Reeling Real Good Moroccans in Hollywood Celluloids

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Abstract: Hollywood movie industry has now developed a significant corpus of motion pictures reeling Morocco. This article investigates whether Hollywood recent pictorializations of Moroccan culture differ from the earliest ones. By means of a set of four representative films, produced between 1998 and 2006, this article focuses on specific representation issues by examining the correlated constituents that have so far energized Hollywood reeling/realing of Morocco. Using a qualitative narrative design, it is aimed to examine the cinematic narrativizing of Morocco and concurrently interrogates the discursive contexts that have helped these artifacts to emerge and circulate. In the last analysis, it is found that the recent Hollywood productions have engaged in positive portrayals of Morocco.

Keywords: Hollywood Cinema, Morocco, Representation.

1. Introduction

Within the bundle of writings written about the representations and pictorializations of Morocco in European as well as Anglo-American cinemas, it is claimed that the colonial cinema has produced a huge archive of films portraying Moroccan people, geography, mores and space in a way that affiliates with the orientalist discursive agendas.

This study has tried to point to the fact that albeit most Hollywood works of art on Morocco has a long history in displaying Moroccans through Orientalist and imperialistic eyes, their happens to be a revolutionary shift during the last fifteen years vis-à-vis the images of Morocco in some Anglo-American cinematic productions. Filmmakers seem to perceive Morocco positively in some recent productions Five Fingers (2006), Hideous Kinky (1999), Legionnaire (1998) and Babel (2006). Despite the rare instances of fair representations, they are considered very promising as they may be a determining catalyst of change in the near future.

2. Literature Review

This review aims at contextualizing the present study by reviewing the literature related to the field of representation and visual art. Representation is currently a much wrangled issue not only in postcolonial or gender studies, but also largely in cultural studies. Across disciplines, the problem of representation has been a hard nut to crack. The definition of the term “representation” alone precipitates bewilderment. The Macmillan English Dictionary defines representation as “a person or a group that speaks, acts, or is present for another person, group, or organization.” Yet, Peter Childs and R.J. Patric Williams see that [r]epresentation carries at least two important meanings: one political where numbers of politicians represent or stand in for the population at large; the other aesthetic/philosophical, where a painting by Van Gogh, for example, “represents” a vase of sunflowers by giving us a two-dimensional coloured image of it on canvas.1

Up on these two classifications of representation, people may find it more problematic in the case of politics; it becomes a dishonor in a situation where a certain cultural group adjudges and determines the function or the role of another group. Here the power of representation becomes exposed especially when the reality of two incomparable different sets of cultures and groups is taken into consideration.

In a world where communication between cultures is conked out, and the belief of accepting differences hardly exists, any ethnocentric group may find it simple and normal to designate other groups and render them incapable of representing themselves as they lack certain qualities of the representing self. Likewise, the hegemonic powers have acted well in the name of Kiplin’s ‘white man’s burden,’ assuming, in Marx’s phrase, that “they cannot
represent themselves, so they must be represented."\(^2\)

The Other is not given ample freedom to act, speak or express himself. Going round Spivak’s question, “Can the Subaltern speak?” it can be said that any attempt of self-representation is not heard or recognized by the listener, simply because it does not meet the needs and expectations of representation. This shows that it is the oppressor\(^3\), using Paulo Freire’s term, who chooses “with what voice consciousness can the Subaltern speak.”\(^4\)

Representing the subaltern self raises impressions of impossibility, especially if the oppressor is eager to maintain the oppressed voiceless and invisible. Hence, self-representation would be recognized only if “the repressed, given the chance,” Spivak says, “and on the way to solidarity through alliance politics can speak and know their conditions.”\(^5\)

Seeking recognition makes the im/possibility of producing an accurate representation a dream wish yearned for by every oppressed to be fulfilled.

The question of representation appears in various literary and aesthetic forms: films, television, photographs, paintings, novels etc. It is within such various forms where the textual or aesthetic representation of the Other’s reality provides the legitimation for the Western self to pictorialize, speak and act on behalf of the Other. However, the problematic of representation is complex in all literary forms even in those produced by native postcolonial scholars themselves. Chenua Achebe, for instance, says “I would be satisfied if my novels (especially the ones set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past with all its imperfection was one long night of slavery from which the first European acting on God’s behalf delivered them.”\(^6\) It is here where the importance of Bhabha’s third space is required to create culture from the perspective of the in-between space. If the production of self-representation is meant to oppose Western ethnocentric ideologies and biased representations, in the imperial context, true self representation is bound to be hindered by I / colonizer representation.

