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Fragmentation and Identity in Moroccan and American Entertainment Discourses

A Dissertation Submitted in partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Doctorate
Degree

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الموجز:

تقدم هذه الأطروحة تحقيقاً في الطرق التي يتخذها الترفيه وسيلة تتجاوز ما يظهر من كونها أداة للدعاية يهدف إلى تسويق لصور نمطية عن الآخر بخلاف الوجه المرح الذي تبرز فيه. من هذا المنطلق تقوم هذه الدراسة لمناقشة ودراسة نماذج من الأفلام الأمريكية والمغربية الكوميدية التي تناولت موضوع الهوية وعلاقتها بين الغرب والشرق، ونتج من خلال دراسته دراسة دقيقة واقعية ومنهجية محايدة، تعتمد على التحليل الدقيق، أدت إلى الاقتناع أن اعتماد منطق التقسيم بين الأنا والآخر في الأفلام الكوميدية لا زال منطقاً سائداً يتطلع من خلاله الغرب إلى فرض الهيمنة على الآخر. كما يهدف هذا البحث إلى إبراز كيف يمكن للعنصرية أن تصبح من خلال الكوميديا فكرة ناعمة يستسيغها المشاهد وتضحكه. وهذه العنصرية هي إحدى التداخيلات الخطيرة للكوميديا الساخرة. كما أن هذه الدراسة لا تدعي بسوداوية أن كل الكوميديا تخدم نفس الأغراض، وتُسخر لنفس الأهداف، بل هناك محاولات جادة لتعزيز قيم التسامح والتعايش، غير أن بعض الخطابات لم تفلح في رسم خطة واضحة، ولا في اقتراح حلول واقعية. فالتعايش في نظرهما، تقارب من جانب واحد، وخضوع من طرف واحد، فهي تصل بنا إلى نتيجة مفادها، أن التعايش ممكن، والتواصل واقع غير مستحيل، لكنه بشرط تخلي الطرف الآخر عن قيمه، وتنازله عن أفكاره، ليصير جزءاً من الأنا، مطابقاً لها، مشابهاً لأفكارها، متشبعاً بقيمها، ومؤمناً بحضارتها. وفي نظرة محايدة أخرى، هناك خطابات جعلت نفسها في دور الوسيط، أو المراقب، وجعلت نفسها حكماً على واقع الصراع الغربي العربي، فقدمت صوراً واقعية، تجعل من الطرفين جزءاً من المشكلة، وتعرض في وجهة نظرها المشكلة بطرفيها، غير أن تلك الخطابات الترفيهية لم تطرح حلاً واقعياً، لكنه يبقى بلا شك محاولة جيدة.

كلمات المفاتيح: الخطاب الترفيهي؛ الهوية؛ الإيديولوجيا؛ العنصرية

Abstract

This thesis offers an enquiry into the ways in which entertainment discourse can go beyond its merely humorous articulations through the fragmentation of one's identity by employing irony and jesting to commercializing stereotypical images of different races. In other words, entertainment discourse proves to be not made only for entertainment, but it also goes beyond its initial humorous function to be infused with political and ideological underpinnings. On the one hand, 'laughing the Other' is employed as a traditional mode of representing other's identity in some American entertainment discourses that proves the amalgamation of different political backgrounds and orientalist principles into the production of ideologies. On the other hand, this thesis tries the 'laughing back' as a way to bring the voice of the Other onto an equal ground where s/he becomes able to produce, reproduce and deconstruct the compartments of knowledge in a way that may dismantle the stereotypical implications of Western discourse. Accordingly, between 'laughing the other' and 'laughing back', this thesis examines some American and Moroccan entertainment discourses that contribute to transcending both the Western stereotypical construction of the Other and the Third World eulogistic construction of the self. This in-between discourse functions as a bridge to dismantle the antithetical epistemic systems that have crippled academia.

Key words: Entertainment discourse; Identity; Ideology; Laughing Others; Laughing back; Fragmentation

Introduction

No one can deny the fact that the picture is a reflection of reality disseminated through different outlets aspiring to deliver messages and instill meanings into individuals' Brainbox. It is also an undisputed fact to say that media is the *alma mater* where the image dominates the visual display unit and where the individual's attitudes are concocted, their daily life is remodeled and their identity becomes "more mobile, multiple, personal, self-reflexive, and subject to change and innovation." (Kellner 231) Despite the fact that media means are wide-ranging and always forging ahead with progress since their inception, their role has remained invariable, encapsulated in generating discourses able to communicate the individual's mind, where ideologies may come on the scene. Accordingly, reaching the maximum audience is the standard unit that measures the success or rather the degree of influence of one discourse than others. Herewith, these discourses are forged in different forms to keep pace with the world changes to maintain their potential to influence the masses. In this context, comedy discourse is held to be one of these media discourses that contributes to exerting their influence over a large number of audience and to the dissemination of some ideological values via employing humorous and encoded articulations.

Comedy as a discourse, or as mostly called in this thesis as an 'entertainment discourse', functions as an anesthetic spray of critical sense and a programmer of the unconscious mind; it negates cautious approach in one's brain, making the individual "black box" absorbing every detail of the exposed attitudes in a humorous framework. It is unequivocal that there is no shame in exploiting comedy in communicating ideas to people in a smooth and uncomplicated manner, but what is defective is to be taken as means to

poison the minds, bruit about missenses or disseminate destructive ideas serving the agenda of its producers. That is to say, because it implies a spontaneous voice of the ordinary people and a breathing space for the masses struggling to overcome and forget their daily sufferings in their society, comedy discourse is worthy of solicitude by the authoritative system that has a hankering to control and monitor its society.

Comedy discourse has become a staple of television products and best-seller artifact and, increasingly, prime-time television genre that can be therefore considered as works of interest for many critics. This fact has encouraged the producers to remodel this work of art based on mechanical reproduction to make it more sophisticated, ubiquitous and more imperative. This “discourse of laughter”, so to speak, does not draw the boundaries of interdiction or taboo, making of its audience unintentionally subservient followers and believers in every single skit being exposed through mass media channels. The consumption of whatever message disseminated via these skits degrades the individual into a state of inertia and becomes glued and immersed in the ideas promulgated in such ‘funny spectacles’. The audience becomes in the state of oblivion and unconcerned about what to be the truth/false, allowance/interdiction, or even joviality/seriousness. In this sense, the audience of entertainment turns out to be the dupe of enjoyment without desecrating the background of the real players behind the scene of ideological production.

By tracking its influence, it is possible to show that entertainment discourse has played a key role in different fields: be they political, economic, cultural and even religious. Politically speaking, comedy is rated an effective outlet employed by some politicians to defeat their political adversaries. It has been also used by conflicting-countries to discredit *l'un et l'autre* tarnishing each one's reputation and taking advantage of such discourse to

overthrow parties and syndicates, among others oppressive institutions. Likewise, entertainment discourse is brought into play by economists to advertise their companies' trademarks seducing people to the consumption of their commodities through annexing them to amusement and relaxation. Utilizing comedy outlet remains a viable and propitious strategy for product advertising; thence it is not weird to notice companies get involved in signing contracts with comedians to that effect.

Moreover, comedy has played a vital role in introducing and spreading the cultures of great nations as a way to assert that the Self is invariably 'superior' and 'noble', while the Other is a pariah whose identity shares quite many stigmatizing labels, such as blackness, backwardness and inferiority to the Self. Undeniably, racism is formally unacceptable practice among people; still, racist jokes disseminated in entertainment discourse may amuse people and become acceptable since they are constructed in "clever extrication and ironic reversal that is shared with others." (Bowers 1) Entertainment discourse, in this sense, hides a powerful effect behind laughing. Amusing the audience becomes a strategy designed to "point out human weaknesses and to attack the high and mighty." (Oesterheld 64)

Generally, comedy is an effective outlet to attacking hilariously both high cultures and low ones; but the case is quite different in colonial discourse, through which comedy is not meant to attack the high, but to deride the low and marginal living the "Third World", whereas it attributes centrality to the West. In the course of history, the colonial discourse has been such a contestation to most of human thoughts that challenge human differences when adhered to conceptions of identity, gender and race. This discourse believed to be framed within a fixed image that is circulating among some westerners in their attempt to

preserve the notion of center/periphery duality. As a reaction to such mode of thinking, postcolonial critics descending, mainly from the ex-colonies, have challenged this Western centrality from where 'knowledge' is normally stemmed and circulating effectively around the world.

The engagement of entertainment discourse in colonial enterprise lies in constructing the image of Others, Arabs as an example, through employing the style of cynicism and contempt in commercializing stereotypical images of Arabs. In many cases, Western entertainment discourse is accused of looking down on Others, and this derision has not changed as time passes by. The stereotypical images adhered to the Arabs have become intuitive knowledge that is fixed in the Western memory and repeated historically in colonial discourse, as Bhabha avers, "An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness." (Bhabha 66)

In this context, it will be then no exaggeration, nor will it be a fact that 'laughing Arabs' in entertainment discourse is still an ongoing process preoccupying the Western narrations. Laughing Arab characters in a manner that contradicts their real cultural aspects is the choice of discourse creators to, as Bhabha states, "meet the demand of colonial discourse." (Bhabha 82) In this sense, this stereotypical discourse aims at inscribing the power and the presence of Western superiority over the natives even through the rituals of clothing and facial appearance and other so-called trivial descriptions. Furthermore, the infusion of such triviality is an effective strategy functions more authentically in entertainment discourses, through which humorous features are instilled by serious issues

regarding Other's cultures and identities, since every 'small talk' is always pragmatically speaking 'big talk'. (Thurlow and Adam 246)

However, postcolonial criticism has tried to deconstruct this Western desire to superiority through providing a space for counter-discourses to impose their position and construct their identification. Going through such process does not mean casting aspersions on the West, but rather aims at defining themselves instead of being defined. Strikingly, this self-representation might not necessarily satisfy the horizon of the reader's expectation, since the influence of Western ideologies transcends the Third World borders to find a space within its cultural industries where producers of media outlets, like cinema, embark upon new projects. Taking the example of Moroccan cinema, one has to admit that the influence of colonial regulation is still taking place within such industry. The French colonizer was aware of media effect on Moroccan people and that controlling this ground is a key to its triumph. This control of media has been undertaken under assigning some decrees to restrict the field of cinema as a way to legitimize its colonial practices through a potential transmitting of the French ideologies. This fact illuminates the intentions of the colonizer to control Morocco, not only by the military, but also through the informational as well as technological tools. Therefore, it might be plausible to aver that there are some voices of the colonial discourse disseminating and carrying out the mission of spreading its ideological stereotypes from within the industry of Moroccan cinema.

In the same line of thoughts, one might perceive that the state continues to impose the same colonial restrictions on the field of cinema industry nowadays as means to control "the public arena and transfer decisions to the hands of uncountable private tyrannies." (Chomsky 218) In this sense, it is not surprising to state that entertainment discourse

functions as a state ideological apparatus and thus questioning the extent to which the production of this entertainment could be rated as a free of certain agendas' interference. It might be assumed that the produced thoughts generated in entertainment discourse are seemingly emanated from the act of its producers' freedom of enunciation, and it might be assumed as well that media outlet is qualified for its good deed that produces a space for this free contribution; however, these assumptions somehow happen to be ideologically and culturally oriented.

All these data are enough to spare for no longer regarding comedy as an innocent discourse, but rather one should contemplate seriously the infused ideologies through every humorous skit. In so doing, this study aims at decoding the implicit social and cultural meanings expressed through such entertainment and exploring the extent to which this reading develops our understanding of the nature of Western and Eastern constant struggle. That is to say, comedy discourse surpasses the horizon of expectation of critics and proves to be not made for entertainment to the hilt, but it goes beyond its initial humorous function to be infused with political and ideological underpinnings.

This study is an attempt to investigate how entertainment discourse can amalgamate different political backgrounds and social principles and the ways it stages multifarious forms of images that still link the Third World in general, and Arabs in particular, to old ages. On the other hand, the study aims at detecting the extent to which entertainment discourse may contribute to stepping beyond the binarism or hatred discourses that promote animosity more than fostering entertainment. In this context, this research attempts to provide answers to some questions such as; how the entertainment discourses have been implemented and constructed as discourses of seriousness instead of facetiousness? To

what extent could an entertainment discourse be labeled as an ideological apparatus? Could the discourse of comedy contribute to the promotion of cultural coexistence and understanding? How does identity fragmentation manifest in entertainment discourses? To what extent have the questions of space, race and gender been fantasized and exoticized? Finally, what is the newness of the contemporary entertainment discourses compared to its traditional modes of representation?

In so doing, the study tries to bring into analysis different comedy/entertainment discourses oscillate between (i) American: a Hollywood movie, two animated films and a stand-comedy show and (ii) three Moroccan cinema movies. These entertainment discourses are divided into three chapters and distributed in accordance with their approach to presenting the intercultural relations between and the West and the East. For example, the first examined entertainment discourses are purely American productions; a Hollywood movie *Road to Morocco* (1942), a Disney cartoon *Sahara Hare* (1955), and a popular stand-up comedy show titled “Achmed the Dead Terrorist” (2008) are the targets of the fourth chapter (the first chapter in practical part). For *Road to Morocco*, starring Bing Crosby, Bob Hope and Dorothy Lamour, is considered one of the most hilarious American comedies ever. Our interest in this movie lies in the fact that it is mostly attained with Orientalist flavor. For *Sahara Hare* is an animated film with a strong representation of the Arab. The reason behind the inclusion of Disney film lies in imposing itself as a powerful discourse with a great influence on the audience, especially children whose ideological background can be perceived as innocent and easily sidetracked and diverted. The last one is Jeff Dunham’s “Achmed the Dead Terrorist” — a stand-up comedy that has gained wider popularity through the topic it is dealing with, namely “terrorism”, a theme commonly associated, nowadays with Arab and Muslim people. This show actually has attracted many

viewers, especially on YouTube and has more than 350 million views (O'Brien). The focus in these entertainment discourses is laid on the relevance of space, racial identity and gender to the construction of difference. The purpose behind this examination is to lay bare the different characteristics, attributes and purviews that are embedded within a humorous formula as a way to reduce the degree of stereotypical claims.

The second collection of entertainment discourses, which happen to be two Said Naciri's (starring and directing) Moroccan movies, focuses on intervening in the ideological stereotypes upon which the previous Western discourses have been built. One of these two movies is set in Morocco, while the other is set in both Morocco and mostly in France. As for the first one, *Abdu in The Almohads' Dynasty* (2006) tries to revisit the Moroccan history and underline the kind of transgression that occurs at the level of identity and cultural shifts nowadays. The second Movie, *Morokki in Paris* (2012), deals with issues of immigration of Moroccan people in France. These two Moroccan movies have managed to open up a space wherein they have brought into question the assumptions and convictions that have formed the binary opposition between the West and the East. The commendable aim of this intervention has noticeably been to bring the Other onto an equal ground where s/he becomes able to produce, reproduce, deconstruct and reconstruct the compartments of knowledge in a way that may dismantle the stereotypical implications as a way to exculpate the 'Other' from Western allegations.

The last collection is an amalgamation of both Moroccan Movies *Road to Kabul* (2012) and American cartoon version, *Achmed Saves American* (2014). The first is a Moroccan movie directed by Brahim Chkiri and starred by Said Bey, Younes Bouab and Rafik Boubker. The movie expresses itself as a new journey towards a contact zone where

difference while embarking an adventure in Afghan city, Kabul. The second movie is an animation of the same character employed in “Achmed the Dead Terrorist” show, but now experiencing in *Achmed Saves America* a different journey *Mizpakmanistan* towards *Americaville* making a promising step to coexistence by providing a cultural contact where Achmed is introduced to the American life that he finds opposed to what he used to believe. Going beyond the traditional identity formation is the newness of these two movies as an attempt to transcend the colonial stereotypical construction of the Other (as adopted in the first discourse collection) and the Third World eulogistic construction of the self (employed in the second entertainment discourse collection). This last collection aims at rendering each race its due and stand in the in-between space of criticism, where the colonizer and the colonized are both *innocent-guilty*. Besides, these intercultural-collected movies may function as a bridge towards a milder discourse advancing peace, tolerance of difference and thereby providing a model for intercultural dialogues.

To substantiate the contention that these entertainment discourses are ideologically and politically constructed, this thesis tries to adopt an interdisciplinary approach as a way to investigate some concepts and perspectives. In this regard, Media studies can be considered as one of the main fields within which this study is located. This importance is gained through a broad sphere of media studies which includes different principles and theories and which, at the same time, can be open to other areas of studies such as visual culture and popular culture. Additionally, Postcolonial theory, cultural studies, feminism, and psychoanalytical theory remain other important approaches used to destabilize and dismantle the essentialist discourse that monopolizes the space of expression and communication. Therefore, these approaches provide a space and give a voice to the subaltern to demand his/her right within a dominant discourse. Additionally, these

perspectives provide elucidations to how the essentialist discourse has been influenced by the legacies of its history and ideological background, in addition to their attempt to uncover the oppositional voices within the struggles against the lingering effects of such discourses.

Part One

“Many of the postmodern theories privilege media culture as the site of implosion of identity and fragmentation of subject” (Media Culture: 234)

1. Conceptualizing Visual Culture and the Effect of Entertainment

1.1 Visuality and Beyond Reality

It might be agreed that the relationship between ‘culture formation’ and ‘visual culture’ is so clear and needs no further discussion, since the typical role of media channels, especially television, is to picture social events for its audience to be visualized. However, the idea is not quite the same as talking about the meaningful connection between visual culture and its effect on the real world. Most people feel the need to trust the picture performed in front of their eyes and interact with it through influencing their way of thinking and acting. This reflects the powerful effect of the pictures that demonstrate the incapability of the audience to resist their seduction, especially those that are considered much more important, as Patrick Fuery and Kelli Fuery state in their *Visual Cultures and Critical Theory*: “The more the image is interpreted as being important and powerful in its given visual field, the more seductive it becomes and the less it is met with spectator resistance.” (Fuery and Fuery 4) In this regard, the audience become entrenched in the multitude of images they receive from their TV sets each day to the extent that they make them part of their lives. This can be supported by the examples of people making of TV stars their idols when adopting and/or adapting to every single move their fictional heroes make.

However, one cannot deny the fact that the images or programmes are made on purpose of seduction, as the Furies acknowledged when they say that “programmes are not designed for the critical subject; instead they rely on the seduction within the image.” (Fury and Fury 2-3) That is, the individual has indulged within an inevitable¹ struggle whose result is determined by the individual himself or herself, since each individual, despite the influence of media, has a free will to be either passive receivers or active interpreters. This constant interaction between the individual and media is necessarily indispensable, for it polices one’s identity and exerts an influence on the individual’s beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. That is, this struggle conduces to remodel the daily life of so many people in unprecedented ways, and thus, reorient their perceptions towards what they “know” about the outside world and what they experience in their society. People, in this sense, become reified by the visual images that blind and prevent from recognizing the implicit assumptions that underpin their cultures and influence their identities. In this regard, the individual cannot undertake identity as being fixed or solid. At the age of modernity, on the contrary, “identity becomes more mobile, multiple, personal, self-reflexive, and subject to change and innovation.” (Kellner 231)

This mobility in one’s identity² occurs at certain levels that may not affect one’s roots; there are forms of identity that are relatively substantial and fixed (Kellner 231). In this sense, the question of identity in modernity has become more personal and no longer affixed to a group but to individuality. It has become a truism that the individual, at the age of media control, is introduced to materials that affect their identity in terms of social and

¹ Especially in the world of technology where everyone is encircled by means of visuality.

² The issue of identity mobility and flexibility will be explored more perspicuously in the “Identity Formation and the Question of Difference” section.

cultural reproduction. That is, media through its discourses exerts an ideological domination that overshadows the cultural and identity values of the individual. It produces a discourse that attempts to deploy ideologies in an appealing mode to prompt the viewer to welcome.

The visual, in this regard, has occupied a large space within and across the social and cultural attitudes. That is, human experience has become easily oriented by what is more visual rather than what is oral (what is textual like novels and newspapers or what is just spoken like political speeches or social programmes broadcast on radios). Nicholas Mirzoeff supported this idea when he states:

Western philosophy and science now use a pictorial, rather than textual, mode of the world, making a significant challenge to the notion of the world as a written text that dominated so much intellectual discussion in the wake of such linguistics-basic movements as structuralism and poststructuralism. (Mirzoeff 5)

He also states, “The world-as-text has been challenged by the world-as-picture.” (Mirzoeff 5) By this, he means that people prefer the access to knowledge about the world to be realized through visuality rather than textuality. Rather, pictorial extravaganzas offered by films, for instance, have superseded peoples’ attempts to look for adventure and know about the world from literary texts. This visual revolution, so to speak, has become rapidly able to cable the whole world and communicate every local society³ through integrating their

³ With the exception of one or two countries like China that has been still struggling to adopt the politics of local media culture consumerism through the verdict of blocking and concealing certain Western news and entertaining media outlets.

interests in more aesthetic manners. This construction of reality in media discourse is covered by certain fictional images that add some refinement to the world introduced to the audience. This refinement is meant to keep the on-going effect exerted on the individual by virtue of imagined world which is given an embellished description that reduces the scenes of the real everyday life to a prosaic one. This process is labelled in the postmodern theory as “hyperreality”. This, Jean Baudrillard defines as an advanced stage of life-as-art which “manages to efface even this contradiction between the real and the imagery. Unreality is no longer resides in the dream or fantasy, or in the beyond, but in the real’s hallucinatory resemblance itself.” (Baudrillard 145) This process functions by means of employing certain symbols to replace actual objects and experiences in a very comprehensible and organized way to make the real look more real. Besides, Baudrillard states that, “the real is hyperrealised. Neither realised, nor idealised: but hyperrealised. The hyperreal is the abolition of the real not by violent destruction, but by its assumption, elevation to the strength of the model.” (Baudrillard 84)

In the same line of thought, Baudrillard discusses how objects and events in contemporary society are constantly transcending their actual essence and placed outside the beyond. In other words, the effect of the visual on the individual conduces not only to the reordering value of certain images, but transcend that to become a hyper-image. Baudrillard has expressed this remodeling that occurs at the level of some of the images and states:

What is also fascinating is the surpassing of the social, the irruption of the more social than the social: the masses... The real does not concede anything to the benefit of the imaginary: it concedes only to the benefit of the more

real than real (the hyperreal) and to the more true than true. This is simulation. (Baudrillard 188)

In his probing, Baudrillard tries to indicate the excessive use of image which takes another dimension and becomes meaningful. Clearly, the televised images become the excesses of what the world is in reality. The “real” becomes “hyperreal”, “violence” becomes “terrorism”, “beauty” becomes “fashion”, “fatness” becomes “obesity”, etc.

This fact contributes to the shift in the meaning of an object in a normalized or a naturalized way to be more welcomed within its social order. In this regard, the world of “simulacrum”, to use Baudrillard’s adage, has been reshaped and recast to the extent that the individual has become unqualified to distinguish fantasy from reality; and thus has been confined to a state of reverie and inertia. This media effect has drawn on the kind of repulsion between the individual and his/her social and cultural contacts, whereas the world of fantasy or the hyperreal imposes itself as a taken-for-granted reality that prompts the individual to express his or her approval for it through imitation. Consequently, the individual is typically not given much space for individualized insight.

With this precaution in mind, one might argue that the social system has been progressively superseded by hyperreality and simulation to the extent that it induces the individual to initiate different cultural experiences. We may conclude in this regard, that media culture provides a dialectical space where the viewer/the individual can consume but cannot produce. That is, the individual is given a limited space that does not allow him or her to voice out and share in their culture. Simultaneously, media culture creates a space for the individual to engage with the outside world from a closed angle, though it is a partial and a cramped one. This space of repudiation, so to speak, has brought into question the

issue of power relations dictated by media discourse. This power relation functions when the visibility or the interaction occurs between the individual and media content.

The act of visualizing an item is, in fact, an act of establishing ideologies and, thus, involving in relations of power between the visualizer and the visualized. That is, the visualized items are subject to political agendas through which ideologies are disseminated to represent the interests of the dominant classes. The Furies have stated in their *Visual Cultures and Critical Theory*, “when we go to an art gallery or read a magazine, look at photos or even when we watch images on film or television, we are engaging with other images and forming investments of power.” (Fury and Fury 1) They also affirm that power is “only ‘activated once a power relationship had been constructed and engaged with.” (Fury and Fury 1) The question of power relation, then, is what essentially matters, since the individuals are disoriented from their cultural and social genealogy and become “cultural programmers who construct personal ‘supercultures’ that transcend cultural traditions and boundaries.” (Curran and Morley 16)

Generally, this “personal superculture” is in conformity with concealed ideologies prescribed by the authority of media discourse. In this regard, this power relation seems to exacerbate the interaction between media and its audience and reconfigure the individual into the state of being subject. For this reason, Michel Foucault perceives power as “a technique or mechanism to be used in working out why and how we become subjects.” (Fury and Fury 1)

Following Foucault steps, discourse is not simply produced by culture, but rather by *a system of knowledge creation* restrained by invisible hands that dominate the public. This system accommodates the subject’s perception to its own definition and implication.

Leaning on this conception, one might argue that the cultural records are estimated to be concocted by certain agendas that dominate this system of knowledge creation and that everyday life is experienced through the structures and the instructions of discourse engendered by the system.

Additionally, the epistemological purpose of this system is to build up a unique idea about particular societies, people, and culture, therefore, it demonstrates and establishes who should have the authority and who should not have a say. The system, in this regard, dominates the platform of information through offering entertaining products and services to keep the everyday consumption and interaction of the individual.

The system, however, is not oriented *only* to the production of specific perceptions/images about specific societies, but it *also* provides outlets that act the part of glamorizing the culture and the identity of those monitoring it at the expense of vilifying others. Accordingly, this strategy is widely adopted within discourses that aim at reproducing certain dominant forms of social power; it serves to retain the ideology of binary oppositions and the ideology of domination that are firmly embedded within the system of knowledge creation. In this regard, producing and instilling ideologies are *raison d'être* of this system that, “serves to further oppression by legitimating forces and institutions that repress and oppress people.” (Kellner 61) In the meanwhile, these installed ideologies themselves:

form a system of abstractions and distinctions within such domains as gender, race, and class, so as to construct ideological divisions between men and women, the ‘better classes’ and ‘the lower classes,’ whites and people of color, ‘us’ and ‘them’, and so on. (Kellner 61)

Media discourse, in this regard, surpasses mere entertaining shows, to say the least, and holds the individual to assume that it has always been nothing more than a spectacle of reality that seeks interactions between the individual and his/her society , and thus, is composed “neither of images nor of shots but of ‘facts’.” (Andrew 44)

The fact that media discourse aims at interacting with its audience must require their accessibility to different interpretations to perceive media content differently according to their identity and cultural knowledge. However, this accessibility is, in a way or another, an invisible strategy to maintain the ongoing effect of power relations through employing complexities and contradictions to make a possible long-connection between the individual and the media world. However, the interpretations given by the individual as a viewer are mostly supervised by certain regulations that overwhelm implicitly the general scene of media content. This strategy elects the individual to be off the space devoted for self-determined and creative interpretations. In this regard, the individual is unavoidably wallowing in the arena of visibility, where media discourse reorients tacitly the individual’s ‘simple’ interpretations to keep its ongoing hegemony.

1.2 The Subject and the State's Media Control:

The fact that media discourse is an outlet of quasi-interaction between producers and audiences refers, in all probability, to the engagement of people in a virtual environment that operates through managing the necessary information needed to communicate the minds of people. This mental control, so to speak, is exercised by its manipulator, specially labeled as the state, through entertainment discourses and other forms of communication. The state, which represent the official power, depends mainly on such outlet to control, what Lippmann termed, “the bewildered herd.” This act of control, however, has taken different forms and has produced different ways of monitoring the individual.

In fact, the major objective of media in any society is to “restrict the public arena and transfer decisions to the hands of uncountable private tyrannies,” (Chomsky 218) this, in turn, plays an important role in, “removing the public from potential influence on policy.” (Chomsky 218) That is, people should remain out of the realm of politics and simply keep themselves away from integrating within the *elites*’ matters. People, in the ‘sham democracy’, are gentle citizen when they are pampering themselves with what the state provides them, yelling patriotic mottos, and believing what is circulated in their media institution. This media propaganda relies on certain models to convincingly market its products to a wider range of people, be they Europeans or non-Europeans. That is, the individuals and the masses remain the main targets of this propaganda that aims at unifying their belief of what is normal and what should be acceptable. This fact is achieved through creating the image of perfect society that could not exist without adopting the way of everyday life cast on the system’s screens. To make this point clear, Douglas Kellner

provides an example of the role of American television that he perceives, like many other critics, as “instrumental in selling American values, commodities, and ways of life to other countries, and is thus a major force of culture hegemony.” (Kellner 32) In the same manner, media propaganda in every society tries to redefine the meaning of life, be happiness, love, hate, modernity, terrorism and anything that the system want to implant in people’s mindsets. As a result, under the influence of this propaganda, vague notions about anything and everything lead to what Ellul terms “psychological crystallization”, thereby becoming powerful, direct and precise. “Propaganda furnishes objectives, organizes the traits of an individual’s personality into a system, and freezes them into a mold.” (Ellul 162) Indeed, media has the greatest potential to influence the masses since they uncompromisingly offer:

A deeper level of identification with the characters and action on the screen more than found elsewhere in popular culture... movies do, in fact, succeed at propaganda... by presenting one set of values as the only viable set. Over a period of years, these values can both reflect and shape society’s norms. (Jowett et O’Donnell 90)

Additionally, media narratives are unavoidably tied into ideology and politics. The latter is what monitors these narratives, and ideology, as Pentti Haddington avers, “enters the people’s lives as part of their everyday conduct.” (Haddington 70) In this regard, media narratives remain an essential institution through which these ideologies and politics may operate more effectively. Often, those who control the production and dissemination of these narratives struggle over how a certain scripts will fit into the prevailing political atmosphere. This is quite clear in Douglas Kellner’s declaration that:

Films must have an enemy, an absolute evil Foreign Other, and both Hollywood and Reagan and Bush turned to Arab heavies for the political demonstration necessary for the narratives of Hollywood film and U.S. politics at the moment when the Soviet Union was turning to Bid Macs, pornography, and capitalism. (Kellner 66)

In this regard, media are considered powerful institutions as their messages may influence the public's perception of different groups. (Messaris 185) Noam Chomsky suggests that media nourishes and perpetuates stereotypes programmatically, and that the American public is kept narrowly and rigidly controlled by media; (Chomsky) for him, their function is "to be 'spectators,' not participants in action. But they have more function than that, because it's a democracy... they're allowed to say, 'We want you to be our leader' or 'We want *you* to be our leader.'" (Chomsky 17) Such manipulation may lead to one-sided media perceptions – that is the state is in the service of the masses and that questioning its reliability would be deemed an act of betrayal to the whole state system – and eventually lead to negative perceptions and attitudes towards anything, while the reality is what Noam Chomsky has made clear when he declares:

They're trying to instill the right values. In fact, they have a conception of what democracy ought to be: It ought to be a system in which the specialized class is trained to work in the service of the masters, the people who own the society. The rest of the population ought to be deprived of any form of organization, because the organization just causes trouble. (Chomsky 26-27)

The act of surveillance has undergone a new shift within its definition of power, since, in the pre-modern, the head of state and the noble people are the only ones to expose

themselves to be seen and to be regarded as models for others, while the masses were departmentalized in the arena of invisibility. However, the case is diametrically opposed to what it is, to use Michel Foucault words, ‘the modern casual society’, since the authoritative system generates a new strategy to maintain its power over the herd. This latter, in this regard, has become the central subject in media discourse. This centrality is meant to keep them under surveillance by the powers to be.

Additionally, this act of controlling society succeeded to keep a certain invisibility from both the public and the private activities of people not through powerful agencies but by use of insidious discursive practices. That is, the state has restricted, through media discourse, the individual’s behaviors and instilled certain forms of self-regulation, which constructs the individual to follow recommendations of the state without physical coercion. This discourse holds in check individuals who become unable to take autonomous action outside the scope of the system. In other words, the individual has an undeliberate role to play in measuring the effect of media discourse when they unintentionally become complicit in the act their own control through acting passive. Therefore, the individual turns into a subservient follower of the practices and rules enacted by the state.

The state, or the supreme power, aims by this act of controlling the herd and checking the society from the inside to protect its authority from the changes and the ramifications of the outside orbit. In this regard, these state-controlled agencies – media discourses- that operate the act of control have established the idea of victimhood to authorize the enactment of punishment and reward as a way to afford a position of leading the world. The idea of victimhood has been a warrant that establishes the right for the supreme power to keep every individual’s activity under its visibility. The strategic need to

rally the masses behind the state against any imminent threat entails seriously considering questions of state function to secure the populous. In so doing, most nations develop their ideologies in accordance with their strategic interests of keeping laymen under tight state apparatus supervision. Noam Chomsky avers that for the state to keep its control over the “bewildered herd”, creating threatening figures remains essential to the entrenched need for the state victorious interference. He states:

It was international terrorists and narco-traffickers and *crazed* Arabs and Saddam Hussein, the new Hitler, was going to conquer the world. They've got to keep coming up one after another. You frighten the population, terrorize them, intimidate them so that they're too afraid to travel and cower in fear. Then you have a magnificent victory over... defenseless third world army that you can pulverize before you ever bother to look at them—which is just what happened. That gives relief. We were saved at the last minute. That's one of the ways in which you can keep the bewildered herd from paying attention to what's really going on around them, keep them diverted and controlled. (Chomsky 44)

At this juncture, the outside threat is loaded with ideological inclinations that instilled through media institutions. Chomsky asserts, “There’s always an ideological offensive that builds up chimerical monster, then campaigns to have it crushed. You can’t go in if they can fight back. That’s much too dangerous. But if you are sure that they will be crushed, maybe we’ll knock that one off and heave another sign of relief.” (Chomsky 45)

Media narratives are apparently tied into politics, for they often struggle to insert a script, which conforms to the general political scene. Politicians weave stories for the

masses to interpellate. These stories are most of the time linked to salient and present day issues such as “terrorism and Islamism” current dominant media topics in the USA. In this regard, entertainment discourse contributes to laying out these issues through media outlets. This discourse, however, functions as an alert announcement that informs people of the outside threat and at the same time as a tranquilizing discourse pacifying them through comic stages. This function of entertainment discourse questions the freedom of the comedians to produce and improvise their own creative speech.

In other words, one might argue that theater is a free stage upon which the actor performs whatever he or she pleases beyond any restraints. At this point, the performer is set free in a world that encourages creativity and impromptu funny moments. Yet, it is an inevitable fact that there is no absolute freedom. Restraints are made inherent in human as well as global laws. Monitoring human acts and behaviors has long been allied not only to national and international security, but also to one’s ethical considerations. Even when an actor performs upon a stage and claims to be free voice for everything and anything, and yet what he/she is expressing is, in a way or another, obstructed by different social, ideological or political forces. That is to say, media has drawn certain limits that certain discourses are not certified to get beyond.

As another example of setting up uncrossed boundaries by the media, the case of Moroccan cinema, which is a French legacy, the fields have been regulated by Dahirs (Moroccan juridical terms denoting a law) as the following quotation may show:

The French opened the first Moroccan laboratory in Casablanca in 1939, which became a French film production company known as Cinéphone. The cinema industry was put under State control and regulated by the Dahir of

December 9, 1940, then modified by the Dahir on August 14, 1941, and again by that of April 18, 1942. (Carter 45)

Sandra Carter has tackled in general some of these Dahirs' decrees and states, "The decree of January 7, 1940, stipulated that it was possible to exhibit a film in Morocco only with permission from the French government censorship committee." (Carter 45) She adds, "Since its creation by dahir of April 20, 1942, followed by its reorganization in 1944, the Service du Cinéma was charged with setting the prices of cinema tickets and other means of regulating the profession." (Carter 46)

The French colonizers were aware of the effect of media on the popular and that controlling this ground is a key to their triumph. For this reason, the French had controlled not only the institution of cinema, but also "the individuals within the domain." (Carter 45) In support of the French controlling agendas in Morocco, "the decree of January 7, 1940, stipulated that it was possible to exhibit a film in Morocco *only* with permission from the French government censorship committee." (Carter 45) Assigning these restricted decrees is, in a way or another, a legitimization of colonial practices and through which their ideologies can be well transmitted. This fact illuminates the intentions of the colonizers to control Morocco, not only by the military, but also through the informational as well as technological tools.

Despite the fact that Morocco has gained its independence, though partly, the colonial regulations and pacts have been maintained in the Moroccan institutions. Allegiance to the French protectorate has not yet ended. Rather, Morocco is apparently not going beyond some important issues that might disarrange Moroccan/French relation. This allegiance is epitomized through the influence of francophone prescriptions on Moroccan

usage of the French language in most administrative provisions and media broadcasts. Moreover, France, as a way to “keep power localized and centralized”, has supported Moroccan media financially. Sandra Carter has stated evidently, “France also benefited from maintaining a tight relationship with its former colony, and in 1961 even created a Ministry of Cooperation to aid former colonies financially and technically, and to simultaneously maintain French hegemony in the region.” (Carter 16) These and other colonial legacies or, say, forms of colonial surveillance have become crippling, for the Moroccan development and total independence. In this sense, media coverage is not an innocent form of discourse, since it relies on ideologies of its controllers, especially the states whose aspiration lies in controlling “over the shaping of public order and public morals by controlling and censoring public projection of films.” In support of this argument, Sandra Gayle Carter notes that:

In many ways these controls on cinema and expression were reflective of the State’s need to cement to itself the loyalty and adherence of its populace. To achieve this, given the nation’s past of decentralized power and regional struggles, the central government sought to take power out of localities and regional affiliations and anchor it more firmly in the institutions it could easily monitor, such as the CCM⁴ and the ministries. (Carter 59)

That is to say, the way government takes control of matters is quite intriguing, in that they rely on media discourses to control the public. Media discourse, in turn, does all it takes to keep the public sphere limited within a restricted field of knowledge; the audience has limited access to knowledge in a media outlet. Over and above all, this limited accessible

⁴ The Centre Cinématographique Marocain

knowledge functions as an ideology disseminated implicitly within content of Media (and more specifically entertainment discourses) to serve the interest of its monitors. These entertainment discourses are introduced to the audience without having an effect on the superior/inferior relations between the sublime authorities and the populace. In this sense, the state is constantly troubled by certain voices, especially those led by intellectuals, advocating freedom of expression as their motifs to claim, rather than just treading on the heels of the supreme power's pronouncements dictated by the governmental media. Likewise, the state is aware of the fact that legalizing a total freedom of expression is a release for vilifying the state's instructions. In support of this outlook, Carter states:

It was equally considered indispensable in free and democratic countries to safeguard the freedom of expression of filmmakers and the freedom of the film spectators. However, freedom of expression would also possibly mean the freedom to criticize, point out problems, or in the worst case to foment unrest in the population. (Carter 59)

For this reason, the state has adopted the strategy of persuasion instead of imposing orders on people; and has made media discourse a channel through which its interactions with people can be functioned, and, thus preserves its ongoing hegemony. Bernadette Casey, et al. have drawn an analogy between parents educating their progenies who choose between using a stick or using a carrot:

How much better for a parent to convince a child that it is only sensible to work hard at school to get on in life, than to beat them with a stick to make them do their homework. Parents could choose to do this (they are the 'dominant' group here, both physically and economically), but it is arguably

much more effective to use persuasion to get children to see things in the same way as themselves (and parents who are not seeing the value of formal education can be just as ‘successful’ in persuading their children that there is no point in bothering with schoolwork). In this example, hegemony can be seen as secured when parental (dominant) ideology becomes embedded in the consciousness of the children (the subordinate group). (Casey, Casey and Calvert 86)

In the same manner, the state as a sublime authority employs the politics of persuading people as the main approach for the success of its project of controlling people instead of implementing dictatorial governance. Besides, the state always resorts to the act of distracting and amusing people with festivals and spectacles for the sake of muffling its politics of hegemony. In this regard, through these entertainment discourses, people remain under control. In other words, these acts of amusements exposed in festivals and media are the main channels through which power is distributed in the society. Therefore, hegemony can be maintained as long as people continue to be subjects of the politics of persuasion and the politics of surveillance and as the state “succeed in framing all competing definitions within [its] range.” (Quoted in, Davis 84) From this point, media discourse proves to be an ideological institution that warrants the ongoing control of the state over the subject. The process of this media control runs in the name of providing people with space for promoting their own cultural meanings, whereas this promotion is already oriented by the system’s regulations that restrict these media discourses. The fact that entertainment discourses are mechanisms utilized for circulating popular culture among people and casting in media as politically pointed outlets presupposes an investigation of its industrial production that gives rise to an unseen disruption to people’s unconsciousness

that is constantly stormed and blocked up with false notions and ideas. This investigation is what the next section will get to grips with in order to question the assumptions and convictions that determine the processes of these cultural productions and the ways entertainment discourses contribute to instilling their meaning in societies and monitoring people's everyday life.

1.3 Popular Culture and the Commodification of Everyday Life

To better understand the process of controlling the individual through media outlets, as discussed in the previous section, this section is an attempt to investigate the ways this influence is operated through what is labelled as popular culture that has been shared and practiced largely by everyone and in everyday life. This investigation of popular culture is, in fact, a challenging enterprise for it is seen as “an empty conceptual category, that can be filled in with a wide variety of often conflicting ways, depending on the context of use.” (Storey 1) That is, popular culture is not an already existing category ready to be consumed by people, but it is rather a production of the effect of certain factors surrounding the individual’s daily life translated into a practice of everyday life. . In this regard, popular culture is produced and emanated from people and practiced by people to boot; it can be defined, in its broad sense as:

[...] the everyday culture of a group, large or small, of people. It is far more than entertainment, the electronic media, folk life, fast foods, fashions, Wall Street, the church, the educational system or the government. It is the way of life in which and by which most people in any society live.... It is the everyday world around us: the mass media, entertainment, diversions; it is our heroes, icons, rituals, everyday actions, psychology and religion — our total life pictures. (Browne 22)

From this quotation, the idea that might be articulated, both implicitly and explicitly, is that popular culture can be seen as an omnipresent and inescapable feature of social life practiced by ordinary people to express their culture in their own way. It might be understood that popular culture can be exercised in different ways due to people’s different

perceptions. In this regard, the institution of popular culture is based on the demands of the individual in their daily life to set up ways of understanding, producing, and consuming certain aspects of cultures.

Given the importance of popular culture is in our everyday life, it is necessary to determine and rethink how it has been altered through the shift of the individual's or group's interests and practices. These interests and practices explore the connection between producing and consuming ideologies, styles of life, social behavior, and speaking languages. In this sense, "these practices bring into play a "popular" ratio, a way of thinking invested in a way of acting, an art of combination which cannot be dissociated from an art of using." (de Certeau XV) That is to say, when people tend to consume whatever practice is in the air, they, knowingly or not, contribute to expanding the range of practices that the culture industry⁵ encompasses. By implication, culture industry becomes a fixed entity that absorbs any and every new aspect in life. Simply put, culture industry evolves along with everyday practices.

However, popular culture, especially in industrialized societies, has been marked by certain contradictions that make it subject to commercialization; simultaneously, it has to appeal to the needs of the *people*. This means that popular culture is not necessarily a byproduct of 'culture industry', but it remains that of people and not on the 'power block'. John Fiske clarifies this argument and stated:

⁵ This concept was first coined by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in their "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" contending that culture becomes industrialized and commodified to be employed by the capitalist to control the society and people's daily practices. (Adorno and Horkheimer)

Popular culture in industrial societies is contradictory to its core. On the one hand it is industrialized- its commodities produced and distributed by a profit-motivated industry that follows only its economic interests. But on the other hand it is of the people, and people's interests are not those of the industry. (Fiske 23)

That is, despite the fact that culture industry is a capitalist production meant to be consumed by people, this production is generated based on satisfying people's tastes and interests. In this sense, people, for John Fisk, become the active participants in the generation of culture by their own; he states, "popular culture is not consumption, it is culture- the active process of generating and circulating meaning and pleasures within a social system ... culture is a living, active process: it can be developed only from within, it cannot be imposed from without or above." (Fiske 23) Therefore, Fisk holds the responsibility for people's choice and declares:

The fact that the system provides only commodities, whether cultural or material, does not mean that the process of consuming those commodities can be adequately described as one that commodifies the people into a homogenized mass at the mercy of the barons of the industry. People can, and do, tear their jeans. (Fiske 25-26)

Concretely enough, the industry produces what people have already been appealed to in order to commercialize its products for the sake of the financial profits. Moreover, people have become themselves "the most important product of culture industries... to be sold to advertisers." (Fiske 26) That is, people are used to function as consumers and distributors, and even advertisers of the culture industry products. By employing these functions, the

individual, for John Fisk, “now becomes a producer, a producer of meanings and pleasures.” (Fiske 27) The role of the individual lies in the production, reproduction and then the circulation of meaning of their daily life. In this context, Fisk avers, “there are no consumers, only circulators of meaning, for meanings are the only elements in the process that can be neither commodified nor consumed: meaning can be produced, reproduced, and circulated only in that constant process that we call culture.” (Fiske 27) However, taking into account the previous remark that ‘culture industry evolves along with everyday practices’ questions the ways through which these processes of production, reproduction and circulation are operated. In this sense, unlike what Fisk tries to assert, people are not independent in their choices, but rather oriented to the production of these meanings through shaping their “taste”. Moreover, people’s tastes have been determined by certain categories like education and social class, as Theodor Adorno avers that the cultural needs and taste are the products of education and social origin, (T. W. Adorno 111)

Back to the industrialization of popular culture issue, unlike John Fisk, Adorno argues that popular culture is the reason for people’s passivity that determines “subjects as means of production and not as living purpose” and that the purpose of this cultural industrialization is to make people docile, manipulated, and make them content and passive. This commodity fetishism⁶, to use the Marxist adage, makes the consumer to be blind allegiance to the producer. What is more, the consumer becomes enthralled by the commodity itself.

⁶ This expression is coined by Karl Marx meaning that commodity is seen as the backbone of the capitalist societies instead of human labour. That is, commodities are given more value than those labours who contributed to the production of this object.

Based on what has been mentioned, Adorno tends to lay bare a foundation of haunting ideas of consumerism that lead to the manner wherein some people perceive and deal with their others. Clearly, manufacturing people's thoughts in a way that makes them believe in the superiority of their culture and the inferiority of others proves a helpful instance to the way cultures are being marketed especially in the bourgeoisie sites of "high culture", which indicates "the artistic and cultural expressions valued by a given society's elite, and as such frequently opposed to popular culture." (Bolaffi 62)

The bourgeois art, Adorno argues, "was bought from the outset with the exclusion of the lower class." (Adorno and Horkheimer 107) This exclusion, however, is not explicitly operated; on the contrary, it functions through the lower classes themselves who are oriented to give praise to the high culture at the expense of derogating of their own. Culture industry, in this sense, monitors "its consumers⁷ from above," (T. W. Adorno 98) thereby letting them serving to mime the culture industry that has categorized them, in the first place, as objects. In support of this contention, Adorno succinctly elucidates the idea that "the customer is not king, as the culture industry would have us believe, not its subject but its object." (T. W. Adorno 99)

In support of its existence and preserving, the culture industry does not only rely on making new customers who might not mind propagating its ways of life, but also turns people into 'reified commodities'. Adorno and Horkheimer assert in their "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" that:

⁷ People are consumers by nature, but they become producers through reproducing and circulating the cultural meaning of culture industry.

Existence in late capitalism is a permanent rite of initiation. Everyone must show that they identify wholeheartedly with the power which beats them...The eunuch-like voice of the radio crooner, the handsome suitor of the heiress, who falls into the swimming pool wearing his tuxedo, are models for those who want to make themselves into that to which the system breaks them... everyone can be happy if only they hand themselves over to it body and soul and relinquish their claim to happiness... Their lack of resistance certifies them as reliable customers.” (Adorno and Horkheimer 124)

This means that the individual has become merely a *subject* oriented to consume through daily contacts with the machinery of the culture industry and also an *object* for advertising its products. Clearly enough, the system of this industry adopts the strategy of *advertising through consuming* and makes the individual's function, modes of behavior and ways of operating in society as being schematized and regularized by its own parameter. Anyone who dares to oppose this regulation or schema is uninvited and left behind, as Adorno puts it: “the monopoly shuts its doors on anyone who fails to learn from the cinema how to move and speak according to the schema which it has fabricated.” (T. W. Adorno 92) In this regard, the consumers serve the aims of the culture industry and become its dynamic engine that gives it a sense of influence and affluence. Therefore, the masses, as Adorno verifies, “are not the measure, but the ideology of the culture industry.” (T. W. Adorno 99)

Adorno believes that popular culture epitomizes the power of the culture industry which is monitored by external forces. This reason his dissent against certain forms of popular culture, like Jazz. Robert W. Witkin confirms this idea through his inspection of

Adorno's repeated denial of claiming the positive side of jazz as a pop culture category.

Witkin states:

When Adorno rails against the products of the culture industry, against jazz and popular music, he is thinking of them in some such relationship to the individual, as manifestations of objective and external force, as oriented to the bringing about of affects in the body of the subject and as undermining the subject at the level of the latter's expressive agency. (Witkin 153)

Concretely enough, Adorno's most concern in his discussion is the divergence between "the individual freedom and societal constraint." (Witkin 150) That is, he is not against "jazz" as an art by itself, but he is against the ideologies that surround this art. For him, the culture industry disorients the real needs of the individual like freedom of expression and creativity and confines them by popular culture and commodity fetishism.

