that he is complex, unique and irreplaceable.¹⁰⁶

People in Diaspora are actually more aware of the complexity of their identity, for that they express themselves differently in various kinds of work arts, such as filmmaking. Their work usually reflects their split characters, ambivalence and hybrid life. Indeed, it is their identity which “prevents them from being identical to anybody else.”¹⁰⁷ For that same reason, enormous number of studies has been taking place recently on different diaspora works, as Khachig Tololyan asserts:

The stateless power of diasporas lies in their heightened awareness of both the perils and rewards of multiple belonging, and in their sometimes exemplary grappling with the paradoxes of such belonging, which is increasingly the condition that non-diaspora nationals also face in the traditional era.¹⁰⁸

Diasporas are empowered because of their awareness of their own multiple belonging and all the paradoxes they are living. Diaspora consciousness is a particular kind of awareness said to be generated among contemporary transnational communities. It is precisely described as having a paradoxical nature. According to James Clifford, diaspora consciousness is constituted both negatively and positively. It is constituted negatively by experience of discrimination and exclusion.¹⁰⁹ In this sense, diasporic consciousness provokes an amalgam of different feelings of loss, nostalgia, alienation, isolation, and shock. Those feelings, accordingly, are what a diasporic might face in the hostland being regarded as the ‘other’.

Although Clifford discusses this negative side of diasporic consciousness, he still argues that it has another positive side. As he puts it, “diaspora consciousness makes

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁰⁸Khachig Tololyan, “Rethinking Diaspora (s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment”, pp. 7-8.

¹⁰⁹James Clifford, “Diasporas” in *Cultural Anthropology*, p. 311.

the best of a bad situation”¹¹⁰. He explains how such negative experience of racial and economic marginalization can lead to new coalitions providing the example of Maghrebi diasporic consciousness uniting Algerians, Moroccans, and Tunisians living in France, where a common history of colonial and neo-colonial exploitation contribute to new solidarities.¹¹¹ As far as the positive side of diasporic consciousness is concerned, Clifford suggests that it is produced through identification with world historical, cultural and political forces.¹¹² Simply put, Clifford proposes that “diaspora consciousness lives loss and hope as a defining tension”¹¹³ mixing both what is negative and positive, as he writes:

A diasporic identity implies a form of group consciousness constituted historically through expressive culture, politics, thought and tradition, in which experiential and representational resources are mobilized in varied measures, from the imaginaries of both the old and the new worlds.¹¹⁴

Accordingly, diasporic filmic narratives are a result of this amalgam of two different lifestyles. It is this combination of diverse and opposing elements which makes their discursive patterns provocative and worth scrutinizing as well. Their hybrid cinematic discourses are an outcome of their journeys through the homeland to the host-land.

It is interesting to note that diasporic filmmakers are basically bearers of their own native cultures. That is to say, when they travel, they take all their cultural norms and traditions with them. They carry images, sounds, beliefs and a whole life perspective. As they get in touch with the other Western culture, they free rein to all their socio-cultural, economic and religious background to end up producing intricate discourses as an outcome of this lived and experienced blended process.

I argue that diaspora and the process of migration empower diasporic filmmakers to approach issues related to identity and home differently as they are allowed to

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 312.

¹¹² Ibid., pp. 311- 312.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 312.

¹¹⁴ Paul Tiyambe Zelza, “The Challenges of Studying the African Diasporas”, p. 7.

scrutinize issues from a unique perspective, for it is in diaspora where different cultures, values and interests intersect. Diasporic filmmakers redefine traditional understandings of national identity, home, and culture. They challenge conceptions that celebrate discourses of authenticity and assumptions that claim purity, and belonging to one specific land and with a solely affiliation. Diasporic Moroccan filmmakers, as a case study, challenge what it is meant to be Moroccan as their films do basically echo their experience of displacement and diasporic life within a heterogeneous space where entirely different cultures and ways of life intermingle.

4. Revisiting Home in the Light of Diaspora

The notion of diaspora calls upon examining several relevant concepts for a better understanding of diasporic experiences. Undoubtedly, home is predominant in our understanding of diaspora because it is from this concept of home that we draw our identities. This section discusses the varied aspects of “home” in diaspora and the relationship of diasporans with the homeland and the hostland. It is an attempt to foreground a theoretical background that would help out in analyzing diasporic cinematic representations of home and dismantle their discourses.

The most intriguing questions revolve around diaspora have to do with the sense of belonging and affiliation. This basically involves: what constitute “home” for the diaspora? Is “home” a place where a diasporic person was born or where one’s parents or ancestors were born and raised? Does it refer to one’s country of birth or residence or is it about the region a person came from? Is it a physical space or a geographical space synonymous with the boundaries of the nation-state? Or is it an imaginary, symbolic space shaped by personal experiences, relationships and practices within the diaspora sphere? Do people in diaspora have one home they attribute to, two homes (based on birth and residency) or multiple homes imbued with different meanings? Equally important, what are the effects on diaspora local and transnational engagement of identifications with these real and imagined spaces? In the traditional understanding of diaspora, the notion of “home” has been always equated with the diaspora’s country of birth or origin. However, the concept of the homeland requires going beyond such already established meanings and views which have been changing over time. This, consequently, has stirred so much debate over the exact meaning of home regarding diaspora.

Home is a complex notion to define, as Amine Maalouf discusses that many left their native land, and many, though they have not left it, can no longer recognize it and have a sense of belonging to. But still, when one leaves the country, his feelings are never simple. When one goes away, it is because there are things that have been rejected like repression, insecurity, poverty and lack of opportunity. Yet, the person feels guilty and angry with himself for abandoning the loved ones, the place he grew

up at and the countless good memories.¹¹⁵ Those feelings of anger and guilt get tense when life in the diaspora does not meet people's expectations and aspirations.

Significantly, the diasporic feels guilty because he has left his home country in the first place. This probably explains why some people in diaspora sticks to keeping almost the same lifestyle they used to have in their country of origin. They keep companions in their exile; such as language, music, religion, customs, and values. They also celebrate special occasions; those connected with traditions and customs. Similarly, one's feelings towards one's country of adoption are also ambiguous in reference to Maalouf. He explains that a person goes there because he hopes for a better life "but this expectation is tinged with apprehension about the unknown."¹¹⁶ The person is afraid of being rejected, marginalized or humiliated. Therefore, they start imitating their hosts, and sometimes they succeed in doing so, but more often they fail. In this regard, Maalouf says:

They haven't got the right accent, the right shade of skin, the right first name, the right family name or the proper papers, so they are soon found out. A lot of them know it is no use even trying, and out of pride or baravado make themselves out to be more different than they really are. And needless to say some go even further, and their frustration turns into violent contestation.¹¹⁷

Diaspora's perceptions of the homeland and "the adopted home" are so complex, but still their assumptions to "home" may differ and it is due to various reasons (relationship with family, interaction with the homeland, problems, interests...). The homeland relationship may differ from one segment in the diaspora to another. For some in the diaspora, the homeland is portrayed "as a sacred place filled with

¹¹⁵Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, trans. Barbara Bray, p. 26.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 39.

memories of past glory and bathed in visions of nobility and renaissance”¹¹⁸, while for others:

Their identities refer to both homeland and hostland and the relationship between these identities is not necessarily hierarchical. The quest for original identity needs not to be measured by their attachment to the homeland or the will to return.¹¹⁹

I assume that these two different views to the homeland strongly relate to different generations in the diaspora. Diasporic filmmakers have portrayed this divisions and the diversity of homes conceptions according to different generations, such is the case of Lagzouli’s *Tenja* and Ferroukhi’s *Le Grand Voyage*. The two movies discuss the first and the second diaspora generations’ feelings towards the homeland and highlight those differences in their storyline.

Scholars such as William Safran put so much importance for diasporic communities of maintaining strong links and ongoing relationships with their homeland. Safran argues that a key feature of diaspora is “a strong attachment to and desire for literal return to a well-preserved homeland.”¹²⁰ Based on the Jewish experience, discussions claim that members of diaspora are dispersed from an original “center” and retain collective memory about the original homeland. Their ancestral home is idealized and they believe that they are not fully accepted in the host societies, and thus dislocated, separated and viewed as a periphery connected and belonging to one center namely the homeland. Safran’s argument that diasporas have continuous cultural connection to a single source and always having a desire to return have been challenged by the argument that many aspects of the Jewish experience itself does not qualify for this category.

Many studies about diaspora challenge this static view regarding the homeland and the connection between people and place. James Clifford argues that the definition

¹¹⁸ André Levy and Alex Weingrod, eds., *Homelands and Diasporas: Holy Lands and Other Places* (California: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 5.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 105.

¹²⁰ William Safran, “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return”, pp. 7-8.

of homeland orientation should not be taken as a universal feature of diaspora because not all the diasporas fall under this definition. He says that South Asian diaspora, for instance, is not so much oriented to roots in a specific place and desire for return as an ability to recreate a culture in diverse locations falls outside the strict definition.¹²¹ In a similar vein, Kim Butler questions whether it is necessary for a diasporan population to attempt or wish to return to its ancestral home. She also argues against those diasporan scholars who argue that a desire to return is a defining characteristic of diaspora. For her, the range of dynamic relationships between diasporas and homelands is very large and encompasses positions concerning a possible or actual return. Thus, “it is the existence of the *issue* of return, and the related sense of connection to the homeland, that is intrinsic to the diasporan experience, rather than a specific orientation toward physical return”.¹²² Surveys and polls have shown that upon their arrival to the host countries, very few migrants are emotionally or cognitively in a position to make a firm decision whether or not they plan to live away from their homelands permanently and whether or not they wish to maintain their connections with the homeland.¹²³

Questions of ‘where do I belong?’ and ‘would I still feel home?’ are central to the diaspora experience; this especially happens when a person leaves his country of origin for a long time. When the person decides to return, he finds everything changed and then starts considering himself as a ‘stranger’ and starts feeling a kind of loss of home at home. He is actually doubled-estranged by himself and by the people of their home-country. He, thus, remains a complete stranger. Safran has talked about members who do not go “home”. He states:

Some diasporas persist- and their members do not go “home”- because there is no home to return; because, although a homeland may exist, it is not a welcoming place with which they can identify politically, ideologically or

¹²¹James Clifford, “Diasporas” in *Cultural Anthropology*, p. 306.

¹²²Kim D. Butler, “Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse,” in *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, 10:2 (2001), p. 205.

¹²³Gabriel Sheffer, *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad*, p. 77.

socially; or because it would be too inconvenient and disruptive, if not traumatic to leave the diaspora.¹²⁴

Safran speaks about alterations which the homelands undergo. As a matter of fact, with the passage of time, both the homeland and the hostland are likely to undergo changes. These changes affect senses of 'home' and belonging which might have important consequences over the question of return. New homes and new senses of belongings are always likely to establish. In that regard, there is "no detour and or return"¹²⁵. Roza Tsagarousianou, too, discusses transformations linked to home mainly due to globalization. She argues that the place called homeland is very possible to transform beyond recognition, and that diasporas themselves are deeply affected by their position at the centre of contemporary globalization flows.¹²⁶

The notion of "home" might be much more complicated when the person experiences a loss of home at home as Wendy Walters discusses in his book *At Home in Diaspora*. In this book, she talks about her experience as a black American woman living in America which is supposedly to be her 'home', but she is always reminded that she is an African. In the introduction of her book, she makes an interesting reference to Patricia Hill Collins, a black feminist, who writes of her own childhood:

I now see that I was searching for a location where I 'belonged,' a safe intellectual and political space that I could call 'home.' But how could I presume to find a home in a system that at best was predicted upon my alleged inferiority and, at worst, was dedicated to my removal? More important, why would I even want to?¹²⁷

¹²⁴William Safran, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return," p. 91.

¹²⁵Ibid.

¹²⁶Roza Tsagarousianou, "Rethinking the Concept of Diaspora: Mobility, Connectivity and Communication in a Globalized World," in *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 1:1 (2004), pp. 56-57.

¹²⁷Wendy W. Walters. *At Home in Diaspora* (USA: University of Minnesota, 2005), p. xviii.

Indeed, it is a real dilemma when a person cannot have a sense of belonging and affiliation to a homeland. The case is even worse with people in the diaspora can neither identify themselves with the country of origin or birth nor with the hostland. This leads us to question whether we can really attribute to a single home or to homes. In this respect, Walters argues that “the notion of diaspora can represent multiple, plurilocal, constructed location of home, thus avoiding ideas of fixity, boundedness and nostalgic exclusivity traditionally implies by the word ‘home’.”¹²⁸

In this view, home in diaspora is seen as complex and multifaceted characterizing plurality of ‘homes’ and plurality of belongings. We cannot talk about one singular ‘home’ in diaspora; what mainly characterizes diaspora is the multiplicity of ‘homes’ and the ‘multiple belongings’. In his “The concept of Home in Diaspora”, P. Prayer Elno Raj declares that:

Diasporic subjects are to form their familiar space to make themselves feel at home and create a sense of belonging at where they are –home away from home. It is natural to experience a loss of home at home which embarks upon a search for a location where the diasporic self could belong, a secure socio-political, cultural and intellectual space one could name as home.¹²⁹

In this light, home is a constructed space for diasporas, which is a consequence of long periods of search. Yet, it is never easy for them to enjoy a real affiliation, like what P. Prayer Elno Raj writes: “the varied and complex notion experiences of the diasporic self undergo feeling of inclusion and exclusion.”¹³⁰ In this same regard, Roza Tsagarousianou states that:

The notion of home therefore is much more complex than approaches to diasporas premised on the power of nostalgia would want us believe. It is

¹²⁸Ibid., p. xvi.

¹²⁹P. Prayer Elmo Raj, “The Concept of Home in Diaspora,” in *An International Literary Journal*, 4:2 (2014), p. 88.

¹³⁰Ibid.

intrinsically linked with the way in which the process of inclusion or exclusions separates and is subjectively experienced under given circumstances. It is related to the complex political and personal struggles over the social regulation of belonging.”¹³¹

Thus, home, based on the given quote, is not limited within the geographical space. It is undefined by walls and borders as James Clifford shows in his article “Diasporas”. He argues that the idea of a bounded territory as being necessary to the diasporic experience is not always true, stating that:

Borderlands are distinct in that they presuppose a territory defined by a geopolitical line [...] Diaspora also connects multiple communities for a dispersed population. Systematic border crossings may be part of this interconnection, multi-locale diaspora cultures are not necessarily defined by a specific geopolitical boundary.¹³²

Clifford supports this statement by citing the ability of modern technology to create connection with the lost homeland that transcends traditional boundaries and methods of interaction.¹³³ Significantly, Avtar Brah, too, makes this link to home as rising above boundaries when she writes:

Where is home? On the one hand, ‘home’ is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of ‘origin’. On the other hand, home is also a lived experience of a locality. Its sounds and smells, its heat and dust, balmy summer evenings, or the excitement of the first snowfall, shivering winter evenings, sombre grey skies in the middle of the day [...] all this, as mediated by the historically

¹³¹Roza Tsagarousianou, “Rethinking the Concept of Diaspora: Mobility, Connectivity and Communication in a Globalized World”, p. 52.

¹³²James Clifford, “Diasporas” in *Cultural Anthropology*, p. 304.

¹³³ Ibid.

specific everyday of social relations. In other words, the varying experiences of pains and pleasures, the terrors and contentments, or the highs and humdrum of everyday lived culture that marks how, for example, a cold winter night might be differently experienced sitting by a crackling fireside in a mansion compared with standing huddled around a makeshift fire on the streets of nineteenth-century England.¹³⁴

I assume this is a more romanticized definition of home that shows it is these many ways of imagining “home” as well as attachments to them that influence the distinctive ways in which diasporans engage with spaces they now occupy and where they migrated from. The ‘here’ and ‘there’ are intertwined in the diaspora. ‘Home’ can be ‘the adopted home’ and vice versa; they are not necessarily fixed geographical spaces. As some diasporans launch long journeys searching for home; others have a home in their memories. A still different idea of “home” is tied to the locality of origin and the places where they resided during the formative period of childhood and youth. Some diasporans evoke multiple notions of home. For others, “home” can be a transnational space linking several different geographical contexts.

Brah suggests that this desire of going back home does not always refer to a physical return. Home is a set of lived experiences that the person takes with them and that ultimately shape their diasporic identity. The *concept* of diaspora places the discourse of ‘home’ and ‘dispersion’ in creative tension, “inscribing a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing discourses of fixed origins.”¹³⁵

Brah explains that this “homing” desire or narrative is not necessarily the same as wanting to return to a physical homeland. Instead, it is more of an understanding that regardless of where the persons relocate, their conception of home is always with them. It means it will remain a central part of their identities and that they will always embody some obligation and responsibility to their home. In fact, some persons in the diaspora feel a need to a physically return to the homeland, but it is still argued that the

¹³⁴Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora Contesting Identities* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 188-189.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 189.

“diasporic feeling” is that one never leaves the homeland regardless of their place of residence.¹³⁶

Brah, interestingly, raises a controversial question: “when does a location become home?”¹³⁷ Feeling at home, for Brah, does not necessarily have to do with the original land. She gives an example by a Black British young woman of Jamaican parentage who might feel more at home in London than in Kingston, Jamaica. She states that she, however, “might insist upon defining herself as Jamaican and/or Caribbean as a way of affirming an identity which she perceives is being denigrated when racism represents black people as being outside ‘Britishness’”¹³⁸.

In the diaspora, home notion differs from one generation to another. This idea is frequently highlighted in diasporic films and it is even deemed as the core subject to issues related to diaspora. Those differences of diaspora groups which create heterogeneous discourses, a fact that is also revealed in diasporic movies, such is the case of movies under study like Lakhmari’s *Casanegra*, and Kassari’s *L’Enfant Endormi*. Home can be related to both; a geographical space and an imagined one like in Marrakchi’s *Marock*. Legzouli’s *Ten’ja* and Ferroukhi’s *Le Grand Voyage*, yet, discuss different views and definitions of home in an association with the first and the second diaspora generations. Avtar Brah also emphasizes those differences when she argues that:

The relationship of the first generation to the place of migration is different from that of subsequent generations, mediated as it is by memories of what was recently left behind, and by the experiences of disruption and displacement as one tries to reorientate, to form new social networks, and learns to negotiate new economic, political and cultural realities.¹³⁹

To conclude, it is necessary to state that the notion of home becomes more vexing when it is associated to diaspora. The concept of home is considered polemic

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷Ibid., p. 190.

¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹Ibid.

due to the constant transformations that happens to the space (homeland) and to the individuals; diasporas and inhabitants of the homeland as well. Different intricate and contrasting feelings of alienation, affiliation, marginalization, estrangements, empowerment and disempowerment determine the way home is considered and perceived by diasporic communities. This evidently influences the image diasporic filmmakers portray as well as issues they take up. In this regard, the following section will discuss how those journeys back and forth home along with various acts of crossing borders affect diasporic individuals' identities' formations and sense of belonging.

5. Journeying, Border Crossing and Memory

As diasporic individuals share a lot of characteristics, they also almost go through the same paths of journeying and crossing borders. They are increasingly mobile through different cultures, a fact that affects their vision to the world and their views to themselves as well. This is reflected in a set of shared motifs that has been detected across different diasporic works. These include journeying, border crossing, and memory. It is crucial to mention again that diasporic identities and communities are not fixed, rigid, or homogeneous, but are instead fluid, always changing and heterogeneous. In an increasingly transnational and multicultural world, diasporic cultural identities are shaped through a constant process of mobility and displacements.

These hybrid heterogeneous cultural identities are characterized by multiple crossings of borders. James Clifford calls it “traveling cultures” and suggests approaching cultures as the cultures in motion and bringing differences. They are by no means looked at as cultures of dwellings and fixed places because culture is not simply bound to one fixed location. Representations of culture should transcend fixity and should be dealt with as cultures of mobility and movements. Clifford suggests that cultures travel, migrate and bring differences into contact to produce new cultural formations based on exchange, interconnection and intermingling- “an intermingling that is sometimes creatively reciprocal, sometimes oppressively brutal, and often a complex mixture of the two.”¹⁴⁰

Accordingly, although the world is connected, it does not mean it is homogeneous. Cultures rather converge in what Pratt calls a “contact zone”. She defines it as “spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery or their aftermaths as they are lived out in the world today.”¹⁴¹ It is useful to recall that no

¹⁴⁰ James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1997, p. 46.

¹⁴¹ Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” in *Profession* (1991), p. 34.

culture is authentic and all cultures are hybrid, in Bhabha's words, to create what Bhabha calls "the third space".

In her "Crossing Borders and Transgressing Boundaries: Metaphors for Negotiating Multiple Identities", Katherine Pratt Ewing discusses the idea of borders as a popular metaphor for thinking about multiple identities, particularly for scholars who view culture as a process of negotiating differences of all kinds. Borders are deemed as a salient point where a flow of people, ideas, and goods take place.¹⁴² They are a meeting zone that either celebrates harmony and congeniality or causes conflicts. Diasporic individuals, however, keep negotiating their own identities within those set of differences.

Journey and diaspora are strongly interconnected, but still not all journeys can be referred to as diaspora. Brah explains how diasporas are clearly not the same as casual travel nor do they normatively refer to contemporary sojourns. She writes that: "paradoxically, diasporic journeys are essentially about settling down, about putting roots 'elsewhere'".¹⁴³ Diaspora is different from travel (though it works through travel practices), but it is not temporary. It involves dwelling, maintaining communities, having collective homes away from home (and in this, it is different from exile, with its frequently individualist focus).¹⁴⁴ Avtar Brah adds that:

All diasporic journeys [...] are embarked upon, lived, and re-lived through multiple modalities: modalities, for example, of gender, 'race', class, religion, language and generation. As such, all diasporas are differentiated, heterogeneous, contested spaces, even as they are implicated in the construction of a common 'we'.¹⁴⁵

Diasporas, in this sense, take multiple journeys of transformations. They actually take journeys which start with border crossing to experiment a hybrid lifestyle

¹⁴²Katherine Pratt Ewing, "Crossing Borders and Transgressing Boundaries: Metaphors for Negotiating Multiple Identities," in *Communicating Multiple Identities in Muslim Communities*, Vol. 26 (USA: Wiley, 1998), p. 262.

¹⁴³Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora Contesting Identities*, p. 179.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 180-181.

influenced by memory. Their deterritorializing and reterritorializing journey in Hamid Naficy's words take a number of forms, and they cross many borders. He asserts that "the "journey of identity" is one of the journeys that displaced people inevitably undergo once they arrive in the new lands."¹⁴⁶ Naficy argues that displaced individuals and uprooted communities may enter the host country with one status as exile, refugees, *émigrés*, students or illegal aliens- but they do not remain in that status for long, especially if they arrive with significant cultural, racial, educational, class and other capitals. He elaborates:

[Displaced individuals] undergo transformations, or their transformation is hindered by the legal status with which they enter the new country and by the work they do there, the activities they undertake, the associations they form and the media they produce and consume, as well as by the host society's historical perception and current reception of them.¹⁴⁷

In his *Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, Hamid Naficy discusses the types of journeys dealt with as a major theme based on an analysis of a number of accented movies. These three types of journeys are: outward journeys of escape, home seeking and home founding; journey of quest, homelessness, and lostness, and inward, homecoming journeys. For Naficy, not all journeys involve physical travel and are not only limited to the traveler's experience outside their home country. He does rather give more emphasis on journeys of identity that expatriates experience once they reach the new destination.¹⁴⁸ This refers to the metaphoric and philosophical journeys of identity and transformation.¹⁴⁹ Therefore, this shows again the ongoing process of diasporic people in searching for their identity, home and a sense of belonging. That is to say, it is that direct contact with the other which shapes diasporic journeys, and hence, identities.

¹⁴⁶Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, p. 222.

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 237.

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 33.

Hamid Naficy argues that diasporas deterritorializing and reterritorializing journeys take a number of forms, and they cross many boundaries- not only physical and geographic but also psychological, metaphorical, social, and cultural borders. Journeys take different forms depending on certain motivations and goals such as exploration, escape, pilgrimage, adventure, emigration and return. The journey, in *Le Grand Voyage* and *Tenja*, for instance, has various goals. Fathers, in both films, aspire to heal their sons's split identity and help them overcome their trauma and dilemma caused by life in the diaspora. For both sons, Nouredine and Reda, the journey is towards self-knowledge and discovery, as for the fathers, it is a journey back to the origin.

It is doubtless how journeys have an immense impact on travelers. Naficy argues how those displaced people are possibly to get in the host country with one status- as exiles, refugees, asylees, émigrés, students- but they do not usually maintain the same status for long, as he says:

They undergo transformations, or their transformation is hindered, by the legal status with which they enter the new country and by the work they do there, the activities they undertake, the associations they form, and the media they produce and consume, as well as by the host society's historical perception and current reception of them.¹⁵⁰

These journeys are, utmost, undertaken by crossing borders. This latter occurs in certain empirical border places that are cathected with effect, such as airports, seaports, railway stations, and which act as entrances to other places and times. He explains that:

These portal places are charged with intense emotions involving fearful escapes, fearful departures, sudden entrapments, devastating rejections,

¹⁵⁰Ibid., p. 237.

joyful arrivals, and a euphoric sense of liberation that can not be recuperated easily.¹⁵¹

Crossing borders means going beyond the comfort zone. Naficy further argues that border crossings and border spaces are not only marked in fixed transitional sites, such as airports, seaports, tunnels, hotels and motels, but also in mobile spaces, such as vehicles and suitcases.¹⁵² Borders and border spaces tend to fix up the human imagination, for they allegorize and stand for wanderlust, flight and freedom.¹⁵³ This is exactly the case of Laila Marrakchi's characters in *Marock*, particularly Ghita and her high school friends, who all associate crossing borders with freedom, partying, and success.

Journeys start with crossing borders and this is considered as the most influential phase in the traveller's experience. Borders, in their traditional meaning, describe a dividing barrier between nations, and thus cultures. It is immediately while crossing borders when people start to hear different languages and dialects, celebrate new occasions, notice different cultures, and discover new traditions, customs, values, histories and ways of life. It is up to the person to either adapt to what is beyond the borders or resist, a fact that might turn into a conflict caused by both sides of borders and driven by power. Heewon Chang discusses how boundaries can separate societies from each other, and how individuals while voluntarily and involuntarily are expected to literally leave their own societies and open up on a new one.¹⁵⁴ It still remains debatable if the person has to really choose between both sides and end up with their new destination. In this regard, Heewon Chang argues that borders embody and exert a certain power, as she puts it:

¹⁵¹Ibid., p. 238.

¹⁵²Ibid., p. 257.

¹⁵³Ibid., p. 248.

¹⁵⁴Heewon Chang, "Re-examining the Rhetoric of the Cultural Border," in *Electronic Magazine of Multicultural Education*, Vol. I, retrieved on 3 August, 2016, from <http://www.eastern.edu/publications/emme/1999winter/chang.html>

To many scholars, a border is not a neutral demarcation line. It is a symbol of power that imposes inclusion and exclusion. The more privileged-dominant, hegemonious side will actively control the border to keep border-crossers out.¹⁵⁵

Obviously, borders transcend the physical line whose job is to only separate nations. They are heavily loaded with codes and deeply affect the individual's journey. They can be referred to as a meeting point of the self and the other, resemblance and contradictions, peace and conflict. Undoubtedly, the notion of borders is very ambiguous and contradictory, and this ambiguity is basically because of the multiple implications borders carry and imply, as Susan Stanford Friedman points out:

Borders are fixed and fluid, impermeable and porous. They separate but also connect, demarcate but also blend differences. Absolute at any moment in time, they are always changing over time. They promise safety, security, a sense of being at home; they also enforce exclusions, the state of being alien, foreign, and homeless. They protect but also confine. They materialize the law, policing separations; but as such, they are always being crossed, transgressed, subverted.¹⁵⁶

For Friedman, borders embody forms of empowerment and disempowerment as well. They facilitate livings, but they also impose exclusions. She continues:

Borders are used to exercise power over others but also to empower survival against others. They regulate migration, movement, travel- the flow of people, goods, ideas, and cultural formations of all kinds. They undermine regulatory practices by fostering intercultural encounter and the concomitant production of syncretic heterogeneities and hybridities. They

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Susan Stanford Friedman, "Diasporas, Migrations and Borders," in *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*, ed., David G. Nicholls (New York: Modern Language Association, 2007), p. 273.

insist on purity, distinction, difference but facilitate contamination, mixing, creolization.¹⁵⁷

Similarly, Heewon Chang argues that the borderland is deemed as a psychological space in which border-crossers struggle with their bicultural or multicultural identities. She suggests that “in this borderland individuals decide how much they want to identify with their cultures of origin or adoption.”¹⁵⁸ It is a space of negotiation of differences that basically ends up with two main outlets for diasporic subjects; those of acceptance or rejection. Cultural borders are real and authentic as long as cultural diversity is viewed at the societal level.¹⁵⁹ Border crossers become, thus, multicultural through their contacts with others with different sets of standards experiencing different cultures.

We live in a world where borders wax and wane and where they are even effaced in some places to facilitate economic movements. The world is in a continuous motion and mobility. For those same reasons, the role of borders becomes more salient and noticeable. Chang writes:

It is clear that culture is not bounded by a territory as earlier anthropologists believed. Rather people are the carriers, movers, consumers, and inventors of a culture. When they move from one place to the other, they carry their cultures- their personal outlooks with them.¹⁶⁰

Crossing borders refers to the process that blends cultures, identities, and ways of life in a way that brings all these aspects together to shape new perceptions of the Self/Other dialectic. This explains the fact that when one moves to live in a new country, there is a tendency to believe that by crossing borders, the original cultural identity is at risk of disappearing because of the need to be accepted by the host country, and of the pressures to follow mainstream ways to become a member of the

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Heewon Chang, “Re-examining the Rhetoric of the Cultural Border,” p. 3.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 4.

society and part of it. This is what Bhabha refers to as *mimicry* resulting in a multiple paradoxes that transform the ways identities are constructed, developed and even invented in the process of migration and settlement.

Borders can embody positive references to the protection of nation-state as well as the culture. Without borders, the world would have been a huge chaos as people would be seeking job opportunities everywhere. This might cause economics problems as well as cultural ones. Borders, from this perspective, protect, but they can also cause conflicts due to differences and intolerance. This is because what is beyond the borders will always stay different, unknown, and dangerous.

It is worth mentioning that memory is one of the most significant elements travelers are carrying with them when crossing borders. Memory is decisive for the formation of diasporic identities without forgetting that it is one essential characteristic of diaspora according to William Safran and Roben Cohen as discussed earlier. To define memory, Anh Hua writes that “memory refers to the capacity of conserving certain information or as a group of psychic functions that allow us to actualize past impressions or information that we represent to ourselves as past.”¹⁶¹ It is a collection of past and present events and stories, and it holds evidence of belonging and affiliations as well. In other words, it is deemed as glue that connects the past and the present together. Memory, as Vijay Agnew also defines, “establishes a connection between collective and individual past, between origins, heritage and history.”¹⁶²

Memory, in this sense, saves the past from oblivion especially in the case of diasporic individuals who most of the time experience a new different life away from their home country; their past. According to Beate Neumeir, memory is essential to individual, social, cultural and national identity-formation. She suggests that the identity formation of diasporic communities requires nonstop reconsideration of collective memory. The significance of remembering of memory and its cultural

¹⁶¹Anh Hua, “Diaspora and Cultural Memory,” in *Diaspora, Memory and Identity: A Search for Home*, ed. Vijay Agnew (Toronto & Buffalo & London: University of Toronto Press, 2005), p. 198.

¹⁶²Vijay Agnew, ed., “Diaspora, Memory and Identity: A Search for Home,” (Toronto & Buffalo & London: University of Toronto Press, 2005), p. 19.

representations is very decisive for all diasporas¹⁶³. I can make reference here to the experience of diasporic filmmakers living abroad while depending so much on memory when portraying stories and issues of their original homelands.

In diaspora studies, studying how memory functions is essential for the details it provides to help us understand the formation of diasporic identities. Memory closely tied up to past events, places, and people; which definitely affect individual's present and future. It is an ongoing process of constructing whatever has to do with the past to connect it with the present and the future. Memory, as Anh Hua discusses, "does not revive the past but constructs it. The quest for memory is about the search for one's history. Sites of memory are collective yet individual, living yet dead, ours yet also belonging to others."¹⁶⁴

There are basically two major differentiated types of memory: personal and collective. Personal memory is about the memory of a single individual through a lifetime, often founded on first-hand experience. Cultural and collective memory establishes the collective memory of many encompassing generations.¹⁶⁵ Personal memory, obviously, refers to only individual's memory of personal events, situations, experiences and of people, time and places personally experienced; whereas, collective memories are mainly about the shared political and social struggles. They also represent cultural rituals, customs, traditions, dialects, common celebrations, events and narratives.

Writers, poets, musicians, and artists make use of collective memory to document the traditions, rituals, and history of their communities and nations. Salman Rushdie has amply discussed the way memory is manipulated to produce diasporic works. In his "Imagining Homelands", he talks about his own experience before starting writing his *Midnight's Children*. He admits that he has spent several months just trying to recall as much as he could of the Bombay-Kashmir, Delhi and Alizarh of

¹⁶³Beate Neumeir, "Memory, Identity and the British-Jewish Diaspora" in *Diaspora and Multiculturalism: Common Traditions and New Developments*, ed. Monika Fludernik (Rodopi: Amsterdam and New York, 2003), p. 86.

¹⁶⁴Anh Hua, "Diaspora and Cultural Memory", p. 198.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., p. 198.

the 1950s and 1960s. “I was genuinely amazed by how much came back to me”,¹⁶⁶ he states. This is actually one of the issues that have been frequently raised up by critics and scholars. The world is increasingly and rapidly changing and when diasporic people write or produce a certain work about their home country, it is usually based on what memory still recalls or even able to imagine. This leads to another problematic of the extent to which diasporic works could really reflect or represent reality of the homeland. Their liminal position equips them with a variety of tools to look at things through and affect their vision. Distance allows them, in the first place, to speak out their mind depending basically and after all on what memory, both personal and collective, still holds. In this vein, Salman Rushedi clearly admits:

What I was actually doing was a novel of memory and about memory so that my India was just that ‘my’ India, a version and no more than one version of all the hundreds of millions of possible versions. I tried to make it as imaginatively true as I could, and I knew that my India may only have been one to which (who am no longer what I was, and who by quitting Bombay never became what perhaps I meant to be) was, let us say, willing to admit I belonged.¹⁶⁷

Rushedi clarifies that those fragmented images in his memory which were provocative for him to write. He discussed how *Midnight’s Children* has been criticized in India for its allegedly despairing tone. This brings to mind a lot of literary and cinematic works that too received criticism. Speaking of cinema specifically, most of Moroccan diasporic filmmakers’ movies under study stirred a lot controversy, such as the case of Merrakchi’s films, Ayouch’s, Lakhmari’s and Zakia Tahiri’s. This is mostly due to the audacity and the sort of themes and topics dealt with by diasporic filmmakers. Salman Rushedi explains this by the amount of freedom artists enjoy abroad. He puts it: “Art is a passion of the mind. And the imagination works best when it is most free. Western

¹⁶⁶Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London: Granta in Association with Penguin books, 1991), p. 1.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., p. 10.

writers have always felt free to be eclectic in their selection of theme, setting, form [...] I'm sure that we must grant ourselves an equal freedom."¹⁶⁸

In this vein, one of the most salient questions to ask is: to whom one is writing and filming for? Do diasporic artists address people in their home country or the host country or both? And most significantly, when a diasporic is producing a work, do they put certain limits and red lines that are impossible to trespass, especially that they are in a position of power as representatives of their own native country? Salman Rushedi answers some of these questions stating:

I have never had a reader in mind. I have ideas, people, events, shapes and I write for those things, and hope that the completed work will be of interest to others. But which others? [...] So I would say that I write for people who feel part of the things I write 'about', but also for everyone else whom I can reach.¹⁶⁹

This is actually part of diaspora consciousness; that is when diasporic people are aware of their dilemma, which is a key element in shaping their artistic works. In the same context, but speaking of cinema, we find diasporic films too imbued with codes as they introduce new perspectives.

To sum up, this part of the dissertation was meant to foreground a theoretical framework that could help out throughout the analysis of diasporic cinematic discourses and to also lead us form new resonances of diaspora films. Yet, before delving into the analysis of films produced by diasporic Moroccan directors, the following part attempts to contextualize diasporic cinema historically speaking to understand how this cinema started and most importantly why is it called diasporic cinema?

¹⁶⁸Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., p. 19.

**PART II: THEORIZING DIASPORIC CINEMA
THROUGH HISTORY**

1. World Diasporic Cinema: A Brief Overview

The influx of migrants to different areas in the world, mainly to the developed countries, is absolutely the major factor behind shaping and forming a diasporic cinema. Films have played a crucial role in presenting diasporic cultures, and diasporic cinema itself has resulted from this migratory process and has emerged thanks to those displaced individuals' experiences of deterritorialization and dislocation. A lot of push and pull factors led to the movement of people beyond the borders. Some push factors may include lack of job opportunities, poverty, injustice, wars, strict government and religious censorship. Immigrants are looking for good living conditions, work purposes, political stability, or business projects and investments, and, most importantly, for more freedom when it comes to artists, politicians and journalists. Interest in diasporic cinema, hence, emanates from the diverse range of films that reflect upon and discuss the experiences of displacement by diasporic subjects.

Since the crux of this work is diasporic cinema, I find it tremendously useful to provide a brief overview to diasporic cinema as an attempt to better understand the emergence of this kind of cinema regarding its history, politics, and aesthetics. Actually, a wide range of diasporic films have been produced throughout the years. Yet, this section is more concerned with introducing some circumstances that led to the formation of those diasporic films. I do not claim to cover all diasporic films made throughout history, but this is rather an attempt to highlight the growing of this particular way of filmmaking and to also give examples of some countries that are considered "leading" of this category of cinema regarding what some scholars, cinema theorists and film critics have demonstrated in relation to its early beginnings, and conditions of emergence.

Undoubtedly, the West has always been seen as an appealing destination to different categories of immigrants around the world, among of which are filmmakers. According to Hamid Naficy, filmmakers who moved to live and make movies in the West are divided into two groupings. The first group was displaced to the West starting from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s by Third World colonization, wars of

national liberation, the Soviet Union's invasions of Poland and Czechoslovakia.¹ The second group, however, belonged to the 1980s and 1990s as a result of, quoting Naficy:

the failure of nationalism, socialism and communism; the ruptures caused by the emergence of postindustrial global economies, the rise of militant forms of Islam, the return of religious and ethnic wars, and the fragmentation of nation-states.²

Naficy further explains that this second group also emerged because of the transformations in European, Australian, and American immigration policies that had encouraged and facilitated the process of immigration to non-Western immigration. This is, of course, besides the exceptional technological advancements and consolidation in computers and media.³

Speaking of Hollywood cinema, the most predominant cinema in the world, and whose "dominance has often been considered as a form of cultural imperialism where its outside influence is considered a threat to the local culture,"⁴ immigrants played a significant role in its developments. Immigrants, as Naficy argues, contributed to the American cinema as both spectators and producers. As spectators, they took part of the transformation of cinema from an artisanal enterprise to an industrial system. Later on, the immigrants' contribution extended to the production, distribution, and exhibition of the movies.⁵ Thus, they moved from having a passive role, as only spectators, to having more responsibilities and to enjoying an active role in making cinema that specifically addresses their own audience of immigrants, as Hamid Naficy elucidates:

From cinema's inception, émigré and ethnic filmmakers attempted to make films for their own specific audiences, with little sustained success or with

¹Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, p. 11.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Steven Rawle, *Transnational Cinema An Introduction* (London: Palgrave, 2018), p. 3.

⁵Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, p. 7.

mixed results. The most successful efforts were Yiddish films that Jews made for the Jewish diaspora and “race movies” that African-Americans made for African-American.⁶

Based on Naficy’s grouping and according to Michael T. Martin and Marilyn Yaquinto, diasporic filmmakers have lived the dislocation experience with greater frequency and depth since the 1980s. This period is basically considered as the beginning of the emergence of postcolonial diasporic filmmaking. This is apparently when “diasporic cinema formations have developed in Britain (Black and Asian film and video collective), in the United States (Iranian, African, American and Asian Pacific American), and to a lesser extent, in Canada (South Asia)”.⁷

According to Jigna Desai, South Asian diasporic cinema is considered as one of the most dominant emerging diasporic cinemas. It started with a new increasing migration wave of South Asians from India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Africa, and the Caribbean to the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia and the Gulf states since the late 1960s and 1970s.⁸ South Asian diasporans, then, initiated the showing of Hindi, Tamil and other dialect language films on Television as well as in movie theatres to large audiences. Desai argues that Asian diasporic cinema surpasses diasporic literature like that by Salman Rushdie, Michel Ondaatji, Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri arguing that “it is cinema that reaches tens, if not hundreds, of millions of viewers.”⁹ Diasporic cinema has undoubtedly played a crucial role in presenting and introducing cultures to other nations. In this respect, Jigna Desai states that:

Film has played a feature role in the formation of South Asian diasporic cultures not only because of its mobility, but also because of its key role in

⁶Ibid.

⁷Michael T. Martin & Marilyn Yaquinto, “Framing Diaspora in Diasporic cinema: Concepts and Thematic Concerns,” in *Black Camera*, vol.22 (U.S.A.: Indiana University Press, 2007), p. 23.

⁸Jigna Desai, *Beyond Bollywood The Cultural Politics of South Asian Diasporic Film*, (New York & London: Routledge, 2004), p. viii.

⁹Ibid., p. vii.

South Asia itself. Film is the most popular and significant cultural form and commodity in the transnational South Asian culture and political economy.¹⁰

Desai further discusses how diasporic films have even contributed in shaping diasporic identities, as she writes: “South Asian diasporic identities are centrally configured and contested through cinema, its production and consumption.”¹¹ This hence indicates the hegemony of images and shows how people are vulnerable to change due to what they watch and receive.

Other two significant diasporic cinemas to mention as well are that of Turkey and Iran. Sabine Hake and Barbara Mennel write that Turkish diasporic cinema has been an integral part of European cinema and has gone through three main stages. The first phase of Turkish-German cinema, precisely, dates back to the 1970s and the 1980s during which it was described as “cinema of duty” because of Turks’ representations as “mute victims”. But, the second phase has known a shift to be defined as “pleasure of hybridity”, whereas, the last phase started to give more importance to immigration issues in the new millennium and it “has brought more critical engagement with questions of migration and immigration beyond Germany.”¹² As for Iran, diasporic Iranian cinema was basically established by many Iranian filmmakers who left their home-country in the aftermath of the Islamic revolution of 1979 as mentioned in *The Oxford History of World Cinema*:

Following the revolution some filmmakers fled the country, and there has consistently been a large contingent of Iranian filmmakers in exile. Even though they work in different countries, they have created what might be

¹⁰ Jigna Desai, “South Asian Diaspora in Film,” in *Encyclopedia of Diasporas: Immigrant and Refugee Cultures Around the World*, eds. Melvin Ember & Carol R. Ember & Ian Skoggard (New York: Springer, 2005), p. 373.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Sabine Hake & Barbara Mennel, eds. *Turkish German Cinema in the New Millennium: Sites, Sounds, and Screens* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012), p. 5.

called an 'exile genre' of cinema- one concerned with the trauma and tragedy of displacement and the problematic of identity formation."¹³

Iranian diasporic cinema, accordingly, demonstrates how filmmakers are inspired by their own personal experiences. They treat issues that talk about their diaspora space and the aftermath of their displacements.

Diasporic cinema has apparently brought up new themes, and has questioned fixed definitions of ethnicity, race, belonging, identity and culture. This genre of cinema has consequently attracted larger audiences since people of both the homeland and hostland of this cinema makers feel themselves concerned. Most importantly, this cinema offers a better perspective to understand diasporic subjects' identities. This is more clarified in *Theorizing World Cinema*:

The notion of diaspora helps reconfigure fixed ideas about ethnicity, race, nation and culture by considering social identities and texts that move simultaneously between a number of locations, helping to shape new global forms of sensibilities. In our interrogation of world cinema, diaspora cinema and its attendant representations not only offer a space for critically theorizing and elaborating the polycentric possibilities of the diasporic subject in his or her varied and fluid modern identities, but also to illuminate and contemplate how world cinema itself has been rejuvenated and made cosmopolitan by the contribution of diaspora aesthetics.¹⁴

With the emergence of this cinema, a lot of film critics and theorists commented that cinema has come as a platform where issues of transnationalism are more highlighted. In this context, Steven Rawle defines diasporic cinema as a cinema which:

¹³Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, ed. *The Oxford History of World Cinema* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 675.

¹⁴Lucia Nagib, Chris Perriam & Rajinder Dudrah, eds., *Theorizing world Cinema* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), p. xxvi.

comes to stand as a signifier of a world in which people, capital, ideas and technologies circulate much more freely than they have done previously. Thinking about cinema as a series of transnationally connected industries and as an artform that reflects the experience of individuals and social groups within a transnational system can help us better understand this world and how it operates.”¹⁵

Cinema, in this sense, can be a means of learning about other people’s differences, cultures and ways of life. Yet, those representations are never innocent and there is always an agenda behind them. Audiences actually see the world via a person’s perspective and camera angle. Movies, then, can send messages and respond to certain already claimed discourses and representations. In this matter, Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden state in the introduction to their collection *Transnational Cinema: A Film Reader* that:

The global circulation of money, commodities, information and human beings is giving rise to films whose aesthetic and narrative dynamics, and even the modes of emotional identification they elicit, reflect the impact of advanced capitalism and new media technologies as components of an increasingly interconnected world-system. The transnational comprises both globalization – in cinematic terms, Hollywood’s domination of world film markets – and the counter hegemonic responses of filmmakers from former colonial and Third world countries.¹⁶

Because of all the different types of technological revolutions the world has experienced, films have circulated very quickly and through large distribution networks. No doubt that many countries are making tremendous efforts to have their movies viewed widely. Diasporic filmmakers began making their own film industry treating issues that are corresponding to large segments of audiences. They are

¹⁵ Steven Rawle, *Transnational Cinema An Introduction*, p. 1.

¹⁶ Quoted in Steven Rawle, *Transnational Cinema An Introduction* (London: Palgrave, 2018), p. 1.

producing movies which they target to be seen universally, and by using storylines that both people in the homeland and the hostland can relate to. But, can we claim that the main role of this genre of cinema is to basically deal only with diaspora issues? Can it provide a counter-discourse to misrepresentations of the homeland and the people? Is it a cinema with established specificities and characteristics which differentiate it from other genres of cinema? Next chapter, hence, is meant to introduce North African diasporic cinema so as to answer the above questions along with many others.

2. North African Diasporic Cinema

To begin with, it is important to state that the Maghreb countries (specifically Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia) experienced, to a great extent, a shared French colonial past, and they all got their independence in the 50s. Right after the Second World War, and specifically from 1954 to 1974, in response to the highly labor demand in France, the French government started recruiting workers from its former colonies; Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. They were basically single male workers, but the French government decided to call a halt to temporary immigration for the purpose of work and to also encourage the possibility for worker's families to take permanent residence with them in France. This, hence, transformed those single male workers community to families whose children would have a French nationality. The second generation immigrants found themselves in a unique dual cultural situation; French by birth and external environment and North African by heritage and family ties. This generation immigrants came to be known as "beur" in the 1980s.¹⁷

By the early 1980s, this generation of children of Maghrebi (North African) parents, born or raised in France, started to be more visible, especially after they organized a massive antiracist march in 1983 from Marseille to Paris under the slogan "For equality and against Racism". The public has known this generation as the "Beur generation". The word 'beur' coined by this generation is the result of a Parisian black slang to refer to "Arabs". It has quickly spread and has been appropriated by the media to refer to children of Maghrebi origins living in France. The term, then, was used to identify the descents of North African immigrants as not entirely French and as unable to fully integrate in the French society. This, therefore, has pushed that new generation to reconsider their Maghrebi cultural heritage.¹⁸ Accordingly, a genre of *beur* literature has appeared during the 1980s. Publications of the first novels about the internal and external cultures against each other came out. Then, with the increasing of anti-foreign

¹⁷ Alison J. Murray Levine, "Mapping Beur Cinema in the New Millennium," in *Journal of Film and Video*, 60:3/4 (2008), p. 43.