Albeit the idea of representation is thought to be realistic and usually based on some notions of being true to an original, this is by no means guaranteed, or even, some would argue, possible. In this regard, Said writes:

We must be prepared to accept the fact that representation is eo ipso implicated, intertwined, embedded interwoven with great many other things besides “truth”, which is itself a representation. What this must lead us to methodologically is to view representation (or misrepresentation-the distinction is at best a matter of degree) as inhabiting a common field of play defined for them not by some inherent common subject matter alone, but some common history, tradition, universe of discourse. Within this field, which no single scholar can create but which each scholar receives and in which he then finds a place for himself, the individual researcher makes his contribution.\(^7\)

It is obvious that representations falsify, distort and dehumanize the real ground of the Other. Representation is not concerned with giving a true picture of the real world as it evokes, rather it invents and inflates difference. The Other becomes an object of imagined distortions, stereotypes, images and myths, which makes the in/visible line between reality and representation seem impossible to be uprooted. Ella Shohat avers that “each filmic or academic utterance must be analyzed not only in terms of who represents but also in terms of who is being represented for what purpose, at which historical moment, for which locations, using which strategies, and in what tones of address.”\(^8\) Through such analysis, one could deconstruct any representations that convey no relations to their authentic nature.

Despite multiplicity and diversity, what the media produce is neither natural nor entirely gratis. This has been clearly asserted by Edward Said: “we do not live in a natural world; things like newspapers, news and opinions do not occur naturally; they are made, as the result of human will, history, social


\(^3\) Oppressor and oppressed are two key terms used by Paulo Freire in his book The Pedagogy of the Oppressed to display the contraventions between the oppressors and the oppressed and how to overcome it. He also put emphasis on the idea that the path to liberation is a mutual pedagogical process, which both the oppressors and the oppressed should work for. Paulo Freire insists that much as the oppressor needs a theory of oppressive action in order to oppress, the oppressed also needs a pedagogy of action to set up a liberating praxis.


\(^5\) Ibid., 25.

\(^6\) Peter Childs and Patrik Williams, Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory, p. 105.

\(^7\) Edward Said, Orientalism, pp. 172-3

circumstances, institutions, and the conventions of one’s profession.” 9 In fact, people are not in close relationship with truth; each one receives news and images that are already fabricated and agreed up on. Similarly, with the media dealing with Otherness, truth and reality do hardly ever exist since everything is made up and slanted by reporters and directors. Instead of trying to find out more about a country or its people, the presenter embraces anything available at hand, usually a hackneyed phrase or some over-generalized perception that readers at home are remote to defy. When a predisposed fixed image is presented about the Other, the audience may take it for granted since that dividing line drawn between “I” and “Other” still persists. The hegemonic media works to create weird stories so as to legitimize and theorize for the media conquest as Edward Said puts it: “the media can do all sorts of things, represent all sorts of points of view, provide many things, that are eccentric, unexpectedly original, even aberrant. But in the end, because they are corporations serving and promoting a corporate identity, they all have the same central consensus in mind.”10

Societies over the length and breadth of the world enwreath certain beliefs, morals, arts, traditions, language, religion, etc. that comprise the indispensable guiding principles of their lives, and surely these guidelines no matter how much they differ from one person to another or from one group to another hold one sole universal label, that is culture. Many people believe and assume that their cultural values and beliefs are rational and better than other cultures- a fact, which puts on show the human nature’s haughtiness to praise ones culture since it is grounded on people’s language and religion. Albeit cultures of the world hold the same components, they couldn’t generate people with the same worldview. Here, difference among cultures proves to be an inevitable aspect of culture. Yet, the solemn part of culture is when some cultural attitudes of a certain society swivel into ideology to “reflect and support the interests of specific groups.”11 These differences and ideologies towards other cultural groups result in what Brian T. Edwards calls ‘walls of culture.’ These walls stand very treacherous in the process of representation because when people cannot jump over these walls, they can only imagine images of what is going behind the walls. In such situations, stereotypical images are constructed predominantly if the representer’s worldview is not open to other cultures. The walls of culture, thus, play unconstructive roles in the way people imagine and construct stereotypes about the unobserved or the unknown Other. Benedict Anderson has conveyed these imagined inspirations about the unknown groups in an outstanding metaphorical sense while talking about the cultural roots, affirming that no more arresting emblems of the modern culture of nationalism exist than cenotaphs and tombs of the Unknown Soldiers. The public ceremonial reverence accorded these moments precisely because they are either deliberately empty or no one knows who lies inside them, has no true precedents in earlier times. To feel the force of this modernity one has only to imagine the general reaction to the busy-body who ‘discovered’ the Unknown Soldier’s name or insisted on filling the cenotaph with some real bones. Sacrilege of strange, contemporary kind! Yet void as these tombs are of identifiable moral remains or immoral souls, they are nonetheless saturated with ghostly national imaginings.12

The significance of those imagined stereotypes to the Other being represented is similar to the empty cenotaph for the “Unknown Soldier”. The cenotaph of Otherness here is so much imagined that “the busy body,” using Benedict’s words, still insists on filling the empty cenotaph with more stereotypes that remain far from reality, which lies above the walls of culture.

