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Moroccan Cinema Between the I and the Other: *Wechma* and *Sayed Almajhoul*

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Abstract

This dissertation traces the development of Moroccan cinema between the historical and contemporary context. An important axis of this research is to situate the crisis of Moroccan identity under the cinematic lens between the colonial and postcolonial paradigm. Whereas in the colonial paradigm, this research explores the conditioning of the self with a lens of "othering"; in the postcolonial paradigm, it will unveil the primacy of the cinema in reprocessing the self with a lens of "selfing". Equally important is the appropriation of the cinematic apparatus as an imperial instrument that legitimized cultural penetration and colonial authority, before and after the French protectorate in Morocco. The findings of the latter will be utilized as a critical approach to address the unsettlement of the self in Morocco's postcolonial and contemporary cinema. Moreover, this paper will also re-evaluate the dilemma of cinematic authenticity for a third eye who oscillates between the local and the global, the national and transnational, and the "I" and the "Other". Therefore, with a close reading of Hamid Bennani's *Wechma* (1970) and Alaa Eddine Aljem's *Sayed Almajhoul (2019),* this dissertation will lead to new theoretical conclusions about the ambiguity of "what Moroccan cinema?.

1. Introduction

Inherent to the ontology of film is an ideological and psychoanalytic mechanism that remodels humans' identity formation once they interact with the apparatus. Ergo, the cinema becomes a defining archaeological site that unearths consciousness and unconsciousness, and raises "the foundations of space, the 'strata', those silent powers of before or after speech, before or after man. The visual image becomes archaeological, stratigraphic, tectonic" (Deleuze 244). Moreover, beyond the archaeological site of the cinema, there lies others sites that unearth the hidden forces behind our existence as subjectivities and intersubjectivities, these are ideological and psychoanalytic sites from which knowledge about the self and the other is produced. Following this reasoning, I will attempt to unearth the hidden cine-colonial scenery from which the colonial subjects, the colonial discourse, and the colonial gaze emerged, while unveiling Morocco's arduous self-making process via the image.

In chapter one, I will examine the colonial system's appropriation of the lens as a visual instrument of imperialism. Based on a Bazinian re-evaluation of the "objective character" of the apparatus, and a philosophical and ideological analysis of semiotics in relation to phenomenological insight, I will investigate the formation of the self under the subjective character of the cinema and within the colonial context. Using Louis Lumière's first Moroccan film, *The Moroccan Goathered* (1896) as an example of visual imperialism, I will explore the context that created Moroccan identity via two modes, as an "absent self" and as a "present Other". On these grounds, I will approach the self-making process of the Moroccan "I" via the mechanism of screen-mirror identification, and the Sartrean phenomenology of "the Look", to unearth the objectifying conditions that stripped national identity from subjectivity. These analytical procedures and the results obtained from them will delineate the structure of colonial authority through the lens.

In chapter two, I situate Moroccan cinema's endeavour for re-subjectification within the postcolonial paradigm. Following Fernando Solanas & Octavio Getino's reasoning of subversion in their manifesto "Toward a Third Cinema" (1969), I analyse the new terrain that the postcolonial paradigm offers to explore cinematic authenticity "from below". Through a close reading of the existential, aesthetic, social, psychoanalytic and religious underpinnings of Hamid Bennani's experimental movie *Wechma* (*Trace*), I attempt to scrutinize the context from which a "third eye" filmmaker was born, and a native cine-eye-subject was formed. On the one hand, as it attempted to revitalize the "self", *Wechma's* imagery offered a site of contemplation where the "self" is located between two modes, existence and non-existence, absence and presence, local and global, "I" and "Other". On the other hand, the film offers a psychoanalytic and existential window that reveals the protagonist's contaminated self-making process, which extends to Moroccan identity. In this way, this chapter identifies the points of identification between the self-making process of the protagonist and Moroccan identity's re-subjectification. In short, this will lead us to new theoretical findings that explore the inextricability of the cinema and identity.