¹⁸ Yahya Laayouni, "From Marseille to Mecca: Reconciling the Secular and the Religious in *Le Grand Voyage (The Big Trip)* (2004)," in *Journal of Religion and Film*, 20:2 (2016), p. 1.

and anti-Islamists waves in the 1990s, interest to document, speak out and discuss that dual cultural conflicts became more urgent and spread. Those tensions, therefore, have deeply affected the focal drama of many *beur* novels as well as films.¹⁹ Literature and cinema, hence, were regarded as the most appropriate outlets to transfer the voice of this marginalized category of immigrants to the public. Their aim was to highlight their problems, inner struggles, identity crisis, and to describe their position in society.

Beur cinema dates back to the 1980s when the second generation filmmakers of the Maghreb descent started making videos and Super 8 films by the Mohamed Collective, such as *Le Garage*, *Zone Immigrée* and *La Mort de Kader*). These videos “played an important role in making the second generation visible as cultural entrepreneurs”²⁰. Algerians ‘beurist’ filmmakers paved the way for other North African filmmakers in France. The first produced short film was by the French Algerian Farida Belghloul’s *C’est Madame la France Que tu Préfères? /You Prefer Madam France?* (1981) followed by *Le Départ du Père/ The Father’s Departure* (1983). Another short film was too produced at the same year by Assia Djabri, an Algerian woman filmmaker, and is entitled *La Vago* (1983). Moreover, there is a consensus that the first feature movie was produced in 1985 by Mehdi Charef, an Algerian filmmaker, and is entitled *Le Thé au Harem d’Archimède* (*Tea in the Harem*). The movie was produced by Costa-Gavras who gave the novelist a chance to turn his novel into a feature-length film. The film won the Prix Jean Vigo, a fact that attracted a lot of attention to Beur cinema at that time along with Rachid Bouchareb’s film *Bâton Rouge* (1985).²¹In his PhD dissertation, Yahya Laayouni, however, argues that Mahmoud Zemmouri’s *Prends 10000 Balles et Casse-toi* (1981) is the first produced beur film, whereas, Charef’s film was the first film that attracted the media attention to Beur cinema.²² Zemmouri’s *Prends 10000 Balles et Casse-toi* narrates the story of an Algerian family who returns to Algeria after years of immigration in

¹⁹Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, p. 96.

²⁰ Carrie Tarr, *Reframing Difference Beur and Banlieue Filmmaking in France* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 10.

²¹Alison J. Murray Levine, “Mapping Beur Cinema in the New Millennium,” p. 44.

²² Laayouni, Yahya. (2012). *Redefining Beur Cinema: Constituting Subjectivity Through Film* (Doctoral dissertation), retrieved on 10 February 2015, from http://d-scholarship.pitt.edu/11446/1/Yahya_Laayouni_Ph.D._Dissertation.PDF

France. The movie depicts the sufferings and the difficulties the children confront in the Algerian society to be accepted as Algerian citizens. Obviously, from its very beginning, diasporic cinema has been concerned with issues that treat immigration and that raise questions over the process.

Both movies by Charef and Bouchareb achieved popular success and consequently attracted the attention of critics to speak of a new phenomenon in French cinema; that is of *beur* cinema. These two movies endow a voice to the inhabitants of the marginalized spaces in the cities, specifically of the Arab immigrants. They describe their daily sufferings, their socio-economic disadvantages, struggles and also shed light on their dreams. Consequently, this cinema was seen as a platform to the preoccupations of this category of transnational communities in France.

Le Thé au Harem d'Archimède (Tea in the Harem) (1985) describes a variety of social problems facing different characters in their daily life in Parisian suburbs. The main characters Madjid, the son of an Algerian immigrant and his friend Pan are two seventeen years old adolescents who spend their days indulging in petty crimes in this suburban society. Madjid could not get a job due to widespread racism and Pat is so indifferent. They consequently both end up as criminals; pickpockets, car thieves and robbers. At the end of the movie, they get arrested by the police after having stolen a Mercedes car.

Rachid Bouchareb's *Bâton Rouge* (1985) tells the story of three young men; Karim, Abdenour and Mozart who live in a town in the outskirts of Paris and dream of going to America, to Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The dream comes true when Abdenour falls in love with Becky, a young American tourist and thanks to one of his friend's tricks; they all manage to get airline tickets to New York. Later on, Abdenour and Karim are deported back to Paris where they set up their own burger bar while Mozart stays in the United States.

Many *beur* authored films share similar concerns that, to a great extent, helped in shaping specific features of *Beur* cinema, particularly when it comes to its narratives during the 80s and 90s, such as films by Franco-Algerian filmmaker Merzak Allouach's *Omar Gatlato* (1976), *Bab El-Oued City* (1994), and *Salut Cousin* (1996). Franco-Algerian filmmakers are regarded as the pioneers of *beur* cinema as they

outnumber Tunisians and Moroccans. Some other *beur* films by Algerian filmmakers in the same period of the 80s and 90s are: Rachid Bouchareb's *Cheb* (1991) and Bourlem Guerdjou's *Vivre au Paradis/ Living in Paradise* (1998).

Similarly, Franco-Tunisian filmmakers share similar concerns as Algerians and produced a number of movies, such as Férid Boughedir's *Un été à la Goulette/ A Summer in la Goulette* (1996), Nouri Bouzid's *Man of Ashes/ Rih Essed* (1986) and *Golden Horseshoes* (1989), and Karim Dridi's *Bye Bye* (1995), which is a recurring reference in a number of texts dealing with *beur* cinema. The movie is about Ismael, a young Tunisian, who takes after his two brothers, Noureddine, who is a cripple, and Mouloud. When Noureddine dies in a tragic fire, Ismail and Moloud leave to join their uncle in Marseilles. Moloud quickly joins his drug-dealing cousin Rhida, while Ismail becomes friend with his co-worker Jacky. As Moulod falls deeper into Rhida's shady lifestyle, Ismail finds himself the target of anti-Arabic racism, led by Jacky's brother Ludo.

The first decade of the twenty-first century has known a new direction of films about and by the *beur* community. This category of *beur* has become less clear as “*beurist*” directors started to address non-*beur* subjects and make broader choices in their cinema. Directors of Maghrebi descent, such as Mehdi Charef, Rachid Bouchareb and Karim Dridi who portrayed *beur* characters in their earlier movies dealt with some new themes. *Bye Bye*'s director, for instance, has made movies about Cuba and French Chinatown.²³ Still, this does not mean that those filmmakers stopped making films about immigrants.

Through a conducted film study of Maghrebi filmmakers in France since the 2000s, Will Higbee acknowledges the diversity of films produced by filmmakers of Maghrebi origin. He explains how those films of the 2000s, under what he calls Post-*Beur* cinema, embraces a far greater narrative themes and genre than *Beur* cinema in the 1980s and 1990s. He differentiates two main groups of filmmakers: Maghrebi-French and North African émigré filmmakers. The first group refers to:

²³Alison J. Murray Levine, “Mapping *Beur* Cinema in the New Millennium”, p. 44.

those French directors of Maghrebi-immigrant origin who were either born in France or moved there at an early age. These directors share the experience of having spent their formative years in France, while also being influenced to varying degrees by the North African cultural heritage of their parents.²⁴

As for the second term, North African émigré filmmakers, it refers to individuals who moved later to France.²⁵ This means that this group of filmmakers had already had an identity in their homeland before moving to France. They are, thus, supposed to be a bit less confused than the other group of Maghrebi-French.

Will Gibee suggests that although these two categories might have shared experiences, cultural references and thematic preoccupations in their work, we should definitely understand the differences between them; which are precisely about how they conceive both their homeland and hostland. That is to say, Maghrebi-French filmmakers always view France as home despite all its potential problems. In this respect, Will Gibee writes: “the notion of post-beur cinema functions as a means of identifying the diversity of films produced by directors of Maghrebi origin in France during the 2000s.”²⁶

This diversity in themes and shift from dealing with immigrants issues is probably part of filmmakers’ rejection to being referred to as *beur* directors who speak only about *beur* topics. Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg explain that:

migrant and diasporic filmmakers have often refused labels as such ‘Turkish German’, ‘beur’ or ‘black’ because they set them apart from ‘unmarked’ practitioners and, explicitly or implicitly, identify them as

²⁴ Will Higbee, *Post-Beur Cinema North African Emigré and Maghrebi-French Filmmaking in France since 2000* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2013), p. 55.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

(albeit authentic) voices who can and must speak (only) about and for their communities.²⁷

Not only beur directors refuse to be labeled as beur, but also actors and actresses. They too believe that such labels are unfair that they limit their talent and make their roles so predictable. In an interview with the four Maghrebi French stars of *Indigènes* Samy Naceri, Jamel Debbouz, Rochdy Zem, and Sami Bouajila, following the films' success at Canes, they all rejected being addressed as *beur*, as the following passage shows:

Samy Naceri- First of all, butter [le beurre] is what you put on your toast to have with a cup of coffee. We are Maghrebis. *Beurs* don't exist. Jamel Debbouz- We are actors with origins, not actors of Maghrebi origin. Sami Bouajila- I'm sorry, but we are fed up with having to always explain ourselves. *Beurs, beur..* We'll go to the moon one day and they'll still write we are *beurs*.²⁸

It seems true that such terminology restricts the scope of creativity of this category of Maghrebi filmmakers and actors in France. Throughout the dissertation and while analyzing movies under study, displaced Moroccan filmmakers will be referred to as 'diasporic' for several reasons. I call them 'diasporic' in regard to their experiences of displacement that I will show how it is plainly voiced out in their cinematic productions. It is also because *beur* cinema is basically only about Maghrebi filmmakers living in Europe, whereas, this work is not only confined to the territories of Europe, but it covers other areas as well, such as the United States of America.

I argue that diasporic cinema presents one of the most controversial movies that usually spark international interest and debate. The diasporic optic offers a possibility to examine issues with more depth due to its duality and complexity. Besides, there is

²⁷Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg, "Locating Migrant and Diasporic Cinema in Contemporary Europe," in *European Cinema in Motion Migrant and Diasporic Film in Contemporary Europe*, eds., Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 18.

²⁸Ibid.

no significant censorship in the hostlands in the West, which makes them enjoy more freedom and allows them to express their ideas openly. Western co-production also plays a role in framing certain discourses that serve particular agendas and secure movies' success in the West. Those movies are not usually appreciated in the Arab world, while they are very much praised in the West and they usually receive awards. One very recent movie that I have watched lately is by Ziad Doueiri; an Arab Lebanese diasporic filmmaker. Although the filmmaker is not within North African territories, I find him an interesting and enriching example of a diasporic filmmaker to include here and close up this section by.

Ziad Doueiri's *The Insult* or *Kadia 24* (2017) is one of the most controversial films by a diasporic filmmaker in the Arab world nowadays, and the first Lebanese film to be nominated for an Oscar, and it was listed among five finalists for Best Foreign Language Film at the 90th Academy Awards. The Lebanese-French, Ziad Doueiri, is well-known for his controversial ideas especially which concern Israel and its politics.

Doueiri's movie is about a trivial personal verbal dispute between Tony Hanna, a right-wing Lebanese Christian, and Yasser Salameh, a Palestinian refugee, which explodes into a drama that consumes a whole nation. The story starts with a small argument over a pipe that drips water from an apartment terrace on the street below. Tony Hanna accidentally splashed some water over the Palestinian while he was watering his plants. Thus, some harsh words exchange has launched the story. Tony's wish that all Palestinians had been wiped away by Sharon will lead all the films' events. Doueiri's courtroom drama is neither simple nor innocent as it brings back so many memories of past atrocities. It questions identity, home affiliations, and political and religious divisions.

The Insult is not the first controversial film produced by this diasporic filmmaker. His first feature film *West Beirut* was made in 1988, followed by *Lila says* (2004), *The Attack* (2012) and *Affaire Etrangère* (2013). His *The Attack* (2004), based on Yasmina Khadra's novel of the same name, was banned in several countries among which Lebanon, for parts of it were shot in Tel Aviv while casting an Israeli actress to play the role of a Palestinian suicide bomber. This is against the law in Lebanon since

Lebanese people are forbidden from travelling to Israel. The below image shows Ziad while holding his two passports: the European and the Lebanese.



Figure 2: Ziad Doueiri holding his two passports: the Lebanese and the European

A shared theme between diasporic filmmakers is their manifested desire to challenge the status quo regardless of possible consequences; which is the case of Doueiri's films along with many other diasporic filmmakers. In the context of Morocco, reference can be made to Merrakchi's *Marock*, Nabil Ayouch's *Zin li Fik/ Much loved*, Nour Eddine Lakhmari's *Casanegra* and Narjis Nejjar's *Les Yeux Secs/ Dry Eyes*. Those movies' narratives are considered more daring while discussing stories that are supposed to be taboos in the Moroccan conservative society.

3. Contextualizing Moroccan Diasporic Cinema

a. “What Moroccan Cinema?”

Morocco encountered cinema very early. It is since the invention of cinema, Morocco attracted international filmmakers and production companies to its natural beauty and stunning scenic diversity. The story begins with the Lumière brothers who sent out operatives to scour the globe for “exotic” and “wonderful” images of Morocco which was the ideal location for its proximity.²⁹ According to the film scholar Jamil Hamdaoui, cinema in Morocco can be generally divided into three main phases: colonial, post-colonial and the new millennium.³⁰

Colonial cinema (1919-1956) was the beginning of cinema in Morocco, as Roy Armes says: “cinema reached Africa with colonialism.”³¹ In 1912, Morocco became a French and Spanish protectorate. Film production was seen by the French in particular as not only an important economic source but also a means of imperial control. Its principle role was to supply a cultural and ideological justification for political domination and economic exploitation.³² During this era, films tackled the relationship of the self and the other through an orientalist lens as Jamli Hamdaoui argues in his *Madkhal ila al-Cinema al al-Maghrebia: Mena al-Cinema al al-Wataniya ila al-Cinema al-Amazighia*.³³ The colonizer invested heavily on the production of films that dehumanize natives and show them as backward and in need of enlightenment. All movies produced at that period dealt with Moroccan themes but through a non-Moroccan lens. They were by French and Spanish crew including filmmakers, producers, scenarists, distributors and technicians, whereas Moroccans played only the role of combers.³⁴ With the beginning of the protectorate in 1912, and under the

²⁹ “History of Moroccan Cinema”, retrieved on 24 April 2016, from <http://www.festivalmarrakech.info/en/>

³⁰ Jamil Hamdaoui, *Madkhal ila al-Cinema al-Maghrebia (Mena al-Cinema al-Watania ila al-Cinema al-Amazighia)* (Rabat: Maaref Library, 2010) (Translation is mine)

³¹ Roy Armes, *African Filmmaking: North and South of the Sahara* (Edinburg: Edinburg University press, 2006), p. 21.

³² Ibid., p. 21.

³³ Jamil Hamdaoui, *Madkhal ila al-Cinema al-Maghrebia (Mena al-Cinema al-Watania ila al-Cinema al-Amazighia)*, p. 5. (Translation is mine).

³⁴ Ibid., p. 9. (Translation is mine).

impulse of French Marshal Lyautey, the creation of a local production company was encouraged, and the first feature film recorded on Moroccan soil was completed in 1919. It was *Mektoub* by Jean Pinchon and Daniel Quintin, and with this movie, ways were paved for “colonial” film genre. This genre produced many legendary titles such as “*Itto*” and “*The Seventh Door*”. It led to the production of a large number of international films in Morocco and to the creation of two key organizations that would play a fundamental role in Moroccan cinema: The CCM (Moroccan Cinematic Centre) and the Souissi Film Studios (1944)³⁵.

Le Centre Cinématographique Marocain/ Moroccan Cinematic Center (CCM) was set up and housed under the ministry of the interior in 1944 by the French colonial regime. It was an essentially colonial organization whose mission is to organize the film trade and promote colonial propaganda to counter the surge of Egyptian cinema and its promotion of Pan-Arabism in the late colonial era. The CCM was also tasked with consolidating the burgeoning sector of international film production and distribution.³⁶ The CCM with studios in the Rabat suburbs of Souissi became more active as a state agency immediately after independence. In the beginning, it timidly funded only short films and documentaries, but it took afterwards over distribution and funding projects for Moroccan films in the 1980s.³⁷

When Morocco got its independence in 1956, the country started to experience a lot of transformations on different levels. Consequently, cinema was affected and knew significant developments throughout the 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s, and 2000s. The government through the CCM encouraged a significant number of short film productions in the sense that “young filmmakers fresh out of prestigious cinema school IDHEC were put to the test, and Moroccan cinema saw its golden age in particular for short film documentaries.”³⁸ To answer back the influence and scale of Western

³⁵ “History of Moroccan cinema”, retrieved on 24 April 2016, from <http://www.festivalmarrakech.info/en/>

³⁶ Jamal Bamhad, “Between Tangier and Marrakech: A Short History of Moroccan Cinema Through its Festivals” in *Film Festival Yearbook 6: Film Festivals and the Middle East*, 6:1, (2013), p. 307.

³⁷ Valerie Orlando, *Screening Morocco Contemporary in a Changing Society* (Ohio: Ohio University, 2011), p. 8.

³⁸ “History of Moroccan cinema”, retrieved on 24 April 2016, from <http://www.festivalmarrakech.info/en/>

representations of Morocco on the big screen, Moroccan filmmakers have devoted themselves since the end of the colonial period to the production of authentic images of the country.

The question of how to exhibit these national self-images was at the center of Moroccan cinema. Then the first film festival in postcolonial Morocco took place, which dates back to 1968. Another festival was the International Mediterranean Film Festival (IMFF) in Tangier, which was organized by the *Federation National des ciné-clubs du Maroc* (FNCCM)/ the National Federation of Film Clubs in Morocco. The CCM, Morocco's national film board, produced two national feature films for the occasion.³⁹ Mohamed Tazi Ben Abdelouahed and Ahmed Al Masnaoui's *Al Hayat Kifah* (*Life is Struggle*, 1968) and Latif Lahlou's *Shams Al-Rabie* (*Spring Sun*, 1969) are widely regarded as the country's first postcolonial features even if Mohamed Ousfour's *Al Ibn A'aq* (*The Cursed Son*) was made in 1958, and it was the only movie produced in the 50s.⁴⁰ Afterwards, filmmakers were expected to produce cinematic articulations of a society in transition. Sixteen feature films were produced in the 70s, among which is Hamid Bennani's *Weshma* (1970), and which was regarded as a real start of the Moroccan cinematic productions according to cinema critics such as Hamid Tbatou.⁴¹

During the era of Moroccan filmmaking (1956-1970), the national industry employed filmmakers as government employers, primarily concentrating on making documentaries and newsreels as trailers for foreign films or to be shown in film caravans that toured the country.⁴² The CCM sent filmmakers abroad to France, Russia and Italy to learn the trade. At the same time at home, the CCM established a studio, lab, film stock, and trained personnel. Filmmakers, however, concentrated only on regional and development issues that could be filmed as documentaries.⁴³ Although the

³⁹ Three movies were produced in the 60s: the aforementioned movies along with Abdelaziz Ramadani and Al Arbi Bennnai '1968) *Indama Tandojo al-Thimar*.

⁴⁰ Jamal Bamhad, "Between Tangier and Marrakech: A Short History of Moroccan Cinema through its Festivals", p. 308.

⁴¹ Hamid Tbatou, *Al- Cinema al- Maghreb: Kadaya al- Ibda'e wa al-howeia* (Tangier: Specraf, 1999), p. 33. (Translation is mine).

⁴² Sandra G. Carter, *What Moroccan Cinema? A Historical and Critical Study, 1956-2006* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2009), p. 67.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

CCM funded or co-funded the first three Moroccan feature films in 1968-1969, support was not in continuous manner in the following decade. It was not until 1977 that at least partial funding by the CCM turned to be the norm, with seven features supported in the period 1977-1979. However, all the films in the early 1970s, Morocco based its first international reputation upon, were privately financed. The advances in the provision of studios and facilities for laboratory and dubbing work had little or no impact on the level of Moroccan domestic production, which remained low throughout the 1970s. During the whole period, since 1968, foreign-produced films shot using Moroccan locations have far outweighed local initiatives of both finance and resources.⁴⁴

The local production situation radically changed in 1980s with the arrival of government aid for cinema (the so-called *fonds de soutien*). This consequently affected the production activity to thirty eight feature films. Production boomed between 1982 and 1984 and led to the creation of the National Film Festival of Rabat in 1982. This change was responsible for an improvement in Moroccan cinema image, which was further strengthened by new ways of getting financial support for cinematic productions.⁴⁵

In his article, “Between Tangier and Marrakech: A Short History of Moroccan Cinema through its Festivals”, Jamal Bahmad discusses the rapidly evolving Moroccan cinema through the story of the origins and evolution of two seminal festivals in two important cities. He writes that “the first National Film Festival (NFF) was held in 1982 in Rabat in response to a growing crop of quality films and the alleged need for a national debate on the country’s visual and cultural identities.”⁴⁶ The event was deemed as the first major encounter with the Moroccan national cinema. It was held in different cities on an irregular basis as a way to reflect on the insufficient quantity of films produced in that early period, and to also express a desire to celebrate cinema in all the country. The NFF brought together filmmakers and other

⁴⁴Roy Armes, *African Filmmaking: North and South of the Sahara* (Edinburg: Edinburg University press, 2006), p. 42.

⁴⁵ “History of Moroccan Cinema”, retrieved on 24 April 2016, from <http://www.festivalmarrakech.info/en/>

⁴⁶Jamal Bamhad, “Between Tangier and Marrakech: A Short History of Moroccan Cinema through its Festivals”, p. 306.

actors in the national cinema sector for the first time and the event soon became a primary platform for lively debates on national cinema and identity.⁴⁷

It is worth mentioning that Moroccan films were not commercially distributed before the 1990s despite a growing production volume thanks to the increased state support. This is mainly because distributors were not interested in local films since they cost many times more than Hollywood, Bollywood and Egyptian movies. However, one national distributor who attended the 3rd NFF held in Mekness in 1991, decided to distribute Abdelkader Lagtaa's *Hub fi Dar al Beida* (*A love Affair in Casablanca* 1991). It was a risky initiative, but "the rewards far surpassed everyone's expectations and changed the history of Moroccan cinema forever." The film did very well at the national box office and created a unique situation on Morocco.⁴⁸

Further proof of the transformation role of NFF occurred in June 1995. The fourth edition of the event in Tangier remains a defining moment in the history of Moroccan cinema. New filmmakers from the diaspora, mostly second generation Moroccan immigrants from Europe, were particularly invited to screen their short films at the festival. The new scenarists met with their old compatriot. Discussions flourished about the state and future of Moroccan cinema, and the CCM promised to cast the net of its funding recipient wider to incorporate the new diaspora filmmakers.⁴⁹ Since then, Moroccan diasporic filmmakers have managed to create a name for themselves and made movies that introduced them to the Moroccan audience.

After the 90s, when cinema got the production of 41 feature films, Morocco knew another era. This is exactly since 1999 and with the death of King Hassan II, Morocco has transformed socio-culturally and politically and Moroccan cinema started to experiment new themes and deal with different topics. In her *Screening Morocco: Contemporary Film in a Changing Society*, Valerie Orlando argues how such political transformations affected cinema in Morocco and the choice of cinematic topics as well, stating that:

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 309.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 310.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 310.

Films and documentaries made in the last decade are significantly more critical and candid about Moroccan socio-cultural and political issues than in the past. During the Lead Years, films would metaphorically or symbolically criticize the social situation, but never to be overtly critical [...] Since 1999, films have probed the societal realities of contemporary Morocco, unfettered and uncensored- that is, as long as filmmakers do not overtly criticize the king and Islam and do not promote themes that are pornographic.⁵⁰

This shift in society will affect cinematic representations since cinema is concerned with current topics. Orlando explains that “this shift to embrace a more societal-realist cinematic discourse- one that is critical and analytical of contemporary society- reflects the societal and political transitions that have taken place in Morocco in the last decade.”⁵¹

Indeed, Moroccan filmmakers began to experiment new themes, challenging the politics of conventions of their society as they sought answers to postcolonial problems such as poverty, illiteracy and corruption. Interestingly, filmmakers dared to touch upon sensitive issues, such as unemployment, sexuality, gender issues, political and social corruption and illegal immigration, to list but few: Nabil Ayouch’s *Ali Zaoua* (2000), Narjis Najjar’s *Les Yeux Secs/ Dry Eyes* (2002), Mustapha Darkaoui’s *Casablanca by Night* (2003), and *Casablanca Day light* (2004), Yasmine Kassri’s *L’Enfant Endormi/ The Sleeping Child* (2004), Laila Marrakchi’s *Marock* (2005), Hassan Benjelloun’s *Fin Mashi Ya Mushi* (2007), Hassan Ghenja’s *Argana* (2007), Aziz Salmy’s *Hijab Lhob* (2009) and many others. It seems that Moroccan filmmakers during that era have manipulated a new shape of cinema and used it as a venue to discuss themes related to society, identity, culture and other topics that have to do with the country and its people. Filmmakers have succeeded in generating awareness and discussions within Moroccan cinema that impact and advance change as the country moves forward in the millennium.

⁵⁰Valerie Orlando, *Screening Morocco Contemporary Film in a Changing Society*, p. xii.

⁵¹Ibid.

The perceived need for debate and discussions of movies and the increased quantity of movies started from the 2000s.⁵² This created a need to platforms where cinema makers and critics can meet and discuss. For that reason, the number of cinema festivals organized all over Morocco has increased, to name but few: The International Mediterranean Film Festival in Tetouan, African Film Festival in Khouribga, National Film Festival in Tangier, The International Documentary Film Festival and Cinema and Immigration in Agadir, The International Film Festival of Author's Cinema in Rabat, Martil International Film Festival of Spanish Cinema, The Trans-Sahara Film Festival in Zagora, The International Women Film Festival of Sale, and Marrakech's International Film Festival.

Festivals are occasions for national film critics to meet up and discuss issues of national filmmaking. They also offer great opportunities to open up to other cinemas and share experiences especially when the festival is international and receive a huge number of cinema makers as guests (filmmakers, producers, actors, tourists...), which is the case of Marrakech International Film Festival.⁵³

b. Beyond the Frontiers: Moroccan Cinema: A Diaspora?

The transformations the Moroccan society has witnessed at all levels, especially in the 2000s after the death of King Hassan II, immensely influenced the cinematic field. The cinematographic industry has known some sort of resurrection with a good increase of the number of movies released, and also at the level of the nature of topics dealt with. Filmmakers have shown significant willingness to tackle taboo subjects wherever the opportunity arisen. Roy Armes discusses how at least half a dozen filmmakers have used the openness about the past to make striking films about the

⁵²78 films were made between 2000 and 2007.

⁵³The first edition of the festival was in 2011. Its foundation is presided over by Prince Moulay Rachid, King's brother, and functions under the high patronage of the king Mohamed VI himself.

persecutions, injustice, and false imprisonments that occurred under the rule of the former king Hassan II.⁵⁴

A new challenging and daring tone was then adopted by a number of Moroccan filmmakers. Freedom of speech and of choice of topics has been vaunted as one of the strengths of the Moroccan film industry. Young filmmakers, particularly those based in Europe, have revolutionized the Moroccan cinema through their most provocative films. They have raised issues of identity, culture, multiculturalism, and have questioned belongings and affiliations. They have discussed gender issues and the East-West relations from a different angle and with different diegesis. Besides, they have explored preoccupations and concerns of transnational migrant communities that have settled overseas. Those filmmakers living abroad were able to describe the struggles, ambivalence and the contingency of diasporic identities through their films. This is basically because diasporic filmmakers primarily rely on their own experiences to produce their movies.

Those filmmakers who were either born abroad or spent years of their life outside their country of origin began to make an impact starting from the 2000s with their films' plots that are told through individual immigrant's experiences. The number of diasporic Moroccan filmmakers has increased in the new millennium during which they have become more known to the Moroccan audience. This is, however, not meant to claim an absence of films produced by diasporic filmmakers before, but the number was very limited though. A significant old film to mention and which has been widely watched, analyzed and written upon by a number of scholars is *Bab as-Sama Maftouh/ A Door to the Sky* by Farida Benlyazid (1988). The film tells the story of Nadia, a young Moroccan immigrant, who returns from Paris to Fez to visit her dying father. In the funeral, Nadia develops a close friendship with Karina whose guidance helped Nadia to turn the family house into a *zawya*, a spiritual destination for Muslim women. The film, then, exposes transformations in Nadia's identity as she returns home.

As for the new millennium period, Nabil Ayouch is seen as one of the most noticeable and known diasporic filmmakers introduced to the Moroccan audience with

⁵⁴Roy Armes, "Cinemas of the Maghreb," in *Black Camera*, vol.1:1(Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2009), p. 8.

his widely watched movie *Ali Zaoua: Prince of the Streets* (2000). He is also director of *Une minute de Soleil en Moins / A minute of Sun Less* (2002), *Whatever Lola Wants, Lola Gets* (2007) and *Zin li fik/ Much Loved* (2015) and his most recent one *Razzia* (2018). Other diasporic filmmakers' works that are also worth mentioning and that have contributed to the Moroccan cinematic view and stirred up a lot of debates are: Ismail Ferroukhi's *Le Grand Voyage/ The Long Journey* (2004), and *Les Hommes Libres/ Free Men* (2011), Hassan El Gzouli's *Ten'ja* (2004), Nour Eddine Lakhmari's *Casanegra* (2008), *Zéro* (2012) and *Burn Out* (2017), and Hakim Belabbes's *khit Errouh* (2003). There are a number of films produced by Moroccan women diasporic filmmakers which also contributed to cinema in Morocco, among them: Narjis Nejjar's *Les Yeux Secs/ Dry Eyes* (2003), Laila Merrakchi's *Marock* (2005) and *Rock the Kasbah* (2013), Laila Kinani's *Sur La Planche/ On the Edge* (2012), Yasmine Kassari's *L'Eanfant Endormi/ The Sleeping Child* (2004), and Zakia Tahiri's *Number One* (2009). From this list and according to aforementioned reasons stems the choice of the movies under study.

Most of these films, if not to say all of them, carry the touch of diaspora and record a return to the filmmakers' origins and roots. Diaspora films bring to mind a lot of assumptions about the experience of movements, dislocations and displacements, and it presents important data to examine the social, cultural and political formations as an outcome of this kind of movements. What makes diasporic individuals different from others is this duality they embody and look at the world through as well as the multicultural space their films celebrate. In this context, Ulfried Reichardt argues that 'diaspora' concept was only brought up into this current debate after the notion of multiculturalism had been fully established and started to be an important field within the cultural studies. That is to say, multiculturalism refers to the existence of a diversity of cultures within one nation.⁵⁵

The rise of the study of diaspora is fairly recent. Research on diaspora is conducted from different perspectives such as anthropology, sociology, politics,

⁵⁵Ulfried Reichardt, "Diaspora Studies and the Culture of the African Diaspora the Poetry of Derek Walcott, Kamau Brathwaite and Linton Kwesi Johnson," in *Diaspora and Multiculturalism: Common Traditions and New Developments*, ed. Monika Fludernik (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi B.V., 2003), p. 289.

migration and media studies. As discussed earlier, the growth of diaspora studies was facilitated from the 1980s by the rise of globalization and transnational studies as well as cultural studies. Diaspora, then, has become a powerful discourse for producing knowledge about displacement, immigration, cultures, and nations. It functions as a lens through which it is possible to examine the East-West relations, and to question identity, home, and effects of multiculturalism. The main question that should be raised here is: How this genre of diasporic cinema is formed? In her *Beyond Bollywood The Cultural Politics of South Asian Diasporic Film*, Jigna Desai interestingly argues that diasporic cinema refers to those films which are made by diasporic filmmakers with diasporic thematics and made in an independent or interstitial mode.⁵⁶

Diasporic movies provide a heterogeneous space where entirely different cultures and ways of life blend together, which is certainly an outcome of immigrants' self-perception, views and experiences. This undoubtedly affects diasporic filmmakers' cinematic visions and relationships with their homelands and culture of origin through films they have directed, and which are most of the time based on diegesis written by them. Therefore, this paves the way for tracing points of convergence between those films and pointing out shared narrative and aesthetics techniques in films by diasporic directors who basically have a common view towards their origin, identity and land, but each approaches them according to certain perspectives and based on specific agendas.

The increasing human mobility and cultural interaction, which I have outlined in the first chapter and which the formation of diasporic communities is of particular significance, have had considerable impact on artistic works and cinematic practices in various ways. It has affected the choice of films' subject matters and the way films are shot, produced and distributed. In this vein, the following section is meant to clarify more how this type of films by diasporic subjects operate discussing their contents, narrative and aesthetic techniques and strategies as an attempt to closely examine

⁵⁶Jigna Desai, *Beyond Bollywood The Cultural Politics of South Asian Diasporic Film*, p. 286.

features that make diasporic cinema, and to also explore criteria upon which this cinema has been categorized and labelled differently from other types of cinemas.

4. Distinctive Features of Diasporic Cinema

It might be useful at this point to examine some common characteristics of diasporic cinema and scrutinize how theorists and film critics categorize diasporic films, and most importantly, find out what make these movies diasporic. The concept of diaspora and diasporic cinema are highly connected. Diasporic cinema, like diasporas, problematizes national identity, raises questions around the homeland and the host land, and it is also regarded as a medium that engages questions of diasporic experiences. There is a variety of terminologies that refer to the definition of diasporic cinema, such as cinema of transvergence (Will Higbee), hybrid cinema, accented cinema (Hamid Naficy), interstitial cinema, transnational cinema, cinema of displacement, intercultural cinema (Laura Marks) and so on. Yet, there are specific features of this cinema that differentiate it from other cinemas regardless of the variety of terminologies used to label it.⁵⁷ As Ayca Tunc Cox defines it:

Diasporic cinema is described as a cinema of multiple allegiances and affiliation. It is a cinema located across subnational and transnational levels, foregrounding transnational mobility and perpetual interconnectedness. Consequently, it is hybrid in character and aesthetics, drawing on, first and foremost, the cinematic traditions of homeland and hostland, but also on a larger, widely available universal language of cinema. It is a cinema that privileges places of transit and nonspaces as the projections of diasporic experience.⁵⁸

Diasporic cinema, accordingly, is a cinema driven, after all, by mobility and movement. It discusses the aftermath of migration in terms of individuals' identity formations and their relationship with their environment. It is a space that celebrates differences to form diasporic discourses. In "Locating Migrant and Diasporic Cinema

⁵⁷Ayca Tunc Cox, "The Use of Music in Turkish-German Diasporic Cinema," in *Border Visions: Identity and Diaspora in Film*, ed. Jakub Kazecki (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2013), p. 142.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

in Contemporary Europe”, Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg explore many aspects of diasporic cinema arguing that any attempt to provide a definition to migrant and diasporic cinema can only lead to a form of homogenization which will not do justice to the specificity of individual filmmakers and their specific socio-political, cultural, historical and industrial context.⁵⁹ They, however, discuss seven distinctive features of this cinema.

According to Berghahn and Strenberg, diasporic cinema usually challenges national cinemas as it produces diasporic identities that go beyond the boundaries of the nation state. It is referred to as a particular type of transnational cinema in terms of production, distribution, reception, and most importantly, the subject matters that raise issues of diversity.⁶⁰ The mobility of those filmmakers has allowed them to be more likely to find foreign aids in terms of a full-production or co-production to their movies than their other counterpart non-diasporic filmmakers. This is perhaps, for their hybrid characters and stories attract more audiences because of the content that mixes cultures and calls for diversity. Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar suggest that this cinema can be understood as a “larger arena connecting difference, so that a variety of regional, national, and local specificities impact upon each other in various types of relationships ranging from synergy to contest.”⁶¹ Accordingly, this leads to enquire about the target audience diasporic filmmakers have in mind especially that, most of the time, they are the scriptwriters of their films. In this regard, Ramona Curry suggests that diasporic cinema:

refers to a set of films or other media works produced by (and often in the first instance for) members of demographic groups and often their descendants who have experienced collective, sometimes forced, migration from their lands of origin to survive in face of ethno-racial,

⁵⁹Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg, “Locating Migrant and Diasporic Cinema in Contemporary Europe,” in *European Cinema in Motion Migrant and Diasporic Film in Contemporary Europe*, eds., Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 40.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁶¹Chris Berry and Mary Farquhar, *China on Screen: Cinema and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 5.

political, or religious discrimination or displacement due to war or other economic necessity.⁶²

Since diasporic filmmakers are seen as neither belonging to ‘here’ nor ‘there’, their films too cannot be affiliated to one part. They, however, and as argued previously, use their movies to return to the homeland through, which is also one of the criteria of diaspora. But the key question is: how do the audiences perceive their movies and categorize them as diasporic filmmakers in terms of nationality and belongings?

To resume the debate over other features of diasporic cinema, Berghahn and Stenberg argue that films often mirror their creators’ memory or post-memory of migration and of belonging to a diaspora. Their movies reflect their ‘double consciousness’ or ‘diasporic optic’ via their distinguishing aesthetic approach. As they further clarify: “It is an aesthetically hybrid cinema which juxtaposes and fuses stylistic templates, generic conventions, narrative and musical conditions, languages and performance from more than one (film) culture.”⁶³ Diasporic cinema is also characterized by a dominance of journeys as well as mobility offering liminal spaces for identities in flux. They are “centrally and importantly engaged with the “other”: it adopts ‘other’ cinematic, dramatic and narrative traditions and it also pays attention to the “other within”, problematizing binaries oppositions between East and West.”⁶⁴ As a last feature, one of the strategic agendas of diasporic cinema is the relocation of the margins to the center as an endeavor to valorize it.⁶⁵

For a better understanding of the features of this cinema, I choose to depend on the work of Hamid Naficy, and to closely examine his *Accented Cinema Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* for the detailed analysis it provides. Hamid Naficy defines and analyzes some common features of the cinematic productions by a variety of exilic, diasporic and postcolonial directors who live and work in countries other than their country of origin. His major argument is that films diasporic and exilic filmmakers

⁶²Ramona Curry, “Transnational and Diasporic Cinema,” in *Oxford Bibliographies in Cinema and Media Studies*, ed., K. Gabbard (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 1.

⁶³Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg, “Locating Migrant and Diasporic Cinema in Contemporary Europe”, p. 41.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid.

make are ‘accented’. That means those accented films on the whole seem to form a specific style that is mainly affected by the filmmakers’ displacement experience. He puts it: “the accent emanates not so much from the accented speech of the diegetic characters as from the displacement of the filmmakers and their artisanal production modes”⁶⁶. The emphasis is that their accent results from their movements and dislocations. Although they might have different experiences of displacements, their films, as Naficy argues, share similar concerns, thematics, subject matters, characteristics, and production practices.

The term “accented cinema” was coined by Naficy to highlight that kind of cinema he defines as ‘different’ compared to Hollywood films and other cinemas. He assumes that all alternative cinemas are accented, but each is accented in a specific way that distinguishes it from the other, as he writes:

Most diasporic films are seen as being located outside of dominant national cinemas and media industries; they are considered to be independent or interstitial because of their supposed marginalized mode of production within the context of xenophobia, empire, nationalisms and global capitalism.⁶⁷

I shall be discussing features of diasporic cinema relying on Naficy’s theorization of the concept while simultaneously making some references to the movies under study as a way to illustrate those criteria given by Naficy. One major aspect of accented cinema, according to Hamid Naficy, is the style characterizing these films. The component of the accented style⁶⁸ includes the film’s visual style which simultaneously exhibits spontaneity and anxious formality. It is less driven by action but more by words and emotions, and it also lacks a definitive closure. As for the

⁶⁶Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, p. 4.

⁶⁷Desai, Jigna (2008). “The Scale of Diasporic Cinema Negotiating National and Transnational Cultural Citizenship,” retrieved on 28 July, 2016, from https://www.academia.edu/5669664/THE_SCALE_OF_DIASPORIC_CINEMA_Negotiating_national_and_transnational_cultural_citizenship

⁶⁸I shall make use of Naficy’s *Accented Cinema*’s Appendix A to discuss the components of the accented style of diasporic cinema.

settings, they are real locations, claustrophobic interiors, often ethnically coded, immense exteriors, homeland's landscapes, nature and monuments. There are also transitional border spaces such as airports, seaports, and bus and train stations.⁶⁹ Those sites usually go hand in hand with films that tackle issues of migration and journeying.

Concerning the filming style, the framing is closed form emphasizing "claustrophobia, control, dystopia; and open form stressing openness, possibility, and euphoria."⁷⁰ There is also an emphasis on oral, aural and vocal for the narrative structure, this is besides the fact that diasporic films are distinguished by multilinguality; that is more than one language is spoken and titled in film.⁷¹ This is obviously the case of all movies by Moroccan diasporic filmmakers under study. All films' titles are in Arabic and French or English, and almost all their characters are bilingual and even multilingual. Throughout the movies, there are different languages used other than only Moroccan dialect, such as French, Spanish, English and Tamazight as well. Other characteristics include: "intentional a synchronicity of sound and image, discontinuity of diegetic time and space and synchronous by "epistolary" media, memory flashbacks, longing narratives."⁷²

The filmmaker uses both diegetic and extradiegetic sounds and the voice over is often provided by the filmmakers or their stand-ins (reference here should be made to Hakim Belabbes' movies; *Khit Errouh* as an example). Narrative space and time are inscribed in three modalities in what Naficy defines as: timelessness/ boundlessness, claustrophobia/ contemporaneity, and transitional time/spaces. Naficy further argues, as part of diasporic cinema features, that diasporic filmmakers do a lot of self-reflecting about exile and filmmaking process, and their film's plot is usually based on and driven by memory and nostalgia for childhood and homeland.⁷³ In the same context, Moroccan diasporic filmmaker Ismail Ferroukhi admits in an interview that he

⁶⁹ This list of characteristics of diasporic cinema is taken from *Accented Cinema's* appendix A. p. 208.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

based his film *Le Grand Voyage* on his childhood memories and transferred them into a movie.⁷⁴

As for the characters of diasporic films, Naficy argues that they are presented as multilingual characters who speak the dominant language with an accent. They are often portrayed in a negative way; they are filmed as “outsiders, alienated, illegal, sad, alone and lonely. Sometimes, they are hybrid, double and split.”⁷⁵ There is also a frequent use of nonactors and real people playing themselves⁷⁶ (such as the case of the street children in Nabil Ayouch’s *Ali Zaoua*, and the female prostitutes in *Zin Li Fik/ Much Loved*). Moreover, Naficy adds that filmmakers represent themselves on image and sound track.⁷⁷

There are certain recurring thematic preoccupations that are central to the accented style: Home-seeking journey that tells about events that caused departure and exile; homelessness-journey, about wandering (Adil in *Casanegra*), continual displacement, homelessness; and homecoming journey that is about return, (Nouredine in *Ten’ja*) desire to return (the fathers in both *Le Grand Voyage* and *Ten’ja*), and impossibility of return and staging of return.⁷⁸ Many diasporic filmmakers discuss issues of identity according to their own experience. It takes different narratives through either “a quest for wholeness, for healing of split identity or simply a performativity of identity”. Those films are usually preoccupied with deterritorialization and unbelonging and they show images of family as often under tremendous pressure.⁷⁹

For Naficy, “since the accented style is not programmatic, one might speak of it as an emergent structure of feeling.”⁸⁰ It is a set of undeniable personal and social experiences of exile encoded in films. Its structure of feeling is derived from the filmmaker’s experience of dislocation, which oscillates between polar pairs:

⁷⁴Ismael Ferroukhi & Michael Toler, “An Interview with Filmmaker Ismael Ferroukhi,” in *World Literature Today*, vol. 81. (U.S.: Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma, 2007), p. 37.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p. 209.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

⁷⁸*Ibid.*

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

⁸⁰*Ibid.*

dysphoria/ euphoria, dystopia/ utopia, celibacy and celebration. Diasporic filmmakers take “masochistic pleasure in ambivalence and asynchronicity.” Their characters and film look backward as plot moves forward and the prevailing mood is filled with melancholia, anomie, fear and panic. They have hybrid characters; selectively appropriating other cultures and practices and keeping them in tension (such as the case of Ghita and her friends in Marrakchi’s *Marock*/ Soraya in *Tahiri’s Number One*/ and the sisters in Marrakchi’s *Rock the Casbah*). Finally, Naficy argues that there is always an emphasis on textures of sound, screen, cultures, gestures, looks and nature (as in Kassari’s *L’enfant Endormi*) along with a strong sense of placelessness/ displacement.⁸¹

Another defining characteristic of accented cinema is the mode of production that refers to the production, distribution, exhibition, and reception of films and videos.⁸² It is known that film, as a product, goes through three main different stages: pre-production, production and post-production. Pre-production is normally the phase of scripting, planning, adjusting the storyboard, casting, forming the film crew and most importantly looking for funds, financial sources and aids for the film. Then, it comes the process of filming, recording, editing, and as a final stage, we can refer to the distribution of the movie and the feedback it gets from the audience, critics, media and the public as a whole. Moreover, the final stage includes films box office results, awards and prizes films might receive in different festivals, along with the success and profits they gain. This significantly reflects the outcome of months or of probably years of hard work.

According to Naficy, accented cinema’s mode of production is divided into the interstitial and the collective modes. This accented mode, as Naficy clarifies:

is born out of moments of autonomy that are ephemeral but sufficiently real, such as the liminality of exile, and it serves not only to enrich the plurality of what is collectively called cinema. Dependence and autonomy,

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid.

therefore are the dual, differentially torqued, engines of the accented mode.⁸³

Accented filmmakers' work is also multifunctional and integrated in the sense that filmmakers take part in all aspects of their films, such as serving as producer, director, screenplay, writer, editor, and sometimes as on-camera talent and cinematographer. Effectively, all scripts of movies under study are written by filmmakers themselves (*Ten'ja* and *Casanegra*, however, are co-written with others) and there are even those who produced their own work, such as Lakhmari's *Burn Out*, Zakia Tahiri's *Number One* and many of Ayouch's films including *Zin Li Fik*. Naficy explains more that those filmmakers can also be involved in the phase of preproduction financing to exhibition.⁸⁴ Diasporic filmmakers, in this regard, are autonomous in the sense that they create authorship by performing different missions in their films.

Another significant characteristic of diasporic cinema is what Laura Marks refers to as *haptic visuality*. Basing her theory on Deleuz' and Guatari's work, Marks explains how cinema is able to engage the viewer bodily to transmit cultural experiences and memory of people living in the diaspora. She explains that "haptic cinema does not invite identification with a figure- a sensory-motor reaction- so much as it encourages a bodily relationship between the viewer and the image."⁸⁵ This indicates the hegemonic effects of images this category of filmmakers produce and which easily touch the viewer and triggers a physical memory that engages all senses not only visual and audible, but that of smell, touch and taste. Laura emphasizes that "the haptic image forces the viewer to contemplate the image itself instead of being pulled into narrative."⁸⁶ The condition of living between two cultures, apparently, requires a quest for new forms of visual expression and ends up creating new effective cinematic discourses as Laura Marks' hypothesis suggests. Marks writes that diasporic

⁸³Ibid., p. 45.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 46.

⁸⁵ Laura U. Mark, *The Skin of The Film Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 164.

⁸⁶Ibid, p. 163.

cinematic works “call upon memories of the senses in order to represent the experiences of people living in diaspora.”⁸⁷

Accordingly, diasporic filmmakers are distinguished by this ability of activating cultural memories of their spectators through images. Filmmakers use this visual medium to transfer that physical sense of place and culture. This obviously goes hand in hand with my argument that this category of filmmakers are in better position to produce films about and for diaspora issues. What makes them different from others is that duality and hegemonic diasporic consciousness they film and see the world through and, thus, translate on the screen.