Stereotyping and constructing Otherness have been in circulation for centuries among people from different cultural backgrounds. One of the most still striking examples about the historical discovery of Otherness is Columbus’ journey to America and his discovery of Indians with a different language and a totally different clothing style manifested in the culture of naturally unclothed people. Notwithstanding the Indians’ power, Columbus could not recognize them positively as he could not understand their language. Yet, he conceived them as “noble savages”13 that were different and ready to be subjugated. Africans, too, have been the prevailing object/subject in the process of Otherness for Westerners. In White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Cultures, J.N. Pieterse has given a thorough analysis about the representation of Africans in the Western mind. He discloses how the image the West produced about the African natives is

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10 Ibid., p.48.
closely related to their feelings of supremacy and power over the Blacks.  

Jack Shaheen argues that the studies carried out on the construction of Otherness show that vilification of Arabs has the lion’s share of stereotypes pertained to the Other. Understanding the Arabs has been very hard because of the long history of stereotypes production. Walter Lippmann has studied the process of stereotypes and provides an account for the development of imagined and over-generalized clichés. He notes down that since people find it hard to reflect and imagine the whole being at one occasion, they build up different behaviours of comprehending the world. Lipmann argues that “the picture inside the head of these human beings, the pictures of themselves, of others, of their needs, purpose, and relationships, are their public opinion.” People imagine outsiders, who are beyond their understanding, according to their preconceptions about the alien. They interpret the outside world along with their interest and worldview biases. Stereotypes, hence, are determined through a person’s values, beliefs, desires and experiences. Lipmann sees the functions of stereotypes as the following:  

A pattern of stereotypes is not neutral. It is not merely a way of substituting order for the great blooming, buzzing confusion of reality. It is not merely a short cut. It is all these things and something more. It is the guarantee of our self-respect; it is the projection up on the world of our own sense, of our own value, our own position and our own rights. The stereotypes are, therefore, highly charged with the feelings that are attached to them. They are the fortresses of our tradition, and behind its defense we can continue to feel ourselves safe in position we occupy. Since these stereotypes help people to form easy representations, maintain their identity and transmit their own values across the world, it is very hard to deny the inhumane and unconstructive effects of every cliché about every human. The power of stereotypes is very perilous as they can change reality to fit the biased beliefs about groups. The way people imagine the Other, the way they construct him, the way they see him, and the way they should accept him is deeply rooted in stereotypes. The problem is that whoever disagrees with the dominant version of constructing the Other is doomed to be an enemy. Or as Lipmann says he would be labeled “perverse, alien and dangerous.”

The power of stereotypes makes people imagine the world before they experience or explore it. People tend to imagine the other part of the world as being recounted to them by others. This is one of the appalling effects of stereotypes that make people most of the times feel deceived once they experience things and places as real as they are. At this point, both Benedict Anderson and Gilles Deleuze agree upon the disparity between imagination and reality. Deleuze believes that the movement from images as representations to images as thoughts signals a dangerous shift especially when the images are, according to Anderson, “empty cenotaphs” filled with what Deleuze terms the void or the false. In his book, *The Time-Image*, Deleuze has raised a very interesting idea when he talks about “the power of the false,” which describes “a dialectical relation between the image and its absence.” Moving from literary narration to the cinematic one or as Anne McClintock terms it, “from the print language to spectacle” where the image is more powerful, representation may falsify the truth subjectively. The spectators usually rely on their subjective repertoire about the Other to complete the image. Most of the flicks produced about Morocco, for example, seem to reproduce the same Orientalist jargon that the audience is familiar with. Therefore, spectators find it easy to fill in the gaps and join pieces of discourse together to complete their preconceived images. This dilemmatic labeling of stereotypes that is full of negative and sometimes positive thoughts about the Other entails a dichotomy in the self of human beings. It really proves the existence of a split self- a part which is good and another which is bad. These two parts embrace both feelings of love and hate, like and dislike, good and evil, etc. that determine the person’s Weltanschauung.

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16 Ibid., p. 96.
17 Ibid., p. 126
19 Ibid. p. 200.
21 Weltanschauung is term derived from the German Language meaning a comprehensive view or personal philosophy of human life and the universe.
stereotypes are composed out of these paradoxical parts of the self, it is conspicuous that there is the good Other that can be loved and the bad Other that can be hated. Thus the self-forms stereotypes when its integration is at stake as Gilman says, “the bad Other becomes the negative stereotype; the good Other becomes the positive stereotype. The former is that which we fear to become; the latter, that which we fear we cannot achieve.”

Self dis/integrations or that which we fear to become; the latter, that which Other becomes the positive stereotype. The former is that which we fear to become; the latter, that which we fear we cannot achieve.”