People assume that they are creative agents that contribute to the promotion of their cultures and beliefs through their provisions of certain meanings to these forms of culture; while they are merely objects to the culture industry and these meanings are already controlled and pre-produced. Normally, popular culture is thought to be for the people and by the people; but there are external forces that manipulate this fact and control people and their beliefs from within. That is, the culture industry has embedded certain agendas that leads to the programming of people's minds and making them abide by the system's regulations. Additionally, the culture industry convinces the public that there is always a change and development in the everyday life, and people have to keep up with this change,

while this change is itself programmed by certain agendas of the supreme power. Henri Lefebvre clarifies this point in his “The Everyday and Everydayness” and states:

The days follow one after another and resemble one another, and yet – here lies the contradiction at the heart of everydayness- everything changes. But the change is programmed: obsolescence is planned. Production anticipates reproduction; production produces change in such way as to superimpose the impression of speed onto that of monotony. Some people cry out against the acceleration of time, others cry out against stagnation. They’re both right. (Lefebvre 10)

Lefebvre’s point of view harmonizes Adorno’s enquiry about his theory of “mass deception” and the passivity of consumers who became central targets for the culture industry. Lefebvre has described the passivity of people as being “organized passivity”, which he explained as follows:

In leisure activities, the passivity of the spectator faced with images and landscapes; in the workplace, it means passivity when faced with decisions in which *the worker takes no part; in private life, it means the imposition of consumption, since the available choices are directed and the needs of the consumer created by advertising and market studies.* (Lefebvre 11) (My emphasis)

It is clear from this quotation that the needs of consumer are created by advertisement and their choices are already pre-programmed. However, this organized passivity, according to Lefebvre, differs from one person to another and weighs effectively on some people than

others. He states, “It weighs more heavily on women, who are sentenced to everyday life, on the working class, on employees who are not technocrats, on youth — in short on the majority of people — yet never in the same way, at the same time, never all at once.” (Lefebvre 11)

Lefebvre’s examples of the average of passivity are indicative of the ways the culture industry exerts its hegemony on people under the emblem of consent, which adjusts them to follow the orders of the authoritative system and which naturalizes these directions. Adriana Johnson has approached this concept of consent and certified its component parts in the following:

It is not simply a question of beliefs; rather, it concerns the way in which everyday material practices become naturalized, so that standing in line for a passport, going to school, acquiring a marriage certificate, affixing a number to one’s house, or measuring a pound of wheat become as ordinary or banal as sweeping the floor or eating bread. (Johnson 23)

The tendency towards the world being disciplined and secured paved the way for the culture industry to instill easily the ideological constructs into the heads of the ordinary people. In addition, the repetition process and sharing activity are both conducive to this fact of naturalizing or normalizing everyday material practices. Once more, Johnson has pondered over this line of thoughts more considerately and avers, “The tendency toward uniformity, iterability, and sameness with which daily life is now lived is, according to Lefebvre, a product of modernity.” (Johnson 23)

In this regard, the product of modernity can be understood as the key feature to the people's tendency to follow the culture industry's seductions, since modernity echoes a sense of affluence. Robert W. Witkin, once again, turns up to touch upon this issue of modernity in relation to the ways the culture industry designs its products so as to appeal to consumer's sensationism:

The emotional or sensuous life of the modern subject is seen as an impoverished reflex of this modernity, a kind of distractive and self-indulgent sensationism. The culture industries are then theorized as designing their products to appeal to this sensationism, to configure the desociated body of the subject in order to render it docile and susceptible to totalitarian organization. (Witkin 163)

This influence of people's sensationism is augmented by certain artefacts, like hair dress styles, choice of colors, and choice of catchphrases as ways to embellish the work of art generated by the culture industry to increase the number of the devotees of its products. These effects, underlined above, raise the question of the system through which people's needs, tastes and choices are constructed. Needless to say that media is the most influential and persuasive of all. Media, including all its forms, is the way through which all aspects of life are translated and exposed. Moreover, media have even influenced the production of meaning associated with the consumer's production, since media progressively invade the realm of culture and ideologies. In this line thought, Stuart Hall, quoted in Hebridge points out the effect of media on social relations and the construction of images in his "The Function of Subculture":

As social groups and classes live, if not in their productive then in their 'social' relations, increasingly fragmented and sectionally differentiated lives, the mass media are more and more responsible (a) for providing the basis on which groups and classes construct an image of the lives, meanings, practices and values of other groups and classes; (b) for providing the images, representations and ideas around which the social totality composed of all these separate and fragmented pieces can be coherently grasped. (Quoted in: Hebride 448-9)

In this regard, mass media is deemed to be the main outlet through which the life of people is shaped and reoriented in accordance to specific ideologies that become attributed to people's cultures and practices which are given, implicitly, importance and meaning. As Hall puts it, this meaning, becomes the means by which, "we grasp, in consciousness, how we live and what we practice." (Hall 322) The act of giving sense and meaning to people's practices is, Hall argues, "fundamentally to locate oneself and one's experience, one's conditions, in the already objectivated ideological *discourses*, the sets of ready-made and preconstituted 'experiencings' displayed and arranged through language which fill out the ideological sphere." (Hall 322)

Media, in this regard, might be considered, or it is, in fact, the mediator between the culture industry and the cultural practices in societies. That is, media leads to the progress and dynamic of the processes of commercializing, promoting and conveying cultural products from the culture industry to its consumers. This movement of the culture industry is, in fact, meant to serve the interest and the agenda of this industry through media. Media, therefore, is an ideological apparatus pregnant with the dominant groups' ideologies.

Subsequently, this culture industry does not simply cater for the needs of the people, but it also indoctrinates the individual subject. Adorno and Horkheimer have spoken clearly in support of this in their “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception”:

Those in charge no longer take much trouble to conceal the structure, the power of which increases the more bluntly its existence is admitted. Films and radio no longer need to present themselves as art. The truth that they are nothing but business is used as an ideology to legitimize the trash they intentionally produce. They call themselves industries, and the published figures for their directors' incomes quell any doubts about the social necessity of their finished products. (Adorno and Horkheimer 95)

Media, in this sense, is legitimized as a business that generates and operates the ideologies of “the people at the top”. The aim of these people is to impose their own culture on the ‘subaltern’, marked as being unrefined. These subtleties are diffused in the realm of media through different forms of discourses to reach the maximum audience through gaining people’s interest and generating different forms of social and cultural contact. In this context, media discourse conduces effectively to the installation and to the dissemination of this contact that is produced and reproduced by the culture industry in the name of entertainment and pleasure.

2. Comedy, Entertainment and Beyond:

2.1 Comedy and Ideology

The production of media discourse and the infusion of ideologies as being the prop of its foundation remain a truism and fundamental constituent on which any discourse is established. However, the incorporation of ideology as the basis of discourse production is not corresponding to reality. That is, the assimilation of ‘reality’ is not necessarily welded to a single perception that might be assessed as a mono-centric vision; whereas, in fact, reality has multidimensional perspectives that are determined by different positionalities and oppositionalities (Bhabha 82), to use Bhabha’s locution, through which ideologies have been generating different perspectives. This fusion between ideology and media discourse and this multiplicity of perspectives conduce to the perpetuation of unremitting power relation.

This spate of perspectives would not be widely disseminated without the intensity of media coverage that paves the way for the production of new different meanings. However, the production of these new meanings is not surely an outcome of an individual’s freedom of enunciation, and it is not certainly a by-product of the space given on media coverage for this free individual’s contribution; whereas, all these assumptions happen to be ideologically and culturally produced. That is, most people’s attitudes, beliefs, desires, behaviors, and tastes are products of the ideologies embedded within certain outlets, especially media discourse. In this regard, the individual’s partaking in the production of social meanings is fundamentally superintended by the “ideological State apparatus” (Althusser, *Ideology & Ideological State Apparatuses (notes towards an Investigation)*), to

use Louis Althusser's title, which might be summed up, in our context, as the all-pervading forms of media discourses whose leverage is ubiquitous.

In this regard, the concept of ideology has shifted from the mere vision that limits the concept to "the history of class struggles" to the all-pervading social patterns that exert influence on every part of society. Blommaert has stated that ideology "penetrates the whole fabric of societies or communities and results in normalized, naturalized patterns of thought and behavior." (Blommaert 159) Reaching the whole fabric of societies remains the main attribute of generating the media discourses based on different forms of social and cultural contacts that are produced and reproduced by culture industry in the name of entertainment and pleasure. Furthermore, entertainment and pleasure turn out to be a space for the individual's wallow in the consumption of the ideologies that are embedded within certain media outlets. Comedy discourse is held to be one of these outlets that contribute to the dissemination of some ideological values through their humorous and encoded articulations.

Some critics view this comedy articulation as an open outlet that tackles different issues without restrictions. For example, Celestino Deleyto has proclaimed this thought that estimates humor as "liberating and uplifting." He adds, "Through it, the ego refuses to suffer, and turns drawbacks and disappointments into an occasion for laughter, drawing pleasure from potentially experiences. For Freud not everybody is capable of humorous and pleasure. Humor is a rare and precious gift that is only bestowed on the minority. (Deleyto 179) In this regard, comedy is thought to be a positive aspect and a gift for the masses who are struggling to overcome and forget their daily sufferings in their society. In the same stream, Walter Benjamin and Rudolf Arnheim support this positive side of

comedy in their essay on Charlie Chaplin and announce that laughter is “most international and most revolutionary affect of the masses... Chaplin only makes us laugh. But apart from the fact that this is the most difficult thing to achieve, it is also the most important in a social sense.” (Benjamin) Comedy, therefore, implies a spontaneous and an essential voice of the ordinary people. Thus, it is worthy of solicitude by the authoritative system that zeros in, controls and monitors the societies. This fact is adequate propulsion for the state to make comedy an “ideological state apparatus”, to use Louis Althusser’s adage once more.

This ideological state apparatus might be conducted by free and independent actors or comedians, whereas, the ideologies voiced out on the stage are controversially controlled and administered by, what Althusser calls, “repressive state apparatuses”⁸ considered to be a threat that intimidates and pressurizes the freedom of expression. However, the comedian or the actor who is introduced to the audience as being free is, in fact, free only “within the boundaries of his beliefs, his emotions, his plan of existence and, in actuality, his own definition of liberty.” (Webster 87) Simply put, the comedian’s freedom is drawn within what he or she believes. Here, Webster’s idea seems to oppose the prior idea of Althusser’s “repressive state apparatuses” that questions the freedom of the comedian on the stage or the actor in film production; whereas as a matter of fact, the question of freedom which Webster raises is that which tries to reflect the original contribution of the actor/writer to the accomplishment of the repressive state apparatuses’ plan to disseminate the ideological state apparatus. Still, Webster believes that the outside effect on the actor/writer’s performance does not overwhelm the production of ideologies, whereas this performance depends basically on its creator. She states:

⁸ As examples of this repressive state apparatus, there are: prisons, courts, army, police, government, etc.

There is no such thing as literature without limitation, for the fundamental principles in the practice of any art are the preservation of the basic structure, the attainment of balance, the elimination of extraneous matter and the organisation of conception and execution towards the single end of a clearly defined artistic purpose. Just as a building can tower no higher than its steel framework dictates, so a book can encompass no more in matter, expression and style than is indicated by the original basic plan. *Thus we see that the writer's freedom of expression depends firstly upon the nature of his work, secondly upon the nature of his mind and only remotely upon any exterior limitations that it may be sought to impose upon him...* A Work of art, that is a *genuine* work of art, cannot actually be held responsible to anyone but its creator, to the mind out of which it is born. (Webster 87-88) (My emphasis)

In this regard, the condition of producing ideology oscillates between an inside responsibility of its creator and an outside pressure of the state's authority. In fact, both conditions are partly responsible for the production of ideologies that concomitantly affect the reproduction of discourse. The responsibility of the performer designates the social cognition of the everyday practice, since he/she is rated an essential social being. In the case of comedy discourse, the comedian merely reproduces the social activity through the act of imitating the experience of people in their daily life. Thus, the contribution of the comedian to the production of ideological discourse is limited within the replication of an already-consumed artefact.

This fact questions the freedom of production, which turns to be an act of consumption. That is, the comedian has become a consumer, for his/her belonging to a

consuming society and for his/her act of counterfeiting the everyday social activity that designates the absence of artistry and innovativeness. Jean Baudrillard has asserted this fact while approaching the ideology of competition by saying that “the ideology of competition, which under the sign of ‘freedom’ was previously the golden rule of production, has now been transferred entirely to the domain of consumption.” (Baudrillard 11) Therefore, the production of discourse is an already planned activity, since the act of consumption cannot be categorized as being independent. Baudrillard confirms this idea and states, “if we can still view consumption as an independent activity (*profession libérale*), allowing the expression of personal references, while on the contrary production appears to be quite definitively planned.” (Baudrillard 11)

Oscillating between the freedom of the performers to present their own ideas to their audience and their coercively compliant with the dictations of the regime interventions, the question of the performer’s agency still has more depth than that. From a psychoanalytical perspective, Slavoj Žižek⁹ thinks, “The ideological analysis always refers back to the extra-discursive, to practices that are mediated by, but not exhausted in language.” (García and Sánchez) In trying to elaborate on the extra-discursive elements shaping the whole scope of ideology, Žižek “characterises ideology (and its critique) as stemming from three basic moments: ideology in itself, as a series of ideas; ideology for itself, in its materiality (ideological State apparatuses); and ideology in and for itself, when it enters into operation in social practices.” (García and Sánchez) Žižek’s concern is the third moment of ideology when it becomes the hidden agent that regulates the course of action between the visible and the invisible, the imaginable and the unimaginable. That is, the production of ideology

⁹ A Slovenian philosopher, psychoanalyst and cultural critic.

in comedy discourse, thus, operates within tacit and confidential processes, while the audience of this entertainment outlet fails to recognize and provide different meanings other than the words that are exposed through the white teeth of the comedian. Furthermore, comedy, in this case, becomes the commodity fetishism that turns a blind eye on the ideological intent that is transformed into an invisible foundation of discourse functioning as an effective monitor that hypnotizes its spectators. This thought is what Žižek believes as Matthew Sharpe and Geoff Boucher confirm in their *Žižek and Politics: A Critical Introduction*:

We could develop a theory of enjoyment, arguing that, since the surplus enjoyment structured by social fantasy is conjured up by the social ideals that the ideology promotes, an analysis of social ideals *will yield the key to grasp the ways in which that ideology hooks subjects into it in unconscious fantasy*.

This is the path taken by Žižek. (Sharpe and Boucher 12) (My emphasis)

Simply put, the subject of ideology, according to Žižek, is attributed a phantasmatic niche in the symbolic world of the other, the object of ideology, and it is from this very space that the subject is accorded an identity and hence a vision of the world, which is by no means innocent but still partial. This understanding of the third moment of ideology for Žižek does not imply that the subject of ideology does not know about it. Rather, “ideology does not depend on the fact that in their praxis human beings do not know it (that they act in benefit of certain power groups) but they do it (Marx 41); it depends rather in the fact that they can know it perfectly well, but they act as if they did not know. Ideology in and for itself does not reside in *knowing* but in *doing*.” (García and Sánchez) Therefore, ideology is constituted in a phantasmatic space and circulated through a discourse of

comedy to postulate its effectiveness through the act of concealing the relations of domination. For Žižek:

The standard notion in regards of the functioning of fantasy within the context of ideology is that of a phantasmatic space that blurs the true horror of the situation. Instead of a true description of the antagonisms that cross our society, we allow ourselves a perception of society as an organic whole which remains unified due the forces of solidarity and cooperation. (Quoted in: García & Sánchez)

That is, the function of fantasy is to conceal the ideology disseminated through comedy ‘and create in lieu “the replacement of what it conceals.” (García and Sánchez) This alternative social reality created by fantasy leads to the recreation of ‘subject position’ that enables “the free floating subject to move from one identification to the other.” (García and Sánchez) In other words, this fantasy, according to Žižek, “teaches to us how to desire,” (Bjerre and Laustsen 39) the fact that compromises the insinuation of the political domination that shapes the subject’s tastes, needs and choices. The desire here is “socially structured, the subject must seek to fulfil its desire by becoming that which the other desires.” (Bjerre and Laustsen 39) This idea recalls, though it opposes it, the Althusserian reading of the ideological interpellation that drives the individual to appreciate ideologies, thereby transfer him/her into subject. For Althusser, “man is an ideological animal by nature,’ (Althusser 171) meaning that the individual is branded a natural blind subject to ideological call.

However, the idea is not quite the same as Žižek perceives it. For him, the subject is determined to be a void or a lack whose perceptions, attitudes, and desires have been

oriented in accordance with the authoritative mechanisms that administer the production of subjectivity. For Žižek, the function of ideology is “to suture that lack ... [that] exists in the structure that all the modes of subjectivation attempt to repress it or to fill it in.” (García and Sánchez) In other words,

The subject feels interpellated, but this feeling is always accompanied by another feeling that could be paraphrased as a ‘to do what?’ or even just ‘why?’... It is as if something is missing. As the mirror image already illustrates, there is also a fundamental impossibility in a mirroring – one never really sees ‘it all’: something always misses out. If I see my face in a mirror, my neck escapes me, and so on. It is this impossibility that keeps haunting the subject. It is as if there is a hidden subjective core that is left untouched by the interpellation. (Bjerre and Laustsen 44)

The subjectivity of the individual functions as a mirror that reflects some of its parts, while it conceals other parts. This fact does not entail calling a halt to the individual’s activity, but rather requires challenging the authority by “resisting the temptations of ideology and accepting the Real.” (Breger 84) As a reaction, Žižek avers that the individual should take step to get out of this subjectivity to avoid the ideological myopia that leads to what he calls “symbolic suicide.” Žižek states, “One must annul oneself as a subject” that is considered for him to be an act of a “symbolic suicide [that] suspends the performative force of words.” (Breger 84) Žižek’s point about resistance, here, is to “undo symbolic authority.” (Breger 86) For him, the resistance against this authority requires responding to it “in the same way Kant responds to the ‘mathematical antinomies’. That is, we should

resist by seeing these sublime objects ideologically.” (Sharpe and Boucher 79) For Kant, quoted in *Žižek and Politics: A Critical Introduction*:

As subjects, we can never know what Thing we are ‘in the Real,’ at the very point from whence we speak about, and perceive, the world. This is why each of us must seek clues to our identity in our social and political life, asking the question *che vuoi?* (what do you want?) of Others and shaping our desires, affects and beliefs around our suppositions concerning them. (Sharpe and Boucher 75)

Put in different words, “the task of philosophy for both Kant and Žižek is not to legitimize power, but to pose questions to it.” (Bjerre and Laustsen 39) The freedom of the individual, hence, is reflected in their capability to reject or traverse the ideological fantasies of the authoritative system that exercises its power through its institutional apparatuses. However, the State has different strategies, not that repressive though, for imposing its ideologies inside societies. In this sense:

Žižek here agrees with Michel Foucault’s famous insight that political regimes can never succeed by being solely repressive, or only ‘saying No’. They must also tacitly ‘say Yes’ to avenues and activities – such as humour, intoxicants, prostitution, clubs, bars, holidays and carnivals, sporting events and wars – wherein subjects are able to ‘let off steam’ and enjoy activities that are usually ‘off limits’, or not tolerated in public life. (Sharpe and Boucher 46)

In this regard, comedy remains one of effective outlets for the State through which ideologies can be circulated. Therefore, the State is aware of the effective way to make their ideologies accepted within a society. Comedy is used to be disliked by the authoritarian regimes for it has been the socially counter-argumentation to their ideological apparatuses and it is unavoidably seeps out political backgrounds, social principles and religious beliefs. The need to industrialize this outlet becomes necessary for the State to control people and their beliefs from within and make them abide by the system's regulations.

Back to our original discussion of the condition of producing ideologies, it has become clear enough that freedom of the comedian on the stage is itself constructed by the act of the foundational political order. Prozorov says in this context:

It would thus be entirely wrong to suggest that freedom is anti-political – on the contrary, what practices of freedom do is liberate the political from its confinement within sedimented and stratified forms of order that are in a strict sense made possible by a fundamental depoliticisation. (Prozorov 10)

Therefore, the question of freedom for the comedian “must precede any positive order of politics.” (Prozorov 10) Their so-called freedom of communicating the audience is rather a “negative liberty” established by a “liberal State.” (Prozorov 28) This fact prompts us to say that freedom of expression or rather the discourse produced on the stage by a comedian is moderated by the authoritative system concealing itself backstage to control the flow of the presented ideologies. This deduction echoes Žižek's approximation between the Althusser's “repressive state apparatuses” and Webster's ascription of responsibility to the creator of a work of art. Žižek's reading of ideology and subjectivity harmonizes these two

visions that attribute liability for the production of ideologies to both sides. Thus, this Žižekian approximation conduces to rethink the agency of the position of the comedian in the production of the given ideologies to society. In some societies, especially the ‘Third World’ like in Arab countries, some comedians are refrained from giving their shows due to their indomitable spirit to cross the limit of constructed freedom. This point questions the reason for permitting some other comedians to keep their engagement to their activities and convince the audience to accept them as successful comedy actors. Therefore, celebrating some comedians and disregarding others remain one of the State planning strategy to distribute effectively its ideologies through the outlet of entertainment. In this sense, the comedian, as it has been stated before, merely consumes the daily cultural practices and reproduces them in the system’s so requested and organized way that none of the audience could discern the possible ideological assumptions that are camouflaged within the entertaining discourse. In this regard, it would be fair-minded to draw the inference that the condition of producing and reproducing ideologies is prepared to be perceived as stemming from people and at the same time functioning against them. However, the question of resistance advocated by Althusser and Žižek functions as some kind of a “wake up call” (Schwarsmantel 143) for the subject to preclude the extension of this ascendancy of the sublime authority.

2.2 On the Production and Consumption of Comedy

As deduced from the previous section, mass media have swept its audience into becoming influenced by every single view or piece of information being disseminated through its outlet, be it through comedy, drama, action or any other form of expression. This situation has resulted in a confusion within the audience conception of truth, reality or objectivity. However, there is a consensus upon the fact that the audience has become mature enough to choose what to watch, listen to or believe. This rationality of audience triggers a new beginning to regarding the audience controllability of media imparted messages as an important issue to consider before going any further.

To reconsider the previous section view about the audience passivity, many writers have spilt much ink on the issue, among whom Jean Baudrillard features most and who denied any freedom of consumer's choice as he commented that the consumer as being "sovereign in a jungle of ugliness, where *the freedom of choice is imposed on him.*" (Baudrillard 39) The interference with one's choice is indeed the cardinal spirit of most Baudrillard's writings. He believes in the coerciveness being placed on the viewer of comedy. The consumption of whatever exposed in front of the viewers without filtration degrades them into a state of inertia. This fact is intriguing in that it implies the consumers' abject passive nature. The viewer becomes glued and immersed in the images and ideas promulgated on the screen. In this regard, he "takes an interior trip" that lapses him/her into unconsciousness and stagnation. Gary Genosko states in a comparative mode "this interior voyage of the central nervous system into the magnetic field gives television its communal flavor and puts it on a continuum with the psychedelic drug." (Genosko 87) The spectator, in this sense, becomes disoriented of what is scatter in front of his/her eyes and thrown into

the state of oblivion, when the question of discovering 'truth' does not matter, what matters is "remembering truth, recovering a truth which has been forgotten." That is, the spectator remains aware of his nature being during the process of consuming images and ideas promulgated in front of him, but s/he may not be aware of the unseen hands that produce these images and ideas. Michel Foucault has put this idea into the following words:

The subject doesn't forget himself, his nature, origin, or his supernatural affinity, but the rules of conduct, what he ought to have done... the subject is not the operating ground for the process of deciphering but is the point where rules of conduct come together in memory. The subject constitutes the intersection between acts which have to be regulated and rules for what ought to be done. (M. Foucault 34)

Being in the state of oblivion, the spectators turn out to be duped by media enjoyment. From a psychoanalytic perspective, this enjoyment is "what is 'beyond the pleasure principle'." (Sharpe and Boucher 7) That is, enjoyment for Žižek is horned in on political factor, but he avers that "there is no 'enjoyment as a political factor' without the fantasy of the 'theft of enjoyment', and, without enjoyment as a political factor." (Sharpe and Boucher 19) This political factor lies in the act of inculcating certain beliefs into the masses, viz. the idea that the more passive they are, the more secure they feel. Moreover, in media discourse, the political factor is patent in the performances that try to entertain people and provide quasi-joyful spectacles along with functioning without providing a space for the spectators to voice out their approval or disapproval. Their position is to listen and keep silent. However, this silence of the masses might hold a positive meaning; for example, Foucault considers the silence of the masses as a "positive condition for acquiring

truth.” (M. Foucault 32) For him, keeping silent should not be regarded as indicative of one’s weakness, but it is rather a chance to contemplate the world around, as he calls the individual to learn the art of listening and keep silent; he states:

The art of listening is crucial so you can tell what is true and what is dissimulation, what is rhetorical truth and what is falsehood in the discourse of the rhetoricians. Listening is linked to the fact that you're not under the control of the masters, but you must listen to *logos*. You keep silent at the lecture. You think about it afterward. This is the art of listening to the voice of the master and the voice of reason in yourself. (M. Foucault 32)

That is to say, being silent does not always hold the meaning of subjectivity, but it could be a source of power that may lead the individual to contemplating the discourses exposed in front of them and deciphering their meanings. In the same stream, Baudrillard believes that “by absorbing the simulations of the media, by failing to respond, the masses undermine the code... this position represents a new way of understanding the impact of media.” (Baudrillard 7) Mark Poster has made it explicit when he announced that “instead of complaining about the alienation of the impact of the media or the terrorism of the code, Baudrillard proposes a way out: silence.” (Baudrillard 7) Baudrillard declares that the spectators are transparent operators despite the fact that they are offstage; he states:

We are becoming not alienated, passive spectators, but interactive extras, the meek, freeze-dried extras in this immense reality show. This is no longer the spectacular logic of alienation, but a spectral logic of disembodiment; not a fantastic logic of diversion, but a corpuscular logic of transfusion, transubstantiation of each of our cells. An undertaking of radical deterrence

of the world, then, but from the inside this time, not from outside, as we saw in what is now the almost nostalgic world of capitalist reality. In virtual reality the extra is no longer either an actor or a spectator; he is off-stage, he is a transparent operator.” (Baudrillard 153)

What Baudrillard tries to do is invest “the silence of the masses with emphatic notions of refusal and resistance.” (Huyssen 14) The consumer, in this sense, is no longer in the state of inertia because of its silence, but this quietness conceals a real resistance of the masses that might erupt at any time. Baudrillard considers consumption as “an active form of relationship (not only to goods, but also to society and to the world), a mode of systematic activity and global response which founds our entire cultural system.” (Baudrillard 199) That is, the act of consumption is an act of silent resistance that interact with, not only “what is consumed” but with the society and the world as a whole. In the manner of being related to the same stream of thought, this silent consumer resistance might take different forms, among which, Michel de Certeau suggests an “activity of reading” which “has... all the characteristics of a silent production.” (de Certeau xxi) The act of reading is one of the forms of the silent forms of resistance that enhances what Foucault indicates as a “positive condition for acquiring truth.” (M. Foucault 32)

However, reading a book might differ from watching a movie. Books are typically categorized as items of information, but movies are usually portrayed as forms of entertainment. Thus, the consumption of the visuality might be reconstituted substantially by the economic interests and the political representations. That is, the function of the consumer cannot outstrip the traditional law that regulates the consumption of the individual. In this regard, the consumer is left without the right to be presented as an active

consumer. Therefore, what the individual consumes is what delineates his/her activity and his/her “passivity”. For example, social networks, viz. YouTube, Wikipedia and Facebook, are forms of revolutionary media that “provide a striking illustration of the oft-suggested blurring of the distinction between (media) producer and (media) consumer.” (Örnebring 771) Örnebring in his essay: “The Consumer as Producer —Of What?” states that the users of these forms of new media are “invited to create their own movie trailer, their own blog, their own comedy video, submit their own news, etc.c. under the auspices of an established media organization, most often via the website of that organization.” (Örnebring 771) This invitation provides a space for the consumer to react, comment, communicate, articulate, participate, and in one word to *produce*. However, Örnebring has asked some questions of great importance about what is produced and how it is consumed. He asked, “What types of content are being produced? Does the blurring of the producer-consumer represent a real shift in power away from traditional media/news organizations, or is the rise of UGC¹⁰ just a way for newspapers to get content produced “for free”?” (Örnebring 771)

In an attempt to answer Örnebring’s questions about the types of content being produced for the consumer society, comedy shows or movies— as forms of media entertainment— are rated as effective entertainment outlets that provide their audience a limited space where they can listen but may not react. It has become a protocol and an accepted behavior that being in front of the stage or at the local cinema requires complete attention and absolute silence. This fact turns out to be reasonable and practical behavior to arrange the atmosphere of listening to the speaker. The active side of the consumers, in this sense, seems to be temporarily deactivated, for they are in the latent state where they

¹⁰ He means by UGC : User-Generated Content.

cannot be heard over the hubbub of comedy spectacles. That is, these forms of media discourse are meant *not* to be interrupted by opposite sides, but they function as forms of integration through which the active voice of the consumer is refrained by the system of exclusion in charge of producing these spectacles. To better understand this relation between media entertainment and its consumer, the users of social network— a form of online media entertainment— are assessed as consumers whose contribution to the system of production oscillates between the attainability of space of communication and the stipulations of the system that restrict their freedom of choice. For example, Facebook users may react to certain events and to some ideas that are disseminated on their sphere, but they cannot go beyond the stipulations of ‘commenting’, ‘liking’, and ‘sharing’. That is, Facebook is more about content sharing than content creation, it is more about commenting within a limited friend list than engaging their thoughts within a larger spectrum.

In the same context, Örnebring has differentiated between two types of production processes: “The first, “production for use”, where consumers produce goods and services for their own personal use; the second, customization and customer involvement in a production process although on the whole controlled and managed by someone else.” (Örnebring 773-774) The first reason of production is categorized as a personal economic interest. The second is an example of what has been a discussion on the use of Facebook. Furthermore, this discussion about consumers as producers brings into the forth the fact that the authorities have adopted another effective strategy that enables people to move from passivity to participation to keep the ongoing effect of consumption. The latter is deemed to be an inevitable right of people that becomes the central interest of the government’s responsibilities, as it has been discussed meticulously in the “The Subject and the State’s Media Surveillance” chapter, maintain its grip over others. The State, in this

sense, is engaged in the process of “making the consumer” through adopting a strategy of, to use Baudrillard’s words, freeing the “energy of the mass in order to fabricate the ‘social.’” (Baudrillard 25) This fabrication of society is regulated by the system and assembled by the energy of the masses, since “the release of energy is the actual form of the present system, the strategic floating of value.” (Baudrillard 124) Baudrillard considers active consumers and their participation as already produced and oriented by the system itself; he states:

The system can be connected and disconnected: all energies released will eventually return to it, because it is the system that has produced the very concept of energy and intensity. Capital is an energetic and intense system. Thus, it becomes impossible to distinguish (Lyotard) the libidinal economy from the system's economy (that of value). (Baudrillard 124)

However, Baudrillard has pointed at a glimmer of hope likely to help escape from the grip of the system and maintain the societal values. He has stated that “the system is the master: like God, it can bind and unbind energies; but what it cannot do (and also what it cannot escape), is to be reversible. The process of value is irreversible. Only reversibility then, and not release or drift, is fatal to the system.” (Baudrillard 124) This reversibility implies the opposite position of the values instilled by the system inside society and which restrict the freedom of the system’s operations. In this regard, “All the hypotheses of manipulation are reversible in an endless whirligig. For manipulation is a floating causality where positivity and negativity engender and overlap with one another; where there is no longer any active or passive.” (Baudrillard 174) Baudrillard, however, articulates that the state has a way out to save its political reality through the adoption of the technique of

“simulation;”¹¹ he states, “it is by the simulation of a conventional, restricted perspective field, where the premises and consequences of any act or event are calculable, that a political credibility can be maintained.” (Baudrillard 174) That is, the act of consumption has shifted from its traditional form of “I buy, I consume, I take pleasure,” (Baudrillard 91) to its political engagement of “I vote, I participate, I am present, I am concerned.” (Baudrillard 91) The consumer has been invited “to participate, to simulate, to play with the models — they go one better: they participate and manipulate so well that they efface all the meaning one wants to give to the operation and put the very infrastructure of the edifice in danger.” (Baudrillard 66) Through its participation, the consumer has been convinced of their active role in the society that s/he takes part in the responsibility to enhance the social values and abide by its discipline. In this sense and after a long exposition to this hiatus, the consumer makes an advance by creating a space of participation through which s/he develops his or her apperception of the worth of his/her existence as a member of society. However, this belief is still an already-oriented principle, and consumers become victims of this “simulation” that makes them ensnared in the complexities of the system’s manipulations and politics.

Taking into account this convoluted politics of the system and harking back to Baudrillard and Foucault’s counselling and urging to face the alienation of media and react to the voice of the master, the “silent” position remains, as Baudrillard defends, an effective strategy that “represents a new way of understanding the impact of media,” (Baudrillard 7) and becomes, as Foucault asserts, a “positive condition for acquiring truth.” (M. Foucault

¹¹ The concept is already explored in “The Visuality and Beyond Reality” chapter.

32) The consumers, who feel unable to play the role of organic intellectuals¹², are instructed to keep the position of dumbness and uncommunicativeness, but not for the sake of quietness, but to acquire the art of listening as Foucault states: “this is the art of listening to the voice of the master and the voice of reason in yourself.” (M. Foucault 32)

However, approaching it from a postcolonial perspective, the culture of silence is met with a sharp rebuff from some critics, who believe that what preoccupies the authorities is to silence rather than to rehabilitate, and that the masses have to resist this silencing intent of the system. Edward Said, in the same line of thought, has castigated intensely this silencing intent in one of his interviews when he states, “what it does do, in fact, is to interest more people in my work and my writing. That’s the way I respond to them, by producing more. *I think what they want is my silence. Unless I die, it’s not going to happen.*” (Said and Barsamian 82) (My emphasis) For Said, the colonizer as the authoritative system is both instilling its ideologies and its power within the *silent* colonized societies and implicitly through its textual and visual discourses. For this reason, Said has urged the intellectuals to “challenge and defeat both an imposed silence and the normalized quiet of unseen power wherever and whenever possible.” (Said 31) The aim of the intellectuals, in this sense, is to seek the dismantling of this silencing process and strive for the inclusion of those silenced masses to defeat this silent power.

Yet again from the postcolonial perspective, the position of the masses has undertaken a different position characterized by its mobility instead of stagnating. The masses or the postcolonial subjects have to “initiate action in engaging or resisting imperial

¹² This concept is coined by the Italian philosopher, Antonio Gramsci, as opposite to the traditional intellectuals. The concept “organic intellectuals” refers to those who speak of the interests of the working classes and aims at dismantling the hegemonic ideologies and ambitions.

power.” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 8) This action is what forms a resistant position that enhances the degree of immunity against the manipulation and the already alluded convoluted politics of the system that are translated into societies through conservative social discourses, like comedy.

The discourse of humor is a subversive outlet that might either establish power and reinforce its structures or function as an outlet for questioning these dominant ideologies. In this context, unlike the culture of silence, the culture of resistance may function as an effective response to the manipulations of the system. This resistance remains the only possible course of action to take stand against the act consumption, since the ostensible integration of the consumers in the production process confine them to be under the surveillance of the system, which affects the contributions of the consumers in society. That is, what is supposed to be the interaction and the contribution of people, be they their comments on social networks post, their filming recordings, and in general, their circulating information, require much revision and modification before distributing them. This stream of thoughts recalls Michel Foucault’s connection between power and knowledge that Edward Said has made use of in his analysis of the conflict between the Orient and the Occident. Said considers the East (Orient) as being represented as inferior to the West (Occident). This representation is shaped in discursive formation, to use Foucault adage, where power is operating.

In sum, the struggle between the individual as a consumer and the state as a political system is in fact a struggle over power and knowledge that informs the politics of inclusion and exclusion through diffusing the ideologies within textual and visual discourses to force the masses to function against their wishes and desires. As a reaction, the postcolonial

theorists have upheld the culture of resistance to dismantle this power relation and urged the masses to redefine the oppressive practices to move from silence voices and provide a space for themselves within the occupied arena where the political system is operating and disseminating its ideologies.

2.3 Comedy Representation and Power / Knowledge Contestation

The debate over binary divisions and their (ir) relevance to the understanding of the nature of some types of comedies has prompted further investigations and inquiries. Historically, the inscription of the discourses that differentiate between Self and Other was nowhere in the world as strongly demonstrated as in the European and later in American culture. Comedy, as a social form of entertainment, has apparently become an outlet through which the question of subjectivity construction has been leading the ground too. As it has been discussed in “Comedy and Ideology” section, the “Self” has been integrated into the phantasmatic and symbolic world of the “Other”, from which the Self still seeks identification and thus an accrued value to that of its Other. By this token, the symbolic network of fantasies that the world of the “other” offers to the “self” gives a leeway to ideology to reign and fills the lack residing in the identity of the self. Therefore, the identity of the self is sutured from the phantasmatic world of the other

This cultural binarism (taking the Self and Other as its main area of instigation) was a historical juncture that marks the onset of constituting the so-called ‘Third World’ as Other (Bulbeck). This construction of ‘otherness’ is, in a way or another, a struggle over identity that “can no longer be seriously considered outside the politics of representation.” (Giroux 202) The function of these representations is to legitimate and naturalize this struggle, which reflects the production and the reproduction of the ideology of opposition. This opposition is situated within the spectrum of the Self which always aspires to have an elevated stance vis-à-vis its denigrated Other.

In support of this latter idea, Kellner Douglas considers the question of representation a reproduction of existing struggles between the represented and the

presenter (Kellner 56). In other words, “the gap between representation and represented becomes the locus of inherent political struggles over meaning on the “contested terrains.”” (Pötzsch 77) Such political struggle between the representor and represented (or call it the representational struggle between the Self and Other) is the thrust of which the Self tries to render the Other subservient in a symbolic network of identification which mostly relies on ‘objective’ knowledge to achieve power ends. This debate over the construction of otherness relaying on knowledge and its relation to power has been the locus of concentration in many literary canons, such as those of Michel Foucault, Edward Said and Homi K. Bhabha, to mention but the most pertinent.

For Michel Foucault, the relation between knowledge and power is firmly stemmed from the historical struggle and progress. He states that he “was working on a ‘genealogical’ history of knowledge. But the true motivating force was really this problem of power;” (Foucault and Trombadori 145) which means that, this relation between power and knowledge proves to be intertwined in the Foucauldian stream of thought. Both, for him, lead to the same end; that is to say, working on historicizing the notion of knowledge is tantamount to working on the power relations that govern the dissemination of this same knowledge.

Power, for Foucault, can be detected in every discourse, as he declares, “Power is everywhere.” (Foucault and Rabinow 283) In this regard, comedy discourse, as one of these discourses through which power can be woven, may conduce to the generation of, to use Bakhtin’s terminology, polyphony of voices (Bakhtin) that interact with one another in an attempt to assert a fixed hegemonic conception of the Self in contrast to a negotiated construction of the Other. That is to say, the production of knowledge in comedy discourse

remains subject to the interference of different authoritative institutions that represent the position of power. This act of taking advantage of authority to disseminate knowledge aims at taking steps to entrench people in a “regime of truth” (Foucault and Trombadori 18) to restrain societies within adhered rules, beliefs, values, and morals. In this sense, the role of comedy discourse, like any other discourse, is to instill the code of belief or the ideology of this regime of truth. Truth, in this instance, cannot be situated outside the system of power, but for Foucault, it is more than that:

The important thing here, I believe, is that truth isn't outside power, or lacking in power: contrary to a myth whose history and function would repay further study, truth isn't the reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (M. Foucault 131)

This also means that the production of truth is highly influenced by power relations, as Foucault has affirmed, “The important thing here, I believe, is that truth isn't outside power or lacking in power.” (Foucault and Faubion 131) These power relations resort to media outlets as an instrument for the exercise of power whose interest in knowledge

production is inextricably linked to politics. Truth, thus, can be perceived as a relative entity that cannot be separated from the practice of power relations serving the interest of its powerful producers. Being annexed to power, truth is perceived as having the quality of credibility that lends credence to its producers' claim. Michel Foucault concern is about the role of power relations with discourse to the construction of knowledge whose claims "are incontrovertibly part and parcel of the implicit design of this relationship involving both the pattern of discourse and the relations of power." (Schneck 22) That is, Foucault perceives that claiming knowledge is associated with constructing reality discursively and violently; he has stated:

We must not imagine that the world turns toward us a legible face which we would only have to decipher; the world is not the accomplice of our knowledge; there is no prediscursive providence which predisposes the world in our favor. We must conceive discourse as a violence we do to things... (M. Foucault 67)

Foucault avers that the pattern of discourse nowadays aims at imposing discursively a kind of discipline to regulate human statements, which ironically reflects the "realities of dominance and repression existing in current relations of power." (Schneck 20) This dominance is not operated in a strict manner but through tacitly instilling certain rules that delineate what is 'true' and what is marked as 'untrue'. Mathew Raden has insisted on this point when states, "there are social constraints which define what is rational and socially acceptable." (Raden 455) Therefore, knowledge disseminated among people is meant to perform the function of inculcating people with the order of discourse and authorizing the exercise of power of the State. Foucault avows, "Every point in the exercise of power is a

site where knowledge is formed. Conversely every established piece of knowledge permits and assures the exercise of power.” (M. Foucault 62) People, in this regard, are constructed by the rules of discourse that aim at establishing or changing the social world order.

However, unlike Foucault, who perceives the existence of power inside the discourse, Seumas Miller in his controversial article titled “Foucault on Discourse and Power” claims that all the theorists who support Michel Foucault perception of discourse and power relations are victims of “debonair mystification” and that sticking to the same way of thinking of their predecessor is “itself and ‘effect’ of power.” (Miller 118) For Miller, theorists should eliminate the idea that “there is *nothing* that is *not* power.” (Miller 120) Such theorists for Miller “have allowed themselves to be dazzled by the glamour of the notion itself.” (Miller 124) As a result, they have not made any effort to question and investigate the origin and the foundation of power. For him, this easy acquiescence to others’ stream of thoughts conduces to the restraining of some conceptions and makes their perception undifferentiated and ubiquitous. He states that:

Just as the Althusserians would have us believe that everything is somehow ideology, so the discourse power theorists see power as characteristic and indeed constitutive of everything. The result of this undifferentiated and ubiquitous conception is that the notion of power loses all explanatory force since on this account there is *nothing* that is *not* power. (Miller 120)

Power, in this sense, might not exist in certain phenomena, unlike the Foucauldian vision which sees power as an omnipresent practice in society. Miller elaborates his point more thoroughly and states:

Being someone's sister is not essentially a power relationship, though the gender roles assumed in many families may have the consequence that sisters compete with one another and seek to exercise power over one another in certain limited ways. Again, take the example of relationships of love. Here once again, there may be elements of dominance and submission, but to say that X loves Y does not necessarily entail that X dominates, or is dominated by, Y; nor would the notion of power permit anything like a comprehensive account of the relationship of love.” (Miller 120)

Miller’s point is not to gainsay the fact that the value of power is rated as a social phenomenon, but to avow the fact that power could be ‘something’ but ‘not everything’ and ‘not everywhere’. For him, there are certain occasions when social life can be perceived without, under no circumstances, appealing to the notion of power. Miller’s purpose is, in short, to dismantle the omnipresence of power as defined by Foucault: “power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere.” (M. Foucault 93)

Edward Said, in this sense, has undertaken the same line of thought that Miller tries to propound and limited the Foucauldian strategies within the areas of cultural and historical studies that takes the position that is at variance with Western hegemony and the production of knowledge. However, Said’s works cogitate about Foucault’s notions of power and knowledge as the foundation of all forms of Western hegemony. Moreover, Edward Said’s theory is not merely circumscribed by Foucault’s notion of “discourse”, which shakes up, perfectly and convincingly, the objects of truth, but he is equally influenced by Louis Althusser’s notion of “ideology” that is rated as the embodiment of

beliefs and the Gramscian use of the concept of “hegemony” that implies the domination of one class over others. These lines of thoughts are the nexus of Said’s theory that might briefly imply the examination of Western “discourse” that zeroes in on disseminating “ideologies” that conduce to the “hegemonic” domination of the West over the East that is transformed into a discursive Orient.

In this regard, Edward Said is in accord with Foucault about the commitment not to find power outside the scope of discourse, not to reduce discourse to a merely former of meaning but also to perceive it as the constructor of power. In an attempt to understand this discursive practice, Said differentiate between two basic strategies: “strategic location” and “strategic formation”. For Said, these two devices are important, in the sense that they help the reader to approve or disapprove, adopt or dismantle the ideologies imbedded within any discourse. The “strategic location”, refers to the position of the author/creator of the discourse. Despite the fact that it is repudiated by many critics such as Ronald Barthes, who announced the “death of the author,” Edward Said regards the context of the author as being of the essence to manifest the inserted ideologies infused within their discourses. In addition, the “strategic formation” defined as “a way of analyzing the relationship between texts and the way in which groups of texts, types of texts, even textual genres, acquire mass, density, and referential power among themselves and thereafter in the culture at large.” (Said 20) Moreover, Said’s argument is not merely restricted to the political circumstances of the “text” and the “author” but also involves the influencing factors of the “reader” to investigate his/her agency, which promotes differences and oppositions that qualify him/her in enhancing or dismantling this ideological apparatus.

Practically speaking, Edward Said tries to construct “Orientalism” as a discourse through placing his thoughts within Foucault’s theory to examine how the West is adroit at managing—and even producing— “the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.” (Said 3) That is to say, the discourse of Orientalism” is controlled by the “distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological text.” (Said 12) For Said, the Orient is constructed as a negative inversion of Western culture in order to establish what it is to be Western. He has noted that the Orient is perceived as “an integral part of European *material* civilization and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles.” (Said 2) Like Foucault, discourse for Said is a historical object that can be inspected to understand the modes of how discourse is established and how it contributes to the foundation and identification of culture and society. This understanding helps to divulge the processes through which power is operated to control society and instill its culture.

However, Said opposes Foucault in terms of the source of this power. Clearly, Foucault considers power as separated from the institution while Said counters this idea. This Saidian opposition marks a notable appendage in his theory, since he believes that colonialism has been the responsible for exerting hegemony, subjugating and dominating the colonized people. This sense of extensive authority springs from the fact of having knowledge about the victim as Bill Ashcroft has unfolded:

The most formidable ally of economic and political control had long been the business of 'knowing' other peoples because this 'knowing' underpinned imperial dominance and became the mode by which they were increasingly persuaded to know themselves: that is, as subordinate to Europe. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1)

By analogy, comedy or rather entertainment discourse is looked on as a "strongly bounded area of social knowledge... within which the world can be known," (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 70) and whose function was one of the "major means of censuring the powers that be, political as well as religious." (Oesterheld 85) It remains a demanded discourse for the West for it incorporates implicitly a "strongest possible contrast and satirical effect." (Oesterheld 69) Thus, this means of communicating the social knowledge in an entertaining manner preoccupies the authoritative systems that have yearned for restricting it through institutionalization. For Edward Said, this kind of discourse gains its power by the fact of being institutionalized. This is what strengthens its function to bridge more effectively power and knowledge. This kind of discourse, for Said, should be read contrapuntally so as to unravel the hidden colonial implications and to draw the pre-planned attention to the effects of colonization on discourse production. This Saidian "contrapuntal reading" is a form of deconstructive reading that demonstrates the extent to which the text/discourse divulges its colonialist ideologies and contradicts its essentialist assumptions. In his definition to the concept of contrapuntality, Said states,

In practical terms, 'contrapuntal reading' as I have called it means reading a text with an understanding of what is involved when an author shows....Contrapuntal reading must take account of both processes, that of

imperialism and that of resistance to it, which can be done by extending our reading of the texts to include what was once forcibly excluded.” (Said 66-67)

This reading remains one of the intellectual’s tasks “to unearth the forgotten, to make connections that were denied.” (Said 22) Moreover, the purpose behind the act of rereading the Western discourse that Said considers another task of the intellectual is as he states an “effort to break down the stereotypes and reductive categories that are so limiting to human thought and communication.” (Said xi)

The most disturbing question, however, is the identification of this intellectual who can be described as such. For the Italian Philosopher Antonio Gramsci, there are two types of intellectuals: *Tradition intellectuals* and *Organic* ones: the first type embraces “teachers, priests, and administrators, who continue to do the same thing from generation to generation;” (Said 4) while the second type is what Gramsci defines as “the capitalist entrepreneur creates alongside himself the industrial technician, the specialist in political economy, the organizers of a new culture, of a new legal system, etc.” (Gramsci 4) This second type, for Gramsci, strenuously engaged in society and “constantly struggle to change minds and expand markets ... [and] are always on the move, on the make;” (Said 4) while on the contrary, he considers “teachers and priests...seem more or less to remain in place, doing the same kind of work year in year out.” (Said 4)

The Indian thinker Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan¹³ has also celebrated this Gramscian vision of the intellectual while he castigates Foucault for the same point. He

¹³ A professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of California, he is rated as one of the leading postcolonial theorists and literary critics in the United States.

states in his comparative essay “Toward an Effective Intellectual: Foucault or Gramsci” that “Foucault and Gilles Deleuze announce the death of representation and the total obsolescence of the cadre known as the ‘intellectual’.” (Radhakrishnan 66) He adds, “What is particularly significant in the conversation between Deleuze and Foucault is the necessary connection between the ‘end of representation’ and the celebration of the knowledge that the masses produce without the help of the intellectual.” (Radhakrishnan 67) Radhakrishnan lambastes Foucault’s discourse for it “ends up privileging ‘what is said’ without raising the question of ‘who is speaking’.” (Radhakrishnan 69)

Seen from a different perspective, Radhakrishnan states, following Gramsci’s emphasis that producing knowledge to generate a change in society, “Change is to be produced through critical consciousness and a critical knowledge of these relationships.... For Gramsci, ‘man’ is what man *does*, and what man *does* is the active realization of changing complexes of relationships.” (Radhakrishnan 84) Every man, in this sense, is responsible for generating this change in society, as Gramsci already noted in his *Prison Notebooks*, “all men are intellectuals, one could therefore say: but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals.” (Gramsci 9) Those who can act the part of the intellectual performer in society are the traditional intellectuals and organic ones mentioned above. The problem for Gramsci with the role of these intellectuals lies in “the loss of contact between the mass and the intellectuals.” (Radhakrishnan 90) Clearly, the masses do not need theories of mediation and the intellectuals should not be living in ivory towers; what is needed is to give a voice to the subaltern to speak instead of being spoken for. For Radhakrishnan, this is the exact difference, between Foucault and Gramsci. “Unlike Foucault and Deleuze, who speak about subaltern reality from without, Gramsci voices this reality from within.” (Radhakrishnan 90) Like Radhakrishnan, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

has lambasted Foucault and Deleuze's inattention to the role of ideology in the reproduction of power relations between West and the rest of the world and their speaking about the subaltern from without. For her, the claim that the intellectuals are representing the subaltern is a trumped-up story while, in fact, they convince the subalterns that they "cannot represent themselves; they must be represented." (Spivak 71) She continues to clear up by saying that "their representative must appear simultaneously as their master, as an authority over them, as unrestricted governmental power that protects them from the other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above." (Spivak 71) This argument gets us back to our original discussion of the conception that "those who have power have control of what is known and the way it is known, and those who have such knowledge have power over those who do not." (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 72) On this occasion, the subalterns have identified an unexpected opponent that is supposedly vindicating their rights. That is, the colonial authority is aware of the role of the intellectual and their influence in society. Thus, it is only to be expected that the intellectuals themselves should be institutionalized and their role be restricted. This fact is the ground on which Gramsci divided the types of the intellectuals and forced the emergence of the "organic intellectuals". Radhakrishnan has alluded to this point in the following quote, "how to organize, persuade, and represent were concerns that were always uppermost in Gramsci's theory; and it is in response to these concerns that Gramsci raises the question of the 'organic intellectual and his or her capacity to elaborate 'hegemony'." (Radhakrishnan 85)

The organic intellectual, however, might face the problem of freedom and the issue of independent thinking. Many organic intellectuals are deprived from playing their role in society, since the authority imposes a media blackout that keeps them out of the state of providing their unobstructed views. This kind of intellectuals is excluded for their

principles and their refusal to lend their hand to the authorities and participate in maintaining the ongoing practice of hegemony over the subalterns. Mehdi Menjra could be rated as the best example of this type of intellectuals in Morocco. The organic intellectuals, therefore, stand between two choices without the option of a fine: (i) employing their intelligentsia against the authoritative system and end up suffering from exclusion and blackout living on the margin of society or (ii) complying with the authorities and, thus, become institutionalized to practice the traditional role as intellectuals perpetuating the system's interests.