For Naficy, accented films are a reflection of the inner side of diasporic filmmakers. They are their means of empowerment in a space where they feel marginalized, as Naficy states that “this cinema is mostly seen as the means of self-representation for long-silenced diasporic subjects, and therefore, is considered autoethnographic and accented”⁸⁸. Naficy argues that most accented films are bilingual, even multilingual, multivocal and muliaccented. He refers to this duality by ‘double consciousness’, as he writes:

Accented films are also mulatta texts. They are created with awareness of the vast histories of the prevailing cinematic modes. They are also created in a new mode that is constituted both by the structures of feeling of the filmmakers themselves as displaced subjects and by the traditions of exilic and diasporic cultural productions that preceded them. From the cinematic traditions they acquire one set of voices, and from the exilic and diasporic traditions they acquire a second. This double consciousness constitutes the accented style that not only signifies upon cinematic by its artisanal and collective modes of production, which undermine the dominant production mode, and by narrative strategies, which subvert that mode’s realistic treatment of time, space and causality. It also signifies and signifies upon

⁸⁷Ibid., p. xii.

⁸⁸Ayca Tunc Cox, “The Use of Music in Turkish-German Diasporic Cinema”, p. 142.

exile by expressing, allegorising, commenting upon, and critiquing the conditions of its own production, and deterritorialisation.⁸⁹

What lies at the bottom of all the accented films is that they reflect the double consciousness of their makers. Being aware of this duality diasporic subjects experience and live, one might raise questions over what types of movies are made by this category of filmmakers. Are they movies that are concerned with the integration of the diasporic community within the host society or movies that highlight differences and ambiguities? Many questions revolve around their representations of both sides: the homeland and the hostland, the here and there dichotomies. Indeed, thanks to this category film, diasporic communities are given a chance to be heard, and are allowed a space to speak through. Yet, one might question the common thematic preoccupations of this cinema and images it makes.

Based on previous analysis, we can definitely confirm this bound relationship between diaspora and diasporic cinema. They both put issues of national identity in doubt and are concerned with the negotiation of difference, struggles, belongings and relationships with the homeland and the hostland. In this respect, Jigna Desai asserts that “diasporic films are often concerned with questions of origins, movement, relocation and disenfranchisement in relation to the nation and migration.”⁹⁰ Desai adds that diasporic cinema frequently engages thematics associated with colonialism, nationalism and capitalism, through depictions of “diasporic dislocation, citizenship, racism and loss.”⁹¹

The idea of loss is reinforced in “In between the Accented and the Mainstream: Cutting across Boundaries in *Kniven i Hjärtat*”. Kaarina Nikunen discusses how diasporic cinema is preoccupied with themes of homelessness, alienation, longing, and

⁸⁹Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, p. 118.

⁹⁰“The Scale of Diasporic Cinema Negotiating National and Transnational Cultural Citizenship,” (2008). retrieved on 6 August, 2016, from https://www.academia.edu/5669664/THE_SCALE_OF_DIASPORIC_CINEMA_Negotiating_national_and_transnational_cultural_citizenship

⁹¹Ibid.

loneliness considering these as central to the accented style Naficy identifies⁹² where he considers sadness, loneliness, and alienation as frequent themes of accented cinema, and sad, and lonely alienated people as favorite characters.⁹³

However, diasporic filmmakers' characters usually go through transformations as they take up different journeys. Naficy has discussed journeying, border crossing and territoriality as important themes that diasporic cinema tackle. He states that:

Many accented films emphasize territoriality, rootedness, and geography because they are deterritorialized, these films are deeply concerned with territory and territoriality. Their preoccupation with place is expressed in their open and closed space-time (Chronotopical) representations. That of the homeland tends to emphasize boundlessness and timelessness, and it is cathected by means of fetishization and nostalgic longing to the homeland's natural landscape, mountains, monuments, and souvenirs. The representation of life in exile and diaspora on the other hand, tends to stress claustrophobia and temporality, and it is cathected to sites of confinement and control and to narratives of panic and pursuit.⁹⁴

Naficy's theorization of accented cinema has been challenged by Asuman Suner who has criticized its author- biographical definition, arguing that without expansion of the definition the concept may lose its critical potential. She argues that "unless the mutual entanglement between exilic/diasporic filmmaking and national cinema are disclosed, the notion of 'accented cinema' will not be sufficient liable to realize its critical potential."⁹⁵ In her paper, Suner provides a parallel reading of three films by non-diasporic filmmakers only to prove that they all fall within the same category of 'accented cinema' according to Naficy's measurements. She, therefore, claims that the cinematic styles and thematic preoccupations associated with exilic or diasporic films

⁹²Kaarina, Nikunen, "In Between the Accented and the Mainstream: Cutting Across Boundaries in Kniven i Hjärtat," in *Television & New Media*, 12 (2011), p. 46.

⁹³Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, p. 27.

⁹⁴*Ibid.*, p.5.

⁹⁵Asuman Suner, "Outside in: 'Accented Cinema' at Large," in *Inter-Asian Cultural Studies*, 7:3(2006), p. 364.

also appear in contemporary world cinema treated under the category of national cinema. She concludes that this genre of accented cinema is possible to include even films made by directors that cannot be identified as diasporic; however, their films may discuss issues of displacement, journeying, migration, and diaspora in a similar way as films by accented filmmakers. I agree with Suner's criticism that the accented style might be noticeable in other cinematic productions by non-diasporic filmmakers, but their representations cannot reflect diasporic experiences alike; this will be further explained with the analysis of movies by diasporic and non-diasporic filmmakers about diapora in the following chapter.

One last feature of diasporic cinema to highlight is the dialogue it tends to construct between the home and the host societies.⁹⁶ Diasporic movies offer a platform for diasporic filmmakers to communicate with their homelands, express their ideas, give their own opinions of their "double" life, experience, political and social issues, and their views of the country of their origin. Those views are turned into cinematic representations or images loaded with codes and messages. This amalgam nature of diasporic movies, indeed, makes "the mixture of cultures audible"⁹⁷. From another perspective, their movies also serve to communicate with the hostland as a way to talk about their own difficulties and problems there.

I suggest that diasporic filmmakers enjoy and embrace a position of power. Their diasporic space is a source of empowerment rather than a source of disempowerment in terms of their liminal and displaced status. They are products of dislocation and relocation and this movement is interestingly what makes their movies imbued with cinematic discourses. The key question that should be addressed is what kind of knowledge, images and representations of the homeland those filmmakers depict and more interestingly, how do they portray and perceive the Moroccan identity from their position and experience of life 'here' and 'there'? What elements interfere while producing their films for a global market?

⁹⁶Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, p. 6.

⁹⁷Kaarina, Nikunen, "In Between the Accented and the Mainstream: Cutting Across Boundaries in *Kniven i Hjärtat*," p. 46.

**PART III: MIGRATING SUBJECTS: THE POLITICS
OF NEGOCIATING IDENTITIES**

1. Negotiating Cultural Identity, Cultural Otherness, and Cultural Belonging in Moroccan Diasporic Cinema

Identity, from a cultural perspective, is one of the issues that raise varied questions allowing many interpretations and understandings. It is a complex notion that cannot be confined to one single study; therefore, it has been approached from different undertakings and dimensions. It is a serious issue that comes to take larger interest in different fields, among which film studies, for the puzzling position it takes. Accordingly, the major concern of this section is to study the representation of Moroccan identities and cultures through the lens of Moroccan diasporic filmmakers. I argue that to find out how diasporic subjects define identity and describe their migratory experience, it is very important to look at their narratives. As a result, this section endeavours to examine the extent to which what has been previously discussed by theorists is applicable to Moroccan diasporic movies and highlighted by Moroccan diasporic filmmakers. It also makes use of issues that have been raised before to understand a variety of constructed discourses by diasporic subjects. This section precisely scrutinizes how this category of filmmakers who are already characterized by instability and inner struggle present identity departing from their own distinct experiences and position.

It is interesting to examine how such experiences of displacement construct identity and affect the representations of issues of culture on the screen. The study of these two concepts is mainly because they both overlap and are inextricably linked to each other and most importantly because identity is constituted in and through culture. I argue that identity and culture are more comprehensible through mobility, immediate contact and juxtapositions of differences. It is through this diasporic space and via a diasporic optic that we could manage to come up with some understanding of diasporic identities and their relationship with their culture. In order to fulfil this task, a close critical reading must be undertaken while analysing and discussing the movies so as to explore the ambiguous hidden filmic discourses produced by diasporic filmmakers, and consequently, end up with a vision that helps out to figure out how

Moroccan cultural identities are visualized through the diaspora point of view and how diasporic filmmakers view the Moroccan identity as well.

This section examines how the diasporic experience influences the reconfiguration of identity in six particular films: Ismael Ferroukhi's *Le Grand Voyage* (2004), Hassan Elgzouli's *Ten'ja* (2004), Laila Marrakchi's *Marock* (2005), Zakia Tahiri's *Number One* (2008), Nour Eddine Lakhmari's *Casanegra* (2008), and Yasmine Kassari's *L'enfant Endormi/ Errag'd* (2005). It also considers the cultural representations of the Moroccan diaspora in Moroccan diasporic films, which is quite thought-provoking to understand the redefinition of the Moroccan identity and culture within a migration context and to conceive how their experiences are echoed in their films.

a. Visual Representations of Cultural Identity in *Le Grand Voyage* and *Ten'ja*

With the increased human mobility and cultural interaction, the study of the *Self/Other* dichotomy has received much interest. The diversity of discourses built around these notions makes it worth scrutinizing especially through visual mediums like cinema; the corpus of this study. Accordingly, the main purpose of this chapter is to examine the representations of the *Self* and the *Other* through the lens of Moroccan diasporic filmmakers with a central focus on issues of identity and belongings. This is with bearing in mind that this category of filmmakers produces different cinematic discourses due to their different visions, point of views, narratives and displacement experiences. Therefore, this section of the dissertation analyses two films: *Le Grand Voyage* (2004) and *Ten'ja* (2004) to obtain a more nuanced understanding of how diasporic individuals portray identity.

Ismael Ferroukhi's *Le Grand Voyage* (2004) tells the story of a Moroccan immigrant who forces his son to drive him from Marseille to Mecca to perform pilgrimage. Whereas, Hassan Legzouli's *Ten'ja* (2004) is about a young Moroccan man living in France and who has to travel from Nord-pas-de Calais to the Middle

Atlas Mountains in Southern Morocco to fulfill his father's last wish to be buried in his native village.

Produced by diasporic filmmakers, *Le Grand Voyage* (2004) and *Ten'ja* (2004) raise a lot of serious questions on the perceptions of the *Self/Other* dialectic. There is no doubt that the way people see themselves is determined and shaped when in contact with the *Other*. The *Other* in its simple meaning is known as the different; the opposite of the *Self*. Eric Landowski argues that what makes the *Self* different from the *Other* is not only how the *Self* represents itself vis-à-vis the other, but it is more about the way the *Self* shows the alterity of the *Other*.¹ *Le Grand Voyage* (2004) and *Ten'ja* (2004) approach this *Self/Other* relation throughout the whole movies in a context of a road trip taken by two main protagonists; the father and the son in *Le Grand Voyage* and by the protagonist and his late father in *Ten'ja*. All of them undertake an ongoing quest for roots and *Self*-discovery throughout their long journeys and as they meet different people.

Ismael Ferroukhi's² *Le Grand Voyage* portrays the relationship between a father and his son as they embark on pilgrimage by car. Reda, a young man who lives in the South of France, must drive his father to Mecca and be his companion throughout the long journey. From the very beginning, the journey seems to be difficult and challenging for both, especially that Reda and his father have nothing in common. Besides, Reda knows very little about his father's culture and has no clue about the meaning of Islam and the value of the trip they undertake. The wide cultural generation gap between the two is even widened by the lack of communication. Reda finds it hard to put up with his father who demands respect for himself and his pilgrimage from France through Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Syria, Jordan to Saudi Arabia. However, the two will embark on a road trip to Mecca that will change their lives and views to each other. Similarly, *Ten'ja* by Hassan

¹Eric Landowski. "L'altérité de L'autre," in *Présences de L'autre* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), p. 16.

² Ismael Ferroukhi is a Moroccan-French writer and filmmaker living in France. He is best known with his movie *Le Grand Voyage* that was nominated for many international awards.

Legzouli³ presents a road movie of Nouredine, a young man who takes the road from France to the South of Morocco respecting his father's desire to be buried in his native village. Like Reda, Nouredine is almost ignorant of his origin and is not really aware of the significance of his father's last wish, and thus, of the road trip. The journey offers a lot of answers to his unresolved questions; it is a chance for Nouredine to travel through time to his departed father's past and to learn more about his country, identity, and culture.

The trip to Mecca, in *Le Grand Voyage*, can only be seen as a long journey of quest for Reda's *Self* and identity which is almost, if not totally, lost. This will take place throughout the whole journey and via Reda's contact with the *Other*, including his father. Reda is a non-religious young man who has a Western lifestyle that he is very proud of. He speaks French all the time, and he knows a little about the Moroccan culture; his origin. Besides, his name is the only thing that categorizes him as Moroccan or non-Western. His father, on the other hand, is a religious man who still preserves his Moroccan lifestyle, culture and traditions. This is obvious through his clothing, use of the Moroccan dialect, and his cultural and religious practices. In the course of their journey and as they cross the frontiers, they meet people who speak unfamiliar languages to them and who belong to different cultures. Ironically, the father and the son also communicate using different languages. Reda speaks only French while the father speaks Moroccan dialect despite his fluency in the French language. Reda's father has some practical reasons for what language to use, how to deal with Reda and, above all, why to make Reda drive him all the way and not simply take a plane.

In fact, by providing such two completely different characters, Ismael Ferroukhi represents the feelings of alienation between diasporic generations that exist because of the differing senses of identities, experiences and belongings as well. The first Moroccan diasporic generation's life is mainly governed by their strong bond to the homeland, culture, and customs. They try to bring back a way of life they have left in their homelands, and they are always nostalgic about returning home. This is the case

³ Hassan Legzouli is a Moroccan-French director residing in France. He was born in 1962 in Adrej, Sefrou province.

of both fathers in *Le Grand Voyage* and *Ten'ja*. Their identities are always reproducing themselves in accordance to their prior identity. This confirms what Hamid Naficy argues about people in diaspora who tend to “have an identity in their homeland before their departure, and their diasporic identity is constructed in resonance with this prior identity.”⁴ On the other hand, the second generation, who are born and raised abroad, find themselves torn between two completely different cultures. They are being culturally hybridized since they are exposed to the culture of their country of origin at home as their parents are very meticulous about their children’s knowledge of their origin, and to the culture of the country they are in a daily contact with. Reda and Noureddine stand as good examples of this category of diaspora. Moroccan diasporic filmmakers, thus, highlight issues of identity formations in diaspora where they claim a heterogeneity of diasporic groups that undergo different processes of search for their own selves, and who also take various *voyages* towards home.

In this era of global migration and diasporization of the world, Ismael Ferroukhi suggests, through his movie, that it is essential to stop and think about the effects that diasporic communities have on the individual, community coherence and nation states. However, what is even more significant is to look inside these communities to understand the type of identity they construct and transmit to the other generation. As they grow and develop, they take up elements of the culture of their homeland, and mix it up with features of the host country. The amalgamation of elements from the homeland and adopted home create an identity which reflects diaspora’s “*inbetweeness*” in Bhabha’s words. Bhabha’s term is significant to examine the idea of a *third space*, which designates a trans-cultural contact zone and hybridity. That is to say an outcome of a meeting of two different cultures, as Bhabha puts it:

Inbetween spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood- singular or communal- that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative

⁴ Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, p. 13.

sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself.⁵

The negotiation of identity within this space does only reflect the real dilemma of these diasporic characters that are, almost always, in constant search for the *Self*, such as Reda. Edward W. Soja refers to this 'third space' as "a purposefully tentative term and flexible term that attempts to capture what is actually a constant shifting and changing milieu of ideas, events, appearances and meanings"⁶. The concept of third space comes to refer to spaces of constant mutual exchange, of deviance and resistance, of negotiations, acceptance, and rejection. He goes further to add that:

this "third space" has everything ranging from subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimagined, mind and body, consciousness and unconsciousness, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history.⁷

This space, accordingly, is a meeting point of a spectrum of contradictions that reflect diasporic stands and from which they begin rethinking their identities and belongings as well, and this is exactly the case of Reda throughout the entire journey with his father.

Diasporic subjects are always negotiating their identities regarding new spaces and reconsidering their belongings and affiliations. Gabriel Gabi Sheffer highlights on this ongoing process of search diasporic subjects go through:

Diaspora is simultaneously a state of being and a process of becoming, a kind of voyage that encompasses the possibility of never arriving or returning, a navigation of multiple belongings, of network of affiliation. It is a mode of naming, remembering, living and feeling group identity

⁵Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 2.

⁶Edward W Soja, *Third Space: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Massachusetts & Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p. 2.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 57.

moulded out of experience, positionings, struggles, and imaginings of the past and the present, and at times the unfolding, unpredictable future, which are shared or seen to be shared across the boundaries of time and space that frame ‘indigenous’ identities in the contested and constructed locations of ‘there’ and ‘here’ and the passages and points in between.⁸

Reda, as an example of a hybrid character, is presented as a Westernized young man since he has patently adhered to the Western lifestyle via adapting himself into the Western culture which is seen through his transparent look, his beliefs and free relationship with Lisa; his French girlfriend. In many occasions in the movie, Reda addresses his father and his culture as “*the Other*” intentionally, and sometimes unintentionally excluding himself from it. This shows the extent to which he has stripped himself off his own traditions and has instead melted into a completely different way of life from his father’s.

Unlike Reda who has embraced the French culture heedlessly, the father, as representative of a first diasporic generation, sticks determinedly and adherently to his traditions and norms. He is not easily influenced by his adopted environment and he keeps faithful to his own country and forefathers, which is highly detected in his food, dress code, manners, eating habits, and conversing with people. We notice that although the father speaks French soundly and accurately, he chooses to speak in the Moroccan dialect, and is dressed in a non-Western style. Thus, the father does adherently stick to his cultural identity which remains his *raison d’être*. In a comparative study of the first and the second diasporic generation, Dipti Rameshbhai Patel writes:

The first generation diasporic population often experiences a sense of isolation, displacement, loneliness and sense of loss in the new land, as a result they cannot intermingle with the people of other community in the settled country. Even if they try, they find it difficult for they are frequently

⁸Gabriel Gabi Sheffer, “Is the Jewish Diaspora Unique? Reflections on the Diaspora’s Current Situation”, p. 7.

victimized of the bitter experiences of discrimination. Initially they try to mingle with the new culture and society of the settled country, but their close bonding with their homeland and culture does not allow them to follow the new land's culture completely. Sometimes it takes years to get assimilated with the new land and sometimes years of living in new land also make them consider it as another country and they prefer to strictly follow their own culture in this alien country. Most of the times, their own internal problems like isolation, alienation and loneliness cause more suffering to them than the outer problems like identity crisis, prejudice and discrimination.⁹

In an interview, Ferroukhi explains the choice of the spoken language by both the father and the son. He clarifies that the father speaks in Moroccan dialect intentionally, for he wants to teach his son the dialect and mainly because he feels that his son kept distance and even lost connection with the family. Thus, the father wants to reconnect Reda with his language and culture. The movie, as Ferroukhi says, is a real rediscovery of Reda's own self.¹⁰ The choice of the Moroccan dialect is also, as discussed in the preceding quote, a way to assert the father's identity in a considered alien place.

Diasporic identities are always in process as they undergo constant transformations. They are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew along itineraries of migrating, but also re-creating the endless desire to return to 'lost origins'¹¹. This is the case of Reda, Noureddine and both fathers in *Le Grand Voyage* and *Ten'ja*. But still, second diasporic generations' desire to return to lost origins' is highly questioned since they are way less attached than the first diasporic generation and they do not really feel the same towards their origin. By the same token, what define these diverse groups of diaspora is their common experiences of living cultural

⁹Dipti Rameshbhai Patel, "Altering Trends of Diaspora: First and Second Generation Diasporic Writers," in *The Global Journal of Literary Studies*, ed. Mitul Trivedi, vol. 2:1 (India: V.N.S.G. University, 2016), pp. 4-5.

¹⁰ Ismael Ferroukhi and Michael Toler, "An Interview with Filmmaker Ismael Ferroukhi", pp. 34 – 35.

¹¹Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: an Introduction*, p. 135.

differences, through which their identities are constructed in Stuart Hall's words. It is that set of paradoxes that diaspora lived/ lives which shapes their identities as they are caught between two different cultures, using two different languages, living the present life and keeping memories of the homeland. But, we cannot refer to diaspora as a homogenous group as there are a lot of differences between the first and the second diaspora generations, thus, we cannot speak about diaspora as one monolithic discourse but "diasporas".

Drawing the debate on diasporic identity representations, Stuart Hall rejects static views to identity as fixed and stagnant. He argues that diaspora has a changing status, as he notes:

Diaspora does not refer us to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all costs return, even if it means pushing other people into the sea. This is the old, the imperialising, the hegemonising form of 'ethnicity' [...] The diaspora experience as I intend it here is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference.¹²

Hall draws attention to the complex nature of identity emphasizing its diversity and richness. This diversity is explained in the way a diasporic person is likely to identify himself even with what is outside his own original culture, values and life style, and therefore embrace it. In this regard, identity, according to Stuart Hall, is defined as an open boundaryless space that is always in the process of changing depending on time and space.

Diasporic filmmakers bring to the fore issues of identity construction in cultural difference, and the journey Reda undertakes with his father is a symbol of that.

¹²Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", p. 235.

Throughout their journey, Ferroukhi represents the *Self /Other* relations through a variety of people the two main protagonists meet on their way. Significantly, in one remarkable scene when the father and the son are lost and have no idea about directions to Belgrade, they stop the car to ask a woman they have found on their way. The woman is old, veiled and is dressed in black. She gets into their car without their consent and does not say a single word. She has strangely joined them and has refused to leave. The father's reaction to this incident is more tolerant and comprehensible than Reda's. Reda is confused and he does not know what to do. He asks his father: "what to do with her now?" "We take her with us. We have no other choice"¹³, the father replies.

The father does not mind helping the woman and taking her with them on their way, while Reda looks very uncomfortable due to her company. He is being very cautious as he keeps all the way looking at her in the rear mirror while driving. Ironically, when they reach the frontiers, the woman disappears to only find her again standing in the middle of the road. She gets into the car again and Reda becomes more anxious. He firmly refuses her company and tries many times to get her out of the car but in vain. It is only after several attempts that they manage to get rid of the old woman when Reda stops by a coffee shop in a small hotel pretending that they need a break. Reda asks his father to leave to the car and he runs hurriedly after him leaving the woman behind. Reda has already booked a room for the old woman in that hotel as if he wants to make sure she will not follow them again.

In fact, the image of that old woman embodies the diversity of cultures that one encounters while crossing borders. It is quite interesting how she disappears on the borders to only reappear in the middle of the road. It is a message to Reda that the world is full of contradictions, diversity and ambivalence, and he should find his own self in the middle of the crowd. But, for Reda, those opposite and various cultures disturb the process of his journey towards *Self*-discovery. Having refused her company symbolically means that he wants to wipe away his dilemma and find out more about himself, his identity and culture; whereas, the father who unhesitantly accepts her

¹³ *Le Grand Voyage* [film], dir. by Ismaël Ferroukhi (France, Morocco, Bulgaria, Turkey: Pyramide Distribution, 2004) (All translations of the movies' quotes throughout the whole dissertation are mine, unless otherwise stated).

company is not afraid or worried about this contact as he is aware of this diversity of cultures and he is also aware of the complex amalgam of his identity and knows how to protect it and deal with it.

Another example of the *Self /Other* representations is through their contact with Mustapha, the Turkish man who has helped them to cross the frontiers when they couldn't communicate with the policemen. Mustapha guides them through Istanbul, takes them for a tour to famous landmarks of the city including the Blue Mosque, and after that, takes Reda out for a drink at night. The father does not seem comfortable with their new travel companion who proposes to join them on their long journey to Mecca. He cautions Reda several times that he should not trust that man. Like Reda, Mustapha has an identity crisis, for he had spent more than twenty years in France before that he decided to return home. The father has felt unease with Mustapha for he knows that he is not a good example of a Muslim man for his son to be in touch with. In one specific scene, Mustapha surprises Reda with an offer of beer. He explains that the validity of religious faith depends on personal convictions rather than an adherence to rituals. He even tells him a story as an invitation to drink:

Someone asked a Sufi master who drinks wine if alcohol was forbidden by Islam. The Sufi master answered: It depends on the greatness of your soul. He said, "Pour a glass of wine into a basin of water, and the water changes its color, but pour the same glass of wine into the sea, the sea's appearance remains unchanged."¹⁴

Later on, surprisingly, the father accuses Mustafa of stealing the money he has hidden in a sock. Actually, the father has made use of this incident to get rid of Mustapha because later on Reda finds their travel funds hidden in their car.

As the journey progresses, Reda's differences are more highlighted and his position as the *Other*, an intruder, vis-a-vis his father and thus, his original culture is more emphasized. Diasporic subjects usually have this feeling of alienation and sense

¹⁴Ibid.

of *otherness* and this is what diasporic filmmakers usually shed light on. When diasporic individuals come back to their native land, they are called 'migrants' and they are looked at and dealt with as very different. Also, when they are in the host-land, they are considered as strangers. They neither fully belong 'here' nor 'there'. Consequently, this makes diaspora space viewed as a place of unsettlement where diasporic individuals are in perpetual struggle to find a position between their place of origin and place of displacement.

As the film progresses, Reda feels more estranged. The son's knowledge of foreign languages is of no importance, while the father's knowledge of Arabic culture and language helps them immensely. As they move on in their journey, they go farther from the son's present and the Western culture to the father's past: the Muslim culture. Reda, then, becomes more reliable on his father to guide him. One of the most important scenes to mention is when they join the other fellow pilgrims to Mecca and Reda seems to feel and look like a complete outsider.

Similarly in *Ten'ja*, Hassan Legzouli highlights the dichotomies of the *Self/Other* representations through a road journey back to the homeland taken by a young man in his thirties. The film's plot begins by crossing borders while Noureddine is heading to Morocco by car from France. Noureddine seems to know nothing about his origin and he is only using a map to reach the village his father is originally from. On his way, he meets a young woman, Nora, who becomes his guide and accompanies him on his road to the village. Noureddine has a lot in common with Reda. He too does not speak Arabic fluently and he, most of the time, uses French. He knows so little about the Moroccan culture and customs. This is manifested through various sequences in the movie. Throughout the trip, he is introduced to the generosity and hospitality of Moroccans when he is invited and accompanied by Mimoun, a young man whom he has met in Tangier and has spent some time with. He is also introduced to the Moroccan traditional *souks* in Nora's company. On his way, he discovers the Amazigh culture, the dialect, roads, places and the area's music and art, and by the end, he takes part in the rituals of his father's funeral in his native village with the other inhabitants.

Both Reda and Nouredine are assigned different tasks by their parents that they have to fulfill. What unifies them is their approach towards the journey as both see it as a burden that they can neither escape nor ignore. Still, their attitude changes because of the different encounters they have made on their ways. However, what differentiates them is their conscious curiousness and desire of rediscovering themselves. Unlike Reda, who seems to be persistent to change and not satisfied with the whole journey of discovery of one's roots, Nouredine is represented as open to change and willing to discover new things about his identity and he is conscious of the whole process. This is demonstrated from the very first opening scene that shows him on the borders leaving France and listening to the news in standard Arabic on the radio.

Identity, in the limelight of diasporic individuals specifically is a complex structure that allows various interpretations. It raises some key questions about whether a person is responsible for the whole process of his identity construction or there are some already innate features of their cultural identity that are just boosted and promoted throughout time. Drawing on the debate on identity, Chatman, Eccles and Malanchuk argue that identity is inevitably constructed and reconstructed through various strategies of negotiations. They write:

Throughout their lives, individuals are continually faced with new experiences and situations that, somehow, must be integrated with existing aspects of the self [...] these events and experiences can challenge individuals to reevaluate aspects of the self and subsequently engage in various negotiations strategies in order to maintain a sense of continuity in the self while adapting to changing circumstances.¹⁵

Following the above quotation, this is what makes the cultural identity of the second generation of diaspora very complex. They are exposed to two different cultures and

¹⁵ Celina. M Chatman, Jacquelynne S. Eccles & Oksana Malanchuk, "Identity Negotiation in Everyday Settings," in *Navigating the Future Social Identity, Coping, and Life Tasks*, eds. Geraldine Downey, Jacquelynne S. Eccles & Celina M. Chatman (New York: Russel Sage Foundation, 2005), p. 116.

because of this dual interaction, they are always in negotiation between the homeland and host country.

Interestingly, Albert Bandura's social learning theory can be very useful here to understand the constant formation of diasporic identities. Bandura suggests that "in the social learning system, new patterns of behavior can be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behavior of others."¹⁶ This, consequently, explains how people learn new behaviors, values and attitudes through observing and imitating the others. The journey of Reda and Nouredine, in this context, is a must trip for them to discover their true selves, learn new patterns, values and behaviors about their origin. Learning about their original culture takes place through observing other people's actions, and thus imitating them. This, according to the social learning theory, demonstrates the hegemonic side observation plays in shaping the things we know and how we do them. Here questions are raised above the type of identities to be observed, and thus, imitated.

In his movie, Legzouli shows how the issue of identity can be very complex and problematic and that identity crisis is not only limited to diasporic persons who are living away from their country and experiencing a hybrid life. He argues that even those inside their country might suffer from a kind of identity crisis due to the many transformations one experiences, the aftermath of colonialism, and the ever-encroaching Western influences. We live in a globalized world that is affecting our identities and our perception to the world and it is very difficult not to get influenced, which Legzouli's movie shows in various instances. First thing to mention is the city of Tangier: its recalling architecture of the Spanish colonialism, and the city's effects on its inhabitants and their daily lives. In a particular scene in the movie, Mimoun and Nouredine pass by an old beggar man sitting in the street. When Mimoun asks him about time, he replies in Spanish. The old man represents the aftermath of colonialism that is still present and disturbing the authenticity of the Moroccan culture in a Moroccan milieu. Another striking character is Nora, the young woman Nouredine has helped while she is abandoned in the highways. He has helped her reach her house

¹⁶Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory* (New York: General Learning Press, 1971), p. 3.

and she has, then, suggested joining him to become his guide throughout his long road trip. Nora is a young graduate from Casablanca who can only provide for her family as being the mistress of a rich businessman. Apparently, she belongs to a poor family that she is financially responsible for.

Nora plays an important role in Nouredine's journey. She is very helpful as she provides him with all necessary information and instructions concerning the road, the people and the culture. On their way, they visit a traditional *souk* where Nouredine experiences and observes the authenticity of Morocco closely. Nora is there to help him with translating some music lyrics from Tamazight to French although she seems to be very reluctant at the beginning since she admits that she has lost the dialect that she does not use at all. Joshua Fishman argues how language stands for the whole culture and by losing it, the person might consequently lose his own culture, as he puts it:

The most important relationship between language and culture that gets to the heart of what is lost when you lose a language is that most of the culture is in the language and is expressed in the language. Take it away from the culture, and you take away its greetings, its curses, its praises, its laws, its literature, its songs, its riddles, its proverbs, its cures, its wisdom, its prayers. The culture could not be expressed and handed on in any other way. What would be left? When you are talking about the language, most of what you are talking about is the culture. That is, you are losing all those things that essentially are the way of life, the way of thought, the way of valuing, and the human reality that you are talking about.¹⁷

Accordingly, language and culture are strongly bound and they both influence each other. It is quite interesting to emphasize that Nora speaks French fluently and although Nouredine understands Moroccan dialect, both of them use only French.

¹⁷ Joshua Fishman, "What Do You Lose When You Lose Your Language?," in *Stabilizing Indigenous Languages*, ed. Gina Cantoni (Flagstaff, Arizona: Northern Arizona University, 2007), p. 72.

Like Nouredine, Nora is originally from an Amazigh area, yet, she does not master the Tamazight language. This loss of language by Nora indicates a crisis in her identity. This identity crisis is not only manifested through the language Nora uses but through other intersecting elements. Nora is an example of a modern independent Moroccan woman who lives alone and works in another city away from her family. She has a certain dress code, certain codes of manners and way of life. She is open-minded and does not object to accompany a stranger. Nora, is somehow, a disappointing character for Nouredine in a context that is expected to be 'purely' Moroccan. Nora, the businessman's mistress, and Mimoun, the young man whose prior dreams is to immigrate to Australia and be reunited with his lover, both share similarities with Nouredine. They are relatively lost characters and they all represent different marginalized groups in the Moroccan society that the filmmaker wants to shed light on.

Nora is depicted as an independent woman who enjoys much freedom. She does not abide by traditions and customs. She goes wherever she wants, whenever she likes, and makes her own decisions. She is so different from the only other woman who appears in the movie; the one who hosts them in the village. Nora speaks French most of the time while she mixes Moroccan dialect with French in other times. All these elements make Nora's cultural identity provocative and questionable.

Through the character of Nora, Hassan Legzouli wants to suggest that not only diasporic people's identity is at risk but also those living in their home-country. While eating, Nora is using a fork and knife, Nouredine on the contrary is eating a typical Moroccan Tajine of cow feet with Moroccan bread and using his own fingers to eat (Figure 3 and 4). These two figures can be read symbolically as reverse roles between Nouredine who lives in the West and supposed to have Western manners and Nora who lives in her country and expected to embody Moroccan manners and ways of life. Nouredine comes to Morocco, according to his father's latest wish, to bury his father and most importantly to search his roots in a community whose authenticity is already threatened. His father, however, is probably aware of this and wants him to reach 'a Morocco' that is still not really affected and changed; which is the case of their native isolated village in the South.



Figure 3: Nouredine having a typical Moroccan *Tajine* for lunch (*Ten'ja*, Hassan Legzouli, 2004)



Figure 4: Nora, Nouredine's journey's companion, while having lunch with him (*Ten'ja*, Hassan Legzouli, 2004)

The representation of this character of Nora is a bit ironical in the sense that this woman, who is supposed to help throughout Nouredine's journey of self-discovery, has already had a hybridized identity due to mixing different manners, values, cultures and ways of life. Furthermore, the choice of the Moroccan food (figure 2 and 3) can be

read as Nouredine is welcoming the process of discovery despite its obscurity and difficulty, while Nora is more driven to the Western lifestyle.

The choice of food is very significant since food is seen as a marker of cultural identity. The symbolic value of food suggests a connection and an attachment to the Moroccan cuisine, which is a parcel part of the Moroccan culture. This instance shows, once again, a need of Nouredine's return to his cultural roots and a desire to reconstruct his cultural identity; however, it depicts the interference of the Western lifestyle even on those living within a Moroccan paradigm in the case of Nora.

This self-reconnection and rediscovery is more stressed when Nouredine reaches his father's original native village. In his article on *Le Grand Voyage*, Yahya Maanouni highlights the significance of journeying in road movies in the construction of diasporic subjects' identities. He states:

The religious and cultural heritage that constructs Beur identity has been overlooked for a long time but surges to the surface in road movies. In these films, the Beur characters' self-awareness of their parents' origin is finally recognized but is often not fully appropriated. Whether forced to make the trip to the parents' homeland or not, the journey affects the Beurs' experiences. Though the process of self-discovery is painful and challenging, it certainly alters the way they look at themselves.¹⁸

Undoubtedly, the journey is of a great importance to Nouredine as it shows the extent to which he is away or close from his roots. It is also a way to reinforce the Moroccan identity and to push him to reconnect throughout various instances during his trip. For instance, in a particular scene when he reaches his father's village, we see him participating in the rituals of his father funerals wearing a Moroccan djellaba and getting deeply involved in the village inhabitants' local traditions in an area that still preserves its *Moroccanness*.

¹⁸ Yahya Laayouni, "From Marseille to Mecca: Reconciling the Secular and the Religious in *Le Grand Voyage (The Big Trip)* (2004), p. 8.

b. From Local to Westernized identities in *Marock*

Similarly, *Marock* (2004) generates an image of a female cultural identity who is made up of both Eastern and Western elements in conflict, aiming at shaping and speaking of a new way of seeing and representing the trajectories of identity through the visual medium. *Marock* is a 2004 Moroccan film written and directed by Laila Marrakchi.¹⁹ It is interesting to mention that Marrakchi grew up in the same social upper class Casablanca milieu in *Marock* and she is also married to a Jew²⁰. The movie is very controversial as it deals with a love story of Ghita and Youri, two Muslim/Jewish high school students in Casablanca. The film portrays the life of teenagers from the upper social class while discussing their concerns, beliefs, interests and dreams within the Moroccan society. Ghita is a seventeen years old Moroccan Muslim girl who falls in love with Youri, a Moroccan Jewish boy. Like her boyfriend, Ghita is from the upper social class, and comes from a very liberal family. In this movie, Laila Marrakchi points out a variety of unexpressed taboo aspects of the Moroccan upper class category portraying the everyday life of teenagers specifically.

The movie encapsulates a variety of paradoxes within the Moroccan society in 1997 in Casablanca city precisely. The film opens up with a very provocative scene. It is very shocking and not common to see prayers overlapping with music; a car guardian on his prayer rug surrounded by luxurious Western brand cars in the middle of a nightclub parking lot. After that, the camera moves to film Ghita with another man kissing inside a car in the parking lot. They are interrupted by the policeman who asks for their identity cards and who reminds them that they are not in Sweden and threatens them to spend the night at the police station. Ghita gets nervous, for she thinks they are doing nothing wrong. She leaves the car shouting at the policeman while heading to join her friends inside the nightclub; whereas, her boyfriend silences

¹⁹Laila Marrakchi is a Moroccan film director living in France and she is most famous for her controversial movie *Marock*. She was born in 1975 in Casablanca in the same milieu depicted in her movie.

²⁰She is married to Alexandre Aja, a French film director best known for his work in various horror films and he is the son of Jewish-French Pied-Noir director and French cinema critic Marie-Jo Jouan.

the policeman with some money. Ghita seems to be very indifferent, reckless and arrogant.

Marrakchi's *Marock* (2005), too, disturbs the conventional conceptions that speak of specific features of a cultural identity. Ghita is coated in Westernized codes in terms of the foreign language she is faithful to and the daily lifestyle she adopts. She has a boyfriend with whom she spends most of her time, and she goes regularly to nightclubs and parties along with her friends. Ghita is represented as an example of a female figure living in a postcolonial society that is still affected by the aftermaths of colonialism. Therefore, and according to postcolonial studies, her identity is viewed as multiple, contradictory and even conflictual.

Identity crisis is the emblem of the postcolonial condition, and Ghita as a postcolonial character, reflects this trauma. She is torn between the acquired values and assumptions and her native traditions. The strenuous effort to balance the two cultures can be clearly exposed in cultural hybridity. Indeed, Bhabha's concept of hybridity is very useful to scrutinize Ghita's situation which allows her to integrate the other culture and its atmosphere, and hence, lead to different upshots. It makes the subject of this process endure the pain of living and adopting two different cultures, ideologies, and customs at the same time. This hybridity accordingly creates a situation of ambivalence. To use Bhabha's words, "the subject is itself always ambivalent because of the intervention of the otherness."²¹ This does not only result in a physical change, but also in a shift of identity which is more risky. Bhabha interestingly argues that "the recognition of the absence of authentic identity opens the space for recognition of identities that are neither the one nor the other since they occupy in between position."²² That is to say, the hybrid fails to comprise two identities and end up by experiencing permanent feeling of alienation and loss. For that reason, Ghita and her friends are most of the time referring to travelling abroad after getting their baccalaureate degree. This reflects the extent to which they do not feel affiliated to their environment.

²¹Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 37.

²²Homi Bhabha, (ed.) *Nation and Narration* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 211.

In his *al-Kitaba wa Tanasukh*,²³ Abed al-Fattah Kilitou clarifies the process of how a person develops a dual identity that is full of ambiguities. Kilitou explains this through telling a story of a man who gets astray and loses his way back to his tribe in a Sahara area known by its mobility. The person finds himself in the middle of the Sahara with no left foot traces to follow and get back home. It is common that the footsteps and the burning fire at night are the only two signs to facilitate directions in Sahara. But, because people are constantly moving, mobility makes it more difficult to join them again. Kilitou argues, then, that the use of language is the most helpful tool to reconnect with the tribe. This happens through imitating dogs bark so that when dogs bark back, the person is guided to his tribe through the heard voice. Kilitou further problematizes this suggesting that there might be some stray dogs that would just misguide and mislead the person more. Besides, even if the person succeeds in reconnecting with his tribe, he might live some unexpected consequences of his imitation to another sound or language. The person is likely to forget about his original voice, his identity, and, consequently, end up adopting a new imitative identity.²⁴ This can be linked to Ghita and her friends whose lifestyle is already deeply influenced by Western ideologies. Their imitation to the West has stripped them off their own culture and identity to end up having a new identity and a new imagined space that is *almost Western but not quite* using Bhabha's concept of *mimicry*²⁵.

Ghita and her friends are baccalaureate students at "Lycée Lyautée"; a well-known prestigious private institution where education is received mainly in French. They all speak in French mixing it up with some very few words of Moroccan dialect. They even speak French better than the language of their ancestors. Yet, they are not looked at as French and their attributes do not make them completely Moroccan. They dress like Westerners in mini-skirts, very short dresses, tight jeans and T-shirts with different eye-catching English words, such as *hoppers*, *USA*, *America*, and *Slippery Rock*. Their looks are inspired by Western models in Western magazines and on TV. Girls' concept of beauty is following Western standards typified by thin and skinny

²³Quoted in Lkhamar el-Alami, *Fi al-Howeya wa Solta* (Fez: Manshurat Dar ma Baa'd al-Hadatha, 2006), pp. 7-8. (Translation is mine).

²⁴Ibid., pp. 7-8 (Translation is mine).

²⁵ See *The Location of Culture*.

models. In short, those teenagers in the movie look at Europe, precisely France, and America in awe and inspiration, and they all plan to pursue their higher education there. For them, Europe and America are places of freedom, liberty and more fancy parties.

Marrakechi argues, through her film, that we cannot stop the flow of the Western cultural values, customs, products, and ways of life. This affects our identities' formations to reproduce new discourses about specificities of the Moroccan identity. Guy Hennebelle addresses, in one of his articles, the Westernization of the characters in Arab movies stating that:

Cinematic production in the Arab world [...] has been held back by the traumatic effects of colonialism. One of the most lasting and pernicious results of colonialism was a rejection of Arab culture by the intellectuals. They became more convinced that only an imitation of the colonizers would overcome *national decline and backwardness*. The result was a shallow and imitative cultural production.²⁶

I assume this is an over-generalized statement that cannot be practically applicable to all cinematic productions in the Arab countries. It does rather reduce all the Arab filmmakers' works to one entity. This is an orientalist view that emphasizes the supremacy of the West over the East. Still, for diasporic filmmakers, who have been exposed to both cultures and have been influenced by life in the West, end up producing complex discourses mixed up with both cultures. It is more than just an imitation; it is a way of life that is adopted and transformed on the screen through their own hybrid and unstable characters.

Accordingly, Ghita and her friends are interesting examples of individuals who have lost their own identity due to their immerse in a Western lifestyle within a society that is deeply affected by Western principles and that highly celebrates and cherishes Western manners according to Laila Marrakchi's views. Through those characters, we

²⁶Guy Hennebelle, "Arab Cinema," in *Middle East Research and Information Project*, 52 (1976), p. 4.

can reaffirm Brian T. Edwards' argument that "Moroccan cinema has visibly adapted Hollywood formulas and 'look'".²⁷ Marrakechi's film clearly shows that and it even eclipses the Moroccan culture with all its specificities and features. In one recurrent scene, Ghita and her friends are filmed at the top roof of Ghita's house enjoying their free time. It is significant how the camera empowers them as they are overlooking Casablanca, consuming Coca-Cola; a Western product, smoking weed, having Western magazines besides them, listening to Western music, and dancing. They are, indeed, filmed as superior adopting a different culture while overlooking their own native one (Figure 5).



Figure 5: Ghita along with her friends at the top of the roof overlooking Casablanca city (*Marock*, Laila Marrakchi, 2005)

At the outset, it is possible to categorize the movie as non-Moroccan, mostly because of the language used and the Western adopted lifestyle. There are only those small details- with interesting implications- that remind the audience it is a Moroccan movie and that events are taking place in an Arab Muslim country. Those touches include the call for prayers, the streets of Casablanca, *Chaabi* music, Moroccan dishes prepared by the housemaids, and the recurrent appearance and reflection of the

²⁷Brian T. Edwards, *After the American Century: The Ends of U.S. culture in the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), p. 144.

mosque. These constituents have an immense connotation that is the religious side (tradition), which is an Arab product, cannot be overshadowed by the Western concepts included in the movie. Thus, they are clearly disturbing the Westernized atmosphere of the film and the proposed image of a Westernized Moroccan culture according to the young filmmaker's perspective.

It is true that *Marock* reflects on different aspects of traditions, including religious practices, prayers, and fasting in Ramadan. However, these representations are not really meant to preserve the local culture and sustain the national identity. Rather than forcing local culture, Laila Marrakchi's approach to traditions problematizes their authentic specificities. Tradition in the movie has problematic implications due to the Western ideologies and the facets that are normalized and presented as the standards of modernity opposing the local culture. Modernism, in fact, is expressed through a complex juxtaposition of communicative codes,²⁸ such as language, behaviors, and intimate male and female relationships. These joining elements are the reasons for making most of the characters including the protagonist Ghita and her friends "Westernized rather than modernized".²⁹ In "Shifting Identities in Maghrebi Cinema: The Algerian Paradigm," Sabry Hafez hammers on this issue of the Westernization of the Arab cinema³⁰ arguing that one of the reasons behind this is that "the cinema of the Maghreb countries addresses itself for the mother France, because its father the third world does not understand it."³¹ Thus, the Western viewer becomes a major factor in the filmic equation so that the filmmakers must produce a work that meets their expectations.

Such confusing representations result in neglecting local identities in the making of national, cultural and social awareness about the problematic of the post colony. The question that should be addressed here is how and to what extent the colonized (the filmmaker) is able to successfully theorize for a cultural distinctiveness detached

²⁸Walter Armbrust, "New Cinema, Commercial Cinema, and the Modernist Tradition in Egypt," in *Alif: Arab Cinematics: Toward the New and the Alternative*, 15 (1995), p. 96.

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰ Sabry Hafez, "Shifting Identities in Maghribi Cinema: The Algerian Paradigm," in *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, No. 15, *Arab Cinematics: Toward the New and the Alternative* (1995).

³¹Quoted in "Shifting Identities in Maghribi Cinema: The Algerian Paradigm", p. 41.

from the West since the role of intellectuals/filmmakers is not to perpetuate colonial practices but free culture from legacies of orientalism, and colonialism?

Moroccan identity, in *Marock*, is expressed through low social class individuals and through minor and marginalized characters. These characters are the small kids selling drugs and cigarettes at the door of discos dressing in miserable ways, the chauffeurs of the family, and the housemaids who keep preaching at Ghita what actions fit in the Moroccan community.

Ghita is frequently remembered by Moui Fatma about what is appropriate to do and inappropriate to avoid in the Moroccan society. Apparently, Moui Fatma is the one who has brought up the two siblings: Ghita and Moe. Ghita is frequently reminded by Moui Fatma of fasting in Ramadan and she is blamed for not practising her faith, but Ghita is too indifferent. In one particular scene, Moui Fatma is explaining the importance of virginity in culture and religion and giving some advice of how to deal with men. Surprisingly, we never see a conversation between Ghita and her mother. Ghita's rich parents are probably too busy to take care of their children and get involved in their lives. They are liberal and do not really care if their kids abide by conservative rules of the society and follow the religion or not. When the housemaid is preparing the *Iftar* table in Ramadan at the day Moe is coming back from London, the mother says: "they are late". "There are still two hours ahead for *Iftar* time and no one is fasting here anyway"³², the father replies carelessly. "They said they would fast today,"³³ the mother answers back coldly.