Self dis/integrations or cultural dis/integrations remain the main compel behind the construction of Otherness either as recognizable or not.

Apparently, the construction of the West as the dominant group usually formulates stereotypes that shape and mold the personality of the represented according to its rules of recognition. Thus, the Otherness’ representability abides with the governing cultural power. Within such dominant view, Pieterse finds that it is “the view of the dominant group that prevails, and survives.” Ergo, the Western discourse generally aims at making the Other recognize his ‘inferior’ side so as to comply with the Western rule and government. The tenacity of this discursive strategy strives to project the indigenous as a “backward” character that deserves to be enslaved, in Frantz Fanon’s phrase, by their “inferiority complex.”

At this stage, the Other becomes, according to Lacan, a mirror image where the Western sees his superior self and cherishes, according to Fanon, his “superiority complex.” But, in reality, these representations only display a relationship of inequality and maintain difference between the Self and the Other. One of them is seen as the incumbent of positive values, while the other is characterized as the keeper of the negative ones. The Other is thus denied; he is merely a negation of the I/self. However, this binary opposition is violated occasionally when the white man exposes the inferiority of the native and describes him as being “perfectly” recognizable. This tendency to appropriate and make the native recognizable is just to contain his threat and retain control over him.

Pieterse puts it in plain words that when the Other becomes menacing, he “threatens to step out of the circle of Otherness and to interfere with the lifelines of identity.” The self recognizes the Other just to serve the desires and interests of the Western self, but never as a full-fledged human being. The Other is predestined to remain, in Bhabha’s phrase, “almost the same, but not quite.”

Purifying the hegemonic cultures from that process of Otherness construction, great efforts should be made especially by intellectuals because even great writers and philosophers whose thoughts influenced the whole world are trapped into the web of Otherness edifice. A case in point is Aristotle cited by M. Kleg in Hate, Prejudice and Racism asseverating that those who live in a cold climate and in Europe are full of spirit, but wanting in intelligence and skill; whereas, the natives of Asia are intelligent and inventive, but they are wanting in spirit... But the Hellenic race, which is situated between them is likewise intermediate in character, being high spirited and intelligent.

The discursive impact of the intellectual here is more disparaging rather than productive. The intellectuals’ production of knowledge and their perception of the Other in faraway places across the phases of history should make a difference on the ground instead of supporting myths and stereotypes. Said’s concluding comment in his essay “Orientalism Reconsidered” has clearly defined “the intellectual’s role both in the defining of a context and in changing it.” Instead of exchanging stereotypes and writing back to defend and criticize a given discourse, the intellectual’s role goes beyond the description of the differences to a more noble work of bridging the gap through changing the discourse from the two spaces of the I and the Other to a third space in between.

As a matter of fact, this article stipulates a real actuation of Bhabha’s notion of third space as a better alternative to go beyond the imagined pictorializations towards new possible ways of seeing by focusing only on positive representational forms of Morocco in Hollywood.

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25 Ibid.
27 Homi Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 60.
3. Theoretical Framework

This article relies on Cultural Studies to approach the representations of Morocco Hollywood Movies. Cultural Studies allows a substantial choice to interrelating textual analysis, ethnography, films and historical research into one overall methodology. Banking on master theorists of Culture Studies chiefly Edward Said, 1978, 1993; Homi Bhabha, 2006; Gille Deleuze, 1989; Stuart Hall, 1980, etc. who surmise that cultural studies is “committed to the study of the entire range of a society’s art, beliefs, institutions and communicative practices” (pp.57-72). It is deemed that Cultural Studies will broaden the analysis to incorporate history, politics, art, beliefs, institutions, etc. The Cultural Studies methodology would be an appropriate implement for delving into the films’ content to re-articulate a different way of understanding the pictorialization of Moroccans in the Hollywood Films. Cultural Studies makes it practical to discuss different themes of film productions. For example, semiotics, psychoanalysis and deconstruction can all be used within Cultural Studies to uncover or interpret the latent messages of the cinematic discourse. It makes it easy to correlate issues of power, discourse, hegemony, institutions, arts, beliefs, people and other cinematic practices related to the imagination and perception of the audience.

It is hoped that Cultural Studies which allows for and respects different narrative voices will provide an apt methodology for looking at the different histories and values reflected in the selected movies. It is also hoped that this methodology will enhance an understanding of different approaches used by various filmmakers as they attempt to undertake the Moroccan identity via cinema. Above all, it is Cultural Studies that aims at founding an alternative third space for cultural encounters, which could pave the way to a new mode of representation.