In fact, the question of intellectual activity “needs to be seen as partly inaugurated by what Stuart Hall calls Bhabha’s ‘symptomatic’ mode of re-reading.” (Byrne 73) The reason of the ongoing subalternity resides in ascribing other’s victimization to a merely focus on the analysis of power and domination. Unlike Edward Said, Homi Bhabha refuses to focus on his reading of colonial discourses on the question of binarism, since it affixes the superiority/inferiority relationships and conduces to the continuous process of colonial power. Bhabha has asserted the need to go beyond this binary division between the colonizer and colonized and zero in on the prominence of “cultural difference” that opens up “new ways of identifying rather than ossifying and caricaturing cultures into archaic models of identification.” (Byrne 133) He considers this cultural difference as “inimical to binary boundaries: whether these be between past and present, inside and outside, subject and object, signifier and signified.” (Bhabha 251) Moreover, Bhabha has gone beyond the perception of colonial discourse, unlike Said who perceives it as an instrument of power, but rather he sees this discourse as “*compelled* to be ambivalent because it never really wants colonial subjects to be exact replicas of the colonizers — this would be too threatening.” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 13) This ambivalence also operates from the

colonized side; these colonial subjects might be “‘complicit’ and some are ‘resistant’; ambivalence suggests that complicity and resistance exist in a fluctuating relation within the colonial subject.” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 12-13) In this regard, Bhabha considers the question of resistance as an “effect of an ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference and reimplicate them within the deferential relations of colonial power.” (Ashcrof, Griffiths and Tiffin 33)

From these Bhabhaesque conceptions that attempt to reread the colonial discourse far from being simply an instrument of power, one might conclude that the question of resistance is debilitated by some intellectuals who are accused for their complicity with the colonial authorities. In this regard, the focus is to be oriented towards the autonomy of the subaltern to speak for themselves dismantling the canonized discourses. The subaltern does not need the mediation of theories or intellectuals to speak with power. They need to be given a space to deconstruct the ideologies that are produced by the dominant groups— the real operators of discourses mostly categorized in the postcolonial theory as one-sided. Bill Ashcroft states that, “the existence of post-colonial discourse itself is an example of such speaking, and in most cases the dominant language or mode of representation is appropriated so that the marginal voice can be heard.” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 219)

“When someone feels that his language is despised, his religion ridiculed and his culture disparaged, he is likely to react by flaunting the signs of his difference.”

(Amin Maalouf 36)

”في رأس أبي...كان يعيش الشعر الأسود..

يوم أتاه الشعر الأبيض..

لم يُقتل أو يُطرد..

لكن لما ازداد الأبيض يومًا..

طرد الأسود! ” (Ahmed Mattar: From “White & Black” poem)

3. Conceptualizing Visual Culture and the Effect of Entertainment

3.1 Identity Formation and the Question of Difference

Every society zeroes in on establishing its determined identity and struggles for perpetuating its own difference, which it eulogizes, cherishes and venerates. This concept of identity, considered as an encompassing one in that circumscribes a number of features seen as a taken-for-granted common sense among the same community. This belief provokes the need for people to “belong” and establish a sense of affiliation to a specific culture, since identity is what delineates the commonality of some features and characteristics of some people and their differences from others. With this picture in mind, one might say that identity is either given or simply inherited within a society one is born into. However, in a globalized world, human identification has become a construction characterized by mobility and flexibility. That is, the question of fixed identity has become

increasingly implausible and unjustifiable; while the idea of mobile and flexible identity has become a catch phrase and a widespread slogan. In this sense, identity is continually redesigned to make a new social surface in order to meet the requirement and satisfy the demands of the new social changes.

Because of the fact that identity is restyled, the mechanisms and the processes are equally changed. In this sense, Media, one of these mechanisms and processes, remains effective and has a potency on its audience to borrow and construct their sense of identity. Indubitably, people in every spot of this world spend several hours of visual pleasure and visual display, be it on television, the internet or reading magazines. This fact crystalizes Media as the virtual source that constructs and reconstructs the outside and inside scope of human identification. Media effect has therefore shifted the perception of identity from its quality of being fixed and solid to the one becoming more mobile, miscellaneous, personal, and subject to change and innovation. (Kellner 231) In this sense the media has contributed to the formation of multiple identities leading to an identity crisis epitomized in a person loses his/her sense of “personal sameness and historical continuity.” (Quoted in, Friedman 159) This crisis is generated by a passive absorption that makes the individual “black box” absorbing every detail of the performed cultural image and its accompanying attitudes.

In the same line of thought, Morley and Robins in their *Spaces of Identity* have averred, “the creation of culture and identity in common would have been impossible without the contribution of print and subsequently broadcast media.” (Morley and Robins 196) Media, in this sense, contributes to formation of its audience’s identity “by the ways in which it represents them.” (Quoted in, Morley & Robins 196) Therefore, the audience

consuming visual pleasure is experiencing a schizophrenic feeling of reacting to the messages framed within the perceived attitudes sketched out from the visual communication and perceived as a positive behavior. This fact frames the audience as a non-stable-identifiable species that demises their social identification. Media is viewed as the source of knowledge that provides the audience with “more information and more direct access to event.” (Morley and Robins 196) In so doing, the audience is made to believe that they are essential parts of this media communication; but in fact, they are pushed behind the curtain of manipulation that controls the contents presented to them. In this regard, the audience is imbibing every performed image on media in silence.

Moreover, identity relies for its construction on outside effects that mitigate the condition of its existence. In other words, identity is established by what is not; to be Moroccan is to be “not Algerian”, to be a Muslim is to be “not Christian”; to be masculine is to be “not feminine”, etc. In this regard, identity is constructed across differences and in relation to other identities. Media discourse constructs identities as they derive from these differences and as they are determined to be in reality. The audience, thus, is not entitled to stand up against the ideologies that are established in advance under the guise of truth, authenticity or scientific knowledge. This itemized perception has buoyed up Stuart Hall’s claim that identity must be seen as a fluid phenomenon; said Hall, “Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact... we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production’, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.” (Hall 222) Identity as maintained by Hall is regulated by the a system of cultural representation that thrusts power relations, which dominate the industry of cinema and media production.

Furthermore, the construction of identity in media manifests itself as a complex process. This complexity is generated, not only from the motive of those standing behind Media production, but also from the fact that identity distinguishes every individual from each other and makes every human being unique and different. This approach is defended sturdily by Amin Maalouf, who has stated in his *On Identity*: “My identity is what prevents me from being identical to anybody else.” (Maalouf 10) Perceive it this way, identity becomes a project of an individual rather than a community. Clearly, the individual may experience conversions and alterations in his day-to day activity. Maalouf has provided an imaginary survey of a person whose identity is shaky as an example to disclose that “the view of religion and mother country will never again be what it was before.” (Maalouf 11) Maalouf states:

Let us observe a man of about 50 whom we in the street. In 1980 or thereabouts he might have said proudly and without hesitation, “I’m a Yugoslavian!” Questioned more closely, he could have said he was a citizen of the Federal Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and, incidentally, that he came from a traditional Muslim family. If you had met the same man twelve years later, when the war at its height, he might have answered automatically and emphatically, “I’m a Muslim!” He might even grow the statutory beard. He would quickly have added that he was a Bosnian, and he would not have been pleased to be reminded of how proudly he once called himself a Yugoslavian. (Maalouf 11)

The identity of the individual, hence for Maalouf is made up of different elements that “may be found separately in many individuals, the same combination of them is never

encountered in different people, and it's this that gives every individual richness and value and makes each human being unique and irreplaceable." (Maalouf 10) He avers that identity "changes with time, and in so doing brings about fundamental changes in behavior." (Maalouf 12)

Maalouf's vision for the identity change does not take a stand against the prior ideas that elucidates the construction of identity in relation to difference and to other identities. He, contrarily, has supported this approach through proclaiming that "the identity a person lays claim is often based, in reverse, on that of his enemy." (Maalouf 13) This fact is very natural for him, since the difference is an already-existed naked truth, he has stated: "Identity is a special case. Mankind itself is made up of special cases. Life is a creator of difference." (Maalouf 17) The difference for Maalouf exists between the same community that shares the same religion, the same language, and even the same culture in general. He has cleared up:

... what I'm trying to say is.... not that all human beings are the same, but that each one is different. No doubt that a Serb is different from a Croat, but every Serb is also different from every other Serb, and every Croat is different from every other Croat. And if a Lebanese Christian is different from a Lebanese Muslim, I don't know any two Lebanese Christians who are identical, nor any two Muslims... People are interchangeable, and often in the same family... we find between two brothers who have lived in the same environment, apparently small differences which make them act in diametrically opposite ways in matters related to politics, religion and

everyday life. These differences may even turn one of the brothers into a killer, and the other into a man of dialogue and conciliation. (Maalouf 18)

Maalouf zeroes in on this perusal to reject the abominated habit that abuses people with generalization and ascribes to them “collective crimes, collective acts and opinions.” He elaborates:

The Serbs have massacred...”, “The English have devastated...”, “The Jews have massacred...”, “The Blacks have torched...”, “The Arabs refuse...” We blithely express sweeping judgments on whole peoples, calling them “hardworking” and “ingenious”, or “lazy”, “touchy”, “sly”, “proud”, or “obstinate”. And sometimes this ends in bloodshed. (Maalouf 18)

In the name of the same principle, the ideologies disseminated in media discourse, especially in comedy performances that are weltered with stereotypical portrayals and preconceived ideas under the auspices of entertainment, are not innocent and cannot be rated as irreproachable. In this regard, constructing people’s identities can never be innocent. Maalouf once more comes to emphasize this thought through stating that identity is constructed and changes throughout a person’s lifetime. This construction, however, does not influence any innate physical facts like, being male or female and black or white. These can never be determined by the social environment, but it determines their significance. (Maalouf 20) Maalouf has instanced that “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.” (Maalouf 18)

In the age of digital technology, the communication of differences and the metamorphosis of identities become susceptible. This easy-going connection between differences has fundamentally remodeled the behavior and attitudes of the individual who might even adopt an identity beyond his or her current self-image. One might argue that what is screened on digital apparatus is stemmed from social values and attitudes. Still, psychologically speaking, people feel the need to belong, which gives them “even more reason to feel threatened because they feel that the qualities that are specific to their culture are coming under attack by this homogenization of world culture. This fear, this desperate need to belong, causes many people to commit fanatical and murderous crimes in the name of their identity.” (Boudreau 29) It seems disconcerting from where the individual comes with this zealous jealousy while his or her identity is a product of a lifetime. To illuminate this point, Amin Maalouf has disclosed that the individual does not distinguish between what they are and what they think they are. He insists that:

On the one hand, there is what we are in reality and what we are becoming as a result of cultural globalization: that is to say, beings woven out of many-colored threads, who share most of their points of reference, their ways of behaving and their beliefs with the vast community of their contemporaries. And on the other hand, there is what we think we are and what we claim to be: that is to say, members of one faith rather than another. I do not deny the importance of our religious, national or other affiliations. I do not question the often decisive influence of our “vertical” heritage¹⁴. But it is necessary at

¹⁴ Maalouf has distinguished between two heritages: ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’. For the “vertical heritage”, it is what people inherit from their ancestors and what comes from their religious community and popular traditions. For the “horizontal heritage” is what comes as an effect of people’s experience in their life.

this point in time to draw attention to the gulf that exists between what we are and what we think we are. (Maalouf 86)

In this sense, it is not surprising to hear of an immigrant, for example, defending the identity of his or her origin, despite the fact that he or she becomes a citizen living in another part of the world where cultural norms are diametrically opposed to his line of descent. In this sense, the identity of people is made up of “number of allegiances, some linked to an ethnic past and other not, some linked to religious tradition and others not.” (Maalouf 26) These different allegiances and affiliations are what make identity complex and what make it a lively debate in every area of activity. It is “easy to imagine”, states Maalouf, “how it can drive people to the worst kind of extremities: if they feel that “others” represent a threat to their ethnic group or religion or nation.” (Maalouf 27)

For exactly the same reasons, people, especially those who have undergone racist abuse, colonialist supremacy and other forms of tyranny, might react in an intellectual manner and in legitimate self-defense against those images disseminated in media discourse that makes of their identity subject of its mode of representation. This representation of identity in the media is substantially projected as a performance of the self in relation to others. That is to say, the ideologies adopted in media discourse conduce to the binary opposition of Us/Them, West/East, White/Black, Civilized/Uncivilized, etc. However, this binary-division is framed within a discourse that circulates ready-made images among its audience as an attempt to preserve the center/periphery duality. Securing this duality and supremacy is an objective of discourse that is defined as “a system of statements within which the world can be known. It is the system by which dominant groups in society constitute the field of truth by imposing specific knowledges, disciplines

and values upon dominated groups.” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 42) Edward Said views this definition of discourse in the same way Michel Foucault perceives it as a “valuable for describing that system within which that range of practices termed ‘colonial’ come into being.” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 41) In his *Orientalism*, Said perceives the colonial discourse, as it is stated in the previous chapter, as an “instrument of power” that aims at constituting social reality in accordance to the interests of its monitors. Colonial discourse, in this regard, is through which this binary opposition, identity and difference are congregated, introduced and interacted. It is then, to quote Bill Ashcroft, “a system of knowledge and beliefs about the world within which acts colonization take place.” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 42)

In the same vein, comedy discourse within which acts of colonization take place is a typical arena where the acts of inclusion and exclusion come about. It operates through ridiculing the other side. In her “Humor and Satire: Precolonial, Colonial and Postcolonial”, Christina Oesterheld avers that comedy discourse operates in a convincing manner “picking out some of the main misconceptions of these representatives of an urban, Western-educated élite, highlighting and exaggerating their follies and thus catapulting them into absurd, hilarious situations.” (Oesterheld 80) Comedy discourse, in this sense, hides a powerful effect behind laughing. Amusing the audience becomes a strategy designed to “point out human weaknesses and to attack the high and mighty.” (Oesterheld 64) Attacking hilariously people in the high class has been one of the main reasons that give birth to comedy. But in colonial discourse, the case is quite different. Colonial discourse is not meant to attack the high, but to deride the low and marginal living the “Third World” and attribute centrality to the West.

As a reaction to such discourse, a host of cultural and literary critics descending, mainly, from the ex-colonies have challenged the Western centrality as a point where ‘all kinds of knowledge’ circulating in the world are said to have come from. They have managed to open up a space wherein they have brought into question all the assumptions and convictions to make the other able to produce, reproduce, deconstruct and reconstruct all compartments of knowledge disseminated in the colonial discourse to maintain their identity heritage and racial equity.

3.2 Rethinking Race in Comedic Discourse

It is plausible to announce that identity has been part and parcel of the colonial discourse, and that the “other” is different from the “self” is inherently predetermined in such discourse. That is to say, the self is invariably visualized as ‘pure’, ‘superior’ and ‘noble’, while the other is rated as a pariah whose identities shares quite many stigmatizing labels, such as blackness, backwardness and inferiority to the ‘self’. It might sound ludicrous to divulge that the construction of this “other” pivots around the idea of skinned color. But this fact has made countless Jamaican people, for example, to bleach their skins using illegal products hankering after a less blackish skin. Seeking a light skin color in the former British colony has resulted in mutilation of Jamaican body, and, as a result, the government has involved in a sensitized campaign under the “Don’t Kill the Skin” slogan. This practice is not simply associated with fashion and beauty, but it is eminently equated with self-image as an influence on social-culture that has colonial legacy.

The Jamaicans have absorbed the idea which claims to be ‘white’ is privileged and socially advantage, while to be ‘black’ is not. Whiteness in discourse on racism is mostly linked to the Western history and tradition, and blackness is affixed to the “rest of the world”. The skin color, in this sense, is the measurement for categorizing and classifying people. In his *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action 1780–1850*, Philip Curtin has asserted this thought of racial classification that he defines as: “a simple system based on skin color, with a white, red, yellow, and black race, each of them placed on one of the four major continents.” (Curtin 38) Color in this regard draws the opposition-connotation between the white and the black; black has connoted evil and disgrace, while white has connoted decency and purity.” (Longshore 183) This connotation of the black skin in

relation to the white has been the main drive for the Jamaicans to 'kill' their skin color. Black people thus have a fixed image in the Western mindset as it is disseminated widely in a colonial discourse.

In this sense, exploring such a conception in a media outlet proves a lucrative venture, as it introduces its audience to what Edward Said called 'the imaginative geography' wherein, to use Bakhtin's terminology, 'a polyphony of voices' interact with one another in an attempt to assert a fixed hegemonic conception of the Self. Perspicuously, this interaction of voices that aims at picturing the "self" in contrast to the construction of the "other" occurs at what Mary Louise Pratt calls the "contact zone", wherein "disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other." (Pratt 4) That is, within this zone, the discriminatory discourse is concocted in "highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today." (Pratt 4) In such discourse, black people are negated and doubly victimized in the sense that they have to emulate colonial cultural forms and, at the same time, play subordinate roles in the project of stressing the colonial supremacy and authoritativeness.

At the present time, racism is a formally unacceptable practice among people. Perceptibly in the world of football for example, people may consent to the need to fight racism, players of football may conduct the campaign of "Let's Kick Racism out of Football," (The Football Association, 1993) and stadiums might be threatened by people in charge to be closed over fans' racist behavior. But eccentrically, one might still observe that these same people might make from their seats monkey noises at black players, the same players of the campaign might be accused of being racist on the pitch, the same people

in charge might expel a black player from a competition for his reacting against a racist abuse. In the same stream, racism is, “predominantly anathematized by states, politicians and populations as a stain on civilized society. And yet, it is also virtually endemic. The discourses which vilify racism are more than amply countered by the many other discourses through which racism is made invisible, normative and even virtuous.” (Downing and Husband 1) This ubiquity of racism in discourse in general and in media discourse in particular drives “its power partially from the social psychological dynamics of social-categorization *per se*, but also from the powerful taken-for-granted legitimacy which race categories have acquired in their historical formulation.” (Downing and Husband 2) It has become unmanageable and quite beyond the bounds to undergo a change of people’s behavior, especially that race cannot be existed outside the discipline of discourse. It is unseasonable and irrational to announce the need for change of people’s attitudes while discourse still forges race as a cardinal bracket to retain the social and political power struggles and stress the classification of people in accordance to their both biological and social characteristics.

However, in his “The Crisis of ‘Race’ and Raciology”, Paul Gilroy has assumed that the notion of race as a major factor in shaping power relations has blurred, since the world is governed by technology, consumerism and mobility and thus the notion of race is equally changing. He has averred, “the meaning of racial difference is itself being changed as the relationship between human beings and nature is reconstructed by the impact of the DNA revolution and the technological developments that have energized it.” (Gilroy 15) Gilroy here has declared the ‘crisis of race’, and it is a perfect occasion when everyone “must try to take possession of that profound transformation and somehow set it to work against the tainted logic that produced it.” (Gilroy 15) Gilroy admits that “raciology has saturated the

discourses in which circulates,” (Gilroy 12) but the demand for the extrication from racist abuse is “an especially urgent matter for those peoples who, like modern blacks in the period after transatlantic slavery, were assigned an inferior position in the enduring hierarchies that raciology creates.” However, he continues to assert that:

This opportunity is not theirs alone. There are very good reasons why it should be enthusiastically embraced by others whose antipathy to race-thinking can be defined, not so much by the way it has subordinated them, but because in endowing them with the alchemical magic of racial mastery, it has distorted and delimited their experiences and consciousness in other ways... they too have suffered something by being deprived of their individuality, their humanity, and thus alienated from species life. Black and white are bonded together by the mechanisms of "race" that estrange them from each other and amputate their common humanity. (Gilroy 15)

Accordingly, the need to stand against raciology has become urgent for the self and the other, for the black and the white, for the west and the ‘rest’. They all suffer from this division based on race, each from its position. Gilroy has restated Frantz Fanon remark to give grounds for his arguments of the ramification of racism and enslavement: “The Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation.” (Quoted in, Gilroy, 2000, p. 15) Gilroy’s deduction is that nothing good results from racism, and the yearning for nonracial humanism “might begin to take shape,” (Gilroy 15) and people have to reserve a space for themselves within this transformation through the engagement of differences in the world of mobility and immigration, which he sees as the most effective countermeasures to neutralize this

“poisonous ideology and a destructive practice” (Downing and Husband 1) and also the virtual endemic called raciology.

This engagement of black people into the world of interaction has somehow taken the edge off stereotypical discourse and racial abuse, since with the rise of visual culture, the old hierarchies manifest itself in the surface as dimness. Gilroy asserts that:

The appearance of a rich visual culture... allows blackness to be beautiful also feeds a fundamental lack of confidence in the power of the body to hold the boundaries of racial difference in place. It creates anxiety about the older racial hierarchies that made that revolutionary idea of black beauty oxymoronic, just as it requires us to forget the political movement that made its acknowledgment imperative. It is as though these images of nonwhite beauty, grace, and style somehow make the matter of "race" secondary. (Gilroy 22)

One might feel tranquil seeing that racism is blurred with the revolutionary technology and that ‘blackness’ that was rooted in the past as a sign of inferiority are now conceived in a satisfactory manner; “Black bodies are now being seen —figured and imaged— differently.” (Gilroy 23) However, this shift in representing the other in a decent way does not necessarily mean thoroughly change in the Western mindsets, but it functions to produce a decent image about a Western democracy and modernity. Moreover, Western audiences may not welcome the idea that a hero or any character in a Hollywood movie is dark skinned. As an example, Christopher Rosen has written an article entitled “Hunger Games' Racist Tweets: Fans Upset Because Of Rue's Race” for The Huffington Post only two years ago about the audience being bitterly disappointed at the characters in the movie

cast with black actors. Rosen wrote, “some fans of the blockbuster young adult trilogy by author Suzanne Collins were upset by the decision to cast an African-American actress as Rue, one of the supporting characters. Never mind that she's described as having "dark brown skin" in the original book.” (Rosen) In fact, it is dissatisfying to discover that still in 2012, the question of racism is strongly circulating in a so-called democratic society. People have expressed their disappointment to the twelve year old black girl cast as “Rue” through sending racist tweets. The collection of these tweets is published on Jezebel websites. (Stewart) Some have assumed that the movie is ‘ruined’: “why does rue has to be black not gonna lie kinda ruined the movie.” Others accused the producer for making all good characters black: “why did the producer make all the good characters black.” Some others refuse to watch it for one simple reason: “rue is black?? I’m not watching.” While another person does not care for being called racist: “call me racist but when I found out rue was black her death wasn’t as sad.” (Stewart)

These are only some examples that underlie plain racism in the American society in modern time. In this regard, the possible change being declared by Gilroy is still questionable. The reason why the Jamaicans are bleaching their skin color might be seen now as full of common sense and could be justified; in this world, nothing happens without reason. From this racist reaction against casting ironically black character in the original book with a black actor, one might come out with one conclusion that the Western mind-set is still inherently governed by the colonial legacies which results in the ongoing dissemination of colonial discourse. In this regard, it is not surprising to notice the popularity and admiration of discourses filled with race prejudices. This sort of discourse is widely detected in comedy shows and films, especially those that are likely to respond to the colonial project. Additionally, the comedy remains the suitable outlet that “combines

perceived distress with clever extrication and ironic reversal that is shared with others.” (Bowers 1) No one can deny the fact that comedy is a double-edged platform that might denounce a stereotypical discourse and it might reinforce it, but the sense of mockery is the dominant attribute that delineates the images of the other.

Moreover, the demand of the black for integration, freedom and equality is not straight thinking. As an alternative, they have to celebrate their differences, by being proud of their skin color and by claiming their right to *remain* different; since people cannot be judged by what they have no responsibility for. The right to be different is a claim that might be called for among Westerners themselves. Amin Maalouf has sketched out a story of some of his French friends who reject the idea of globalization that they perceive as synonymous with Americanization and states:

In recent years in France, I’ve noticed some of my closest friends tending to speak of globalization as if it were a catastrophe. They are not as thrilled as they used to be at the idea of “the global village”; they are cool about the Internet and the latest advances in communication. This is because they now see globalisation as synonymous with Americanisation, and they wonder what future there will be for France in an increasingly standardised world, and what will become of France’s language, culture, prestige, influence and way of life. They are vexed when a fast food store opens in their neighborhood, they inveigh against Hollywood, CNN, Disney and Microsoft, and comb the newspapers for anything resembling an Anglicism. (Maalouf 61-62)

The same vision is adopted by German, Italian and even the Soviet people, especially after the end of the World War Two. Dell'Orto states in his *The Hidden Power of the American Dream*: "France, Germany, and Italy never believed America's professions that it was up to a different play." (Dell'Orto 20) They all consider the Americanization as a modern form of American imperialism, and globalization as "nefarious project of U.S. hegemony, the devious attempt to win the world's consent to its own subordination through the shining little rewards of merchandise made in the U.S.A." (Dell'Orto 23) This modern form of overwhelming the world has made of the United States "not only the first world power, it is the world." (Dell'Orto 23) As a reaction, the European critics believe that "outright resistance is the only way to prevent that every nation loses its own identity under Americanization. Resentment and resistance breed a form of anti-Americanism that grows side-by-side with the worldwide spread of American customs and products." (Dell'Orto 22)

In the name of the same principle, Amin Maalouf avers that if this is the reaction of the West then:

It is all the easier to imagine the reaction of the various non-Western peoples whose every step, for many generations, has already been accompanied by a sense of defeat and self betrayal... their language now studied only by a handful of specialists, while they had to learn other people's languages if they wanted to survive and work and remain in contact with the rest of mankind. Whenever they speak with a Westerner it is always in his language, almost never on their own. There are millions of people south and east of the Mediterranean who can speak English, French, Spanish and Italian. How

many Englishmen, Frenchmen, Spaniards or Italians have thought it worthwhile to study Arabic or Turkish? (Maalouf 62)

Moreover, the coexistence of difference of races has been, from the onset, the aspiration of Frantz Fanon, as Bhabha states: “The time has come to return to Fanon; as always, I believe, with a question: how can the human world live its difference; how can a human being live Other-wise?” (Bhabha 64) However, admitting racial difference or cultural difference might be perceived, on the one hand, as the prop for distinguishing the west from the east or the white from the black through instigating the project of multiculturalism that is believed to serve the political agenda of the West. On the other hand, however, cultural difference might rather serve as a subtle integration of minorities into the world of majorities with the perpetuation of the clash between “Culture and culture”, since the world is inextricably made up of different cultures and different races and it is beyond the bounds of possibility to gather humankind under one race/nation. In this sense the question of “understanding” imposes itself as a “lost cause”, as Terry Eagleton avers: “I do not understand you by ceasing to be myself, since then there would be nobody to do the understanding.” (Eagleton 49) In this regard, the West has failed to understand this difference of other cultures and other races, whereupon its project of multiculturalism has failed as well. Eagleton avers, “In one sense, to be sure, multiculturalism is simply a later ironic turn of the same history.” (Eagleton 62)

In the same line of thought, comedy discourse that echoes a colonial legacy is not innocent in the sense that it perfectionizes the image of one culture over other different ones. On the other side, difference dismantles this racist discourse and the colonial hegemony hidden behind the falsifiable laughter and that aims to imply Western cultural

superiority as the embodiment of “civilization”. However, culture can never be discriminated against as being uncivilized; it is a way of life that differentiates one’s values, tradition, and beliefs from others. Civilization, in this sense, can be assessed as another Western euphemism that strengthens the claim for binary oppositions. Civilization, thus, “played down national differences; whereas ‘culture’ highlighted them.” (Eagleton 9) In closing and after all, the main distinctive feature of comedy that might be rated as the privilege of humankind is, as Mikhail Bakhtin puts it: “the right to be ‘other’ in this world, the right not to make common cause with any single one of the existing categories that life makes available.” (Bakhtin 159)

3.3 The Reaffirmation of Gender Attitudes:

It is pointless, perhaps beyond the question, to explore the questions of identity and race without alluding to the analysis of gender issue within its cultural context as social production and consumption. The issue of constructing gender occupies an important space in the scene of representation and seen as an influential mechanism that asserts the position of man and woman in Western and Eastern media discourse. It is settled among people nowadays that man and woman have or should have formal equal rights. However, one might wonder whether this equality could be detected in the discursive construction manifest in colonial discourse through which the ideology of the colonizer and its attitudes towards the ‘Third World’ are established. Inquiring into the representation of woman in such discourse has come to the fore with the movement of “women of color” who struggle against being doubly victimized and challenge both racism and gender discrimination. Abena P.A. Busia has stated in her “Silencing Sycorax: On African Colonial Discourse and the Unvoiced Female”:

The question of the (re) presentation of black women in colonial discourse is problematic on many levels. The problematic, for the purpose of interpreting or decoding the master's text, arises from the place of black women as receptors of two paradigms of alienation and otherness within this dominant discourse: that of femaleness and that of blackness... the question of gender is much more submerged... when conducted in the language of the master.
(Busia 84)

The “Third World” women are essentially constructed in colonial discourse as a victim of their social barbarism, ignorance, and male-domination. One might think that this

representation is nothing but a commiseration of the West to the tribulation of the “Third World” women. However, this utility of gender in colonial discourse has been manipulated to stress the superiority of the Western ‘self’ over the inferiority of the Eastern ‘other’. That is, the question of gender has been demonstrated in the colonial discourse to lay bare the disparities between the rationalized West — by virtue of its respect to both men and women that form strong social bonds — in contrast to the freedom-restricting East — taken as a society that tends to separate between the two sexes, favoring males over females and holding the woman's body as a site of mere sexual excitement and recreation.

However, one might consider that this knowledge provided by the colonial discourse about the situation of women is not emanated from the creation of their imagination. There might be consent among observant that women in the “Third World”, especially in Arab societies, are subject to sexual harassment and male violence, and whatever their societies suffer they suffer the most. Moreover, this vision has been the desideratum of women’s social struggle labelled as “feminist movement”. This movement is worthwhile for the postcolonial discourse, seeing that:

Both patriarchy and imperialism can be seen to exert analogous forms of domination over those they render subordinate. Hence the experience of women in patriarchy and those of colonized subjects can be paralleled in a number of respects, and both feminist and post-colonial politics oppose such dominance. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 102)

Feminist movement in this sense stands against the “social constructionism” of gender that is summarized in Simone de Beauvoir famous words: “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.” (de Beauvoir 273) That is, women are not born as women but

are made women by the pressures and expectations of a patriarchy. In a patriarchal society, Beauvoir observes, men are considered independent, free and essential subjects and thus men represent all what is positive about human creations. While women are considered dependent beings controlled by circumstances and thus women represent merely what men are not. Man can act upon the world, change it, give it meaning, while women have meaning only in relation to men. Thus, women are defined in terms of their deficiency to men. For Beauvoir, the word “woman” has the same implications as the word “other”. A woman cannot be defined concretely or positively, but only as the indefinite side of “Man”. In a nutshell, woman in patriarchy is man’s “other”; she is only “wo” that has no meaning without “man” (wo/man), and she is only “fe” that has no meaning without “male” (fe/male).

The attribution of these Western feminist inquiries in the Eastern patriarchal societies might seem truthful and particularly in some areas other than others. However, this conviction has contributed to the circulation of stereotypical assumptions in the colonial discourse about the East in general and the Eastern woman in particular. Moreover, Western feminist has postulated the conception of binarism among women from the Middle East and North Africa. Marnia Lazreg has averred in her “Feminism and Difference”: “the political attitudes of ‘center’ states are mirrored in feminist attitudes toward women from ‘peripheral’ states.” (Lazreg 88) That is, women of the “periphery” stand in need of vindicating their freedom and liberty achieved in the West. But this achievement is viewed in the Western discourse as improbable where women are considered as the weakest link in their societies. In the same stream, Lazreg states, “Arab women are represented as being so different that they are deemed unable to understand or develop any form of feminism. When Arab women speak for themselves, they are accused of being ‘pawns of Arab men’.”

(Lazreg 88) This accusation and degradation of non-Western women in the Western discourse are meant to associate women's movement with Feminism of the "First World."

Furthermore, the issue of "writing women" of the Third World societies has been the uppermost in Western minds. However, the task of writing/representing women is not that easy owing to the fact the sources of information are limited within the oriental space that was at one time rated as a private sphere that cannot be penetrated without a hitch by Western people, especially men. Thus, the employment of imaginative images remains the alternative source for the construction of colonial discourse to implement the stereotypical discourse about the natives. Moreover, this imaginary creation of discourse might be based essentially on the pre-produced images about the Orient women that have been widely known disseminated in works like the authorless *The Arabian Nights*. This process of "rewriting identity" in Western discourse is a part of their desire to, as Homi Bhabha states, "emerge as "authentic" through mimicry- through a process of writing and repetition." (Bhabha 88) The repetition of what is "already" said is an attempt to give a profundity to the representation of the unified image of women of the Orient, stigmatize their space, and make it come across as real and familiar. From the other point of view, Clifford Geertz argues that the Western imaginations both "reveal and reproduce the emotional and political disenfranchisement of women, through the manipulative strategies of capital, as well as through oppressive representations of dominated women." (Berlant 346) In this regard, providing knowledge about the "other" is not meant for understanding, as Foucault states: "knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting." (M. Foucault 88) Foucault statement's recalls the question of knowledge in relation to power that avers that no knowledge is produced without being caught up with authority.

With this precaution in mind, the images of Arab in general and women particular are predetermined and repetitive in the Western media industry. In his “100 Years of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim stereotyping”, Mazin B. Qumsiyeh has affirmed that “Hollywood has had a consistent record of Arab stereotyping and bashing.” (Qumsiyeh) That is, the Arabs are stapled with a consistent delineation that is circulated immutably in the Western mindsets; “Arabs in TV and movies are portrayed as either bombers, belly dancers, or billionaires.” (Qumsiyeh) That is, Arab men have no other image in the West but that echoes barbarism and terrorism, while women are stereotyped as sexual and domestic servants whose preoccupied function is producing desire to titillate males’ sensuality. These images had been circulated, though it may seem strange, in the pre-colonial era. Qumsiyeh presents an example of the way Arab women are represented in a short film made by Thomas Edison in 1897 as characters “with enticing clothes dance to seduce a male audience.” (Qumsiyeh) In the same stream, Jack Shaheen presents in his *Reel Bad Arabs* some scenes that affirm these stagnant images in the Western media. He has noted these scenes: “David visits the bedouin, Abou ibn Kader (Topol). Inside the Arab’s tent some musicians accompany an attractive bellydancer. Abou grabs handfuls of foodstuffs, forcing the reluctant David to digest edibles. Abou slaps the dancer, hard, then dispatches her and the musicians.” (Shaheen 127) In another scene of another film: “At a bar, a lovely Arab dancer performs. One legionnaire places a key into a slingshot and fires, striking the dancer’s navel and injuring her. No one cares.” (Shaheen 140) He adds one more scene: “The men come across an Arab wedding ceremony, complete with Arab food, music, and dancing. Cohen dances with a young Palestinian woman.” (Shaheen 146) He also states, “The camera displays a souk, cave, mosque, and coffee shop. Inside Ahad’s palace, bellydancers perform.” (Shaheen 162) For Shaheen, the images that the Arabs hold are

injustice in the sense that they are repetitious and always negative. He states, “I am not saying an Arab should never be portrayed as the villain. What I am saying is that almost *all* Hollywood depictions of Arabs are bad ones. This is a grave injustice. Repetitious and negative images of the reel Arab literally sustain adverse portraits across generations.” (Shaheen 11) This announce of Shaheen concurs with Bhabha’s erstwhile declared comment that avers that colonial discourse emerges “through a process of writing and repetition.” (Bhabha 88)

However, Hollywood discourse has succeeded to deviate the meaning of terrorism from its sense of “killing and using violence against innocent people” regardless of the killer to be affixed merely and entirely to the Arab people. That is, the act of killing in a movie, and even in reality, could be seen as an act of “saving the world” while conducted by a westerners, but it is “terrorism” when adhered to Arab people. When the US president declares the war against “terrorism”, even the child of 10 years old might perceive it against a group or a state that has connection to Arab or Muslim people. Shaheen reveals, “Arabs trying to rape, kill, or abduct fair-complexioned Western heroines is a common theme, dominating scenarios from *Captured by Bedouins* (1912), to *The Pelican Brief* (1993).” (Shaheen 6) In the same manner, women in Arab societies are constantly and frequently portrayed as victim of male violence, victims of the patriarchy, victim of Islam and hidden in the society but sexually available, as Malek Alloula states: “the odalisque is the very symbol of the harem, its highest expression. She fills it with a presence that is at once mysterious and luminous. She is its hidden, yet available, core, always throbbing with restrained sensuality,” (Alloula 74) this is on the one hand. On the other hand, Western women are rated as free, educated, independent and civilized. Shaheen has exclaimed to perceive the world with equitableness and reasonableness. For him,

All groups contain some Attila-the-Hun types; some Israelis and Latinos are militant zealots; some Irishmen and Arabs are terrorists; some Italians and Indonesians are gangsters; some Asians and Africans are rapists; and some Americans and Englishmen are child-abusers. Every group has among its members a minority of a minority committing heinous acts.” (Shaheen 11)

Moreover, the aforementioned feminist’s claims have been widely known that indicate the situation of women in the West. That is, women of the “First World” have been, and maybe still in some parts of the West, the victim of patriarchy. Simone de Beauvoir, for example, has been criticizing the French women for worsening their status and for their own subjugation. Some of them adopt the French saying “Sois belle et tais-toi”. They always want to be beautiful in the eyes of Men. Beauvoir says, “If woman seems to be the inessential which never becomes the essential, it is because she herself fails to bring about this change.” (de Beauvoir 18) The reason for Beauvoir for this failure to go beyond the patriarchy is that:

Women lack concrete means for organizing themselves into a unit which can stand face to face with the correlative unit. They have no past, no history, no religion of their own... They live dispersed among the males, attached through residence, housework, economic condition, and social standing to certain men. (de Beauvoir 18)

In this sense, the situation of Western women has been indistinguishable from that of women of the “Third World” that are constructed in the colonial discourse, though with an overstatement. However, women in the West is *still* viewed and screened as different creation to men and merely a commercial body in movies and broadcasts. Woman in the

West, like in the East, is a subject of man's joke; she is treated with denigration and contempt in his daily pleasantries. In her "The Joke on us", Susan Carlson has announced: "the differences between male and female generated humor." (Carlson 574-575) Some other people magnify the issue to consider: "feminists and comics as natural enemies, since stereotypically speaking, feminists can't take a joke and comedians can't take criticism." (Pozner) This struggle over anecdotes meant for comicality demonstrates how much power was adhered to the world of comedy. If that is the case in the West, therefore resistance undertaken by postcolonial women could be rated as a full of common sense and could be more reasonable when jokes attributed to racist abuse.

Comedy has proved to be a virtual background where racist abuse can be produced freely and directly. That is, in other forms of discourse, one might express his or her resentment to the presentation of racist abuse, while most people, if not all, might consider it as a merely entertaining performance. The image of Eastern women in comedy shows is built-up in accordance to certain signs that distinguishes women of the East from other part of the world. As an example, the appearance of Muslim women has been discussed vitally in western discourse. In fact, this obsession with the appearance of Muslim women is a dated-back process held by the Western imagination. Moreover, the dress of women in colonial discourse has been essentially linked sexuality and fetishism. Moreover, the subject of women is present in consistently present in comedy discourse that tackles the issue of Arabs. For example, depicting Arab men as oilmen and wealthy is tagged with having woman employed as concubine, odalisque, or belly dancer. Depicting Muslim man as terrorist is associated with being beneficial to "sexual Jihad" on earth and promised 72 virgins in paradise. That is, the image of veiled Arab woman is stigmatized in the West as a sexual subject to men. Affixing an image to specific human race has become "the

conditionality of the colonial discourse.” (Bhabha 114) This conditionality conduces to the construction of discriminatory knowledge that ridicules the subject identification that has come to be recognized as a “common knowledge” in the Western memory that values or devalues the positionality of one’s culture.

However, these exposed signs and symbols are perceived differently by other people, be from the West and most from the East. That is, the veil worn by Muslim women is not a sign of backwardness or imprisonment, but it is also perceived as a sign of resistance to the male’s gaze and against being a seen as a merely attractive body in the eyes of those who are obsessed with the physical appearance of women. Billie Melman states:

The veil is divested of its sexual, erotic meanings and is associated with privacy, autonomy and the inviolability of the female body. In the big cities veiling protects females from harassment....The veil no longer symbolises *subjection* and sexuality but autonomy or, freedom *from* sexual exploitation. (Melman 121)

On the other hand, the veil is not merely providing security from sexual harassment and exploitation, but it is more than that; it is a matter of identity. In his *Media Gender and Identity*, avers that: “any aspects of the physical body can be relevant to self-identity: for example, whether one is seen as overweight or underweight, tall or short, hairy or shaven or bald, or wearing spectacles, unusual clothes, or piercings.” (Gauntlett 15) Amin Maalouf has confirmed this approach and states: “Identity is in the first place a matter of symbols, even of appearances.” (Maalouf 100)

To end the discussion, the meaning provided in the colonial discourse could be simply dismantled by the emphasis of the question of difference. Celebrating difference is what gathers every race: colonizer and colonized, black and white, and man and woman into what Bhabha calls: “the third space of enunciation,” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 37) where woman should be seen a human equal to man not dependent on man, and black should be accepted as black not as inferior to the white. Abena P.A. Busia states:

That I am a black woman is irrefutable, and I want it to be recognized and remembered that I was born in an African country (which was still a British colony at the time of my birth). I speak as a black African woman, deliberately invoking all the significances of race, gender, and national and cultural heritage and history that those three terms call up but without privileging either gender or race and without distilling gender or race from origins. (Busia 83)

Part Two

This part is devoted to investigate American and Moroccan entertainment discourses in accordance with theoretical inquiries provided in the previous part. This investigation is employed the thematic reading to these discourses to contest the different modes of representations to reveal their ideological assumptions and to highlight identity fragmentation from different positionalities. This part is divided into four chapters starting, each of which includes different sections. The first chapter (the fifth in the ordinal number of whole thesis) is concerned with analyzing three American entertainment discourses: a Hollywood movie set in Morocco *Road to Morocco* (1942) and a Disney cartoon *Sahara Hare* (1955), and a stand-up comedy show *Achmed the Dead Terrorist* (2008). The second chapter (the sixth in the whole thesis), is an attempt to give voice to two Moroccan entertainment movies voice to the discussion of the self-identity formation and its fragmentation. These movies are *Abdu in The Almohads' Dynasty* (2006) and *Morokki in Paris* (2012). This chapter functions as "laughing back" the ideologies revealed in previous American discourses, as it gives credibility to the Arab contribution to the construction of civilization. The third chapter (the seventh in this thesis) tries to go beyond the Orientalist and Occidentalism construction of the Other's identity through investigating an American animated movie *Achmed Saves America* (2014) and a Moroccan movie *Road to Kabul* (2012) that have employed a new mode of representation. The Last chapter (the eighth in this thesis) functions as concluding remarks that brings together the whole thesis into an abridged discussion.

4. **The Taken-for-Granted in American Entertainment Discourses** (*The Road to Morocco*; *Sahara Hare*; *Achmed The Dead Terrorist*)

4.1 **Laughing the Arab-land: Mapping the Orientalist Fixity of the Native Objects**

Comedy movies and shows have become staples of television products and best-seller artefact and, increasingly, prime-time television display that can be therefore considered as a work of interest for many critics. Not surprisingly, the world of comedy has attracted millions of people and turned to be identified as a popular social activity. This fact has encouraged the producers to remodel “the mechanical reproduction” (Benjamin), to use Walter Benjamin phrase, of this genre to make it more sophisticated, more ubiquitous and more imperative. This cultural significance of comedy has become an outlet through which issues can be framed and disclosed and from which ideologies and cultures can be attributed. That is, comedy, like any other discourse, seeps out different political backgrounds, social principles, and religious beliefs. As such, some Western movies have gone so far as to stage quite multifarious forms of images a fact that still links the Third World in general, and Arab in particular, to old ages where there were no signs of modern civilization. In this regard, the relevance of history to the ongoing debates with regard to the representations of Arabs in colonial discourse is strongly needed. It lies in the contestation for drawing the line between fantasy and reality in the colonial discourse. The present section is set out to examine some Western comedy discourses and their representation of others identities. A Hollywood movie set in Morocco *Road to Morocco* (1942) and a Disney cartoon *Sahara Hare* (1955) will be the targets of this analysis.

The first imperative concern of these two Entertainment discourses lies in the creation of an imaginative geography for both the colonizer and the colonized to stress the

distinction between the West and the East. The importance of discussing the significance of space is set in the contention that space is a marker of difference and expressive of social and cultural meanings, as some critics have put it, “in all these cases, space itself becomes a kind of neutral grid on which cultural difference, historical memory, and societal organization are inscribed.” (Gupta and Ferguson 7) In this regard, the question of the Arab-land is set as a place that *continues* to connote danger, emptiness and utter darkness. It tends to be framed within a fixed image inherited from earlier Western circulated discourses that depict, for example, the desert, camels and arched turquoise doors as if they are the only markers of the Arab geographical staples. Taken as such, the Arab desert is framed as a “dematerialized landscape,” (Lefebvre), where the Orientalist can insert, modify and mold things, people and lands in the desert according to the earlier forms and narratives of Orientalist discourses.

People and geographies¹⁵, in a dematerialized space, are depicted in exotic and debased terms to fit the Orientalist frames of earlier writings about the backward Orient. In this sense, some films about Arabs have adopted the modes of representations by which they order Arab locations as seen by Western Orientalist traditions. This kind of representation has made of the Arab space to be understood in terms of an abstract space, as Lefebvre would have it, subject to transformation and ordering. In this sense, the Arab space is made:

¹⁵ The use of geographies here is meant to account for the way movie producers tend to transform territories to come up with different geographical features to suit their particular opportunistic agendas. Geographies in a plural form denotes the idea of having many imagined and transformed spaces inside a movie. These geographies, in fact, do not have any kind of similarities between real life geography and the film geographies.

Homogeneous in appearance (and appearance is its strength), abstract space is by no means simple. In the first place, there are its constitutive dualities. For it is both result and container, both reproduced and productive [...] For, while abstract space remains an arena of practical action, it is also an ensemble of images, signs and symbols. It is unlimited because it is empty, yet at the same time, it is full of juxtapositions, or proximities ('proxemics'), of emotional distances and limits. It is at once lived and represented, at once the expression and foundation of a practice, at once stimulating and constraining, and so on... (Lefebvre 288)

The characterization of abstract space as encompassing a host of opposites is of importance given that through such represented contradictories that this abstract space is made recognizable and tempting. In other words, the abstract space constitutes a way of looking at the world the way its constructors want it to be introduced to their audience not the way it is. The audience aspire to have spaces made exactly the way they fancy when looking at moving pictures on TV screens. Therefore, the function of representation in an abstract space "entails a series of substitutions and displacements by means of which it overwhelms the whole body and usurps its role. That which is merely seen is hard to see – but it is spoken of more and more eloquently and written of more and more copiously." (Lefebvre 286)

In this sense, in most TV scenes the Arab geography is introduced to the Western viewers in a way that may reflect its outdated. Such transformations of geographical image prove a start for more sweeping misperceptions of the Arab cultural diversity and complexity. Instead, they are more concerned with creating a space to fit the ideas the West

have on the East. That is, a space full of people and things is framed based upon debased terms of exoticism, violence, barbarism, misogyny and excessive lust, et cetera.