Moa is back from London and it is interesting to learn that he has so much changed. Moa is another person now and this is obvious through different instances in the movie. When Ghita and Moui Fatma first see him, they both comment on his short haircut since he used to have long hairstyle. Besides, Ghita finds it strange to see him praying and he is also fasting which is not something common to happen. Moa is unhappy with his sisters' behaviour and he always complains about her look, make up, dress code, friends, and nightlife parties. He also asks her to keep away from Youri especially that he is a Jew. It is interesting how this experience of displacement has

³² *Marock* [film], dir. by Laila Marrakchi (Morocco and France: Pan Européenne Distribution, 2005).

³³ *Ibid.*

transformed Mao a lot. When he was in Morocco, he was deeply indulged in a Western lifestyle, but his stay in London has changed his views, look, behaviour, and beliefs. He has developed a new understanding of his Moroccan culture and much more appreciation to his Moroccan identity.

Laila Marrakechi's attitude to concepts of culture and identity is further emphasised in her second feature film *Rock the Casbah*³⁴ (2013), which is as *Marock*, explores notions of culture, religion, and belongings in the context of Moroccan social upper class. In both movies, Marrakchi brings to the fore the image of Morocco and Moroccans as caught between traditions and Western influences. There is always a process of negotiation of two completely different cultures and ways of life, which is a kind of liberation from a culture that restraints individuals' freedom according to Marrakechi's cinematic discourses. *Marock* closes up with Ghita's departure to France leaving her family, friends, and home behind. This is, apparently, the most appropriate outlet to a character that does not fit in the Moroccan society due to Ghita's adaptation to Western values and lifestyle.

These characters of Reda, Nouredine, Nora, and Ghita in *Le Grand Voyage*, *Ten'ja* and *Marock*, respectively, reflect the paradoxes of diaspora experience. For diasporic filmmakers, it is difficult to balance between two different cultures, which is reflected in their movies and through their film characters. They live the same liminality and ambivalence the directors live, and experience the same estrangement. Such discourses are a result of their *otherlisation* in both societies, since diasporic individuals can neither fully belong to the adopted country nor to the homeland which they look back at and film about. In this matter, Chih-Yun Chiang suggests possibilities of talking about global identities and cultures:

In the twentieth century, the upward mobility, the irresistible flow of capital, information technology, and people destabilize the traditional identity paradigm—a static sense of nation-state-based cultural identity.

³⁴The movie is 2013 French-Moroccan drama film about a family reunion at the funeral of the father in Tangier city. The three daughters and the mother are finally together after a long time. A lot of secrets are revealed and traditions and culture are highly challenged and questioned throughout the whole movie.

Globalism, following its monopolized corporate culture, leads to a seemingly unified world culture. Since globalization de-territorializes, the borders of countries and the bounds of cultures become blurred, contested, open-ended, unstable, and frequently modified. On one hand, the mobility and re-placement of our bodies destabilize our traditional sense of identity that was usually deeply rooted in a sense of nation-state. On the other hand, “localism,” or “nativism,” simultaneously increases as reaction and resistance to the global forces from the locals.³⁵

This category of filmmakers suggests, then, that diasporic identities are constructed within this liminal space where they are in constant negotiations of differences. Contrary to Chih-Yun Chiang’s idea of resistance to global forces and alterations, Diasporic filmmakers suggests that it is hard to maintain a cultural identity in the midst of all the societal changes, technological advancements and with the highly increased speed of people’s mobilization.

c. Lost Identities Recovered in *Number One*

Number One (2004) also discusses identity issues via a diasporic point of view. The movie is written and directed by Zakia Tahiri,³⁶ and it narrates the story of Soraya, a Moroccan woman in her thirties, married to Aziz who is the boss in a factory where there are only female workers. The film basically displays some contradictions between men’s and women’s lifestyles. Unlike her husband who is given the chance to venture into “free spaces”, Soraya is restricted to the domestic sphere most of the time. She is a woman who is unsatisfied with the itineraries of her life, as she is humiliated and ill-treated by a husband who embodies patriarchal ideologies. This fact makes Soraya’s image in his mind fragile, easily defeated, and even totally controlled. In

³⁵ Chih-Yun Chiang, (2010), “Diasporic Theorizing Paradigm on Cultural Identity”, retrieved on (date), from <https://web.uri.edu/iaics/files/03Chih-YunChiang.pdf>

³⁶ Zakia Tahiri is a Moroccan-French writer, actress and filmmaker. She was born in 1963 to a Moroccan father and a French mother, and she lives in Lile, France. She has produced many films- She is best known abroad for her French film *Made in France* (2001), and she has also produced many Moroccan TV series as well.

view of women's marginalization, many feminist film critics have pointed out to "the male gaze" and the male dominance that have predominated cinema since its early beginnings. Budd Boetticher summarized this view in his most used and counter attacked quote when he points out that:

What counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents. She is the one, or rather the love or fear she inspires in the hero, or else the concern he feels for her, who makes him act the way he does. In herself the woman has not the slightest importance.³⁷

Because of this claim of women's marginalization in filmic discourses, many feminist film critics have called for alternative discourses or for what Claire Johnson has coined "a counter cinema". Johnson argues that women have the potential to produce a disruptive narrative to those traditional conventions that render women to a secondary position as passive beings on the screen.³⁸ Women, therefore, are possible to gain authority on the screen. Drawing on Johnson's concept, Zakia Tahiri empowers her female character to subvert hegemonic patriarchal ideologies. When Soraya's feelings of oppression are intensified, she starts deeply thinking about a solution. She is fed up with all the frontiers that hinder her movements, and begins revolting against her position as an inferior and submissive woman, and against her narrowed and small world that the husband dominates.

Soraya's need of change starts to emerge after her meeting with Morel who comes to Morocco to do some business with the clothing factory *Maroc Star*, where Aziz works as a junior manager. What makes the role of Morel significant is the fact that she is a member of the French Federation Association of Female Feminists. Like Marrakchi's point of view, Tahiri too suggests the need of the interference of the Western culture and ideologies as a means of liberation to women in the Moroccan community. Morel is deemed to be the first card used against the dominance of men in

³⁷ Quoted in Hasan Gürkan & Rengin Ozan, "Feminist Cinema as Counter Cinema: Is Feminist Cinema Counter Cinema?," in *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 5:3 (2015), p. 74.

³⁸ Ibid.

this movie. One of the first initiatives that Morel goes for is her request to Aziz to bring his wife to their business dinner. This is a chocking request for Aziz that he, however, cannot turn down.

During dinner and for the first time, Soraya is allowed to speak for a long time without being interrupted or silenced by her husband and it is her first occasion to talk about herself, her dreams, and interests. The extreme close up on Soraya in that particular scene is of great significance since she becomes the centre of attention. The camera focuses on her facial expressions in order to show delight and satisfaction; thus, this makes the audience experience and feel her joyfulness, and make them sympathize with her. The scene introduces Soraya to the viewer for the first time as an educated woman who speaks fluent French, and who has ambition and desires to go beyond the frontiers that confine her. In this regard, Soraya says, “I wished to be a doctor or a lawyer. I wished to travel around the world, but this is my destiny.”³⁹ This scene, in fact, is of great importance, for it gives free reign to Soraya’s suppressed identity to emerge.

It is worth mentioning that Tahiri uses different techniques to show the suppression the protagonist suffers from, which will help later to disclose Soraya’s identity. Soraya, accordingly, is represented as a person longing for freedom and searching for a gate to escape through. To illustrate, from time to time, Soraya is shown browsing a collection of women’s magazines with beautiful model pictures while expressing her great interest and strong desire to be one of them and even take their position. This act demonstrates the extent to which Soraya is unsatisfied with her situation and aspires to change. This self-dissatisfaction will lead her later to resort to sorcery as another double-edged recourse for freedom and selfhood. Soraya seeks the service of a female sorcerer to change her husband’s conduct. For her, this is the main cause of her oppression, suffering and loss (figure 6). Figure 6 symbolically shows how Aziz is in full charge of Soraya’s life and decisions. The scene shows the couple having lunch while watching TV. Aziz is sitting in an arrogant way holding the remote

³⁹*Number One* [film], dir. by Zakia Tahiri (Morocco: Côté Distribution, 2008).

control in his hand while choosing what to watch. Soraya, however, is passive, lacking self-confidence and cannot express her views or interests.



Figure 6: Soraya and Aziz before the change in *Number One* (*Number One*, Zakia Tahiri, 2004)

Later on, when the magic exercised on Aziz works out well, Soroya appears completely different as demonstrated in the following figure:



Figure 7: Soraya with Aziz and their two kids after the change in *Number One* (*Number One*, Zakia Tahiri, 2004)

Soraya becomes more at ease and comfortable with her life. She gets a new look and changes her lifestyle as if she wants to efface from her memory anything that could remind her of her past life. She endeavours to eradicate the submissive Soraya and let her real self emerge. By producing an image of a woman who succeeds in asserting and finding her own identity after a series of transformations, Zakia Tahiri wants to prove that the person's cultural identity is not fixed, but rather changeable. This brings up Amin Maalouf's main argument of *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong* which state that identity is made up of a number of allegiances, influenced by the surrounding environment, circumstances, and by people around. Maalouf argues that a person does not merely grow up aware of his identity, but he acquires it step by step.⁴⁰ This signifies that Soraya's identity is an outcome of a sequence of changes, made up by a set of circumstances, and built up because of the change happening to her husband. This proves once again what Maalouf stresses: "Identity is not given at once and for all. It is built up and changes throughout a person's lifetime."⁴¹

Through the character of Soraya, the director shows that cultural identity must go beyond the fixed, unchangeable and dogmatic stereotypes about female's identities. Besides, Tahiri criticises the position of women in Morocco because of deeply-rooted conventional beliefs and traditions, and she also wants to prove that change is possible to occur. Identity, in this regard, is a floating signifier that must always be in a process of change and identification which demonstrates the continuity in our identities' formation.

Zakia Tahiri assumes that one's cultural identity is socially constructed. The cultural and the social transformations that the person experiences throughout their lifetime affect their cultural identity, such as the case of Soraya. From this perspective, cultural identity "is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture."⁴² Simply put, *Number One* invites audiences to question fixed definitions of female identities and accept identities in perpetual change, which

⁴⁰Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, p. 26.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 23.

⁴²Ibid., p. 225.

means affecting and being affected. It also calls for reconsidering traditions and customs which refrain identities' formation particularly of women and open up on Western waves.

d. *Casanegra* and *Errag'd* Reconsidered: Cultural Intrigues and the Quest for the Self

The question of cultural identity and the quest for the self beyond the boundaries is further discussed by two other Moroccan diasporic filmmakers. This section, accordingly, concentrates on two movies to examine how similar or different they are from the previously analyzed films, and to also explore more discursive patterns of identity by diasporic directors. Both movies Nour-Eddine Lakhmari's *Casanegra* (2008) and Yasmine Kassari's *Errag'd/ L'Enfant Endormi/The Sleeping Child* (2005) put the Moroccan cultural identity into debate by portraying unstable characters looking for their own true selves through symbols and while they are negotiating their identities beyond the boundaries of the nation: Spain in *Errag'd* and Malmo in *Casanegra*.

Errag'd (2004), a movie written and directed by Yasmine Kassari⁴³, opens on the wedding ceremony of Zeinab and Hassan and just the day after, all the men of this remote village in the Atlas Mountains depart to seek job abroad. Women are left behind alone in the village, for their men have chosen to leave clandestinely to Spain to find work. Soon after, Zeinab finds out that she is pregnant and decides to lull the fetus to sleep until her husband returns, but he never comes back. The opening of the movie depicts some aspects of the Moroccan culture. Men and women are celebrating the marriage ceremony in separate places. Tea is being served and women chants as they are surrounding the bride. Men, however, are dancing and singing outside.

Kassari suggests that it is very difficult to preserve one's own cultural identity from exterior impacts. She claims that a person's cultural identity is affected even in

⁴³ Yasmine Kassari is a Moroccan film director born in 1970. She had moved to France at an early age to study at high school and then moved to Belgium where she resides. She is known for her *L'Enfant Endormi/The Sleeping Child* movie that has received international awards.

the most remote areas that are considered as marginalized and less exposed to globalization and technological advancements, that are consequently disturbing the authenticity of our lives. In this village, all the men dream about immigrating to Europe, specifically to Spain. When Hassan is asked by his mother about the reasons behind leaving the village, he replies: “there is nothing to do here and nothing to wait for. Almost all men left the village and I cannot stay here and work alone in the land.”⁴⁴

Errag’d, as a postcolonial feature movie, shows the effect of globalization on the postcolonial Morocco in a small village in the South where its inhabitants, specifically women, still undergo a real struggle for liberation from a “new” kind of colonialism. Women sacrifice to preserve the land, the traditions, and the villagers’ cultural identity. They are left behind by their husbands, sons, and brothers, and are expected to stay in the village and preserve it. Katherine E. Hoffman explains this as part of women responsibilities to maintain the land and the language as well.⁴⁵

The film represents cultural identity through the relationship of the inhabitants with their village. The village stands for the inhabitants’ origin; it speaks of their roots, past, present, and future, for which women make some sacrifices to maintain. Women are considered to be the bearers of culture and be transmitters and perpetuators of cultural traditions and heritage to the next generation. In her article “The Notion of Women as Bearers of Culture”, Syeda Samara Mortada elaborates on how women can be cultural bearers when she writes that: “Women are usually expected to accept everything that happens to them without questioning, be it fate or the decisions (made for them) by their male counterparts.”⁴⁶ Yasmine Kassari calls for reconsidering and revisiting the idea of an oppressed woman who is imprisoned in her house, controlled, oppressed, and disempowered by men. In *Errag’d*, women film themselves and send videotapes to their husbands in Spain sharing their news and asking about their men’s

⁴⁴ *L’Enfant Endormi* [film], dir. by Yasmine Kassari (Morocco and Belgium: Filmmuseum Distributie, Floris Films, Trigon-fim & Film freak Distributie, 2005).

⁴⁵ Katherine E. Hoffman, *We share the Walls Language, Land and Gender in Berber Morocco*, p. 4.

⁴⁶ Syeda Samara Mortada, “The Notion of Women as Bearers of Culture in Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane*,” in *BRACK University Journal*, vol. VII (2010), p. 54.

daily life. They are empowered by the filmmaker and are, therefore, endowed a voice to speak.

It is noteworthy to emphasize that *Errag'd* opens up with a critical scene of groups of women inside a house in a closed space celebrating a marriage ceremony. Just after that, the camera moves to shoot a good number of men outdoors in tents enjoying themselves with the bridegroom. Then, all of a sudden, all the men of the village disappear and no one is present in the village except two men; the truck driver passing by from time to another to bring some available news about the departed men, and the second man brings packs of grain/crops to the women of the village. The village becomes absolutely different from the first scene of the marriage ceremony since all their men have left to Europe seeking job opportunities, and hoping to get a better life and send money to their families. There are only women left behind playing the role of both men and women. They are responsible for household and outside work. They cook, prepare and serve meals, clean the house, take care of their kids and family, tend sheep and goats, clean wool and grain and fetch water and wood. They are silently struggling and suffering the absence of their men, but they are still resisting. Sooner, as events develop, their silence is broken, and their isolation is shaken. This initially happens when Zeineb and Halima have managed to borrow their neighbor's camera to videotape themselves and send messages back to their husbands.

Kassari has given her female protagonists the power to answer back and break their silence in the village, and to let their voices be heard beyond it to reach Europe. In this vein, Valerie Orlando describes, in her analysis of the movie, the endowed voice to Halima and Zeineb by “defiant” as she states that:

In contrast to the camera lens from Spain that documents the defeat of the village men's lives, Zeineb and Halima's decision to borrow their neighbor's camera to videotape themselves allows the two women a defiant voice they never have had.⁴⁷

⁴⁷Valerie Orlando, “*L'enfant Endormi (The Sleeping Child, 2004)*, Yasmine Kassari: The Myths of Modern Morocco,” in *Screening Morocco Contemporary Film in a Changing Society* (Ohio: The Centre for International Studies Ohio University, 2011), p. 142.

The lens of the camera becomes a robust weapon to challenge the fact of being silenced, left behind and abandoned as the following figure (8) shows:



Figure 8: Different shots of Halima and Zeineb while filming each other to send videotapes to their husbands in Spain (*Errag'd*, Yasmine Kassari, 2005)

It is even when the camera is taken away from Zeineb, she does not surrender. She has gone to the closest village Taourirt along with her blind grandmother and Halima's daughter, Siham, to take a picture and send a written message on it to her husband. In her most quoted article "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Gayatri Spivak argues that women can never articulate and have a voice in a context which is largely controlled and dominated by men and colonialism. Spivak concludes that "there is no space from which the sexed subaltern subject can speak."⁴⁸ She also adds that "the subaltern as female cannot be heard or read."⁴⁹ Spivak's intention is not to claim that women cannot speak but rather their talk, in other words, does not achieve the same level of utterance as men. That is to say, their voices and utterances cannot be heard and read in a space which is monopolized by both patriarchy and neo-colonialism.

Applying Spivak's argument on the reading of *Errag'd* can only problematize its discourse especially when it comes to the end of the movie when borders are

⁴⁸Rosalind C. Morris, ed. *Reflections on the History of an Idea Can the Subaltern Speak?* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2010), p. 281.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 63.

successfully trespassed and challenged. Many instances emphasize female's hegemony to answer the question: Can Zeinab and Halima speak? The answer would be definitely positive. They are both heard since their voices have gone beyond the national borders and have affected and altered lives.

Halima and Zeineb are presented as daring and determined. They challenge boundaries and do even trespass them. This is manifested through various instances. The major one is when Zeineb decides to lull the fetus waiting for her husband Hassan to come back. She wants to have some control over her fate hoping to change circumstances the way she desires. As for Halima, she dares to break the conventional rules of her conservative area and be in an affair with Amziane; one of the few men who returned from Europe.

These forms of resistance and rebellion are having consequences later on. Both female characters are punished because of their defiant acts over traditions and patriarchal ideologies, which lead to question the possibility of a full challenge of the patriarchal system in the Moroccan cinema. Although these women are empowered in a sense that they manage to create discourses of resistance, punishment is their ultimate fate. Halima is deprived of her child and asked to leave the village, and she apparently might never get an official divorce. As for Zeineb, she is destined to wait for her husband at the hope he might return home one day. By transgressing the “*Hudud*” of the patriarchal system, women have to be punished. This notion of boundaries has been patently examined by Fatima Mernissi in her book *Beyond the Veil* when she states that:

The institutionalized boundaries dividing the parts of society express the recognition of power in one part at the expense of the other. Any transgression of the boundaries is a danger to the social order because it is an attack on the acknowledged allocation of power.⁵⁰

⁵⁰Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1975), p. 137.

Indeed, violence takes different shapes and dimensions when rules of society are infringed and frontiers are interloped. It results in portraying a serious cultural violence as well as clash on the screen. It is mainly an outcome of challenging conventional gender role patterns and violating gender spaces.

Halima's character plays a crucial role in the film. She is strong, aware of the surrounding challenges, and most importantly supportive to her cousin and friend Zeineb. Halima is aware of the pitfalls of traditions and of the constraints put on women. In various sequences, she initiates challenges and takes Zeineb outside of her comfort zone. She insists on getting her little child Siham educated, as she believes it is a significant form of empowerment. Because she goes beyond the normalized parameters, Halima soon pays the price and becomes a victim due to her infringements to male space, and to her defy to gender roles. She is disciplined through various manners; one of them is being badly beaten by her husband's family upon the discovery of her indelicacy. Later on, Halima is informed that her husband Ahmed has deserted her to find herself forced to depart the village, take her little boy and leave Siham with Zeineb and the grandmother.

The end of the movie can be still looked at positively. Halima and Zeineb are both subverting the conventional practices of their community and re-attaining a sense of independence. Kassari's movie, therefore, offers new vistas to represent female rural Moroccan identities as capable of transgressing the rules of society, prove their existence, and assert control over their life and destiny. The same discourse is found in Moroccan diasporic filmmaker Narjis Nejjar's first feature film *Les Yeux Secs*/"Dry Eyes" (2004).

Les Yeux Secs shares a lot of similarities with *Errag'd* as it too highlights women's life in a remote and isolated village in Morocco. It tells the story of a village inhabited solely by women who practice prostitution with the belief that it is their only source of income. This category of marginalized rural women is endowed with a voice to tell stories of their sufferings over men's control of their destiny. The filmmaker portrays an image of a female character who wants to rebel against women's situation in the village so they could change their life and construct a new identity for themselves.

One crucial role to highlight is that of Mina, a female character who is released from prison after twenty five years of incarceration. She returns to the village accompanied with Fahd; a young bus driver, and she is determined to find a weaving cooperative in the village to sell the women's Berber carpets in Casablanca. Her main purpose is to bring an alternative income to the women of the village to relinquish prostitution. However, at the end of the movie, "Mina realizes that she cannot change the mentalities of the rural men toward women, but she can work to alter the prostitutes' view of themselves as victims imprisoned in what they believe can be their only trade."⁵¹ She stays to set up and grow her weaving company with the older generation of mothers and sends Fahd, her daughter Hala, and Zeineb to a new destination that is not defined in the closing of the film. Through shedding light on those rural women's lives, Valerie Orlando points out in her analysis of the movie that Nejjar wants to raise audiences' awareness and attention to such issues, as she writes:

It forces Moroccan audiences to discuss sensitive topics such as social disparities due to gender, race, ethnicity, language, and economic means. Equally important, the film represents the increasing sociocultural and political inquiries that young filmmakers, particularly women, are making in order to effectuate positive changes in their homeland."⁵²

In a nutshell, *Errag'd* and *Les Yeux Secs* successfully tackle the invisibility of rural women in those remote isolated villages in Morocco through making them the center of the camera's gaze. They also show that resistance to male dominance is extremely possible even if there are some absolute sacrifices. These diasporic women, as Foster argues, "challenge dominant cinema, which is predominately [...] eurocentric, and male dominated".⁵³ Through these two movies of *Errag'd* and *Les*

⁵¹ Valerie K. Orlando, "Les Yeux Secs (Dry Eyes, 2002), Narjiss Nejjar; Berber Women's Voices," in *Screening Morocco Contemporary Film in a Changing Society* (Ohio: The Centre for International Studies Ohio University, 2011), p. 136.

⁵² Ibid., p. 138.

⁵³ Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, *Women Filmmakers of the African and Asian Diaspora Decolonizing the Gaze, Locating Subjectivity* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997), p. 3.

Yeux Secs and based on previous analysis of *Number One*, it can be assumed that Moroccan female diasporic filmmakers produce complex discourses to empower their female characters giving them more space to challenge and sometimes even overthrow conventional patriarchal patterns. Female diasporic filmmakers' aim is to patently reshape understandings of female identities and to form a counter discourse to images of women as passive, oppressed and submissive. They, instead, want to cherish a quest for female freedom, strength and emancipation on the screen. Female directors have moved beyond the margins of male-dominated representations to command new spaces and discourses leading to new shapes of identities.

Similarly, Noureddine Lakhmari's⁵⁴ *Casanegra* gives a voice to another category of marginalized people in the society: unemployed youths living in Casablanca. The dramatic story revolves around two ordinary young men who are put in the margin of the society. They find themselves leading a daily life marked by misery, unemployment, poverty, violence, and all social problems. Despite their suffocating reality, they remain ambitious and willing to escape their vicious circle with whatever means possible. Adil suffers from his violent stepfather, who always beats his mother. This urges Adil to stick to his dream to find the "Eldorado," the Swedish town of Malmo and eventually leave his "Casanegra" behind. Karim is a bit more optimistic; he seeks to assert himself within his society so that he could satisfy his destitute family's needs. Nevertheless, what unifies Adil and Karim is their attempts to do whatever possible to have a better life.

The film is given an ironical title: *Casanegra* is literally a Spanish word that means "the black house". *Casanegra* gives a pejorative image of Casablanca, the real name of the city which literally means the white house. It is an "alternative" cinema in the sense that minor characters are given much attention. Much space is devoted to the people who are put in the periphery, which empowers them and gives them an opportunity to express themselves and tell their unsaid stories. Casablanca city is presented through their own perspectives and hard circumstances, which renders it a

⁵⁴Noureddine Lakhmari is a Moroccan director known for his trio films (*Casanegra*, *Zero* and *Burn Out*). He was born in 1964 in Safi and he has spent several years of his life in Norway.

black place. Interestingly, most of the scenes are shot at night in the dark, a technique used by the director to mirror the characters' interior anxieties.

Because of the bleak image of Casablanca and the continuous pull of social problems and paradoxes such as poverty, unemployment, and violence, Adil busies himself with his dream of leaving Morocco. He manages to find an outlet through which he can escape the closed spaces of "Casanegra". For him, the postcard of Malmo is like a window through which he imagines another world and another *self*. In this regard, Adil's identity is merely lost or imagined; he does imagine his identity as someone somewhere else. He imagines it the way it looks on the postcard he carries with him most of the time, as clean, white, and overwhelmed with surprises and happiness (figure 9).



Figure 9: Malmo as portrayed in Adil's postcard in *Casanegra*
(*Casanegra*, Noureddine Lakhmari, 2008)

Foucault's theorization of space is of great importance to examine the effect of space on identity. Michel Foucault suggests that there are two types of spaces: utopias and heterotopias. Utopias, as defined by Foucault, are sites with no real place; it is a non-existing model of space and non-existing model of society. Other real spaces, however, are called heterotopias to refer to those spaces that embody different

meanings and connotations other than what the eyes basically see.⁵⁵ These terms are quite interesting when examined within specific cultures and societies. Foucault claims the possibility of joining these two spaces together, as he says: “I believe that between Utopias and these quite other sites, these heterotopias, there might be a sort of mixed, joint experience, which would be the mirror.”⁵⁶ These spaces, as Foucault argues coalesce in what he calls a virtual space, comparing it to the mirror. He clarifies:

The mirror is, after all, a Utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the Utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy. From the standpoint of the mirror, I discover my absence from the place where I am, since I see myself over there.⁵⁷

These concepts are significant while analyzing Adil’s relationship with the two spaces of Casablanca and Malmo. Indeed, the city of Malmo can be read as a placeless place or a mirror where Adil sees himself, yet, he is not there. The postcard of Malmo becomes a mirror through which Adil imagines himself. This self-recognition reminds us of Jacques Lacan’s developed concept of “the mirror stage” as a key moment in the formation of the subject. This can be further explained when Adil clearly states:

This postcard enables me to forget everything [...] to forget the traffic jam, to forget the policemen who always run after us, to forget those who drive flux cars, to forget the vagabonds, to forget those women who use children

⁵⁵ Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” in *Visual Culture Reader*, ed. Nicholas Mirzoeff (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 239.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 239.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 240.

for begging, to forget the fundamentalists who want us to enter paradise by force, to forget Saudi pent-ups who mess this country, to forget Casanegra. Malmö is where I want to be in a little house with a chimney where I can watch the snow falling outside.⁵⁸

This shows once again that Adil's dream is a way to escape the social and spatial marginalization looking for "a new" *self* or uncovering an oppressed one. The "here" Casablanca becomes alien, unusual and strange to the subject, and the "there" Sweden is envisioned as "home". He is immersed in his fantasies in the hope that they will be realised one day; it is a constructed safe space that is imagined through a postcard rather than experienced. The city of Malmö, in fact, contradicts the image of Casablanca in the movie as the following picture demonstrates (figure 10):



Figure 10: Casablanca as portrayed in the movie *Casanegra* (*Casanegra*, Nouredine Lakhmari, 2008)

The audience is invited to see nothing but darkness in Casablanca (figure 9), the white city turns out to be "Casanegra" as a problematic way of revealing the inner psyche of the characters, especially of Adil whose search for his identity continues until the very end of the movie. Malmö has changed to Bergen though viewers, for a second, might think that the dream evaporates when Karim tears off Adil's postcard.

⁵⁸*Casanegra* [film], dir. by Nour-Eddine Lakhmari (Morocco: Bodega Films, Moonlight Films, Sigma Production & Sigma Technologies, 2008).

However, Adil's search for his sole dream goes to having a new postcard: a new imagined identity.

It is noteworthy that there is much focus on male protagonists in *Casanegra*. The two friends Karim and Adil typically make the decisions which lead the story, and are assertive and dominant, while women are shown in need of protection and direction, and their major role is to offer love and support to male characters. Female characters fall inside the same boundaries of searching for their own selves where it overlaps with the search for a cultural identity whose image is blurred and affected on the screen. One example to mention is one of the most striking female characters in *Casanegra*: the belly dancing woman (*shikha*), who works in a nightclub.

It is common that *shikha*, a singer/dancer woman, embodies traditions, and she is also known as part of the Moroccan culture regardless of what further connotations of her occupation might denotes. She usually dresses up in Moroccan clothes, known among people as traditional. However, *Casanegra* introduces *shikha* in/with a different context. She works in a nightclub- a dominated male space. She smokes, drinks alcohol, and dresses up in Western clothing though *shikha* is usually thought of as being traditional with a Caftan. Besides, she defines herself in relation to Zirek, the owner of the nightclub and her husband-to-be, and she is completely dependent on him. Ironically, in one particular scene, when Zirek is singing his frequent song "hello, hello, my name is Zirek, I'm from Casablanca"⁵⁹, she also sings with him "my name is Zirek"⁶⁰.

Through this character of *shikha*, we can notice the permanent clash between tradition and modernity which affects the representation of a cultural identity, but it does not necessarily lead to violent conflicts. I can even argue that this clash generates a new identity formation which combines features of both sides; of tradition and modernity in what Homi Bhabha calls "hybridization". I assume that this feature of "hybridization" can only lead identities to a state of crisis or "inbetweeness" where they are neither traditional nor fully modern.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid.

Nour Eddine Lakhmari projects an imagined world where the nightclub ‘*Tout va bien*’ is a contact zone of tradition (*shikha*) and modernity (the place itself). This clash between tradition and modernity is a result of differences between cultures, since modernity is considered a Western product. Anthony Giddens asserts that “when we speak of modernity, however, we refer to institutional transformations that have their origins in the West.”⁶¹ The question that must be addressed is how far is modernity distinctively Western?

In his *Questions of Modernity*, Timothy Mitchel argues that if modernity had its origins in reticulations of exchange and production encircling the world, it was not then a creation of the West, but an interaction between West and non-West.⁶² Hence, can we still always speak of clashes between tradition and modernity when they both come into contact? Do any of them obliterate the other? Having this in mind and by giving such image of a female character torn between what is modern and traditional, does only visualize an unstable character losing the specificity of their own true self and own culture.

Lakhamari also discusses tradition as a possible barrier to women’s advancement through the two female characters: Adil’s and Karim’s mothers. Adil’s mother can be called “traditional”, not because she enacts traditions per se, but she is a woman who does not take responsibility for herself. She lets men determine her fate and seems unable to live without the guidance of men in her life. She apparently has a job; however, this is not the woman we see. We only see that woman who allows her husband to take her money, to beat her up, to denigrate her and her son. Even escaping the abusive husband is only done when Adil gives her bundles of cash and urges her to leave. Therefore, this type of woman is only called traditional because women have traditionally been subjugated to the men in their lives--their fathers, their husbands, their sons; they don’t take the reins of fate into their own hands.

Karim’s mother can too be called traditional because she is what the usual rendering of a “good mother” would be. A woman who stays at home and waits for

⁶¹Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (U.K.: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 174.

⁶²Timothy Mitchel, *Questions of Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 2.

money to come in from outside while she cooks, serves food, takes care of the children, and of the ill husband. Yet, she is a strong woman, unlike Adil's weak mother, but perhaps these are two sides of the same "tradition". If tradition, for Lakhmari, parallels only women's oppression and if the amalgamation of tradition and modernity produces unstable characters that are not really accepted in the Moroccan context since they are seen as violating the rules of the society, what is the image of a Moroccan modern woman in the eyes of Lakhmari, and in the limelight of his movie *Casanegra*?

Lakhmari and Marrakchi present modernity as strongly linked to the West. Nabila in *Casanegra*, and Ghita in *Marock* are two independent 'modern' female characters. Nabila is the owner of an antique shop, a divorced woman who looks after her child. Ghita is a rebellious indifferent high school teenager. They both look Westernized. They mostly speak in French and often dressed up in Western clothes. They go to nightclubs, and they deal with the sexuality of their body as they want not as what 'custom' and 'religion' dictate. Being a modern woman through the lenses of both filmmakers of *Casanegra* and *Marock* is only an act of mimicry to the West. That is to say, to become modern is to act like the West without taking into consideration the cultural, religious, and social differences between the East and the West. Therefore, the Moroccan audience cannot consider Nabila and Ghita as two Moroccan characters that represent their cultures, but as shocking characters going against the common mainstream.

Having discussed the representations of identity in Moroccan cinema through a diaspora lens, it is obvious that filmmakers produce unstable characters, and bring to the fore some thorny issues because of ongoing rethinking of belongings and affiliations. It can be even stated that those representations of identity on the screen share common concerns; that is to discover and know the self, and the need to negotiate between the old identity and the new one. Diasporic filmmakers also want to prove that those who are inside and outside the boundaries are the same regarding identity crisis and the interference of completely different elements of various cultures. It can be concluded that those characters are mainly a reflection of their filmmakers' own identities, and they echo their statuses of ambivalence. In an interview with

Ferroukhi about his movie *Le Grand Voyage*, he is asked if Reda is a reflection of himself, he replies:

If you could say that, yes. Because I also don't speak Arabic very well. I understand it but don't speak it. I am like Reda, yes. I am rediscovering my culture. My parents left France to return to Morocco twenty five years ago. Even though I went back to Morocco from time to time as a child, it was on vacation and only for short visits. I am rediscovering the country and its culture. Yes, I am like Reda. This story slightly autobiographical. Not that I took a trip like that with my father, but you know I try to be as sincere and nuanced as possible in the film. I based it on my life. It is true that I feel a connection to Reda, but everyone who sees the film seems to feel a connection to Reda. I find this reassuring.⁶³

Accordingly, diasporic filmmakers depart from their own experiences to tell their stories and discuss their fears, aspirations, and anxieties. I argue that their view of the hybridization of the Moroccan identity is a way to assert their identities within a Moroccan framework that they believe it is not too much different from their own diasporic space. Diasporic filmmakers' identities are reflected through the way characters are represented in their movies.

I conclude from the analysis of identity representations in *Le Grand Voyage*, *Tenja*, *Number One*, *Errag'd*, *Marock*, and *Casanegra* that films of migrant and diasporic filmmakers mainly aim at redefining our understanding of the Moroccan identity as constructed, and as an outcome of a number of proliferating migrations taking place. Diasporic cinematic discourses revisit static and traditional understandings of national identities and challenge what it is meant to be Moroccan. I argue that diasporic filmmakers occupy a specific position that allows them to study identity and culture issues from various perspectives, which consequently distinguish their work from non-diasporic filmmakers.

⁶³Ismael Ferroukhi & Michael Toler, "An Interview with Filmmaker Ismael Ferroukhi", p. 37.

Diasporic filmmakers' unsettlement ends up constructing various discourses on identity issues. This dilemma of identity arises when one is not sure where to belong or where to place oneself among others. It is that experience of displacement which has had a profound impact on artistic cinematic productions of diasporic filmmakers.

Moroccan diasporic filmmakers project a new Moroccan cultural identity that is composed of various components of the East and the West, but still, male and female diasporic directors' representations are different. For that reason, the following section is meant to elaborate more on how filmmakers' gender affects identities' representations on the screen and what kind of images those filmmakers produce. The key question is about whether their displacement experience affects their views of gender in the Moroccan conservative society and how is it transmitted via their movies' narratives?

2. Representing Gender in Diasporic Filmic Discourses

There is no doubt that the media plays a crucial role in influencing people's daily lives, views of themselves and of the world. Films, specifically, have a profound impact on how we see social, economic, cultural and political issues. Cinema, as a vital and strong visual medium that is embedded with codes and signs, affects our perception of other cultures and their people as well. Cultures, nowadays, are being easily exposed through cinematic representations, and people's interest to discover, learn and explore is at its height. In the previous chapter, it has been argued that Moroccan diasporic filmmakers represent identity differently and one aspect of this difference has been proven to be based on their gender. This section, thus, further examines those points to probe gender representations and more specifically in relation to who is behind the camera. Analysis to gender representations, yet, will be mainly scrutinized in relation to space in Moroccan films by Moroccan diasporic filmmakers.

Space is a salient component that allows a nuanced understanding of gender identities' formation. It is one of the mandatory factors in the cinematic sphere. It shapes the story, orients the viewer, and contextualizes the process of the characters' development and of the plot as well. It is interesting to note that space differs from one film to another and it affects female and male characters differently. Those representations, however, have a vast impact on the viewer and they convey so much about societies' structures. This section endeavors to discuss all these elements for a better understanding of the relationship between gender, space, and cinema.

Place is not transparent and unproblematic as one might think of it. It is full of ambiguity, especially when it is metamorphosed to space. Meanings of space become negotiable and questionable in the process of developing, creating, and constructing implications. Yi-Fu Tuan argues that "the meaning of space often merges with that of place, 'space' is more abstract than 'place'. What becomes undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value."⁶⁴ Accordingly, we assume that the terms 'space' and 'place' have different connotations. Talking about

⁶⁴Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 6.

‘place’ in movies can only refer to a physical environment, which is not the case of ‘space’. Space, in cinema, plays a crucial role in presenting and contextualizing the story of the movie since it refers to the dimensions of lived experiences and characters’ interactions with places. More interestingly, space allows an understanding of gender and cultural identities through filming life practices within different places.

In *Writing Women and Space*, Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose suggest that there are two gendered spaces in society: public and private. They argue that this division of space has a deep hand in determining the roles of both men and women. The private space represents all that is in connection with motherhood and childhood. Thus, it is a woman’s space. The public space is all that is in connection with politics, culture and economy, and it is a man’s space.⁶⁵ I argue that Moroccan diasporic filmmakers, specifically women, as post-colonial subjects, are aware of the social changes taking place in their societies especially regarding the position of women, which consequently affect their vision while dealing with space and in relation to gender. Space, in cinema, becomes a negotiable entity where ‘old network voices’ are challenged due to the emergence of filmmakers’ ‘new network’ of consciousness.

Movies can go beyond these binary oppositions in patriarchal societies that construct some spaces as “feminine” and others as “masculine” and thus allocated certain kinds of gendered activities to certain *gendered* spaces. Although these movies strive for challenging such discourses, they still perpetuate gendered views in one way or another. Zakia Tahiri’s *Number One* (2008) and Noureddine Lakhmari’s *Casanegra* (2008) show how the cinematic space can be highly male or female conquered. Meanwhile, there is a challenge and a counter discourse to such conventions. This section, hence, examines gender representations within cinematic spaces by both male and female diasporic filmmakers.

⁶⁵ Alison Blunt & Gillian Rose, eds., *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1994), pp. 1-2.

a. Gender Roles Restaged: Femininity Challenges Masculinity in *Number One*

Gender issues have always been a subject of debate, controversy, and polemic. It has also always been one of the most dominant themes in Moroccan cinema that is usually dealt with as a parcel of the Moroccan culture. Several Moroccan movies have been concerned with the representations of the inferior position women occupy in the Moroccan patriarchal society. To list but few, *Araess men Kassab* (1981) by Jilali Farhati, *Badis* (1987) and *Baht an Zawj Mraati* (1993) by Mouhamed Abedrrahman Tazi and *Mohakamat Mra'a* (2001) by Hassan Benjloun. However, recently, a new mode of cinema has emerged that aims at challenging the patriarchal system through different stories such as *Lo'qba Lik* (2008) by Yassine Fanan, *Casawiyat* (2009) by Narjiss Najar, *Argana* (2006) by Hassan Rhanja, *Number One* (2008) by Zakia Tahiri, *Kharboucha* (2010) by Hamid Zoughi and many others. Since the scope of this work is narrowed to only movies by Moroccan diasporic filmmakers, this section will continue the debate already raised to examine diasporic filmmakers' construction of filmic discourses in relation to gender issues. It is an analysis of the discursive patterns of gender roles in cinema under the limelight of Moroccan diasporic movies. It mainly endeavors to scrutinize the impact of dislocations and displacements on perceptions of gender hierarchies within the persistent negotiation of the present and the past, traditions and alterations.

There is no doubt that gender representations are so much affected by who is behind the camera. Women are more underrepresented on-screen by male filmmakers than by female filmmakers. Films produced by female diasporic filmmakers highlight more on gender issues and give more space for women characters in their movies. They revisit gender roles, challenge patriarchy and criticize the position of women within society. Diasporic male filmmakers, on the other hand, almost always give small if not to say unimportant roles to female characters such is the case of *Casanegra*. But, they are still presenting some intricate challenging discourses of gender representations influenced by their hybrid position that is made up of two different cultural components. This confirms what Hamid Naficy (2001) talks about

when referring to some statistics of the number of Middle Eastern and North African diasporic filmmakers:

The majority of filmmakers were men, reflecting the dominance of patriarchy within the sending nations and the general pattern of migrations worldwide, which have favoured the emigration of men ahead of their families to establish a beachhead for chain migration. This gender imbalance also reflects the belief, common to Middle Eastern and North African societies, that cinema is not a socially acceptable, religiously sanctioned, and economically feasible enterprise for women. The patriarchal ideologies of the receiving countries, too, contributed to women's underrepresentation.⁶⁶

Space, in *Number One*, is being reconstructed, loaded with new meanings and dimensions. Although it starts highlighting binary oppositions between men's and women's spaces, it later goes to restructure and reshape them. The beginning of the movie emphasizes the division of space in relation to men's and women's cultural and societal practices within a patriarchal system. In view of that, Moghadam argues that in patriarchal societies the ideal woman's proper role is a housewife and a mother, a position that for her is noneconomic and correctly played out in the privacy of the domestic sphere. She suggests that men appropriately take the position of the breadwinner and operate in the economic realm outside home. Consequently, this distinction maintains a divide between men and women and also leads to the separation of the private and the public: home and business⁶⁷. *Number One* highlights these gendered divisions through the depiction of a society that is led and controlled by patriarchal ideologies.

Zakia Tahiri's *Number One* depicts a typical image of a patriarchal society that is based on and led by male dominance. Soraya holds the position of an educated housewife who lives within a closed space that is home. Therefore, she is completely

⁶⁶Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, p. 18.

⁶⁷Valentine M. Moghadam, *From Patriarchy to Empowerment: Women's Participation Movement in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Africa*, p. 170.

dependent on her husband who holds the position of the provider of the family. Man's authority in the family as portrayed in the beginning of the movie is legitimized by the notion that women are economically dependent, which affects their access to different spaces. As the story develops, gendered spaces are being revisited and rethought in the sense that the public sphere is no longer fully and exclusively dominated by men. Soraya is allowed by her husband to have a full access to the public sphere freely. Aziz is also violating women's space and shown in the kitchen cooking and doing women's role. According to Zakia Tahiri, patriarchy is the major cause behind male's and female's space dichotomies. That is why the movie goes further to depict an imaginary view of a society that challenges and even overthrows patriarchy when spaces are reconsidered and reordered by the filmmaker.

Number One, as a film produced by a woman director, can be looked at as a real challenge to men's hegemonic stand in society as well as an attack on the whole patriarchal system where man is deemed as "number one" as the movie's title ironically suggests. The movie, explicitly, is a mockery to men's power in the person of the protagonist Aziz Bidaoui. This latter, who considers himself as the most powerful and dominant, will undergo a radical change caused by a woman whom he always considers weak and dealt with as inferior. However, the techniques the movie director employs undermine and subvert this counter-discourse of the movie.

This image of man's monopoly and the representation of Aziz as the best example of a man who represents patriarchy in all its facets are to soon collapse in the movie. One day, after some women's gossip, Soraya decides to resort to sorcery hoping to change her husband. Soraya seeks the service of Chama, a female sorcerer, who gives her a potion to add to her husband's dinner. The change happens and Aziz becomes another person. He shifts to behave super kindly with his wife and addresses his female co-workers with so much sympathy. He is no longer the autocrat boss, neither at home nor at his workplace. Aziz becomes sympathetic towards everyone and starts to get closer to the female world. Thus, he is now able to feel their sufferings and understand their problems. More than this, he becomes deeply involved in their private sphere as figure 11 demonstrates, this time not as a dictator, but as an active

participant. As a result, this radical change has brought so much joyfulness and happiness to his wife Soraya and all his female co-workers.



Figure 11: Aziz' portrayal before and after his radical change (*Number One*, Zakia Tahiri, 2008)

Aziz is the only exclusive case in the movie of a man who undergoes radical transformations. Hence, he is looked at as a misfit in the Moroccan society. His male friends start to feel worried about him and his neighbours blame him badly. This leads Aziz to get concerned too and when he starts to think seriously about the new change he is going through, he decides to consult a psychoanalyst. Aziz's concern goes to the extent of explaining his new status as being homosexual.

There are two important points about *Number One* which demonstrate a real challenge to men's hegemonic position and an attack to the patriarchal system of the Moroccan society where man is the core of everything. First, it is a reaction to that prestigious position that is monopolized exclusively and solely by men. The message of the movie is clearly and explicitly expressed: if we, as men and women, share the same world, why don't we enjoy the same rights, experience the same lifestyle and have access to similar spaces? Second, that man, who embraces dictatorship whenever he goes and whose words are to be heard under whatever circumstances, at home and at work, can be controlled and transformed in a complete way from that woman whom he considers all the time as helpless and weak. Aziz has lost his authoritative role and the change has deeply affected him. He finally acknowledges the presence of women

as full human beings and he no longer denigrates them. When Aziz consults the doctor, he starts complaining about his inability to talk to any woman in the same authoritative old way.

Through the character of Aziz, Zakia Tahiri draws a new vision of men's attitude towards women as individuals who should be equally treated as men. For the first time, Aziz views women as full beings and acknowledges their identities. Interestingly, he no longer calls the female workers by numbers but by their own names. In a particular sequence, while talking with el-Iraqi, the manager and owner of the factory, Aziz defends the female employees' rights stating that "they too are humans."⁶⁸

Furthermore, in another significant scene when Aziz is driving back home, he looks around him and finds himself in a world that is full of women. He sees women playing the roles of men and men playing the roles of women. Women are sitting in coffee shops, smoking, reading newspapers, and walking in the street, whereas, men beat carpets over balconies and do household tasks. This scene portrays how gender roles can be radically changed if gendered spaces are reversed, and it also reminds us of Judith Butler's concept of *performativity* in gender roles. According to Butler, gender must be broadened and developed. A person's identity is the outcome of their actions, gestures, and behaviors. Butler defines the concept of gender as follows: "Gender is the mechanism by which notions of masculine and feminine are produced and naturalized, but gender might very well be the apparatus by which such terms are deconstructed and denaturalized."⁶⁹ This taken-for-granted and well-established structure of genders is possible to be deconstructed through the subversion of gender roles and through creating different forms of performances, a hypothesis that *Number One* raises accordingly. Based on Butler's theory, Tahiri too suggests that gender should be rethought through subverting and reordering gender roles. But how could this be accepted by a man who monopolizes power?

One day when el-Iraqi suddenly shows up in the factory, he finds Aziz among the female employees behaving so kindly. The scene provokes el-Iraqi, which makes him

⁶⁸*Number One* [film], dir. by Zakia Tahiri (Morocco: Côté Distribution, 2008).

⁶⁹Judith Butler, "Gender Regulations," in *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 43.

feel very offended and disappointed. He then fires Aziz as an expression of his dissatisfaction. His reaction is coming out of a feeling of danger from such transformation that symbolically threatens men's patriarchal principles. For el-Iraqi, Aziz has broken the rules of his society and has to be punished. Iraqi states ironically: "Is this number one? You are zero."⁷⁰

It is noteworthy that el-Iraqi is not the only person who attacks Aziz's new status, but almost all the men who notice the change. When Aziz is with his wife at the bank, the bank director feels flabbergasted from the gentle way Aziz deals with his wife, especially that he comes to create a personal bank account for his non-working wife. In doing so, Soraya is no longer dependent on her husband which the male bank director considers as another violation to the patriarchal ideologies. His neighbours, too, blame him for causing them more trouble in the sense that he becomes the ideal man that all women ask their men to follow his steps.