The research is particularly the result of an extensive analysis of literature research. By discussing concepts and theories from the fields of literary, cultural and film studies, it will examine the status of the Moroccan image in Hollywood visual culture as posted by cinema. The Study makes use of the theories of Edward Said, 1989, 1993; Michel Foucault, 1997; Stuart Hall, 1980; Gilles Deleuze 1989 and Homi Bhabha, 2006. The theoretical frameworks of Jack Shaheen, 2001, 2008; Laila Sohat, 1990, 2003; Robert Stam, 2005 and Roy Armes, 1987, 2006; Mathew Bernstein, 1997; Hoberman, 1999; Christian Metz, 1986 etc. are also employed.

4. Methodology

For the purpose of exploring in depth Hollywood discursive practices on Morocco, the following research questions were developed.

4.1. Research Questions

The primary research questions guiding this research are: What is the nature of images and narratives presented on the screen on Morocco? How is the identity of Moroccans articulated in opposition to the Anglo-American identity? Can Moroccans represent themselves in films? What is the relationship between culture, traditions and film content?

4.2. Research Design

To investigate the above problematic questions, this study relies on the qualitative narrative research design. It uses a range of data sources: primary and secondary analysis of films, scholarly books and articles, reviews of films, etc. that can help to contribute to a better understanding of how cultural domination can work upon the minds and practices of filmmakers to act around the Moroccan character in a large sample of movies. To decode the movies’ messages, many components in the film are analysed critically. Plot, character, theme, point of view, and setting are all typical areas of analysis. Because of the film’s peculiar visual qualities, each of these areas takes on additional dimensions. Character, for example, is not only written into the screenplay, but also interpreted and portrayed by the actor. When the action is being filmed, the shot, speed of motion, tonality, sound and special effects also become important interpretive factors within a film since cultural pictorializations within a film can be depicted or influenced through these elements. The sequence of events will also be discussed since the narrative design emphasizes the chronological analysis of the data.

The study will make use of the literary critique of the elements of narration together with the ways in which these elements are portrayed visually to analyse the films and what they say about Moroccan society and its values. It uses the elements of the narrative design as a guide to discuss the cultural representations across the scenes.
4.3. Corpus sampling

The films analysed in this article are sampled across the Hollywood film productions, basing their selection on firm and concrete criteria. The sampling is purposeful to target the problem of Moroccan representation ever since 1998 up to 2006. Purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest.

The study has tried to plump for films that have been shot only on Morocco and taking Moroccan space, gender and mores as their main theme.

4.4. The coding process

- Themes are organized according to their frequency in the different films
- Films are thematised in a chronological order
- The themes are coded in terms of the complexity of the story
- The choice of the themes focuses on the insights about the individual’s experiences
- Themes have addressed the research questions

5. Analysis and interpretation of films

It is believed that much has been written about the recto of the Anglo-American pictorialization of Moroccan mores and grounds. Likewise, in this article, it is aimed to scrutinize the reverso of this representation to give some credit to those Anglo-American filmmakers who have broken the norms of the traditional Anglo-American view of Morocco to reel some of its real cultural aspects. It seems that these daring filmmakers of Five Fingers, Hideous Kinky, Legionnaire and Babel have recognized that more attention needs to be paid to the way that Euro-American cinemas have developed a ‘global imaginary’… the film should afford its spectator a humanistic, touristic, arguably complacent global vision from a hegemonic First World perspective.

Moving from the recto to the verso of this representation, It is interesting to stress the idea that the Arab image of 9/11 aftermath has overwhelmed many Anglo-American filmmakers to narrate and concoct new Arab myths. Likewise, it has also prodded some other image-makers to revamp somehow their conceptual imaginings being circulated about Arab characters in general and Moroccans in particular to a more concrete and genuine portrait, presenting a new mode close to the wind of positivity and reality.

The portrayal of Moroccans during the outset of the twentieth century in Morocco (1930), Road to Morocco (1942), The Man who knew too Much (1934/1956), Casablanca (1942), The Wind and the Lion (1975) and others has been denigrating at all levels. Anyone watching the aforementioned movies, obviously, will come across various scenes that undesirably depict Moroccans as “barbarous,” “uncivilized,” “fanatics,” “lascivious,” etc. One could hardly see a good Moroccan character or setting being displayed definitely positive. Moroccans, for example, couldn’t help but feast their eyes on every scene of the above flicks without enduring and going through the same repetitive screenings that they had seen before dozens of times. Despite the fact that the films were shot by different directors, the leitmotifs remain the same formulas used either by early travelogues or artists (Arab baddies versus Anglo-American protagonists) who contributed to the establishment of “the later empires hotbed of servile unrest.”