On seeing the desert, for instance, Jeff Peters and Turkey Jackson the actors of the movie, *Road to Morocco*, become surprised to have their pre-formed ideas drawn from the *Webster Dictionary* quintessentially linked with what they see around them, as they state, “like Webster’s dictionary, we’re Morocco bound.” (Butler and Hartman) This cynicism reveals that they are in a land already defined in American culture as it is constructed in previous movies like *Morocco* (1930) that constructed Moroccan land as threatening and yet tantalizing. Referring to one of the widely used dictionaries in the United States is an attempt to give credibility to the circulated image of the Arab-land as a desert place and thus giving credibility to the colonial construction of otherness. The use of *Webster Dictionary* endorses the view that this comedy movie is a discourse that, in fact, intersects with other numberless Western discourses adopting the same othering process. This process of “rewriting identity”, to depict it perspicuously, is a part of the Western desire to, as Homi Bhabha states, “emerge as ‘authentic’ through mimicry- through a process of writing and repetition.” (Bhabha 88).

The repetition of what is *already* said is an attempt to give a profundity and credibility to the representation of the unified image of the other and to create a space that “stigmatizes” it in order to make this a space more familiar and real. Furthermore, the opening of *Road to Morocco* was inspired by Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), the first novel ever written in England whose hero is rated as “the true prototype of the British colonist.” (Quoted in, Calder 142). The novel starts with Robinson Crusoe being shipwrecked in a storm and left as the only survival on a deserted island. The same prologue

has been employed in *Road to Morocco* when Jeff and Orville were shipwrecked on the North African coast. The repetition of this parodic entry has become a discursive code that warrants the arrival of Western people inadvertently to this exotic space. Moreover, Jack Shaheen believes that the *Arabian Nights*' stories¹⁶ have brought a concomitant effect on Western perceptions. This perception legacy about the Other is what marks the discourse of colonial history that aims at concealing its colonial oppression and normalizing its imperial territorial expansions overseas. For this and other reasons, the mechanism of representation employed in *Road to Morocco* seems to maintain the same line.

However, what might characterize *Road to Morocco* movie from others is its adoption of humorous manner that is deemed an essential attribute for commercializing these images, since this manner is "a socially acceptable form of attack." (Reichl and Stein 10) The imposition of humor on the construction of Morocco in *Road to Morocco* is in some way a challenge to anyone who examines the colonial situations through taking *seriously* what is supposed to be humorous. Besides, comedy discourse has gained its power through its aptitude to camouflage its ideological messages. From the onset, *Road to Morocco* proves to maintain the same artistic features and devices that leak the Western ideology in a more pleasing manner as a way of constructing the 'unknown other.' The experience of *Road to Morocco* with its humorous plot and its main characters' adventure in an exotic land have made of this movie one of "The 50 Greatest Comedies of All Time."¹⁷

¹⁶ Shaheen avers that "until 1979, the *Arabian Nights* 200-plus tales had been printed in more languages than any other text except the Bible," (Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* 8)

¹⁷ See: "Premiere Magazine's 50 Greatest Comedies of All Time." n.d. Filmsite. Document. 23 2 2014. <<http://www.filmsite.org/50greatestcomedies.html>>.

This fact reveals its weight in cinema industry and that that it worth a considerable focus to be taken seriously.

Humoring Moroccan land is in a way or another laughing the identity of its natives. After their shipwreck, Jeff and Orville have pave the way for the West to develop more their stereotypical vision towards what they see as exotic, mysterious and empty land. The desert, in *Road to Morocco*, is defined as a land of emptiness and no one's land without a bulwark and thus as the land of aggression where the question of security remains lacking. The vision of a desert as an empty space has two possible connotations; first, the desert is a *terra nullius* that requires populating as Nathaniel Harris states in his *Atlas of the World's Deserts*: "The 'discovery' of new lands, and the gathering of knowledge about them, was in many cases a precursor to invasion. In the European mind, deserts, above all, were considered "no-man's land" and therefore open to annexation." (Harris 238) Second, desert is perceived as a total vacuum that can be filled only with aggression and harsh realities. This connotation remains largely a reasonable undercurrent that haunts the Western mind nowadays. This stream of perceptiveness has become in the present climate prevalent in most colonial discourses as it is constructed in Western imagination, since "their understanding of desert regions sometimes owed more to imagination than reality." (Harris 238) One might argue that it is difficult to tell the extent to which the desert in reality could simulate its description in the Western imagination, as Harris puts it:

The word "desert" most often evokes a landscape of endless gigantic sand dunes, dazzling white under a cloudless hot-blue sky and a blazing sun. This landscape of the imagination is likely to be empty—deserted—except, perhaps, for a caravan of nomads and camels that inches slowly across the

horizon, or a lone man stumbling, sun-blackened and sun-parched, through the heat haze. (Harris 1)

The infusion of this description in colonial discourses, however, is not quite innocent in the sense that this description are almost annexed to the desert natives themselves rather than the place. For this reason, depicting the weather in the desert, for example, as that of roughness refers to the roughness of its dwellers. That is to say, the aggressive moments faced in the desert makes people aggressive by nature. Moreover, the desert is always made the first to appear in almost all Western movies about Arabs as if it were the only marker of their landscape and cultural variety. In this sense, it is exposed to the audience as a place that collocates threat. Shaheen states: “Arab men threaten Westerners and accommodate annihilators. North Africa appears as a filthy, inhospitable area, complete with dark alleys and terrifying desert sandstorms.” (Shaheen 427)

However, the movie under scrutiny captures this aggression in a comical vein that reduces its sharpness to a light-hearted euphemism as it is clearly expressed in the attempt of Jeff and Orville, in their first step inside the souk, to run away from Arabs shooting guns led by the sheik of the desert named Mullay Kassim. Jeff and Orville are informed that the sheik is pursuing a princess for marriage. Jeff comments satirically that he hopes not to be around when he comes for a divorce. (Butler and Hartman) The way the desert sheik has entered the souk recalls the act of aggression of the Arab images repeatedly depicted in most colonial discourses. Jack Shaheen, in his *The Reel Bad Arabs*, ruminates over the fountainhead of this stereotypical image deployed in Hollywood movies. Shaheen states:

Obviously, filmmakers did not create the stereotype but inherited and embellished Europe’s pre-existing Arab caricatures. In the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries, European artists and writers helped reduce the region to colony. They presented images of desolate deserts, corrupt palaces and slimy souks inhabited by the cultural “other”— the lazy, bearded heathen Arab Muslim. The writers’ stereotypical tales were inhabited with cheating vendors and exotic concubines held hostage in slave markets. (Shaheen 7-8)

Screening Arabs as aggressive in the first steps of Jeff and Orville inside Moroccan Souk that is located in the middle of the desert recalls the attribution of violence to Arab people in the bulk of Western representations of spaces thereby turning them into mere connotations of emptiness. Such representation find their terms of reference in a large number of earlier Orientalist¹⁸ writings. In keeping with such legacy of re-representing earlier images the nowadays writers, comedians or movie producers, have taken the venture to reproduce these images in their works in more enmeshed and modern ways. In support of this, Jack Shaheen states in a YouTube video,

We inherited the Arab image primarily from Europeans in the early days, maybe 150 years, 200 years ago. The British and the French who traveled to the Middle East and those who didn’t travel to the Middle East conjured up these images of the Arab as the oriental other – the travel writers, the artists who fabricated these images and who were very successful as a matter of

¹⁸ According to *Dictionary of Race, Ethnicity and Culture* (2003), the orientalist form two main historical movement: first, ‘the scholarship and administrative practices of members of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in the latter part of the eighteenth century’ that believed that the “British East India Company should govern India in accordance with perceived Indian traditions.” The second group “the nineteenth-century French artists who painted scenes, real and imagined, of North Africa and the Middle East.” Later, “the period of decolonization in the second half of the twentieth century saw a major reevaluation of Orientalist practices.” (Bolaf, Bracalenti and Braham 212)

fact. And these images were transmitted and inherited by us. We took them, we embellished them and here they are. (Shaheen)

In this regard, ascribing aggression and barbarism to the Arabs in *Road to Moroccan* scenes is not necessarily an innovative fact; it began to appear in Renaissance European writings about Islam, a religion for most Arabs. (B. Lewis 25) The attempt to stigmatize the Arabs as “Barbary” aims at labelling them as uncivilized population and uncultured. The term then is likely to be pejorative in the sense that it connotes the exclusion of this category of people from the human sphere. However, Paul Baepler, in his “White Slaves, African Masters”, states that:

Barbary had not only pejorative connotations but a sense of commercial and cultural resistance; Africans were called "barbarians" because they refused to communicate and were reluctant to cooperate. The Barbary corsairs themselves originated in part from the need to defend North Africa from European aggression. (Baepler 91)

This act of perceiving the other as “barbarian” evokes the colonial pretext that the Rest (that is the world outside Europe) needed to be civilized. In other words, the colonial authorities have attempted to couch the real intentions behind laying their control over the other within a set of euphemisms, such as protecting, modernizing and civilizing. Therefore, this idea of barbarism was meant to assert itself “only if there was a concept of the civilized to oppose it.” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 37)

Moreover, the construction of space in such entertaining discourse is apparently an attempt to labelling the other as being different from those who descend from the West. In

this sense, *Road to Morocco* seems to preserve the Western stereotypical way for exploring and representing others' land as unsecure territory. The representation of space, as stated before, carries with it a colonial ideology that tries to outline the desert as wilderness. Edward Said affirms that the empire's concern behind representing the other's geographical landscapes is for expropriating them. In his book of *Culture and Imperialism*, Said says that, "Imperialism means thinking about, settling on, controlling land that you do not possess, that is distant, that is lived on and owned by others." (Said 7) Said's quotation sharply articulates the absence of a present other in imperialist ambivalent mindset as the other that lives on and owns a land that they do not possess.

In an attempt to reflect the difference between the Western civilization and the *Rest*, the movies under analysis fit squarely into the framework of flashing some modern aspects inside the desert land of Arabs that lay beyond civilization. In other words, the Arabian Desert is in constant metamorphosis, in the sense that, from time to time, it is filled with modern technologies that do not fit the time normally hinted to or the place presented in these movies. These actions of desert transformation to fit a more or less modern aspect is maintained with anachronisms. This technique of "placing an event or person or thing outside its historical era" (Abrams 230) and outside its special context is predominantly utilized in the entertaining discourses under investigation. The technique is typically employed in entertaining discourses to add some refinements to the effects of this discourse through attracting the audience's attention. This is done through employing some features out of context like infusing some modern ideas and items in earlier historical and spatial settings. For instance, in *Road to Morocco*, Orville's saying, "If this keeps up, I'll have to buy a scooter," (Butler and Hartman) in the middle of the desert where horses and camels are the only means of transport.



Jeff and Orville running into the mirage of gas station in the middle of the desert (Butler and Hartman)

In the same vein, much of this debate around anachronisms comes real in *Road to Morocco*. For instance, when Jeff and Orville are left in the middle of the desert “all alone in the desert. No food, no water, no nothing,” (Butler and Hartman) many ideas pop into their minds as a sort of what is known as ‘mirages’. These mirages are brought into light to make some changes in the desert setting to as a way to make distinction between the empty desert and that of Western settings. In so doing, Orville tells Jeff in an ironic way, “There must be a gas station somewhere around here.” (Butler and Hartman) Irony is this statement is almost tangible, since a gas station is normally a modern facility found where there are highways, cars and infrastructure, among other equipment that seem to be lacking in the desert.

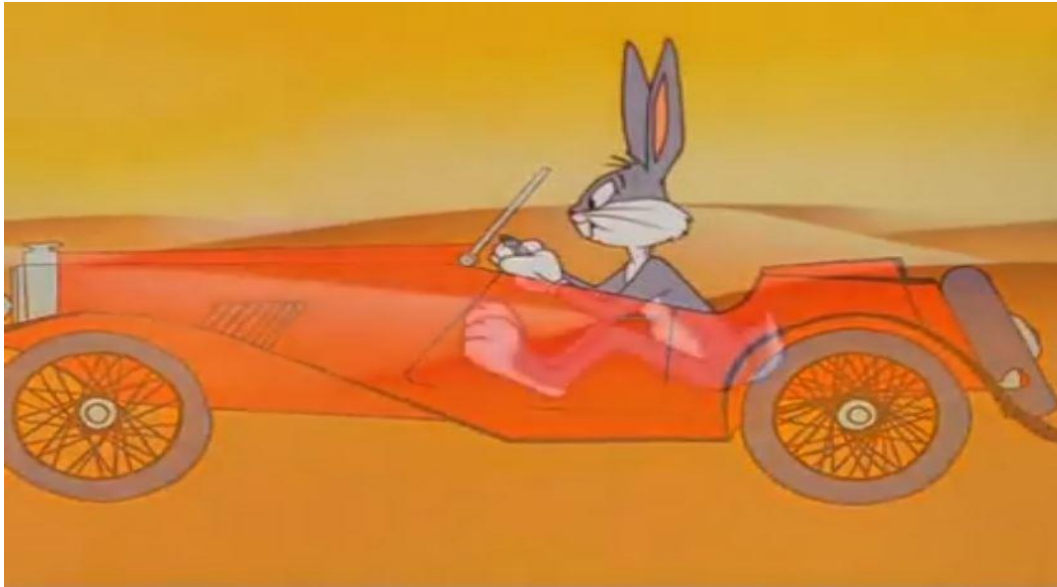
Still a more intriguing aspect of this ironic statement of Orville is its unsaid features. Bringing a gas station idea into a different scene is inconvenient and exemplifies a Western

colonialist tendency to claim civilizing places and people. For centuries now, Western colonialist powers have sought to stretch their colonial reach outside their geographical borders by their willingness to carry out a civilizing mission or as Rudyard Kipling would have it, “a white man’s burden.”¹⁹ This burden of the white-man vis-à-vis the other spaces entails bringing them out of darkness and ornament them with Western features. This is quite clear in *Road to Morocco*, since it has started with featuring an abject, dark and empty desert that has been transformed into somewhat of a modern space. For instance, the gas station featured in the middle of the desert with refreshing drinks, Sandwiches and parking cars; illustrating thus this colonizing desire typical of the Orientalist imaginings. Though it is a mirage, this occurrence examines the way Western Orientalists express their dissatisfaction with a belated nature of a person and their places. Their mission, therefore, is to help these people get ahead with their modernization project with the help of the West.

In this same line of reasoning, the Disney cartoon of “The Sahara Hare” (1955) employs the same technique of anachronism when Bugs Bunny mistakenly arrived in the Sahara believing he came to “Miami Beach”, but found himself in the land of endless hot sands with no sea around. More dramatically and at the same time, ironically, Bunny finds himself chased by the ‘sheik’ of the desert who claims possession of this empty land. Bunny in his attempt to run away from the sheikh saw a mirage of a car once again in the middle of the desert that he tried to use, but it suddenly disappeared. It is, in fact, not the idea of bringing a modern item into a, more or less, backward and empty setting that matters here,

¹⁹ Rudyard Kipling’s poem “The White Man’s Burden” first appeared in *McClure’s Magazine* in February 1899, during the heyday of Empire, and it was written as a response to the American takeover of the Philippines. It was meant to encourage the US following of the imperialist tradition that has been already established by the other European Empires. The poem is so much important in the sense that it embodies the spirit of imperialism. Hence, the title has been used to represent the burden of imperialism.

but it is the fact of adopting a way of thinking that resembles a great deal that of colonial powers seeking only to colonize territories and transform them into the exotic space. The lure of the exotic made accessible through a mélange of anachronisms and the geographies being depicted yields much about how humor would turn a space into a longed for venture to live even through vision.



Bunny riding a car in the middle of the desert before discovering that it was a mirage
(Foster, Sahara Hare)

The mirages employed in these entertaining discourses are meticulously related to Western utilization of modern facilities and technologies that reflect the uncivilized position of the Arabs still living in tents and riding horses and camels. This anachronistic use of Western gadgets in the middle of Arab deserts aims at drawing a kind of binary opposition between the West and the Rest that aims at asserting a kind of dominance of one over the other. In support of this idea, Ashcroft states, “The binary logic of imperialism is a development of that tendency of Western thought in general to see the world in terms of binary oppositions that establish a relation of dominance.” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 24)

Dominance here needs not be understood only in terms of one party exerting a certain kind of power or another by means of military or coercive forces, but it has to be approached from the angle of power as being implemented through imagination. Conflict, nowadays, is viewed in terms of media influence on peoples and its power to defuse imagined stories worldwide in a matter of seconds. The movies approached here do have this capability of creating imagined geographies that can best entice a large group of audience into watching the multitude of images dispatched to them on a daily basis. In this sense, representing the Arab lands in *Road to Morocco* as a merely desert space has a potential effect on people's attitudes to believe in its plausibility, whereas, this disseminated thought is in utter contrast with the topographical features of the Arab land in reality. What a movie represents is an imagined misrepresentation of reality.

As an elaboration on this, Munzer A. Kilani examined the processes of constructing the images of native people in anthropological discourses, as occasionally relying on participant observations rather than imaginary descriptions. However, Kilani affirms that even in anthropology, "the other is shoved into the usual imaginary descriptions; then tamed and neutralized by means of his own culture. This is how the Other is understood and perceived through the eloquence of alterity whose statements and objectives belong to no other than the observer himself." (Kilani 11) In fact, the movies under analysis have maintained the same tags as being already encapsulated in old Western traditions about Others. What is pictured in movies is a mimic and imaginative reproduction of old Western travelers' accounts, novelists, photographers or anthropologists, among many others. What is more than shoving other people or places into the usual imaginary descriptions is their taming by means of their own cultures. That is to say, the places and people being imaginatively represented are subject to their cultures' inadequacy. Considerably, the way

19th century travelers pictured a certain place is being reproduced as the dreamed reality for the subsequent generations. Their cultures still hold negative images stamped on them from earlier works that have now been developed by mingling imagination with old stories.

Twentieth and twenty-first century accounts of these cultures or places have evolved to take on different forms; yet defamed and eroticized in essence. The space is now a slave of the culture it incorporates, and it cannot escape the already made Orientalists' misconceptions about it. Now the observer or producer of a movie has grown in eloquence and imagination to produce a different example of a place that has more imagined features but still in communion with its ancestral part.

The reflection of real space in the movies under analysis seems to deviate from reality to phantasmagoria, especially in *Sahara Hare* cartoon. This phantasmagorical image recalls Baudrillard's conceptions of "hyperreality"²⁰, which is clearly employed in Disney movies as a way to entertain their audience and as a way to disseminate their ideological inclinations in a more aesthetic manner and at the same time with the utility of trivial signs. This manner of hyperreal Disney production is what characterizes the entertaining discourses that seduce their audience through *hyperreality* and trivialization. This seduction weakens the audience and thus makes them believe every image presented to them as a matter of reality and truth. Baudrillard states:

To seduce is to weaken. To seduce is to falter. We seduce with weakness,
never with strong powers and strong signs. In seduction we enact this

²⁰ As discussed in the theoretical part, Jean Baudrillard defines this concept of "hyperreality as an advanced stage of life-as-art which "manages to efface even this contradiction between the real and the imagery. Unreality is no longer resides in the dream or fantasy, or in the beyond, but in the real's hallucinatory resemblance itself." (Baudrillard 145)

weakness, and through it seduction derives its power. We seduce with our death, with our vulnerability, and with the void that haunts us. The secret is to know how to make use of death, in the absence of a gaze, in the absence of a gesture, in the absence of knowledge, or in the absence of meaning. Psychoanalysis proclaims: "assume passivity, assume weakness;" but turns them into forms of resignation and acceptance, in terms still almost religious, in order to promote the development of a resilient, balanced psyche. Seduction, however, makes use of weakness, makes a game of it, with its own rules. (Baudrillard 162)

In the same manner, entertaining discourses in *Road to Morocco* and *Sahara Hare* succeeded in disseminating their descriptions of the imaginative Arab land through employing their seductive features of anachronism and *hyperreality*. These two features are the secrets in reducing the dislikable scenes of violence and death to gain the satisfaction of the audience. The death of Arab antagonists invites more laughter than empathy. Death, for the audience turns into a joyful moment and a normal corollary after which the sinner needs and must be punished. Seducing audiences does not need that much of signs and power of coercion, but it simply relies on positing opponents as perpetrators of all heinous crimes. Since iniquity is despised in almost every culture, Bugs Bunny, though represented and voiced as an animal, gains the audience empathy as symbolizing a Western character who is after good wherever it may. By contrast, the desert sheikh is left unnoticed and cast into a state of oblivion after he is conquered by the Western hero. Doing violence to him is not considered a hateful act, but it is, actually, even invited and celebrated by the audience who grew tired of the bad features attributed to the bad guy in any movie they watch. The same, in fact, applies to *Road to Morocco*, wherein both Western actors gain the audience

empathy and love. Their escape from the desert is indeed symbolic in the sense that it stands out from all that is Arabian and dangerous.

The beginning of both movies always marks the unintentionally or mistakenly arrival of Westerners to the desert; on the other side, the end is always closed by the escape of these arrivals after imbuing their stereotypical discourses through repeating the already circulating images within earlier Western discourses. These sequences of events employed in both movies recall Vladimir Propp's Functions starting with, what he terms, 'absentation' and end in "Wedding." (Propp) In the same line of thought, the act of escaping the desert is another Propp's Function in the tale that he referred to as "The Hero is Pursued," (Propp 56) when "The pursuer attempts to kill the hero." (Propp 57) This event is patent in *Road to Morocco* and *Sahara Hare* when the heroes were targets of the desert Sheiks. According to Propp's Functions, this escape, however, is followed by what he labels as "Rescue of the hero from pursuit." In *Road to Morocco*, for example, Jeff and Orville succeeded in defeating the two Sheiks of the desert and their herd with their simple witty ways, thereby bringing to an end this triumph by the Function of escape as they have succeeded to save victims and leave the desert unscathed.

However, the most striking point that comes to mind while watching the end of the movie lies in the employing this escape as the ultimate objective of Moroccan visitors. This act of escaping Morocco marks a happy-ending, not only in *Road to Morocco*, but also in some other Hollywood movies set in Morocco, like *Hideous Kinky* (1998) *Casablanca* (1942). The most important reason behind this escape is its allusion to freedom; both western actors have made it, finally, to the outer nirvana, New York, out of the outrageous Arab desert. The relief is sensed upon their spotting the skyscrapers of America to realize

how unlucky they have been happening to be in the middle of nowhere unprotected and unsecured.



Jeff and Orville have made it back to New York after their desert escape
(Butler and Hartman)

To conclude this discussion of space, it would be well grounded to argue that the Arab Sahara has been construed, in the Western popular imagination, as a terra nullius, a dangerous and insidious wilderness needing taming. For centuries, it has been argued that approaching these places cannot go without its negative consequences. Many people died in the Arab desert, it is believed, because of the barbarity and ruthlessness of the place itself or the people living in this place. Danger always hovers in the Arab desert. More significantly, the Arab people living in the desert are part of their environment. If the desert connotes roughness and risk, these attributions translate into attitudes adopted by the people living there. In this sense, the Arab race in the Sahara is depicted in distinguishable terms to fit the already held misconceptions about Arabs and Muslims in general. In this sense,

the next section will be a venture into this world of representations of the Arab race in Western Entertainment discourse.

4.2 The Politics of Racial Identity in Western Entertainment Discourse

Many theories have been produced to classify people for anthropological purposes. Anthropology has been based, in general, on theories of race and raciology, to use Paul Gilroy neologism. Historically, colonial powers relied a great deal on theories of race to justify their colonial rule overseas. Henceforth, stories about different races have come to occupy the main themes of literature and media industry. The construction of these races through these outlets becomes a discursive strategy that fuels the circulation of ready-made-judgments about other, believed to be, inferior races. As examples of these races have been Arabs, Africans, Asians, et cetera.

Considerably, race in some movies and TV shows is marketed in a rather sublime manner under the pretense of amusement. More importantly, these media discourses have made it obvious that the question of race is not only about representation of different colors of people, but it also stresses the importance of considering the different characteristics that make a certain people different in their own rights. The difference here is linked to their language, religion, culture, and every practice of their everyday life. In this sense, when Arabs have been first shot on Western TV screens and movie industry, they have been caught within the parameters of such characterizations. Their difference has been construed as a sign of backwardness to the extent that difference has been equated with barbaric and not diversity. The logic for these media productions is to equate all that is different from the Western Self as exotic to their cultures and thus uncivilized. In this sense, the present section examines the ways in which the Arab people are constructed in some American entertainment discourses namely the Hollywood movie *Road to Morocco*, the Disney

Cartoon *The Sahara Hare*, and also one of the most popular stand-up comedy shows in the United States titled as *Achmed the Dead Terrorist* (2008).

North Africa as an area distinguished from other parts of the African continent is seen as an extension to the MENA race/culture. Thus, Arabs are clustered in the American entertainment discourses as sharing the same exoticism, barbarism and what is labelled nowadays as terrorism in addition to other stereotypical and discriminatory descriptions. The first appearance of the Arab people in *Road to Morocco* embodies the way they are exoticized by their difference from the Western actors, the reason why Jeff and Orville keep repeating the phrase “it’s a strange country.” (Butler and Hartman) The strangeness of that country lies in its accommodating different aspects of life, strange face of people and weird cultural behaviors adopted by the desert settlers. Importantly, the repetition of the phrase, ‘it’s a strange country,’ embodies the Western mindset of viewing all that is different as strange and thus unreal. This fact presupposes treating this source of difference as a cluster of barbaric people and sexually deviant creatures. Such was the idea attributed to Arab or African geographies since colonial times.

Westerners construed as an elevated Self occupy a higher rank vis-à-vis its odious African, Asian or Arabian Other or any alien Other for that matter. Everything that the Other does and that differs from the deeds of the Western Self is regarded with suspicion, animosity and despised. In the same manner, Jeff and Orville have viewed every aspect of the Arabian culture as strange; a strangeness reflecting the opposition by which one culture is demeaned at the expense of exotic others.

Screening Moroccan people, in *Road to Morocco*, as exotic “Other” is perspicuously expressed in the way Moroccan people are dressed and the way their faces are delineated.

The Moroccan person is pictured as pudgy, clad-in-Bedouin attires, with garbled sounds. Their attires are all the same to the extent that they resemble one another. Importantly enough, dressing the same way is thought provoking simply because these Moroccan people have many things in common, or, more or less, their culture seems to be not rich and undiversified. This sameness means that they think, act and behave the same way. If one of them is caught stealing money, it means that all of them are potential thieves. If another is spotted killing, it also means that all of them are indubitably dangerous killers. Moreover, with their long beards, Arabs are pictured as evil creatures. Their devilish faces scare not only human but also animals. Picturing them as such is meant to dehumanize them. Their only purpose is to dominate one another and enslave one another. Ruthlessness has been the key marker of their identity. They have been ripped of the humane features as the desert has been ripped of its green grass. Mainly, the image of all of them being the same, wearing the same and behaving the same invites further criticism and enquiries.

This exoticism revealed in the Western stereotypical discourse has become intuitive knowledge fixed in the Western memory and repeated historically in their discourse, whose main feature lies in “its dependence on the concept of ‘fixity’ in the ideological construction of otherness.” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 66) Because most hegemonic discourses are tarred with such fixity, Bhabha views this feature as a weak point that reflects an ambivalent mode of representation. Bhabha adds:

Fixity, as sign of cultural/historical/ racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition. Likewise, the stereotype, which is its major discursive strategy, is

a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always ‘in place’, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated... as if the essential duplicity of the Asiatic or the bestial sexual license of the African that needs no proof, can never really, in discourse, be proved. (Bhabha 66)

Simultaneously, the images that overwhelm Moroccan people in *Road to Morocco* are perceived as intuitive knowledge that requires no proof to be justified. The stereotypical images ascribed to Moroccan people “must always be in excess of what can be empirically proved or logically construed.” (Bhabha 66) In whatever way, the images of exoticism in colonial discourse can never be proved, but rather, they are replicas of the already production of *Arabian nights* industry.

On the other side, however, Western characters, Jeff and Orville are characterized by their elegant appearance in most of the movie scenes. If any comment has to be made on this characterization, the answer lies in the nature of the encounter made between the Western characters, defined as superior and civilized, and the desert settlers, viewed as backward and heathen. This cultural encounter is referred to as a “contact zone”, to use the Mary Louis Pratt adage, wherein, the elegant Western characters are brought to contact exotic and gauche people. Moreover, this contact is perceived as a moment of “ideological interpellation” (Althusser, *Ideology & Ideological State Apparatuses* (notes towards an Investigation)) when Moroccan people are left with confined descriptions and rules set to guide their behavior and appearance in accordance with the dictations of the repressive apparatus of the colonial discourse. The representation of the Moroccan people and Western characters at the same moment in a desert that forms a contact zone is meant to be

an encounter between the “self” and the “other” that assumes the centeredness or superiority of the “self” as contrasted to the inferiority of the “other”.

However, the elegant appearance of Jeff and Orville reflecting their ‘civilization’ is outlined in a mode of ambivalent representation. That is, Jeff and Orville have appeared for the most duration of the movie in elegant Moroccan attires. In this regard, the negative descriptions given to Moroccan characters in clad-Bedouin attires contradicts the real cultural aspect of the Moroccan people, which, according to the Western appropriation of it, corresponds to the elegant way of clothing. In this sense, this stereotypical discourse aims at inscribing the power relations through the rituals of clothing and facial appearance. The question of the clothing ritual might seem a banal affair; however, Bhabha perceives the enactment of such ‘banality’ as the essential configuration of ideological practices. He states:

Aila leads us to the unhomely world where... the banalities are enacted - the fuss over births, marriages, family affairs with their survival rituals of food and clothing." But it is precisely in these banalities that the unhomely stirs, as the violence of a racialized society falls most enduringly on the details of life: where you can sit, or not; how you can live, or not; what you can learn, or not; who you can love, or not. Between the banal act of freedom and its historic denial rises the silence. (Bhabha 15)

Through these banalities, the exoticism of the desert settlers emerges, the discriminatory image is construed, and thus the play of power operates. The infusion of such banalities is an effective strategy employed more authentically in the humor discourse, because in the comic movie *Road to Morocco*, the audience might laugh at both the comic performance

of Jeff and Orville and at the banal messages disseminated in their conversations. Their supposedly 'funny' conversations are instilled by serious issues regarding other's cultures and identities, since every 'small talk' is always, pragmatically speaking, 'big talk'. (Thurlow and Adam 246) As case in point, Jeff and Orville stopped a bearded man to get information about what they label as "the headstrong, impetuous boy" meaning the Sheik; after being informed that he is Mulay Kassim, Orville touched the beard of the informant despising his face semblance and said, "you short of blades?" (Butler and Hartman) As another scene, Jeff asked Orville about some men in the entries of the castle rooms moving their head up and down: "Who are they yessing?" Orville answered: "The princess' old man used to use this for a courtroom. He never lost a case." (Butler and Hartman) These are some ways of circulating negative images of exotic "other" as they are mostly articulated in a humorous manner, as a way to reduce the degree of stereotyping discourse.

Moreover, the act of othering Moroccan people is not only exhibited through their appearances but also through their beliefs. Jeff and Orville's experience in Morocco expresses scenes of exotic beliefs that reflect the credulity of the natives. There are two striking examples in the *Road to Morocco*. First, as American characters arrived inside the Souk penniless and starving, they noticed a hideous plain-featured man getting food at no cost. Orville went to get some "free cold cuts" (Butler and Hartman), but he was about to get his hand cut off by the vender. Jeff shouted at the man "the other fellow did it, why can't he?" (Butler and Hartman) The answer of the vender was, "Allah has seen fit to dim the light of his wisdom. To us, such unfortunate ones are sacred." (Butler and Hartman) This respect of 'sacred person' is deep-rooted in Moroccans' belief throughout its history, and mostly referred to 'Baraka.' However, the concept of Baraka is literary means "blessing, in the sense of divine favor," (Geertz 44) and mostly adhered to those men having

“strength, courage, dignity, skill, beauty, or intelligence.” (Geertz 44) This criteria seem to be absent from the man in *Road to Morocco* that is screened as a foolish man. More than that, the concept of Baraka is viewed by most researchers as a primitive belief ascribed to primitive people. In this conception, Dietrich Von Denffer in his research article “Baraka as Basic Concept of Muslim Popular Belief” avers that, “Many of the researches have included *Baraka* among the conceptions of ‘primitive people’, believing strongly in evolutionist theories and thus also providing good reason for colonialism to exploit the native people.” (Denffer 167) From Geertz and Denffer’s statements, one may deduce that the belief in Baraka did and *still* does loom large in the mindset of most Moroccan people, what is not appreciated, however, is its wrong conceptions and usage as a pretext for colonialist and racial objectives, among which Denffer has listed, “wrong conception of baraka therefore means a wrong and distorted conception of Islam.” (Denffer 167)



The food seller bowed down before the ‘sacred’ man having a free food inside the Souk (Butler and Hartman)

Second, the princess Shalmar has bought Orville from his friend Jeff to marry her, because she believes, according to the Hyder Khan²¹ that her first husband “will die a violent death within a week of the marriage...it is also written that her second husband will be blessed with long life and happiness.” (Butler and Hartman)

These two scenes confirm the credulity and the superstitious belief of Moroccan people and aim at locating them out of the realm of the so-called civilization. However, such Moroccan beliefs cannot be referred to a criteria of their stepping outside this realm of civilization.; but rather, it might be seen as a way of life that differentiates one’s values, tradition, and beliefs from others, because every nation, be it Eastern or Western, is characterized by certain beliefs that may be seen by outsiders as exotic. In this sense, it is not feasible to employ one’s belief or culture as a yardstick to distinguish between ‘civilized’ and ‘uncivilized’. These beliefs have to be approached as signs of difference between nations and yet a manifestation of similarities. Geertz has defended this conception of different cultures that are yet curiously similar and states,

Two men, two cultures; and like those cultures, at one and the same time sharply different yet curiously similar. Their differences are apparent, as differences usually are. One a townsman; the other a rustic. One a displaced aristocrat attempting to sustain his status; the other an ordinary tribesman attempting to raise himself above his origins. One a yogi and spiritually something of a chameleon, tuning surface features to novel settings while remaining inwardly inviolate; the other a puritan and something of a zealot, asserting the moral sovereignty of personal holiness in whatever setting at

²¹ A wise man, in *Road to Morocco*, whose knowledge stemmed from looking at the stars.

whatever cost. The similarities are more elusive, as similarities, at least when they are genuine and more than skin deep, usually are. (Geertz 35)

In other words, the difference does exist within the same society, let alone different ones. Therefore, one might encounter, within the same community, those who do not dress in matching outfits, those who do not speak the same dialect, those who do not celebrate their holidays in the same rituals and those who do not have the same mindset of not sharing the same views and the same likes and dislikes. Western people themselves will not accept to be generalized for a behavior of one person belonging to their community. Therefore, the difference is annexed not only to different communities, but also to the same community.²² The identity of the same community is, thus, “not similar,” but yet “not different”. People sometimes share certain cultural aspects, but at the same time, every one of its individuals perceives those aspects according to their educational background and social influence.

In this sense, some Arab practices might be perceived as primitive; still, these practices, for them, are the best ways to preserve the pure bonds they have with their ancestors. Moreover, these practices might need no further justification, but simply they feel comfortable and reminds them of what they really are and what they should aspire to be. On the other side, these Arab clans are, in fact, intelligent in their own way: the way they nominate their leaders, the way they cherish social bonds and the warmth of their social relationships, and also no one can deny the past contribution of the Arabs in the fields of Arithmetic and Medicine, Astronomy and other fields.

²² This idea of difference within the same community has been discussed profoundly in the section “Identity Formation and the Questions of Difference”.

In this regard, descriptions should be approached in a context of difference. It is, therefore, a context of difference that should not be understood as a warrant to vilify the “Other”, but should be seen rather as reinforcing cultural diversity. In this regard, the act of judging the Other’s belief in *Road to Morocco* is employed through the positionality of the Westerners that view all that is different as exotic to their cultures, whereas, the question of different positionalities that expresses the other perspective is lacking. In the same context, the movie has utilized some images of dehumanizing humanity as it is embodied through slavery. The princess Shalmar of Karameesh is cast, sometimes in the Souk, as a woman carried in a veiled box over the shoulders of half-dressed black men. Other times, she is screened inside the castle served by dozens of women, secured by some strong black slaves standing in every entry of the building, where bearded men standing in lines and keep their head up and down.



The princess is carried by black men inside luxurious box in the middle of the Souk
(Butler and Hartman)

Annexing the act of slavery to the culture of Moroccan people might function here as an act of mislaying the Western contaminated memory of slavery. In this context, this act, as Michel Foucault contends, is a twofold operation: (i) it is a means of oppression and (ii) also a means of resistance. The West, in this regard, resists through exerting pressure over the Other as an attempt to conceal their guilt of the slave trade and colonialism.

However, the scenes of binarism that differentiates the West from the Rest, as mentioned previously, are couched within fixed descriptions that repeatedly circulated in Western discourses. The most striking image that asserts this center/periphery duality and that is widely ascribed to Arab people is the act of barbarism. For example, in *Road to Morocco*, the first appearance of Arabs are introduced as an aggressive person, attacking everyone impeding their way and wrecking others' properties. Jeff and Orville were exposed to different aggressive episodes, most of them by the Sheik and his troop. The Desert Sheik is delineated as an antagonistic man whose deeds are not contained by any law; he is the judge, jury and the executioner. When he heard of the willingness of the princess to marry Orville, the first thing he stated, when he made his first step inside the castle to meet the princess, "where is this dog...it's whispered that on the day set for our wedding, you're planning to marry this...American... Come Ahmed Caspa, let's us see the color of his liver... hang his carcass for the jackals to nibble." (Butler and Hartman) The princess failed to hold his anger at first until she told him to listen to the words of Hyder Khan, the wise man, on whom he commented: "Hyder Khan? Very well, Shalmar. Five minutes does not matter in the life of a cockroach." (Butler and Hartman) This transition from being unsilenced to a tranquil man reflects the profound effect of superstition that could not be desecrated and that functions as both the cause of barbarism and as its sedative.

The Sheik's glossary seems to lack the word "dialogue"; whenever the princess tries to talk to him, he mutes her saying some words like "enough", "quite", or "silence" leaving no space for others to discuss with him. When his first encounter with Jeff and Orville takes place, the only thing was trying to do is killing them without a second thought. However, reading the scenes and the Sheik's reactions and behaviors from the point of view of the Sheik, one might perceive the Sheik's character as intelligible. The Sheik's harsh reaction is an influence of the environment characterized by its hardship and insecurity. Besides, his antagonism against Jeff and Orville might be justified by their attempt to escape with his fiancé. These are the Sheik's vindication for his reaction. Even Jeff and Orville status as strangers does not influence their easy-going life in Morocco. They have been treated like any native, unless they carry out some unacceptable deeds, like trying to cheat some vendors and get free foods. In this sense, committing unacceptable deeds is like violating the tradition of the society, and thus the Westerners are the ones to be blamed for due to their lack of knowledge about other's cultures. This lacking of knowledge about other's culture questions the claim of superiority of Western civilization at the expense of Others. Therefore, it is not fair to despise one's culture and disseminate stereotypical images, while the absence of 'knowledge' imposes itself as a matter of face. The colonial discourse, then, requires rethinking the logics of representing the images constructed by its industries. Cultural conflict is the normal result and the mainstream of lacking knowledge about the Other's culture.

However, the repetition of these stereotypical discursive practices that describes the other as barbaric has rendered its content a taken-for granted knowledge. The circulation of discriminatory description may gain plausibility more authentically through the some barbaric activities of Arab Other, who may represent a much smaller number of the Arab

world. Still, this barbarity does not always stand as the dominant description of one's personality; everyone holds a good side in him/her as well as a bad one. In this context, the



Sheik Mulay Kassim demands apology to his Abdulah (Kassim's guest of honor on his wedding day) after Jeff and Orville start their plan of internal dissension
(Butler and Hartman)

personality of Sheikh Mulay Kassim is not always described as antagonistic, but rather sometimes as a generous, patient and reasonable man, especially after he has invited his enemy in the desert to his wedding inside Kassim's camp. Jeff and Orville have prepared for their plan to save the princess who changed her mind and no longer want to get married to the Sheik after her meeting with Jeff. The plan as Jeff describes is "internal dissension" which Orville explains: "divide and conquer. Brother against brother." (Butler and Hartman) This plan shows the other side of the Sheik who tried to tranquil his guest who is the subject of Jeff and Orville's plan to the extent that Mulay Kassim has bowed down before the other Sheik apologizing for these inconvenient and equivocal deeds. Mulay Kassim says, "This is no doing of mine. Be of good faith. There will be no more...."

Abdulah, please, patience. I humble myself at your feet in apology. Come, sit down.”

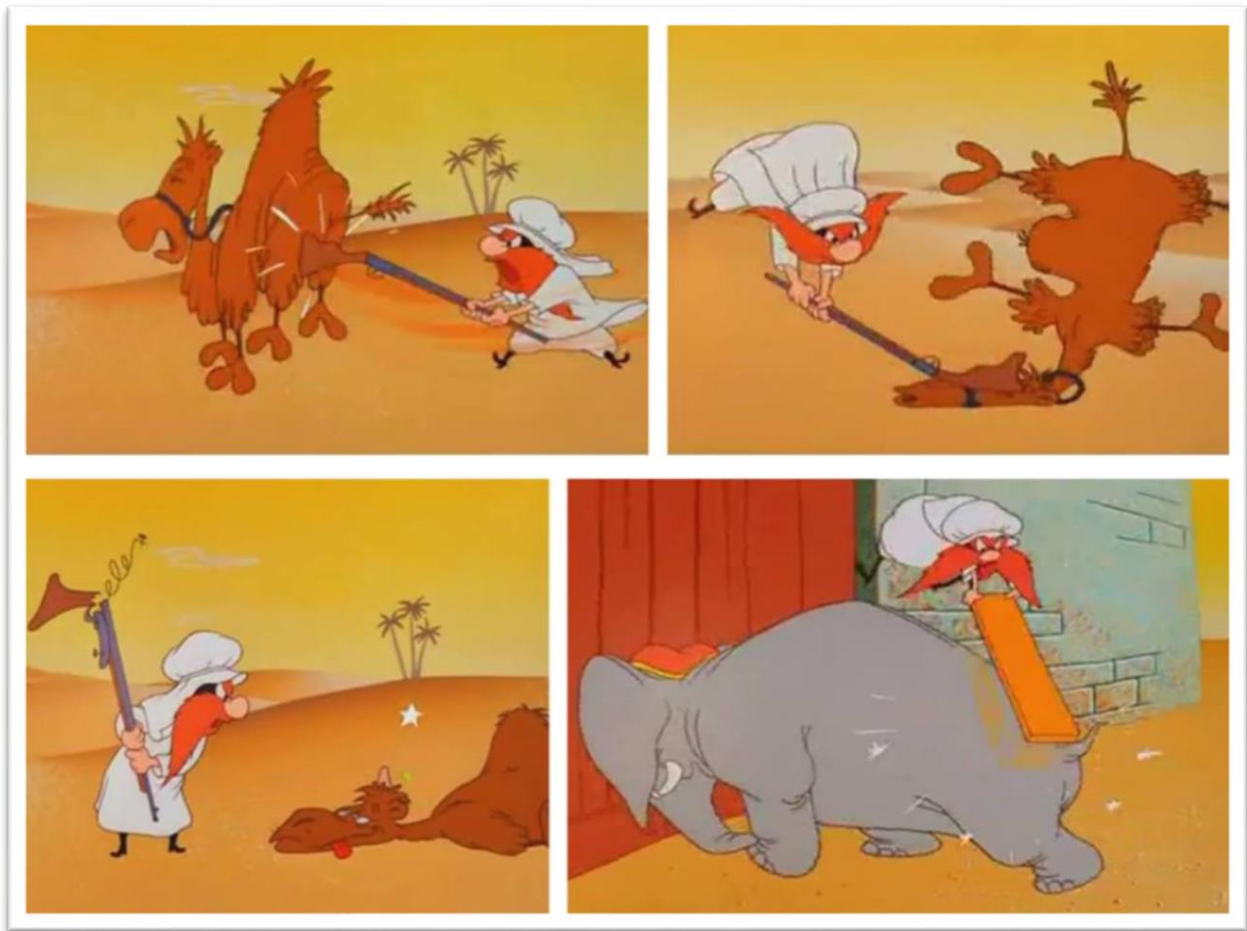
(Butler and Hartman)

The fact that the plan of “internal dissension” drives Arabs to fighting each other, like the case of many countries nowadays, could be understood in the West as a natural reaction exerted by the Arabs whose sense of violence is idiosyncratic. Moreover, Orville has described the plan as “divide and conquer” which resonates the colonial legacy. Malcom X in his speeches “The Black Revolution” has stated, “the greatest weapon that the colonial powers have used in the past against our people has always been divide-and-conquer.” (Malcom) This strategy helped Jeff and Orville to weaken the power of the two Sheiks and make them focus on their internal disturbance. Jeff and Orville, of course, have achieved their principle objective to escape from the desert with the princess and her servant maid.

Moreover, barbarism is deemed as the prevailing image that could be detected in almost every Western discourse about Arabs, including Disney cartoons. For example, In *Sahara Hare*, the barbarism of the Arab desert settlers is cast in the first encounter made between Bugs Bunny and Sheik Riff Raff Sam²³, the Sheik desert. Like Mulay Kassim in *Road to Morocco*, the Sheik Riff Raff Sam lacks the utility of dialogue while meeting a stranger, as he has been pictured as aggressive since his appearance. This aggression is portrayed as natural for it is exerted even against his camel ignoring his order to stop while

²³ That is the name of Yosemite Sam character in *Sahara Hare*

Sam screaming “Whoa camel whoa! Whoa! WHOA! Oh come on whoa! When I say “Whoa!” I mean “WHOA!” (Foster, Sahara Hare) Sam’s acts of violence have gained



Some scenes of Sheik Desert aggression against animals (Foster, Sahara Hare)

their influence on audience perception through the insertion of comic elements. In other words, presenting aggression in comedy discourse insinuates ideas more effectively through emotion rather than reasoning. In his “Cartoon Violence and Aggression in Youth”, Steven Kirsh states that “In an investigation of 5th and 6th grade boys and girls... found that cartoons with comedic elements were perceived as more violent than cartoons without comedic elements, even though both cartoons contained the same amount of violence.” (Kirsh 548-549) This perception of violence for children is reflected in their doing and their thinking. That is, children are likely to “imitate” what they see on television without

distinguishing reality from fantasy (Kirsh 551) and that they are likely to “believe” what they see on television as real (Kirsh 551). In this regard, watching Arab’s aggression in *Sahara Hare* by children, the main audience of Disney cartoons, is likely to instill the idea of ascribing barbarism to Arabs in minds.

The potency of *Sahara Hare* discourse on its viewers’ attitudes lies in both its inclusion of humorous elements and its orientalist trend. These two features enable the circulation of Orientalist vision about the other among children themselves and contribute to lump all Arabs together under the same heading of aggressive people. This trend, thus, is kept leaking out and instilled inside one’s memory for generations; the influence of such type discourse (animated comedy) could be detected in both children and adults. In support of this, an “American Medical Association” published a survey that affirms,

For both adults and children, we expect that there will be positive relationships between their degree of exposure to media violence and their subsequent short-term displays of aggressive behaviors, emotions, and ideas. Priming, imitation, and excitation transfer would all contribute to these effects. (Bushman and Huesmann 349)

This fact could be more fair-minded while referring to entertainment discourse, like *Sahara Hare* in our context, whose role is to “camouflage or trivialize depictions of violence” and makes the viewers of all ages believe that “seriousness of the events they are watching should be down played.” (Kirsh 549) However, the events presented in comedy discourse is peculiarly and unconsciously taken more seriously by the viewer due to its deviation from reality. Kirsh avers that “the more the violence deviates from reality (as is the case in cartoons, science fiction, and fantasy), the less likely it is that the act of violence

will be taken seriously by the viewer.” (Kirsh 549) Kirsh confirms as an outcome: “Given that comedic cartoons deviate significantly from reality, and it is therefore difficult for the viewer to make a connection between the onscreen violence and a personal threat of violence, the level of violence associated with the viewed media is diminished.” (Kirsh 549) In other words, the act of violence is camouflaged by the inclusion of humorous elements and made of it a natural scene that needlessly have to be criticized.

Our concern in this analysis is not to expose the influence of violent scenes on viewer’s behavior, but rather to reveal their influence on people’s mind and the way the Other is constructed and subjected in Orientalist representation. For example, children who watch *Sahara Hare* might fall prey to the negative image ascribed to desert Sheik as being a living-in-desert terrorist man. Besides, this negative image is likely to “illustrate the child to *vice versa* his understandings of his life and surroundings” (Habib et Soliman 256) and may come to grow up lumping the Sheik under this ‘acquired image’ disseminated more effectively through cartoon discourse, where the Sheik becomes the archetype of all Arabs for they all belong to the same community.

Moreover, though the Arabs have been categorized as terrorists since the 60s, the idea of ascribing terrorism to the Arabs has become a more conceivable and natural description in the post 9/11. The issue of terrorism has become the prime-subject of most entertainment discourses, especially in the United States. As an example, Jeff Dunham’s *Achmed the Dead Terrorist* stand-up comedy show has gained its popularity through the topic it is dealing with, namely “terrorism” which has been associated predominantly with Arab people in general and Muslim people in particular. Besides, the show has attracted hundred millions of viewers, especially on YouTube website and Dailymotion. Dunham,

an American ventriloquist, is known for his style of employing his collection of dummies to transmit his remarks on the different issues, among which his dummy “Achmed the dead terrorist”²⁴ functions as a religious fanatic whose job used to be a suicide bomber.