It is significant to mention that, by providing such cinematic discourses, the filmmaker wants to highlight the idea that all men in this society share the same patriarchal views. However, the irony of the movie is that most of them are represented as wearing masks to hide their own realities. They all have to appear in front of other people with a certain image so as to fit in a society that celebrates patriarchy at its finest. In the film, one of Aziz's friends confesses that he was married to a French woman and he used to clean, cook, and give his salary to his wife and he was very happy with her. When his family in Morocco knew about his life, they asked him to divorce her and come back to his country. Through this character, Zakia Tahiri wants to claim that society is responsible to a great extent for shaping individuals' patterns, as she also criticizes the contradictory beliefs they embrace.

Being aware of the changes he is going through, Aziz resists at the very beginning but after losing hope to get back to his old status, he starts to adapt to his new situation. In this respect, Aziz says:

I, unconsciously, have started to show sympathy to the female employees and I even call for their rights. I have consequently lost my job. I have

⁷⁰*Number One* [film], dir. by Zakia Tahiri.

become another person. My behaviour towards my wife has changed. I have started to feel freer than ever before and happier. I have got closer to Soraya and I do not see her as I used to do.⁷¹

Significantly, Aziz's new behaviour is imposed on him. He himself, at the beginning, was not satisfied with his new life, and the proof is his act of searching for a solution that could put an end to his misery. He has consulted doctors and he, after that, has resorted to a *Fqih*. There is a set of contradictions in *Number One* that can be summed up in one main question: If a feminist man cannot fit in the Moroccan society and is severely attacked by men, how can the movie serve as a call for men to dispense with the ideologies of patriarchy that celebrate divided spaces?

It is salient to stress that it is a woman who is behind the change Aziz undergoes. Aziz becomes unable to revert to his normal self. He cooks, cleans, and does the laundry. At the very beginning, he was unsatisfied and resorted to many doors to reverse this new situation. Frightened by the changes in his personality, he seeks the advice of the *Fqih* who admits to be completely powerless in front of the force that has brought in that change in Aziz's behaviour. This act, in fact, can be interpreted as a very powerful feminist statement. That is to say, women's power can ultimately overrule even the most tyrannical man, and the form of this power is represented through a female sorcerer. By depicting Aziz's problem as unsolvable, Zakia Tahiri challenges men's hegemony, claiming explicitly and strongly that women are more powerful and their power cannot be defeated.

Women in *Number One* are bored and even sick of their situations. They know they can fight for their rights, and most importantly, they know that they do not really have to fight against men. Women know that, taking the movie into account, a positive change for women's interests is possible on men's side, following the example of Aziz someone who turns into a model which paves the way to a new mode of thinking, to an open-eyes stage in which women are now aware enough to continue living that way. Making women completely aware of their conditions is just another technique used to empower the feminist discourse in this movie as Gerda Lerner states in her *The*

⁷¹Ibid.

Creation of Patriarchy (1986): “The coming into consciousness of women becomes the dialectical force moving them into action to change their conditions and to enter a new relationship to male dominated society.”⁷²

Number One examines the patriarchal practices and depicts them as real obstacles to the progress of society. Androcentrism is represented as a stigma that requires being removed so that society can progress and relations between men and women can work out well. Aziz's androcentric ideas are the main cause behind keeping Soraya at home and depriving her of leading the life she has always dreamed of. The movie clearly shows the mistreatment of women by men and their daily suffering from patriarchal beliefs. All female characters are represented as one homogeneous entity and as undifferentiated individuals. In this regard, Chris Barker states in his *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice* (2008) that: “[A] criticism of the concept of patriarchy is its treatment of the category of women as undifferentiated. That is all women are taken to share something fundamental in common in contrast to men.”⁷³ By the same token, it can be claimed that women in patriarchal societies are seen as almost the same. They are all looked at as inferior to men, and thus, consequently mistreated and underrepresented in cinema.

Sorcery, under the light of the movie, is the used weapon against the patriarchal structure of society. When Soraya starts to feel tired of her husband's behavior, she resorts to a sorceress as her last option towards change. Indeed, Aziz has changed and the effect of sorcery works out very well, but, in fact, he has changed only when an extra power is manipulated. In this regard, it can be concluded that patriarchy is a mere characteristic of the Moroccan society that is very hard to change or exclude.

I argue that sorcery in the movie serves not only to attack and eradicate patriarchy and to consequently challenge gendered spaces, but to also express the irrationality of women who are to be blamed for their way of thinking and the way they seek solutions for their own problems. Consequently, this act of resorting to sorcery presents women as weak, unwise and irrational beings. Here once again, we have another confirmation of one of the stereotyped ideas stating that women use their

⁷²Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1986), p. 5.

⁷³Chris Barker, *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice* (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2008), p. 24.

minds only to do evil things. That is to say, a woman's intellect is only used to befall others. When Aziz resorts to the *Fqih* to get rid of the impact of magic over him, the *Fqih* expresses his inability and incapability in front of Aziz's case. He could not help him mainly because it is a woman's work. In this respect, he says: "Women are very tough nowadays. The magic they practiced on you is scientifically well studied, and then, I am helpless in front of its power now."⁷⁴

The act of resorting to sorcery, as a magic power, only shows that women can never transcend men's power. *Number One*, as a movie that attacks androcentrism and calls for change, confirms the impossibilities of change. To illustrate, by providing white magic or the use of sorcery as a very effective solution to Soraya's problems, the movie excludes any other solutions unless an extra magical power is manipulated. Accordingly, if women want to achieve the same results as Soraya's, they have to follow the same stream that is they must all seek the service of a sorceress. It is obviously impossible for all women to solve their problems in the suggested way, as it is impossible, then, for the Moroccan society to change.

Sorcery in the movie has two different implications. First, it could simply show the fortitude of those women to counter attack patriarchal repressions as well as their determination to assert their existence by acting and speaking out. The second implication can, however, refer to the representation of the weaknesses and irrationality of women as relegated to a secondary position after men. When Soraya tells her friend about her husband's misbehaviour and mistreatment, her friend only suggests the help of a sorceress. They have not argued and discussed the problem and they have not even tried to look for any other logical and reasonable alternative. Sorcery is the first suggestion and only solution they have been able to come up with. Thus, this indicates that sorcery for women is simply just a mode of thinking.

In this regard, women, in the movie, are depicted as very emotional and illogical. Soraya feels very happy at the very beginning because she succeeds in changing her husband, but she later starts to pity Aziz and feel sorry for him and guilty. Although she has got what she has been looking for, she could not get used to the updated way of life. This shows a massive set of contradictions that indicate that patriarchy can be

⁷⁴*Number One* [film], dir. by Zakia Tahiri.

celebrated by both men and women. Soraya, then, finds herself unable to enjoy the reality she always aspired for which ultimately leads her to confess the whole story to Aziz.

The use of sorcery by women to change their situations and attack patriarchal attitudes and norms of the Moroccan society contradicts the message of the movie. *Number One* legitimizes patriarchy as one of the aspects of the Moroccan society. It presents women as irrational and always in need of men to take their position as “number one”. The movie, in this respect, succeeds in legitimizing male authority in the family by the notion that women are subservient and in need of control and orientation regardless if this is really the intention of the filmmaker or not. The female director’s agenda of empowering her female characters turns to be a form of disempowerment.

In the limelight of the core subject of this study, gender representations seem to be determined by and reflected on in relation to various factors. The role society plays in affecting the way cinema deals with various issues including gender cannot be denied with either having in mind that cinema is a constructed version of society or a representative form of it.

Number One is a good example to show how cinema, as a discourse, creates a specific position for viewers. It is meant to be a propagandistic movie of the new family code or “*Mudawana*”: a set of rules that aims at regulating family relations. The movie debates the societal confusion surrounding this law in a comic way as it also highlights the public understanding, misunderstanding and reaction to it. It is very interesting to stress the fact that *Number One* discusses gender roles from a female point of view and in relation to the law. Tahiri opens up her movie with a couple of sentences: “The *Mudawana* which was reformed in 2004 emancipated women and granted them the right to divorce. However, this law is still ignored by some people, not that clear, and misinterpreted by many.”⁷⁵

The message of the movie is clearly stated from the very beginning. It is even stressed with another opening scene to the film which shows a newspaper and magazine seller in the street calling out people to read the news about the advanced

⁷⁵Ibid.

position the law grants Moroccan women. This particular scene is regarded as an invitation to examine and explore the changes the *Mudawana* has brought to gender relations. In fact, these two techniques that the movie opens up with initiate the filmmaker's message. The movie presents the new family code as a counter attack to patriarchal ideologies. It grants this law so much power to overthrow patriarchy, on the one hand, and to empower women over men on the another hand. Yet, there are many challenges facing the implementation of that law which is illustrated through the relationship between the protagonists Aziz and his wife Soraya.

Through the character of Aziz, viewers are invited to examine the updates the *Mudawana* is calling for. To illustrate, in one significant scene when Aziz tells the psychiatrist about the change he is going through, the doctor diagnoses his case as “the syndrome of the *Mudawana*”⁷⁶. After being so cruel and strict while dealing with women, Aziz becomes another person who is so caring, specifically with his wife. He changes his harsh attitude and behavior towards Soraya by showing love, respect and appreciation.

Masculinity in the movie is challenged by femininity, if not to say overthrown. Aziz stands as a model that embraces all the perceptions of *Mudawana* according to Zakia Tahiri's point of view. However, this man who becomes an ideal representative of the new law ideologies is severely attacked and criticized by society including his male neighbors, male friends, and even by some women. Aziz's life turns to be a hell, and he is viewed as a misfit and even a 'queer'. This is because he no longer fulfills the expectations of the society. As a result, it is clear from the movie that society frames gender roles that are pre-culturally expected as mentioned in *New Dimensions in Women's Health*:

Gender role refers to the public expression of one's gender identity, as well as cultural expectations of male and female behaviors. Gender role

⁷⁶Ibid.

expectations are culturally defined and vary from society to society; they can also change as a culture develops.⁷⁷

Following the Quote, the movie demonstrates how it is really difficult to change gender roles even when a culture develops. But still, *Number One* calls for redefining gender roles and the expectations of the society. This is because in the end of the movie, we see Aziz rewarded by being nominated as ‘the man of the year’ by a leading Moroccan women’s magazine *Femmes du Maroc*.

One of the most problematic issues in the movie is the resort to sorcery in order to empower femininity. It is the power of magic that can never be a solution. Consequently, Aziz becomes and remains an ‘exception’ that represents gender in reverse. The movie, therefore, does not show so much hope in changing gender roles nor does it emphasize it. It is as Valerie Orlando comments on *Number One* in her book *Screening Morocco*:

This is not a feminist, socially transformation film. The filmmaker never insists that women must find the strength to stand up from themselves. Instead, Tahiri tells them that the only way they can hope to combat the prowess of men is by using potions and magic [...] Once again, men are advanced to “number one”, while women are left behind preparing their dinners.⁷⁸

Gender roles have undoubtedly a deep impact on male and female identities’ formation as they determine their whole lifestyle. Tahiri’s films’ narrative and aesthetic techniques have failed to revisit gender roles in a way that counter attack the patriarchal system, and she, instead, has only provided complex cinematic discourses. The following section is meant to examine how gender is represented through a male

⁷⁷Linda Lewis & Judith L. Larosa, *New Dimensions in Women’s health* (London: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 2010), p. 69.

⁷⁸Valerie K. Orlando, “*Number One* (2008), Zakia Tahiri: A Comic Family Code?,” in *Screening Morocco Contemporary Film in a Changing Society* (Ohio: The Centre for International Studies Ohio University, 2011), p. 152.

point of view for a nuanced comprehension of diasporic cinematic narratives on gender.

b. Spaces of Difference: Disciplining and Reordering Gender Spheres

To begin with, it should be stated that all films under study produced by male diasporic filmmakers do not present female leading characters. In all films already discussed by male diasporic filmmakers; *Tenja*, *Le Grand Voyage*, and *Casanegra*, women are given secondary roles. In *Le Grand Voyage*, the son and the father take their trip leaving behind them the mother who appears in only two very short scenes, while she is in the kitchen talking to Reda and when Reda is complaining about his father's wish to drive him to Mecca. The role of the mother in *Tenja* is also totally marginalized, neglected, and she is only shown within the domestic sphere and for only one single scene. James Clifford affirms that:

Life for women in diasporic situations can be doubly painful-struggling with the material and spiritual insecurities of exile, with the demands of family and work, and with the claims of old and new patriarchies. Despite these hardships, they may refuse the option of return when it presents itself, especially when the terms are dictated by men. At the same time, women in diaspora remain attached to and empowered by, a 'home' culture and tradition-selectively.⁷⁹

Space in Lakhmari's movie is portrayed as entirely masculine where male characters outnumber female ones. Interestingly, it takes more than ten minutes to see a female character on the screen. And when Nabila, the antique shop's owner, appears on the screen, she is silenced and is only stared at from a distance by Karim. Much space is actually devoted to Adil and Karim in *Casanegra*. They are empowered and given an opportunity to express themselves and narrate their untold stories. We see

⁷⁹James Clifford, "Diaspora," in *Globalization: Global Membership and Participation*, eds. Ronald Robertson & Kathleen E. White (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 435.

Casablanca city through their eyes and hard circumstances, what makes it a black place.

Women, in the movie, are confined to the domestic sphere and rarely or even never shown outside it, such as the case of Karim's mother and sister. They are doubly marginalized, because of their "gender" within a patriarchal structure and the "masculine" lens of Nouredine Lakhmari. As for Adil's mother, the only few seconds we see her beyond the domestic sphere is when she is traveling and is escaping her abusive husband. Obviously, Adil's mother has a job and works outside because we see her husband taking her money. Yet, she is most of the time filmed at home and frequently beaten by her husband. Karim's mother and sister are also never shown outside home even though we are informed that his sister goes to school since we see her working on her homework. Furthermore, *Shikha* and Nabila, the only other two female characters in the movie, are confined to their workplace and their movements are very limited. *Shikha* in '*Ou Tout Va Bien*' nightclub is never seen outside it. As for Nabila, the only few scenes that show her away from her shop is when in Karim's company. Still, these two main characters remain very challenging to gendered spaces.

There are two striking female characters in *Casanegra*: *Shikha*, a singer/ dancer woman, and Nabila, the antique-shop's owner whom Karim loves. The belly dancing/ singing woman (*shikha*) works in *Ou Tout Va Bien* (Where everything is allowed) nightclub, an entirely male dominated space. Unlike other previously mentioned female characters, Adil's mother and Karim's mother and sister, *shikha* is all the time filmed in public within a male's sphere. She shares male's activities inside the nightclub; she smokes, drinks alcohol, and dresses up in Western clothing. She, however, defines herself in relation to Zrirek, the owner of the nightclub and her husband-to-be, and she is completely dependent on him.

Spaces in *Casanegra* are not just gendered, they are even dealt with and viewed differently by female and male characters. This can be illustrated from two remarkable similar scenes in the movie. In the first, at night, Karim and Adil are standing in a corner at the top of a very high building at the centre of Casablanca when both scream loudly 'Casa'. Afterwards, Adil comments that nothing seems to be "white" in this

city, but overwhelmed with blackness. For him, it is not Casablanca but rather “Casanegra” (figure 12).



Figure 12: Karim and Adil screaming “Casa” at the top of a high building (*Casanegra*, Nouredine Lakhmari, 2008)

Later on in the movie, another scene shows Karim with Nabila at the same high building corner (figure 13). During that short scene, the light is focused on Nabila while Karim remains in a dark spot.



Figure 13: Nabila and Karim at the top of a high building (*Casanegra*, Nouredine Lakhmari, 2008)

Nabila takes off her jacket and climbs the building even higher, she screams ‘Casablanca’ with a very lurid voice (figure 14), trying to make herself heard in a space that is designed by Lakhmari only for men.



Figure 14: Nabila screaming “Casablanca” on the top of the roof (*Casanegra*, Nouredine Lakhmari, 2008)

Nabila is granted an advantage position resisting all the ‘blackness’ and patriarchal ideologies the filmmaker associated his cinematic space with. It is a counter-discourse to Adil’s scene to show how spaces can be seen differently when they are not experienced in the same way and especially with having gender differences in mind. Another interesting aspect to this scene is the actual confidence that is exhibited by Nabila while she is at the top of the building. The camera angle from below gives a certain authority to the subject, Nabila. It grandifies her image and grants her a position of power, whereas, in Adil’s scene the shot from below puts Karim and Adil in a state of denigration. It is worth mentioning that using different point of view shots are not done arbitrarily. Point of view shots are considered one of the most significant techniques that reveal the filmmaker’s vision to the world as well as his personal opinion regarding the film’s theme plot.⁸⁰ Based on that, Lakhmari is

⁸⁰ Alaoui Lmherzi, *al-Mokaraba al-Nakdia Lilkhatab al-Cinémae bi al-Maghreb men 1905 ila 2000* (Rabat: Saiss Medit, 2007), p. 199. (Translation is mine).

aware of the subordination of women in the Moroccan community. Yet, his female characters are not really empowered.

It is true that most of the movie events take place at night, but this does not mean that there is no single scene filmed during the day. Even when filming the street of “Casanegra” during the day, there is a total absence of women. The space is entirely male occupied either at night or on the day. In Lakhmari’s vision, the space of the city is hazardous and is full of unexpected actions. This vision reminds us of an article by Tovi Fenster in which she discusses some reasons behind the divisions of space. She claims that the “fear of use of public space, especially in the street, public transportation and urban parks is what prevents women from fulfilling their right to the city”⁸¹, and here, it is appropriate to suppose that it is the same fear Lakhmari has for not letting women intrude the space of “Casanegra” that is extremely male-controlled and that looks jam-packed with danger. He does rather endow a voice to a marginalized category of unemployed young men to speak and to be heard at the expense of many other categories including women, and whose representations disturb the story of the movie and the filmmaker’s vision.

In short, diasporic filmmakers have problematized gender issues in their movies, for they negotiate two different views of gender representations driven by their hybrid life where entirely different cultures and ways of life intermingle. They, therefore, end up producing contradictory and imagined cinematic discourses. The representations of gendered spaces are complex by both male and female diasporic filmmakers. But they still have different visions which are mainly determined by their gender in the first place. I suggest that there is a solid link between gender representations on-screen and with who is behind and in front of the camera. This, hence, has a deep hand in shaping gendered spaces in films.

Lakhmari’s vision to space is very complex in the sense that he considers Casablanca’s space as extremely dangerous, thus, it should be highly male-dominated. Man is still depicted as the most powerful sex despite all the attempts to subvert such discourses. Male filmmakers focus more on male characters who are assigned leading

⁸¹Tov Fenster, “The Right to the Gendered City: Different Formations of Belonging in Everyday Life”, in *Journal of Gender Studies* (Routledge, Part of the Taylor & Francis Group: 2005), p. 242.

roles in their movies, while women characters are marginalized. Women have unimportant roles in the movies, but they are still able to violate male's space and subvert it from within. It is, however, a modest call for reordering gendered spaces and challenging patriarchal divisions where new visions and new networks of consciousness have to emerge. For male diasporic filmmakers, the main concern is to make movies proposing an outlet through which characters can find relief and a kind of affiliation.

Diasporic women filmmakers, however, construct an imagined world where women set the rules of the society and overthrow the patriarchal regime. There is no doubt that there are certain conditions that lie behind such representations, one of which is the cultural and societal interference/influence of Western principles and values on women diasporic filmmakers' vision. *Number One* calls for redefining gender roles and the expectations of society, but what makes the movie message complex is the use of magic to fulfill that. Gender roles have a deep impact on male and female cinematic spaces. They determine their performance, attitude, and ways of life. Cinema remains one of the most popular platforms through which gender roles can be discussed in a particular society. Both films', *Number One* and *Casanegra*, narrative and aesthetic techniques counter attack those patriarchal ideologies, but to only end up forming disruptive and complex discourses that do not serve the position of women in the society.

Space, in cinema, ends up being a vision and a discourse that is highly constructed. It has a great influence on the development of the story and it affects characters so deeply. It limits their movements and launches new discourses to the viewers as Sandra Carter (2009) puts it, "films might be revolutionary, leading audiences toward new attitudes, perspectives and ideas"⁸². In short, as it has been previously discussed, Moroccan diasporic filmmakers suggest that gender roles can be challenged through disciplining and reordering gendered spaces in cinema in spite of the fact that this leads to the construction of complex gender identities in a society that celebrates patriarchal ideologies.

⁸²Sandra Gayle Carter, *What Moroccan Cinema?*, p. 8.

c. Bodies of Desire: The Erotic and the Sexual in Moroccan Films

The status of women in the Arabo-Islamic world has always been a heated topic because of the dynamics of representations involved in such issues. Women's issues are often revisited through different mediums, namely in cinema, which is the core subject of this study. After having discussed some aspects and elements that affect and shape the image of Moroccan female identities in cinema, this section attempts to resume the debate already raised as it endeavors to investigate the portrayal of Moroccan female bodies in cinematic productions under study and decipher their discursive messages. Obviously, this is one of the thorniest issues that many theorists, film critics and feminists have always been concerned with.

In her *The Second Sex*, Simon De Beauvoir makes woman the core subject of her text raising so many provocative queries. She questions the meaning of being a woman trying to answer back long held stereotypes about women. She asserts that women have always been regarded as the "second sex" that is in need of the other to define it, sustain and prove its presence. She puts it, "what place do they occupy in this world, what their place should be?"⁸³ One might wonder how much it is offensive to hear like these queries that shake the position of the feminine sex and suspect its presence. This is simply because we might never hear these questions in reverse, about the masculine sex. This, however, can be mainly due to the prestigious position that man has always occupied throughout history and in societies.

Based on *Errag'd*, *Zin Li Fik*, *Les Yeux Secs* and *Casanegra*, I argue that these movies still confirm and perpetuate the same conceptual images about women as bodies of desire and exoticism. Although it seems like an attempt to liberate the female body and make women in the same position as their male counterparts, this, however, leads to constructing other complex discourses, especially within a conservative society, which is different from those societies diasporic filmmakers reside in. Women's images are mainly used for the sake of gratifying men's sexual desire and reinforcing women as "full sex". Male and female filmmakers approach this problematic theme of female bodies' representations quite differently. Yet, they both

⁸³Simon De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 1.

attempt to liberate the female body, for they already almost share the same vision and attitude as diasporic. It can be even claimed that female filmmakers tend to carry more this burden of reshaping female bodies' representations. Thus, their discourses are even more complex, daring and challenging.

In Yasmine Kassari's *Errag'd*, the female body is reduced to sex and reproduction. Men get married and leave their wives behind them in the village to seek another life abroad. Women, however, are expected to wait for them till they come back, if they ever do. Their bodies represent their sufferings as they become site of struggles. Women desires are repressed and this is clear through Halima's relationship with Amziane. Although, as argued previously, Kassari's female characters have been empowered, they were not exempted from such representations that exoticize them on the screen.

In his *Rihanat a-Cinema al-Maghribiya: alfaeliya al'Ibdaeya wa Taessilal el-Motakhayel*, Hamid Tbatou tremendously discusses some elements that have a deep hand in affecting women bodies' representations on the screen. He summarizes them in five main points: 1) Male's hegemony: this has to do with men's and women's role in societies and more precisely with men's maintenance of dominance over women. Women, therefore, are looked at as merely bodies of desire to satisfy men and as child bearers. 2) Violation to the public space: Women are more expected to fulfill their roles in female's space inside the house, whereas men's roles are carried out outside the house. For that, women are sexually harassed when they try to trespass their space to the public, which is exclusively designed to men. 3) Authority in social relations: This refers to the position of power one might enjoy that allows him to manipulate the female body. 4) Social misery: This authorizes the use of female body to gain money, thus, it renders female bodies to mere "sex objects". Finally, 5) Lack of awareness and backwardness: It refers to that fact of turning female bodies into a ground of ideological and intellectual struggles.⁸⁴ Tbatou further discusses that a lot of movies come as a counter-discourse to those representations that devalue and misuse the female body following their agendas and ideologies. Yet, the number of movies is very

⁸⁴Tbatou Hamid, *Rihanat Cinema al-Maghreb: Fa' eliyat el-Ibda'ia wa Tae'seel al-Motakhayel*. Ouarzazate: Net Impression Ouarzazarz, 2006), pp. 90-91. (Translation is mine).

insufficient. One real restraint that limits this is due to the encouragement of production companies to the commercialization of the female body, for they are more concerned with interest the film makes and the popularity it gets.⁸⁵

It is true that films are products that go through a number of stages and procedures before they are made. One of the most distinct and critical stages is the production phase. Directors might cross borders in the pursuit of finance and support to their films. Diasporic filmmakers, however, take the advantage of their displacement to get an international production. They sometimes also have co-production with their home-countries. The most common element between all those films discussed here (*Casanegra*, *Errag'd*, *Marock*, *Le Grand Voyage*, *Tenja*, and *Number One*) is the co-production. This, yet, affects the artistic, aesthetic and cultural content of the movies. This international nature of film production becomes a barrier for contributing to the Moroccan national cinema.

Diasporic filmmakers produce movies that are in dialogue with the West and that boost Westerners' expectations of the East. This argument can be more illustrated in the diasporic filmmaker Nabil Ayouch's *Zin li Fik/ Much Loved* (2015), which projects a very shallow and superficial image of almost all female characters whose world is confined to men and sex. The film depicts the story of four Moroccan women who live together and make a living as prostitutes in Marrakech. In this movie, the filmmaker homogenizes all of his female characters reducing them to mere sex objects. Priority has been given to feminine sexuality while underestimating any intellectual capacity. Simon De Beauvoir has conspicuously elaborated on this point when she states that:

She is called 'the sex', by which is meant that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him she is sex- absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute-she is the Other.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Simon De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 3.

Drawing on this quote's arguments, the image of women as sex objects is strongly stressed in *Zin li fik* taking as examples the main female characters: Noha, Randa, Soukaina and Halima. Through men and women relationships in the movie, Nabil Ayouch asserts that men cannot see women more than sex objects. It is shown how much all men in the movie are bewildered by women's beauty. They admire their bodies but not their personality and agency. Noha's body is mostly solicited, but her intellectual ability is altogether tarnished. Throughout the whole movie, there is no single scene that shows or reflects on an intellectual conversation or discussion either between female characters or with the male ones. There is much focus on women as bodies rather than as minds. Besides, most of the scenes take place either in nightclubs, house of guests or at home. Women's spaces have been violated by the lenses of the camera just for the sake of having a full access to the female body, which is targeted.

Zin Li fik shoots different images of women while they are completely naked and while having sexual intercourse with men. Almost all women characters are represented as weak beings who are easily tempted. Men's image, however, signifies power which he imposes over the female body. Using the Lacanian's concept of *the mirror stage*, it can be illustrated that the female body is only considered as a mirror for man to identify and recognize his power through. In this respect, the female body does only connote inferiority, weakness and submissiveness for the masculine view to exert his power and feel it through. A woman is considered the other who is crucial in the definition of man/ the self, who feels empowered when he sees the other as weak. This also applies on Lakhmari's movie *Casanegra* and particularly through the relationship of Nabila and Karim. It is significant to state that Nabila's role in the movie is very superficial and of almost no importance. The only scene she appears in for more than ten minutes is when she is having an intimate relationship with Karim (figure 15).



Figure 15: Karim and Nabila intimacy in *Casanegra* (*Casanegra*, Nouredine Lakhmari, 2008)

Nabila is represented as an attractive beautiful female body whose presence is reinforced to gratify a man's desire (Karim) as well as the male viewer'. This illustrates what Sharon Smith proclaims in *Women and Film*:

Women, in a fully human form, have almost completely been left out of film [...] The role of a woman in a film almost always revolves around her physical attraction and mating games she plays with the male characters. On the other hand, a man is not shown purely in relation to the female characters, but in a wide variety of roles.⁸⁷

There is much focus in *Casanegra* on the male protagonists, Karim and Adil. These men typically make the decisions which lead the story and they are assertive and dominant, while women's roles are of no importance and do not affect the plot of the film. Their image is rather associated with men and never beyond it. They are weak and in need of protection and direction. Laura Mulvey's essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative cinema" expands on this concept of the passive role of women in cinema to

⁸⁷Quoted in David Gauntlet, *Media, Gender and Identity* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 48.

argue that men take the active role as they are “the one forwarding the story, making things happen. Man controls the film phantasy and also emerges as the representative of power in a further sense: as bearer of the look of the spectator.”⁸⁸

Mulvey further discusses how films provide visual pleasure through scopophilia, and identification with the on-screen male actor. That is to say, women are represented as both: an erotic object for the character within the film’s plot and as an erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium.⁸⁹ In *Casanegra*, for instance, Nabila is projected as a ‘passive erotic object’ while the story of the movie is driven by male characters. The female body, in the movie, is misused and manipulated for commercial purposes that serve one of the objectives of the production and filmmaker. It just functions as the object of the male gaze as Laura Mulvey puts it:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female from which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness.⁹⁰

Male viewers identify with the male protagonist, and the female characters are the subject of their desiring gaze. Jonathan Schroeder also talks about the male gaze when he notes that, “a film has been called an instrument of the male gaze, producing representations of women, the good life, and sexual fantasy from a male point of view.”⁹¹ This means that women are presented as an object to be looked upon by the viewer but not assumed to have any power of their own, except of beauty and attraction which are mostly used against women rather than in their favor.

⁸⁸ Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” in *Film Theory and Criticism*, eds. Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 810.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 809.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 841.

⁹¹ Jonathan Schroeder, *Visual Consumption* (USA & Canada: Routledge, 2002), p. 58.

There are several cinematic techniques that are used to sexualize, objectify and commodify the female body. One of the most common camera techniques is the close up along with shots of highly fragmented images of female bodies. The mutilation of the female body has become a 'tradition' in movies as Barbara S. Morrison argues that "the practice of disfiguring the female body and destroying sites of pleasure as mapped onto that body occur all over the world, but mostly practiced in areas of Africa, the Middle East and in parts of Malaysia and Indonesia."⁹² *Casanegra* and *Zin li Fik* do frequently use this technique of fragmentations of their female body characters.

The camera fragments the female body through extreme close ups. It is even, sometimes, not easy to recognize and understand what the image is about. It is a kind of violence that the camera exerts on the female body for particular aims as mentioned earlier. It is noteworthy that such scenes are usually accompanied by a sort of calm music which plays a significant role in stimulating emotions. Simply put, all these combined elements have one aim to eroticize the viewer as what Mulvey discusses in her "Visual Pleasure and Narrative cinema". Women, in movies, are reduced to the status of bringing pleasure to male spectators, which consequently activates their subordination and affects the construction of their identities. Mulvey argues that in order, for women, to be equally represented in the workplace, women must be portrayed as men: as lacking sexual objectification.⁹³

Diasporic filmmakers tend to give more freedom to their female characters, each according to their own agenda. Both male and female diasporic filmmakers tackle some taboo issues and deal with themes related to sex and relationships outside the institution of marriage openly and dearly. Diasporic female filmmakers produce treatises of female bodies that resist those negative typical representations. They open up new critical forms of resistance to patriarchy through female voices which interrupt the male gaze and refuse to be relegated to the status of passive object. Diasporic female filmmakers like Zakia Tahiri, Yasmine Kassari, and Narjis Nejjar empower their female characters to alter their destinies from the impotent "other" to powerful

⁹²Barbara S. Morrison (2008), "Feminist Theory and the Practice of Female Genital Mutilation," retrieved on 15 March, 2017, from

<http://uuair.lib.utsunomiya-u.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/10241/6361/1/kokusai26-013.pdf>

⁹³Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", p. 847.

female characters with the ability to change their “looked-at-ness” as only bodies that are silent by the male gaze and traditions to independent agencies. However, male diasporic filmmakers’ movies can be interpreted as exerting some power over female characters and as perpetuating the hegemonic masculinity paradigm.

It is interesting to note how both films *Les Yeux Secs* and *Zin Li Fik* approach the notion of body differently although the two movies deal with the same theme of female prostitution. In Narjiss Nejjar’s *Les Yeux Secs*, there is one single scene that exposes fragmented parts of the female body when Hala is having shower and Fahd suddenly shows up. *Zin Li Fik* or *Much loved*, however, was even banned by the Moroccan government and stirred a lot of controversy in the Moroccan society because of its inappropriate and erotic scenes and for the excessive use of cultural stereotypes, nudity, and taboo issues.

The film has prompted an avalanche of criticism from various voices calling for the ban of the movie and the execution of the director. Loubna Abidar, the leading actress, was even attacked and beaten by anonymous which led her to flee to France over fears for her safety. Although the film was banned in Morocco, it was still broadcast outside the country and it even received some awards.⁹⁴ Religious authorities as well as common people condemned the film for hardening stereotypes of Moroccans and the country, and for portraying a very negative image of Morocco and its people, specifically women. The Ministry of Communication has also announced that the Moroccan authorities decided to ban the film for its abuse to the Moroccan values, and for the denigrating images of the Moroccan woman and the country as a whole.⁹⁵ *Zin li Fik* is not the only banned film that is still well-circulated in the West, cherished and was even given awards. This takes us to those binary oppositions of us and them; the East and the West. Muslims and Arabs, in general, were for a long time

⁹⁴The film was nominated twice in Cannes Film Festival (2015) and César Awards (2016) and It won two awards: Loubna Abidar as best actress in Gijon International Film Festival (2015), and Best French-Language Foreign Film in Lumiere Awards, France (2016), retrieved on 20 March, 2017, from <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt4685750/awards>

⁹⁵“Al-Khalfi: Karar a’dam al-Tarkhis bi’ared Film *Zin Li Fik* Ja’a Himayatan Li Hurriat Taa’beer,” (2015), retrieved on 24 March, 2017, from <https://www.alayam24.com/articles-7822.html>

misrepresented in Western media. So, those banned films in their country of origin perpetuate those orientalist views that the West just admires to see.

I argue that there are a number of interfering elements that contribute in establishing this orientalist discourses on Arabs. This leads us to ask some crucial questions about whether those diasporic filmmakers are aware of further connotations of their cinematic discourses or not. Also, whom do they have in mind as a target audience while making films: the West or their home country? Most diasporic filmmakers, under this study, if not to say all of them, produce hybrid characters, adopt a postmodern vision and celebrate differences as well as ambiguities. The choice of their leading characters is of paramount significance too; most of them are not well-known in their home countries, and interestingly, some of them appear on the screen for the first time, such as Omar Lotfi (Adil) and Anas El-Baz (Karim) in *Casanegra*, Morjana Alaoui (Ghita) and Matthieu Boujenah (Youri) in *Marock*, and Nicholas Cazzalé (Reda) in *Le Grand Voyage*. This is what Hamid Naficy argues as one characteristic of diasporic cinema.

Diasporic filmmakers choose their characters prudently, and they, most of the time, look like them as they have a lot of points in common. They are also displaced and hybrid characters that were either born in the West or moved to settle down there. This is significant in the sense that they are deemed as their filmmakers' own reflexive mirror. Therefore, it is quite easier to work with and it sounds authentic when they perform roles about migratory and diasporic experiences, and more specifically when they are playing roles of hybrid and displaced characters. Nicolas Cazalé (Reda), in *Le Grand Voyage*, is a French actor of an Algerian mother, and Roschdy Zem (Noureddine) in *Tenja*, is a French actor of Moroccan descent who is relatively known among the diasporic community as he has participated in several French films, but never in a Moroccan film before. It is their fluency of the French language which integrates those characters in French cinema from one hand, and it is their poor Arabic language that excludes them from Moroccan cinema from another hand. Those characters fit the most in diasporic cinema for they comprise the same characteristics this type of cinema calls for.

Moroccan filmmakers are aware of the global circulation of their movies the fact that affects their vision and perspective, as Eva Rueschmann writes in her introduction of *Moving Pictures, Migrating Identities*:

For immigrant filmmakers inside Europe who are documenting the displacements and cultural relocation of their families and communities, the complex politics of film production, reception and representation affects the nature of their work.⁹⁶

To illustrate this, sex is no longer considered as a taboo topic in their movies. In both *Casanegra* and *Zin li fik (Much Loved)*, sex is dealt with openly and with no restrictions because the filmmakers are also addressing audiences in the West with open-minded lifestyle. This, however, comes at the expense of the image of their conservative society.

These representations of Arab men and women come just to confirm and perpetuate some of the stereotypical images that Western audiences have in mind. Men are presented as lustful while women are perceived as sex objects. Therefore, women are definitely presented as victims of men's domination. But, are Moroccan filmmakers aware of the further implications of their representations or do they aim at meeting up the expectations of Western audiences in order to realize an international success and gain interest? If it is so, what is the role of the intellectual in the cinematic field? Does his role aim at reflecting reality or constructing it, especially when we talk about diasporic filmmakers whose films are considered as more circulated and whose space of freedom is wider? The following part, hence, will examine some of the most discussed themes in diasporic filmmakers' movies so as to unfold their narratives and to explore more their representations of the homeland in their movies.

⁹⁶Eva Rueschmann, ed., *Moving Pictures, Migrating Identities* (The United States of America: The University Press of Mississippi, 2003), p. xxi.

**PART IV: REVISITING HOME AND CULTURE
THROUGH A DIASPORIC OPTIC**

1. Crossing Borders and Journeying: Voices from the Margin

Journeying and crossing borders are one of the most recurrent themes in diasporic cinema. These notions are closely linked in the sense that diaspora starts with a journey and is characterized by multiple crossing borders and movements- be it physical, mental, spiritual, cultural, social, political or even metaphorical. Diasporic filmmakers have made up out of these motifs of journey and border crossing an appealing ground to discuss diaspora issues, negotiate diasporic identities, and to visualize life on both sides of the borders. This section, therefore, consists of an interpretative analysis to the representations of diasporic cultural identities and to the individuals' views of home as they are crossing borders and through their ongoing journeys from one location to another and through their continual travel back and forth between the homeland and the hostland. The analysis is also meant to help us get more nuanced understanding of what happens when a person crosses borders since there are a variety of journeys taken in diasporic movies from the perspective of diaspora cinematic narratives. Diasporic filmmakers, I argue, eloquently discuss notions of journeying and crossing borders as forms of empowerment (inclusion) and disempowerment (exclusion) to their characters simultaneously.

a. Nostalgic Journeys in *Ten'ja* and *Le Grand Voyage*: Toward a Lost Home

Borders are basically linked to geographical territories but they also embody symbolic connotations. Journeying in *Le Grand Voyage* and the act of crossing the borders have significant meanings in the sense that the voyage transcends the geographical terrain as it embodies the journey within which is of identity. Journeys take different shapes as they form a major thematic thread in diasporic films. They also have different objectives depending on travelers' motivations and goals. In his *Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, Hamid Naficy defines three types of journeys: "outward journeys of escape, home seeking, and home founding,

journey of quest, homelessness, and lostness, and inward homecoming journeys”.¹ This variety of journeys demonstrates once again the enduring process of diasporic people in searching for their identities and home; a sense of belonging and affiliation.

In his *Accented Cinema*, Hamid Naficy argues that diaspora deterritorializing and reterritorializing journeys take a number of forms, as they cross many boundaries- not only physical and geographic, but also psychological, metaphorical, social, and cultural borders.² Interestingly, Naficy gives more emphasis to the journey of identity. For him, a journey does not merely refer to physical mobility, but it is more about the traveler’s lived experience outside their home country. He clearly states that the emphasis is rather on journeys of identity that expatriates live once they reach the new destination.³ This explains the fact that when one moves to live in a new country, there is a tendency to believe that by crossing borders, the original cultural identity is at risk of change or even disappearance because of the need to be accepted by the host country, and the pressure to follow mainstream ways to become a member of the society and part of it; a case which completely represents Reda in *Le Grand Voyage*. Diasporic cultural identities constantly negotiate their position since difference is not easily accepted or valued. All this results in multiple paradoxes that transform the ways identities are developed, created and even invented in the process of migration and resettlement.

Indeed, changes in environments, interests and experience both father and son live in *Le Grand Voyage* result in a change in identity as well. In this regard, Philip M. Kayal writes:

Identities are always changing. As situations change, so do identities. As the collective identity alters, so does the subjective one. Identity formation, then, is not a singular process with a definitive end point but an evolving

¹Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, p. 33.

²Ibid., p. 33.

³Ibid.

social-psychological experience of self-discovery that changes with events, issues, and sociopolitical circumstances surrounding a person.⁴

In a persistently transnational world, cultural identities are shaped through an ongoing process of mobility resulting in the formation of diasporic cultural identities that are expected to keep a sort of dialogue between both sides. They are characterized by and reshaped through multiple crossings of borders and with ongoing journeying. Diasporic cultural identities, then, operate through politics of recognition as well as negotiations of differences beyond the national borders and while they are in contact with the other.

The change Reda undergoes in the movie is due to the journey the father takes charge of to seek recovery of his son's lost identity. This begins when the father insists on not taking the plane to Mecca and having his youngest son drive him there. The film represents a long journey toward the development of a sense of cultural identity that is reconstructed through crossing borders till they reach Mecca; their ultimate destination. The movie unveils significant upshots when expatriates, particularly of the second generations, go for long journeys of self-discovery and self-knowledge. As Jakub Kazecki argues in his introduction of *Border Visions: Identity and Diaspora in Film*, "the medium of film has the ability to visually capture these processes of (self-) discovery and (self-) knowledge and through the universality of this language, can have an impact on a wide range of audiences across borders".⁵ Accordingly, diasporic filmmakers take advantage of the power of visual images to highlight the significance of those experiences of journeying and to make expatriates aware of the various processes their identities are very likely to undergo.

In one remarkable sequence, Reda looks very preoccupied and is totally absent-minded. His father asks him: "what is on your mind?"⁶ Reda answers back hurriedly:

⁴Philip M. Kayal, "So Who Are We? Who Am I?," in *A Community of Many Worlds: Arab Americans in New York City*, eds., Kathleen Benson & Philip M. Kayal (New York: The Museum of the City of New York, 2002), p. 90.

⁵Jakub Kazecki, et al., eds., *Border Visions: Identity and Diaspora in Film* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2013), p. xv.

⁶*Le Grand Voyage* [film], dir. by Ismaël Ferroukhi (France, Morocco, Bulgaria, and Turkey: Pyramide Distribution, 2004).

“I wanted to ask you something: Why did not you fly to Mecca? It is a lot easier.”⁷

The father replies:

When the waters of the ocean rise to the heavens, they lose their bitterness to become pure again. The ocean water evaporates as they rise to the clouds. And as they evaporate, they become fresh. That is why, it is better to go on your pilgrimage on foot other than horseback, better on horseback than by car, better by car than by boat, and better by boat than by plane.⁸

Reda is ignorant about the value of the trip and its significance in religion. Although his father clarifies the purpose of the journey, Reda keeps complaining as he finds the trip so difficult and challenging. He complains about having to sleep in the car in the middle of nowhere while it is snowing and freezing. Besides, he is always irritated that he has to drive all the way without sightseeing the cities passed by. He is also unsatisfied with their poor nutrition blaming his father for his choice of taking the journey that way. What Reda does not grasp is that the journey, for the father, is rather spiritual; it is an act of renewal and reconnection with the self.

As they cross borders, their differences are less highlighted and they start to get a bit closer to each other. Yet, as they move farther, they meet people with a lot of differences and it becomes difficult for them to communicate with others. Reda gets nervous, for he starts realizing how estranged one can feel when the person meets another culture and crosses borders. This is also because by crossing borders the person goes beyond their comfort zones. This, therefore, might help Reda understand his father's feelings of alienation in and towards France.

The father, however, remains calm and wise, for he knows exactly what it means to cross borders and what kind of problems a person might confront. In several occasions, the father has managed to overcome a variety of challenges caused by cultural and linguistic differences even if that requires him to communicate with tactile

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

sign language. The film emphasizes that borders put a set of cultural and ideological boundaries in front of people who are crossing them.

From the very beginning, it is obvious that the father knows exactly what he wants and what should be done as he is aware of his son's trauma. There are many instances that flow in the same direction, such as choosing to speak only in Moroccan dialect and not in French, the language Reda uses all the time. In another scene, we see the father throwing away Reda's cell phone when he was asleep, and thus, ending up any kind of communication Reda could have with Lisa, his French girlfriend, and with everything he left behind him in France, the adopted home.

As they progress in their journey, the gap between the father and the son gradually decreases. Thanks to the constant interaction with the father, Reda gets to know more about his religion, culture, and customs. This is despite the fact that we do not know what happens to Reda when he goes back to France. The movie, however, ends up with a promising clue of change when Reda gives some money to a beggar in the street, while he was against this before. In a previous scene in the movie, when the father offers some money to a beggar woman, Reda objects stating that they need money the most while they are on a trip. This shows that Reda is unaware of the significance of helping others in Islam and is ignorant about its positive reward and consequences, but he has learnt that later.

Reda's journey of the *Self* quest starts exactly when he travels outside of the host land and thanks to a direct and daily contact with the father. The process of *Self*-discovery Reda undergoes throughout the journey proves what scholars such as Stuart Hall argues concerning diasporic people's identity as fluid and constantly transforming and not fixed or stagnant in any way. Hall suggests that identity should be thought of as a production because it is an ongoing process⁹. He states that cultural identity:

is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as well as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere,

⁹Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, eds. *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* reprinted in *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory: A Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 222.

have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power.¹⁰

The journey, therefore, offers Reda a space to develop his own identity and move from the state of ‘being’, the high school adolescent student who is deeply influenced by a foreign culture, to a state of ‘becoming’ as getting to know more about his origin and his native culture.

The journey, then, is towards self-discovery and self-knowledge through building a sense of the self. Knowing oneself cannot be achieved only once in contact with the other and only once experiencing the different and the unknown. It is through similarities and differences that we achieve a sense of identity and social belonging. According to Andrew C. Ocolie:

Identities are relational; groups typically define themselves in relation to others. This is because identity has little meaning without the “other”. So, by defining itself a group defines others. Identity is rarely claimed or assigned for its own sake. These definitions of self and others have purposes and consequences. They are tied to rewards and punishment, which may be material or symbolic. There is usually an expectation of gain or loss as a consequence of identity claims. This is why identities are contested. Power is implicated here, and because groups do not have equal powers to define both *self* and the *other*, the consequences reflect these power differentials. Often notions of superiority and inferiority are embedded in particular identities.¹¹

It goes without saying that Reda unconsciously develops an identity because of the adventure he undertakes. He rediscovers himself, his culture, religion and origin. Yet,

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹ Andrew C. Ocolie, “Identity: Now You Don’t See It; Now You Do,” in *An International Journal of Theory and Research*, Vol. 3:1 (2009), p. 2.

when the father dies, Reda symbolically loses his means of discovery of his roots. He, then, has to continue his long journey back home alone by himself.

If the death of the father interrupts Reda's journey, Nouredine's journey in *Ten'ja* starts because of death. Nouredine's journey is of no difference of Reda's. He is a young man who takes a journey to a place he knows nothing about. As recommended, Nouredine goes to the Atlas Mountains in Morocco to bury his father in his native village. It seems that the dead father was worried that his son might never see his country of origin when he is gone. For that reason, he made that journey his ultimate wish. They probably had no chance to go there together when he was still alive, but it is obvious that he wanted his son to discover the village by himself and undergo that experience of self-discovery. The fathers, in both movies, consider themselves responsible for the formation of their son's own identities. Thus, they have planned for a long journey that crosses different borders. At the outset, it was their own choice to immigrate and leave their native country behind, and form a family in such conditions of displacement. The journey, hence, might be a sort of remedy to both sons as well as a relief to the fathers who seem to feel guilty for their son's situations.