Notwithstanding those timeworn clichés, some Anglo-American filmmakers have moved on from picturing all Moroccans as vicious baddies and terrorists to a people who provide help to foreigners starting from the late twentieth century to the time being. In Five Fingers, for instance, the radical food contamination which was intended to be executed and accomplished by a Dutch philanthropic, targeting American citizens made the FBI agents to appear in Moroccan Muslim clothes to track down the terrorist mastermind. Among the FBI agent, there is a Moroccan character (Said Taghmaoui) who is employed and presented as a terrorism fighter. This shift in representation from being an antagonist villain to an agent working for world security is one of the rare scenes where Moroccans act acceptable roles. In the beginning of the film, one may judge resistibly the film director for presenting and framing Said Taghmaoui as a member of the terrorist cell. Within the course of events, the audience will discover that Taghmaoui is, in fact, playing a totally different role together with the US federal agents.

In spite of the existence of some phlegmatic and unenthusiastic acts such as the one in which the Dutch has been kidnapped from within scruffy and


ragged people transported with chickens in a shabby coach, it should be tagged that the recent cinematic productions at least put forward a moderated view discrepant from the previous movies of the early twentieth century. Eventually, while watching the latest Anglo-American celluloids, it is noticed that this cinema is not at all gloomy as its predecessors as there is a tokenism of new Moroccan goody. The films’ representation produced nowadays remains dissimilar in one way or another from the old narratives which deployed and put stress mainly on the immoral and harmful depictions. In the new movies, the Moroccan audience can come across double portrayals: good and evil. Moroccans now are used to perpetuating the traditional stereotypes and simultaneously as real decent fellows for Anglo-Americans.

In *Legionnaire* (1998), Peter McDonald happens to shoot one of the rarest affirmative scenes ever in the Anglo-American cinema. Compared to *Casablanca* (1942) or *Morocco* (1930), it must be a challenging experience for MacDonald to portray objectively the Moroccan historical events in which Abed El krim El Khatabi had given hard times to the colonial legion in the Rif Mountains before independence. He is presented as a national hero who defends his country and struggles against the invaders. Out of dozens of films done about Morocco, Abed El krim El Khatabi is the only Moroccan or even the Arab character that is really shown as powerful and in a position of the winner. In the film, it is felt that the filmmaker has tried to respect and represent the real happenings of the different battles between the legion and the Moroccan resister of colonialism led by A. El Khatabi. Such film indeed betokens a revolutionary and a groundbreaking shift in the domain of Anglo-American cinematic representations of the Moroccan persona and charisma. This encouraging and promising construction of Moroccans foreshadows other coming modifications and adjustments in the Anglo-American scenarios in the future. Within the same line of thought, Jack Shaheen puts forward in the last segment of his video, *How Hollywood vilifies a people*, that several recent films have begun to break down the traditional process of stereotypes. In the video, Shaheen ends up with a tone of hope in the young creative filmmakers who take the courage of moving beyond the bigoted portrayals that are deeply rooted in the Anglo-American culture.

Despite the presence of some pejorative depictions about Morocco in *Legionnaire* (1998), one can notice on the other hand a minimum of advantageous traits which couldn’t be shown in the earlier movies like *Casablanca* (1942) or *Morocco* (1930). If Moroccans have been silenced in the majority of earlier films shot on Morocco, viewers nowadays are presented to a slightly different image in *Legionnaire*. A. EL Khatabi’s strong presence and discursive authority in the film can be a fluent response to Spivak’s query: “Can the subaltern speak?” The film affirms that EL Khatabi can speak and can resist the foreign legions with no inferiority complex. Rather, he is put in front of the public as a man who is aware of his duty and eager to fulfill his mission. As a Moroccan character EL Khatabi is against being silenced and he is ready to fight whoever has the intention to demean his dignity. He speaks loudly to Legonnaire Alain Lefevre and explains to him things that neither the legionnaires nor their leaders could understand. He refuses to be assimilated or to be turned into an object of the Anglo-American hegemony and dominance. His verbal expressions are further supported by his physical bravery. Out of about sixty films in which Moroccans are screened voicelessly and powerlessly, it is the Moroccan this time that brings Anglo-American hero under control and crushes him into silence. This inexorable determination to drive his opponent into silence is manifest in his serious caveat. EL Khatabi addresses Alain: For centuries, my people have roamed across this land. It has always been our home. In our culture, a man who has courage is valued above all. For this reason, I will allow you to live. Take a message back to your leaders: this is what awaits them, if they continue invading our country. *Legionnaire* (1998), 1h 29m 13 s

Peter McDonald’s film, *Legionnaire* (1998), signals a rigorous shift in the realm of the Anglo-American perception of the Moroccan mores and inhabitants. The way A. El Khatabi is lionized in the film remains a catalyst of change in the literature of representation towards Moroccans from a villain to a national hero.