The humorous exploration of terrorism in *Achmed the Dead Terrorist* has gained, however, the satisfaction of audiences, even Muslim people too, especially after his successful performance of Achmed dummy in some Muslim countries, like the United Arab Emirates and Malaysia. This fact reflects the power of humor to scorn others through circulating opposite ideas and yet receiving rousing applause during and after the end of the show. However, the case of humor is not always the same while scorning what others might consider sacred. For example, the Danish political humorous cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammed in 2006 “have triggered outrage among Muslim across the Middle East, sparking protests, economic boycotts and warnings of possible retaliation against the people, companies and countries involved.” (Anderson) This reflects two perspectives about humor. First, the power of comedy “to reflect gross misconceptions of the Other.” (Purcell, Brown and Gokmen 374) Second, laughing people directly and with no retouch of one’s talk might not operate as a successful message to criticize others. For example, despite the fact that Dunham has wisely avoided falling into these two traps, he has received some kind of resistance in Malaysia, when the Ministry of Culture and Arts demanded that Dunham’s dummy character Achmed has to “be changed for local sensitivities, including his name, likeness, references to virgins or Muslims.” (Gourlay) However, the *Achmed the Dead Terrorist* show was successful despite the replacement of “Achmed” with his brother

²⁴ This puppet is “shown as a skeleton with heavily accented features such as a high forehead, black bushy eyebrows, eyeballs that appear to be crazed, a turban and the stereotypical beard often associated with Muslim males. (Purcell, Brown and Gokmen 379-380)

“Jacque the French Terrorist”²⁵. The Malay Ministry was worried about any public outrage because the name “Achmed” that may be seen as another name of the prophet²⁶ Mohammed (Yusuf)

The use of “Achmed” instead of “Ahmed” might be another troublesome opened to different interpretations. It could be read from the Arab perspective as an distorted appellation to an Arab man in general. This perception could be an over-dramatization of an issue, but there is one patent fact that could not be denied that the name is meant to be Arabic. Dunham has made a humorous skit on the name of “Achmed” in his conversation with his character dummy. Some audiences might perceive this skit as amusing, whereas others may see it as a scornfulness of cultural difference:

- **Jeff:** So, uh, Achmed...
 - **Achmed:** No, no, it's Achmed.
 - **Jeff:** That's what I said
 - **Achmed:** No you said Akned, it's Achmed khukhkhukh khukh Huch... (laughter from the audience) Silence! I kill you!
 - **Jeff:** How do you spell it?
 - **Achmed:** What?
 - **Jeff:** How do you spell your name?
 - **Achmed:** Oh-uh... it's: A... C... Flemkh... (laughter from the audience) Silence! I kill you!
- (Dunham, Achmed the Dead Terrorist)

²⁵ “Jacque the French terrorist” dummy was actually Achmed with a beret and mustache.

²⁶ As it is mentioned in the following Quranic verse: “And remember when Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), said: “O Children of Israel! I am the messenger of Allah unto you, confirming the Taurât [(Torah) which came] before me, and giving glad tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be *Ahmed*.” (The Qur'an, As-Saff s61.v6) (My emphasis)

Seeing this conversation from two different perspectives brings into the fore the theory of disposition that provides a “nuanced understanding of the social attitudes brought to instances of humor and, in particular, a more developed sense of individual social context and how these contexts influence what is considered funny and acceptable discourse.” (Purcell, Brown and Gokmen 375) What is acceptable and what is not is the core of this theory that gives the right to the audience to evaluate comedy discourse pivoting on their dispositions, as Purcell et al. put it: “Disposition theory is a framework to understand who will regard which content as funny, and how disparaging humor can be seen as amusing.” (Purcell, Brown and Gokmen 375) This audience engagement to the assessment of humor has interrupted the belief that the content of comedy discourse should not be taken seriously.

This engagement, however, does not mean viewing all humorous content from a negative perspective by those who are the subject of it. Comedy discourse can still keep its humorous influential on the its subjects themselves, for example, “some women [find] sexist jokes humorous... whites [find] anti-black humor funnier than blacks and vice versa, but blacks also demonstrate an appreciation of anti-black jokes.” (Purcell, Brown and Gokmen 375) In this sense, *Achmed the Dead Terrorist* oscillates between different positionalities: the view that might see it nothing more than an entertainment show and those who find it a subject that should be condemned, as it is epitomized in Malaysia. The reason for this condemnation lies in the fact that Dunham’s humorous show is not difference, in terms of content, from the Danish cartooning of Prophet Mohammed. Dunham’s show and the Danish cartooning meet with referring to a belief that those committing suicide Bombing may get rewarded in paradise with 72 virgins. In one of his skits, Dunham informs Achmed that he is a dead bone, a fact he refuses to believe. After

contemplation, Achmed “looks out at the audience and asks if they are his virgins, invoking the popular if mythical reward for suicide bombers.” (Purcell, Brown and Gokmen 280)

Dunham, on the other side, tries to reorient the trend of tagging Achmed as a Muslim leaving a space for his objectors to rethink their view towards his shows. Dunham has asked ‘Achmed’: “So I guess you’re Muslim?” but ‘Achmed’ repudiates this claim in view of the fact that he is “made in China” (Dunham). Still, this failed escape is not entitled to camouflage the clear truth that the subject of his show is meant to be Islam, especially with his reference to some occasions of Muslim uses of words like “Allah”. By bringing into question the non-Islamism of ‘Achmed’, however, Dunham’s message to his audience might be his refusal to generalize the fact that all Muslims are suicide bombers, but at the same time, he defends the idea that all suicide bombers are Muslims. This equation is based on the ground of 9/11 event that has made the West paranoid and afraid of some extremist ‘Islamist’ movements carrying out a threat against their security. This paranoia has contributed to the emergence of what is branded as “Islamophobia” in many countries. Besides, many nonconformist fundamentalist behaviors try to spread the “*Laisser-Tuer*” attitude in the name of Islam.²⁷ From this point, one might be able to understand Dunham’s motive behind the utilization of “Achmed the Dead Terrorist” puppet.

However, approaching this discussion on *Achmed the Dead Terrorist* from a Postcolonial perspective might give another dimension to this analysis. Since “Stereotype humor is culturally and historically contingent, and functions to express relative power,” (Purcell, Brown and Gokmen 385) the struggle between the Self and the Other is the essence of this comedy discourse, through which stereotype is “continually

²⁷ Like the case of ISIS and Taliban movements.

propagated...likely hardening the views of the Other and making it difficult to change an individual's position on the dispositional spectrum.” (Purcell, Brown and Gokmen 385)

The presence of this ‘conflictuality’, to use Bhabha’s word, in such discourse affirms the continuity of satisfaction/dissatisfaction and desire/fear that incarnate the colonial ambivalence. That is, Dunham’s attempt to non-Islamize his character ‘Achmed’ can be interpreted, according to Bhabha’s line of reasoning, as a projection of Western fears of the unknown Other, the fear of his religion and, generally, the deep cultural fear of the ‘Other’.

At the same time, Dunham’s ambivalence is also reflected through his desire to make of ‘Achmed’ “a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite.” (Bhabha 86) This use of this Bhabha’s expression might seem to be out of its original significance, but it reflects the way Dunham’s attempt to non-Islamize ‘Achmed’ is meant to confirm, without reservation, that the Achmed dummy is not quite Muslim but almost the same. More profoundly, his question about Achmed’s religion might also function as an aide-memoire to his audience that all terrorists are Muslims and not all Muslims are terrorists.

To conclude, this section has attempted to read the way racial identity is constructed through comedy discourse. This proves that comedy discourse is just like any other Orientalist discourse designed to maintain tight grips on the subject and the object of their representations. Defaming people by resorting to racial and stereotypical labelling is one of the parameters that this section has made apparent in addition to the way this racial discourse may control audiences would accept pejorative stereotypes to be valid about a person without even questioning the validity of these stereotypical claims. Comedy has added a new dimension to the conception of representation through its insertion of techniques that lead to galvanizing audiences into enjoying its discourse without alluding to its insidious ideological implications. The following section, however, will focus on how

gender is allied with race to form stereotypical disparaging of the Arab people. To this end, exploring gender is meant to investigate the way Arab women are screened in the American entertainment discourse.

4.3 Humoring Gender: The Orientalist Flow of Harem Construction

Postcolonial theory, indeed, allows us a peculiar lens to see into the lives of the once colonized and marginalized people. It interrogates the firmly established traditions of Western discourses that aims at exploring the Oriental life as a way to exert their control over them. Such control has been attained through a plethora of means, the most important of which is placing firm grabs on women's private sites. By having access to private spaces of oriental women, the intrepid European gazes have managed control over other oriental belongings. This way, the process of laughing the Other would manifest itself as an effective outlet with the infusion of the issue of gender, which is perceived as typically an important feature of humorous discourses stereotyping Oriental women. Women in entertainment discourse are either absented or brought into play misrepresented and stereotyped in most cases. Most of Western Entertainment discourses aim at providing a site of entertainment to their audience, especially through stories circulating about the Oriental women. These entertaining stories contribute to the circulation of stereotypical assumptions disseminated through colonial discourse about the East in general and the Eastern woman in particular. The Arab world, in fact, has constituted a plain ground for Western representations, through which the woman appears, "only as a metaphor for the negative characterization of the Orientalized Other as feminine." (R. Lewis 18)

Like many other colonial discourses, *Road to Morocco* proves to employ the same image of an oriental woman as it is circulated in Western memory and which projects her through a mirror of subjugation, sexual promiscuity and occupying 'harem'. Stereotyping Moroccan women in *Road to Morocco* lies in confining them into a unified image that portrays them as belly dancers with attractive half-dressed clothes. They are the center of

the Western gaze and the first object to catch Jeff and Orville's sights in their first step inside the Arabian city. Their attires and half-dressed bodies are like dangled baits immediately enticing voyeuristic gazes. Picturing them as such proves right this idea of reiterating the Western old racist traditions of tabling and archiving the Orient. Whenever they are brought on stage, they become objects of sexual desire and solely tools of distraction. This is supported by Jeff's and Orville's mere act of bumping into the roof of a gate's ark unaware of anything except the tantalizing Arabian female body which happens to be around at the same time.



Jeff and Orville attacked by a woman attired in a belly dance dress inside the Souk
(Butler and Hartman)

Moroccan women in *Road to Morocco* are incontrovertibly ideological constructs. The movie has distinguished between two types of Moroccan women; (i) women with a transparent clothes known as belly dancers, and (ii) those with a *haïk* covering their faces allowing only their eyes on display. In the movie, the first type is always made visible and centralized in the middle of the screen, while the second is marginalized, mostly silent and ill-cast. Despite the fact that the way of dressing of the second type was the accustomed attire in Morocco at that time,²⁸ these women are not centralized in the movie, but one may notice them only among the crowds, for they may not promote the ideological construction of Orientalist discourse. On the other hand, the focus is made on the second type, since they appeal to the Western memory as belly-dancers-like with their transparent diaphanous garment. In this regard, women in *Road to Morocco* are stereotyped as colonial subjects based on their difference to women in the West. Therefore, this discourse represents women as Western subjects with a fixed image rather than as Moroccan citizens with a real identity reiterating what Bhabha's statement that "colonial discourse produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once an 'Other and yet entirely knowable and visible.'" (Bhabha 70-71) The aim of such discourse is to recognize the "racial/cultural/historical differences" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 70) and distinguish them from those of the West. This differentiation overwhelms the Western writings in which they create their own myths of the Orient (Kabani) and made their Orient not "the Orient as it is, but the Orient as it has been Orientalized." (Said 104)

This Western construction of the image of the Oriental woman is essential to the drawing of this center/periphery relation and to the creation of the imagined community

²⁸ 1942, the year *Road to Morocco* was published

through which imperial ideologies are constructed. Implied in Said's claim is the idea that the image the West has of the Orient is the corollary of processes of Orientalizing/Othering carried out by Orientalists all for the sake of exposing the female body to outer intrepid gazes. The challenge is to get inside the harem enclosure and find a way into the most fragile part of the Orientals, which is their women. In this sense, the harem sphere "symbolised the opacity of the indigenous culture which the colonisers were determined to render transparent, so as to better include the private (feminine) sphere of the native home within their surveillance." (Morley 66) This fact has made of Western cameras thirsty for penetrating this "enclosed, protected, luxurious and secret female space." (Morley 75) This access can be attained only through Western women who may have free access to harem's scenes and enclosures. This condition is not available for *Road to Morocco* movie with the absence of Western woman character to play this role. However, the power of entertainment discourse has made of this private space open to Western males. Entertainment discourse, in this account, has made it possible for the Western man to have access to the harem niche, since humor is viewed as an innocent act that may generate laughter rather than violence or hatred.

Moreover, entertainment discourse is characterized by its "simplification in the process of stereotypical representation," (Bhabha 70) which can be seen as a light-hearted amusement. This simplification and humorous feature may function as a warrant for the Western camera to circulate freely inside the Harem sphere revealing its secret to public. Caustically, many Western writings have engaged in criticizing Arab men for subjugating innocent and primitive women to satisfy their libidinous drives. This space is perceived in the West as "a space of pure sexual fantasy, where a man can have "a few dozen ladies on the side". It is a space of absolute male power, where the master of the harem surrounds

himself with eunuchs.” (Jarmakani 1) However, this image of a master of the harem seems to be applied to Orville and sometimes Jeff instead of the Mulay Kassim, the desert Sheik. They are seen after their arrival in Morocco in a luxurious harem space surrounded by a few dozen women on either side dancing for them and waiting on them.



Orville surrounded by a few dozen women waiting on him (Butler and Hartman)

This scene can be read from two different perspectives. First, breaking into this private space by Jeff and Orville might be understood as an intentional act to add some humorous refinements to the movie, since sometimes “breaking the strongest taboos surely resulted in great comic effects.” (Oesterheld 71) This scene, in this sense, should not be taken literally and seriously. However, the second perception lies in the ambivalence of the Western claim defending Arab women’s rights, whereas these rights are transgressed by Western characters themselves while adopting the same practices, like enslaving women, they usually the Eastern men are accused of. This ambivalence has given a new dimension

to the mode of representation articulated in *Road to Morocco* that is reflected in the transparency of what Roland Barthes calls “l’effet du réel.” (Barther) That is, although some Western writings²⁹ accuse the Arabs of imprisoning the Arab women and condemning her to a life prison inside the barred walls of the harem, they themselves (Westerners) indulge in the pleasures offered by the traditional sexual images and roles attributed to the Oriental woman. Looking at how Jell and Orville, the two Western characters in the movie, expressed from the outset their resentment towards the Arab mindset of confining their women to a life of servitude, but later, they seem to contradict their prior attitude about women freedom allowing themselves to be surrounded by dozen of servants waiting on them hand and foot. Having done so proves their hypocrisy and wavering attitudes. They do follow the same path trodden by their ancestors when they attempt to sketch the Arab woman as culturally unchanging and degraded adopting the same disparaged and stereotyped images about Arab woman as abject belly dancer serving nothing but quenching sexual whims of men.

As stated earlier, the Arab woman images in the movie of *Road to Morocco* have taken two different trajectories in their projection. In addition to exposing belly-dancer woman to the center of male/camera gaze, the other type of woman is that with *haïk* attire that is totally marginalized and barely noticed among the crowds. Because of the fact that Moroccan women wearing *haïk* are unreachable and for Western voyeur and do not correspond to the way Arab women are constructed in most Orientalist discourses, *Road to Morocco* casts them as passing and unseen living souls with no reference to their status

²⁹ As an example of these writings, what E.H. Mitchell have cited in Judy Marbo about helping “our poor sisters to escape from their captivity, but to go and see them in their detestable prison was more than a Christian should have to bear.” (Mitchell 8)

and role in the society. The reason behind ignoring these fully veiled women in *Road to Morocco* is that they contradict their colonial texts representing Arab woman as sensually available, and they obstacle their desire to penetrate the *Harem*. In this sense, this way of dressing *haïk* can be perceived as a form of resistance against male's desire (voyeurism), whereas it is seen from another positionality as a form of oppression against woman's freedom, as Malek Alloula puts it in his analysis of the colonial postcards: "the colonial postcard says this: these women, who were reputedly invisible or hidden, and, until now, beyond sight, are henceforth public." (Alloula 118) For him, the frustrating thing for the colonial photographers is not only the question of invisibility of these women, but also the fact that these women make of these photographers an object-to-be-seen; Alloula clarifies:

These veiled women are not only an embarrassing enigma to the photographer but an outright attack on him . . . Thrust in the presence of a veiled woman, the photographer feels photographed; having himself become an object-to-be-seen, he loses initiative: he is dispossessed of his own gaze. (Alloula 14)

Practicing the viewing instead of being viewed has made of the *Road to Morocco* producers resort to the representation of unveiled harem women, which reveals the clear Western desire to unveil Arab women and reshape the perspectives and the principles hidden behind the veil. This reaction was also adopted, as Alloula confirms, by the French photographers who seek the "unveiled *Algérienne*":

The photographer will respond to this mutism and challenge by means of a double violation: he will unveil the veiled, and give figurative representation to the forbidden. This is the sum total of his project or, rather, his symbolic

revenge upon a society that continues to deny him any access and questions the legitimacy of his desire. (Alloula 14)

This attempt to “unveil the veiled” reveals the intention of what is labelled as a Western ‘civilization’ that aims to create an alternative “reality” for the natives under the auspices of modernization and emancipation. The fact of this reality, however, seems to reverse the native’s traditional values and make a huge rift between what they are and what Westerners want them to be. The veil is perceived in most Arab countries as a national dress and its confrontation with the Western style has made of it a marker of difference that differentiates one’s identity from Others, it functions as “‘a kind of visual metaphor for identity’ that works to relieve the identity ambivalences in Western culture.” (Droogsma 296)

In addition to the centrality of the harem and the marginalization of women with *haïk*/veil, the movie *Road to Morocco* has presented the heroin as a princess Shalmar³⁰, waited upon by the harem and black men, living in a luxurious palace. Shalmar is presented as a unique character in her appearance and clothing. Her facial expressions suggest her being a westernized character more than Moroccan. She has been divested in the movie of Arab qualities is meant to get her join the bandwagon of the so-called Western modernization process. On the one hand, she is no longer a backward creature clad in thick garment covering all of her while letting a tiny space for her eyes to pop out; on the other hand, she is not a total mimic of a belly-dancer or the other marginal women staged to perform solely pleasurable stuff. More interestingly, Shalmar is a Western refinement of both pictures. Her attitude is more Western than Moroccan. Engaging in a process of westernizing Shalmar all through the movie has proven valid this habit of Western claims

³⁰ The role of princess Shalmar was played by Dorothy Lamour, an American actress.

to civilize a part of the world and its people. The fact that she belongs to a royalty and has all a Western lady characterization, Shalmar becomes an epitome and reference of a good manner and lady-like comportment compared to other Moroccan women. She, therefore, has to follow her model as she speaks good English, sings romantic songs and, above all, sighs as an upper class Western lady, especially when performing Hawaiian songs. Shalmar, thus, is a replacement of the Western character given that she is Moroccan but not real Moroccan reflecting the transition or rather the transgression of Shalmar from Moroccan culture to the Western so-called 'high culture.'

However, just like all Orientalist movies, the princess has to fall victim of the system to which she belongs. Though she is a prince, she, too, has to face some hard times such as other Moroccan women in a phallogentric social milieu. She is forced to marry a desert Sheikh without her consent. Shalmar was engaged to the Sheik before the arrival of Jeff and Orville, but, as it has been stated before, Hyder Khan, the wise man, has instructed her that her first husband "will die a violent death within a week of the marriage...it is also written that her second husband will be blessed with long life and happiness." (Butler and Hartman). In this context, she has to find someone to be her first husband, who is happened to be Orville. This vision of Hyder Khan is a sign of transition in Shalmar's life, for it is a leading event to an intercultural romancing experience, especially after her receiving good news from the wise man about the mistake he made for not noticing a fireflies sticking to his telescope as a result of his not cleaning "the lenses for a week." (Butler and Hartman) Presenting Western men as being fascinated by Moroccan women, Shalmar has decided to spend the rest of her life with Jeff, she states to him: "You may feel strange about marrying a princess, but I'll spend the rest of my life trying to live it down." (Butler and Hartman)

This romance experience between the Moroccan princess and the American character contradicts Jack Shaheen's announcement that "America's movie censors objected to love scenes between Westerners and Arabs. Even producers experiencing desert mirages dared not imagine such unions." (Shaheen 20) Though there might be no Hollywood code confirming that, but Shaheen's statement could be based on his examination of "more than 900 feature films displaying Arab characters," (Shaheen 10) or he may be alluding to Arab male character not being allowed to marry a Christian woman. At any rate, he has confirmed that this kind cross-cultural union is allowed only "after revealing they were actually Western Christians!" (Shaheen 20) He has provided an example of Valentino in *The Sheik* (1921), when a love unites both Diana, the Western heroine in the movie, and Sheikh Ahmed, who has been revealed later as a European, not an Arab, regardless of his dressing in Arab garbs and being the boss of Arabs in the desert. This is revealed in the movie when his French friend has affirmed to Diana that he is not an Arab. His father was an Englishman, his mother a Spaniard. (Shaheen 20) However, the case in *Road to Morocco* seems to be diametrically opposed to this rule, since there is no sign of American or European roots of the princess in the movie, apart from being an American actress in reality named Dorothy Lamour. However, the rule Shaheen has detected could be defended from different perspectives. First, the idea that Shalmar is presented in the movie as a lady with Western qualifications can make this rule reasonable and valid; she is not really Western but made appear Western. Her free choice to join the two American heroes in the movie with every move they make accounts for her mesmerize with the Western fascination and the way a Western gentleman treats a lady. In fact, such westernizing of the princess yields quite different interpretations. One of these would be the idea that most Western movies about Arabs attempt to westernize an Arabian characters

and prove that this one would easily succumb to their wishes while bragging them for bringing them from out of darkness and their social milieu tyranny. Eventually, *Road to Morocco* weaves perfect scenarios of westernized princess characters leaving her country and her people behind, while following and looking forward to embracing the full ideals of the West. Looking at such kind of cultural detachment, so to speak, makes plain the fact that Western movies about the Arabs construct the validity of Shaheen's claim that romance experience could be attained merely between Westerners.



The princess Shalmar in conversation with Jeff and Orville (Butler and Hartman)

Still a more interesting point is the fact that the Western heroes in *Road to Morocco*, Jeff and Orville, have chosen Shalmar because of her privileged social status and her affluence. In other words, this marriage between Jeff and Shalmar is established upon the heroes' acquisitiveness to have their hands on the princess fortunes. This fact is revealed when Orville has said to the princess attendant, when they were on a ship back to New York: "This time I'm bringing home the bacon too, and what a slab... but don't think I'm marrying you for her money." (Butler and Hartman) When the attendant, however, asked him about his reasons behind marrying her, he becomes entangled and tries to make her

forget about the issue by saying: “I want the Statue of Liberty to be proud of me, so I’ll powder my nose.” (Butler and Hartman)

Moreover, the fact that this movie is an entertainment discourse could be another reason for allowing this marriage between the West and the East to take place. This quasi-intercultural relationship is meant to be funny, so as to entertain the audience with this unexpected scenario. After all, entertainment discourse is about expecting the horizon of unexpected issues, not necessary to expect the same sequence of events, like disallowing any marriage between a Western woman and an Arab male. . In this sense, entertainment discourse should be replete with “newness, contrast, inconsistency and surprise, form the basis of amusement and humor... while maintaining a level of pleasantness at the new situation.” (Purcell, Brown and Gokmen 375)

Moreover, violence against women is a predominant theme in *Road to Morocco*. It has been stated before that this behavior is labeled as idiosyncratic in the Arab world. What is striking, however, is that native women are portrayed as the main victim of this behavior. Regardless of her position in Morocco. Shalmar the princess is depicted as being an easy-target of violence from the desert Sheik. She lives in constant fear of him whenever he comes to the castle. When he came to see the princess after he has heard of her marriage with one of the American heroes, all women in the castle including the princess panicked.



The princess Shalmar bowing her head before the Sheik desert, Mulay Kassim
(Jones, 1942)

Patriarchal system, in this sense, has a potential influence on gender roles in the Arab world. Regardless of her social class, the Moroccan woman in *Road to Morocco* construction is categorized as contingent, given that she cannot live without being dependent on and controlled by male. Princess Shalmar, who lives in a luxurious palace with power over other women and some ‘black’ male, is still dependent on the Sheik, who lives in a tent with his gang away from any sign of modernity. In this sense, living in a patriarchal society, the Moroccan woman could be seen as having the same implication of the ‘Other in colonial discourse. Woman (the Other) cannot be defined other than the nebulous side of “Man” (Self). In short, she is the man’s Other.

Caught in the attempt to escape to New York with her new American lover, Shalmar becomes a captive of Sheik Mulay Kassim. She is taken by force to a wedding arranged in the middle of the desert. This quasi-dramatic scene of holding her in captivity (though embedded with humorous features) furnishes the ground for the appearance of the American heroes to rescue the princess, their only hope to depart this desert and move to

their home in the US. In this sense, the pattern of captivity in *Road to Morocco* seems not to follow the thread of captivity narrative in desert Sheik romances that usually feature a romantic adventure between a desert Sheik and a Western woman, and picturing the Sheik as a man hiding his mercy and love behind his arrogance and his violent reactions. The story usually ends by revealing these hidden emotions and thus produces unexpected happily ended. In the same stream, Barlow and Krentz state:

When the romance reader picks up a book that describes a marriage of convenience to such a devil-hero, she understands she is being promised a tale that will deliver a strong sense of emotional risk and at the same time resolve paradoxes and integrate opposites. The happy ending will be especially satisfying because it will have been preceded by several exciting clashes between the heroine and her beloved adversary. (Barlow and Krentz 19)

Despite the fact that in most Sheik romances, this feature of ‘fierce pleasure’ is “used to depict the dynamics of the developing relationship” (Barlow and Krentz 26) that ends with the Sheik’s marriage to the Western heroine, the story line of the Sheik of *Road to Morocco* has a different perspective. With the presence of Western heroes in the movie, Mulay Kassim has kept only his devil tag with no reference to any positive image. He shows no respect to a woman’s choice; he has taken the princess by force and has asked, at the same time, his right hand man to “take one of the girls for yourself.” (Butler and Hartman) This

phrase reflects the position of women in the Arab land. She is merely a creature that could be owned and placed somewhere at will. *Road to Morocco* in this sense does not take the



Jeff and Orville accompany the princess and her attendant to New York (Butler and Hartman)

Sheik's love experience seriously, as Shaheen avers by stating that, "the idea of 'sheik' was a joke. Arab chieftains could no longer be taken seriously as screen lovers. Sheiks were satirized."³¹ (Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* 196) In this context, the movie has furnished the ground to Jeff and Orville to rescue the princess from the Sheik's captivity. This captivity does not simply reflect the captivity of Shalmar, but it is a captivity of beauty, intelligence, westernization and, in short, a captivity of civilization.

³¹ However, Shaheen avers that later especially after 1970s, the idea of the sheik is associated more with power and money than with romance; he states: "In the 1970s, says Edelman, producer-director Stanley Kramer announced the production of *The Sheiks of Araby*, a comedy about "the oil crisis." The film was never made. Explains Edelman, "Contemporary sheiks are associated more with power and money than with romance." (Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* 196)

The mission of Jeff and Orville is not simply a mission of saving Shalmar and her attendant from the “barbarism” of the desert men, but their burden lies in rescuing the civilization. The audience of *Road to Morocco* is prepared to shout ‘Yes!’ and throw a victory salute into the air (Malek 77) for their mission accomplished, especially after their appearance in elegant Western clothes on the marine’s ship heading back New York.

Moving to another American entertainment discourse, the issue of women seems to be almost absent in *Achmed the Dead Terrorist* show, where the only reference to them lies in the 72 virgins women-reward awaiting terrorists after their death. After being informed that he is a dead terrorist, Achmed states:

- **Achmed:** Wait. If I am dead... That means I get my 72 virgins, (looking at the audience) are you my virgins? I hope not.
- **Jeff:** Why?
- **Achmed:** There's a bunch of ugly... guys out there. If this is paradise, I've been screwed.
- **Jeff:** Well, did they say it would only be female virgins? (Dunham, *Achmed the Dead Terrorist*)

This excerpted conversation conduces the discussion of the Islamic influence on the construction of women in Muslim’s mind. The seventy-two virgins’ idea is probably the first tag that describes Islam in the West and, at the same time, the most spread notion among extremists committing suicide and crimes in the name of Islam. However, this idea the seventy-two virgins is not quite right while reading this idea from an Islamic perspective. Since this discussion is not the core of our subject, the response to this idea could be encapsulated in the following four points: first, the only reference to “72 virgins”

comes only from a hadith³² ascribed to the prophet Mohammed that some scholars see unauthentic. Second, assuming this hadith is authentic, there is no clear reference to the condition that if anyone commits terrorist acts will be rewarded with 72 virgins in Paradise in the saying of Prophet Muhammad. (Ali) Third, “Islam considers committing a suicide and even merely the act of threatening or hurting innocent people sinful, let alone killing them. Fourth, perceiving women as merely objects to be desired by men, even after life stems from the misinterpretation of Islamic instructions.

To sum up, deconstructing the meaning behind laughing the “Other” in the two American entertainment discourses does not necessarily mean that this Other is faultless. The problem with the discussed American entertainment discourses, in this case, lies in two main points. The first one is attributed to the “cultural generalizability” through which differentiation becomes homologous (Bhabha, 1994, p. 128) and that generalizes the same negative descriptions of minorities over majorities with no differentiation. The second mess of colonial discourse lies in what Shaheen declared the injustice to Arabs for being the only ‘bad’ subjects of the Hollywood industry. He states:

I am not saying an Arab should never be portrayed as the villain. What I am saying is that almost all Hollywood depictions of Arabs are bad ones. This is a grave injustice. Repetitious and negative images of the reel Arab literally sustain adverse portraits across generations. The fact is that for more than a

³² “The smallest reward [each] for the people of Heaven is an abode where there are 80,000 servants and 72 wives, over which stands a dome decorated with pearls, aquamarine and ruby, as wide as the distance from [Damascus] to [Yemen].”

century producers have tarred an entire group of people with the same sinister brush. (Shaheen 176)

Constructing stereotypical discourse on Arabs is typically based on a fallacy of judgment that is repeatedly disseminated within discourses for generations. However, the colonial continuity of maintaining their generalizing discrimination on Arabs, surprisingly even in Western comic discourses, requires further investigation to dismantle this cultural generalizability. In this sense, the process of investigating “laughing others” should operate from within the discourse of the ‘others’ themselves. This invitation has a double-functioned scheme; it provides a space for “subaltern” to speak and leaving a space for them to either self-subalternizing and thus asserting the validity of their circulated images in Western memory or disavowing the colonial discourse as an invalid “epistemological condition of Western modernity.” (Bhabha 196) Doing so, the next chapter will shift to perusing two Moroccan comic movies on which the other brought to the center of the ideological construction accountability.

5. Arab Entertainment discourse: Prospects and Challenges (*Abdu in The Almohads Dynasty; and Morokki in Paris*)

Since postcolonial critics offer theoretical frameworks to dismantle the stereotypical implications adopted in the colonial discourse as a way to exculpate the “Other” from Western allegations, without further ado, it is worth making an inquiry into the ways this “Other” has identified themselves and constructed their identity. To some extent, the Arab world, especially in the Moroccan society, has been the main object of the previous analyzed Western comedy through which the ideological construction is operating. However, the circulation of their self-representation in their cinema production tends to loom large, especially while discussing their influence within the worldwide marketplace.

Moroccan cinema, like any other Third World cinema, “has little chance of reaching the marketplace; and, even if it does, theaters are so few and audiences so limited and impoverished that costs cannot be recovered let alone profit be made.” (Dwyer 1) The reason for this limited circulation of Moroccan films lies in the economic constraints, which affect the “creative élan” of the filmmakers. The State is held responsible for imposing this cramped condition as a way to keep its control over the circulation of the ideological content within cinema production. A report held by “Open Society Foundation” in 2011 avers, “Since television is government-controlled, much of this information is omitted.” (Zaid and Ibahrine 44) This fact is only to be expected, especially that the State run most visual media outlets, as confirmed by another report held by ACRLI³³, “On the visual level, there are currently nine public TV channels¹ run by the State, in terms of finance and in terms of administration and supervision.” A further reason behind the non-participation of

³³ Arab Center for the Development of the Rule of Law and Integrity.

the Third World cinema in this competing marketplace, and take the task of resisting the misleading discursive formation of identity in colonial discourse , lies outside the politics of 'canonization' that highlights Western discourses and plays down others. This politics was of great importance in critical practices when a set of texts and authors were selected to constitute a canon as John Guillory has pointed that,

"Canon" was used to signify a list of texts and authors, specifically the books of the Bible and of the early theologians of Christianity. In this context "canon" suggested to its users a principle of selection by which some authors or texts were deemed worthier of preservation than others. (Guillory 233)

One might deduce, then, that any text supporting the spirit of Christianity is be canonized, whereas texts against its trend are excluded and marginalized. Thus, such practices of exclusion and inclusion reflect that canonization is ideologically oriented, and any discourse has to meet the requirements of Euro/Self-centricity imposed by the canonizers. The authors of these selected/canonized works have come, quoting M.H. Abrams,

to be widely recognized as "major," and to have written works often hailed as literary classic. The literary works by canonical authors are the ones which, at a given time, are most kept in print, most frequently and fully discussed by literary critics and historians, and most likely to be included in anthologies and in the syllabi of college courses with titles such as "World Masterpieces," "Major English Authors," or "Great American Writers. (Abrams 29)

The fact is that the Western canon is 'white', male and high/first class defined conduces to the exclusion of the 'black', female, or lower/second class people. This questions the extent to which the Third World cinema could be given a space within such a large space of canonized cinema productions, especially that the criterion of canonization are already encapsulated in the author's sense of being as Westerner. These canonizers "were not concerned with how beautiful texts were, or with how universal their appeal might be. They acted with a very clear concept of how texts would "measure up" to the standards of their religious community, or conform to their "rule"." (Guillory 233) In the same manner, critics "have become convinced that the selection of ...texts for "canonization"... operates in a way very like the formation of the Biblical canon." (Guillory 233) The operation of canonization aims at universalizing the Western canon to be the most effective discourse circulated globally. This universalizing process has a twofold function: naturalizing Western values, tastes and aesthetics, and excluding others and thus excluding difference.

This fact expresses in words the ongoing function of some Western movies, *Road to Morocco* as an example, to disseminate their ideological inclinations among people through generations and, at the same time, question the capability of Third World cinema to indulge within the process of what Ashcroft et al. (1995) termed "the empire writing back". However, postcolonial criticism has tried to deconstruct this Western canonization through providing a space for the counter discourses of the Other to voice their position and construct their identification. As an example, James Coetzee writes *Foe* to deconstruct misrepresented images employed within *Robinson Crusoe*, the British canonized novel of Daniel Defoe. In this line of thought, Sandra Ponzanesi argues that,

Emancipatory tales and postcolonial critique have aimed at correcting the canon, by including forgotten or neglected voices of women or Third-World authors on the syllabus. They have also questioned the desirability of the canons *per se*, criticizing the institution of canon formation as a veritable incarnation of power and authority. This is because any concept of the canon, whether mainstream or alternative, is understood as necessarily exclusive, privileging some texts above others, recurring to selective criteria which are ideologically tainted. (Ponzanesi 127)

This process of decanonizing the canon is what this chapter is trying to elucidate as a way to go beyond the traditional Western vision towards the Other. Going through such process however, does not mean casting aspersions on the West, but rather aims at defining themselves instead of being defined. Still, the result of this self-representation might not necessarily satisfy the horizons of the reader's expectation. In this chapter, with two sections, the light will be shed on the analysis of Said Naciri's two comedy movies: *Abdu in The Almohads' Dynasty* (2006) and *Morokki in Paris*. In the first section of this chapter, Naciri's first movie is considered as one of the most interesting Moroccan movies that tries to revisit the Moroccan history and underline the kind of transgression that occurs at the level of identity and cultural shifts nowadays. The second tries to deal with the issue of Moroccan migration to France where their identity oscillates between worlds: the orient and occident.

5.1 Negotiating Subjective Racial Identity: Perusing *Abdu in the Almohads Dynasty*

Said Naciri's movie *Abdu in The Almohads Dynasty* has been perceived as one of the most successful movies in the Moroccan comedy for it combines between the past and the present as an essential *modus operandi* to the construction of the Moroccan identity. This act of revisiting history in *Abdu in The Almohads Dynasty* functions as a casual reference to the justification of the Arab culture and prosperity that dismantles the Western representations that tag images of exoticism, backwardness and terrorism on the Moroccan society.

The incident of revisiting the Moroccan history in Naciri's movie has started when Abdu, a man spending most of his time in the square of Jamaa el-Fnaa in Marrakech earning his bread through selling drugs to tourists, finds himself pursued by two police cars trying to catch him while on the run. This pursuit functions as a rising action that leads to the turning point of the story and of history. While Abdu is trying to escape away from the police, he has passed by an American and French scientist box making their scientific research trying to detect the location of Mohammed al-Idrissi's map using a developed time machine. Abdu is happened to intervene in such Western experiment and become the target of an intense beam of light coming out of the time machine making him traveling across time with his motorcycle back to the Almohads' dynasty.

This moment of 'time transition' in the movie thread is expressive in the sense that it alludes to the formation of modes of binarism between Moroccan and Western characters. These binary formations of such interrelations in the movie, however, oscillate between the confirmation of the undeveloped condition of Arabs as being circulated in the previous

analyzed Western comedy discourses and the ratification of Arabs' agency through highlighting their overlooked civilization.

Presenting Western characters in such Moroccan comedy movies as scientists immersing themselves in making experiments to construct new ideas and thus illuminating their societies might be seen as a natural view by Moroccan audience themselves, since the West has become the cradle of technological development and modernity in people's mindset. This scene holds different messages that support the binary opposition between the West and the Rest and confirm the images ascribed to the Arab people in colonial discourse. In other words, screening Moroccan people as scientists making their research using a time machine might be unwelcome and an abnormal incident in the movie, since scientific researchers are almost adhered to Westerners due to the daily progress they are undertaking at the level of industrial, mechanical and technological inventions. The role of Abdu, as a Moroccan character, in such a scene is merely an experimental object that intervenes accidentally such a Western experimental plot.

5.1.1 *Abdu in The Almohads Dynasty as a Replica of Colonial Discourse*

From the onset, the movie seems to be supporting some of Western ideological stereotypes. For instance, contemplating the first view of the Souk where Abdu is bound to be after being sent from the 'future' seems to project startlingly almost the same outlook employed in *Road to Morocco*. The Souk in both movies is presented as the first place where a newcomer is exposed to make a cultural encounter. The Souk is also screened in both movies as a fortified place located in the middle of the desert where camels and donkeys in addition to people shouting clamorously depicted as exclusively the first natural and rational scenery could be detected in such areas. In this sense, one might come up with

one of two conclusions: (i) that the Moroccan movie is a voice of the colonial discourse disseminating its ideological stereotypes; or (ii) that the images circulated about Arabs in colonial discourse and confirmed in the Moroccan movie are real.

Assuming that both suggestions are valid. One is led to believe that *Abdu in The Almohads Dynasty* is replicating the colonial discourse, although this does not necessarily accuse the movie director and actors of being hand in glove with the colonial enterprise. Yet, one had to admit that the influence of colonial regulation is still taking place within a Moroccan cinema industry. As has been stated in "The Subject and the State's Media Control" section above to "keep power localized and centralized", France has supported Moroccan cinema financially. In this sense, the movie producers get the financial aid "from ministries, bilateral cultural programs, or international aid programs (the most frequent sources, in Morocco's case, appear to be the French cultural programs Fonds Sud and ACCT)." (Dwyer 157)

However, this Western funding entails abiding by the stakeholders' aims and conditions. The influence of these Western funding sources could be epitomized that, for example, "co-producers on occasion have sought to influence the final product in ways that run counter to the producer-director's conception, particularly where these influences tend to push the film toward satisfying rather predictable Western "Orientalist" tastes for the "exotic"." (Dwyer 158) Besides, nobody can delineate the effect of colonial discourse on shaping the Arab mindset. In this sense, preserving the Western description of a Moroccan Souk in Moroccan movie might be understood as well as an intertextuality that draws its inspiration from the previous colonial discourse. This intertextuality is developed by dint of the influence of Western cinema, especial French, on the Moroccan directors, producers

and actors. These close ties with Western inspiration make the adoption of the same thread of narratives as an expected outcome.

The second suggestion, however, reflects that the adoption of the same thread of narrating Moroccan society in *Abdu in The Almohads Dynasty* through the repetition of the same images circulated in *Road to Morocco* might be perceived as a reflection of the authenticity of such representation that seems to be emanated from reality and function as a transparency of the real Moroccan society. Though this suggestion supports the claims of the colonial construction of the Other, this question of presenting reality through movie discourses brings back the discussion of this reality in relation to the imaginative construction of this other's culture and space. M. A. Tazi, director of *Looking for My Wife's Husband*, considers the infusion of images as a natural phenomenon that should exist, in every film: "naturally, every film has to adapt the imaginary of a screenplay to the reality of shooting, to the circumstances, to the terrain. This often enriches the screenplay, which, coming as it does from the domain of the imaginary, is necessarily circumscribed and enclosed." (Dwyer 111)

In this sense, the infusion of the imaginary into the real has come to be a necessity in the production of movies. Still, what is striking in our context is the preservation of the same representation of others by the natives themselves, which paves the way for reconsidering the path of self-identification and emancipating the industry from the colonial regulations, since the Other is affixed to specific description in the West. As an example, this image is unexpectedly preserved in the last Hollywood movie a part of which is shot in Morocco. The movie, entitled *Mission Impossible 5: Rogue Nation* (2015) and starred with Tom Cruise, has introduced the first outlook of Casablanca, the biggest city in

Morocco, as a land of sand where signs of backwardness where the viewer can detect images of buildings made of mud, street with no sign of infrastructural development and where local people graze their animals.



Scenes from *Mission Impossible 5* screening Casablanca as a desert landscape
(McQuarrie)

No Moroccan viewer can deny the fact that these scenes are shot in Morocco. But what is not cogent is the act of introducing to the Western viewers a city known for its industrial and infrastructural development in addition to the fact that it is located hundreds of kilometers away from the desert as a representative of these two outlooks. This mode of representing Morocco proves to be an orientalist construction as Shaheen once again states:

We inherited the Arab image primarily from Europeans in the early days, maybe 150 years, 200 years ago. The British and the French who traveled to the Middle East and those who didn't travel to the Middle East conjured up these images of the Arab as the oriental other – the travel writers, the artists who fabricated these images and who were very successful as a matter of fact. And these images were transmitted and *inherited by us*. We took them, we embellished them and here they are. (My emphasis)

These inherited images have exerted a strong influence on the Arabs themselves who might have never paid a visit to Morocco but formed their perceptions based on Hollywood circulated images. As a case in point, two months after the release of *Mission Impossible 5*, a famous Egyptian show presenter and the owner of the Farraeen satellite channel named Taoufik Okacha has recounted in a TV interview the details of his last visit to Morocco and expressed how stunned he was to know about its considerable progress. He adds that, unlike now, Tangier, in 2008, was a small city with three or four small hotels, while Casablanca was looking backward and most of its areas form the Sahara desert. (Okacha)

Surely, these descriptions are diametrically opposed to reality, for Moroccan cities, like Tangier and Casablanca, are known for their industrial and infrastructural developments in days of yore. Apparently, such images have been cast two months before these assumptions are made about the movie *Mission Impossible 5: Rogue Nation*. This fact reflects the extent to which Western discourses could shape the Arab mindsets themselves. Now, it is not the West that reiterates these racial discourses, but the Arabs themselves. This act of carrying out the mission of spreading racial discourses is named self-

Orientalism, which designates this attitude and tendency to label one's own people in derogatory terms, thereby feeling a sense of superiority when looking at one's own people. This erroneous testimony from the Egyptian show presenter and the owner of the Farraeen satellite channel confirm the fact that the West has succeeded in raising its own defenders in every corner of the globe. These pro-westerners act on behalf of the West and tend to spread racial and stereotypical discourses while saving the West the time to do it itself.

More importantly, preserving these images in *Abdu in The Almohads' Dynasty* could be understood as conceptions inherited from the Western attempt to lump all Arab under the same umbrella. Accordingly, the Moroccan movie has in a way or another contributed to the preservation of some gloomy images about the Arabs. As another example, when Abdu was taken on his way to the governor of Marrakech Abu El Hassan, and he noticed a crowd of people in a large square by decapitating a man. This cruel act recalls the barbarity description annexed to the Arab people in *Road to Morocco*.

However, the movie has adopted this skit as a way to add a sense of humor to the arrest of Abdu who is understood to be involved in a performance of a movie he does not know about. Still, this attempt to add a sense of humor to a scene of decapitation functions as "humorous disparagement [that] creates the perception of a shared standard of tolerance of discrimination that may guide behavior when people believe others feel the same way." (Drimonis) In other words, presenting violence, racism or sexist jokes about women might lead to tolerance of violence, racism and "hostility and thus their direct spread against women in a way that most people don't even realize because these types of "jokes" are so omnipresent in our society." (Drimonis) In this sense, infusing such sort of images in *Abdu*

in the Almohads' Dynasty implies the normalizing act of barbarism within Arab societies through history.

Strikingly, not only Western audiences have such perceptions, but also Moroccan audiences themselves have created fixed images about the way the historical spaces, figures and their behaviors should come into sight. The audience absorb such public beliefs uncritically and which "have effectively been given the privileged status of being authoritative and, in some cases, truthful." (Happer and Philo 322) It is not surprising thus to have the image of Arab men pictured in most movies, if not all, wearing "simple tunic, an unfitted garment pulled on over the head," (Jirousek) always armed with swords or knives. This sort of appearance of Arab character in movies becomes a truism firmly embedded within audience perception and gives a credit to the act of aggression as a typical sequel expected from the Arab people.

In fact, the first word that comes to ear when Abdu has been arrested is "kill him! He must be a spy of Ben Ghaniya!" (Naciri, Abdu in the Almohad Dynasty) These words recall Kassim's reaction in *Road to Morocco* at any time when he refers to Jeff and Orville, the new arrivals. This perception reflects that newcomers or rather the ambassadors of difference, so to speak, are not welcome by the natives, be they Westerners (the Americans in *Road to Morocco*) or Arabs/Muslims (Abdu in *Abdu in the Almohads Dynasty*). In this sense, the process of othering people and culture is established in the first contact made with the unfamiliar being (different), while dialogue remains an absent condition to the promotion of understanding. In this sense, suspecting Abdu's intrusion in the first contact is an intuitive reaction, especially from people whose city is constructed for a defense purpose against the attacks of enemies.

Moreover, the struggle between tribes is a common issue whenever we talk about the Arab world. As it has been talked in *Road to Morocco* Sheik Mulay Kassim is in incessant struggle with another Desert Sheik; on the other hand, Said Naciri's movie has referred to a famous historical struggle between the Almohads and Banu Ghaniya, descendants of a previous dynasty known as Almoravides. The details of this historical struggle may have no space in this section, but questioning the reason behind Arabs recourse to a constant fight among each other. The main reason behind such struggle is the influence of religious and political perceptions of the Arab world. Apparently, these two categories are the first interpretation put on any conflicts among the same nation, and it might be the first reading of the struggle discussed in the movie. However, for some critics, religion is not the main cause of Arab friction. For example, Alan Lurie, in his "Is Religion the Cause of Most Wars?", considers that "History simply does not support the hypothesis that religion is the major cause of conflict." (Lurie) He refers to the *Encyclopedia of Wars* and states:

From their list of 1763 wars only 123 have been classified to involve a religious cause, accounting for less than 7 percent of all wars and less than 2 percent of all people killed in warfare. While, for example, it is estimated that approximately one to three million people were tragically killed in the Crusades, and perhaps 3,000 in the Inquisition, nearly 35 million soldiers and civilians died in the senseless, and secular, slaughter of World War 1 alone.

(Lurie)

In the name of the same principle, the Arab world struggle is not essentially a religious cause, but it is in the first place a political one with a religious binding. That is to say,

religion is merely a departure point that any political authorities or any militant group might resort to justify their wars against others and fanning sectarianism for their political purposes. As a case in point, the revolutions that come to be known as Arab Spring has made this relation between religion and politics struggle more discernible.

However, one may react against screening Arabs as a nation with decimated records by referring to the fact that there is no nation in this world that has no history of bloodshed, especially while talking about developed countries nowadays. In this context, one can refer to: the Norman Conquest of England (1066), the American Revolutionary War (1781), the Napoleonic Wars (1813), the American Civil War (1862), the Spanish Conquest of Peru (1532), the Chinese Civil War (1948), World Wars 1st / 2nd, and the conflict between England and France known as the One Hundred Years' War (1337-1453). This short list of battles confirms, "Every age of human history has experienced battles." (Lanning) Once again, presenting Arab people either in *Abdu in the Almohads Dynasty* movie or in *Road to Morocco* might not be listed as a black hole in the representation of them, since a problem shared is a problem halved. What is not fair is annexing wars and crimes to one nation and concealing others.

Still one last important point, one may refer to the fact that the Western interference in the Arabs' affairs could be added as another reason behind the constant struggle taking place in Arab countries. This outside interference of the West has been alluded to in our previous analysis of *Road to Morocco* while talking about Jeff and Orville's strategy to defeat Mulay Kassim. This strategy is labeled as the "internal dissension" which Orville has explained: "divide and conquer. Brother against brother." (Butler and Hartman) In our previous analysis, such strategy is seen as a way to weaken the power of the two Sheiks and

make them focus on their internal disturbance, which make it easier for the Western characters to achieve easily their objectives. This fact is not far from reality as it is confirmed by Noam Chomsky in one of his interviews:

The Arab-Islamic world has a long history of democracy. It's regularly crushed by Western force. In 1953 Iran had a parliamentary system, the US and Britain overthrew it. There was a revolution in Iraq in 1958, we don't know where it would have gone, but it could have been democratic. The US basically organized a coup. (Chomsky)

The interference of the West in the Arab world is occasionally perceived as 'conspiracy '. However, Chomsky opposes this mode of thinking that disparages the way people perceive the world politics and states:

They said that the perception in the Arab world is that the United States blocks democracy and development and supports harsh dictators and we do it to get control over their oil. The memorandum said, this perception is more or less accurate and that's basically what we ought to be doing. (Chomsky)

This analysis will not run through the details, but it is important to make two remarks here with regard to the nature of this interference. First, the interference might be operated indirectly. That is, the West could launch a war against Arab by proxy through ordering their Arab infiltrators living in Arab societies to divert the attention of people away from high-priority issues. As an example, the Almohads were very busy with their struggle against Banu Ghaniya paving the way to the collapse of Andalusia. Second, the history of Arab civilization could be understood as one of the impelling forces to the interference of

the West in the Arab affairs. Evidently, after the demise of the Ottoman Empire "the Arab Islamic civilization has been deep in a crisis" announcing the advent of a new civilization that comes to be known as a Western Civilization. In this sense, the appearance of one civilization emanates from the disappearance of another.