Crossing borders and journeying are salient themes in diasporic cinema. The journey could take different directions either from the homeland to the hostland or vice versa. However, diasporic filmmakers usually highlight more journeys from the hostland to the natal land, which is the case of *Ten'ja*. The filmmaker suggests two kinds of borders: a physical geographical divide and a constructed ideological barrier that establishes the division between the subject and "the other". The journey back home is more stressed by diasporic individuals in the pursuit of balance and towards a deeper connection and reconciliation with the *Self* and the homeland.

The themes of journeying and crossing borders seem to be dominant in cinema and they are not only exclusively tackled by diasporic filmmakers. There are other films by non-diasporic Moroccan directors that fit the description of a diasporic filmmaking in terms of narrative aesthetics and techniques, but they still, as I shall argue, cannot be labeled as diasporic. Two well-known films that attracted a lot of

attention are: *Où vas-tu Moshé?*¹²/ *Where are you going Moshé?* (2007) and *A dieu Mères/ Good Bye Mothers* (2007). *Où vas-tu Moshé?* is a Moroccan film directed and written by Hassan Benjelloun. The journey, in the movie, is about going back home where a large group of Moroccan Jews are heading back to Israel. Similarly, *Wada'an Omahat/ A dieu Mères/ Good Bye Mothers*¹³ (2008), directed by Mohammed Ismail and co-written by him and Reine Danan, is another film that portrays the return of Moroccan Jews to Israel. The journey, however, is overwhelmed with feelings of alienation and up-rootedness as home is what is left behind not heading to.

Although none of these filmmakers is diasporic as Benjelloun and Ismail both reside and live in their home country, they have produced movies about diaspora issues with similar concerns and characteristics of diasporic cinema as discussed by Hamid Naficy in his *Accented Cinema*. This includes the movie theme plot, the desire of a return to the homeland, the hybrid characters and the co-production (specifically *Où vas-tu Moshé?*- that is a Moroccan- Canadian collaboration). In this regard, Asuman Suner (2006) criticizes Hamid Naficy's author-biographical definition of accented cinema arguing that without expansion of the definition the concept may lose its critical potential. Suner argues that there are non-diasporic filmmakers who also produce films dealing with diaspora thematics. That is to say, accented cinema should not only include films by diasporic filmmakers, but also those which discuss issues of displacement, deterritorialization, loss, homelessness, and migration in a similar way as Naficy's diasporic subjects.¹⁴

I argue what makes films produced by diasporic filmmakers different and unique is the reflection of both: their directors' personal experience as well as their own identity. Naficy refers to this in his *Accented Cinema* when he writes that "the greatest and most enduring works of literature and cinema have been created by displaced

¹²Set-up in the small town of Boujad, the movie depicts the turmoil created in a small town after the exodus of the Jews of Morocco, specially between the last Jew in town, Shlomo, and the owner of the only bar of the city, Mustapha.

¹³Set-up in Casablanca, the movie depicts the fate of Moroccan Muslim and Jewish families during the exodus of the Jews of Morocco in the beginning of the 1960s. The plot inspires itself from the tragic sink of the Egoz, when 44 Moroccan Jews who were clandestinely emigrating to Israel lost their lives.

¹⁴Quoted in Kaarina Nikunen, "In Between the Accented and the Mainstream: Cutting Across Boundaries in Kniven i Hjärtat," in *Television & New Media*, 12 (2011), p. 49.

writers and filmmakers.”¹⁵ It is true that diasporic filmmakers produce more creative, provocative and intrepid cinematic works. Moroccan cinema, specifically, has recently known an upswing thanks to those displaced filmmakers. Filmmakers such as Nouredine Lkhamari, Faouzi Bensaid, Narjis Nejjar, Nabil Ayouch, and others are now leading directors of cinema in Morocco. Their films, basically, attract the audiences’ and critics’ attention, and they usually receive several awards in national and international film festivals. Moroccan film critic Ezz Eddine el-Ouafi has discussed how diasporic filmmakers have enriched the scope of Moroccan cinema with their diasporic films, as he writes:

I believe it is thanks to those diasporic filmmakers that thorny issues have been raised and discussed widely. We have to make use of their narratives to initiate extensive debates on societal and cultural projects aiming at connecting nations and tolerating differences. Filmmakers-such as Ismael Ferroukhi, Hassan Legzouli, Narjiss Nejjar, Hakim Belabbes, Yasmine Kassari, Laila Merrakchi and Nouredine Lakhmari- have been able to provide a new vision of Morocco that earlier filmmakers never talked about. They had been only filming themes related to social problems, such as poverty, marriage, retirement, and political issues, such as repression and imprisonment.¹⁶

I argue that diasporic filmmakers’ duality and hybridity which inspire different visions and give their films a different touch from other “national films”. To further legitimize my argument, I shall quote Naficy again when he states that “this liminality and interstitiality may become passionate sources of creativity and dynamism that produce in literature and cinema.”¹⁷

It is diasporic filmmakers’ touch as hybrid and displaced subjects influenced by life on cultural boundaries which empowers their productivity, boosts their creativity,

¹⁵Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, p. 12.

¹⁶Ezz Eddine el-Ouafi, *Roaa fi al-Cinema al-Maghribia* (Nador : Matbaa’t Iqrae, 2010), p. 50. (Translation is mine)

¹⁷Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, p. 13.

and which also endows their movies with a lot of controversy and depth. In her article “The Scale of Diasporic Cinema Negotiating National and Transnational Cultural Citizenship”, Jigna Desai discusses how this genre of diasporic cinema is formed, and she emphasizes that “diasporic films are identified as those films made by ‘diasporic filmmakers’ which feature ‘diasporic thematics’ made in an independent or interstitial mode.”¹⁸ She adds that the geopolitical trajectory and social identity of the filmmaker is identified as significant to the aesthetics and narratives of the films.¹⁹ Their narratives are a reflection of their identities. For that reason, diasporic filmmakers are preoccupied with themes related to dislocation, loss, question of origins, movement and disenfranchisement in relation to the nation and migration.²⁰ Desai further defines this genre of cinema as:

Diasporic cinema is often identified as a genre by the ecology of its production and circulation as much as its content and style. Most diasporic films are seen as being located outside of dominant national cinemas and media industries. They are considered to be independent or interstitial because of their supposed marginalized mode of production within the context of xenophobia, empire, nationalisms and global capitalism.²¹

Therefore, and according to the above quote, I argue that there are a number of elements that classify films as diasporic not only their theme-based subject, but most importantly, the production, style, content and circulation. Interestingly, the debate must be raised upon the extent to which those diasporic films can be located in or outside the national cinema by different segments, such as the audience, critics and filmmakers.

¹⁸ Jigna Desai, (2008), “The Scale of Diasporic Cinema Negotiating National and Transnational Cultural Citizenship,” retrieved on 25 April, 2017, from https://www.academia.edu/5669664/THE_SCALE_OF_DIASPORIC_CINEMA_Negotiating_national_and_transnational_cultural_citizenship

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 208.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

One of the most striking characteristics of diaspora, and thus diasporic cinema, is displacement, crossing borders and journeying. Like what has been already discussed in the theoretical part, diasporas take different journeys of transformations. One type of journeys begins with border crossing to embrace a hybrid life where the person gets in touch with different cultures, and where different values and manners can be even adopted. Another significant form of journey takes the opposite direction from the host country to the native land, a journey back to the origin and the roots, such as the one taken in *Ten'ja*. Both young men, Reda and Nouredine, take a journey of discovery to their roots and their father's origin, values and culture. According to Naficy, home-seeking journeys, in diasporic films, have profound and symbolic meanings as he writes: "The direction of the journey has profound empirical and symbolic values that shape not only the travel, but also the traveler. This is because significant journeys tend to be ameliorative and redemptive experiences."²²

The father's journey in *Le Grand Voyage* has multiple purposes. He wants his son to remedy his lost soul and identity through their constant contact throughout the whole journey. This is done through urging the son to discover more about his cultural values, religion and Islamic practices. And most importantly, the father takes that journey as a fulfillment of his faith. Naficy elaborates on the meaning of journeys in diasporic films explaining how physical journeys are interconnected with the emotional journey and thus affect the transformation of the characters. Naficy explains:

Depending on their motivation, journeys may take the form of exploration, pilgrimage, escape, emigration, or return – the latter three more precisely qualify as exilic and diasporic journeys. However, journeys are rarely simple or homogenous. Most often, they are composite and evolutionary. Exploration, for example, may involve quest, wandering, search, homelessness, or even conquest and colonization. Once initiated, journeys

²²Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, p. 223.

often change character: begun as an escape, for example, a journey may become one of exile, emigration, exploration, or return.²³

Journeys, in this respect, are almost always meant to make change happen. People might take different journeys and have different purposes, but they are still all of them affected and transformed.

Although the father in *Ten'ja* is dead and viewers never happen to know anything about him, his role is influential. The deceased father appears only in one single sequence when Nouredine is sick and starts hallucinating that his father is sitting beside him alive and talking to him (figure 16).



Figure 16: The only sequence in the movie of the deceased father and the son together (*Ten'ja*, Hassan Lgzouli, 2004)

Undoubtedly, the father's role in the film is very strong and significant. He is the one responsible for that journey and is the one who pushes Nouredine to go for such experience of pursuing one's roots. The father, and implicitly the filmmaker Hassan El Gzouli, suggests that in order to answer questions of origin and culture, there should be a return to the past geographically, physically, emotionally and mentally speaking. Nouredine is searching for his own self through experiencing the present as well as

²³Ibid., p. 222.

the past. The present offers him a great opportunity to learn about himself and his native culture through a direct and constant contact with the inhabitants of the country, and the father's past pushes him to search more for the roots, that is where his father came from and was raised up. It is, interestingly, a more authentic place that still preserves traditions and still represents the Moroccan identity. Indeed, it is through this journey that a new identity is reshuffled and reconfigured.

In both movies, there is a strong desire of return to the homeland by both fathers. This is to confirm that one important feature of diaspora is those feelings of longing to the homeland and the everlasting dream of going back one day to the origin. As Hamid Naficy emphasizes:

Every journey entails a return, or the thought of return. Therefore, home and travel, placement and displacement are always already intertwined. Return occupies a primary place in the minds of the exiles and a disproportionate amount of space in their films, for it is the dream of a glorious homecoming that structures exile.²⁴

These thoughts of return, however, are only linked to the fathers in both movies. They were both born and raised up in Morocco and they only went to France looking for better job opportunities and better life conditions. As for their sons, who belong to the second generations born and raised in France, might develop that feeling of longing to the origin after that their journeys of remedy to the soul and identity are fulfilled. The journey back home in *Ten'ja* stirs provocative issues about the position diaspora communities occupy. It shows that diasporic subjects go back home because of their failure to fully integrate in a different culture and they, consequently, remain marginalized as Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg state:

Diasporic cinema is characterised, on the one hand, by a preponderance of journeys and a heightened sense of mobility. The dominance of transitional and luminal spaces signals that migrant and diasporic films are concerned

²⁴Ibid., p. 229.

with identities in flux. On the other hand, a predilection for claustrophobic interiors and the use of locations on the peripheries of global cities underscore the fact that social marginalisation is still experienced by many migrant and diasporic subjects.²⁵

It is clear that the father has always felt marginalized and has lacked a sense of belonging and affiliation in the hostland. As a result, his last wish was to be buried in his natal hometown. The father has always wished to cross the borders again, but he has only made it back home when dead. He could not fulfill his dream mostly because of various life engagements, specifically financial ones, and he only had the courage to make that decision and go for it when he is gone. The family, hence, continues their struggles as marginalized subjects who live in the periphery of the society without the father. It is quite interesting how the opening of the movie summarizes all those feelings of marginalization and estrangements while filming Nouredine talking to his mother in a caravan that is obviously where they live surrounded by many other families who look non-native too. Although the sequence of the caravan is very short, it gives us a cultural and social context about Nouredine and his family.

Ten'ja, then, has presented the journey of the deceased father to Morocco as that one of escape, whereas the son's journey is of discovery and reconnection. The movie stresses the power of borders that imposes, using Heewon Chang's words, inclusion and exclusion²⁶ in the sense that when crossing borders, you are venturing into a new space of either acceptance or rejection or probably both at once. It is as Isabel Baca states: "*Borders* describes linguistic, cultural, and emotional borders showing how crossing such borders may lead to opportunity and benefits and/or confusion, problems, and marginalization."²⁷ Accordingly, crossing borders in *Ten'ja* offers an

²⁵Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg, "Locating Migrant and Diasporic Cinema in Contemporary Europe," in *European Cinema in Motion Migrant and Diasporic Film in Contemporary Europe*, eds. Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg (London: Palgrave Macmillan), p. 41.

²⁶Heewon Chang (1999), "Re-examining the Rhetoric of the "Cultural Border"". Electronic Magazine of Multicultural Education, retrieved on 27 April, 2017, from <http://www.eastern.edu/publications/emme/1999winter/chang.html>

²⁷ Isabel Baca, "Introduction: Crossing Borders," in *Borders* (Southlake, Tex.: Fountainhead Press, 2011), p. 2.

opportunity of inclusion to Nouredine to know himself more, while crossing borders in the past only led his father to marginalization and exclusion. For that reason, the father has chosen to cross borders back where he sees himself fit in the most.

It is interesting to note that *Ten'ja* has a circular structure since it finishes the same way it starts with Nouredine crossing the borders. It is the same setting but Nouredine is a different person when he is leaving back to France. He, now, has fulfilled his task and has finished his journey. The ending, however, is not really promising. While at the borders, the policeman asks Nouredine in Arabic: "Are you Moroccan?" Nouredine looks at Mimoun waiting for interpretation. It is weird though how he could not understand such a common and basic sentence in Moroccan dialect. Nouredine never answers back and he let Mimoun reply instead.

In addition to that, just before leaving to France, Nouredine is at a night bar drinking and enjoying his time with Mimoun. We see Moroccans with their *djellabas* surrounded by some *shikhat* (singing/ dancing women). In fact, the choice of the Moroccan outfit is an important reminder, because it emphasizes the setting and the nationality of people there. At that night, Nouredine gets to know about the left amount of money Mimoun needs to pay for his illegal immigration. The movie's last scene shows then Nouredine at the borders offering Mimoun some money. Mimoun gets out of the car singing and dancing that his dream to reach Australia and meet his beloved girl is about to come true. At this point, the extreme close up shot of Nouredine's face on the rear mirror while driving reveals satisfaction and sympathy. Nouredine is leaving Mimoun behind wearing a tracksuit in Morocco's flag colors, red and green, and the word "Morocco" is written on it. Symbolically, Mimoun stands for the country. It is highlighted here how diasporic subjects invest in their countries despite the entire dilemma they are living and despite being rejected and estranged. Although they are seen as strangers who cannot fit in the Moroccan atmosphere, they still consider Morocco as home. This instance can also be read differently. That is to say, the country is always in need of the West, represented through Nouredine, to develop and progress from the filmmaker's point of view as a diasporic.

To conclude this section, the journey in *Le Grand Voyage* can be deemed as a voyage that encompasses the possibilities of becoming in a context of multiple

belongings. It is a journey of discovery of the *Self* through a direct contact with the *Other*. This encounter takes place in various locations and via contact with different people from different cultures. Besides, the movie sends a message that makes it clear that individuals do not have to identify with those who fall inside the same boundaries, as the case of the father, but may in fact identify more with those who are located outside of their borders. It also claims that it is because of that direct and ongoing contact with the other and through diaporic journeys that diasporic identities are being reshaped, and developed.

The two movies, indeed, mirror and reflect to a great extent the inner *Self*, conceptions, principles, and values of the filmmakers to only prove that this category is already aware of the dilemma of their hybrid identity, their own multiple belongings, and all the paradoxes they are experiencing. The films are multilingual, spoken in Arabic permeated with French, Tamazight and Spanish (in *Ten'ja*) and in several dialects (in *Le Grand Voyage*). This hybrid style of filming emphasizes a critical (authorial) positioning revealing the interrelation between the cultural and the political in the construction of identity. In an interview with Ferroukhi, he admits that he feels a connection to Reda and he too is rediscovering his country and its culture not in the sense that he took a trip like that with his father, but it was based on other aspects of his life.²⁸

Border crossing, indeed, does not only imply that physical and geographical movement, but it most importantly refers to crossing those borders from the present to the past by both sons. It is a journey toward self-knowledge through the process of constructing the self. In this regard, Stuart Hall writes in his essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” that:

It is because this New World is constituted for us as place, a narrative of displacement, that it gives rise so profoundly to a certain imaginary

²⁸ Ismail Ferroukhi and Michael Toler, “An Interview with Filmmaker Ismail Ferroukhi”, pp. 34 – 37.

plentitude, recreating the endless desire to return to ‘lost origin’, to be once again with the mother, to go back to the beginning.²⁹

This is the journey that both fathers have taken and have always wished for, and that they have also forced their sons to experience as well. But Hall then cautions:

We have been trying to theorize identity as constituted, not outside but within representation; and hence of cinema, not as a second-order mirror held up to reflect what already exists, but as that form of representation which is able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects, and thereby enable us to discover places from which to speak.³⁰

In a nutshell, both films have successfully addressed a variety of diaspora issues of emigration, marginalization, negotiations of differences, and the changing dynamics of identities through journeying narratives. As they cross borders, diasporic subjects are empowered to embrace possibilities of identity recovery and self-discovery. *Ten’ja* and *Le Grand Voyage*, however, have failed to imagine and visualize a harmonious Euro-Moroccan identity as an outcome of the meeting of two different cultures in the characters of Reda and Nouredine.

b. “Dreams of Trespassing” Borders in *Casangera* and *Errag’d*

If Legzouli’s and Ferroukhi’s movies examine the crossing of borders and their effects on the individuals’ lives, Nouredine Lakhmari’s *Casanegra* and Yasmine Kassari’s *Errag’d* (*L’Enfant Endormi*) talk about dreams of trespassing borders. Those movies can be deemed as the opposite version of *Ten’ja* and *Le Grand Voyage* in the sense that the desired journey and the act of crossing borders take the opposite direction from the homeland to the host-land. It should be clear by now that the journey from the host-land to the homeland is a journey towards self-knowledge and

²⁹Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”, p. 236.

³⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 236-237.

discovery for the sons, a journey of escape towards the past for the father in *Ten'ja*, and a journey of fulfillments for the father in *Le Grand Voyage*. However, the journey from the homeland to the host-land remains somehow blurred since it is most of the time linked only to financial aspirations and to the search of an imagined homeland. But, what is the price given in return by border crossers? What do immigrants leave behind them and to what extent could they give sacrifice at the hope of living a better life with better conditions? And most importantly, who is responsible for creating such images that always glorify the West and make it an Eldorado in the mind of a lot of people?

The notion of crossing borders in *Errag'd* and *Casanegra* seems to be similar. Yet, each filmmaker discusses borders according to their own perspective and vision. *Errag'd* opens up with a preparatory scene when almost all the men of the village get ready to cross the borders to Spain. All the men of the village are obsessed with the idea of immigration which is emphasized at the opening of the movie. In a dialogue between Hassan, the bridegroom, and his mother, she tries to convince him to stay and take care of their lands instead of going through hardships in foreign countries. He replies that there is nothing to do in the village. Crossing borders to Europe, specifically to Spain, remains a shared dream of all the men of the village. They even cross borders clandestinely, putting their life at risk. All that matters for them is to get to the other side of the shore. Their main aim is to seek better job venues abroad leaving their women behind with various dreams of crossing different kinds of borders.

If crossing borders for men does explicitly refer to immigrating to Spain at all expenses even if it costs them their own life, women dream of trespassing other types of borders; they are cultural borders designated by society which separate individuals, mainly men and women as shown in the movie. Men are granted the right to change their own destiny through abandoning their remote and deserted village in Morocco, while women have no place to head to and no right to alter their lives. They, are, thus, oppressed, abandoned and left behind to take responsibilities and bear the consequences of their men's choice of emigration. Throughout the film, there is a continuous focus on the landscape that reflects the roughness of life in that rural area

(figure 17). These are long shots of the harsh land and the dry environment to emphasize the long duration. It is a reflection of women's inner self as well as their need of men besides them.



Figure 17: Different landscape shots from *Errag'd*
(*Errag'd*, Yasmine Kassari, 2004)

The movie highlights those cultural borders that control the lives of individuals based on their gender. The choice of the filming location is very significant in the sense that Kassari wants to show that even in the most remote, isolated and disempowered area, cultural borders can be crossed. Kassari, in this regard, discusses possibilities of trespassing those borders through empowering her female characters to be able to make choices upon their lives and see the world from different perspectives to realize opportunities and possibilities of change.

Errag'd reconsiders those cultural stereotypes that render rural women to weak and submissive beings. Crossing cultural borders takes different forms, such as Zeineb's refusal of giving birth to her baby. She has decided to lull the fetus and to take control over her own fate even though she is actually risking her life and the fetus' as well. It is a form of resistance and rebellion over being neglected, abandoned by her husband, and not given chances of making decisions over her life. What is ironical, however, is that both men and women put their lives at stake to cross borders

physically, metaphorically, and culturally. This, hence, indicates how borders can embody forms of disempowerments to both genders.

At the outset, it might seem paradoxical to find diasporic filmmakers dealing with themes of migration as a widespread shared dream among people; meanwhile, they themselves produce movies with themes of dreams of return to the homeland. Like many Moroccan filmmakers, precisely diasporic ones, Kassari wants to unveil some of the sufferings of Moroccan immigrants in Spain. For many young Moroccans, Europe is a dreamland that occupies the mind of a huge number of them. They wish to find a job abroad, make money and help their families in their homelands. It does not matter what job to do or with whom to live. All that matters is to cross the borders. Reality, however, can be harsh and disappointing as Kassari suggests in her movie.

Later when they are in Spain, the men of the village film themselves and send their news in some videotapes to their women. Women usually gather in a room over tea and cookies and watch the videotapes hoping to hear some good news from their husbands (figure 18). Apparently, the best news would be their husband's definite return to home.



Figure 18: Women gathering over tea watching the sent videotape by their husbands (*Errag'd*, Yasmine Kassari, 2004)

The videotapes, however, are disappointing for the women. They only reveal difficulties and hardships the immigrant husbands are going through. In their first sent videotape, one of them is complaining about having to cook after getting back tired from work. They are also worried that they might not have their legal papers done any time soon. Another man apologizes from his family for not being able to send some money soon because he no longer works and he cannot find a job easily. There are even other men who refuse to talk and appear in the camera like Ahmed, Halima's husband. They feel embarrassed and ashamed because they are unable to contribute to their families' economic situation. Besides that, they are disappointed since it is not the life they expected to find when they were still at the village. The movie highlights difficulties immigrants face when they cross borders, and specifically clandestine and those with poor education. It emphasizes the idea that expectations might be very disappointing since they do not always correspond to reality.

Kassari wants to show that life on the other side of the borders is not as easy and comfortable as some men think, expect, imagine and dream about. When Halima is beaten by her husband's family, Amziane comes to Halima's window to talk to her one last time. She asks him about the reasons behind coming back from Europe. "I did not like it there", he said. Halima goes on with her questions: "Isn't life better over there?" Amziane answers back immediately: "it is better for people who belong there." "People there are free and do whatever they want", Halima commented. "This is just the case of the natives", Amziane replies. Halima: "As soon as Ahmed gets his papers done, I will join him to there." Amziane: "Here, you are the most beautiful woman. Over there you will be ashamed of yourself, of your color, of your dresses..." Halima: "It's true, I'm illiterate." Amziane: "It's not about that. Groveling in foreigners' countries is so different from groveling in your own."³¹

Through this conversation, Kassari wants to draw more attention to the situation and the position of immigrants in the hostland. She argues that border crossers remain always marginalized and rendered to a secondary position in the host society. Immigrants, thus, can never be in the same position as the natives and enjoy the same

³¹ *L'Enfant Endormi* [film], dir. by Yasmine Kassari (Morocco and Belgium: Filmmuseum Distributie, Floris Films, Trigon-fim & Film freak Distributie., 2005).

rights. The film also proposes other critical queries, such as: What happens when two cultures meet? To what extent can immigrants be accepted, welcomed or refused and dealt with as unnoticed? We can even expand this to other questions such as: what happens to one's language, culture, beliefs, and life while crossing borders? In fact, the meaning of borders goes beyond the physical line that separates two countries. It is an adventure one embarks on and that threatens all intrinsic elements related to one's identity and roots. Kassari, hence, discusses how crossing borders can lead to various repercussions. It is true that it might offer opportunities and benefits, but it can also cause confusion and problems as well.

Through the character of Amziane, Kassari wants to give an example of a man who has seen and experienced both sides and has ultimately and convincingly chosen to come back to his hometown and settle in it. The village is absolutely not better than Europe, but Amziane's choice to return home is based on his belief that, I quote him again: "groveling in foreigners' countries is so different from groveling in your own."³² This is again to emphasize the various aspects of difficulties immigrants encounter.

Crossing borders is not purely about physical borders, but it is deeper than this. When one goes to the other side of borders, they take with them their whole culture and identity and go through a long journey of negotiation, acceptance, rejection and adaptation. Valérie K. Orlando clarifies this point when she writes that:

Yasmine Kassari wants her audiences on both sides of the Mediterranean to understand the loss immigrants face when they make the choice to leave their homeland. Life is not easier in Europe, and risking one's life to go there does not bring the happiness and fortune so many seek. These cruel realities become more evident in the videotapes that are sent back from the men in Spain. They suffer injury, unemployment, and isolation. Their faces

³² Ibid.

are marred by the bitter experience of immigration and their disillusionments stemming from what Europe has not offered.³³

It is worth mentioning that Yasmine Kassari has already produced a 57 minutes documentary film entitled *Quand les Hommes Pleurent (When Men Weep)* (1999) about Moroccan workers in Europe shedding more light on their suffering and daily hardship. It discusses how those people risk their lives and cross the borders illegally to reach the other shore. She does this through interviewing clandestine people who tell fearful stories of their journeys of crossing, and she also reveals reasons behind putting one's life at risk for the sake of reaching an "imagined land" as Kassari describes it.

Quand les Hommes Pleurent also unveils stories of humiliation, marginalization, and racism that Moroccans specifically face in Spain through the story of Salima, a fifteen-years-old teenager, the only girl who lives with her little brother and father in a place full of hundreds of men in Spain. The young interviewee talks about the hardships and the fears she daily lives. She explains that they can move to nowhere because no one wants to rent them a house. Kassari criticizes the Spanish authorities and those who are responsible for such racist and humiliating conditions immigrants, including legal ones, experience. "The girl and her father, apparently, have their legal papers since the girl goes to school,"³⁴ Kassari says in an interview on the radio.

Throughout the documentary, Kassari uses some verses of poetry by Mahmoud Darwish³⁵ in the background of her documentary film to accompany different

³³ Valerie K. Orlando, "*L'enfant Endormi (The Sleeping Child)*, 2004), Yasmine Kassari: The Myths of Modern Morocco", p. 142.

³⁴ The interview was on the Radio and it is available online, retrieved on 5 October 2018, from <http://docdif.online.fr/qlh/extraits.htm> (Translation is mine).

³⁵ Mahmoud Darwish is a diasporic Palestinian poet, was born on 13 March 1941 in a quaint village in the Galilee (a Palestinian village). At the age of seven, Darwish and his family were coerced to flee to Lebanon to escape the ongoing massacres by the Israeli army as it occupied Palestine in the process, destroyed the poet's village. He spent his life moving from one country to another started from Lebanon, Moscow, Egypt, Tunisia, Paris, Ramallah till he died on 9 August 2008 in the United States. Mahmoud Darwish has always expressed strong love, nostalgia and love for his homeland. His writings reveal disappointment, and bitter longing for a lost home as well as his undying hope for a return to his homeland,

sequences. She clarifies her choice by arguing that Darwish is just like other immigrants in Spain who also search for a space: “He is like all those immigrants who look for a space to stick and belong to.”³⁶ He voices out issues related to immigration, the land, and sense of belonging questioning exactly which country would they live in and eventually die in.³⁷

Kassari’s documentary film serves as a counter discourse to widely spread images by Western media that glorify the West and shows it as a place of paradise and where dreams are easily achieved. *Errag’d*, also, comes to solidify her argument to complete stories of immigration, dreams and plights. She argues, in her both works, that crossing borders could be more a form of disempowerment rather than what is usually considered as a form of empowerment.

Accordingly, in *Errag’d*, her first produced feature film after *Quand les Hommes Pleurent*, Kassari turns attention to those women left behind by their immigrant men. It is like a flashback taking the documentary into account to highlight what men had left behind them before they crossed borders. She discusses different side effects and consequences of illegal immigration not only on individuals but also on their families. *Errag’d* shows, both, what is behind and what is beyond borders as a way to continue what has been already said in *Quand les Hommes Pleurent*.

Diasporic filmmakers deal with themes of journeying and crossing borders in a deeper way since their position permits to discuss the topic from different angles. They know how life looks like beyond borders as they are aware of the nature of elements one loses or gains. They are aware of their dilemma, confusion, and difficulties and this is reflected in their movies. Thus, their narratives, either intentionally or unintentionally, are loaded with codes and messages that tackle different aspects of the aftermaths of crossing borders and journeying. Kassari, in short, lists a set of challenges when borders are crossed, questions serious aftermaths, and calls for reconsidering the whole experience of leaving one’s country heading to the unknown.

retrieved on (date) from: http://www.universeofpoetry.org/palestine_p3.shtml and adapted accordingly.

³⁶ “Interview with Yasmine Kassari,” (2001), retrieved on 5 October, 2018, from <http://docdif.online.fr/qlh/extraits.htm> (Translation is mine).

³⁷ Ibid.

Noureddine Lakhmari, similarly, has addressed the theme of borders in his two movies: *Casanegra* (2008) and his most recent film *Burn Out* (2017). The two films talk about crossing borders from different perspectives and with different storylines, yet, they both flow in almost the same discourse.

Casanegra, like *Errag'd*, portrays the daily life of a young man whose only dream is to cross borders and reach Sweden. Adil is obsessed with the idea of leaving his “Casanegra” behind looking for a better life. For him, the city offers nothing positive, but poverty, social problems, and unemployment. His suffering is worse extended because of his terrible stepfather who ill-treats him and his mother. This, consequently, pushes him to stick more to his own dream.

When the film starts, the camera shoots Adil talking to a status in a shop in the streets of Casablanca. He takes out a postcard from his jacket and he comments: “Malmo, this city is called Malmo, in Sweden. My uncle has sent it to me.”³⁸ After that, we see a conversation between Adil and a clandestine dealer about the amount of money Adil has to pay to fulfill his dream. When Adil complains about the price, the other man reminds him about how rewarding it is to be in Sweden. Adil answers right back: “I know all this.”³⁹

Through the character of Adil, Lakhmari represents a particular category of young Moroccans who want to escape their reality pursuing a dream overseas. He unveils their way of thinking, their expectations, and he stresses the imagined image they have about the West. Adil is desperate and is only preoccupied with how to gain money to pay for an illegal crossing to the other side of Europe. He is ready to work with Zerirek and execute his evil plans so as to get money in return and over whatever consequences.

There is no doubt that the Western media has a deep hand in shaping images that glorify the West. Those images raise curiosity and stir desire to discover, and experience this glorified life. Learning about higher wages, and decent employment conditions tempt the youth to idolize the West. Europe, through Moroccan eyes, is a land of promises, progress and a symbol of power and advancements. Adil seems to be

³⁸*Casanegra* [film], dir. by Nour-Eddine Lakhmari (Morocco: Bodega Films, Moonlight Films, Sigma Production & Sigma Technologies, 2008).

³⁹ Ibid.

fascinated by the West achievement and the Western culture and civilization. The dream of crossing borders, according to Lakhmari, disempowers individuals who might end up their lives dreaming without fulfilling anything in reality.

Karim, however, is not obsessed with the idea of immigration and does not share the same idealized image of the West as his friend. He, at least, tries to look for a job and takes responsibility of his unfortunate family. He is more realistic than Adil. In different occasions, Karim has eloquently criticized Adil for being driven with his dreams. He never ceases the chance to mock Adil's dream whenever the topic of Sweden is brought up. Karim does even tear off Adil's postcard. Through Karim and Adil, Lakhmari wants to present two contradictory discourses to demonstrate heterogeneous views towards the West and its culture.

Borders can be tackled from different angles as previously argued. Lakhmari's recent movie *Burn out* (2017) also discusses borders following the same concept as in *Casanegra*, but this time from another perspective. It is mainly about social borders between different categories of Moroccans.

The diasporic director clarifies how borders are able to separate not only nations, but even people falling in the same boundaries based on their own social hierarchies. This is interestingly a small image of how the world functions, especially when talking about the East versus the West; developing nations versus developed ones. Borders, consequently, are again deemed as acute forms of disempowerment as well as confinement.

Burn out is a multi-narrative film that tells stories of different characters belonging to different social statuses. Each one of these characters has a dream and a goal to achieve. Ayoub is a shoe-shiner who aspires to buy prosthesis for his disabled mother. Jad is a successful entrepreneur who could not overcome the loss of his father; which has affected his life negatively, especially his relationship with his wife Ghita. Ghita, consequently, finds herself leading an unhappy marriage to ultimately ask for divorce. Faridi, a famous politician, whose son died in an accident, and he seeks affection from Aida who is a medical student, selling her body in exchange of money. The film is rich in terms of characters' narratives. It is a way to clearly portray a variety of images of violence, marginalization and confinement as a result of crossing

borders and mainly social ones. The argument lies within how crossing borders are always argued as forms of disempowerment and, thus, a way to mirror diasporic individuals' continuous inner struggle because of them.

The ubiquity of the journey and crossing borders motif in Moroccan diasporic films' narratives reflects filmmakers' attitudes towards the hostland. Over all, diasporic filmmakers do not cherish immigration in their movies. Crossing borders towards the hostland is much more associated with trauma, marginalization and disempowerment. Their images and stories vary but they ultimately agree on almost the same upshots of immigrations. Questions are to be addressed to how those filmmakers perceive home when borders are crossed in the opposite direction back home. What images diasporic filmmakers portray of home, and most significantly, what is home for them?

2. Traveling Pictures of Home: Toward Nostalgia and Ambiguity

To understand diasporic filmmakers' relationship with their home country, it is necessary to examine their movies' narratives. De facto, the proliferations of the meanings of 'home' in their films are crucially important as they are most of the time conflictual. Hence, this section attempts to bring up a better understanding of the notion of 'home' through analyzing a number of movies by Moroccan diasporic filmmakers. I initially suggest that home must not be merely rendered to binary oppositions of 'here' and 'there' as there are some other underlying nuances that are worth scrutinizing. In this section, I analyze the representations of home in a selection of cinematic discourses by filmmakers of the Moroccan diaspora. In those films, home and nation are renarrated and revisited as a changing terrain where cultural identities are reshuffled and in ongoing transformations.

The term diaspora generally emphasizes physical and psychic movement and displacement from a relatively stable home, where one has family and feels a kind of attachment and belonging. Diasporic filmmakers approach the concept of home differently; each tells stories of and about home from their own perspectives. Diasporic films hold different resonances, whether as a cinematic discourse or cultural aesthetic or even as reflections to lived personal experiences. However, what is common between diasporic narratives is the essence of the experience of deterritorialization, their life between the homeland and the hostland and their feelings of dilemma, nostalgia, alienation, and homesickness. Therefore, home is a principal theme that diasporic films discuss. These movies come to destabilize unifying discourses on nation, identity and culture. They open up a space where diversity and multiplicity are celebrated and at the same time, reject essentialist nationalist views of home. Although the focal point of my interpretative analysis to the movies is to discuss how diasporic filmmakers represent home, brief attention will be paid to the way those directors position themselves in relation to both the homeland and hostland. It is an attempt to draw a comprehensive understanding of how Moroccan filmmakers

make a sense of their own experiences to raise questions related to home and belongings.

a. Exiled at Home and Home at the Exile: Between Here and There

Le Grand Voyage and *Ten'ja* provide examples of diasporic characters who are 'trapped' between two different cultures- that is of the original land and of the receiving society. They neither fully belong to the 'original' home nor to the hostland; thus, they are always in the process of finding a place to call home. In spite of the fact that the fathers, in both films, have been living in France for a long period, their Moroccan identity has always existed. They have lived there at the hope that one day they would go back with their families to Morocco, their country of origin. Both fathers in the movies, using James Clifford's words, "feel (maintain, revive, invent) a connection to a prior home. This sense of connection must be strong enough to resist erasure through the normalizing process of forgetting, assimilating, and distancing."⁴⁰

The father, in *Le Grand Voyage*, has intentionally taken his youngest son and not the eldest one, for he notices that Reda is the one who almost knows nothing about his culture. He wants to make from that road voyage a trip of self-discovery and self-knowledge that might well ahead lead to a desire of return to the roots. This is a way to tell his son that home must be searched for and it is definitely not France where he was born and raised up. Similarly, in *Ten'ja*, the father's desire to be buried in his remote village in the South of Morocco has a significant implication. The deceased father, obviously, has always thought of going back home even as a dead person. He wants to reconnect with the land and feels home again.

Le Grand Voyage and *Ten'ja* have a lot of similarities when it comes to the storyline and the themes discussed. Both fathers embark on a journey with their sons despite the fact that in *Ten'ja* the father is dead and is taken back in a coffin to his native village. What is common between the two fathers is their longing for the homeland and their desire of return, whereas it does not really matter for the sons. The

⁴⁰ James Clifford, *Routes Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 255.

movies discuss two different generations of diaspora; how they negotiate their affiliations and how they perceive home differently. The fathers are feeling like an exile at home and the sons are feeling home at exile. Despite the fathers' feelings of exile and nostalgia to a left home behind, the filmmakers suggest that they have successfully managed to create a home at exile. It is regardless where the person relocates, they take up with them elements and memories of their homeland that empower their resettlement in the diaspora and eventually allow a reconstruction of home away from home.

The fathers, in both films, still represent and stand for the Moroccan identity in terms of their lived lifestyle. It is very easy to sort out the father as Moroccan in *Le Grand Voyage*. This is manifested through his practices of culture, traditions, and religion as well. He desperately shows eagerness in keeping his Moroccan lifestyle separate from his life in France. The journey to the pilgrimage is a solid illustration of that as well as the use of the language. The father never speaks in French with his son during the whole trip. Those practices, indeed, represent the father's memories of his past. Both William Safran and Robin Cohen⁴¹ classify memory as one of the most important features of diaspora. Diasporic individuals keep memories of their homeland while they are away from home. Memory, accordingly, shields the past from oblivion and sustains diasporic identities throughout their process of transformations.

Both filmmakers, indeed, want to highlight the complexities of home diasporic subjects experience between feeling exiled at home and feeling home at exile as well. Hamid Naficy notes:

Today, it is possible to be exiled in place, that is, to be at home and to long for other places and other times so vividly portrayed in the media. It is possible to be in internal exile and yet be at home. It is possible to be forced into external exile and be unable to, or wish not to, return home. It is possible to return and find that one's house is not the home that one had hoped for, that is not the structure that memory built. It is possible to go into exile voluntarily and then return, yet still not fully arrive. It is possible

⁴¹These points have been approached in more details previously in the theoretical part.

to be able to return and choose not to do so, but instead continue to dream of and imagine a glorious return. It is possible to transit back and forth, be in and out, go here and there - to be a nomad and yet be in exile everywhere.⁴²

Although the fathers have willingly settled in France and have formed families there, they still look back at home wishing to return one day. Even though both mothers, in *Ten'ja* and *Le Grand Voyage*, only appear at the beginning of the movie, their roles have a significant resonance. Their appearances and their preservation of the Moroccan identity (which is manifested through their clothes, look, and the language used) confirm the fathers' protection to their traditions and cultures which signifies a strong tie with the 'original' home. This is, actually, against common thoughts of several scholarly works that perceive diaspora and nation as opposing concepts. Through providing characters that embody features of their home culture in the diaspora, diasporic filmmakers revisit diaspora / nation-state representations. Diasporic filmmakers, consequently, tend to reconcile diaspora and nation in their cinematic discourses. This diasporic consciousness is what William Safran theorizes as one of the main characteristics of diaspora.

It is this diaspora awareness or consciousness, as Hall calls it, which empowers diasporic subjects regardless of the fact that "it is constituted both negatively and positively."⁴³ Diasporic individuals, fathers and mothers in *Ten'ja* and *Le Grand Voyage*, are conscious of their experiences of discrimination, marginalization and even exclusion in the host-society. They recognize that they are addressed as strangers and put in the margin. In France, the family lives in a caravan that seems to be in an isolated area in the margin of the city; this is a significant indication of their exclusion. In fact, it is this diaspora consciousness that triggers feelings of alienation, loss and nostalgia. This is clear through the father's wish to be buried in his natal village where real home is. From another perspective, the positive side of diasporic consciousness, as explained by Hall, is that those negative feelings lead to new coalitions and solidarities

⁴²Hamid Naficy, ed, *Home, Exile, Homeland: Film, Media, and the Politics of Place* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 3-4.

⁴³James Clifford, "Diasporas", p. 311.

between diaspora communities.⁴⁴ I argue that the emphasis on diasporic consciousness by diasporic filmmakers in their movies is a way towards the formation of consolidated diasporic groups to rethink and revitalize diaspora/ nation-state relations.

Following William Safran's features of diaspora as embodying a level of consciousness of the homeland, collective memory, feelings of longing and alienation in the society of settlement, and eventually a return to the ancestral homeland emphasizing the image of an 'ideal' home, Tiffany Patterson and Robin Kelly also reconfirms that diaspora is:

A dispersal from a homeland, often by violent forces, the making of a memory and a vision of that homeland, marginalization in the new location, a commitment to the maintenance/restoration of the homeland, and desire for return and a continuing relationship and identity with the homeland that shapes the consciousness and solidarity of the group.⁴⁵

When Nouredine takes back his father's corpse to Morocco and when Reda drives his father to Mecca, they could not relate to their fathers' feelings. Nouredine feels exiled even when he is at home, a place his father always considers home and wishes to return to. Reda, too, could not feel allied to his father's journey nor to the people they both meet and ultimately join in Mecca. Kwame Dawes explains those feelings of the second generations of the diasporic community providing the example of black and Asian British-born writers whose representations tend to refer directly to Britain as a primary place of belonging. He writes that:

They write about Britain as home. They were born there or have grown up there all their life. They are uncomfortable with the notion of a home

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 312.

⁴⁵Quoted in Katharina Gerund, *Transatlantic Cultural Exchange African and American Women's Art and Activism in West Germany* (Bielefeld: The Deutsche National bibliothek, 2013), p. 200.

elsewhere for they have no sense of exile. Their sole exile is the exile within their own home country.⁴⁶

In this same context, none of the two sons feel a sense of belonging to their own culture and home. They instead feel alienated and othered. For instance, when Noureddine is crossing the borders, the police officer asks him if he is Moroccan. He replies: “yes”. The policeman re-inquires him while looking at his passport. He, then, asks him not to speak in French. Ironically, when Noureddine is crossing back the borders going to France, the police officer asks him the same question. Noureddine’s *Moroccaness* is highly questioned once again. But this time, Noureddine does not answer back. He just stars at Mimoun and asks the latter to translate for him, and eventually let Mimoun answer back. This highlights the diasporic loss as well as failure to learn and master their mother tongue, which is an essential element in forming one’s cultural identity. The journey, apparently, has shown Noureddine how estranged he is and even unwelcomed in a place that is supposed to be home.

There are many other instances that show Noureddine as looked at as an alien in Morocco. Noureddine is occasionally made fun of because of his ignorance to some aspects of the Moroccan culture. Some examples to mention is when he is in Mimoun’s company, the man he meets in Tangier. Mimoun offers him some help and shows him where to spend the night. In a scene where they are both in a *café* drinking Moroccan tea, Mimoun comments: “The tea has to be foamed on top. You cannot pour tea the way you pour wine”⁴⁷. This is part of the Moroccan traditions that is tea is usually poured from a certain height causing foam to form on the surface of the tea. Another noteworthy instance is when Noureddine is on the road with Nora. She complains about the music in his car while his father’s corpse is just behind them. Noureddine is ignorant about some common facts of culture and religion, which dictate that it is very inappropriate to listen to music in death occasions, let alone in the presence of a dead corpse. Through these instances and others, Noureddine, in fact, is

⁴⁶Quoted in Chris Weedon, “Migration, Identity, and Belonging in British Black and South Asian Women’s Writing,” *Contemporary Women’s Writing*, 2:1 (2018), p. 28.

⁴⁷*Tenja* [film], dir. by Hassan Legzouli (France and Morocco: Pierre Grise Distribution, 2004).

represented as an ignorant and a stranger, someone who is unfamiliar with the traditions and the conventions of the country. He is someone who cannot fit in the Moroccan context, since he merely knows anything about his homeland.

Ironically, El Gzouli defends Nouredine through highlighting other vexed questions of home and belonging arguing that home is affected by time and is thus changed. When they are on their way to the village, Nora and Nouredine stop the car to ask an old man about directions. The old man informs them that the village has been abandoned. Nora asks about the village name. “It is called *douar*”, the old man says.⁴⁸ Nora surprisingly answers back: “Doesn’t it have a name!?” “No”⁴⁹, he says once more. Through this incident, El Gzouli demonstrates how home is constantly changing throughout time that when the diasporic is back, they might not recognize it, and even worse, they might not find it at all. As a result, there is no place to go back to; “no detour and or return”⁵⁰.

Similarly in *Le Grand Voyage*, in a very significant scene when the father and the son reach Mecca, the camera follows Reda to demonstrate his feelings of loss, whereas the father is harmonically integrated with the other pilgrims. Reda is wearing a yellow T-shirt in the middle of a crowd of men with their white clothes. He is invisible that no one can see him and feel his presence. Reda is talking to his father, but he never answers back and just continues his way with his fellow pilgrims. As a reaction to this, Reda stands over their car trying to make himself visible as the following picture from *Le Grand Voyage* shows (figure 19).

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰William Safran, “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return,” in *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, vol.1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), p. 91.



Figure 19: Reda is being invisible and excluded as they reach *Hadjj*, their ultimate destination. (*Le Grand Voyage*, Ismail Ferroukhi, 2004)

While Reda is standing over his car, there is a wide shot that locates where he is exactly (figure 19). Then, the camera moves to shoot him from below and with extreme close up on the face to express his feelings of lostness and loneliness. He is still intruder, different and lost. Reda is excluded and left behind not knowing where to go and what to do, questioning probably to where he belongs while watching his father going away from him. His feelings of estrangement will be more emphasized after the father's death.

Amine Maalouf has amply explains that the homeland relationship may differ from one category in the diaspora to another. For some in the diaspora, the homeland is portrayed as a sacred place full with memories of the past. This same category usually keeps companions in their exile, such as language, music, religion, customs and values, which is exactly the fathers' case in both movies. For others, their identities mix up both the homeland and the hostland elements; they are a mixture of 'here' and 'there'; a case which conforms to both sons.⁵¹ Therefore, those categories tend to see home differently. That same home which represents stability, comfort and peace of mind to the fathers is the same home that represents constant conflicts and

⁵¹ Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, p. 39.

clashes to the sons. Still, both movies attempt to depict some hope of new established relationships between the sons and their origin emanating from these exact conflicts.

Like the concept 'diaspora' and based on what has been previously discussed in the first part of this work, home is a much more complex notion that is not given a solely fixed definition. Yet, it can be claimed that there is almost no controversy over how diasporic subjects are usually presupposed to suffer from homesickness, nostalgia or estrangements. Their minds are usually preoccupied with the idea of going back home or of searching for a home.

The meaning of home varies from one person to another. We cannot talk about one single home in diaspora as it is the multiplicity of homes and belongings that characterizes diaspora. Some might consider home where one has work, family and relatives, while others call home to places where they can find peace of mind and where they feel comfortable with a sense of belonging and attachment, a home that whispers 'you are safe here'.