In the context of Orientalism, it is evident here that Said’s notion of Oriental powerlessness is reversed by Abdelkrim El khatabi who gains the status of the hero by crushing every one standing in his way, namely the legion- the emblem of power, authority, hegemony and domination. El Khatabi overrides major film scenes and his voice defeats the opponent. McDonald’s film displays a huge space of resistance and defiance. From within the Anglo-American discursive authority, El Khatabi finds for himself a space to resist, protest and more importantly to speak. This time, it is the Anglo-American hero who can’t speak. El Khatabi is also in a position to give life or take it, which is obviously
portrayed in the scene where Alain stands powerless in front of El Khatabi’s words. As the picture shows, the mercy and the humane act of El Khatabi comes before any bad decision of revenge to slaughter his enemy. The analysis of this scene can go further in the sense that El Khatabi’s refusal to kill Alain and advises him to take a message to his leaders emphasizes the high spirit of dialogue and communication required for overcoming any conflictory encounters between Moroccans and their Anglo-American counterparts. His strong physical and verbal articulation delivers a direct answering message to Spivak’s question, affirming that the Moroccan subaltern can speak clear messages of humanity, pride and dignity.

Alejandro Gonzales Inarritu’s film Babel (2006) has given a plus to those fair scenes attributed to Moroccan traits and values. Screening Moroccan dignity and honour in this film is in point of fact a great step forward towards objective and constructive representation of the Moroccan Arab Other in the Anglo-American moving pictures. The previous images presented by the early movies like Casablanca (1942), Morocco (1930) or The Road to Morocco (1942) about Moroccans as ‘burglars’, ‘helpless’ and ‘sulliable’ people, Babel (2006) seems to deconstruct such misconceptions especially in the act in which the Moroccan man Anwar played by Mohammed Akhzam has tried to provide help for Susan Jones responding to Richard Jones (Brad Pitt): “find me an ambulance. Do anything” (Babel 2006). What is more inspiring is the shot where the poor Moroccan Anwar refuses to take the money he deserves for the services he has purveyed to Richard and his wife.

The film highlights clearly the fact that even the American hero gets surprised by the way Anwar reacts beneath his Moroccan dignity. As a matter of fact, the film projects one of the pure Moroccan characteristics, which is manifested in their readiness to provide help and services for others. The film, thus, could not escape such reality that displays the recognition of this Moroccan noble act of generosity and beneficence. Still, the film has not only casted the good act of Anwar, but also the gathering and concern of all villagers about the health of Susan without any charges or costs. The actions and the reactions of the villagers have been represented genuinely. All people seem to have good intentions and innocent deeds. Along with some other fair instances presented in Babel (2006), the powerful and dignified action of Anwar can only demystify some of the preconceptions Anglo-Americans hold in their imaginary about Moroccans. Hence, the Moroccan dignity and honour happen to take place in Alejandro Gonzales Inarritu’s film in a highly distinguished manner, particularly if it is compared to its previous counterparts. These filmmakers seem to say that “it is necessary to rearrange those bad thoughts and to restore some form of sanity, namely a recognition that whatever we do is noble and right.”

In addition to those dispassionate scenes in Five Fingers (2006), Legionnaire (1998) and Babel (2006), Gillies MacKinnon’s Hideous Kinky (1998) narrates other forward-looking prospects of the Moroccan culture. The film recounts the story of a young British Woman with her daughters who come to Morocco to satiate the sadness of the father who moved after another woman. The family left the wretchedness of London to the hospitable and cordial environs of Marrakesh. Despite her financial problems, Julia’s quest for the spiritual enlightenment in Morocco helped her to meet a Moroccan acrobat Bilal (Said Taghmaoui), who has much gratified her thirst to the Moroccan life experiences. The warm hands of Bilal that Julia and her daughters couldn’t find in London with her ex-husband made her somehow forget the different sufferings she had already encountered. In the mere times of financial crisis, Bilal offered Julia help and everything she needs including the parental feelings of a good father for the young daughters. The open handedness of Moroccans has pushed Bilal during the moment of money shortfall to take Julia and her daughters to his village to accommodate them. Bilal’s sacrifice with the British Woman reaches its peak when Bilal acts against his traditions to take a foreign lady to his hometown, which is very conservative. Julia’s love and respect for Bilal as a Moroccan character signifies a big positive portrayal in the history of the Anglo-American cinema of Morocco. Across the Movies reeling Morocco, the story of a mutual love between a Moroccan and a British or American character remained a dream wish for Moroccans until the coming of the film Hideous Kinky (1998).

Julia’s love for Billal does really symbolize her love of the whole country and its inhabitants. In Hideous Kinky, the British lady seems ready and eager to assimilate the Moroccan culture- a fact that might not be seen in other films on Morocco. Julia displays a great flexibility to accept any uprising cultural difference. The act of praying as a Moroccan would do is one of the biggest changes in the process of the Anglo-American representation of Moroccan

people and religion. Through such scene, MacKinnon has transmitted a highly civilized message to the entire West that Morocco is a land of freedom and religious diversity mainly during the hippie age. Historically speaking, Morocco is known as a place of different encounters of hippie visitors from various corners of the world. In this conjunction, Brian T. Edwards states that “for the hippie taking the so-called Marrakesh express, the infrastructure built by the French organized the ascriptions of a visible and essentialized Moroccan Otherness on which the hippie experience depended.”