The fact of being in a constant struggle in the Arab world sets the individual's mind at rest that the West is the best and paying no heed to the Arab contribution to the enhancement of modern ages. Regardless of reproducing the same images that we come to the conclusion it is an effect of the Western control over media coverage and an effect of an inherited colonial legacy on Arab politics, *Abdu in the Almohads' Dynasties* have, on the other side, tries to zero in on this Arab past recollection that stamps on the development of sciences.

5.1.2 *Abdu in The Almohads' Dynasty and Arab Prosperity*

It is not fair to judge the Moroccan movie as complying with Western mode of representations. As it has been stated previously, the movie has touched upon some positive sides that might contribute to the promotion of a mode of representation transcending the discriminatory colonial discourses. The objective of the American and the French scientists in *Abdu in the Almohads' Dynasty* to locate the, through their time-machine, the first worldwide map made by, Al-Idrissi, a Muslim figure does reorient the previous section's trend of exalting the West and calls instead of rethinking the history of the Arab role in the scientific achievement and discoveries that becomes the basis of development of science nowadays.

Historically, this map of Al-Idrissi, the objective of the Western scientists in the movie, has been one of the greatest Arab contributions during to civilization. The map of Al-Idrissi has been perceived as the marker of the history of science and was for centuries the prop of geographers who copied it "without modification." (Haque 98) Al-Idrissi's map inspired some "Islamic geographers such as Ibn Battuta, Ibn Khaldun and Piri Reis" (Haque 98) and more importantly inspired Christopher Columbus and Vasco Da Gama. (Haque 98) This fact reflects "the civilization of that great race whose achievements in science, literature, and the arts have been the inspiration of the marvelous progress of the present age." (Scott V) However, there are several attempts from some critics to conceal this verity of Al-Idrissi's contribution in geography. For example, in the *Encyclopedia of the History of Science, Technology and Medicine in Non-Western Cultures*, the editor tries to aver that Al-Idrissi's map was not his genuine achievement, since in the first place Al-Idrissi "was not a geographer in the true sense of the word at this stage. But he began constructing the map under the patronage and supervision of Roger." (Selin 442) It is clear from this encyclopedic reading the attempt to inscribe the first worldwide map to a Western instigation and contribution by claiming that the Christian king of Sicily, who sent "envoys to different regions to collect fresh data. After the information was acquired, al-Idrissi utilized only such data on which there was unanimity; the rest was discarded." (Selin 442) Furthermore, the encyclopedia has affixed Al-Idrissi's achievement also to some already ready data of some Arabic geographical works. These data,

were available to him, such as the Arabic version of Claudius Ptolemy's (ca. AD 90-186) *Geography* (Arabic *Jughrāfiya*), *Kitāb Sūrat al-Ard* (Book on Routes and Kingdoms) by Ibn Hawqal, *Al-Masālik wa 'I Mamālik* by Ibn Khurdādhbih (AH 232/AD 846), and the lost work of al-Jayhānī entitled

Kitāb al-Masālik wa 'l Mamālik. Thus, it seems that al-Idrisi had a vast amount of geographical material in the known world at his disposal. (Selin 442-443)

This attempt to include other contributors to the construction of the first map of the world does not deny the fact the name of the Arabic geographer is the first to manifest itself as a convincing figure to "to have formed a collaborative team to create a map of the world." (Ellis) In addition, the Arabic data the encyclopedia stated to have been used as the knowledge prop for al-Idrissi does confirm, in a way or another, how this achievement is strongly a genuine work of Arabs themselves discounting the supervision of Roger the second, whose presence in such event was on grounds of his position as being the king of Sicily. Likewise, many European geographers have confirmed the Arabization of the achievement in many of their works. For example, "A German scholar, Konrad Miller, published the maps [of al-Idrissi] in his *Mappe Arabicae* (1926–31)." (Jwaideh) Moreover, "The first loose sections of a critical edition of Idrīsī's *Kitāb nuzhat al-mushtāq*, undertaken by a committee of Italian scholars in cooperation with a group of international experts, had begun to appear in the early 1970s." (Jwaideh)

In this regard, referring to the Al-Idrissi's map as being the objective of Western scientist in *Abdu in The Almohads' Dynasty* furnishes the ground for Abdu to revisit a part of Moroccan history known for its great achievement in different scientific areas. This act of revisiting history functions, in our context, as a counter comedy discourse that "laughs back" the circulated images about Arabs in colonial discourse.

Abdu's visit of Almohads dynasty functions as a mission to expose the unsaid facts about Arab people in general and Moroccans in particular. This visit inside the disregarded

achievement of Arabs in this Moroccan comedy serves as a process of "laughing back" at the messages exposed in *Road to Morocco*. Despite the fact of preserving the same Western record of the entry of Arab landscape, the Moroccan movie will be an adventure beyond 'dematerialized desert' that is filled through the history of colonial discourses with stereotypical images as well as beyond the conceptions of picturing the Arabs as "the lazy, bearded heathen Arab Muslim." (Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* 8) In this sense, the opening of the movie in *the Almohads' Dynasty* might be perceived as an antithesis that reverses the upcoming mode of representations that promotes the Arabian contributions to the developments of societies.

Abdu's accidental arrival at the Almohads dynasty has revealed the side of Arabian prosperity that has been ne'er hinted at in previous colonial discourses³⁴. This act of Abdu's revisiting history of a Moroccan epoch is an attempt to give credibility to the Arab contribution to scientific, technological and humanitarian fields and clear up some discriminatory images annexed to Arabs. After being arrested, Abdu was taken to the governor of Marrakech named Abu El Hassan, who was in a meeting with his counselors discussing the new scientific achievements of Arabs and the condition of the State. However, because he was accused of being a spy of Ben Ghaniya, Abdu was taken to a prison that might be perceived by any viewer as lacking the quality of humanity towards prisoners, since the prison building is presented as a second-rated with poor lighting. Being in such condition, however, could not be understood as a callous treatment; this situation is in fact an effect of *space-time*. In other words, the situation of the prison in the Almohads' epoch could be perceived as a positive approach for such dynasty, since it was pertinent to

³⁴ Especially fictitious discourses in which Arabs are subject to discriminatory formation.

1198. In this sense, the condition of the prison as being screened in the movie is in a better than it might be in other countries where prison at that time was an apparatus of punishing rather than rehabilitating and disciplining.

Moreover, the movie might be criticized for preserving the same orientalist mode of representing the *Harem*, when Abdu woke up and found himself surrounded by some women. This scene, however, does not transcend the fact they were merely taking care of



Some female doctors taking care of Abdu who went unconscious after being injured in a struggle against a herd of Ben Ghaniya (Naciri, Abdu in the Almohad Dynasty)

Abdu who went unconscious after being injured in a struggle against a herd of Ben Ghaniya. When he woke up, Abdu was in a state of astonishment and disbelief that he is “a space of absolute male power, where the master of the harem surrounds himself with eunuchs.” (Jarmakani 1) The case, however, does not correspond to the perspective disseminated in most Orientalist discourses, since he discovered, as soon he is awoken, that

those ladies on his sides are medical practitioners, who left the room immediately after assuring their patient is in fine fettle.

In this sense, viewing the role of Arab women in the Arab world from the positionality of Moroccan movie does not meet what is always circulated in Western discourses. *Abdu in the Almohads' Dynasty* proves that women in the history of Arab world played an important role in the functioning of their society and their role was not limited to homemaking, but also were “scholars, jurists, rulers, benefactresses, warriors, businesswomen, and legal experts.” (Aliyah) Through history, women established themselves as effective actors in different fields. For example, Lubna of Cordoba is an example of the intellectual woman known for her contribution to writing and translating different manuscripts. According to a BBC report on the Islamic Golden age, Lubna “leaves traces in fragments of records: one says she was the royal library acquisitions expert, another suggests she was a private secretary to al-Hakam II. What's not in doubt is that she had a fine and piercing intellect and moved in some of the most interesting circles of the day.” (Taylor) Moreover, her knowledge of mathematics “was also immense and she was proficient in other sciences as well. There were none in the Umayyad palace as noble as her.” (Mooney)

As other famous names of women traced the history of Morocco, especially in the Almohads dynasty, Princess Zineb, the sister of Almohads Caliph Yqub al-Mansur, is known for her great philosophical knowledge achievements. Moreover, other women have a historical record playing governmental role like the case of Oda-Lala, who was an

ambassador of Morocco in the Marinid³⁵ dynasty to the Ottoman Empire. Besides, Kenza al-Awrabiya, the wife of Idris I, played a great role in the political scene managing the Idrissi's State affairs. She played an essential role in stabilizing the country and securing the power transfer from her husband to her son Idris II and was his backup contributing to the prosperity of the State.

These examples are small drops of water in the ocean, while the history of the Arab world in general and Moroccan society in particular are testimonies of positive engagements of women within their societies. Unfortunately, some other women of this sort do not have their historical records in the absence of any historians interesting in women's memoir. In this sense, the only remaining source for the construction of Arab women was twofold: first is the creation of Western imagination, which opposes the reality presented in *Abdu in the Almohads Dynasty*. The second source could be the inspiration of the Western society, whose suffering is a black spot in the Western history, taking for example the case of Mary Ann Evans using the name of George Eliot as a pen name.

Besides, presenting Arab women as a mirror of sexual promiscuity could be also an inspiration of Western way of thinking, since sexism is pervasive in the West in comparison to the East; and the female body is a priority commodity screened by Hollywood industry in a way that makes her "an aesthetic object to the male characters ... dressed in tight dresses, lingerie, or wearing no clothing at all." (Teasley) This view, however, is meant

³⁵ Also called Banu Marin, "Amazigh (Berber) dynasty that replaced Almohad rule in Morocco and, temporarily, in other parts of northern Africa during the 13th– 15th century." (Marinid Dynasty)

spotlighting the question of meliorating Western nation at the expense of annexing gloomy images attributed to Other.

In still another ne'er-hinted side of Arabian prosperity, the issue of inventions remains the point of convergence of Abdu's discovery of the Almohads' achievements. Strolling inside the laboratory of Cheikh Abou Ishak Al Hakim, the advisor of Marrakech governor, Abdu was introduced to different achievements developed by Muslim people, including the previously mentioned map of Mohammed al-Idrissi in addition to a large compass with a large needle invented at that time. In another scene, Abdu was introduced to a highly developed medical machine used, as Abou Jaâfar explained to Abdu, for surgery and morbid anatomy.

These and other unsaid Muslim inventions have gone clean out of both Western and Eastern minds and silently ignored by historians, as Scott states in his *History of Moorish Empire in Europe*:

The benefits wrought by Mohammedans— especially during the Middle Ages— have, until the end of the last century, been silently ignored or studiously depreciated by historians; in some instances through want of information, but, for the most part, because the phenomenal progress of Islam, when compared with the apathetic condition of other religions, suggested a formidable rivalry. But in this age, insatiable of knowledge and equipped with every means of obtaining it, it is no longer possible for clerical intolerance to obscure the splendid achievements of Moslem science. The day has long since past when the labors of astronomers like Ibn-Junis, of historians like AlMakkari, of philosophers like Averroes, of physicians like

Avicenna, and of botanists like Ibn Beithar, can be treated with obloquy because they were not authorized by the decree of an Ecumenical Council or approved by a bull of his Holiness the Pope. (Scott 62)

In the same line of thought, Sebastian Christ, a political journalist, has criticized the European lack of knowledge about Arab scientific achievements, whose influence on the European culture is incontrovertible. Christ states:

Western development rooted from the Muslim achievements “When thousands of “patriotic Europeans” took to the streets once again in Dresden to protest “the Islamisation of the West,” their actions were the result not only of resentment and fear, but also of ignorance. Luckily for us, our central European culture has benefited from Islamic influences for hundreds of years.” (Christ)

This lack of information about the history of Muslim scientific achievements is in a way or another an influence of imperial control over discourses lumping Arabs under the umbrella of backwardness and barbarity. Still, one might come across some critics acknowledging the Arab contribution to the enhancement of modern of civilization. Among those critics, Mark E. Rosheim has referred to a Muslim inventor whose acquirement in the robotic progress is undeniable. He states:

Unlike the Greek designs, these Arab examples reveal an interest, not only in dramatic illusion, but in manipulating the environment for human comfort. Thus, the greatest contribution the Arabs made, besides preserving, disseminating and building on the work of the Greeks, was the concept of

practical application. This was the key element that was missing in Greek robotic science. (Rosheim 9)

In this sense, going back to the first scene of the movie screening Western characters as scientists busy conducting scientific experiments to detect the location of Mohammed Al-Idrissi's map using a developed time machine should be reconsidered as a continuity of the Arabian scientific revolution. This point is the main message behind the movie *Abdu in the Almohads' Dynasty*, since the only way Abdu finds his way back to the future is by a time machine invented by Abu Ishak. This "home coming" using also a time machine is a clear notification to both Arabs who deride their triumphant history and to the West deriding the so-called Third World.

However, the movie does deny the fact that the West becomes, at the present, a symbol of development and modernity and that Arab nowadays are lamenting their days of prosperity. This fact is admitted in the movie; when Abdu was asked by Abu Ishak about the future (the present time of Abdu), he started the following conversation:

- **Abdu:** if you want to know about the future read these newspapers... No Arab science is advanced nor the world Arab is developed; Arabs displayed the flag, each is concerned with his own affair
- **Ibnou Rochd:** What happened to the Arab Islamic world?
- **Abdu:** Discussing globalization and the greater Middle East project... The Arab Islamic world becomes baseball on the table of the American congress.
- **Abou Ishak:** How the Arab and Muslim react to that?
- **Abdu:** they are watching football games.
- **Ibnou Rochd:** Are they no longer ruling the world?

- **Abdu:** They become terrorists in American, British and Zionist view... Zionists have occupied Palestine that lost Al Quds...
- **Ibdnou Rochd:** (looking at some pictures in the newspaper) What are these pictures?
- **Abdu:** Those are pictures of *Harraga*, Muslim sons endangering their live in the Mediterranean to reach the Spanish region of Andalusia.
- **Abou Ishak:** But we are in power of Andalus?
- **Abdu:** Andalusia that you know is now sending us death certificates of your sons and grandsons; and the Mediterranean Sea becomes a mass grave.
- **Abou Ishak:** That's impossible; we are the ones who established the Andalusian civilization and made its glory.
- **Abdu:** Now, but the future is something else... have a look at those pictures and see the miserable situation of your grandsons... Those pictures shows how Iraqi people are tortured in Abu Ghraib... by Americans and its allies... Mesopotamia is demolished and becomes a square for experimenting their mass destruction weapons.
- **Ibnou Rochd:** Are you saying that the Arabs lost everything!
- **Abdu:** Arabs lost everything; they lost bravery, power, and they lost the most important thing: dignity. (Naciri)

This conversation might be perceived as including exaggerated statements, but in a way or another it could be rated as a reality talk that differentiates the depressed present of Arabs from the flourishing past. The West nowadays is regarded as the ideal embodiment of development and the measurement of Arab progress. This idea is central to postcolonial critics who observes that “implicit in the idea of “the other” is a distinction between the modern (the self) and the residue that is non-modern (the other).” (Young 36) Annexing

modernity to Arabs, in this sense, might not be operated nowadays outside the Western perceptions. The British historian, postcolonial theorist and cultural critic, Robert Young considers that this equation maintains the process of “othering” that he perceives as an obstacle of tolerance and coexistence. Young states: “Tolerance requires that there be no “other,” that others should not be “othered”. We could say that there can be others, but there should be no othering of “the other.” (Young 36)

Overall, the movie has established evidence that Arabs have their greatest contribution to civilization. However, Robert Young has announced that people are still “othered” and located outside modernity; he avers, “Yet people regarded as being outside modernity, or outside the West, are still frequently described and categorized in terms of the concept and the term of “the other.” (Young 36) Ironically, there is a divide in the Western/Arab perceptions of the Arab/Islamic history. For the West, Arab history marks a lack of success and development, whereas, the present knows a considerable a progress in different fields. For example, talking about the situation of women, the report of the United Nations Development Programme in 2005 avers that: “The situation of women in the Arab countries has been changing over time, often for the better.” (Programme III) This statement is based on the recent contributions of women to “the arts, sciences, politics and other fields of human endeavor, achieving results that equal, and often surpass, those of men.” (Programme III)

Moreover, a same positive assessment made in the West about Arabs, and which that in a way testifies to the Arab advance in their journey towards development and democracy, is Charles Haskins’s statement: “Indeed, more of Arabic science in general passed into Western Europe at the hands of Gerard of Cremona than in any other way.” (Haskins 287) However, our analysis has proved that Arabs’ (men and women)

contributions to these fields has been marked through history as outstanding; this fact questions the views on which this report is based and the positionality from which it is concocted.

On the other side, there is a common consent among Arabs who look at their history in a nostalgic manner for it evokes an emotion of pride and prosperity; whereas the present is perceived as evoking emotions of despondency and loss due to the sorry condition the Arab world is experiencing. Unlike the Western perception, Arabs regard their present time as that of stagnation and relapse, but their past/history as that of prosperity and development.

Moreover, history has marked Arab societies as multicultural par-excellence as this reflects the coexistence of a range of different cultural experiences within each group or each society.” (Bolaffi, Bracalenti and Braham 183) Young states: “Prior to the Canadian adoption of multiculturalism in the 1970s, the major and historically longest example of successful multiculturalism in Europe was the Islamic state of Al-Andalus in the tenth century. During eight hundred odd years of Muslim rule in Spain.” (Young 32) Moreover, Young has referred to Cordoba as an example of society with a realized multiculturalism; he confirms that, “what was unusual about Cordoba, certainly compared to other parts of Europe at that time, was that it was a multicultural society comprising Muslims, Jews and Christians living peaceably together—*Convivencia*— and even engaging with each other convivially.” (Young 32) In a way or another, Young confirms that the Arab society provided a perfect example of coexistence, but still its history is not acknowledged in the Western construction of binarism.

To bring this movie analysis into an end, indeed the idea which the movie advocates of this necessity revisit the Arab history and try to quench one's thirst for knowledge from its very multiple fountains of luminous civilization. The past as revisited in *Abdu in Almohads' Dynasty* is a past admitted by Arabs, and even by some Westerners, to be one of the brightest moments that mark the history of civilization, whereas there is only darkness and savagery attributed to Arabs and looms large in people's mindsets. In this connection, the next movie to analyze invites people to embrace Western culture and see how it can cause moral, civilizational and democratic changes in Eastern peoples' lives. Based on this invitation, the next Moroccan movie *Morokki in Paris* (2012) tackles a Moroccan adventure in France and discusses the immigrant experience of "going French." In this context, this entertaining movie is an attempt to understand the true natures of both Western and Eastern cultures in a European contact zone.

5.2 Constructing Moroccan Identity from Arab Tradition and Western Culture: Investigating *Morokki in Paris*

The tension between Arab Tradition and Western culture is a preoccupying subject whenever the issue of migration from homeland to a host land is raised. The source of this tension may be the upraising conflict between modernity and non-modernity, civilization and no-civilization, bringing to the fore the question of binarism as a vital force of most relations, especially colonial ones. However, classifying cultures as being civilized/modern and discriminating others as being non-civilized/non-modern conduces to the segregation of societies and humanities. This fact questions the extent to which projects like multiculturalism could be successfully realized within a community with cultural differences to promote “understanding between cultural, racial or religious groups, with the aim of fostering tolerance, inclusion and positive diversity.” (Bolaffi, Bracalenti and Braham, Dictionary of Race, Ethnicity and Culture 64)

As an attempt to decipher this possibility of coexistence between cultures, races and religions, scrutinizing the life of Arabs³⁶ within a Western society remains a convenient experience through which one can measure the degree of accepting Arab tradition within a Western society. One might ask why not explore the opposite: the degree of accepting Western cultures within the Arab-Islamic society. The answer could be as follows: first, the present section will focus on analyzing a movie about the experience of Arabs within a Western society; second, the condition to measure the extent to which a foreign culture is welcomed or not entails a long-lasting settlement of people with different cultures and races

³⁶ Referring to Arabs' ethnicity in this thesis should not be perceived as a pejorative term; instead, it stands for other ethnicities labelled in Western discourses as Others. In this context, the use of Arabs in this thesis extends to not only Arabs but to Berbers and other ethnicities.

in a host land. This fact is experienced mostly in Western societies rather than Arab ones, especially while tackling the issue of immigration (mostly experiencing by Arabs) instead of tourism (a temporary journey in other lands mostly experiencing by Westerners). In this sense, the immigration project is a staple for exploring the relation between differences in a melting pot social milieu.

Exploring the issue of integration of immigrants comes as an impetus to equate the experience of Arab in Western societies with the experience of Jeff and Orville in *Road to Morocco* as an attempt to have a complete image about investigating the mode of presenting other's identities from different positionalities. In so doing, the present section aims at exploring both Arab and Western cultures through the utility of *Morokki*³⁷ in *Paris* (2012) another Moroccan entertainment movie by Said Naciri, the same director and actor of *Abdu in the Almohads' Dynasty*. The movie has been rated as one of the two top Moroccan films in 2012 along with another movie titled *The Road to Kabul*. In support of this, Martin Dale, in his "Moroccan Cinema Coming of Age", avers, "In 2012, the top two films were Brahim Chkiri's comedy road-movie, *The Road to Kabul* which is replete with special effects, and Said Naciri's crime comedy *A Moroccan in Paris*." (Dale, Moroccan Cinema Coming of Age) Dale has also testified, in a different contributions saying that the, "53-year old Said Naciri – who studied in the US – is an extremely popular comedy actor-director who has produced some of the country's biggest box office hits, including *The Clandestine* and *A Moroccan in Paris*." (Dale)

³⁷ My use of the term "Morokki" instead of "Moroccan" is deliberately done as to keep the original use of the word in the title.

Unlike in *Abdu in the Almohads' Dynasty* where Naciri (Abdu) has explored a prosperous era in the Moroccan history and its contribution to the development of societies and their longest successful experience of multicultural society, *Morrokki in Paris* is concerned with the experience of a man named Naguib living a desperate life in Morocco and has eventually decided to migrate illegally to France seeking a better life options. This visit to Europe might acquire different meanings to Arab modes of representation a Moroccan comedy movie rather than a Western one. This self-narration aims at placing Western and Moroccan discourses in an epistemic context that provides access to a multitude of modes designating the Arab thinking of all life styles by combining a movie based on history with one based on the present reality. Moreover, *Morrokki in Paris*, more precisely, might be rated as a window to the life of some Arabs in a European society. This window is an attempt to spare the embarrassment of testing the sense of belonging to an Arab identity within a so-called multicultural Western society.

5.2.1 Tracking Stability Overseas: Mapping Moroccan Journey from Home to Europe

Europe has become the first destination for anyone living in extreme income poverty in their homeland and seeking a decent life to insure their future. However, stepping inside the European countries remains, on the face of things, the first and the most challenging part of realizing the dream of a better life. The movie *Morokki in Paris* brings into account the experience of Naguib, who lives in a desperate life in his country and has decided to leave Morocco towards France. In this sense, Naguib, the hero of the movie, has opted for an illegal crossing to reach France, where he is convinced, by some Moroccan immigrants, to spend the rest of his life. Naguib's illegal migration towards France recalls Abdu's

statement, in *Abdu in the Almohads' Dynasty*, complaining about the status of Arabs endangering themselves in the Mediterranean to have a decent life wherein they can enjoy their basic rights – such as freedom, equality and dignity. The increase of poverty and unemployment, in Morocco, makes endangering oneself in the Mediterranean a more desirable option as a substitute for spending the rest of one's life facing an oblique future. This belief preoccupies the minds of a great deal of Arab youngsters. However, the movie tries to uncover the other side of living in Europe and avers that, on the contrary, the experience is not an easy one.

The first challenge that awaits many immigrants intending to live in the European societies is what is labelled to as cultural conflict. This conflict may not be an issue for many immigrants at the outset of their journey towards *difference*. However, such conflict remains the main challenge that most immigrants experience in the host land, though underlined by mottos like human rights, democracy and personal freedoms. These mottos are images annexed to European societies in most media coverages and circulated widely in colonial discourses. Reading Naciri's movie *Morokki in Paris* is an attempt to examine these perceptions from the Moroccan angle of vision as experienced in a Western society not an Arab one. Opting for France as Naguib's destination does not come as an accidental choice. In fact, this choice is very significant in the sense that the reasons are twofold: initially, it resonates a colonial legacy due to the history of French imperialism in Morocco, and more importantly, the second reason is an unconscious option that corresponds to nationalism claiming that France is the only foreign place where he has a circle of friends and acquaintances. That is, the deep fear of being vagrant and alone in a foreign country is the main prompting propulsion that drives Naguib to choose France as a point of disembarkation, not only the economic drive situation in Morocco.

In this sense, despite the fact that Naguib is aware of the encouraging and forward-looking mottos annexed to Western societies, the presence of his Moroccan family in France has been the main stimulus to undertake this experience. This condition of having a Moroccan family in foreign countries has been confirmed by the Moroccan immigrants as an encouraging reason for Naguib to take an action and start a new life in France. Having a family in France might seem to establish a new perception foregrounding that living in Europe is a second blessing opportunity in life. However, this idea is made with no evidence backing it up, and it only remains a hypothesis that has not been yet labeled as true or false. Naguib's mission in the movie is an attempt to reveal how Western cultures are established in their relation to Arab cultures in Western societies as France.

On his way to his brother's dwelling, Naguib has engaged unintentionally in drug trafficking activities after his meeting with a Turkish man named "Atila" whose valise full of drugs is mistakenly substituted with Naguib's. This meeting, in fact, functions as a driving force in the movie's thread as the scenario that comes to uncover one of the sides of Arabs' living conditions in European societies. The Turkish man has been assaulted by a gang of Moroccans and Tunisians, who threatened to assassinate his wife and child in case he has not succeeded in a mission of drug trafficking. This situation embodies the tendency of some Arabs to adopt a felonious trend in European societies, which effectively supports the Western claim of Arabs' aggression.

However, casting these types of Arab Mafiosi in *Morokki in Paris* as second-generation immigrants is an essential reflection that might question this mode of thinking about the Other. In other words, it questions the reasons behind the increase of crime rates among this category of people compared to the first-generation immigrants, like Naguib's

brother. Undeniably, living between two cultures could be rated as living in-betweeness with unstable identities. Being “Ni Arabe, Ni Français” has been, in fact, one of the main drives that make of the European-born children of Arab immigrants adopt law-breaking activities as Rich Morin has confirmed in one of his studies on crime rates in the West: “Until recently, most sociologists have explained this increase by noting that many second-generation immigrants feel caught between two conflicting worlds—the old world of their parents and the new world of their birth.” (Morin)

Being caught up between two worlds makes it a possibility for Arab gang in Naciri’s movie to endorse drug trafficking, crimes of burglary and smugglings of all sorts. In other words, this felonious inclination of Arab immigrants emerges as a reaction against being stuck in in-between spaces that intrigue their feeling of disintegration and rootlessness. Many second-generation immigrants feel detached from any social identification. Such feelings often result in violent acts to protest against both worlds, this of where they live in and that of parent’s origin. Bhikhu Parekh has confirmed this in-betweeness as being the main drive towards criminality. He states:

Detached from their parental and British cultures, alienated young Muslims tend to form their own groups based on a shared subculture of defiance and victimhood. Some turn to drug trafficking, prostitution, gang warfare and petty crimes. It is striking that young Muslims form nine percent of the prison population, which is three times their proportion in the country. There is an increasing trend towards drug addiction among young Muslims, and a disturbingly large number of single mothers in London are Muslims. (Parekh 32)

This fact reveals the dark side of the process of adaptation in which projects like multiculturalism and assimilation have failed to acknowledge the difference and create a balanced society where coexistence could be applied. Turning to drug trafficking proves the miserable situation of the second-generation immigrants that could run into the fact that they can adopt neither the identities of their parents nor the identity of the European societies; they are displaced and with no identity to adopt.

Besides, integrating a society where an immigrant is still viewed as an outsider remains a vain attempt. In this sense, being a criminal or adopting drug trafficking does not necessarily reflect the violent tendency of Arabs, but it rather translates the sympathetic account of their life in a society of birth. Most of the second-generation immigrants find themselves experiencing the *bandlieue*-life, neither *in* nor *out* but *down* in a French society and away from its sophisticated life. Most of them harbor “a sense of inferiority, especially those coming from the ex-colonies,” (Parekh 6) and sometimes worry about exhibiting the identity of their parents due to racial discrimination on the part of the natives. These are enough illuminating reasons to push the second-generation immigrants to revolt against their host society through turning to “drug trafficking, prostitution, gang warfare and petty crimes.” (Parekh 32)

In this context, becoming aggressive is an act that reflects the sense of dissatisfaction with their unstable values and their marginal mode of life. However, opting for such path, the immigrant becomes a subject to a prison punishment and raises the rate of prison population, as it has been stated before “it is striking that young Muslims form nine percent of the prison population, which is three times their proportion in the country. There is an increasing trend towards drug addiction among young Muslims.” (Parekh 32) This increase

in rates of Muslims within jail walls testify to their being subject to psychological harms inside their host countries. The best way out of their troubled personalities is their inclinations to join hands and get organized in gangs to fend off what they take to be a danger and threat to their collective identity.

However, it is not fair to put blame on one side whilst discussing an integration of two sides; Arab immigrants themselves may be held accountable for their integration failure. This failure is perceived as being associated with religious influences on people's identity. For this reason, Parekh considers that the "European Muslims have some difficulty in coming to terms with multicultural societies, and that aggravates the European anxiety." (Parekh 29) At the same time, Parekh considers that the only way out from adopting criminality is by resorting back to their religion; he states "Many of those who avoid crime turn to Islam to give them a sense of dignity and identity." (Parekh 33) From these quotations, one might deduce that the second-generation immigrants are trapped between three options to live in the European society:

- 1) First, most immigrants consider the full adoption of European values remains the only possible way to integrate and get the same advantages as Europeans have. However, this option entails departing the original identity and abdicating their values and thus get caught between a rock and a hard place. It remains to some extent the preferable one not only for integrating the cultural and political life of the host countries, but it is rather a protection against the racial discrimination. Still, the attempt of some immigrants to integrate a Western life is considered by some natives as an outward appearance and nothing else. Naguib's brother in *Morokki in Paris* is a perfect example of this attempt to adopt the French values proving his full integration through a marriage with a French woman living

in a French manner; still his marriage fails to convince the French to recognize him as a part of them. In this context, Parekh avers that in France, for example, “there had been a growing feeling that its Muslim population had remained only ‘paper French’, French in their passports and nothing else, and needed to be integrated.” (Parekh 9) This feeling pushed the Commission on Nationality to reproduce its second volume Report under the title of *Being French Today and Tomorrow* that dictates, “Muslims should be ‘absorbed’ into the cultural mainstream, and their religious and cultural differences confined to the private realm.” (Parekh 9) Absorbing other’s cultural values deviates from the real meaning of processes of integration. No one can deny the fact that integration entails the acceptance of some values of European societies, but acceptance of these values does not mean their absorption, since integration requires “a mutual exchange between the migrants and the host society.” (Bolaffi, Bracalenti and Braham, Dictionary of Race, Ethnicity and Culture 152) Keeping one’s religious and cultural affiliations under confinement in the host countries could be perceived as a flagrant breach of basic notions of Human Rights and personal freedoms to adopt whatever religion or ideology is in the air.

The failure of European countries to eliminate differences is quite evident in many examples of different types of personal freedoms’ censorship to which second generation immigrants are continuously exposed. These differences should be made of effective use to stir noticeable and efficacious changes in any society other than nipping them in the bud. These may be milestones that push the second-generation Muslims living in Europe to feel insecure and thus search for new ways to protect themselves as gangs willing to initiate any criminal plan that is in the best interest of their group no matter what it is or what effects it may bring about.

2) The second problem entrapping the second-generation immigrants while living in the European societies is their insistence on firmly grabbing hold of their religious affiliations no matter what options could be there making them lose their religious convictions. Therefore, opting for sticking to the Islamic instructions as part of the Arab immigrants' identity might be troublesome in Europe. The new arrival to France, Naguib could represent the case of immigrants still stick to their traditions and original identities. When Naguib, for example, proposed marriage to a French woman, she immediately refused after his persistence not to marry her in the church, but instead he insisted on the wedding to be at the Mosque and in Islamic custom. Like Naguib, most of immigrants "define their identity in religious terms", which makes some Europeans develop their sense of anxiety and start wondering "how to integrate them and turn them into loyal citizens." (Parekh 10) This wondering stems from the fact that Europeans consider Islam as being a religion of undemocracy. Parekh avers this perception by saying that, "Islam, they argued, was inherently undemocratic, which was why no Muslim country had so far thrown up a stable democracy, and almost all of them strenuously resisted internal and external pressures to introduce one. European Muslims could not be counted upon to respect democratic institutions." (Parekh) The presence of some Muslim immigrants may turn into a threat to Europe, because *some* insist on maintaining their values in the European societies. More than that, Arab people, in general, are still defined in a way they used to be circulated in colonial discourse. That is, they are defined in relation to what the West is not; they live in Western societies, but they should not pretend to be Westerners because they are made seem the source of many troubles lurking behind darkness awaiting any opportunity to cause disruption of peace and turbulence among peaceful European 'pure' citizens.

In fact, the Arab immigrants' presence in Europe is deemed a threat to the West and is there to define what the entire West is not. If the West is pure – and this is pretentiously the case which Europeans strenuously advocate –, then Arab immigrants are their adversary, their dark side. Following this stream of analysis, perceiving Arabs as a threat due to their religious background is not a valid argument, since they live in societies that introduce themselves as 'multicultural' and 'democratic'. In this sense, these mottos remain pseudo claims among other Western projects. As an example, Parekh has affirmed that "In some European societies there are deliberate attempts to demonize and generate powerful feelings against Muslims." (Parekh 13) Such Islamophobia or fear of the Arab presence in Western societies "has prompted deeply perplexed European leaders to ask what else to do to counter the 'Islamic threat'." (Parekh 14)

Some European leaders have become preoccupied with how to exterminate the Muslim threat; the reason that makes of most immigrants not privileged as other Europeans and treated in different hateful manners. Parekh avers that "Many European countries are devising new tools, such as greater surveillance of Muslims, a better network of informers, stronger anti-terrorist laws, detaining people on suspicion, making 'glorification' of terrorism a criminal offence, monitoring mosques." (Parekh 14) However, these means of restricting and developing the sense of fear against Arabs in Europe are over-exaggerated devices that cannot yield any results, but, on the contrary, they strengthen the presence of Muslims at bigger extents. Take for instance the incidents in which Muslims have been accused as the first initiators and planners. These terrorist attacks in places like Madrid, London, and Paris were all stamped to Muslims, most of whom were not even immigrants, but declared to be "estimated to have passed through al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan." (Parekh 14) On the other hand, the majority of Muslim people in Europe

proves to have a “good record as a law-abiding community... [and] Britain has 300 Muslims in its armed forces, and the chief of staff Sir Nicholas Walker, who recently praised their loyalty and commitment, asked for more Muslim recruits.” (Parekh 15) This fact proves their readiness and ability to integrate peacefully in Western societies without breaking away from their own religious and cultural values. Unfortunately, Arab immigrants are viewed in the same way they were first constructed in the Westerners’ mindsets and “have either suffered quietly or protested peacefully but rarely taken the law into their own hands,” (Parekh 15) and they have on many occasions opted for life away from straight and narrow heinous crimes as a revenging reaction against their being considered as second class citizens.

- 3) The last and maybe the most advisable option for the immigrants to live in European societies is to occupy an in-between space, where they can identify themselves, for example, as an Arab-French citizens referring to themselves as a part of the French society rather than consider themselves as diasporic. The best example of this option could be the uncle of Naguib and his cousin, a Moroccan Jewish departed Morocco to live in France as immigrants. These Naguib’s relatives have succeeded in a way or another to be mistaken for French people, but at the same time, they could practice and preserve some of Moroccan traditions, like insisting on having Moroccan couscous for dinner with other Moroccan people. In this context, this in-between standing entails accepting some French values and rejecting others that might oppose theirs, gay marriage is an example. Besides, some European values are identical to Arab values, as Parekh states: “As far as the basic European values and practices are concerned, Muslims do not have much difficulty with many of them.” He provided some examples of such common basic values that are enjoined by both European society and Islam. He adds: “Human dignity, equal human worth,

equality of the races, civility, peaceful resolution of differences and reciprocity are all either enjoined by Islam or can be read into it. Although polygamy and female circumcision are practiced by some groups of Muslims, they are disapproved by others and are in decline.” (Parekh 19) However, the problem with in-between space lies in constructing one’s identity through difference and conduces to the formation of an identity that is “fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different.”(Hall, 1996, p. 4) Undeniably, Arab immigrants are no longer culturally and politically “invisible” due to the successful integration of some figures within European societies. However, this success is achieved through redefining the identity of immigrants in the in-between space and is likely to furnish the ground to the first option of a fully assimilation of European values.

Related to these three options, the movie *Morokki in Paris* has covered them and made them apparent while stressing the difficult life conditions to which immigrants of Arab and Muslim origins are frequently subject. Through relating the experience of Naciri Said in Paris, the movie pictures this reality of Arab and Muslim immigrants having strenuous inclinations to join street gangs and commit crimes to survive in a foreign social milieu that continually rejects them, for their presence is a staple to social progress and a disturbing incident to Europeans sense of peace and security.

5.2.2 Going French: Moroccan Immigrants’ Road to uncertain integration

The path towards integration into the French society remains the main challenge for Arab Immigrants in the movie of *Morokki in Paris*. Each immigrant has opted for their own way to express their de/satisfaction with regard to living in such different European societies with different values oscillating between either integration or assimilation. The difference between the two paths lies in the degree of absorbing the culture of the French

society and the extent to which Arab values are kept as grounds for identification. *Morokki in Paris* movie has aimed at revealing the extent to which the relation between the West and the East can stand together and to also explore the possible ways to help overcome the rifts existing between the two poles.

As an attempt to bring into effect the previous listed options as they are enacted in *Morokki in Paris*, Naguib, as previously recounted, has met Atila, the Turkish man, carrying the burden of saving his family from the hands of Arab Mafiosi who have abducted them. These Mafiosi have demanded from Atila a bag of drugs as a ransom in return for his family life. The Mafiosi team is composed of immigrants, namely Arabs becoming major players in drug dealing in the French society. As it has been marked previously, living between two worlds and with no clear-cut identity is an impetus to take revenge by becoming aggressive. This aggression could be understood from the Western point of view as a natural behavior on the part of Arabs, confirming thus the already circulated images in colonial discourses. This perception questions the extent to which *Morokki in Paris* has or has not contributed to the rectification of such ready-made images with regard to Arabs in the European popular imagination.

The first contribution of the movie to rectify the images of Arab immigrants lies in defending the idea that the Mafiosi path is undertaken by a small number of Arabs that do not represent the majority of the rest immigrants. This contribution is expressed through employing different immigrants as characters with Arab origins, who have successfully integrated in French society; one of them becomes a police officer. The movie tries to reflect how wrong to message of the movie while resorting to cast some Arab immigrant as belonging to Mafiosi group is twofold; (i) not all immigrants are criminals, and (ii)

opting for this option is not the recommendable to express one's disapprobation of being socially marginalized. However, one may not also neglect the responsibility of the governmental contribution to such social and cultural ramification. This is not an attempt to glorify criminality and exculpate the Mafiosi path, but it is rather an attempt to scrutinize the originality of such immigrant's behavior. The West opened their gates for immigrants to both improve the potential economic power of Europe and "feed its labour-hungry industries from the 1950s onwards." (Parekh 5) The European governments, however, have failed to furnish the ground for the integration of immigrants who "have either suffered quietly or protested peacefully" and if acting, they acted mostly from the margin. Acting from the margin runs out of control of the government. In this sense, the European governments have held their responsibility of the consequences of the unsettled future of such Arab and Muslim immigrants.

More seriously, immigrants' adoption of criminality proves to be an act of revenge for their being actors from the margin in their host societies and also for being without any identity. In other words, their tendency to drug dealing, for example, is not necessarily a matter of addiction, but rather it is an act of being abused in their born society where they feel they have no right to belong. As a simple proof to such a view, the movie has presented Atila, the Turkish man, who has immigrated illegally to France. His illegal presence in France forced him to work for the Mafiosi group who offered him in return to adjust his illegal status and become a permanent resident. This offer may urge every illegal immigrant, like Naguib, a new arrival who has never experienced any criminal act, but he has been forced to use a gun for killing. Besides, joining Mafiosi group could be a free choice of some immigrants, especially youngsters, and could be developed more to join terrorist organizations. In this context, most immigrants with the experience of delinquency

and petty crimes have been accused of being involved in direct terrorist attacks in Europe. For example, investigations into the last terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015 have found that some of the attackers' past "is littered with petty crime," and other "was known to police as a petty criminal - getting eight convictions between 2004 and 2010 but spending no time in jail," whereas, another one "owned a bar... which some reports say was managed by his brother Salah. People who knew them there have said both men drank alcohol and smoked drugs." (Paris attacks: Who were the attackers?) In the same line of thought, Olivier Roy, a French thinker, has thoroughly averred:

Many have a past of petty delinquency and drug dealing. Before turning born-again or converts, they shared a "youth culture" which had nothing to do with Islam. But most of them share the pattern of a sudden and rapid "return" to religion (or conversion), immediately followed by political radicalisation. There is a clear "breaking point", often linked with a personal crisis (jail for instance). (Roy 6-7)

The fact that Naguib has used a gun for killing reflects the extent to which immigrants are likely to unquestionably embrace radicalization and criminality with open arms, thereby they are made puppets in the hands of the Mafiosi leaders to issue whatever mission is available no matter who the target is or how dangerous and destructive it can be.

In this context and as previously confirmed, the path of drug trafficking or terrorism do not have 'only' religious grounds but more effectively have social problem roots. Back to Paris attackers, for example, BBC news has reported that the Molenbeek district, the residence of the Arab immigrants accused of Paris terrorist attacks, is known as "a densely-packed district where unemployment is high and disengagement rife. Children play on

green open spaces framed by graffitied walls, and behind the colourful shop facades there are pockets of poverty.” (Forsyth) In the same vein, Naguib and Atila are not introduced in the movie as religious fanatics, but rather as men aspiring to decent and peaceful life. Besides, the sudden immigrants jump into violence translates their lack of connection with the French society. The role of the government, in this sense, has to focus on connecting the immigrants to societies instead of storming their accusation towards the original identity of these immigrants as an attempt to annex them, more profoundly, with the image of barbarity as it has been inherited from colonial discourses.

Moreover, the movie *Morokki in Paris* has introduced the victim of Mafiosi acts of violence as other immigrants in addition to some natives. For this reason, Naguib’s brother and others do disapprove the attitudes of violence instilled in the minds of some immigrants, for they expose all immigrants not only to danger but also to suspicion and distrust. Away from the movie, some immigrants have denounced the acts of violence of these immigrants through media coverage and others have voiced out their concerns through fiction by expressing their disapproval of all forms of fanaticism that lead to terrorism. As an example of these immigrant literary discourses, known as diasporic literature or beur literature³⁸, mention can be made of Hanif Kureishi’s “My Son the Fanatic” in which he expresses the worries of some immigrants with regard to the changes of the attitudes and behaviors of their children in a manner that is not compatible with the lifestyle of European everyday life.

³⁸ The difference between diasporic literature and beur literature lies in the fact that diasporic literature is a type of literary works produced by the first generation of immigrants living outside their homes. Beur literature could be defined as works of fiction written by French or European -born immigrants mostly originated from North Africa.

Back to the movie, *Morokki in Paris* brings into effect the experience of Hamid, Naguib's brother, to integrate within French society. He emigrated to France for the sake of pursuing his studies in a French university, but never made any contact with his family in Morocco. Naguib's journey to France uncovers the new life of his brother Hamid, who married a French woman and started over his life trying to adopt the French values and turning into "being French today and tomorrow a year later." (Parekh 9) As mentioned previously, Hamid is considered a perfect example of the first option which immigrant may adopt to live in European societies. Hamid's marriage to a French woman reveals his willingness to integrate within a society with different values and become a member of a French family. However, this integration entails abdicating his Moroccan cultural values that are revealed implicitly after Naguib's arrival in Paris. Nevertheless, Naguib has shown his disappointment when he has found the photo of his mother thrown in a forgotten corner, while the photo of the French mother is the only thing hung on the wall. This scene is not simply about hanging a picture on the wall. In Hamid's case, this 'mother picture' is very telling, especially that he lives in a contact zone: living in France and with a French wife under the same roof, where different cultures are confronted. In this context, his failure to take proper care of his mother's photo, at least keeping it in a safe place not on the floor, reveals his negligence of his original values.

The magnitude of the change in Hamid's values, however, does not reflect the real sense of such metamorphosis of identity, since the hostility of his brother along with his words expressing his solicitude for Naguib reflects a kind of nostalgic feelings towards his original identity. This fact also reflects an inner-struggle between Hamid's nostalgia for the past and his real present and between the history of his identity and the modernity of the French society. In support of this, Homi K. Bhabha refers to this inner-struggle as a tension

between the *pedagogy* and performativity that he has explained more deeply. In this sense, he considers this tension as:

A tension between the *pedagogy* of the symbols of progress, historicism, modernization, homogeneous empty time, the narcissism of organic culture, the onanistic search for the origins of race, and what I shall call the 'sign of the present': the performativity of discursive practice, the “*recit*” of the everyday, the repetition of the empirical, the ethics of self-enactment, the iterative signs that mark the non-synchronic *passages* of time in the archives of the 'new'. (Bhabha 245)

What Bhabha has meant by *pedagogy* is the status of people as “historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy.” (Bhabha 145) On the other hand, Bhabha perceives *performative* as the ability of immigrants to perform themselves as “‘subjects' of a process of signification that must erase any prior or originary presence of the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principles of the people as contemporaneity: as that sign of the *present* through which national life is redeemed and iterated as a reproductive process.” (Bhabha 145) Simply put, Hamid’s pedagogy lies in his past as an object with a Moroccan identity, while his new life in the French society entails that he should go beyond his original identity and start identifying himself in the context of his new life, and thus preforming the values of the French society as “a sign of present” instead of the Moroccan past.

To bring this ‘uncertain integration’ discussion into conclusion, this new space of Hamid’s participation, between the *pedagogy* and the *performativity*, represents “the *movement of political power beyond* the binary division of the blindness of Ideology or the insight of the Idea.” (Bhabha 146) However, the immigrants might succeed, in a way or

another, to perform their new cultural values, but their *pedagogy* (past) turns them into becoming “neither One nor the Other but *something else besides, in-between.*” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 219) This in-between space constricts the immigrant’s agency and forces them to be ‘out of location’ developing a deep feeling of identity ambivalence. As an alternative, Bhabha avers that such people might “find their agency in a form of 'future' where the past is not originary, where the present is not simply transitory.” (Bhabha 219)

5.2.3 Towards a Certain Integration:

The tension of living as immigrants in European societies questions the adequacy of the Western project of multiculturalism that is intended to furnish optimistically the ground for establishing a society where coexistence could be realized. The movie *Morokki in Paris* contributes, as a discourse of the Third World, to express the other side of life in Western societies in their relation to Others. Arab immigrants have not been treated as the natives, regardless of any path they undertake to establish their presence as citizens in the French society. In this context, *Morokki in Paris* represents the West as a community rejecting the Other and erasing “the Occidental culture of common sense” (Bhabha 251) brings to the fore the problem of the Western ongoing attempt to exert its hegemony over the immigrants as a representative of Others. Apparently, the movie might be perceived as not being concerned with such Western struggle over power, but the main purpose of the *Morokki in Paris* lies in its emphasizing the Moroccan culture of coexistence and of multiculturalism that could not be explored in the French society. In this sense, the movie establishes itself as a discourse of laughing back at the disseminated perceptions that glorify the Western society and disparage the Moroccan one.

One might perceive that the movie *Morokki in Paris* has in a way or another, attempted to adopt the strategy of anti-colonial discourse to create the image of the Self (Moroccan) at the expense of the Other (Western); however, the focus of the movie is laid on representing the Moroccan immigrants rather than the Westerners. This focus aims at delivering the message of the Moroccan cultural tolerance and the Moroccan status in European societies. The culture of tolerance of the Moroccan people is perceived in the movie as an ideal achievement that aims at disseminating the culture of tolerance, broad-mindedness, respect, coexistence, brotherhood, and the adoption as well as the global spread of ideals related to the uplifting of common good choices other than selfishness, among many other cultural values, among nations rather than perceiving Other people from inhumane and debased perspectives.

As an example, the movie opted for binding together a sense of intimacy among Moroccan people as Arabs, Amazigh, Muslims and Moroccan Jews. Undeniably, the struggle between the Jews and Arabs is viewed as a predominantly omnipresent struggle in the world for its religious connotations and its historical linkages. The movie, however, has explored how Moroccan people can go beyond this traditional struggle between Muslims and Jewish people, and therefore create an environment where both can successfully coexist side-by-side overcoming the religious issues which are tributary of the historically recent Palestinian-Israeli struggle. This coexistence has astonished Atila, the Turkish immigrant, when Naguib asked his friend David, a Moroccan Jew, to keep quiet by saying, “please David, keep quiet and let me think how to overcome this problem; you know how much I respect you, so don’t get me nervous.” (Naciri) David responded by saying, “Sorry, I respect you too.” Atila has commented on this conversation with a phrase that expresses a kind of astonishment and states that, “it’s the first time I see a Muslim and a Jewish getting

along with each other.” Naguib’s answer holds a strong message that “Only Moroccans who can understand this.” This answer refers to the fact that the Moroccan society is a place where every different culture can coexist together with another, thus overcoming the conflicts between cultures and treating people from humanistic positions rather than overempowering racial differences and killing stereotypes.