Diasporic filmmakers evoke a lot of questions on how different diasporic subjects perceive home. They suggest that there is a diversity of homes, for that we can never define a singular home. This reminds us of Avtar Brah's conceptualisation of diaspora that entails a process of 'multilocationality across geographical, cultural and psychic boundaries.'⁵² Some diasporic subjects constantly express their longing for a homeland and they make sure to maintain a strong relationship with it while others, on the other hand, start journeys of searching for a home and there is another category which considers the hostland as their adopted home. Of paramount importance is the way Hakim Belabbas⁵³, Moroccan diasporic filmmaker, depicts and discusses the notion of home in his movies and documentary films.

The obsession with the concept of home is plainly expressed in Belabbes' movies; one example to mention is *Khit Errouh (Threads)*. The movie opens up with

⁵² Avtar Brah, "Diaspora, Border and Transnational Identities," in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, eds., Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2003), p. 615.

⁵³ Hakim Belabbes was born in the Moroccan town of Boujad, where his father owned the only movie theatre. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in American and African literature in 1983 from Mohamed V University in Rabat, Morocco, and a graduate degree in film and video from Columbia College in Chicago, where he now teaches film direction and production.

the camera shooting the land to move to film an old woman dressed in a Moroccan traditional caftan while talking to the camera. Significantly, the woman symbolizes the land: home. She eloquently states a couple of sentences that sum up an aspect of how diasporic persons feel towards their origin and land:

My children are like the fingers of my hand. I don't prefer one to the other. To me, the small is like the big. There is no difference. My children always leave but they always return. Whether they go East or West, they always return; alive or dead.⁵⁴

This mania of return to home is further discussed in Belabbes' personal documentary film *A Nest in the Heat* (1992). The documentary revisits concepts of belonging, separations, independence, and affiliations. It also questions issues of estrangements inside one's country particularly when one feels exiled at home. The documentary is about Hakim Belabbes' journey from his home in Chicago to visit his family in Boujaad, his hometown. *Boujad: A Nest in the Heat* films some intimate instances of family relationships, their views of life, family and home. The camera keeps moving from domestic spaces to public ones to offer some thought-provoking screenings and discussions by the director and his family as well.

Throughout the documentary film, Belabbes keeps raising some thorny questions which many diasporic critics interrogate. He shakes the meaning of belonging and home when he says: "as much as I want to stay away, something keeps sucking me back here every year."⁵⁵ The documentary, later on, comes to answer this main query. Belabbes suggests that those feelings of attachments with the homeland are not restricted to diasporic individuals, but to also those living at home. In many instances, the filmmaker's parents and siblings express their strong attachment to Boujad and that they have solid reasons not to leave the place where they feel they adherently and powerfully belong to. His sister states: "When I go to Rabat and I am away from

⁵⁴*Khit Errouh/ Threads* [film], dir. by Hakim Belabbes (Morocco: X, 2003). (Subtitles in English are already provided in the movie).

⁵⁵*Boujad: A Nest in the Heat* [Documentary film], dir. By Hakim Belabbes (Morocco: 1992) (Translation is already provided)

home, I feel scared. So I run back here where I feel secure. In Boujaad, my parents are protecting me.”⁵⁶ The documentary focuses on that strong tie individuals have with their origin, culture, home and therefore, identity. This is regardless of being exiled, diasporic or not. It seems that Hakim Belabbess wants to approach other people’s feelings towards home to come up with a comprehensive understanding to his dilemma as well.

When Hakim Belabbes returns to his small town at the time of a locale celebration of the harvest season and pilgrimage to the local saint, he admits that he finds so many things altered (figure 20). He says: “Suddenly, I realize how estranged I have become in the midst of everything familiar that is surrounding me.”⁵⁷ He is feeling estranged, othered and he himself emphasizes this feeling many times, in different words and in various contexts with his voiceover. Amine Maalouf has already raised this point of home transformations that consequently affects diasporic sense of belonging and perceptions of their homeland. This is precisely happens when that image in their memory is shaken. Thus, the person starts considering himself as a stranger and begins feeling a kind of loss of home at home.⁵⁸ Obviously, this makes the notion of home much more complicated where one does not know where to belong. In *Boujad: A Nest in the Heat*, Belabbes eloquently stresses later: “I feel I don’t belong here.”⁵⁹ He raises questions over feelings of attachments and belonging especially when one feels exiled at his own home. Still, the viewer is not informed if Chicago is deemed as home or not for Belabbes, but it is mentioned how it is linked to studies, work ambition, and future endeavors.

⁵⁶Ibid. (Translation is adapted and changed a little bit).

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸See Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*.

⁵⁹*Boujad: A Nest in the Heat* [Documentary film], dir. By Hakim Belabbes (Morocco: 1992) (Translation is already provided)



Figure 20: The depiction of Home in Hakim Belabbes' *Boujad: A Nest in the Heat* (Hakim Belabbes, *Boujad: A Nest in the Heat*, 1992)

Similarly in *Hadihi alayadi (These Hands)* (2008), Hakim Belabbes, once again, further discusses the inhabitants' relationship with their hometown Boujaad. The film is divided into different segments that highlight the city, its culture and people, and all this is filmed by a Moroccan university professor teaming up with a videographer friend from Boujaad.

The film starts with various interviews with ordinary people of the town asking them a couple of questions about their affiliation to the city, love, belonging, expectations and dreams. They, unexceptionally, and despite all the unsatisfactory conditions, they express strong love towards the city and stress their inability to depart from it. The camera moves, then, to introduce the shrines and saints of the city through testimonies of the elders. We also see interviews with a number of ordinary people practicing different jobs. This transcendental style is what distinguishes, the Chicago

resident, Hakim Belabbes among other Moroccan filmmakers at large. *These Hands* along with other mentioned works of Belabbes demonstrate how central the question of memory and origin has been inspiring generations of filmmakers, especially those who experience life in both sides, here and there. This is definitely a shared concern of diasporic filmmakers towards their origin. Lakhmari, too, filmed his three movies: *Casanegra* (2008), *Zero* (2010) and *Burn Out* (2017) in Casablanca, his city of origin. Cinema, for them, is an ambition to express their reality the way they perceive it. This is what Lily Cho discusses as a form of shared power between those diasporic:

Diasporas are not simply collections of people, communities of scattered individuals bound by some shared history, race or religion, or however we want to break down the definitions and classifications. Rather, they have a relation to power. They emerge in relation to power. This power is both external to the diasporic subject and internally formative.⁶⁰

Their cinema keeps its mobility in the realm of nostalgia and question, and incessant interrogation. It is an attempt to document culture and archive traditions offering film viewers at home and abroad a universal message with authentic estheticism, and a meaningful experience in film.

Diasporic people are conscious of this amalgam of feelings they go through throughout time. It is, as argued, part of the dual or the paradoxical nature of diasporic consciousness that is

[...] when one is caught between ‘here’ and ‘there’ or between those who share roots, and is shaped through *multilocality*. The consciousness and identity of diasporic may focus on their attachment to the symbols of their ethnicity, and they may continue to feel emotionally invested in the ‘homeland’. Yet, such attachment and sentiments are experienced

⁶⁰ Lily Cho (1997), “The Turn to Diaspora,” retrieved on (date), from <https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/politicalfeeling/files/2007/10/cho-topia11-30.pdf>

simultaneously with their involvement and participation in the social, economic, cultural and political allegiances to their home in the diaspora.⁶¹

Many diaspora people serve their own country in the hostland through different mediums, charity work and associations as examples. For diasporic filmmakers, their movies are considered as a utensil through which they could help in introducing their own culture and country of origin. Festivals open gates for films to be watched, discussed and get chances to win prizes and awards. Therefore, it is very important to question what kind of pictures and discourses produced by this category of filmmakers traveling beyond the borders.

b. Imagining and Eroticizing the Homeland: Manipulating Landscape and Music

Undoubtedly, those feelings of estrangement, alienation and “loss of home at home” are essential factors that push diasporic individuals to look for a place to call home and feel an attachment towards. The need and desire to belong have always been a focal interest in diasporic cinema. But, what would happen when one cannot feel fully affiliate to neither the homeland nor to the host-land? Questions of belongings become fundamental in diasporic cinema as they reflect their filmmakers’ sites of loss, dilemma and ambiguity as well. Their films, therefore, I argue, operate as an arena where imagined spaces are reconstructed so that they film a home that they imagine, aspire to exist, and they long for. An imagined home, thus, becomes as an empowering and liberating space for the characters in diasporic cinema. To further discuss this notion of *imagined homelands*, this sections endeavors to analyze representations of home in female diasporic filmmakers’ narratives examining Tahiri’s *Number One*, Kassari’s *Errag’d* and Marrakechi’s *Marock* and *Rock the Casbah*.

Needless to say now that of paramount importance is the way diasporic filmmakers depict home in their movies. If, as it has been previously analyzed,

⁶¹Vijay Agnew, ed., *Diaspora, Memory, and Identity A Search for Home* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2005), p. 14.

diasporic male filmmakers present images of home in relation to feelings of lostness and exile at both the homeland and the hostland, female diasporic filmmakers, however, depict imagined images of the homeland consisting of a set of contradictions that establish discourses of ambiguities and eroticization. Their movies entail the clash and fusion of different cultures and ways of life which affect identities formation. Consequently, their representations of home reflect more views of cinema as transcultural, yet, it is an arena of clashes.

To begin with, Zakia Tahiri's *Number One* fuses conceptual and cultural values of the East and the West. This combination has contributed in forming forged images of a non-existing, if not to say, an idealized home. It is an imagined home through a diasporic lens that turns up to be a space of struggle and contestation between the global and the local. Diasporic filmmakers portray this limbo situation that blends elements from different cultures seeking to reconfigure different homes and this is reflected in their cinematic style. This discourse is primarily developed because of diasporic movements and contact with different homes. Susan Stanford Friedman reasserts this idea stating that:

The movement of peoples from one place to another around the globe is a history of dislocation and relocation, displacement and emplacement, losing homes and making new homes, living in a limbo between worlds and adapting over time to new ways, being changed by and also changing the culture of the adopted land.⁶²

The depiction of home in *Number One* is imbued with ambiguity. The film reconstructs social and cultural norms and values in a Moroccan community *but not quite*. It calls for reordering gendered spheres in the Moroccan community, and it also calls for gender equality with the hope of reaching an equal status as the West. The movie has interestingly borrowed a lot of concepts from the West and has built upon

⁶² Susan Stanford Friedman, "Diasporas, Migrations and Borders," in *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*, ed., David G. Nicholls (New York: Modern Language Association, 2007), p. 264.

them an imagined picture of a society where women are able to challenge patriarchal ideologies and where men, most specifically the protagonist Aziz, succumb to feminine power.

Soraya, Aziz's wife, is empowered and liberated because of those borrowed Western concepts of freedom and equality. *Number One* debates gender issues in the Moroccan society highlighting the binary position between the status of men and women while having in mind the Western model. It challenges traditional views of gender roles while presenting women as victims of the patriarchal legacy and of the attitudes of the society. Those are the main reasons behind women's marginalization, subjugation and control by men according to Tahiri. In order to defame men's superiority and thus eliminate those binary positions, Zakia Tahiri has resorted to some techniques taken from the Moroccan myths to counter attack this huge gap between men's and women's practices as well as positions in the society.

By producing images of a woman who has been able to change her husband's conduct and assert her own identity as an independent and strong woman in a patriarchal society, Zakia Tahiri draws "an imagined Morocco". In order to do so, she has used some impractical techniques to forge images of home the way she imagines it. The filmmaker, however, falls into the trap of eroticizing the homeland by employing and normalizing the use of magic among Moroccan women as a tool to solve their problems and change their lives.

Similarly in *Errag'd*, Yasmine Kassari employs white magic as a tool of resistance and empowerment to her main female character Zeineb. In a small remote and isolated village in the Atlas Mountains, women are permitted by the filmmaker to have control over their fate and change their destiny. Zeineb, the main protagonist, has resorted to white magic to lull the fetus until her husband returns from Spain. When Halima asks about the reasons behind lulling the fetus, Zeineb replies: "I have to wait for his father to come back. It is said that the lull fetus brings his father back."⁶³

Similar to *Number One*, *Errag'd* too produces erotic images of the homeland to empower the female characters. Those diasporic narratives perpetuate stereotypical

⁶³ *L'Enfant Endormi* [film], dir. by Yasmine Kassari (Morocco and Belgium: Filmmuseum Distributie, Floris Films, Trigon-fim & Film freak Distributie., 2005).

images of Morocco as a land of magic and witchcraft. Those representations of Morocco as a destination to people who seek sorcery services has been widely portrayed in Western and Arabian media. *Errag'd* has contributed in confirming this image from the opening scenes of the movie. Zeineb is celebrating her marriage ceremony among her family and everyone is waiting for *Fqih* to show up from Taourirt city.

According to the villagers' beliefs, Zeineb is not ready to get married and cannot have a sexual intercourse with her husband unless the *Fqih* comes to nullify the effects of magic on Zeineb and breaks the spell. *Tkaf* is a local cultural belief and practice to protect men and women from committing sins and having a sexual relationship before marriage. It is also meant to protect women's virginity which is considered very important in the Moroccan society regarding both religion and culture. The pictures below (figure 21) show those scenes when the *fqih* arrives and starts his ritual practices of setting Zeineb free from any effects of magic with Halima's assistance. He is reciting versus of Quran while Zeineb is walking forth and back over a carpet and Halima is immersing a paper in a water basket. At the end, Zeineb has to wash all her body with that same water used by Halima.



Figure 21: The *Fqih* nullifying the effect of magic on Zeineb with Halima's assistance.
(*Errag'd*, Yasmine Kassari, 2004)

In a nutshell, the use of supernatural power in *Number One* and *Errag'd* undoubtedly serves to eroticize the homeland. It disturbs the real intention of the female filmmakers which is to empower their female characters and liberate them from patriarchal ideologies and to also call for an immediate change.

Diasporic filmmakers share similar thoughts about an imagined homeland that is made up of two different legacies of the East and the West. This amalgam of cultures that is an outcome of their living experience is reflected in their films' narratives and aesthetic techniques when they take up elements from their own native culture and from the Western one and blend them all together. Ironically, female filmmakers highlight on cultural elements from the Moroccan folklore that show Morocco as a land of magic and supernatural power as an attempt to create empowering discourses in their movies. Moreover, they end up adapting elements of the Western culture to a Moroccan context. This consequently leads to constructing spaces of struggles. One striking example of this combination of the homeland's and the hostland's elements coalesce in the use of language, the ubiquity of Western products and the adaptation of Western values.

Music is also a prominent borrowed facet of the Western culture which is employed and even overused in many diasporic films. It is needless to say that music is a marker of culture and identity as Dan Lundberg asserts. Several intertwined questions are raised about diasporic filmmakers' choice of diegetic music or source music and also about their use of different musical soundtracks throughout their films. Needless to say that their choices are not innocent and they embody a lot of implications. Dan Lundberg argues how the use of music implies highlighting similarities and differences and it might also serve in connecting and strengthening feelings of affiliations. He points out that:

Music is an important part of our identity and its symbolic potential lies in the fact that it can be used to express and maintain both differences and similarities. In the multicultural context, music is used as a marker of group boundaries for the own group. But it is also used outwards, marking boundaries against other groups and individuals. Internally, the group can

use its 'own' music to strengthen the feeling of belonging, and the same process can be used to mark a difference between 'others' and 'us'. This use is by no means limited to ethnical categories in society. People forming identities around music concept such as hip-hop, jazz, old time folk music and heavy metal also use markers to a similar extent.⁶⁴

In Laila Marrakchi's both movies *Marock* and *Rock the Casbah*, Western music is powerfully manipulated throughout the whole movies. Diegetic and non-diegetic⁶⁵ Western soundtracks are even put on some scenes that portray some very authentic Moroccan cultural incidents and spaces. In various scenes, the sound of the Western music is made louder to remind audiences of coming waves of Westernization in Marrakchi's point of view.

There are similar remarkable scenes in *Marock* and *Rock the Casbah* where Western music tracks overthrow aspects of the native culture and where home is clearly being eroticized. The use of different Westerner musical soundtracks can indeed powerfully change the viewer's interpretation of the scenes. More significantly, the choice of musical soundtracks can play an immense role in enhancing the film's narrative and in making some scenes very memorable and catchy.

Music has the power to make the scene more intense and controversial. To illustrate this, there are two remarkable scenes in *Marock* when diegetic musical tracks change the entire purpose of the scenes. The first scene is the opening of *Marock* when the guardian car is praying in the middle of the crowd between luxury cars with overlapping loud Western musical tracks, and the second one is when Mao is praying too while his sister is talking to him and loud Western music invades the background of the scene. Those few diegetic musical scores used in the films serve to manifest cultural clashes between different cultures. Moreover, Music, in fact, adds to the expressions of actors and conveys a lot of messages without the need of articulating

⁶⁴ Dan Lundberg, "Music as Identity Marker: Individual Vs. Collective," in *CÔRTE-REAL*, Maria de São José, ed., *Migrações Journal - Special Issue Music and Migration*, October 2010, no.7 (Lisbon: ACIDI), p. 41.

⁶⁵ Diegetic music is understood to emanate from a source in the fictional narrative or "diegesis". Hence it is also known as "source music". Conversely, non-diegetic music is understood not to emanate from the film itself, so the characters do not hear it.

them out loud. In both scenes, music signifies strong messages by the filmmaker about the invasion of Western culture and the hybridization of the Moroccan society and Moroccan individuals.

Similarly, in *Rock the Casbah*, during the funeral of the father, when *tolba* are reciting Quran and while the deceased father's corpse is taken away from home to be buried in the graveyard, it is shocking to hear diegetic Western music overlapping with Quran. Music, in this regard, is used to violate the most authentic traditions that make and speak of the Moroccan identity. It does even challenge religious beliefs. The film is neither glorifying nor imagining the homeland; it is rather creating an eroticizing narrative.

The use of music to reveal the crisis of identity in a time of globalization is clearly expressed in both films by Marrakchi. Home consequently is portrayed as already affected and altered. This probably leads diasporic filmmakers not to link home with a particular geographical space but with an "imaginary homeland" in Salman Rushedi's word. Susan Stanford Friedman elaborates on this notion in her "Diasporas, Migrations and Borders", as she writes:

Many migrants and diasporics associate home not with a particular geographic location but with an "imaginary homeland", with the experience of being perpetually in between cultures, or with an affiliation based on a communal identification that crosses national boundaries (e.g. religion, gender, queerness, indigeneity). The writing of home has become in a variety of ways, from the literal to the metaphoric, increasingly deterritorialized. Globalization has not eliminated the power of nationalism as a global force. But transnational mass media, economies, cultural practices, and people have reshaped national institutions and identities and made for new forms of interplay (both creative and destructive) between the global and the local.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Susan Stanford Friedman, "Diasporas, Migrations and Borders," in *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures*, ed., David G. Nicholls (New York: Modern Language Association, 2007), p. 262.

If music in Marrakchi's films is used to disturb the Moroccan authentic sphere and is represented as a matter of clash and conflict, in previously discussed diasporic films, it is used to assert the Moroccan identity, stress nostalgia, and reveal feeling of longing for a homeland. It is quite interesting how diasporic filmmakers choose expressive diegetic music in their movies differently. This is mainly because the choice of the music can greatly affect the narrative of the film. In *Ten'ja* and *Le Grand Voyage*, diegetic music tracks are obviously used as a form of resistance and as an expression of nostalgia. Interestingly, the audience's reactions to movies are gained through a variety of ways- whether sadness, happiness, sympathy, death, success or failure- but probably one of the most essential tactics to getting some sort of reaction lies within the use of music since it is a powerful cue for many people. The choice of musical tracks in films is no way arbitrary; they are loaded with messages as discussed in *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema*:

Taking music as an object of cinematic representation changes the critical agenda substantially. It immediately causes music to lose the transparency and simplicity that its role as mere accent imposes. As cinematic representation, music becomes thickly textured, in the sense of demanding thick description; it resonates with an intertextual polyphony that can no longer go unheard or unexamined.⁶⁷

Music, in the regard, can never be ineffective or useless. Road movies, such as *Ten'ja* and *Le Grand Voyage*, use authentic Moroccan music tracks to demonstrate feelings of nostalgia and hope of return to the homeland. Music elicits memories of the father's past and evokes nostalgic feelings. The music is sad with expressive lyrics about the homeland. Besides, it is most of the time accompanied with long different shots of home landscapes to stimulate the viewer's emotions and to also unveil filmmaker's feelings towards their home.

⁶⁷Daniel Goldmark, et al., eds., *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2007), p. 6.

From another perspective, music operates to divulge characters' ethnical and cultural affiliations and identity. The opening of *Ten'ja* is accompanied with a very sad Moroccan folk music which reveals inner emotions of the deceased father while returning home. As the movie progresses and Nouredine is about to reach his father's place of birth more specifying Amazigh folk music takes over. The music therefore is used to stress specificities of the culture and instantaneously allow a romantic connection with long shots of the homeland's landscape. Music is clearly used to stimulate nostalgic feelings and provoke memories of the native homeland.

In short, music is obviously meant to express nostalgic emotions of diasporic individuals who long for a homeland in the character of the deceased father who has opted for returning to the native land and be buried there. Similarly with *Le Grand Voyage*, when Reda has buried his father in Mecca and he is returning to France, almost same music sound style as in *Ten'ja* is manipulated. Reda feels relieved as he has finished his task in spite of the sad ending. He is looking out of the window of the taxi, while viewers are hearing very sad Soufi non-diegetic music. Music, here, actively serves to bring up memories and flashbacks of the past which are described as a source of inspiration, solace and invitation to search for the origin and discover the land.

Diasporic filmmakers, then, manipulate music differently to serve their own agendas and their films' storylines. Music can be used in two contradictory ways by diasporic filmmakers. It is used to assert connections with the homeland and demonstrate nostalgic feelings, and it is also used to confirm the hybridization of the Moroccan community through mixing Western and Moroccan tracks music all together at once.

3. Diaspora Issues: Cinema Beyond Taboos

a. Revisiting Religion and Culture through the Lens of Diasporic Filmmakers

Movies do not only entirely present life stories, but they might also influence or even shape audiences' norms, values, attitudes and perspectives towards life or towards a specific culture and nation. Filmmakers use their art to entertain, introduce and document culture, serve political agendas, and even promote or negotiate differences of religious beliefs. Although it is clear that religion is an integral part of individuals' lives, it is not commonly expected to see many religious references in films and to watch movies that raise issues related to religion. This is because religion is considered a taboo topic that cannot be tackled freely, especially in the Arab world and through cinema. Diasporic filmmakers, like Laila Marrakchi and Ismael Ferroukhi, have broken a lot of taboos in their movies, among of which that of religion. They, however, present completely different and opposing discourses. If *Marock* portrays an image of Islam that is more to please Westerners prospects, *Le Grand Voyage* answers back to long held stereotypes on Islam by Western media.

When films and religion intersect, a wide appealing glimpse of culture is provided. It is an invitation to examine the role religion plays in daily lives and in connection with culture. The question begging an answer is whether or not the portrayal of religion we are given through films is meant only to entertain, or is it meant to be an actual representation of what people believe and practice? What are the intentions of filmmakers in presenting religion concepts? What ideas of religion have been reinforced, represented, and resisted? Can films play a role in constructing or deconstructing some religious stereotypes? And to what extent can films affect religious attitudes? And most importantly, to what extent can we talk about religion and culture, as both, configuring a Moroccan identity through the eyes of diasporic subjects?

Understanding religion is very complex and there are heterogeneous discourses when it comes to cinematic representations by Moroccan diasporic filmmakers. Those

representations are mainly divided into two main categories: those who portray Islam and Muslims in a way that meets up the expectations of the Western audience' imagination and fantasy, and others who provide counter discourses to stereotypical images and misrepresentations of Islam and Muslims. In his classical work *Covering Islam*⁶⁸, Edward Said argues that there are hidden agendas behind the representations of the Islamic world in Western media. He adamantly discusses how the image of Islam has been distorted by the Western media. Basing his argument on Foucault's notions of knowledge and power, Said explains the relationship between knowledge, power and media. That is to claim, if knowledge means power, those who are in control of the Western media are the most powerful to determine and shape images of the East. The media, thus, have the ability to determine how Islam should be represented. Consequently, Islam and Muslims are, most of the time, as Said argues, portrayed negatively.

1.1. Orientalizing Islam:

Undeniably, diaspora' dislocation and relocation politics allow diasporic filmmakers to get access to a larger audience, specifically those in the West. For many diasporic filmmakers, their films are a means to launch and establish chains of dialogues with the West which has always considered the East as a mysterious place to discover. Diasporic filmmakers' position, thus, raises possibilities of *returning the gaze or reinforcing* it as they are in a stronger and better place than their non-diasporic directors' counterparts.

One of the most prevalent and worth scrutinizing recent themes that diasporic filmmakers cover in their movies is that of religion. Although the topic seems to be a bit sensitive to talk about for the various interpretations it permits and for censorship and freedom concerns, Laila Marrakchi's *Marock* has openly discussed religious thoughts and practices in the Moroccan society. As a consequence, the movie was

⁶⁸See Edward Said, *Covering Islam How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997).

harshly and widely criticized by the public and by the press, and the PJD party went further to ask for banning the movie for their audacious discourses and narratives.

In fact, the most striking scenes of *Marock* are those which talk about religion and portray religious practices. The movie significantly opens up with an old bearded man in charge of the parking lot praying just beside a nightclub while both sounds of prayers and Western music intersect. Symbolically, Marrakchi proposes that the old man stands for the aged Islam that has to be renewed and reconsidered in this age of modernity and globalization. It is a daring call for reconsidering both religion and culture and for questioning people's perceptions to both of them.

The movie calls for a more liberal Islam to take over through Marrakchi's adolescent characters and their rich liberal families. It is also a clear invitation to scrutinize a set of contradictions in the Moroccan society taking religion into account. The movie includes various instances of religion such as Ramadan, fasting, praying, and it also highlights Muslim/Jewish relationships. Besides, there is a recurrent shot of mosques throughout the movie. Ghita, the young high school adolescent, is the core center through whom issues of religion are raised in different contexts and situations. Ghita neither prays nor fasts Ramadan and she is in an intimate relationship with a Moroccan Jew. Marrakchi presents a liberal character that shows neither respect nor commitment to her religion and culture in a liberal space. Thus, Islam is being belittled and openly attacked.

There are various scenes in *Marock* that misrepresent Islam; one of which is when Mao, Ghita's brother, is praying while Ghita is disturbing him with her questions about the jeans he brought her from London without respecting the fact that he cannot answer back. The camera moves from Ghita's room where she is enjoying her time listening to some Western music and dancing into filming Mao in his room praying. This shift of the camera shows completely different views. Interestingly, when Ghita moves to Mao's room, the music is still heard in the background and here once again another instance that shows what happens when the Islamic religion and Western thoughts and elements intersect. The scene suggests that tolerance, dialogue and communication are absolutely absent.

Ghita is wearing indecently while looking down at Mao with bewilderment, perplexity and disrespect to his religious practice. The picture below shows clearly how the filmmaker has chosen to make Ghita dominate over Mao (figure 22).



Figure 22: Ghita looking down her brother while he is praying (*Marock*, Laila Marrakchi, 2008)

While addressing Mao, Ghita's words are very expressive and carry a lot of interpretations. She says:

What has happened to you? Have you fallen on your head? You have lost your mind! You think you are in Algeria? So, that is it, you will become bearded. Father! Mother! Your son is going completely nut [...] It is fine. You just keep ignoring me and never answer back.⁶⁹

This scene is so significant and provocative that it shows what is happening when two different lifestyles and views of cultures meet. Dialogue is absent for there is a total ignorance of resonances of culture and religion as well. Ghita, who stands for the Western culture, is however portrayed in a position of power as she is in entire mastery

⁶⁹ *Marock* [film], dir. by Laila Marrakchi (Morocco and France: Pan Européenne Distribution, 2005).

of the whole scene, while her brother is weakened and silenced since he cannot answer back and stop his sister's hallucinations. Ghita seems unable to understand why her brother adheres to Islam. The act of prayers becomes a tool of dehumanizing Muslims and attacking them. Mao is deprived of power by Ghita and the lens of the camera that shoots him from above to highlight his powerless look on the screen. Besides, while referring to Algeria, the filmmaker backs up other misinterpretations to Islam as linked to extremism and terrorism. This is because it is known that Algeria, historically speaking, has known some kind of extremism in the past. In a nutshell, Islam is reduced to a mere act of silencing and to a beard look and some other negative associations.

Ghita's derision of Islam is shown through the way she mocks prayers and when she belittles the importance of fasting in Ramadan as well. She fetishizes prayers and does not accept her own culture. While disturbing her brother as he is praying, Ghita is gazing at him dressed in very indecent clothes. Moreover, while standing before her kneeling brother, Ghita is not only meant to annul his prayer but she is also symbolically put in an advantageous position portrayed in mastery of the whole scene. The brother, however, is reduced to silence, and weakened in a situation which is supposed to be of empowerment when the person is in spiritual connection with his creator and in a total submission. This is, in fact, not the only mockery to Islam in the film, Ghita goes further to claim her liberal stance and eat publicly in Ramadan. This is, too, the case of Ghita's friends who gather in parties at nights and drink alcohol during the sacred month of Ramadan.

Ghita abandons those pillars of Islam and rejects to show any kind of commitment and respect to her religion. Her rejection of the Moroccan culture is so absolute that it does not allow for any acceptance of that culture. In addition to that, Ghita's parents are very indifferent to their children's religious practices, and throughout the film, no one expects to see a dialogue between Ghita and her parents about religion. From another perspective, Moui Fatma, as referred to in previous sections as one of the few representatives of the Moroccan identity figures in the film, is the only person who urges Ghita to fast and she keeps reminding her of various aspects of, both, culture and religion. Moui Fatma asks her: "Aren't you ashamed of eating in front of everyone in

Ramadan?” Ghita replies that she is in her bloody period⁷⁰. Moui Fatma, who perfectly knows that Ghita is not telling the truth, replies: “Bloody period! Does your period last the whole thirty days of Ramadan?!”⁷¹

Another misrepresentation of Islam is manifested in a further manner through Ghita’s discourse over it. When Mao attacks Ghita in the presence of their parents and let them know about their daughter’s relationship with a Jew, her father gets very mad and asks everyone to keep her under surveillance limiting her movements between home and school. This is, actually, the sole scene we see the whole family together and having a conversation. Ghita defends her position stating: “I do not need a religion to sleep peacefully. Treat us as disbelievers but your religion of Islam is not any better.”⁷² This is probably an attempt for Marrakchi to detach and destabilize the connection reference to religion and culture when representing identity and when also referring to a certain nation.

In a particular scene when Ghita is with her boyfriend Youri discussing their own situation, they talk about religion and the possibility of converting to Islam so she can be with him. She belittles Islam and reduces it to a couple of articulated words. She says: “Well, it is simple to convert to Islam. It is just a sentence in Arabic and that is it.”⁷³

Such complete rejection of religious concepts can be also read against the all-encompassing tolerance the film preaches; that is only manifested through the Muslim/Jewish relationship. Ghita’s rejection of her culture and religion, by no means, serves discourses of tolerance, respect and commitment. For that reason, she must leave Morocco according to the filmmaker’s point of view.

Through these religious representations, Marrakchi asserts the aftermath influence of France and the French culture on the Moroccan society. She proposes that this influence is still taking place in Morocco and is affecting mostly the youth generation. The French culture is engraved in the Moroccan lifestyle and it is an undeniable parcel of it. The filmmaker gives the example of Ghita and her friends as

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Ibid.

liberal Muslims who mix up both cultures and adopt a more Westernized lifestyle. *Marock*, indeed, as Sandra Carter suggests, “challenges the status quo of Islamic traditions and thus carried much criticism, even though those criticisms didn’t mar the popularity of either film.”⁷⁴ Marrakchi portrays the youth as rebellious over religion and traditions. They date, smoke, take drugs, have sex, party in nightclubs and homes. In fact, the movie with all its events draws a westernized image of Morocco. The viewer might forget for some time that those events take place in a Muslim country. Yet, the repeated call of prayers and other few cultural references come as a reminder as well as disturbing signals in the movie.

In order to disorientalize those images given of Islam so that the West would acquire more knowledge about it, adequate discourses should be built up. Discourses that boost mutual understanding, tolerance and acceptance must be more highlighted and cherished.

Such kind of movies as *Marock* raise serious questions about further dimensions, meanings and facets on such loaded discursive representations which make us question if cinema does really reflect reality or forge it. In fact, one of the thorniest and very debatable subjects in cinema revolves around reality in films. There has always been a heated debate over the question whether cinema reflects or constructs reality/ society. “Does cinema mirror society?” is a recurring question that has been the core subject and the main concern of many theorists.⁷⁵ This probably has been an extremely useful query in order to reflect on the nature of cinematographic discourses, the relation of the film to reality, the credibility of images, and the role that cinema plays in reflecting, understanding and representing the world.

Cinema is the product of writers, and scriptwriters can write stories on cultures and life experiences, but they also write about fiction, which would be both real and unreal. Cinema is like literature- it is broad and it is a fusion of many aspects of real and unreal events since movies are narrated from a certain point of view. There are some theorists, such as André Bazin and Ronald Barthes, who think that cinema is a reflection of reality in the sense that it tackles real issues. Ronald Barthes argues that

⁷⁴Sandra Gayle Carter, *What Moroccan Cinema?*, p. 276.

⁷⁵Such as André Bazin, Timothy Corrigan, Rudolf Arnheim, Christian Metz, Ronald Barthes, Siegfried Kracauer, Mark Shiel and many others.

realism in cinema is constructed through *code referential* that means when the spectator sees something on the screen, they refer to the real world. Thus, *code referential* is deemed as responsible for establishing realism in cinema. But, there are others who believe that cinema is a constructed version of reality. In other words, a film gives a forged and a constructed reality that is filled with codes, ideologies, and discourses of all types.

In all this debate, a small reference to fantasy films might be useful here. Those films are basically based upon creativity and imagination rather than visualizing reality. When we say that films mirror society/reality, we, then, take away any personal touch and we deny the filmmakers subjectivity and point of view. I argue all that filmmakers choose to show or highlight is almost always subjective, even when they attempt to provide some objective facts. For some critics, realism is a mere illusion as Timothy Corrigan states: “The illusion of realism, in short, is a kind of *mise en scène* that makes us believe that the images are an everyday world that is simply ‘there’-one we know and are familiar with.”⁷⁶ Accordingly, the claimed reality in films is constructed through the technique of *la mise en scène* which refers to the whole process of filmmaking. Corrigan goes further to state that:

Even if the filmmaker may not acknowledge it, the reality of a movie is constructed for a purpose, simply putting a camera in front of a scene, as one writer has noted, changes the most realistic situation into a kind of theatrical setting.⁷⁷

This means that this alleged realism is an illusion, for that the filmmaker is aware of what images to include and exclude on the screen. In contrast to this, the realist theorist Siegfried Kracauer argues that the realism of a movie is more apparent in the physical reality that a film provides which exists in the real world. He notes that:

⁷⁶Timothy Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing about Film* (US: The University of Pennsylvania, 2007), p. 49.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, p. 50.

What accounts for the cinematic quality of films, however is not so much of their truth to our experience of reality or even to the reality in general sense as their absorption in camera-reality-visible physical existence.⁷⁸

This is to say, camera-reality is what gives a sense of reality to films no matter how far it is from everyday life.

It should be clear that films are an industry that generates a given ideology throughout the world with a certain discourse. Corrigan refers to that when he writes:

Whether we agree or disagree with the values expressed in a certain movie, the ideological critic maintains that these movies are never innocent visions of the world and that the social and the personal values that seem so natural in them to be analyzed.⁷⁹

In the same vein, movies should not be taken for granted as facts because they are ideologically loaded. That is why, they should be analyzed and taken seriously as carrying hidden codes and messages. Any kind of representations on the screen should be questioned as they might be forged or probably imagined to serve certain agendas or to just create a different discourse to attract as many viewers as possible and get critics', media and cinema lovers' attention to generate interest and success.

1.2. Boosting a Heterogeneous Muslim Identity

If *Marock*'s cinematic discourses intend to satisfy a Western fantasy about Islam at the expense of the image of Muslims, and to destabilize beliefs and convictions, *Le Grand Voyage*; however, promotes an image of Islam as a religion of tolerance, real commitment, co-existence and peace. It is a counter discourse to stereotypical representations that put Islam within a spectrum of negative prejudices and wrong

⁷⁸Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 116.

⁷⁹Timothy Corrigan, *A Short Guide to Writing about Film*, p. 93.

assumptions. *Le Grand Voyage* draws attentions to heterogeneous images of Muslims to answer back proclaim discourses that render Muslims to a monolithic entity. This section, therefore, endeavors to discuss the representations of Islam in *Le Grand Voyage* so as to come up with a vision of how religion can be disorientalized through diasporic eyes.

Since religion is an integral part of culture, it is common to notice a lot of transformations on individuals when both of them are separated. Diasporic filmmakers unveil the relationship of the immigrants with their religion. They tend to draw images of the second generation of diaspora as lost and as knowing very little about Islam. This explains how culture is deeply connected with religion and is affected by it. Undeniably, culture and religion are inseparable and they are linked in many ways. Religion shapes and affects cultural beliefs, practices and behaviors. Being away from their own culture and religion, diasporic subjects, and mainly those of the second generation, lose elements of their own identity, which is exactly the case of Reda in *Le Grand Voyage*. Diaspora space, indeed, is a melting pot of different cultural and religious practices and beliefs that consequently has a deep hand in shaping diasporic identities particularly those of the second and the third generations.

The trip, in the film, is the ultimate chance for the father to introduce his son to his cultural and religious legacy. Reda's ignorance of his religion is clear from the very beginning. He does not even understand the significance of the trip and its importance in Islam. Even when they are in Mecca, Reda is only waiting for his father to finish the rituals to go back home. He believes that he is not concerned and that his sole role is to drive his father to do his pilgrimage. On the road and when they are at the checkpoint in Italy, the father asks the son to park somewhere for some time to pray. Reda replies: "We are at the borders, and there is no place to pray here."⁸⁰ The father asks immediately "Do you believe in God?"⁸¹ The father, obviously, is not expecting an answer, but he rather wants Reda to contemplate and rethink his faith. It

⁸⁰ *Le Grand Voyage* [film], dir. by Ismaël Ferroukhi (France, Morocco, Bulgaria, and Turkey: Pyramide Distribution, 2004).

⁸¹ Ibid.

is also meant to draw his attention to that by crossing borders and displacements, individuals' beliefs and convictions should not be affected or shaken.

While the father is praying, Reda is talking on the phone with his girlfriend Lisa. He is reaching out just because his father is away. Reda knows perfectly that the father would object his relationship with a French girl. The girl, can symbolically, stands for the Western culture that is chasing Reda's steps. It is a way to keep him attached to his adopted homeland. Immediately after his first call with Lisa, the father throws Reda's cell phone in a trash bin when Reda is asleep and; therefore, has cut any means of connection with what is left behind them in France, and with such form of Western influence.

The film starts with the father's proposal to Reda to drive him to Mecca. Reda rejects the idea but he still cannot say that to his father. "Can't he fly like everyone else?,"⁸² he says to his mother while complaining about the mission. This shows Reda's total ignorance of his own religion. As the journey begins, the father firmly shows Reda that the purpose behind their long journey is rather spiritual. This creates a lot of problems between both of them as Reda wants to enjoy more the road trip while the father is only thinking about their destination. In this context, Reda states when they are about to reach Italy: "Why can't we stop in Milan? I may never get the chance to visit it again. We can just take some photos, discover the city and visit its landmarks."⁸³ The father harshly reminds Reda of the purpose of the journey claiming: "Do you think we are tourists? And that we have to stop by whatever city we pass by!"⁸⁴ The father keeps silent and leaves Reda sitting alone on the table. Intentionally, and throughout the whole journey, the father asks Reda to stop at the suburbs of the cities they pass by to spend their nights. The father wants them to stop in isolated areas that are not meant to be distractive to their journey.

Le Grand Voyage draws a heterogeneous image of Muslims. By providing this example of the Turkish man Mustapha, a Muslim who drinks alcohol and with an open-minded spirit, and the example of Reda, the secular young Muslim, and the father, the devout Muslim, and the crowd of Muslims coming from different parts of

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Ibid.

the world to Mecca, Ferroukhi challenges stereotypical images about Muslims as a monolithic group. It is also a counter discourse to misrepresentations of Muslims as almost all the same. Moreover, they are discourses that challenge those images that portray Muslims as terrorists, violent, extremists and oppressive.

The movie, yet, gives more space to the father to talk about Islam since he has more knowledge about it (figure 23). The camera shoots different sequences of the father praying and it is significant how the filmmaker chooses to isolate Reda during the time of prayers. It is perhaps a way to highlight how he is ignorant about religious practices. The journey, however, offers a chance to Reda to get to know about his religion. It is through the father that Reda is introduced to Islam and to the significance of the pilgrimage. In doing so, different instances in the movie highlight Islam and religious practices such as prayers, reciting the Qur'an, giving charity to the needy and showing tolerance and acceptance towards the others.



Figure 23: Different shots of the father while praying in *Le Grand Voyage*
(*Le Grand Voyage*, Ismael Ferroukhi, 2004)

Reda is learning about Islam and the audience too, particularly the Western one, since as argued before diasporic movies are widely circulated in the West. Reda is aware of his ignorance of his father's religion to the extent that he considers himself not really concerned with the spiritual trip. One night, while in Jordan, Reda spends most of the night in a nightclub drinking alcohol and dancing. He even ends up bringing a girl with him to his room at the hotel. The father gets so mad at him, takes his suitcase and leaves Reda alone.

The father, then, has decided to continue his journey alone. Reda is pleading him to forgive him but the father keeps ignoring him (figure 24). Reda suddenly shouts: "Don't they practice forgiveness in your religion?"⁸⁵ The father immediately stops, turns back and gets into the car. This is obviously to emphasize and to also show Reda that Islam is a religion of forgiveness and tolerance. The father insists on presenting good images of Muslims to Reda. For this reason, the father has refused Mustapha's company before, because he thinks he is not an example of a good Muslim his son should know. He, accordingly, warns Reda not to trust him and not to believe everything he says.



Figure 24: The father and the son in *Le Grand Voyage* (*Le Grand Voyage*, Ismael Ferroukhi, 2004)

⁸⁵Ibid.

After that scene (figure 24), when his father forgives him, Reda has a terrifying dream of him sinking in quicksand and calling out his father to rescue him. When he wakes up, he has found his father praying. This is rather a message to Reda to stick to his religion and his own culture. Ferroukhi suggests that religion plays a great role in building up the father-son relationship. Although they seem to be completely different, religion has reunited them to take up the journey together.

In a nutshell, Ferroukhi's *Le Grand Voyage* builds up messages about Islam as a religion of tolerance, acceptance and peace through the father-son relationship. Though they have different religious ideologies and beliefs, they do accept each others' differences. The film closes up with the death of the father upon their arrival to Mecca and like many other diasporic films, death is a very recurrent theme. Thus, the following section endeavors to highlight the major interpretations of death from a diasporic perspective.

b. Rethinking Death in Moroccan Diasporic Cinema: *Ten'ja*, *Le Grand Voyage*, *Marock*, and *Rock the Casbah*

Movies are full of metaphors of humans' life experiences and they imply a lot of meanings. It is those implicit or explicit metaphors and symbols that give a value to the movie, help in enhancing and beautifying a visual story, and send strong messages to the audience. Those symbolic images provoke the viewer to contemplate and raise questions and they are most of the time used for abstract concepts that cannot be translated into simple words.

As what has been previously discussed throughout this part, diasporic filmmakers usually make use of a lot of symbols in their movies and they are mainly to depict their perceptions of the homeland, and to also narrate stories that reveal the diasporic dilemma, nostalgia and that reflect upon their hybridity and experience of dislocation in general. In this section, I choose to focus on the notion of death since it is a catchy common repeated theme in diasporic films so as to come up with a close understanding to its use and implications.

The frequent portrayal of death in diasporic movies has almost become a common theme between diasporic films despite their differences in terms of the movies' plot, characters, setting, time, and filmmakers. Literally, the meaning of death usually implies the end of life. It is a final point that someone reaches when it is destined to and it brings nothing but sorrow and grief. However, in diasporic films, death is equated to a variety of negative and positive resonances as well. While examining movies under study, it has been concluded that many diasporic filmmakers have such a keen interest in the notion of death, which indicates that it should not be looked at in a superficial way as it is very likely to carry a range of symbolic implications that are worth scrutinizing and analyzing.

Moroccan diasporic filmmakers have talked about death in various films. Death, in its primary meaning, is the opposite of life. It is the end of a story and an experience, and a final point in a person's lifetime. Interestingly, in diasporic films, there is always a story to tell about death and it is deeply associated with culture. At the first glance, it might be taken for granted that diasporic filmmakers are likely to manipulate the theme of death to refer to a shared idea; that is their real concern over the demise of the native culture, language and identity especially when it comes to the second-generation diaspora. Yet, they produce different discourses.

Being aware of the challenges diasporic people face, diasporic movies do mainly reflect the fear of losing the language, and the contact with the homeland and the culture. They, consequently, discuss the effects of immigration on the first and second generations using various metaphors and symbols. Nevertheless, though death might refer to the demise of culture, its use has been reconsidered in many films and has been endowed with different meanings.

In both movies, *Le Grand Voyage* and *Ten'ja*, death is dealt with as a crossing bridge to the origin. Both filmmakers make out of the theme of death a starting point to a journey of self-discovery and a pretext of searching for tolerance with the self. It launches new beginnings and opportunities to Reda and Nouredine to get closer from their culture. Death, hence, has been significantly stripped of its negative interpretations to go beyond them and permit new discourses to emerge.

The death of the fathers in *Ten'ja* and *Le Grand Voyage* is a solid reason to Reda and Nouredine to go back to their father's past and discover more about their origin. Death, therefore, interestingly, means life for others, opens new doors, and promises new cultural endeavors. Consequently, those representations of death end up having a deep hand in changing the discursive and narrative patterns of the movies.

It is needless to say that death, on the one hand, symbolically reflects the suffering and endurance of both fathers throughout their long years of dislocation and estrangement in France. On the other hand, death gives hope to the fathers' left family members and to their lost sons, specifically, to clear blurred images about their origin. It is, indeed, a resurrection process for the two confused sons as I shall argue based on both movies: *Ten'ja* and *Le Grand Voyage*.

The death of the father is a must-paid price in order to liberate the sons from the Western culture that they are deeply indulged in and get them introduced to their native culture. In *Ten'ja*, for instance, the son would have never gone to that remote village in Morocco if it hadn't been his father's will to be buried there. Thus, death in *Ten'ja* is a transformative point in the life of others in the sense that it opens their eyes more on their original land and the roots, and it also creates a series of cultural encounters. It is that moment when the father dies that the son's journey towards self-discovery begins. It can be stated that the father's intention, on the one hand, is to urge the son to discover his own origin, and the act of burying in the native land, on the other hand, is symbolically meant to cure those deeply formed wounds made out throughout years of estrangement and dislocation. When buried in his native town, the father can finally feel home and reconcile with the homeland.

Similarly, *Le Grand Voyage* closes up with the death of the father at the end of their long journey from France to Mecca. The father dies after having already fulfilled his tasks of reaching Mecca and of getting Reda closer to his culture of origin, traditions, and religion through his contact with him. Therefore, after the father's death, it is up to Reda to learn by himself and start other journeys towards self-knowledge. The movie, indeed, ends up with some promising clues that Reda has learnt a lot from his deceased father and is willing to change and stick more to religious as well as cultural legacies of his home-country. The most striking scene, at

the end of the movie, is when Reda is helping a beggar in the street with some money while he has objected that before when his father did the same during the journey. Reda, now, is more aware of the significance of helping others in his religion.