Generally, when it comes to space, MacKinnon has done a great job to change the American and the British worldview concerning Moroccan landscapes by displaying Morocco as one of the regions that can offer “a more feasible space for the encounters with third world Otherness.” This belief is clearly posed in the original novel, *Hideous Kinky*, by Esther Freud in chapter thirty:

The streets of Marrakech were lined with people on the morning that we said goodbye to the Nappy Ladies and Ayesha and her grandmother and Moulay Idriss and made our way to the train station. There were rows of flags strung up above the crowd, and in the distance short, sharp valleys of gunfire rang out. Bilal carried our bags. He edged his way through the people who streamed down the avenues of oranges trees towards the gates of the city....

The description of the city and people is much different from earlier description of Morocco in earlier narrations. On the whole there is a positive appreciation and ascription of Moroccan space and people’s big-heartedness in the act of people farewelling Julia in the streets of orange trees and Bilal carrying her luggage at her departure.

By way of concluding, it should be admitted that the Anglo-American representation of Morocco has experienced a noticeable change in the view of the last cinematic productions. To side with the words of Jack Shaheen, if the young generation of filmmakers adopts this new trend of representation used by Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu, Peter MacDonald, Gillies MacKinnon and Malkin Laurence, one can be sanguine for the process of representation in the coming years. The filmmakers of *Hideous Kinky*, *Legionnaire*, *Babel* and *Five Fingers* have broken the ice and started to narrate new Moroccan experiences that will affect the becoming of research in this domain in the near future positively. Now, it is the role of the next generation to give further importance to fair exemplification more than any other previous partial portrayals.

Despite this changing attitude towards Moroccans, great efforts and challenging portrayals are still awaiting for filmmakers to include the Moroccan female in their agenda of fair representation. The young Anglo-American directors should work for attributing Moroccan women more space of fairness. It is time to recompense the female for the loss of her identity and chastity ever since the commencement of travelogues. It might be quite difficult and demanding to make an acceptable restitution for centuries of denigration and vilification in a short time, but what is most central nowadays is to launch the undertaking and take the solemn vows of understanding, love, friendship, estimation, bias free imagination, genuine perception, etc. towards the Moroccan stream of human life. Such formulation will confidently aid either the Anglo-American or Moroccan spectator to cognize better, according to Christian Metz, “the filmic state by setting it as a mixture of similarities and differences.” Thus, the film can become a sort of narrative-representational mirror where the spectators feel that they are really present as human beings not fantasized as imaginary creatures. The film, then, can provide and reflect identification of real life happenings.

Once the filmmaker narrates different cultural contexts with worthy authentic images and resonances, “the physical reality of the film and the cinematic situation become the most common path of excitations that traces out a one-way line- a directed line which is Freud’s ‘progressive path.’” So, for a sustainable ‘progressive path’, in this globalized social life, spectators, actors, filmmakers and businessmen should permanently work all together to reinitialize the process of representation considering all the cultural discrepancies and found a new Anglo-American cinematic situation, where the Arab Moroccan spectators and characters are identified with real life images.

It seems that the story of representing Otherness stands at the crossroads and cinema may

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34 Ibid., p. 22.
37 Ibid., p. 114.
stipulate another constructive eye which can call the shots of representation- this eye is termed by Fatimah Tobing Rony "the third eye." It would be termed the wise eye that can standstill the resistance of young Arab generations who watch their ancestors misfilmed. No one could endure watching his/her parents, grandparents or other predecessors being badly portrayed in cinema. The consequence may be turning the gaze of the Anglo-Americans back onto themselves and we may watch the circulation of movies, as Fatimah Tobing Rony puts it, where "the savage parodies the civilized." Now, it would be immature to judge the future of Anglo-American representation of Morocco in the coming cinematic productions, but with the presence of some exemplary pioneers like Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu, Peter MacDonald, Gillies MacKinnon and Malkin Laurence its future is deemed to be promising.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

Scrutinizing Hollywood movies on Morocco, from Legionnaire (1998), Hideous Kinky (1999), Babel (2006) to Five Fingers (2006), the encounter between the East and the West seems to be portrayed in a different way from the earliest productions. It is found that there is a shift in the representation parameters that remain positive. The shift of representation from a stereotypical to a balanced one should be enacted by both Anglo-Americans and Moroccans. For a prolific change, some recommendations seem to get off the strongbox of this research. First of all, further cooperative research is recommended especially in the area of representation in video film systems between Anglo-Americans and Moroccans. Such findings could come up with more detailed facts that may provide fruitful strategies for organizing this problem of Moroccan representation and consumption by Hollywood film industry at large.

7. References

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