The fact that Morocco is a model of religious tolerance and of a peaceful coexistence is deeply recognized by many Western leaders who admit that it could be rated as a model society that shows “commitment and perseverance on the path of moderation, dialogue and diversity.” (Noozz) Bill Clinton, the former US president, has given his testimony on the Moroccan tolerance and model of cultural coexistence in one of his renowned speeches before the Hope Global Forum. His testimony has taken the example of the broadmindedness and wisdom with which the Moroccan king(s) has been described, on different continuous occasions, especially after crossing his people safely to the other side of peace and security away from the hellish turbulence ensued from what has come to be termed as the “Arab spring” in many Arab countries over the past few years. In this sense, Bill Clinton confirms that,

The King of Morocco, a direct descendant of the prophet Mohammed, ordered the total restoration of every standing synagogues in the country...and the Moroccan Jews that went to Israel have been told that if any of them want to come home ever, they will be welcome to their ancestral land and treated equally as brothers and sisters... That’s the kind of future we get to build: inclusive politics and inclusive economic. (Clinton)

The movie discourse avers that the Moroccans might be described in colonial discourses as blacks and uncivilized, but they know their way to live in peace with others regardless of their cultural differences. Naguib's journey to Paris ended by being arrested for his illegal presence in France. On his way back to Morocco, he expressed his sudden nostalgia to his home, since the state in France did not fulfill the horizon of his expectations. He discovered that living peacefully in Morocco is better than staying in a society where there is no space for his identity. The scene of arresting Naguib comes immediately after he has saved the sister of Hamid's wife from being kidnapped by a Mafiosi.

This scene expresses that the fact of being Arab-born is a black spot that could not be tolerated by some Westerners. Hamid provides a perfect example of a man who was fully integrated into the French society; he is attending the church and accepting the invitation of his wife's father to drink in a bar; but because of his origins, he is a subject of derision of the French people, especially his wife's mother. Despite the fact that he has succeeded to live in France, but some judgments emanated from some French people express their hidden feelings that embody their rejection of the Other's presence on their country's land. For example, when some neighbors heard some noise from Hamid's apartment, a French man comments: "Ugh, these crazy Arabs always like this when fighting over their trivial things." (Naciri, Morokki in Paris)

The example of Hamid's failed integration reflects the failure of integration at the expense of departing his cultural values. However, the purpose of Hamid's marriage to a French woman might be materialistic in purpose, for most of Arab immigrants marry European women for the sake of gaining "paper French", others might marry for the sake of money, fame or any other materialistic objectives. Moreover, the reason could be hiding

his “blackness” behind the mask of “whiteness” so that he can be allowed to sit at the table of French “civilization,” as *Ziauddin Sardar* avers in his “Foreword to the 2008 edition” of Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Mask*:

Black Skin, White Masks offers a very particular definition of dignity. Dignity is not located in seeking equality with the white man and his civilization: it is not about assuming the attitudes of the master *who has allowed his slaves to eat at his table*. It is about being oneself with all the multiplicities, systems and contradictions of one’s own ways of being, doing and knowing. It is about being true to one’s Self. (Fanon)

The question here, in this sense is the ability of Hamid to protect his dignity and identity while living in the French society that defines itself as a democratic and a representative of the Western civilization. However, the repetition of such acts of deriding the Arab in *Morokki in Paris* expresses the dark side of the Western civilization disseminated in most of colonial discourses, whereas it confirms the positive side of Arab’s ability to go beyond the racial differences as the case was in Al-Andalus under the Arab sovereignty. As it has been stated earlier, the success story of multiculturalism in Al-Andalus is strongly affirmed by Robert Young’s words in his article of “Postcolonial Remains”:

“Prior to the Canadian invention of multiculturalism in the 1970s, the major and historically by far the longest example of successful multiculturalism in Europe was the Islamic state of Al-Andalus in the tenth century, during the eight hundred odd years of Muslim rule in Spain.” (Young 32)

In fact, building a colorful society comprising of the differences and varieties is not an easy task given peoples' selfish nature to rule and discriminate. Multiculturalism as advocated by many theorists in Europe is indeed a strong point that if properly and effectively utilized to one's own side, it would really generate quite many different benign interests here and there. In this way, if Arabs and Westerners could possibly make use of their cultural difference and furnish the ground of peace through sharing their customs and arts and enriching their knowledge about each other to spread the culture of tolerance. However, this culture of tolerance could be promoted transcending the traditional discourses from both Occidentalists and Orientalists to establish a world without binarism. In this context, the subsequent chapter will be an attempt to explore these ideas as pictured in the next Moroccan (Occidentalism) movies *The Road to Kabul* (2012) and American (Orientalism) animated film *Achmed Saves Terrorist* (2014)

6. Beyond Traditional Orientalist / Occidental Perceptions

As often remarked, Orientalism, as a discipline, has stirred a considerable debate which is still being heated by new generations. Intriguing as it may seem, Orientalism has been an energizing tool in the process of entrancing colonialism back in the history of many different countries. The term has been used to designate dichotomous differences between East and West. The 'US' versus 'THEM' formula on which the colonial discourse is premised has been the core element accounting for all colonial practices in the erstwhile colonies. Now, people have come to identify dichotomous differences based on colonialist discourses. Another key thing to remember, Orientalism has developed from being a mere set of ideas and behaviors towards setting firm feet as a political doctrine. Common sense as this explanation of the term Orientalism might appear, in fact, this thesis is bent on adopting a new method of looking at Orientalism as a concept and a school of thought.

It could be asserted that there is a new drive towards treading a reconciliatory and critical pathway in the latest movies about Arabs, Africans and Asians to cut off all ties with overgeneralizations and stereotypes. The movies analyzed in the previous sections have explained and questioned the orientalist nature of the discourses adopted in the movies. The bottom line was an amalgamation of a number of stereotypical imageries that are cloaked with their intentional tendency to black out all attempts of communicating veritable accounts of a person and their cultures. However, the focus will now be placed on freezing such stereotypical construction of nations and thereby provide new accounts from movies ahead to explain that it is now the time for both reconciliation and self-criticism. That is, this is not to rehearse the grounds for Occidentalism discourse, which set on the mission of either writing back to the metropolis for abrogating colonial languages or

correcting misconceptions, rather it is time for highlighting the multitudinous tapestry of thoughts and claims a movie can be laden with.

The movies to come shall thoroughly engage in a mission of explaining the way in which we can have an alternative other than Orientalism or Occidentalism. This one is concerned with internal Orientalism or *self-Orientalism*. This term is meant to designate a state of mind in which the once colonized people or the third world countries appropriate the colonial discourse, not for the sake of colonial emulation of blind aping, but rather for self-criticism. It may look odd to speak of positive sides appertaining to the usage of Orientalism as a whole, but, as it is claimed in this thesis, Orientalism is a double-edged sword; it has both positive sides as well as loopholes. Choosing this section to reside in self-Orientalism is predicated upon the conviction that by speaking the truth to ourselves and being honest that we can make a world a better place and an open space for everyone to coexist.

Self-Orientalism refers to the process of internalizing the orientalist discourse to the construction of the self. To give an illustration, stamping a bearded person with a terrorist is an orientalist legacy that has been unconsciously internalized in most people's minds. The media have so greatly worked on this image of the terrorist that many people look at people with beards with fearing eyes. It is not only some Europeans that call bearded people terrorists, but it is also Arabs themselves doing the same. The beacon of light in such self-orientalist assumptions by Arabs themselves is their tendency to prove a degree of truth. It may be true that people with beards are terrorists and a source of terrorism, but what is more important is to ring alarming bells in the heads that we, as Arabs, have, on continuous occasions, been the source of threat to peoples' security through our ignorance. The time

has come to be honest about and criticize ourselves for falling prey to our ignorance. It is only by being honest and critical towards one's self-behavior the world may change for a better. This idea marks the gist around which the movies ahead revolve as the ground for bridging gaps for a world of multiculturalism and coexistence.

6.1 Road to Kabul: A Moroccan Journey Towards Neutral Mode of Representation

The previous analysis of both Moroccan and American entertaining discourses has revealed the different modes of constructing the Other: according to the American entertaining movies, the other has kept the same position as different and located out of the realm of civilization. The Moroccan movies, on the other hand, have asserted the Arab position in general, and the Moroccan in particular through revealing the “unsaid truth” about Arabs establishing their discourse as a “writing back” or “laughing back” the stereotypical images circulated in American entertaining movies. However, this section aims at going beyond the traditional reading of both orientalist and Occidental discourses as an attempt to create the third space where the Other and the Self could be identified from the angle of humanistic vision rather than from racial difference. In so doing, the Moroccan entertaining movie *Road to Kabul* (2012) expresses itself as a new journey towards a contact zone where difference manifests itself as a pivotal concern of the players with different identities.

Going beyond the traditional identity formation is the newness of *Road to Kabul* mode of representations. This “going beyond” inheritable discourses are revealed in the movie as an attempt to transcend the colonial stereotypical construction of the Other (for example *Road to Morocco*) and the Third World eulogistic construction of the self (*Abdu in the Almohads’ Dynasty*, as an example). On the contrary, *Road to Kabul* tries to render each race its due and stand in the in-between space, where the colonizer and the colonized are exposed to criticism in a humorous manner. This humorous criticism functions as a “rubber sword- it allows you to make a point without drawing blood.” (Hirsch) The first

path towards a “beyond traditional identity formation” status adopted in *Road to Kabul* movie is *self-and-other-fault-finding* that could be rated as an alternative perspective of constructing the image of the Arabs without being decorated and the image of West without being accessorized. In other words, the movie’s message revolves around deconstructing, intentionally or unintentionally, both Orientalist and Occidental discourses.

6.1.1 Self-reflection or self-Orientalism: Redefining the Third World Boundaries

The first step of the *Road to Kabul* movie towards deconstructing the traditional discourses is twofold: (i) talking reality of Moroccan society and (ii) admitting the serviceability of Europe provided for Arab immigrants. These two modes are employed strongly in the movie averring the reasons that force many young people to flee their countries towards Europe. Despite the fact that people are or might be aware of the suffering of immigrants in Western societies due to their marginal situations, some young Arab people, as the characters of *Road to Kabul*, regard, however, their status-quo in their homeland as unfortunate and second-rate. Spending their life between unemployment and weed smoking, the heroes of *Road to Kabul* have decided “to go for illegal immigration to Netherlands, where they were promised by Ouchan, many girls, cash and good weed.” (Road to Kabul: Review) The same decision has been taken by Naguib in our previous movie *Morokki in Paris*, but ended coming back to Morocco confirming the idea that suffering in one’s home is preferable than the servility in Western societies. However, *Road to Kabul* has another vision towards immigration averring that one should face the current situation and start finding a better life, even overseas instead of waiting for the mysterious future under the auspices of patriotism.

This vision reflects *le bon côté* of Western societies that contributes in a way or another to providing a space for the “excluded Other” in their countries to live in a decent way in the West. Promoting immigrants’ integral and valued positions is a responsibility of both Western societies and immigrants themselves; Western societies “need to give young Muslims a stake in society, hope for a better future, and the opportunity to develop and enjoy multiple and mutually moderating identities.” (Parekh 36) On the other hand, immigrants “need to take a long and overdue critical look at themselves, and find ways of overcoming the pervasive sense of victimhood and the tendency to father all their ills on the wider society.” (Parekh 37) In short, they need to “repair their disintegrating social fabric.” (Parekh 37) In this sense, the movie’s vision comes as an attempt to go beyond the traditional Occidentalism that views the West as a foe of one’s nationalism. In other words, the movie has opted for a dereliction of inveighing against the West and constructed its vision to the East and West relations without favoritism.

Furthermore, the movie establishes itself as a discourse that surpasses the debate over Edward Said’s perspectives of “Orientalism”. In other words, the West should not always be perceived as an opponent to the East, but rather as a proponent and a sponsor of Arab migrants who could “return to their home with enough savings to give them a better start in life.” (Parekh 6). Before heading for Kabul, Morocco is cast as a weak society that faces different difficult circumstances that impel young people to depart the country without hesitation due to the infirm economic diversification; Moroccan people struggle day after day to realize their dreams that labeled as their right in Western societies. For example, the heroes of the movie consider that engaging in productive employment is part of basic rights for any citizen in the West, while in Arab societies it is still classified as a hard-to-achieve dream. One might argue that this vision adopted in the movie embodies to

some extent a true situation of Moroccan society; however, others might reject the idea for its reflection of what is labeled as “inferiority complex” that constructs a vision towards the self as being an “inferior Arab” compared to “superior West.”

This psychological sense of inferiority preoccupies the mindsets of many Arab people as they see Europe as a land of dreams. This self-racial classification, however, is perceived as an influence of colonialism that has out to use different outlets to disseminate the idea of white people being a privileged creature compared to black ones. Besides, this inferiority complex finds its way to the heart of many Arab youngsters through the economic gates, which emphasizes “their difference and constructs them as inferior.” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies* 184) In the same stream, Frantz Fanon annexes the grounds of this complex to “primarily, economic; subsequently, the internalization—or, better, the epidermalization—of this inferiority.” (Fanon 4) By “the epidermalization of this inferiority”, Fanon means that: “When the black man comes into contact with the white world he goes through an experience of sensitization. His ego collapses. His self-esteem evaporates. He ceases to be a self-motivated person.” (Fanon xiii)

This self-worth lacking does loom large in *Road to Kabul* heroes who dedicate their time working hard to earn a large amount of money to make one of them eligible for an illegal migration to Europe. Apart from the economic drive, according to Fanon, the wish to live in European countries hides a racial drive to convince oneself that they could be accepted as white. On the basis of what Fanon believes: “The entire purpose of his behavior is to emulate the white man, to become like him, and thus hope to be accepted as a man.” (Fanon) Moreover, this going beyond Said’s perspectives of *Orientalism* is also transparent

in *Road to Kabul* through the reproduction of some images already disseminated in colonial discourses about Arab people as backward, savage, and their lands as unsecured Sahara. After being able to send one of their friends named Hmida for an illegal migration, the movie heroes, Ali, Mbarek, Messoud, and Ouchen, have found out through a news channel that Hmida is not in Holland, but in Afghanistan ask for help. This news flash has driven their friends to reorient their thinking from migrating to Amsterdam towards migrating to Kabul to rescue their friend.

This shift from the Dutch migration to Afghan adventure marks the shift in the modes of representation normally adopted in the Third World “writing back” discourses from criticizing “other” to rereading the “self”. Reaching the Afghani frontiers is like reaching “a fruitless land, where there is nothing but a drought and misery... no tree could be seen, no blessing, no birds, etc.” (Chakiri) Reproducing this image of Arab land as unsecured space as being described in the American movie *Road to Morocco* does not necessarily mean that the Moroccan movie is supporting the orientalist claims about the Others, but it might rather furnishes the ground for a new discussion that aims at drawing the rift between the traditional modes of Orientalist and Occidentalist representations. That is, *Road to Kabul* has opted for what is referred to as “internal Orientalism”³⁹ that preserves the same modes of constructing others as being disseminated in colonial discourses, as savages, barbaric, and their land as a land of aggression, emptiness, and thus of insecurity.

³⁹ This concept is understood by analogy with Michael Hechter's (1975) "internal colonialism", and perceived as a “problematic feature of the postcolonial predicament... [and that] the very cultural basis of public life has been affected (and infected) by ideas of difference and division that have colonial and orientalist roots.” (Breckenridge and van der Veer 11)

The movie comes to acknowledge that what is disseminated in Western imagination is nothing but a reflection of reality. However, admitting this reality conduces to generate a new meaning that might dismantle the stereotypical discourse of colonialism. In other words, describing the land of Afghanistan as being “a fruitless land, where there is nothing but a drought and misery... no tree could be seen, no blessing, no birds...” (Chakiri) by Moroccan characters themselves reflects the fallacy of generalization appropriated in colonial discourse. Simply put, when *Road to Kabul* opted for criticizing Afghanistan’s land, it is an oblique way to exculpate other Arab lands from the stereotypes embedded in colonial discourses. The same thinking could be applied to the identity of Arabs and their cultures; not all are alike. In one community, one may encounter those who do not dress in matching outfits, those who do not speak the same dialect, those who do not celebrate their holidays in the same rituals and those who do not have the same mindset because they do not share the same views and the same likes and dislikes.

This discussion of the “Arabs not being alike” and yet constructed in colonial discourses as being so leads us to confer about the nature of identity of individual that is perceived as being made up of different elements that, “may be found separately in many individuals, the same combination of them is never encountered in different people, and it’s this that gives every individual richness and value and makes each human being unique and irreplaceable.” (Maalouf, *On Identity* 10) In this sense, Arab’s identity distinguishes Moroccans from Egyptians, and Algerians from Yemenis and these from those, which makes of the same nation and race as *different*. In this sense, *Road to Kabul* comes to “write back” the colonial discourse differently and yet effectively through confirming Amin Maalouf’s announcement: “My identity is what prevents me from being identical to anybody else.” (Maalouf 10) In other words, *Road to Kabul* message could be deciphered as

following: Moroccan identity, culture, and land is what prevent Morocco from being identical to Afghanistan and other Islamic and Arab countries.

The idea of existence of differences within the Arab nation signifies the necessity to redefine the boundaries between Arabs themselves and dismantle the “curse of generalization”, so to speak, that squeezes the definition of Arabs under the umbrella of barbarism and backwardness and confines them inside the borders of uncivilized, empty and dangerous desert. The movie *Road to Kabul*, in this sense, aims at nullifying other part of the Arab nation, like Morocco from this curse of colonial generalization. In so doing, the Moroccan heroes have experienced a dangerous journey after being subject to suffer due to the threat of some Afghan Jihadi troops despite they share the same religious background. The movie addresses the dichotomy of Islamic troops through employing some ironic scenes. For example, when the Moroccan characters reached the boundaries of Afghanistan, they were left in the middle of nowhere and suddenly a troop of armed men in uniform reached the place, their leader was a man with a long black beard pointing his gun towards them and saying: “Assalam Alaykom... Welcome to Afghanistan.” (Chakiri) Later, the Moroccan characters are left without clothes facing the desert hardness.

Indeed, this image of pointing a gun to the face of unarmed people and stating the Islamic greeting “Assalam Alaykom” (Peace be upon you) reflects the dichotomies or rather the hypocrisy of some Muslim when pretending to consistently adhere to the teachings of Islam simply by enunciating Islamic appearance, but at the same time, they are clearly bent on a heinous crime of terrorizing unarmed people. In other words, the Islamic teachings and laws, which these Islamist armed groups try to advocate are in complete oppositions to what Islam basically advocates. Therefore, Islamic laws, in this

way, are made consistent with hidden agendas that the Islamist armed groups envisage reaching. This is how Islam is might be perceived by many insurgent groups, such Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Taliban... etc. These groups might start terrorizing innocents, and even kill them in most cases, but before perpetration they would yell out some Islamic words such as “Allah Akbar” (Allah is the greatest) so that they get prepared for the worst.

As another example, the Moroccan characters are caught by an Islamic movement of Al-Qaeda, and immediately accused of spying for the US armed force. Before standing before the judge, the Moroccan characters suggested to talk to the judge and convince them they are all belong to Muslim nation and talk about the reason of arriving in Afghanistan, which has nothing to do with their fight against the US military force. However, their attempt to prove their innocence has been in vain, especially there is an already consensus among trial judges and ironically their lawyer about their conviction. This and other images of the barbarity of Muslim troops reproduced in *Road to Kabul* are not simply meant to support the ideological inclination about the Third World as they are disseminated in most stereotypical discourses, but it is a deciphering message to draw a boundary within Muslim and Arab nations themselves. In other words, the movie’s intention is to refrain discourses from the “curse of generalization” through employing the assailant as Muslims and the victims as Muslims as well.

However, the mode of representing Arabs or Muslim nation by Arabs might be given different interpretations of self-Orientalism in which the Arab discourse plays the role of colonial discourse from *within*. In other words, preserving the same colonial mode of representing Arabs could accuse the discourse of Moroccan movie as in compliance with the discriminatory discourse contributing to give a sense of plausibility or “vraisemblance”

to the colonial agenda. Still, this perception could be reckoned as valid in case we take into consideration that the production of Moroccan cinema has been associated with French colonialism. In this case, dealing with Moroccan cinema recalls the rules on which such industry was established and how it was (and maybe is still) regulated by Dahirs (Moroccan juridical terms denoting a law) as the following quotation may show:

The French opened the first Moroccan laboratory in Casablanca in 1939, which became a French film production company known as Cinéphone. The cinema industry was put under State control and regulated by the Dahir of December 9, 1940, then modified by the Dahir of August 14, 1941, and again by that of April 18, 1942. (Carter 45)

From this quotation, one might deduce that Cinema industry in Morocco has been controlled by a French agenda through assigning some restricted decrees⁴⁰ to establish what becomes to be known as CCM (Le Centre Cinématographique Marocain). Taking into account that Moroccan cinema is established under French regulation might validate the interpretation that *Road to Kabul* as a reiteration of colonial mode of representing Arabs. In this regard, the movie could be rated as the dynamic engine of colonial culture industry that exhibited after it fulfills the conditions of the French agenda as the decree of “January 7, 1940” might dictate: “the decree of January 7, 1940, stipulated that it was possible to exhibit a film in Morocco *only* with permission from the French government censorship

⁴⁰ As examples of these decrees, Sandra Carter, the author of *What Moroccan Cinema? A Historical and Critical Study, 1956-2006*, has tackled in general some of these Dahirs’ decrees and states: “The decree of January 7, 1940, stipulated that it was possible to exhibit a film in Morocco only with permission from the French government censorship committee.” (Carter 45) She adds: “Since its creation by Dahir of April 20, 1942, followed by its reorganization in 1944, le Service du Cinéma was charged with setting the prices of cinema tickets and other means of regulating the profession.” (Carter 46)

committee.” (Carter 45) This idea recalls Adorno’s denial of claiming the positive side of popular culture, especially “jazz”. That is, when Adorno stands against “jazz”, he does not mean to criticize it as an art by itself, but rather he stands against the ideologies that surround this art. By means of analogy, *Road to Kabul*, as a production allowed by CCM, might epitomize the passivity of Moroccan cinema industry that is directed by the regulation of colonialism itself and their ideologies are pre-programmed and that the movie might exert “Orientalism” from within.

However, the fact that *Road to Kabul* is categorized as a comedy discourse might reorient this interpretative reading of Moroccan cinema passivity. Clearly, the movie has utilized some comic scenes through which the West is criticized in the same way Muslim and Arabs has been misrepresented. This divergence leads this analysis to discover new dimensions through which this discourse can be identified as unique and different from traditional discourses that follows the path of previous inclinations.

6.1.2 American as Barbaric: The West Not Always the Best

The movie *Road to Kabul* proves to be unique and different from other Third World discourses. Clearly, ascribing some images of barbarity as a projection of the US army proves a challenging mode of representing the West in the same way the Arabs or Muslim people are constructed. This shift in *Road to Kabul* narration from praising the West to criticizing the Rest and then back to the reformation of the West but in a different manner, or rather in the same manner the Rest is constructed, reorient the interest of racial discourse from traditional modes of both “colonial discourse” and “writing back”. By mixing both discourses, *Road to Kabul* has succeeded to establish a new mode representation with a sensible limit by which the “curse of generalization” could be dismantled.

In so doing, *Road to Kabul* reproduces a hard experience of Moroccan characters, but the barbarity they confronted is effectuated this time by the Americans and not by Muslim Jihadi organization. Just like the heroes of the movie were left in the middle of desert after they were misappropriated by an Arab person at the onset of their experience in Afghanistan, this incident has come into being for the second time undertaken by John, an American person. Surprisingly, John was saved by Moroccans after he was found wounded under the rubble of a building destroyed in a battle. They have shared with him food and cured him, as they trust him, because of what they hear about the American people as being sympathetic and sweet-tempered. John, however, has disheartened their trust after swiping their savers' virtuals on three-wheeled motor vehicle.

Moreover, the journey of suffering of the Moroccan characters in Afghanistan deconstructs some ideal images annexed to the American role in Afghanistan such providing security of the civilians. For example, the movie characters have been stuck by mistake in a landmine zone, so they tried hard to overcome this plight and get out of the zone safely. After they found a place in the sun, they found a signboard made by the United Nation announcing that: "Zone cleaned by the American army. The Afghani people thanks the American Army." (Chakiri) However, they throw unintentionally this signboard inside the zone, and then a loud explosion takes place within a close range of their area. This scene embodies the irreverent attitude to the human life in the minds of the supposedly labeled as the deputy of safekeeping in other's land.

As another example that epitomizes the barbarity or terrorism, to put it in its modern context, of the representative of the West in Afghanistan lies in the torture of the Moroccans, simply because they were found in the middle of desert after being

misappropriated by John. They try the language of dialogue to convince them of their position; but as Messoud states to Ouchen: “you don’t have to disturb yourself trying to convince these guys; the only language they have is putting an end to our life.” (Chakiri) Being tortured in prison is rated as the most agonizing experience they ever face in Kabul. Despite their entreaty, the Moroccans have been exposed to pouring cold water on their naked bodies, use of electrical wires, without mentioning ruthless beating and the use of grim dogs to frighten them.

The embarking on this barbaric behavior by the American soldiers in the prisons unveiling some unsaid barbaric images of some Westerners mostly attributed only to the Third World people as transmitted through media outlets and finds its place within “sensible narratives that become unsettled in that very act of repetition.” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 200) However, the establishment of the contact zone in *Road to Kabul* affirms the fact that any form of discourse, be it colonial discourse or counter-discourse, must be scrutinized by the lens of difference and the lens of disinterestedness.

6.1.3 The banality of Cultural Conflict and Intercultural Communication:

Road to Kabul’s mode of representing Muslim/Arab people and Americans is a call to provide a space of revision of both ‘colonial’ and ‘writing back’ discourses. Things seem to be what they are not in fact. This latter assumption is presumed upon an instance, once provided by the ex-president of the USA: George W. Bush, who adamantly supported the war on Iraq for a purported noble human cause, and paced all his means in pursuing that cause to until the end. The idea is that when the war was over, the international community got more convinced that it all was a big lie to defend the jeopardized US personal interests in the Gulf Region at the time. So things were made clearer by the end, and nothing was

done to change that situation. The movie *Road to Kabul* snaps a closer shot on such a torturing reality, basically when it shadows this idea of waging wars in the name of noble ideals, which are way far from the truth.

This banality resultant from such cultural conflicts between nations is brought to light in the movie of *Road to Kabul*, especially when these Jihadi movements are made the way they are to pursue only their own interests or those of their creators. What they publicly advocate turned a big lie when it is placed down into practice, thereby demonstrating the extent to which conflicts, wherever they are, are not purely based on noble causes but they are mostly biased. Therefore, this movie has woven its scenario based on three main assumptions: 1) The need to be honest to oneself defects, 2) Placing the other on equal footings and lastly 3) the need to learn from past histories to light up a future free of hatred and animosity.

For the first assumption, *Road to Kabul's* message is a call for the Arabs to acknowledge their demerit instead of initiating “writing back” discourses that aim at perfectionizing the images of their countries as democratic-industrial ones, or instigating counter-discourses targeting Westerners as desperado and imperious. On the contrary, the main assumption of *Road to Kabul* is to render each race its due and stand in the in-between space judging both the West and the East with fair and square dealing even through repeating some colonial discourse ideological inclinations about Muslim societies.

The second message of the movie has also been tackled in the previous section. The purpose being to demystify the perfection Westerners are supposed to have as a badge of

superiority. The movie has, indeed, utilized images that unveil the unsaid truth⁴¹ about the American army in Afghanistan and Iraq and other parts of the world. Utilizing this image, however, does not necessarily put the whole Western society under the same judgmental statement. On the contrary, the purpose of the movie is to avoid value judgments as a way out of binarism that is still tearing the world apart into two or more conflicting and antagonistic poles.

As an attempt to dismantle this binary-division habit of the world, *Road to Kabul* resorts to a surprisingly to the banality of cultural conflict between the West and the East. This banality lies in the conflict between the American army and the Jihadi organizations in Afghanistan, which reveals the discrepancies between the rumors leaked in the media and the real objectives behind launching a struggle in Afghanistan. In a way or another, the movie has averred the idea that Afghanistan is set a black spot that provides a convenient ground to fulfil the real drive for US to inaugurate what is labeled as “a war on terror” and for the “extremist” organizations to declare what is called “Jihad”. The fact that Moroccan characters are trapped between “a war on terror” of American army and Afghan Jihadi groups lead them to reveal the truth hidden behind the conflict that causes massacres in Afghanistan. When the court has announced its decision to execute the Moroccan characters after they have been accused of being American spies, they are taken to their leader named Sheik el-Molla, where a truth about this conflict comes into sight. The Moroccans discover that the Sheik is, in fact, a Moroccan actor named Said Bey, who ended his acting career and travelled to Afghanistan for such a position that becomes a source of economic prosperity for him and others. Messoud asked him: “Brother Said, we all know

⁴¹ Especially in US media outlets

you as a beloved Moroccan actor, but what are you doing here... in Afghanistan, in the middle of Taliban, Bombs, and all this chaos..." (Chakiri) Said responds: "America is a casting producer and we are actors." (Chakiri) These words reveal many ideas that the movie tries to express. The movie avers that the war on terror and Jihad are inaugurated out of expediency and nothing else.

Following the same stream, many critics have considered the war started against "terror" as a modern mega-lie that is used as an excuse to serve some agendas politically, ideologically and economically. In this context, the idea of *Road to Kabul* corresponds to a great extent with some controversial documentary films⁴² in the United States that have misgivings about what is taking place in countries like Afghanistan and Iraq. For example, Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* is rated as a controversial and challenging "the results of official, government-sponsored investigations." (Glant) The film questions and tries to dismantle the allegations made about the war inaugurated in Iraq and Afghanistan. According to Moore, the allegation of "war on terror" has been proceeded, due to the common economic interests between the US government and the Bin Laden Family. In this vein, Robert Brent Toplin has reported *Fahrenheit 9/11*'s claim and revealed:

At various points in *Fahrenheit 9/11*, Moore suggests that proponents of intervention were motivated by greed. He explores the ties between the Bush family's fortunes and the fortunes of the Saudi royal family as well as the wealthy bin Laden family of Saudi Arabia. The director also reports on the

⁴² For example, Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004) and John Pigler's *Breaking the Silence: Truth and Lies in the War on Terror* (2003)

activities of wealthy investment groups that stood to realize huge profits from the occupation of Iraq and the rebuilding of its oil industry (Toplin 1147)

Following the same trend of *Road to Kabul* of giving each race its due, Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* communicates sympathy for not only Iraqi civilians, but also the American soldiers; once again, Toplin has reported:

Fahrenheit 9/11 claims that Iraqi civilians and American soldiers (as well as their families) have paid a heavy price since the war began. Moore shows Iraqis living cheerfully in the prewar days and then quickly shifts to footage of heavy bombing in Baghdad, the destruction of Iraqi homes, and the horrible deaths and maiming caused by the war. He also shows American soldiers nursing physical and mental wounds at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. As in *Roger and Me* (1989), Moore communicates sympathy for poor Americans, who are often the victims of decisions made by powerful people (Toplin 1147)

The same tragic images discussed in *Fahrenheit 9/11* have been screened in another documentary film titled *Breaking the Silence: Truth and Lies in The War On Terror* (2003). This film "dissects the truth and lies behind the 'War on Terror', investigating the discrepancies between American and British justification for 'war' and the facts on the ground in Afghanistan and Washington DC." (Pilger) The documentary film starts with President George W Bush declaration during his war on terror: "America will bring to the Iraq people food, medicine, supplies and freedom... we have shown Freedom's power and in this great conflict, we will see Freedom's victory." (Pilger) The sound of such

declaration is accompanied by “a harrowing series of photographs showing the carnage inflicted on Iraqis by the United States and British military forces in 2003.” (Pilger)

The point behind squeezing both Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11* and Pliger’s *Breaking the Silence* into the analysis of *Road to Kabul* is twofold: first, these two films share the same perceptions of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan as being tackled in *Road to Kabul*; second, the two films are documentaries and *Road to Kabul* is a comedy film, but still shares the same perceptions. This point is very important in the sense that it reveals the extent to which a comedy can reproduce reality as documentary film is rated as a genre that represents reality. Supporting this claim, a report by the World Union of Documentary (1948) reveals,

Documentaries are all methods of recording on celluloid any aspect of reality interpreted either by sincere and justifiable reconstruction, so as to appeal either to reason or emotion, for the purpose of stimulating the desire for, and the widening of human knowledge and understanding, and of truthfully posing problems and their solutions in the spheres of economics, culture, and human relations.

From this excerpt, one may perceive that in all movies and documentaries, it should be acknowledged that there is a degree of truth, though not a total one. This is simply because of the need to stir peoples’ curiosity and desire to see new things even though they may not have resembled to reality. This very truth is made reference to in Jack Shaheen’s words in avowing that,

I am not saying an Arab should never be portrayed as the villain. What I am saying is that almost all Hollywood depictions of Arabs are bad ones. This is a grave injustice. Repetitious and negative images of the reel Arab literally sustain adverse portraits across generations. The fact is that for more than a century producers have tarred an entire group of people with the same sinister brush. (Shaheen 176)

To sum up, criticizing American policies and Jihadi organizations, the movie *Road to Kabul* has largely proven itself as a neutral discourse that stands for humanity and not for any race. That is, employing neutral characters in this movie proves that anyone should be a target of criticism and that being honest with oneself and acknowledging one's defects is the way out of this worldly furnace of conflicts that is still tearing this world apart. Communication and dialogues are, first and foremost, predicated upon this honesty and transparency that seem to have lost their way in our present materialistic and interest-driven times.

6.2 Achmed Saves America: Beyond Stereotypical Discourses

Following the production of the movie, *Road to Kabul*, there has been an urge towards stepping beyond the binarism or hatred discourses which do promote animosity more than fostering entertainment. As has been discussed in the previous section, the *Road to Kabul* has been a bridge towards a milder discourse advancing peace, tolerance of difference and thereby implicitly providing a model for intercultural dialogues rather than engaging in a process characterized by flows of diatribes from different partisans of opposing sides. To this end, the movie has come as a mediator between all voices to bring all to a reconciliatory table beyond weaponry accusations of extremism, barbarity, savagery and *uncivilization*.

At this stage, the movie has featured different scenes and examples wherein there is this self-criticism. Therefore, no need for someone to come just to spot the weak points of one's reality or psyche; rather it is the duty of the self to voice its defects as an attempt to correct them and get uplifted in the scale of human civilization. The purpose of such self-criticism is in fact an attempt to overcome one's arrogance and cultural particularities, which have, in the near past, resisted discussion. Everything, according to such mindset, is now a target of debate and correction. Therefore, the movie features scenes where Arabs criticize their own people and accuse them of savagery, selfishness and reluctance to serve the common good at the expense of their own personal interests.

Following the same thread of thoughts, the movies *Achmed saves America* corroborates this idea of promoting peaceful dialogues beyond flows of diatribe from narrow-minded extremists. However, intriguing as it may seem, there is another aforementioned show discussed before and in which Achmed is presented in a one man

show as a skeleton yearning for more blood of innocents. This show has pictured Achmed as a dead terrorist who would not mind coming back alive to kill more Americans or Europeans. The only word he keeps repeating is “I kill you”, thus showing no sign of flexibility even in his attempt to speak sound words. This character is characteristic of an Arab mindset, which does not favor dialogue instead of diatribes and killing. Therefore, and against all odds, this one man show has come again with a different attitude with the same skeleton to alter all the previous assumptions that it built on itself. It is now more open to dialogue and peaceful solutions, which do not include weaponry outlets in anyway. This shift has come in line with the same conceptions promoted through the movie of *Road to Kabul*. This alteration in the mode of representation in both movies embodies a light at the end of tunnel aspiring to coexistence in a world of differences. This world which Martin Luther King once envisaged in terms of equal relations, opportunities and hopes for all without exception. The questions of skin color, religion or gender relations no more pose challenges to human progress, but rather constitute a richness and variety of options all for human advancement.

In this connection, *Achmed saves America* has come with a new and inspiring idea. This idea has come counter to all conventional linearity. That is to say, the west, or mainly America, has always been pictured as a savior, as president Woodrow Wilson once declared, “*At last the world knows America as the savior of the world!*” (Qt in Stone & Kuznick, 2012, p. 35) This same skeleton used to terrorize and kill people whom he now saves and wills to die for. The reason why Achmed, and not some other Arab characters, is brought into light now and not before is to transmit this message of tolerance and forgiving. More than ever before, we need now to forgive those perceived as enemies for the world to live in peace and look up towards a bright future. Hatred generates more hatred and

animosity which do sweep everyone into a swamp of blood. Therefore, enough with revenge theories, and time for benevolent actions. Achmed is the same person people wished to die a thousand times before, but now he has been given another chance to fix things and conciliate with the world out there.

The urgent need for fresh starts and intercultural dialogues has been epitomized through this movie of *Achmed saves America*. Importantly, had it not been for some Americans with good wills, Achmed would not have been changed into a benevolent character. Most movies discussed in this research foreground this idea of having people with racist inclinations on both sides, but at the same time, there are those who keep standing in the face of extremism to constitute a shed-drop that would change the course of action one day. *Achmed Saves America* is perceived as a new departure discourse that aims at promoting the Western / Eastern relations beyond the traditional vision of this relation as being one of struggle and division. This animated movie avers that the need for the West/East contact remains a prerequisite to treat the relation between the two sides “not in terms of separateness or apartheid, but in terms of co-presence, interaction, interlocking understanding and practices.” (Pratt 7)

6.2.1 Achmed’s Journey from Fanaticism to Moderation

After the disturbance ensued by the utilization of the dummy named Achmed the dead terrorist in Jeff Dunham’s show of 2008, especially when he received some kind of resistance in Malesia, when the Ministry of Culture and Arts demanded that Dunham’s dummy character has to “be changed for local sensitivities, including his name, likeness, references to virgins or Muslims.” (Gourlay), Dunham has become aware of the outrage that may follow his comedy shows. As a reaction, he has produced his recent animated

movie *Achmed Saves America* as an attempt to express the idea that discussing or laughing others should not be viewed as a source of regret. On the contrary, this discussion could be promoted as a way out of this fanaticism to reach integration, moderation, and intercultural communication. In so doing, Achmed in *Achmed saves America* is portrayed as the same dummy Skelton keeping the same beliefs as he was cast in the 2008 stand-up show. However, his new journey towards America has known a considerable change in his belief.

The first appearance of Achmed is set in a desert named Mizpakmanistan before getting exploded and becoming a skeleton. He received a phone call from his boss who is blaming him for still being alive, thus saying: “I should’ve heard the big bomb by now...you’ve worked for us for three years and you still haven’t killed an infidel one...I swear you’re the worst terrorist in the whole non-Muslim world.” (Dunham, *Achmed Saves America*) Strikingly, Achmed’s response to the accusation of his boss is not expected as he says, “I’m not... As a devout non-Muslim, I’m offended by that.” (Dunham, *Achmed Saves America*) This response seems to be confusing in the sense that Achmed repudiate his belonging to the Islamic religion. However, this episode has its archetype in the Dunham’s stand-up show *Achmed the Dead Terrorist* (2008), when Dunham asked Achmed: “So I guess you’re Muslim?” but ‘Achmed’ denies this claim in view of the fact that he is “made in China.” (Dunham, *Achmed the Dead Terrorist*) As it has been previously commented on this skit, the interpretation of Achmed’s answer was twofold: first, it was seen as an attempt to hide the fact that Achmed’s dummy was made to be presented as Muslim representative, especially when referring to the dummy’s name and its appearance with a beard and turban, and even when referring, on many occasions, to Muslims’ frequent uses of some words like ‘Allah’.

Second, Dunham's message to his audience is perceived as his refusal to generalize the fact that all Muslims are suicide bombers, whereas he confirms simultaneously that all suicide bombers are Muslims. However, by adhering non-Islamism to Achmed in *Achmed Saves America*, the interpretation could be harmonized to include the call for a new start in our judgments on people afar. That is, the terrorist is a terrorist regardless of their belonging or religious background; terrorism should be tackled as terrorism without exploring its ideological propensity, as Jean Baudrillard declares in his "The Spirit of Terrorism",

This is terror against terror — there is no longer any ideology behind it. We are far beyond ideology and politics now. No ideology, no cause — not even the Islamic cause — can account for the energy which fuels terror. The aim is no longer even to transform the world, but (as the heresies did in their day) to radicalize the world by sacrifice. Whereas the system aims to realize it by force. (Baudrillard 9-10)

Labeling Achmed as "a devout non-Muslim terrorist" is an attempt to empty terrorism from any religious background, but it should be treated "like viruses, is everywhere." (Baudrillard 10) Baudrillard, in this sense, tries to universalize the issue of terrorism instead of limiting it to one specific civilization, "this is not, then, a clash of civilizations or religions, and it reaches far beyond Islam and America." On the contrary, it is time to "speak of a world war— not the Third World War, but the Fourth⁴³ and the only really global one." (Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism and Requiem for the Twin Towers* 11)

⁴³ Baudrillard has explained the chronological order he depends on to speak of the Fourth World War and avers, "The first two world wars corresponded to the classical image of war. The First ended the supremacy of Europe and the colonial era. The second put an end to Nazism. The third, which has indeed taken place, in the form of cold war and deterrence, put an end to Communism. With each succeeding war, we have moved further towards a single world order." (Baudrillard 11-12)

This perception may serve to explain the reason behind repudiating the religious background of Achmed and tackling terrorism as a threat to humanity as a whole.

Moreover, the reason behind making of terrorism a universal threat finds account in what Baudrillard labels as “the spirit of terrorism.” This spirit lies in terrorist turning their “death into a Counterstrike weapon.” (Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism and Requiem for the Twin Towers* 16) Suicide for a terrorist is the ultimate objective that he/she may want to achieve, albeit as a publicity for the agenda he (or she) may have. This fact is reflected in Achmed’s saying after being blamed for still being “alive” when his boss suspect his will to commit a suicide bombing “Achmed... You’re not losing your nerve. Are you?” Achmed responds angrily, “No, are you kidding! I’ll be crazy not to kill myself.” (Dunham) This announcement embodies the desire of terrorists to kill themselves, the fact which cause a real threat against “a system that operates on the basis of the exclusion of death, a system whose ideal is an ideal of zero deaths.” (Baudrillard 16)

The terrorist war against the world is broken out in the spirit of what Baudrillard is expressed in the name of terrorists, “what does the American bombing matter? Our men are as eager to die as the Americans are to live!” (Baudrillard 16) In this sense, it is a mistake to announce that terrorism is “obeying a purely destructive logic”, since there could be no reasoning behind launching terrorist wars against others and maybe for no return, which is an extra-motive to declare terrorism an alarming bane nowadays. The absence of logic is what characterizes the acts of terrorism; some critics try to provide reasonable explanations to this plague, but their theories have failed to provide decisive answers. For example, when Achmed was asked by his boss about the rationale behind his mission to commit a suicide attack and the grounds on which he hates the infidels, Achmed’s answer

was simply, “because you told me to.” (Dunham) This impetus to commit a suicide attack reflects the weirdness of some terrorists to endanger others’ life with no specific reasoning, which make it hard to think reasonable answers to examine this bane and decode its grounds. Baudrillard states: “if we are to gain some understanding of it, we have to slough off our Western perspective to see what goes on in the terrorists’ organization, and in their heads.” (Baudrillard 21) Sloughing off Western perspective, however, is not adequate to understand the phenomenon, especially with the raising Muslim voices that condemn terrorism even more mightily than some Westerners do. However, Dunham’s *Achmed Saves America* has suggested a new strategy to understand what goes on in the terrorists’ mind. This strategy lies in trying to integrate Achmed, the terrorist, into America even through taking him accidentally and in an unexpected manner.

The journey of Achmed from fanaticism to moderation begins when he is lifted by a bald eagle, a mighty American symbol, from his home nation of Mizpakmanistan and thrown over an American airline plane making his flight towards the United States of America, or rather towards the “US American Liberty Freedom” as the plane may display.

Being taken by the American eagle and US Airways is a sign that Achmed is taken by force to be introduced to the world, he believes, of ‘infidels’ that he intends to blow up. On many occasions, we hear in many stories, especially in colonial discourses, about journeys of Western characters towards the “Third World” societies⁴⁴. These kind of trips mostly resonate the colonial discourses that carry with them misrepresentations of Other’s landscapes, cultures, and people. In the case of *Achmed Saves America*, however, the journey is diametrically opposed to the former discourses. Dunham has opted for inviting



Achmed lifted by an American eagle and carried by an American plane towards USA

(Dunham)

Achmed even by force to Americaville and hosted by an American family that mistakes him for a French foreign exchange student named Claude. Dunham’s strategy to reverse the traditional cultural contacts taking place in the Other’s lands and replace it with a more

⁴⁴ Take for example, Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, *Road to Morocco* or Diane Johnson’s *Lulu in Marrakech*, etcetera.

modern cultural contact to bring up a new mode of representation characterized by its moderation. He thus brought an extremist from a faraway land on a bunch of maniacal self-exploders to grant him a unique chance of reconsidering his false judgments on Americans.

By stepping beyond the old paradigms of colonial discourses when cultural contacts used to take place on the oppressed lands to a more reconciliatory mode of bringing differences to a dialogue table, Dunham intends to shift all old understanding of how communication can be established on firm, solid grounds. That is to say, it is now a priority to invite people, and even by force, to learn and make them see the beauty and peacefulness of your own culture. Your whole benign make up would be all exposed to your enemy to see and feel, and even those with the slightest inch of mercy will learn to appreciate who you are and how generous you have been all the time in treating them. This chance is now granted to Achmed to try to change what he once thought about Americans, even though other options, like exterminating him so easily, could have been initiated so effortlessly. For Dunham the solution is to engage in dialogues rather than confronting violence with violence.

In this regard, Achmed's first impression on the Americaville has not changed; as soon as he is alighted in front of a large signboard saying "Welcome to America", Achmed reacts to it in a prompt way and says: "death to America", then he takes out his dairy and jots down: "Terrorist lag...I've arrived in the land of infidels." (Dunham) This prompt reaction to the Americaville city reflects the ready-made judgment instilled in the mind of Achmed and reveals the way America is seen by people of 'Mizpakmanistan'. When Achmed is mistaken for Claude, the Wilson family has expressed its happiness to meet him. But Achmed responds: "are you infidels friendly or idiots or just friendly idiots."

(Dunham) This moment may be considered as an overture to Achmed to start his terrorist mission from within the hosting family and land. First, he starts taking notes in his diary while having his eye for detail. The notes he is taking seem to stem from his pre-established and wronged assumptions on America as being “the enemy of peoples”.

In fact, Achmed considers the Wilson family as his “enemy” even though, in his words, “they insist on treating me with respect, and feeding me an obscene amount of food that I can barely keep down... their town is in terrible shape, and their lives are filled with emptiness and failure, yet they don’t take the obvious route of blowing themselves around them up.” (Dunham) Apparently, these notes are meant to oppose the plain images screened in front of him, which reflects the ambivalent he is undergoing and against which he is in constant struggle while on his stay on the American soil. What seems to tear his psyche apart while dwelling on the American life and the way its people are nice to each other is the idea of having to adamantly stick to what he already believes about them or, in his strict terming, “These are nothing like the Americans I was taught to hate, which makes me hate them more.” (Dunham) In stating this, Achmed acknowledges that terrorism is manufactured. Hatred, in turn, is made implanted in the minds and hearts of succeeding generations.

Therefore, it is hard to deracinate an implanted idea which has been there for quite a considerable amount of time and has even been on function for so many terrorists across the globe. Therefore, resisting the idea of vilifying the Americans is torturing Achmed from within, but it is something with which he can do nothing for now, since he was taught to behave accordingly. This state of mind conjures up a myriad of fancies that the terrorist has to constantly deal with. These fancies are what Raja Shehadeh terms as the intricacies of

the makeup of the terrorist psyche. In this account, he succinctly explains that part of the terrorists is that of a steadfast resistant, for he

Choose [s] to stay in that prison, because it is [his] home, and because [he] fear [s] that if [he] leave [s], [his] jailer will not allow [him] to return. Living like this, [he] must constantly resist the twin temptations of either acquiescing in the jailer's plan in numb despair, or becoming crazed by consuming hatred for [his] jailer and [him] self, the prisoner. (Quoted in Chomsky 262)

In choosing to remain a prisoner to years of ignorant instructions from fanatics, Achmed is epitomizing a struggle he has to wage while trying to refute the idea that Americans could be nice and different from the portrait he was taught. Resisting the idea of changing one's prejudices is indeed predicated upon the premise that if one decides to quit what he was taught for something new, he would never have a chance to come back if later found out that the new trodden path is wrong and halfway. This apprehension is what Achmed abhors most and to which he chose to react in numb submission by blindly following dictations of his fanatic jailors no matter what the repercussions could be like. Therefore, it is all about the idea of resistance to positive change that looms large in Achmed's mind so far, and this state of obstinacy is what Raja Shehadeh explains as a strategy to resist any intruding idea that could have toppled effects on one's whole life. In this regard, Shehadeh terms this state as being a steadfast combatant who,

Is like being in a small room with your family. You have bolted the doors and all the windows to keep strangers out. But they come anyway—they just walk through the walls as if they weren't there. They say they like your room.