The father, in patriarchal societies, is the core of the family. He is the one to dictate and set rules. He embodies traditions and stands for the image of culture. There is no doubt that the father enjoys a tremendous position in the family. Children are given their father's last name as a way to create a family unity. The father also bonds his family with their own culture and native land. The father's death, therefore, shakes and threatens all these concepts all together. Ferroukhi and Legzouli, however, do not discuss death in their movies negatively and pessimistically. Death does not mean the disappearance of culture and traditions. It is rather a call to revive the memories of the fathers' past and learn from them. It is a real invitation to travel to the father's past to discover stories about the origin, and to embrace the native culture.

Undoubtedly, the father plays a remarkable role in *Le Grand Voyage*. He is the leading of the events and the most influential character in the film. The father is present even in Reda's dreams and nightmares. In an interview with Ferroukhi, he explains those frequent nightmares Reda has in *Le Grand Voyage*. He puts it:

At first, when he has these nightmares, he doesn't understand them. He sees his father walk away as a shepherd, and then he begins to sink in the sand. He doesn't understand what happens. The dream says nothing to him, and he pretty much forgets about it. But later, when he is waiting for his father and he sees the same scene he had dreamed, it is a sign to him. He realizes there is a problem, and it compels him to go and look for his father at the mosque in Mecca. He is unsettled. Something is bothering him. For me the dream is symbolic. When the father walks away, it is as if the son has lost his roots - symbolically, that is. He loses his roots, yet he needs those attachments to be truly free.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Ismael Ferroukhi and Michael Toler, "An Interview with Filmmaker Ismael Ferroukhi", p. 36.

Questions are still raised upon whether both sons in *Ten'ja* and *Le Grand Voyage* will ever visit their homeland after their fathers' death or not. That is to say, is their travel back to the homeland only a matter of a dictated mission by the fathers that they have to fulfill and then go back to their normal life? Reda in *Le Grand Voyage* has driven his father to Mecca and Nouredine in *Ten'ja* has buried his father in his native village. Both films suggest an opening ending that proposes different possibilities, although it might sound more logical that with the death of the fathers, the sons lose their means of connectivity with the origin. Basically, the death of the fathers can turn out to be a cutting off of every tie that could relate the sons with Morocco. This, therefore, puts into questions the consequences of immigration not only on the first and the second generations, but also on those coming after.

Ironically, both diasporic filmmakers associate the homeland with the father while it is very common that the mother is a symbol of it. This association is also present in Hakim Belabbes's documentary film *Boujad: A Nest in the Heat* when he, at the closing sequence, admits that what brings him back to visit his hometown is his father and he has emphasized this fact in different occasions. Although the mother is interviewed too, she is not presented and talked about in the same way as the father. One might wonder about the reasons why diasporic filmmakers portray this father's bond image with the homeland and just totally neglect the mothers'.

The mothers are left behind in both *Le Grand Voyage* and *Ten'ja*. They only appear once or twice at the opening sequences of the movies, and they are never seen again. This reflects the structure of patriarchal societies, where the role of the mothers is restricted to the domestic sphere and where mothers are deemed as caretakers of the children while the fathers are heads of the household and are responsible for important decisions and for their families' financial maintenance as well as lifestyle. Interestingly, diasporic space has not changed such consumptions and traditions, but it rather reinforces them.

Hakim Belabbes is another diasporic filmmaker whose film narratives revolve around death as an essential key plot element. While watching his films, viewers can feel the extent to which the filmmaker is subjectively involved and the extent to which he is obsessed with the theme of death. According to Mohamed Chouika, Belabbes

uses his camera to reflect his own world. He plays various roles while making his films; he is the producer, the observer, and the interpreter of events. His views and stories are so subjective based on personal beliefs and ideologies.⁸⁷

In his *Boujad: A Nest in the Heat*, for instance, Belabbes seems to be very worried and preoccupied with the idea of death. He keeps telling stories about death and asking related death questions to his family members. He also shares his frequent nightmares about his father's death. For him, as long as his father is alive, he feels more connected to his roots and has a strong reason to return to his native town. In many occasions, he has strongly emphasized that the father symbolizes the land. In this respect, Reshmi Dutt-Ballerstadt notes in his *The Postcolonial Citizen*:

The loss of a parental figure becomes a loss of both root and route. It is a loss of root given that these parental figures are the only reminder of an on-going basis for the second generation regarding their ties to their ancestral homeland. It is a loss of route since the very parental figures that migrated to America or else where, carrying with them the stories of the past and the trajectory of their travels are now dead.⁸⁸

Belabbes also links death to feelings of guilt and considers it as a kind of punishment to his decision of immigration and for his choice of being away from family and home. While in a family gathering, he clarifies his fears of death claiming that it is a consequence as well as a must paid price to some carried out actions and good deeds. He tells them stories of his childhood when he used to get good marks, but he always feels that something bad is going to happen, and he mainly talks about the death of relatives, particularly of his sister and father. He, then, thinks that he must hurt himself to save someone's life. He elucidates:

⁸⁷ Mohamed Chouika, "al-Cinema wa al-Anthropologia Kira'a Fi Aflam Hakim Belabbes," in *Hakim Belabbes Machrou'e Cinema Jadida* (Tangier: Slaiki Akhawayne, 2014), p. 15.

⁸⁸ Reshmi Dutt-Ballerstadt, *The Postcolonial Citizen* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), p. 58.

This is why I cannot stay away. This is why I cannot move on. So if I don't want my father to die, I have to hurt myself. Even in my studies, I think that if I were to do so well and get good grades, my dad or one of my siblings might get hurt.⁸⁹

Only a few minutes before the documentary film ends, he gives an answer to all his raised queries. He admits, once again, that he is worried to lose his father while he is not there in the town. It is a feeling of guilt and sorrow which is expressed in a particular scene when the filmmaker is crying and whining in his father's arms. That scene, is then, followed by the closing sequence when both the father and the son appear on the screen in the middle of a crowd while the son is walking away in the opposite direction leaving his father behind staring at him. Belabbes comments on this with his voiceover:

I think I know now why I keep coming back here. I need my father's validation. I need his approval. I want to hear him say that he is proud of me. That I am a man and that he trusts that I can be on my own. I don't know if I got what I wanted from him and I don't know if I am going to keep trying to get it.⁹⁰

Belabbes wants to prove the feelings of guilt diasporic individuals have because of their choice of leaving their home country where family is. He also emphasizes this bond relationship between the father particularly and the land. The loss of the father, according to Belabbes, means the loss of connection with the homeland, family and everything related to them.

Similarly, death is also present in Laila Marrakchi's both movies *Marock* (2004) and *Rock the Casbah* (2013). If *Marock* closes up with the death of Ghita's Jewish boyfriend Youri, *Rock the Casbah* starts up with the death of the father.

⁸⁹*Boujad: A Nest in the Heat* [Documentary film], dir. by Hakim Belabbes (Morocco, 1992).

⁹⁰*Ibid.* (Translation is mine).

Significantly, death, as a movie theme, is used to close up and to initiate Laila Marrakchi's movies' plots. Not very different from Legzouli's, Ferroukhi's and Belabbes' movies, death in Marrakechi's films, too, has symbolic meanings that are worth scrutinizing. One major question to ask is about whether death is similarly or differently represented via a female diasporic point of view?

The death of Youri in *Marock* can be read as the only outlet and escape from a relationship that has been attacked and rejected by Ghita's family and by the society as a whole. Although Ghita's parents are too liberal, they have strictly rejected such relationship especially because of religion differences. When the parents know about Ghita's relationship with Youri, they prevent her from meeting Youri and show so much intolerance towards the matter especially because Youri is a Jew.

The death of Youri symbolically refers to the death of the Jewish culture within the Moroccan society and to also the rejection of Moroccans to the Jewish existence in Morocco. Undoubtedly, the presence of Moroccan Jews in the Moroccan community has tremendously changed compared to the past. In the past, Moroccan Jews were more welcomed and acknowledged as Moroccan citizens and they used to live among Moroccan Muslims. They used to be friends, partners, neighbors and colleagues. However, in this new era, and especially after the Jews exodus from Morocco, their numbers decreased and those left minorities cannot enjoy the same rights and privileges Moroccan Jews used to have in the past. Besides, Moroccan attitudes towards the Jews have changed over decades.

The movie, hence, discusses possibilities of whether a Moroccan Jew can still fit in a Moroccan context and from another perspective, it acknowledges the presence of Jews and reconstructs an image of a society which is built up by heterogeneity. The death of Youri at the end of the movie gives a clear answer of the shift of opinion and attitudes towards the Moroccan Jews. Therefore, the death of Youri signifies the disappearance and the death of the Moroccan Jewish culture and its inability to adapt and exist any longer in a Moroccan milieu.

In a conversation with Ghita, Youri states that his parents are planning to leave to the United States because they are scared after the Gulf war, which also indicates that they feel insecure. Youri, however, claims that he knows no one in the United States

and he is not leaving Morocco. Because Youri cannot fit in the Moroccan society, death is his ultimate fate either done intentionally or unintentionally by the director.⁹¹

However, death in *Rock the Casbah* (2013) has different implications and resonances. The film opens up with the death of the father to initiate the film narrative that is about a family gathering after the father's decease. The three sisters, Meriem, Kenza and Sofia, are finally reunited with their mother at home (figure 24). Significantly, it is always the loss of the father that is made as a scapegoat to return home in diasporic films. Sofia, the youngest sister, has ultimately returned home with her little son from the United States to attend her father's funeral and join up with the family. Sofia is finally home after many years; a fact that is explained at the airport when the policeman checks her passport. He asked for her identity card, but she explained that she does not have it anymore. The policeman, ironically, states: "You are Moroccan even if you possess an American passport."⁹²



Figure 25: The mother and the sisters reunited at home (*Rock the Casbah*, Laila Marrakechi, 2013)

⁹¹ Laila Marrakchi is married to a Jewish man. It is quite obvious why she is interested in Jewish Moroccan relations in her movies. She even works with Jewish characters such as the case of the mother Hiam Abbass in *Rock the Casbah* who is an Arab- Israeli actress and filmmaker.

⁹² *Rock the Casbah* [Motion picture], dir. by Laila Marrakchi (Morocco and France: Pathé, JIFF Distribution, 2013).

Similarly to *Ten'ja* and *Le Grand Voyage*, *Rock the Casbah* by Laila Marrakechi too probes the death of the father positively and deals with it as a turning point in other characters' life. It is paving ways to new journeys to be undergone. In fact, the whole movies' events revolve around the funeral of the father that lasts for three days. During this period a lot of secrets, lies and feuds are revealed and family members get to know more about each other (figure 26).

Death in the movie means family reunion as well as rebellion over traditions. With the loss of the father free rein are given to the characters to be themselves when they are not anymore under control. Death unveils various behaviors, convictions, and values. The filmmaker argues how society, in relation to culture, dictates a certain way of life and path that people are required and expected to follow only to please authoritative figures and fit in the patriarchal mainstream.



Figure 26: the funeral day (*Rock the Casbah*, Laila Marrakechi, 2013)

The film starts with the death of Moulay Hassan: a Moroccan entrepreneur starring by Omar Sharif⁹³ and with the return of Sofia, the youngest daughter, with her

⁹³ Omar Sharif is one of the most famous and leading actors in the Egyptian cinema. He is also best known for his roles in English and American productions. Sharif speaks different

little son from the United States. Sofia and her other two sisters and the mother are finally reunited. Not very different from *Marock*, *Rock the Casbah* tells the story of a family from the upper social class too where traditions and liberal thoughts collide.

Similar to *Marock*, the movie challenges the Moroccan traditions and celebrates Western standards and lifestyle. The focus is on one of the most traditional occasions that reveal so much about the Moroccan identity and customs. Marrakchi has wittily manipulated this incident of funeral to demonstrate that even those very Moroccan occasions that reveal Moroccan traditions are not exempted from Westerner waves portraying an image of a nonstop changing society.

With the death of the father, traditions have been challenged and surveillance and control have gone. The death of the father is paving the way for Western thoughts and lifestyle though it can be claimed that the father, in fact, is not really portrayed as a purely Moroccan figure who embodies traditions and customs at their finest. But still, the image of the father remains as authoritative and commanding for others.

When Sofia is back home, she asks to see her dead father to blame him for his cruelty and over control of Laila's life: her deceased sister. For Sofia, he is the main reason behind her sister's suicide. For that, she has decided to read Laila's last letter to him in which Laila describes how her father has over-controlled her own life. Sofia and the whole family will understand by the end of the movie her father's refusal to Laila's relationship with Zakaria who happens to be their half-brother.

In one particular sequence, we see the grandmother wearing a Gucci T-shirt, eating her MacDonald's burger and smoking. She gives her granddaughter Kenza a cigarette to smoke. The granddaughter smokes for a while but she quickly turns it off. She feels uncomfortable smoking at home in an observable spot to everyone. The grandmother says while addressing her: "The one you used to hide from is gone so now you can do whatever you want."⁹⁴ This literally means that the death of the father indicates the demise of patriarchy too. It is a kind of empowerment as well as liberation to the female characters from traditions and patriarchal ideologies.

languages which allow him to be an international actor. In *Rock the Casbah*, he speaks all the time in French when he gives running commentary from the sidelines on events of the movie.

⁹⁴*Rock the Casbah* [Motion picture], dir. by Laila Marrakchi (Morocco and France: Pathé, JIFF Distribution, 2013).

Marrakchi's characters in *Rock the Casbah* are not too different from *Marock*. She has portrayed unstable characters that are deeply influenced by Western values and culture, including those living in Morocco and Sofia, who is coming back from the United States. Their rebellious acts are demonstrated via different instances even during their father's *gnaza*. Sofia goes out dancing and drinking with Zakaria at night in a nightclub. Sisters drink alcohol in front of everyone and when they are supposed to show more respect at the funeral of their father.

There are more striking and shocking scenes in the movie that contradict the milieu of a *gnaza* such as sisters' talk about men and plastic surgeries while *tolba* are reciting Quran. Drinking alcohol is also shocking to see during funeral days and in front of guests. Other inappropriate scenes are when Yacout, the housekeeper, and Sofia are listening to music in the kitchen, and also when Sofia and her nephew are singing. On the second day of funeral: *Tolba* reciting Quran and taking the corpse out of the house and then Western music overlaps. Marrakchi keeps reminding audiences that Western waves are too ubiquitous and dominant. She is challenging and overthrowing traditions claiming that they are outdated and new waves should take over.

In a nutshell, it seems that death as a topic is central to diaspora narratives. Diasporic filmmakers depict death in heterogeneous images and symbols. It is seen through different scopes and perspectives, but what is common between all the studied movies is the death of the father in specific. Diasporic filmmakers portray death as a turning point for other characters' lives. It is a start of journeys of freedom and self-discovery and search for the roots in *Le Grand Voyage* and *Ten'ja*. Belabbes portrays death as a threatening factor that might cut off strong ties with the homeland. Marrakchi, however, represents death as the demise of patriarchy and a threat to an authentic Moroccan culture in *Rock the Casbah*, and as the disappearance of the Jewish culture in the Moroccan community in *Marock*. No doubt, those ideas, symbols, and narratives in diasporic films are widely circulated. They convey a lot of representations of the home country which affect its image. Next section, thus, examines how those representations travel and most importantly how diasporic movies circulate.

c. Circulations of Movies and Cultures: Attitudes towards Home

The circulation of movies has mainly implied the transmission and transfer of ideas, traditions, customs, values, and ways of life. In fact, the circulation of movies directly and strongly embodies the circulation of cultures to trespass and cross the national borders to reach out international as well as multinational zones. Undoubtedly, cinema plays a tremendous role in spreading knowledge and in bridging the gap between different cultures and nations. This section explores the ways movies circulate and how they affect individuals and communities. It argues that the circulation of films is intertwined with the circulation of cultures. It is also an endeavor to explore reasons behind the circulation of displaced filmmakers' cinematic works in the West more than other filmmakers' work categories. Besides, this section is meant to understand reactions to and feedback on films throughout their life cycle and how films operate through their circulation.

No doubt, the circulation of movies has greatly been influenced by technological advancements. The circulation of movies has grown rapidly lately due to the world technological revolution which makes a vast quantity of films ubiquitous. However, this does not mean that all movies are easily accessible since there are different conditions that are taken into account while getting movies circulated. In her article "Mapping the Circulation of Films by Women Filmmakers with Maghrebi Funding in the Digital Age", Patricia Caillé examines the chain of intermediaries participating in the production and circulation of films on various media platforms. She explores the process through which a specific film project becomes accessible in different formats on different media platforms according to different points of its life cycle. She, more precisely, scrutinizes the circulation of films directed by women filmmakers with Maghrebi funding to explore the circulation of those films in the digital age.⁹⁵

According to Caillé, there are a number of means that get movies circulated: commercial distribution, such as film festivals, but they mostly often go through

⁹⁵ Patricia Caillé, "Mapping the Circulation of Films by Women Filmmakers with Maghrebi Funding in the Digital Age," in *The State of Post-Cinema*, eds., Hagen M., Hediger V., Strohmaier A. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 72.

France and Francophone Europe. She argues that “Maghrebi films do not circulate between the different countries in the Maghreb except for rare film festivals devoted to regional cinemas.”⁹⁶ Caillé also discusses the immense role the internet plays in making films commercially speaking successful. Films are sometimes posted by individuals to let the decision later to the film makers to either choose to block them or keep them with free access.⁹⁷ There are, however, few Moroccan films available online. Films can be found on counterfeited DVDs or through streaming.⁹⁸ Pirated DVD copies are also another means of movies’ circulations. But, in the case of Morocco, things have changed lately and it has become somehow difficult nowadays to find forged DVD copies sold out in the streets due to some recent strict censorship, and it is also because “the new digital circulation of films has made it much harder for content industries to get a share of the profits generated by the circulation of the films.”⁹⁹

There are few Moroccan filmmakers who agree to allow viewers to get free access to their films on streaming through a range of platforms via video-sharing sites like Youtube. Patricia Caillé explains this by the importance of the filmmakers’ and producers’ strategies, giving examples of Farida Benlyazid’s decision to make her films widely accessible, to Narjiss Nejjar’s¹⁰⁰ stricter control that makes access to her films more difficult but not impossible.¹⁰¹ This, at the end, remains a personal choice that is, for sure, based on legislative agreements and contracts.

Diasporic films might be more circulated than other films due to some reasons of co-production, filmmakers’ displacements, the language used in the movies, the provided subtitles, films’ participation in international film festivals, and films narratives as well. Most of the time, diasporic films tackle thorny issues that attract the attention of audiences and stir controversy. They deal with taboos including sex and religion openly for they are mainly addressing a global market. They, however, end up

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 82.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 73.

⁹⁹Ibid., p. 74.

¹⁰⁰I personally have been looking for *Les Yeux Secs* by Narjis Nejjar for a couple of months. I contacted a lot of people including the production company that refused to provide me with a copy of the movie and I even emailed the filmmaker but she never answered back. I finally managed to get a copy from a researcher who kindly shared it with me.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 83.

producing intricate discourses that consequently arouse the curiosity of both audiences to discover and learn more about life in both sides. Diasporic filmmakers' vision usually mixes up elements of the homeland and the hostland together to attract Western audience too and get widely circulated, a fact that, hence, affects the homeland's representation. In this regard, Jigna Desai argues that films which get mostly circulated in the West are those meeting up with the expectations of the audience, as she writes: "Those films are most likely to circulate transnationally are those that are more "Western friendly," adopting familiar genres narratives or themes in their hybrid productions."¹⁰²

There is no doubt that there is a handy link between the circulation of movies and cultures. The circulation of movies, indeed, encompasses the circulation of ideas, norms, values, traditions, beliefs, music, folklore, crafts, art, language, dialect, food, and clothing. It also refers to race, ethnicity, religion and all discursive patterns that contribute to the meaning of culture, to name but few. All these elements and others are both implicitly or explicitly encompassed in movies and translated on the screen into visual images. Since diasporic films are more widely circulated for the previously stated reasons, the Moroccan culture, hence, is more represented through displaced filmmakers' lens. For that same reason, an urgent need to understand the film industries' reconfiguration of identity, images of the homeland and culture has emerged. A variety of values and beliefs are being produced and reproduced via the lens of individuals who take the advantage of their dislocation, which empower them and grant them more freedom because of the less censorship they find abroad compared to their native lands' conditions.

James Clifford has argued that cultures should not be assumed as having a fixed geographic center. He emphasizes that every culture is a "travelling culture" and no culture is without movements.¹⁰³ In the same regard, when cultures are visualized, they have impacts locally and globally. They launch dialogues, establish discourses and send a set of ideas and assumptions. It is as Irit Rogoff asserts:

¹⁰² Jigna Desai, *Beyond Bollywood The Cultural Politics of South Asian Diasporic Film*, p. 45.

¹⁰³ See James Clifford, "Travelling Cultures," in *Cultural Studies*, eds. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson & Paula A. Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 96-112.

Visual culture opens up an entire world of intertextuality in which images, sounds and spatial delineations are read on to and through one another, leading ever-accruing layers of meanings and of subjective responses to each encounter we might have with film, TV, advertising, art works, buildings or urban environments.¹⁰⁴

People usually assume that movies shape and reflect cultures. For that same reason, movies get a lot of attention from various outlets and create a lot of controversies. Cinema is regarded as a tremendous means to introduce culture through which you can almost know everything about a certain nation. Culture is: “a system of building identities. Identities that are developed by beliefs, faiths, practices, customs, traditions, arts, crafts, language, food habits, dress [...] of a society or social group”¹⁰⁵. Interestingly, several people watch documentary films and movies to discover or enhance their knowledge about a particular culture, as Irig Rogoff argues in his “Studying Visual Culture” that “in today’s world meanings circulate visually, in addition to orally and textually. Images convey information, afford pleasure and displeasure, influence style, determine consumption and mediate power relations.”¹⁰⁶ The power of visual images is unquestionable. People get affected by what they receive and they draw images and even judgments from those representations.

In his “*Marock in Morocco: Reading Moroccan Films in the Age of Circulation*”, Brian T. Edwards revisits Moroccan cinema from a perspective that looks upon its relationship to cultures of circulation. He emphasizes the role the advancement of technology plays as a quick means to access information and to market films and consequently cultures.¹⁰⁷ Undoubtedly, it is thanks to the development of technology that it becomes easier to access movies and to get them

¹⁰⁴Irig Rogoff, “Studying Visual Culture,” in *Visual Culture Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*, eds. Joanne Morra and Marquard Smith (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 223.

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 224.

¹⁰⁷Brian T. Edwards, “*Marock in Morocco: Reading Moroccan Films in the Age of Circulation*,” in *North African Cinema in a Global Context through the Lens of Diaspora*, ed. Andrea Khalil. (London & New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 15.

circulated in a faster and a wider way. By cultures of circulation, Brian Edwards refers to how specific cultural norms of a specific society circulate globally. The circulation of movies; and thus of cultures, I suggest, serves as a double-edged sword. This is mainly because cultural representations in films affect how people perceive nations and shape their understanding of them.

Brian T. Edwards highlights on films by diasporic filmmakers for, once again, they are the type of movies the most circulated in the West particularly. He eloquently discusses films' circulations as well as cultures they circulate. He states that:

They are concerned with what place Morocco and Moroccans might have in a global setting within which ideas, products, and commodities, lifestyles and technologies have complicated what was once, perhaps, or more binary situation.¹⁰⁸

He argues that films should be considered in the changed framework in which the nation operates within globalization. That is to say, Morocco and its culture are not necessarily affected by its former colonizers: France and Spain. He discusses the influence of the US and the American culture on the Moroccan nation as portrayed in Marrakchi's *Marock*. This is primarily caused by globalization or what he defines as "the age of circulation"¹⁰⁹

It is true that there are different instances and scenes in the movie that refer to America and the American culture. This starts with Marrakchi's choice of English songs as diegetic and non-diegetic sounds to different scenes throughout the film. References to the American culture are also presented through the English words written on T-shirts, and the pirated Hollywood movies circulated in Casablanca between youths. In one particular sequence, we see Ghita buying pirated Hollywood films cassettes from a seller in his car. The seller is offering a mobile service to rich adolescents in the mid-streets of Casablanca with an old car that is full of recent pirated Hollywood movies. In addition to that, Youri, Ghita's boyfriend, has

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 18.

mentioned that he would go to America to continue his higher studies. Usually, Moroccans take Europe as their destination for studies, but the movie suggests America as well.

Moreover, Edwards makes reference to the cover of the film in *Tel Quel* (figure 27) which he states that it presents “a vivid example of the changing look of young women in Casablanca, not only in terms of clothing and brands, but in body size and type itself”¹¹⁰ he adds that it is “a form of cultural circulation; transnational circulation of Western models of beauty and body type.”¹¹¹ Feminine beauty standards as dictated by Western media are synonymous with thinness and tallness. It is obvious that those standards are adopted by Marrakchi too in the selection of her female characters. Ghita and her friends are filmed in different recurring scenes while browsing English magazines of fashion.

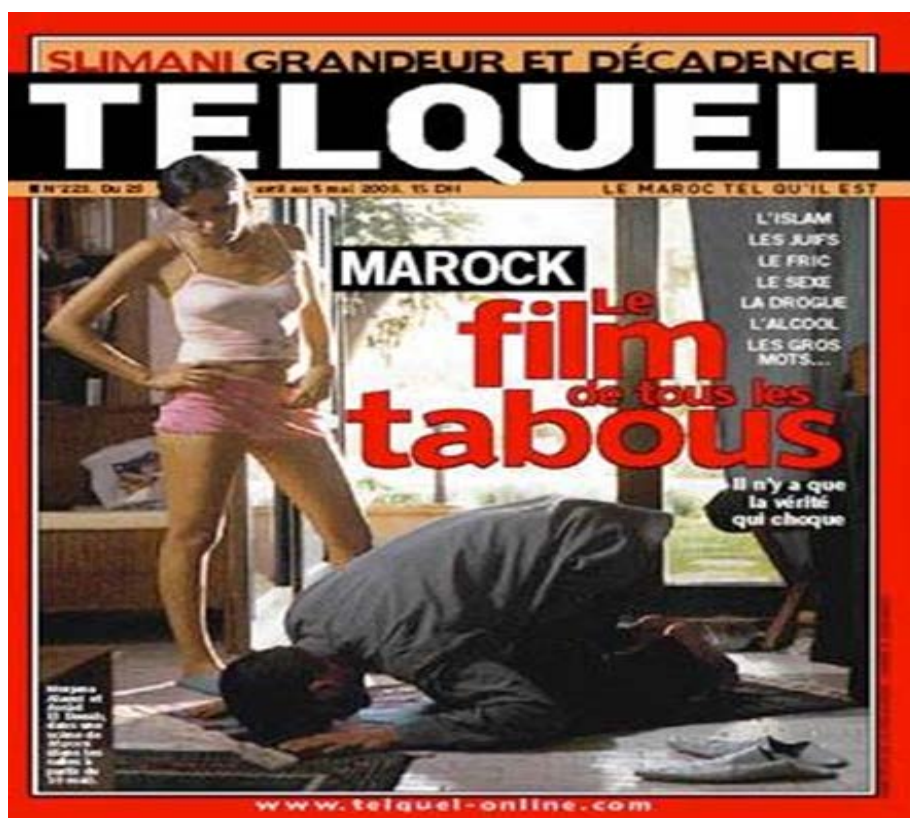


Figure 27: The cover of the film *Marock* in *Tel Quel* magazine (*Marock*, Laila Marrakchi, 2008)

¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 22.

¹¹¹Ibid.

Brain Edwards summarizes many explicit and direct indications of global circulation in *Marock* and he refers to those elements as:

[...] the music, apparel, food, products, and commodities that animate the world of these Casablanca youth. If these youth look to Europe for their futures after the bac, the commodities, products, and culture that they consume are for the most part American. Most accurately, these objects of consumption are ‘global’, and generally rendered in ‘global English’, both of which are associated with the US irrespective of the national origin of the cultural product or artist.¹¹²

He further argues that “the story of *Marock* is familiar enough to Hollywood teen romances, and at the level of the plot, it borrows from a number of Hollywood films and TV serials.”¹¹³ The young filmmaker produces rebellious characters with rebellious acts:

Youth are seen as the part of society that is most likely to engage in a process of cultural borrowing that is disruptive of the reproduction of traditional cultural practices, from modes of dress to language, aesthetics and ideologies [...] Youth subcultures are seen as being implicitly rebellious, born as much from a desire to reject the generation that went before them, as from an identification with what they have become.¹¹⁴

Significantly, both *Marock* and *Rock the Casbah* narrate stories of upper class families. *Marock* portrays rich teenagers’ life in Casablanca while *Rock the Casbah* films an upper class family in Tangier. The choice of this category of people is significant in the sense that allows Marrakchi to get better circulated. Her rich

¹¹²Ibid., p. 20.

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴Heaven, Cara and Tubridy, Matthew (2003). “Global Youth Culture and Youth Identity,” retrieved on November 15, 2018, from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/e3a1/d600dea8e70e943925f1e8d5867d52f11abb.pdf>

characters speak French most of the time, wear international brands and consume global products. The choice of the social class makes the use of French in *Marock*, English and French languages in *Rock the Casbah* more convincing to the audience. Language too plays a tremendous role in allowing the movie to be watched by non-natives. As has been already discussed in earlier chapters, diasporic filmmakers produce their movies having in mind different audiences. They want to please the West and meet up their expectations, but they end up producing intricate representations of their country of origin. The movie has evoked a lot of controversy due to dealing with taboos openly. In her blog Laila Lalami quotes Ursula Lindsey when she wrote about *Marock* saying that:

The film's been debated in the Moroccan press for months (and it's been a cover story for French-language weeklies *Tel Quel* and *Le Journal*). While secularists and liberals have championed the film as a great step forward for freedom of expression, others have accused it of being a needless attack on Islamic values that most Moroccans hold dear. The Islamist newspaper *Et-Tajdid* called on readers to boycott the film, and the Islamist opposition party the PJD (Justice and Development Party) has asked the government to ban it.¹¹⁵

Similarly to *Marock* and *Rock the Casbah*, *Errag'd* highlights the idea of the circulation of cultures and the crossing of information via technological mediums. The movie discusses how even people in remote areas can be connected. They can circulate and receive news from and to their small and confined space. The movie emphasizes how the whole world is connected and getting affected by all possible means and at all levels.

When the men of the village left to Spain, the videotapes sent to the women by their husbands become their essential means of communication. The camera shows how women happily gather over tea and cookies in a living room of a house that has

¹¹⁵ “*Marock* Review”, retrieved on 25 July, 2018, from <https://lailalalami.com/2006/guest-column-marock-review/>.

electricity, video player, and TV to watch coming news of their departed men. Thanks to technology those women in one of the most remote and isolated areas in Morocco are connected to the world. Technology, hence, has erased their isolation and has empowered them to make themselves more visible. This can be significantly related to diasporic filmmakers as well, since when their movies are circulated and watched by different segments of audiences- those of their homeland and hostland, they are being empowered and not anymore affiliated to the periphery.

Taking advantage of the empowerment of the diasporic space, displaced filmmakers should normally construct discourses that set up bridges of communication, and visualize narratives that create mutual understandings between the homeland country and the hostland. Their dilemma, however, affects their views and approaches to a variety of topics in their films. I suggest that even diasporic filmmakers' choice of their films titles do absolutely reflect their dilemma and intricacy.

Movies' titles are the first to draw the viewers' attention to a film and they can even influence the way we perceive a film, judge and also build expectations upon it. Film' titles can either capture the viewer interest or make them completely indifferent and not willing to watch the movie. I suggest that diasporic filmmakers almost always give movie titles that echo their attitudes towards their homeland.

I would like to reassert that all movies under study are written by the filmmakers themselves. Their films, therefore, are a reflection of their own identity. They voice out their ideas, perceptions and beliefs in the form of a series of narratives about the homeland. In *The Arab Diaspora Voices of an Anguished Screen*, Zahia Samail Salhi and Ian Richard Netton argue that:

This attempt at coming near home while in exile results in two important factors; on the one hand it creates an unnatural world whose *raison d'être* is to ease the pain of being cut off from one's country and culture, but on the other hand, and this is very important, it creates a new landscape in the host

country, a new cultural elements are being added to inform the host society about other cultures.¹¹⁶

Diasporic filmmakers take advantage of the global circulation of their movies so as to present their arts to a wider audience. They tell narratives about their country of origin, its people, culture and many other aspects of life. They discuss issues of society, problems, dreams and aspirations. Diasporic films get more chances to be seen abroad and, thus, circulate the native land's culture. The issue is still about the nature of topics this category of filmmakers chooses to unveil to different sets of audiences worldwide especially when they are not censored. Reference here can be, for instance, made to Lakhmari's movies *Casanegra* (2008) and *Zero* (2012) which stirred a lot of controversy because of the way they have portrayed the country and its inhabitants. Lakhmari's movies have been greatly criticized for the uncomfortable 'street' language used. Many people have considered the used language very shocking and inappropriate to be on the screen and to be watched with families. Marrakchi's *Marock* and Nabil Ayouch's *Zin Li Fik* have also provoked the audience for their misrepresentations of the land and the people and for their daring and challenging discourses to the conservative structure of the society.

Diasporic films are products of displacements, dislocation and relocation. This has greatly affected the choice of the topics and the granted freedom to discuss issues of the homeland. No doubt, the effect of movements on diasporic filmmakers is what interestingly makes diasporic films more circulated. They, thus, have been empowered by this same act of dislocation that is supposed to disempower them.

¹¹⁶Zahia Smail Salhi, et al., eds., *The Arab Diaspora Voices of an Anguished Scream* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 3.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has argued that Moroccan diasporic filmmakers undergo a journey of inner struggle between what is real and what is imagined to produce images about their homeland and to also reshape conceptions of identity on the screen. I have been trying to demonstrate how their position of displacement, which is usually characterized with instability, estrangement, marginalization and hybridity can serve as a space of empowerment to their cinematic discourses and position. Their cinema is basically and significantly empowered through and driven by mobility and movement.

This shift of power basically emanates from the diasporic style that embodies hybridity and celebrates difference and diversity. Diasporic filmmakers are empowered through their diaspora space that grants them more freedom to tackle issues, including taboos, freely and to use their camera to penetrate and portray the homeland' space in a daring and more challenging way to only end up producing intricate discourses. Those discourses, however, are not always welcomed in the homeland. To illustrate, most films under study have stirred so much controversy among the Moroccan audience and some of them were harshly attacked by media and even banned by the government.

Undeniably, diaspora' dislocation and relocation politics allow diasporic filmmakers to get more access to a larger audience specifically those in the West. This empowered position, hence, raises possibilities of *returning the gaze or reinforcing* it as diasporic directors' movies are more circulated in the West than their non-diasporic directors' counterparts.

Starting from the fact that cinema is more than a mere form of entertainment; this study has tackled filmic discourses through scrutinizing their imbued codes and messages. This work has probed issues pertaining to identity as an attempt to understand its formation in Moroccan diasporic cinematic productions. Approaching such an issue is like treading in unstable grounds, because of the discursive nature and structure of its messages due to the interactions of different factors.

I have dealt with the topic through analyzing six main Moroccan movies which include: Hassan Legzouli's *Ten'ja* (2004), Ismail Ferroukhi's *Le Grand Voyage* (2004), Laila Marrakchi's *Marock* (2005), Noureddine Lakhmari's *Casanegra* (2008), Yasmine Kassari's *L'enfant Endormi/ Errag'd* (2005), and Zakia Tahiri's *Number One* (2008). My concern has been to study and investigate identity and home representations in Moroccan cinema through a number of interacting elements that necessitate analysis and examination.

Interestingly, the diasporic style that distinguishes diasporic filmmakers part of it is based on getting co-production finances and aids that are most of the time coming from the West and are most likely meant to serve certain agendas. Morocco, like many other Arab countries, has not been exempted from stereotyped images that put the country and its people within frames of backwardness and in a constant need of the West to enlighten it. This brings up Edward Said's theorization of *Orientalism* that is based on the discussion of binary oppositions of "us" and "them". Efforts, however, have been made to change such negative conceptions, but they remain insufficient and sometimes, attempts do rather perpetuate and reconfirm those negative representations.

Accordingly, the representations of identity and the homeland in diasporic movies under study reflect filmmakers' inner struggle between the duality of "here" and "there", "us" and "them", "the homeland" and "the hostland". Their movies turn to be a space where a set of contradictions are highlighted and cherished, which consequently affect the image of the country on the screen. In most of the analyzed movies, the viewer is most of the time reminded of the emergency of the interference of the Western waves in the Moroccan spheres that reaches even the most remote and authentic places in the country as Kassari's *Errag'd* and Legzouli's *Ten'ja*, for instance, depict. These representations are an outcome of displaced filmmakers' global views that are shaped because of their movement and act of crossing borders.

Diasporic filmmakers go through a constant process of struggle calling for change, each according to their own vision, perspective and style. It has been proven that gender affects to a great extent the representations of identity by diasporic filmmakers. That is to say, the way female filmmakers depict Moroccan identity in movies is completely different from their male counterparts. Bearing in mind that

Morocco is a patriarchal society, diasporic women filmmakers play the role of a savior in their societies regarding women's position. They try to depict change taking place as they treat social problems that women face and highlight issues of gender inequality in the Moroccan community.

It is also worth mentioning that the main characters in female diasporic films are most of the time, if not all the time, female characters. These are the most active characters and the ones who lead the story and go through a constant process of change as what cannot be done and achieved in real life is absolutely possible in female director's movies; thus they tend to create a spectrum of images of an *imagined* Morocco.

Diasporic women filmmakers construct an imagined space where women set the rules of society and overthrow the patriarchal regime. They endeavor to empower their female characters to counter attack discourses built on patriarchal ideologies of the Moroccan society, yet, they fall in the trap of orientalizing the image of Moroccan women in a way that does not serve their position.

Undoubtedly, there are specific conditions that lay behind such representations, one of which is the cultural and societal interference and influence of Western principles and values on women diasporic filmmakers' artistic visions. Zakia Tahiri's *Number One* calls for redefining gender roles, challenges men's hegemonic discourse and attacks the patriarchal system of the Moroccan community. Men's power, as embodied through the character of Aziz Bedaoui, is challenged and overthrown by his wife Soraya. Yet, one of the most problematic issues in the movie is the resort to sorcery in order to empower femininity. Gender representations would not have been revisited until an extra power has been manipulated.

In *Errag'd*, Zeineb and Halima challenge traditions that oppress women in the village. In the movie, Halima and Zeineb refuse to succumb to men's dominance and dare to take control over their lives and make decisions. Zeineb has decided to lull the fetus as a sign of control over her own faith and resistance to men's authority. Also, In Marrakchi's *Marock* and through the character of Ghita, conventional assumptions of society, traditions and even religion has been challenged.

Diasporic female directors tackle the invisibility of women in patriarchal spaces and make them the center of the camera's gaze. This is part of diasporic cinema interests which occupy itself with turning the periphery into the center. Those female directors demonstrate that resistance to male dominance is extremely possible even if there are some absolute sacrifices. But, in doing so, they produce complex discourses to empower their female characters. Their aim, ultimately, is to patently reshape understandings of female identities and to form a counter discourse to images of women as passive, oppressed and submissive. They, instead, want to cherish a quest for female freedom, strength and emancipation on the screen. Female directors have moved beyond the margins of male-dominated representations to command new spaces, new discourses leading to new shapes of identities. This is ironically done through the resort to some techniques that disturb the image of women on the screen and subvert filmmaker's discourse, such as the use of sorcery and magic.

Male diasporic filmmakers, however, focus more on male characters who are assigned leading roles in their movies, while women characters are completely marginalized. Female characters' roles remain unimportant in their films as they do not really affect the plot. In *Le Grand Voyage* and *Ten'ja*, for instance, the mothers are left behind as the male characters start their journeys. Male characters, in their films, make journeys, sometimes metaphorically, of self-discovery, searching for their roots and the origin as it is the case of the male and main characters Adil, Reda, and Noureddine in *Casanegra*, *Le Grand Voyage* and *Tenja* respectively. For male diasporic filmmakers, the main concern is to produce discourses proposing an outlet through which characters can find affiliation and a sense of belonging.

In *Casanegra*, Adil, the main character, busies himself with his dream of leaving Morocco because of the bleak image of Casablanca and the continuous pull of social problems and paradoxes. Adil manages to find an outlet through which it is possible to escape the closed space of "Casanegra" as he calls it. For him, the postcard of Malmo, which he always carries, is like a window through which he can run away to another world and imagines another *Self*. Also, *Le Grand Voyage* traces a long journey to reconnect with the *Self*. It is a journey of a father, who is well connected with his past, origin, land and customs, along with his son who knows nothing about

his country of origin. The film explores Reda's journey towards Self-discovery and Self-knowledge of his native culture through his constant contact with the father. In the same respect, Legzouli's *Tenja* highlights Nouredine's journey to the South of Morocco to bury his father in his native village following his wish. In line with this, Nouredine goes through different incidents through which he comes to discover his origin, the country, its people and culture.

Diasporic filmmakers' unsettlement ends up constructing various discourses on identity issues. This dilemma of identity arises when one is not sure where to belong or where to place oneself among others. It is that experience of displacement which has had a profound impact on the imagination and artistic cinematic productions of diasporic filmmakers and their choice of movies' plots which are almost always written by them.

Moroccan diasporic filmmakers project a new Moroccan cultural identity that is composed of various components of the East and the West. Their films, hence, challenges national cinemas as they produce identities that go beyond the boundaries of the nation state. These characters of Soraya, Reda, Nouredine, Nora, and Ghita in *Number One*, *Le Grand Voyage*, *Ten'ja* and *Marock* respectively reflect the paradoxes of diaspora experience. As diasporic individuals, it is quite challenging for them to balance between two different cultures, which affect the choice of their characters and their identities' portrayal. Their characters live the same liminality and ambivalence and experience the same estrangement. I highlight that such representations are a result of their *otherlisation* in both communities: the homeland and the hostland.

Diasporic individuals can neither fully belong to the adopted country nor to the homeland, but they keep looking back to their homeland, which they tend to return to via their movies. There is a consensus between diasporic filmmakers that identities are constructed while in constant negotiations of differences. They do even argue that it is hard to maintain a cultural identity in the midst of all the societal changes, technological advancements and with the highly increased speed of people's mobilization. For this reason, they portray hybrid characters; selectively appropriating other cultures and practices and keeping them in tension which is the case of Ghita and her friends in Marrakchi's *Marock*, Soraya in Tahiri's *Number One*, the sisters in

Marrakchi's *Rock the Casbah*, Reda in *Le Grand Voyage*, Nouredine in *Ten'ja* and Nabila in *Cansanegra*. This reminds us of Hamid Naficy's argument when he states that diasporic filmmakers take "masochistic pleasure in ambivalence and asynchronicity."¹

I conclude and argue that Moroccan diasporic filmmakers reject those assumptions that attributed people in the diaspora as lost, isolated, marginalized and hybrid. They have portrayed characters with the same manners in an authentic Moroccan context; they are Westernized and hybrid. This is to claim that even people at home might feel a source of alienation and loss, undergo journeys of negotiations of their identities, embrace hybridity, and search for a sense of belonging.

Accordingly, diasporic filmmakers depart from their own experiences to tell their stories and discuss their fears, aspirations and anxieties. Their views of the hybridization of the Moroccan identity, I argue again, is a way to assert their identities within a Moroccan framework that they believe is not very different from their own diasporic space. I conclude from the analysis of identity representations in a number of movies by Moroccan diasporic directors that films of migrant and diasporic filmmakers target redefining and reconsidering our understanding of the Moroccan identity. They also challenge static and traditional perceptions of national identities and their characteristics.

To attain its objectives, this study has dealt with a number of issues pertaining to its subject matter- identity and home representations. There are certain recurring thematic preoccupations that are central to films by diasporic filmmakers and that have deeply affected the portrayal of identity and land on the screen, such as home-seeking journeys and crossing borders.

The ubiquity of the journey and crossing borders motif in Moroccan diasporic films' narratives reflects filmmakers' attitudes towards their homeland and the hostland. They have made up out of these themes an appealing ground to discuss diaspora issues, negotiate identities and to visualize life on both sides of the borders.

Although borders are basically linked to geographical territories, they also embody symbolic connotations. In their movies, displaced filmmakers usually

¹ Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, p. 209.

highlight more journeys from the hostland to the natal land, which is the case of *Ten'ja* for instance. Legzouli discusses two types of borders; a physical geographical divide and a constructed ideological barrier that sets up the division between the subject and the ‘‘the other’’. The journey back home embodies the pursuit of balance and towards a deeper connection and reconciliation with the *Self* and the homeland. Journeying in *Le Grand Voyage* and *Ten'ja* and the act of crossing the borders have salient connotations in the sense that *the voyage* transcends the geographical terrain as it symbolizes the journey within, which is of identity.

It has been argued that the representations of crossing borders go beyond the physical lines that separate nations. When people cross borders, they carry with them their whole culture and, thus, undergo a long journey of negotiation, acceptance, rejection and adaptation.

Over all, it has been concluded that diasporic filmmakers do not cherish immigration in their narratives as crossing borders towards the hostland is equated with trauma, marginalization and disempowerment. This is clearly discussed in *Casanegra* and *Errag'd* that portray characters whose solely dream is to reach Europe. Adil in *Casanegra* and the young men of the village in *Errag'd* are preoccupied with the idea of immigration for they believe that the West is a land of promise. Kassari and Lakhmari, however, ironically argue against those images demonstrating how crossing borders can only disempower individuals who might put an end to their lives; just dreaming and without fulfilling anything in reality. This is, therefore, a kind recognition of the ongoing struggles and challenges diasporic people experience away from home by both filmmakers.

In the same vein, such representations can be considered as part of diasporic filmmakers' consciousness of upshots of immigration as they are aware of the nature of elements one loses or gains. They are aware of their dilemma and confusion which consequently affect their artistic vision. It is thought-provoking to understand the redefinition of Moroccan identity and culture within a migration context and to conceive how their experiences are echoed in their films.

In addition to this, I have argued in this work that representations of the homeland in diasporic films manifest in various symbols. The notion of death is a

catchy shared theme in diasporic film narratives and which allow different interpretations that aims at discussing the image of the homeland. Diasporic filmmakers depict death in heterogeneous images, but what is common between all the analyzed movies is the death of the father in specific.

Diasporic filmmakers have manipulated this theme to mainly discuss the diaspora experience. Some of them portray death as a turning point in characters' lives; it is a beginning of journeys of freedom, self-discovery and search for the roots as in *Le Grand Voyage* and *Ten'ja*. Marrakchi's *Rock the Casbah*, however, represents death as the demise of patriarchy and as a threat to an authentic Moroccan culture. With the death of the father, traditions have been challenged and surveillance and control have gone forever. Thus, the death of the father is paving ways to Western thoughts and lifestyle; while in her *Marock*, the death of Youri was analyzed as the disappearance of the Jewish culture in the Moroccan community.

Interestingly, films by displaced subjects deal with a variety of intriguing and controversial themes. In this study, I have also discussed how their movies circulate the Moroccan culture as a whole with all the representations they construct. Their cinema turns to be an appealing venue to discuss taboo issues and unveil topics about the Moroccan society. These taboo issues cover mainly politics, sex and religion. Sex is dealt with openly for the filmmakers are also addressing audiences in the West with a relatively open-minded lifestyle. This, however, comes at the expense of the image of their conservative society.

As a last point to state, I have concluded that there is heterogeneity of discourses when it comes to religious representations, which also lies within depicting the homeland. Representations vary between those who produce images to satisfy a Western fantasy about Islam at the expense of the image of Muslims, and to destabilize beliefs and convictions like portrayed in *Marock*. Other narratives, however, promote an image of Islam as a religion that calls for co-existence, tolerance and peace like depicted in *Le Grand Voyage*. This serves, hence, as a counter discourse to stereotypical representations that put Islam within a frame of negative prejudices and wrong assumptions.

Undoubtedly, cinema plays a great role in affecting viewer's minds and perceptions since it is a tool that sends various codes either directly or indirectly. For that reason, the position of the filmmaker, as an intellectual, must be questioned since they are in charge of disseminating substantial messages that target and affect a large audience especially when we speak of a diasporic cinema that has proven its capability to be mobilized and widely circulated.

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