They bring their families and their friends. They like the furniture, the food, the garden. You shrink into a corner, pretending they aren't there, tending to your housework, being a rebellious son, a strict father or an anxious mother – crawling about as if everything was normal, as if your room was yours forever. Your family's faces are growing pale, withdrawn—an ugly grey, as the air in their corner becomes exhausted. The strangers have fresh air, they come and go at will – their cheeks are pink, their voices loud and vibrant. But you cling to your corner, you never leave it, afraid that if you do, you will not be allowed back. (Quoted in Chomsky 262-263)

In the name of the same principles, Achmed has become a prisoner of his thoughts that he was taught in his nation Mizpakmanistan. He is treated in a good manner by what he sees as strangers and 'infidels'. He keeps himself aside preparing his bomb to blow up the concourse where organizing a party that he does not know was prepared for him. His good feelings are his negative plans and answers are met with positive and smiley faces of Wilson family; after he finishes making his "big bomb", he jots down in his 'memo': "Dear diary, my bomb is complete. Tomorrow I will get my revenge on these people who have been so nice to me, (a door is open, and it was Mrs. Wilson brings to Achmed a soft pillow)... how I hate them." (Dunham)

Achmed's negative reactions to the host family could express the extent to which he was humiliated by his overseers, especially that he was living in a cave and always blamed for still being breathing. Certainly, living in a violent area will produce violent behavior. His perception of Wilson family could be judged as being an unjustified madness that has symptoms but no cause and sometimes no cure, as Badri Raina avers, "We are invited to believe that madness may have cause but 'terrorism' has none." (Raina 5327)



Ahmed's Life in Mizpakmanistan (Dunham, *Achmed Saves America*)

However, looking back to the horrible past of Achmed before becoming a killer and to the circumstances of his nation where war is established as routine and constant, there might be no space of logic to talk of madness in this case; as Amine Maalouf may assert,

So we talk of murderous folly, of bloodthirsty ancestral or hereditary madness. In a way, we are right to talk of madness. When an otherwise normal man is transformed overnight into a killer, that is indeed insanity. But when there are thousands, millions of killers; when this phenomenon occurs in one country after another, in different cultures, among the faithful of all religions and among unbelievers alike, it's no longer enough to talk of madness. (Maalouf 28)

Maalouf does not intend to exculpate the liability of terrorism or vindicate the declaration of wars, but he does warn of the conditions that may culminate in atrocities and that “the emotions of fear or insecurity don't always obey rational considerations.” Reacting against this fear is the propensity that might conduce to the disturbance of nations. He explains,

We have only to review the events of the last few years to see that any human community that feels humiliated or fears for its existence will tend to produce killers. And these killers will commit the most dreadful atrocities in the belief that they are right to do so and deserve the admiration of their fellows in this world and bliss in the next.... *What we have to do is prevent the conditions occurring that will bring the monster forth.* (Maalouf 28) (My emphasis)

Maalouf's advice to prevent the conditions that may bring the “monster forth could be reflected in *Achmed Saves America* in the hospitality and generosity of the Wilson family towards Achmed without jumping, from the onset, to the wrong conclusion about him. This kindness and generosity have brought a peace hidden behind the contaminated hatred discourse was taught in Mizpakmanistan. After Achmed done setting up a bomb to blow up in the assembly, he was surprised to know that the assembly was arranged by the Wilson

family as a party for him to express their gratitude and welcome him to “America, the nation of foreigners.” (Dunham)

6.2.2 Towards Complicated Integration

Minimizing conflicts between cultures, spreading peace among nations, and overcoming divisions within societies remain the most challenging and complex factors to attain in the world of difference. However, Achmed's experience in Americaville reveals a glimmer of hope in the realization of cultural integration after a constant battle against his extremist beliefs. Achmed is surprised to know that the people he intends to kill trust him; he states, "You trust me! What's a Fatwah... the guys have it all wrong. You're the best infidels ever, and I'm from no-one-is-nice; they stay in their caves, knee-deep in camel poop, covering their wives so they look like Pac-Man ghosts.... I love this country. Life to



Achmed tears up the Fatwah of 'hate America' (Dunham, Achmed Saves America)

America!” (Dunham) He regrets his intention to blow up the party spot and decides to deactivate the bomb explosion at the last minute, which makes of him the hero of Americaville.

Achmed expresses his apologies to the American people through tearing up the fatwa paper while performing his expressive song titled “I was wrong”. This moment is a turning point in Achmed’s life. Ripping up the fatwa expresses the rejection of his terrorist beliefs, he had used to obey before moving to America. This sense of regret reflects the influence of cultural contact to promote tolerance and integration. It is this situation for which, “many thinkers have earnestly explored the idea that bringing East and West together at an ideological level might provide a key to a new world order of peace and reconciliation.” (Clarke 108) However, cladding in Uncle Sam” attire and calling for American patriotism may question the way in which the integration of Achmed into the American society is going to be carried out. The movie foregrounds an idea that integration is tantamount to total succumb to certain new cultural traits. For Achmed to get accepted by the Americans and into the American society as a whole, he is supposed to let go of all his past principles, be they right or wrong, and totally embrace the culture of the host country.

However enticing this urge as it may seem, the conception of integration is here cloaked under different promising assumptions that anyone would unconditionally aspire for. Integration according to this movie promises total freedom for people to express themselves the way they want; to embrace whatever religion they want and most of all acting like a hero and a savior for people who would cheer up every time upon hearing your name. However, this integration deprives Achmed of getting along with his true self and

of, most importantly, maintaining his identity as a different person from what the Americans are trying to make out of him. The picture, which the American dream is trying to redraw of Achmed, is in total opposition to the one which he accumulated for himself through many years, regardless of the black spots characterizing it. Still, what you are should never be changed as a whole for simply a new idea that may be discovered later on to be a total scam and a fiasco.

Indeed, what the movie intends to make of Achmed is a total conversion done by means of assimilation instead of adaptation. Assimilation, as a concept implies “a situation in which a minority group or groups are forced to abandon their behavior in order to adopt that of the majority.” (Bolaf, Bracalenti and Braham 152) That is, when Achmed opts for wearing Sam’s attire, ripping up the fatwah, dressing in a Christophe Columbus manner, acclaiming for American pop culture and exalting some American televised figures, he certainly becomes more American than Americans themselves do. These images reflect that Achmed has assimilated, which echoes colonialism, since ‘assimilation’ “was first applied by French and Portuguese colonial systems in Africa to the relationships between populations and cultures.” (Bolaf, Bracalenti and Braham 19) It has been developed with the rise immigrants arrivals towards Europe. In this context, Achmed as a foreigner has expressed successfully his love of the country through absorbing the dominant culture of the American dream.

This transition may be perceived as a “natural’ way for migrants to adjust gradually to their new environment by absorbing the values of the dominant culture.” (Bolaf, Bracalenti and Braham 19) This claim could be perceived as valid, especially while taking into consideration the fact that identity is, as Maalouf may sometimes defend, acquired and

not born. Maalouf's rule to defend this view implies the idea that, "What determines a person's affiliation to a given group is essentially the influence of others." (Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong* 25) Whenever a person is confronted with a new culture, they summarily learn how to handle their new statuesque. The influence of people on a newly comer to a certain group is inevitable. If one chooses to fend off the intrusion of a new identity in favor of preserving his own, then he/she would be outcast and regarded with disrespect in his/her new environment.

This situation conveys the impression that the people absorbing the dominant culture are not always happy and contented. Even if we assume that the case of these people is otherwise, it has, for many years, proven that a newcomer to a group is never regarded with utmost intimacy and welcome. Rather, even when one chooses to embrace, fully or partly, a new culture and adopt its identity, the host land keeps regarding them with an inherent eye of weariness. By going back to the movie of *Achmed Saves America*, this situation becomes complicated with Achmed when has been discovered by his former terrorist overseer Hassan, telling people that the man they are celebrating with is not Claude, the French student; his real name is Achmed and he used to be a terrorist. People without hesitation have not tolerated him regardless of his total assimilation of the American dream.

Knowing Achmed is an ex-terrorist, or rather not a French (Western), drives all American citizens and all American forces tracking him and Hassan all over the city. More sadly, the Wilson family has gone through tragic events that could have led the whole family to a tragic edge after being arrested and remanded in custody, charged for harboring Achmed, a former terrorist. This accusation of the Wilson family reflects the lack of

cultural maturity, so to speak, that does not judge people “on the basis [their] human qualities and [their] opinions and not of [their] inherited allegiances.” Americaville, thus, proves that it has “not reached that point yet. No one has, anywhere, to tell the truth.” (Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong* 155) This is not a denial of the possibility to build up a world of peace and coexistence, but it is an attempt to avouch the still existing of tension in the world of difference. Things even get worse with the constant struggle embarked upon by humanity at large, sometimes in the name of fighting “infidels” and many other times in the name of striking terrorists and exterminating them in their own homes; needless to mention tribal wars and even trivial wars.

Respect of cultural difference and disparaging of stereotypical discourses remain effective in promoting coexistence between nations. Jack Shaheen avers, “Dislike of “the stranger,” which the Greeks knew as xenophobia, forewarns that when one ethnic, racial, or religious group is vilified, innocent people suffer.” (Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* 4) Re-asking the question of Postmedia movie critic Jay Stone: “Where are the movie Arabs and Muslims who are just ordinary people?” Shaheen considers that it is important “for the average American to know and care about the Arab stereotype.” For him cinema movies have negatively “affected the lives of ... minorities.” (Shaheen 4) The first step towards, coexistence, thus for Shaheen, implies dismantling the stereotypical discourses, since “History reminds us that the cinema’s hateful Arab stereotypes are reminiscent of abuses in earlier times.” (Shaheen 4)

In this sense, Dunham’s *Achmed Saves America* has made a promising step by providing a cultural contact where Achmed is introduced to the American life that he finds opposed to what he used to believe. However, one may not approve the total transition of

Achmed towards purely American person detaching himself from his original identity. Needless to say that repenting terrorist beliefs and ripping up the fatwa of “hating others” are right minded and ethical deeds. What one may not approve is the failure to employ integration without abandoning Achmed’s culture, as though he has left no choice, but the denial of the self. If we have averred previously that terrorism madness may have no cause, Maalouf comes once again to confirm the opposite that if people “feel they have to choose between denial of the self and denial of the other - then we shall be bringing into being legions of the lost and hordes of bloodthirsty madmen.” (Maalouf 35) In this sense, building a world of peace and a society of coexistence start from the acknowledging *difference* that should not be understood as a warrant to vilify the Other, but it should rather be seen as reinforcing a sort of cultural richness that admits the existence and coexistence of both the Self and the Other as two equal entities.

The refusal of Achmed after being recognized as being “not French” raises different question about the possibility of living in a modern society without resorting to the denial of the one’s self. Maalouf raises some questions that follow the same trend of complexity of people living in other’s society without losing their identity. Asks Maalouf, "How can we modernize ourselves without losing our identity?"; "How can we assimilate Western culture without denying our own?"; "How can we acquire the West's knowledge without leaving ourselves at its mercy?" (Maalouf 79)

As an attempt to provide an answer from *Achmed Saves America*, the message of the movie is to keep hope and try to make a happy denouement by changing a wanted terrorist into a savior and finally implying a message of tolerance and peace for everyone to heed. The arrest of the Wilson family urges Achmed to save them by turning himself in

on one condition — releasing the Wilson family. In so doing, Achmed decided to use his skill in manufacturing and invent an astonishing car to pursue the family taken under the army escort to Guantanamo Bay. He succeeded to reach and stop the escort expounding,

I am turning myself in.... Ladies and gentlemen and big dangerous guns, I came back to tell you that these wonderful people, the Wilsons, do not deserve to be taken to prison, I do... [all gasping] It's true that I came here with the intent of doing you harm, but that is all over. And the Wilsons had nothing to do with it, because they are decent, kind people, like Americans everywhere... The Wilsons' only crime was seeing the best in me, and my only crime was not seeing the best in them... and plotting to blow up the whole town..." (Dunham)

As an answer to Maalouf's questions, Achmed reveals the secret behind realizing coexistence of differences. This secret lies in the way the Wilson family looking at other races; "The Wilsons' only crime was seeing the best in me." These Achmed's words encapsulate an effective way to make of the world a better place. Seeing the good in Others is, in fact, a "humanometer" by which people of different races can be measured from their humane sides rather than their racial, religious, and cultural aspects. Seeing the good in Others, is not servilism but rather a truth behind every human being; each possesses a good in their self. Looking at the good in people conduces to, not necessarily abstracting, but at least reducing racial discrimination of others. On the other hand, "not seeing the best" in others, thus, culminates in undesirable consequences, as Achmed avers, "my only crime was not seeing the best in them... and plotting to blow up the whole town." (Dunham)

However, Achmed's confession has not been enough to cease the soldiers' attempt to shoot him with a Sniper. This reflects the wide divergences of tolerance between the Wilsons and other Americans. This divergence could be detected in almost every nation; otherwise, there would be no difference and thus no necessity to call for tolerance and coexistence. This difference reconsiders the Other's identity as being the ground of solidarity and coexistence is not necessarily based on cultural sameness. In this sense, the presence of "zero tolerance" in *Achmed Saves America* is understandable while tackling the conflict of cultural difference.

Moreover, the attempt of sniping at Achmed at the time he is expounding his regret at his beliefs and exculpating the Wilsons from the allegations of dishonesty and the accusation of harboring a terrorist in their house, furnishes the ground for the role of Dunham's talent to promoting peace in the world. Clearly, being on the verge of being sniped at, saving Achmed remains a critical moment that leads to the denouement of the story. After the officer starts countdown to shoot Achmed, voice featured from nowhere, "a sniper team, stand down... that is a direct order! This is General Charles McCarthy of the United States Joint Command, and I order you to stand down now!" (Dunham) The voice, in fact, is that of Kevin, the son of Wilson, who uses his skill of imitating different voices without moving his lips. This skill is featured as ventriloquism; the same skill mastered the creator of Achmed dummy, Jeff Dunham.

The moment of saving Achmed by a ventriloquist embodies an optimum moment to exhibit the comedian role to spreading peace. Being accused of circulating hatred discourse for performing with Achmed dummy, Dunham avers that the role of the comedian is not what some critics may perceive, but they rather fight hate in the arena of comedy. Thus,

Dunham's message to his opponent that comedy is not always meant to be a concealed weapon of racism and stereotypical discourses, but rather an outlet supporting peace and coexistence.

The argument discussed in the movie acknowledges that promoting coexistence is complicated and yet achievable. *Achmed Saves America* has brilliantly unfolded the challenges and complexities of coexistence within a Western society, and yet it has tactfully



Achmed's overseer, Hassan, embracing an American soldier after a cultural peace accord (Dunham, *Achmed Saves America*)

detected in its quasi-possibility to be realized. Back once again to Maalouf's questions about the possibility to live in a hybrid modern society without adopting the strategy of self-denial denial, the movie has averred that integrating within a different cultural society is attainable through employing terrorist characters, Achmed and his overseer Hassan, as typical cases, who have ended living in the United State after reconciliation is made between the representatives of different cultures.

However, it is important to declare the complexity of such possible integration lies in a slippery condition. That is, the movie has affirmed implicitly that there could be no space of enunciation without renunciation. That is, building up a society of different cultures is established through abandoning a part of one's self. Achmed's integration in the Americaville is set on the basis of "American dream." As Miss Wilson describes Achmed to the officers:

The American dream burns within him... he believes in the America we all believe in, a place where you can make a fresh start no matter where you came from, where you can arrive in this country without a dollar in your pocket, change your name and make a new life! It happens to someone you might have heard of, someone named Miss Shania Twain.... (Dunham)

These words of Miss Wilson encapsulate the whole message conveyed within the events of the movie. Providing the example of the Canadian singer, who has changed her name from Eilleen Regina Edwards to Shania Twain and identified by numbers of Americans as being purely American, is very telling in the sense that it confirms that "being treated as a fully-fledged citizen" requires an abandonment of part of one's self or concealing his or her identity ingredient. This condition is quite clear in Maalouf's declaration that,

Neither on a world scale nor within any society should anybody feel so scorned, depreciated, mocked or demonized that in order to be able to live among his fellow citizens, he is forced to conceal or be ashamed of his religion, color, language, name or any other ingredient of his identity. Everyone ought to be able to hold his head high and acknowledge without fear or resentment every one of his allegiances. (Maalouf 122)

In this sense, the equation of embracing Western values with self-denial in *Achmed Saves America* discourse marks the disturbance of concealing the maintained hegemonic structures of power in the so-called Western civilization. Denying one's self, thus, reflects the humiliation of the Other being and ends up in the vanishing of cultural differences conducing to a profound identity crisis under the auspices of modernization. In support of this thread of thought, Maalouf asserts that despite the fact that modernization "has sometimes been embraced with enthusiasm, it has never been adopted without a certain bitterness, without a feeling of humiliation and defection. Without a piercing doubt about the dangers of assimilation. Without a profound identity crisis." (Maalouf 72)

7. Concluding Remarks and Discussion

The present chapter is meant to bring together all the chapters of this research dissertation and discuss its main outcomes/findings of carried out while analyzing some American / Moroccan entertainment discourses. In so doing, this research paper has aimed at demonstrating the ways through which these entertainment discourses function as providers of certain ideological assumptions that affect one's identity in terms of social and cultural reproduction. In other words, they exert an ideological domination that overshadows the cultural / identity of the individual through including humorous mode of performance whose function is to mesmerize the audience and reshape their beliefs, attitudes, and practices

7.1 Institutionalizing Entertainment

The findings of the first chapter largely correspond to the aims established in this research paper, since they contextualize the shift of discourse from “the world of text” to the “world of picture” and conceptualize the influence of the visual image on the individual's attitudes. This influence is operated by virtue of imagined worlds, which are given an embellished description that reduce the scenes of the real everyday life to a prosaic one. Moreover, entertainment discourses are perceived as the productions of a system that controls the knowledge production accommodating the subject's perception to its own definition and implication. Thus, the act of consuming entertainment is an act of validating ideologies, since discourses are established as outlets through which ideologies are leaked. This fact has questioned the extent to which Moroccan cinema could be rated as a non-aligned industry and not state controlled. In this sense, the findings have detected its French legacy through skimming over some Dahirs and decrees that regulated this field through

not only the institution of cinema, but also “the individuals within the domain.” (Carter 45) Assigning these restricted decrees is, in a way or another, a legitimization of colonial practices and through which their ideologies can be well transmitted. This fact brings to the forth intentions of the colonizers to control Morocco, not only militarily, but also through a cinema industry that contributes to the industrialization of people’s everyday life that aims at imposing the cultures of ‘the people at the top’ on the ‘subaltern’. Entertainment discourses, in this context, remain an effective outlet through which the life of people is shaped and reoriented in accordance to specific agendas’ interest.

7.2 Within a Context of Ideologies

In the same stream, the findings of the second chapter correspond to those of the previous one. The first chapter has furnished the ground to tackle the processes of infusing ideologies within entertainment discourses and the ways comedy shifts from being a spontaneous and an essential voice of the ordinary people to an “ideological state apparatus”. This shift questions the extent to which a comedian can be creative on the stage instead of serving the interest of certain agendas. Findings have asserted that the production of entertainment discourses is basically an already planned activity produced within a context of ideology that is constituted in a space of fantasy and circulated through these entertainment discourses to postulate its effectiveness through the act of concealing the relations of domination. The function of fantasy, in this context, is to conceal the ideology disseminated through comedy and create in lieu an alternative social reality that leads to the recreation of ‘subject position’ that enables “the free floating subject to move from one identification to the other.” (García and Sánchez) In other words, this fantasy “teaches us how to desire,” (Bjerre and Laustsen 39) the fact that compromises the insinuation of the

political domination that shapes the subject's tastes, needs and choices. The desire, thus, becomes "socially structured, the subject must seek to fulfil its desire by becoming that which the other desires." (Bjerre and Laustsen 39) This idea recalls the Althusserian interpellation of ideologies that drive to espouse them, thereby transferring them into a natural blinder to disseminate malevolent values via entertaining media outlets. The viewer becomes mesmerized by the images projected on the screen and "takes an interior trip" that lapses him/her into unconsciousness.

Moreover, comedy, as an institutionalized social form of enjoyment, has been transformed into a discourse that emphasizes the continuous struggle of differences that are, in a way or another, struggles over identity that "can no longer be seriously considered outside the politics of representation." (Giroux, Benetton's 'World Without Borders': Buying Social Change 202) This politics of representation is the thrust of which the Self tries to render the Other subservient in a symbolic network of identification. In this sense, entertaining discourses remain an effective outlet for the exercise of power whose interest in knowledge production is inextricably linked to politics. In this regard, Michel Foucault avers that the pattern of discourse nowadays aims at imposing discursively a kind of discipline to regulate human statements through tacitly instilling certain rules that delineate what is 'true' and what is marked as 'untrue'. Therefore, knowledge disseminated among people is meant to perform the function of inculcating people with the order of discourse and authorizing the exercise of power of the State. Following the same thread of argument, Edward Said cogitates about Foucault's notions of power and knowledge as the foundation of all forms of Western hegemony. Edward Said's theory is not merely influenced by Foucault's notion of "discourse", which shakes up, perfectly and convincingly, the objects of truth, but he has been equally influenced by both Louis Althusser's conception of

“ideology” and Gramscian’s notion of “hegemony” that implies the domination of one class over others. Despite the fact that some critics raise “a potential contradiction” in his works, these lines of thoughts remain the nexus of Said’s theory, briefly considered, implies the examination of Western “discourse” disseminating “ideologies”, conducive of “hegemonic” domination of the West over the East. In this context, Said tries to construct “Orientalism” as a discourse adroitly managing— and even producing — “the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.” (Said 3)

By analogy, findings show that entertainment discourse is a discourse that gains its power by the fact of being institutionalized. This is what strengthens its function to bridge, more effectively, power and knowledge. This kind of discourse, for Said, should be read contrapuntally so as to unravel the hidden ideological implications and to draw the pre-planned attention to the effects of ‘power’ on ‘knowledge’ production. This Saidian “contrapuntal reading” is a form of deconstructive reading that demonstrates the extent to which the text/discourse divulges its colonialist ideologies and contradicts its essentialist assumptions. This reading remains one of the intellectual’s tasks “to unearth the forgotten, to make connections that were denied.” (Said 22) Moreover, the purpose behind the act of rereading Western discourse, that Said considers another task of the intellectual, is, as he states, an “effort to break down the stereotypes and reductive categories that are so limiting to human thought and communication.” (Said)

7.3 Racial and Gender Identity in Entertainment Industry

In addition, the dissertation has approached, in chapter three, the scope of discourse in relation to issues of race, gender and identity. These issues impose themselves as

essential contents representing the images and the practices of people in their everyday life. That is, these issues are deemed as props for the enactment of stereotypical assumption and the cultural representations of peoples and societies. In this context, to construct a discriminatory knowledge in entertainment discourse entails ridiculing the identification of the subject that has come to be stigmatized as a typical representation that is revealed illusively to be ideologically void. Indubitably, people in every spot of this world consume several hours of visual pleasure and visual display, be it in the form of television, internet or magazines that are looked on as virtual sources of people's identification. That is, these media have shifted the perception of identity from a quality of being fixed and solid to the idiosyncrasy of becoming more mobile, miscellaneous, personal, and subject to change and innovation (Kellner 231). In this sense, media have contributed to the formation of multiple identities bringing up what social scientists, like Erik Erikson, see as 'an identity crisis.' This crisis lies in a passive absorption of attitudes disseminated from media outlets that makes of the individual as "black box" absorbing every detail of the performed cultural image and its accompanying attitudes. However, identity relies for its construction on outside factors that determine its contours basically by way of elimination. That is, identity is established by what is not; to be Moroccan is to be "not Algerian", to be a Muslim is to be "not Christian"; to be masculine is to be "not feminine", etc. In this regard, identity is constructed across differences and in relation to other identities. Entertainment discourse constructs identities in the same way that is as they derive from these differences and as they are determined by reality. These different allegiances and affiliations are what makes identity complex. Still, it is "easy to imagine", Maalouf states, "how it can drive people to the worst kind of extremities: if they feel that "others" represent a threat to their ethnic group or religion or nation." (Maalouf 27) Thus, the representation of identity in

entertainment discourses is substantially projected as a performance of the Self in relation to Other. That is, the ideologies adopted in these discourses conduce to the segregation of the world into “us” and “them”. However, this binary-division is framed within a discourse that circulates fixed images among its audience as an attempt to preserve the center/periphery duality. In this context, entertainment discourses are perceived as a typical arena where acts of inclusion and exclusion operate through ridiculing the opposite other. In her “Humor and Satire: Precolonial, Colonial and Postcolonial”, Christina Oesterheld avers that entertainment discourse operates in a convincing manner “picking out some of the main misconceptions of these representatives of an urban, Western-educated élite, highlighting and exaggerating their follies and thus catapulting them into absurd, hilarious situations.” (Oesterheld 80) Entertainment discourse, in this sense, hides a powerful effect behind the laughter it provokes. Amusing the audience becomes a strategy that designs to “point out human weaknesses and to attack the high and mighty.” (Oesterheld 64) Attacking hilariously the high and mighty has been one of the main reasons that give birth to comedy, but that is not always the case. Some discourses are not meant to attack the ‘high’ but to deride the ‘low’ and marginal living the “Third World” and attribute centrality to the West.

In addition to identity, the discussion of gender and race in entertaining discourses has proved a highly lucrative, since they function as essential mechanisms for downgrading one’s culture at the expense of an alien and competing one. By way of illustration, the issue of constructing gender occupies an important space in the scene of representation and is seen as an influential mechanism that asserts the position of man and woman in Western and Eastern media discourse. In entertainment discourses, woman, be she of the West or of the East, is a subject for comedians’ joke. This fact has furnished the ground for an

antagonism between comedy and gender that proves the virtual arena where racist abuse against women can be enacted directly and blankly through entertainment discourse; yet, it is mostly given, consciously or unconsciously, a big round of applause by women audience themselves. That is, in other forms of discourse, one might express his or her resentment to the presentation of racist abuse, while most people, if not all, might consider the same racist abuse expressed in comedy show as a merely entertaining performance. This fact proves the power hidden behind disseminating ideologies via the outlet of entertainment. In the same line of thought, the image of Eastern women in the Western entertainment discourse is formed in accordance with some fixed signs, like belly dancing, veil wearing, and ignorance. This, certainly, distinguishes them from other women in other parts of the world. Those signs are recognized as a “common knowledge” in the Western memory that devalues the positionality of women of other cultures.

However, this dissertation has tried to reread these fixed signs from the positionality of the Other, which gives these signs alternative meanings that celebrate their differences rather than play them down. In this sense, the demand to celebrate difference is called for as an effective strategy to dismantle the stereotypical discourses. For example, Homi Bhabha has announced that “the time has come to return to Fanon; as always, I believe, with a question: how can the human world live its difference; how can a human being live Other-wise?” (Bhabha 64) That is, the demand for integration of people with different cultures and races is old-fashion and no longer a straight thinking. Whilst, the alternative lies in the fact that they have to celebrate their differences, by being proud of their cultural difference and of their skin color and by claiming their right to *remain* different.

Moving to the practical part, the previous preliminary inquiry can be best understood in terms of discussing its divergence and convergence in the light of American and Moroccan entertainment discourses. In this context, the practical part tries to provide a thematic reading of different entertainment discourses distributed as follows: The fourth chapter is concerned with analyzing three American entertaining discourses: a Hollywood movie set in Morocco *Road to Morocco* (1942) and a Disney cartoon *Sahara Hare* (1955), and a stand-up comedy show *Achmed the Dead Terrorist* (2008). For the fifth chapter, the light has been shed on the analysis of two Moroccan entertaining movies: *Abdu in The Almohads Dynasty* (2006) and *Morokki in Paris* (2012). The last chapter of this practical part has tried to discuss the newness shift in the mode of representation employed in two entertaining discourses: Moroccan *Road to Kabul* (2012) and American *Achmed Saves America* (2014).

7.4 American Entertainment Discourses: Representation and Othering

First, the findings of the fourth chapter prove the continuity of colonial stereotypical implications on Arabs. This continuity is detected whilst examining the three American entertaining discourses: *Road to Morocco*, *Sahara Hare*, and *Achmed the Dead Terrorist*. The mode of representing Arabs in these entertainment discourses is caught within the parameters of different characteristics framed within a fixed image inherited from earlier Western circulated discourses. The difference of Arabs has been construed as a sign of backwardness to the extent that difference has been equated with barbaric and not diversity. The logic for these media productions is to equate all that is different from the Western Self as exotic and thus uncivilized. Reproducing the image of Arabs in the mode of “fixity” becomes an intuitive knowledge that requires no proof to be justified in the Western

mindsets. In the same context, Homi Bhabha confirms, “An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of ‘fixity’ in the ideological construction of otherness.” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 66) In whatever way, the images of Arab exoticism and barbarism in colonial discourse can never be proved, but rather, they are replicas of the already production of *Arabian nights*’ industry.

Moreover, the contribution of this analysis lies in the fact that the discourses under scrutiny in this chapter capture this mode of representation in a comical vein that reduces its sharpness to a light-hearted euphemism. The imposition of humor on the construction of Others’ images has gained its power through its aptitude to camouflage its ideological messages. Many may consider the messages diffused by means of comedian performances are lightweight and banal that require no critical reading. Whereas, this fact is what makes of comedy shows or entertaining discourses in general fraught with no laughing matter, but rather with heavyweight danger in terms of hammering home the ideologies of the producers’ agenda. In supporting this idea, Bhabha once again considers the enactment of ‘banality’ in discourses as the essential configuration of ideological practices. He states:

The banalities are enacted - the fuss over births, marriages, family affairs with their survival rituals of food and clothing." But it is precisely in these banalities that the unhomely stirs, as the violence of a racialized society falls most enduringly on the details of life: where you can sit, or not; how you can live, or not; what you can learn, or not; who you can love, or not. Between the banal act of freedom and its historic denial rises the silence. (Bhabha 15)

That is to say, ingraining banalities in entertaining discourses remains an effective strategy that drives the audience to laugh at the banal messages disseminated in the conversations

employed in such discourses, whereas, they fail to comply with the instilled ideologies regarding other's cultures and identities, and every 'small talk' is always pragmatically speaking 'big talk'. (Thurlow and Adam 246)

Moreover, the enactment of humorous features to the entertainment discourses trivializes some acts of violence and makes the viewers to believe that the "seriousness of the events they are watching should be downplayed." (Kirsh 549) Moreover, entertaining discourses downplayed by the audience due to its adaptation of some imaginative construction of some events that deviates the scenes away from reality, as is the case in cartoons, science fiction, and fantasy. In this context, Kirsh confirms that, "Given that comedic cartoons deviate significantly from reality, and it is therefore difficult for the viewer to make a connection between the onscreen violence and a personal threat of violence, the level of violence associated with the viewed media is diminished." (Kirsh 549) In other words, acts of violence diffused in entertaining discourses are camouflaged by the inclusion of humorous elements and imaginative images that leads the audience to rate them as natural scenes that needlessly have to be criticized. The findings prove, however, that the discussed Western entertaining discourses are just like any other Orientalist discourse meant to maintain tight grips on the subject and the object of their representations. Defaming people's identity, race and gender by resorting to stereotypical labelling remains unacceptable pejorative stereotypes, however, comedy has added a new dimension to the conception of representation through its insertion of techniques that lead to galvanizing audiences into accepting these images without deciphering their ideological inclinations.

7.5 Can Moroccan Entertainment Speak?

On the other hand, as an attempt to bring Moroccan voices to the discussion of self-identity formation and its fragmentation, the fifth chapter is an attempt to shed light on the analysis of Said Naciri's two entertaining movies: *Abdu in The Almohads' Dynasty* (2006) and *Morokki in Paris* (2012). Forging the process of self-representation does not mean casting aspersions on the West, but rather aims at defining themselves instead of being defined. This process of self-identification is reflected through revisiting the Moroccan history and underlining the kind of transgression that occurs at the level of identity and cultural shifts nowadays, and through expressing the experience of Moroccan migrants in France, where their identity oscillates between worlds: the orient and occident. The findings of reading the first movie, *Abdu in The Almohads' Dynasty*, oscillate between its projection of some colonial mode of representing Arabs and its reflection of Arab contributions to civilization.

The first implication does not necessarily accuse the movie director and actors of being hand in glove with the colonial authorities. Yet, one has to admit that the influence of colonial regulation is still taking place within a Moroccan cinema industry. That is to say, preserving the Western description of Moroccan society as aggressive, exotic and uncivilized in a Moroccan movie is understood as an intertextuality that draws its inspiration from the previous colonial discourse.

This act of carrying out the mission of spreading racial discourses is named self-Orientalism, which designates this attitude and tendency to label one's own people in derogatory terms, thereby feeling a sense of superiority when looking at one's own people. This fact reflects that not only Western audiences have such perceptions, but also Moroccan

audiences themselves have created fixed images about the way the historical spaces, figures and their behaviors should come into sight. The audience absorbs such public beliefs uncritically and which "have effectively been given the privileged status of being authoritative and, in some cases, truthful." (Happer and Philo 322) It is not surprising thus to have the image of Arab men pictured in most movies, if not all, wearing "simple tunic, an unfitted garment pulled on over the head," (Jirousek) always armed with swords or knives. This sort of appearance of Arab characters in movies becomes a truism firmly embedded within the audience's perception and gives credit to the act of aggression as a typical sequel expected from the Arab people.

The second finding of the movie, *Abdu in The Almohads' Dynasty*, lies in the positive side of the Arabs that might contribute to the promotion of a mode of representation transcending the discriminatory colonial discourses. This positive side is revealed in Abdu's journey to Almohads' dynasty that functions as a mission to expose the unsaid facts about Arab people in general and Moroccans in particular. This visit inside the disregarded achievement of Arabs in such Moroccan comedy serves as a process of "laughing back" the messages exposed in previous discussed Western entertaining discourses, as it gives credibility to the Arab contribution to scientific, technological and humanitarian fields and clear up some discriminatory images annexed to Arabs.

After Said's adventure in the *Almohads' dynasty*, his second entertainment movie, *Morokki in Paris* (2012) offers a prospective vision to Moroccan identity as it is presented within a so-called multicultural Western society. No one can deny the fact that Arab immigrants are no longer culturally and politically "invisible" due to the successful integration of some figures within European societies. However, this success is achieved

through redefining and positioning the identity of immigrants in the in-between space that furnishes the ground to a partly, if not fully, assimilation of European values. Findings of reading *Morroki in Paris* substantiates that occupying an in-between stance on cultures and values remains the advisable option for the immigrants to settle in European societies. Still, this option of accepting some French values and rejecting others is bound to have ramification reflected in the identity formation that becomes “fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different.” (Hall 4) In this sense, the challenge of integrating into a French society reflects the extent to which the relation between the West and the East can stand together. That is, the presence of Arab immigrants in European societies is met with approval of ‘some’ and disapproval ‘most’; they are defined in relation to what the West is not. Clearly, they live in Western societies and they may assimilate Western values, but their origins are a source of trouble for them as it lurks in the dark awaiting any opportunity to resurface and cause havoc and turbulence.

Provided as an example in the analysis of the movie, Naguib’s journey to France uncovers the new life of his brother Hamid, who married a French woman and started over his life trying to adopt the French values. His attempt to integrate forces him abdicating his Moroccan cultural values. However, his brother’s arrival evokes a kind of nostalgic feelings towards his original identity, which reflects his inner-struggle between his nostalgia for the *past* and his *present* experience in the French society. This new space of Hamid’s participation represents “the *movement of* political power *beyond* the binary division of the blindness of Ideology or the insight of the Idea.” (Bhabha 146) However, the immigrants might succeed, in a way or another, to perform their new cultural values, but their *pedagogy* (past) turns them into becoming “neither One nor the Other but *something else besides, in-between*.” (Bhabha 219) This in-between space downgrades the immigrant’s resistance and

forces them to be deeply entrenched in their society and yet quite not theirs. As a substitute, Bhabha avers that such people might “find their agency in a form of 'future' where the past is not originary, where the present is not simply transitory.” (Bhabha 219)

Moreover, the question of dividing nations into Arab, France, Turk, etc. is unquestionably not a random segregation, but, in a way or another, it hinders integrating of different cultures and promoting multicultural societies. That is, some critics consider that there is no nation that “traces its origins” (Renan 9) since nations-states “are something fairly new in history.” (Renan 9) Ernest Renan considers as nations nowadays “were in no way nations” but rather folks or clans forming empires through history and “imposed dynasties and a military aristocracy upon the more or less extensive parts of the old empire of the west, which assumed the names of their invaders. This was the origin of France, Burgundy, and Lombardy, and, subsequently, Normandy.” (Renan 9) There was no existence of nations such as France, China or Egypt, but they “made their way, by often circuitous paths and through a thousand and one vicissitudes, to their full national existence, such as we see it blossoming today.” (Renan 10) In this context, France, where Hamid in the movie tries hardly to integrate into is, in fact, a society encompasses different races that comes together through history to form the nowadays nation called France or West, since “the fusion of their component populations” is what defines nations’ future.

7.6 Moroccan and American Entertainment: Beyond Orientalism and Occidentalism

Moving to the last chapter, the focus is on trying to go beyond the Orientalist and Occidentalist visions towards the construction of the Other’s identity as adopted in both American and Moroccan discourses. This chapter aims at rendering each race its due and

stand in the in-between space, where the colonizer and the colonized are exposed to criticism and without turning the scale of one over the other and thus deconstructing both Orientalist and Occidentalist discourses. In so doing, this chapter has offered reading two entertaining discourses: Moroccan movie *Road to Kabul* (2012) and an American animated comedy film *Achmed Saves America* (2014). The first movie, *Road to Kabul* takes the positionality of neutrality as it is expressed through representing *le bon côté* of both West and Arabs and their pejorative side to boot. The movie's perception is based on dismantling the ideology of "generalization" that squeezes the definition of nations under the same umbrella inherited from other discourses. In this sense, *Road to Kabul* has opted for constructing its vision to the East and West relations without favoritism. First, the West should not always be perceived as an opponent to the East, but rather as a proponent and a sponsor of Arab migrants who could "return to their home with enough savings to give them a better start in life." (Parekh 6) The movie admits the fragility of Moroccan society in terms of economic diversification that drives many young people to leave their lands to Europe without having second thoughts. This vision reflects *le bon côté* of Western societies that contribute in a way or another to providing a space for the "excluded Other" in their countries to live in a decent way in the West. On the other hand, however, the journey of *Road to Kabul* has annexed images of barbarity as a projection of the US army in Afghanistan. Embarking on the barbarity of the American soldiers in the prison unveils certain foggy images embedded in the Moroccan characters, whose knowledge about the West has been based on what is transmitted through media outlets. The establishment of the contact zone in *Road to Kabul* affirms the fact that any form of discourse, be it colonial discourse or counter-discourse, must be scrutinized by the lens of difference and the lens of disinterestedness.

Moreover, the movie has called for redefining Arab boundaries as a way of avoiding lumping all Arabs under the same heading of stereotypical discourse, which confines them inside the borders of uncivilized, empty and dangerous desert. The movie *Road to Kabul*, in this sense, aims at nullifying other part of the Arab nation, like Morocco from this curse of colonial generalization. In so doing, it criticizes the dichotomies or rather the hypocrisy of some Muslim people when pretending to implicate the teachings of Islam simply by enunciating some Islamic appearances, whereas, they are clearly bent on a heinous crime of terrorizing unarmed people. They may start terrorizing innocents, and even kill them in most cases, but before perpetration they would yell out some Islamic words such as “Allah Akbar” (Allah is the greatest) so that they get prepared for the worst. The movie has affirmed this picture in many scenes, especially when Moroccan characters are caught by an Islamic movement of Al-Qaeda, and immediately accused of spying for the US armed force. Findings comes to conclusion that this and other images of the barbarity of Muslim troops reproduced in *Road to Kabul* are not simply meant to support the ideological inclination about the Third World as they are disseminated in colonial discourses, but it is a deciphering message to draw a boundary within Muslim and Arab nations themselves. In other words, the movie’s intention is to refrain discourses from the “curse of generalization” through employing the assailant as Muslims and the victims as Muslims as well. By doing so, the movie has employed both modes of “colonial discourse” and “writing back”, while criticizing American policies and Jihadi organizations, and thus furnishes the ground to a new mode of representation that show more compassion for humanity.

Skimming through the analysis of the second movie of this chapter, the emphasis is laid on exploring the point of convergence where both the West and the East can overcome their conflict that seems to float in every colonial discourses. Having said that, the last

entertaining discourse brought into play is an American animated comedy film that tries to step beyond the cultural conflict between the East and the West. *Achmed Saves America* comes as comedy discourse that aims at promoting dialogue as a way out of this cultural conflict to reach integration, moderation, and intercultural communication. The first step towards promoting dialogue is made when Achmed, a Skelton dead terrorist, is invited to Americaville and hosted by an American family that mistakes him for a French foreign exchange student named Claude. This invitation reverses the traditional cultural contacts mostly taking place in the Other's lands, whereas, the contact of differences made in the film made in American society, which bring up a new mode of representation of engaging in dialogues rather than confronting violence with violence. The experience of Achmed in Americaville drives him to a constant struggle against his thoughts that he was taught in his nation that consider the Americans hosting him as 'infidels', which make of his integration in American society more complicated. However, the power of cultural encounter to uproot implanted negative ideologies against Others has made of Achmed experience a glimmer of hope in the realization of cultural integration after a constant battle against his extremist beliefs.

However, the findings of the section on *Achmed Saves America* consider that the coveted integration of Achmed could end up in a total conversion away from his identity to one assimilating American values and realizing his American dream. This total transition of Achmed marks a disapproval shift in the process of promoting tolerance and integration, since it deprives him of getting along with his true self and of, most importantly, maintaining his identity as a different person from what the Americans are trying to make out of him. Needless to mention that repenting terrorist beliefs is a right minded and ethical deed. What one may not approve is the failure to employ integration without abandoning

Achmed's culture, as though he has left no choice, but the denial of the self. In this sense, the equation of embracing Western values with self-denial in *Achmed Saves America* discourse marks the disturbance of concealing the maintained hegemonic structures of power in the so-called Western civilization. Whereas, building a world of peace and a society of coexistence start from the acknowledging *difference* that admits the existence and coexistence of both the Self and the Other as two equal entities. Howbeit, in contrast to the previous discussed Western discourses, *Achmed saves America* marks an important start towards intercultural dialogue through employing a cultural contact that exerts a special influence on promoting tolerance and integration. Many critics consider this contact as the key to the a new world order of peace as J. Clarke avers in his *Oriental Enlightenment*, "many thinkers have earnestly explored the idea that bringing East and West together at an ideological level might provide a key to a new World Order of peace and reconciliation." (Clarke 108) As for the Achmed's integration, no one can deny the fact that living in different societies with different culture, religion and language can be attained without bitterness of departing at least a part of one's identity. In this sense, the movie of *Achmed Saves America* has in a way or another expressed its message of tolerance rather than that of othering.

Conclusion

It has proven that entertainment discourse is not innocent and is in total opposition with the funny character it adamantly tries to boost and convince people to unquestionably absorb through blacking out its audience's criticism and sneak inside his/her subconscious, thereby holding a tight grip on his or her actions and thoughts. Entertainment discourse makes a good use of global conflicts and establishes unaltered positions for its adversaries, thus placing societies, peoples and cultures in constant hierarchies. The West is notably the winning bet. It continues to occupy a superior position vis-à-vis its primordial Other, the East. Comedy fosters this mindset through hypnotizing its audience, who unconsciously grows to believe and defend the idea that the best, superior, powerful and technologically advanced is the Western smart and cunning Self, whereas on the other side lays the weak, immature, irrational and appropriating Eastern Other. This way, entertainment discourse establishes unbalanced relations between the East and West based on unreasonable data and prejudiced beliefs for rendering such undisputed claims and taken for granted facts that both sides, West and East, should accept and even work on promoting. At this stage, the powerful come to believe in their constructed power, even if it is fake, and, on the other side, the weak accept their meekness and beg their 'masters' for constant support and commands without thinking, for a second, to resist these ideas and improve oneself to level with anyone whomever that may be. This tragic result is thoroughly accepted since certain audience of comedy do not bother to question these racial and unbalanced constructions, but rather enjoy them while watching, and it is then when the subconscious gets overwhelmed with ideas that get implanted and become impossible to uproot even as time passes by.

These claims have come concrete and apparent while analyzing the examples of the American and Moroccan entertainment discourses as case studies in this thesis. The analyzed movies have shown how identity is constructed across the lines of both East and West. This rift between the East and West is growing day by day, even if governments of both entities have developed peaceful relations, politically and economically. In this sense, entertainment discourses keep using the idea of the victim through which the West looks forward to laying its ascendancy over the helpless East via marketing the same outdated imageries of Orientalism as if things have never changed even as times and borders change across the years. What has been proven through analyzing the aforementioned discourses is that the same orientalist discourses of colonialism are still ringing the bell high and resonate even in the places that hold onto bragging themselves for being a civilization.

More interestingly, racism seen through comedy turns soft in its reception by audiences, in that it does not usually shock or trigger their disgust. Rather, unfortunately, it is even appreciated for being funny and laughable, and also gets fossilized in one's psyche just to appear, once in a while, in his/her social contacts. Such racism turns a jeopardizing ramification of entertainment discourse when not taken seriously, and it is even the best example to use in convincing those who do not believe in its insidious effects on spectators that racism, when molded in comic veins, triggers unappreciated effects deeply grounded in one's subconscious.

In fact, what has been said so far is not there to foreground a gloomy image of the nature of comedy in films and shows. Definitely, not all comedy is used for the same opportunistic and destructive aims, but certainly, there are serious endeavors on the part of some types of comedy to improve cultural and human values of tolerance and coexistence.

A case in point is the animated entertainment film, *Achmed Saves America*, that has come to turn upside down all conventional understanding of the nature of relations still bringing the West and East together. However, this same movie has not been completely drawn a clear roadmap or suggest concrete and actual solutions for how both East and West can peacefully coexist and tolerate their differences. Accordingly, coexistence is merely a one-side approach. One-side approach means that one has to give up its culture, social values and even its identity for the sake of being accepted by the other side. One, therefore, has to fully adopt and adapt to other ways of life to be considered as a friend eventually. Bridging a cultural gap and putting forward the possibilities of coexistence, for this movie, could be realized on condition that the Other has to melt in its new environment and thus denying long years of accumulated social and cultural values of its own. Once this Other absorbs the new culture and gets overwhelmed by the Western civilization ideals and eventually denies his/her identity, then he/she is welcomed into this new environment and becomes an example of the good people who can turn over their own people, societies and cultures just to defend the purported ideals of the Western civilization. This condition of coexistence that the film of *Achmed Saves America* suggests cannot be accepted simply because it is unreasonable and unfair.

For example, according to this movies, hands of all nations should be joined together to nip terrorism in its bud. However, what should be first addressed is the question of what kind of terrorism and fanaticism the West intends to fight. That is to say, the “war on terror” should not be ideologically instigated. At this stage, it is inequitable to identify as terrorists, those defending their own lands against conquest attacks or those standing in the face of injustice and seeking democracy. It is not fair to lump a person under the heading of terrorism simply due to his belonging to a specific religion or nation. Therefore, what kind

of terrorism are nations to fight and unite efforts to exterminate? There are those who would say that terror arises when innocent people get attacked with no reason, whereas there are also those who claim that terrorism is when nations wage incomprehensible wars only to secure their opportunistic interests no matter what comes of the people they are attacking.

Furthermore, another analyzed entertainment discourse, a Moroccan Movie *Road to Kabul*, has offered an impartial insight into how things truly are between the West and East. This movie has placed itself as a mediator or even judge in explicating the nature of this long conflict between both parties. Therefore, it has offered an actual image in which both entities are part of the problem. Still, this movie has not also, as the case of the other movies analyzed, proposed tangible solutions except for the shots of analytical scenes scattered here and there as the movie progresses. This makes of the Moroccan cinema a body that has very limited effects, if not exaggerated, on its exclusively Arab audiences. Nevertheless, it is undoubtedly still a respected try meant to fix things between cultures and peoples of the world.

Entertainment discourse, as one of the most effective means of communicating a large number of people around the world, is a double-edged outlet that either could have been handling issues of cultural dialogues and values of coexistence or could be an outlet to the contrary. Therefore, entertainment discourse is able to take one of the job, since it is a great arena from which people can learn about human values and thus pass them on to other succeeding generations to take up. Such discourse, in this sense, can make it easy for anyone having good intentions to contribute in fixing the world that has been torn apart by years of human and cultural conflicts. This is the kind of entertainment movies and shows needed to watch and enjoyed spending one's precious time deliberating.

In such view, comedy discourse, in general, and comedians, in particular, need to get detached from any political affiliation. Politics has to step away from directing the course of action when comedy only needs to be a mere instructional and entertaining discourse. As long as comedy is ideologically or politically manipulated, it will not be an ambassador of peace worldwide. Its complete detachment from controlling regimes would endow it with a power to devastate those seeking to enslave it and use it for their own purposes and not the purpose for which it was first made. This way, entertainment discourse would contribute to raising the voice high of those who call for saving the world from conflicts and violence. People would then recognize their differences and respect each other. Therefore, comedy needs to be independent from any commands, whatever these may be, for it to take the first step towards serving civilization and humanity.

It is also significant to point out to the leading role of the audience consumption in promoting discourse calling for peace and coexistence through abstaining from the type of comedy discourse that instigates hatred and mockery. As long as this spectator does not consume or encourage this version of comedy, it quickly fades away and retreats to dark corners of oblivion and it is thus spontaneously superseded with good willing attempts to use comedy for instruction and entertainment. This punishing attitude, so to speak, of the viewer would push any entertainment discourse encouraging violence and stereotypes to rethink everything over and even criticize it for the aim of getting to discover the truth that it has always been trying to black out.

At this stage, generalizations and ready-made judgments would no longer be a possibility for such discourse to enjoy a wide reception from all sorts of audiences. If this condition is fully applied, everyone in the world shall get to know that not all Arabs are

backwards or terrorists as well as not all westerners are civilized or peaceful. Recognizing such facts would roll the wheel of global coexistence, dialogues and peace forward towards a better world for everyone. Therefore, comedy has to get rid of any ideological or political predispositions to not miss the long awaited day of the global victory over peoples' ignorance and fanaticism. Entertainment discourse, in this respect, needs to be a mediator between cultures and constitute a bridge for communication and cultural dialogues. It should be an open stage for everyone to meet and know about each other's differences and eventually coexist. Spreading peace and fun and making people feel secure is the challenge which this entertainment outlet is strongly advised to pursue until the end.

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