Finally, chapter three reviews Moroccan cinema between the national and transnational terrain. While *Wechma* embodies the national model, Alaa' Eddine Aljem's *Sayed Almajhoul* (*The Unknown Saint*) represents the transitional model of Moroccan cinema. In this chapter, I attempt to unveil Aljem's self-orientalization and self-othering of the Moroccan "I" via his passivizing images that employ Eurocentric patterns that aestheticize the process of "Othering". Therefore, based on an examination of the Sartrean "bad faith", I will unearth the filmmaker's unsuccessful attempt to express "from below" with a dominant language.

In short, as it traces the development of Moroccan cinema within the historical and contemporary context, this dissertation will cross different paths of analysis to locate Moroccan cinema between the "I" and the "Other".

2. Colonial authority through the lens

In general, the precedent exploitation of the medium of painting, postcards, and photography paved the way for semiotic orientalism which, under skilful structure and composition, brought to the fore the differential qualities between the Occident and the Orient. Apparently, visually representing the Orient as distorted, under-civilized, exotic, and erotic laid the groundwork for cultural domination in the colonies, provided that "the act of representing others almost always involves violence to the subject of representation" (Said 1983). The latter is evidenced in most French colonial postcards that represent Moroccan women without their traditional veils, incorporating them into an imperial apparatus that stirs the colonials' scopophilia (see figure 1). As a result, when the photographer unveils "the veiled and give figural representation to the forbidden" (Alloula 14), he provides for the colonial empire the perfect ground for penetrating the colonial subjects culturally and sexually.

Fig. 1 Three French soldiers posing with four Moroccan woman in Casablanca

Apropos the cinematic apparatus, it stands to reason that the first colonial encounter with this apparatus took effect when Louis Lumière's expeditionary cinematographer brought back to Paris the first *actualités* of Morocco in *Le Chevrier Marocain* in 1897. Whereas the first projection of *La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon* (1895) in Le Salon Indien du Grand Café in Paris introduced to the world Lumière's first cinematographic mission, the first projection of *Le Chevrier Marocain* (1897) in the zoological Jardin d'Acclimatation in Paris introduced to

the world Lumière's first colonial mission towards Morocco in particular and the cinema in general. That is to say, as it took up "the theme of the people put on exhibition throughout Europe" (150), the filmic apparatus was summoned to be part of "the colonial paraphernalia" to study the colony's people, landscapes, culture, and architecture on the one hand, and to legitimize colonial authority through the lens on the other hand (Vera 4). Therefore, because *Le Chevrier Marocain* contributed to the empire's vindication of its own civilizing mission in Morocco, one could assume that the colonial system's exploitation of the filmic apparatus stems from the latter's powerful agency in actualizing what was once mythicized and imperceptible to perceptible and proximate "imagined geographies".

In their book *Colonial Culture in France since the Revolution* (2013), Pascal Blanchard, Sandrine Lemaire, Nicolas Bancel, Dominic Thomas, and Alexis Pernsteiner argue that the idea behind French colonial films was

> to inscribe these lands within the national space, within France, as a legitimate part of the nation. In a way, these films legitimized both colonization and the various associated acts of conquest, by projecting images of peace, a kind of proof of the goodness of the nascent empire. Here, the images were thought to reflect reality: if the director can film it, then it must exist; these lands look pacified, so they are pacified, so they are French. (150)

Under these circumstances, it can be stated that in the midst of its mechanical metamorphosis from an object of scientific experimentation to an object of aesthetic expression, the filmic apparatus was annexed to the French colonial discourse as a powerful instrument of visual imperialism. In addition to the representational nature of painting, postcards and photography which preceded the apparatus in fortifying the institution of cultural imperialism, the transparent immediacy of the filmic image foregrounded the instrumentality of the perceptual parameters of the apparatus in entrenching the hegemony of French colonial empire. However, up to now, research on the colonial discourse tend to focus on the socio-political underpinnings of colonial cinema rather than examining the latter in light of the cinematic apparatus's psychoanalytic, ideological and philosophical underpinnings.

2.1.Power through perception

To begin with, the reproduction of time and space "by automatic means has radically affected our psychology" of the image (Bazin 13), while re-defining the aesthetic and realistic aspects of mediation, medium, transparency, representation, perspective, perception, and reception. In his study of "The Ontology of the Photographic Image" in *What is Cinema?:Volume I* (1967), André Bazin asserts that the object, the object's duration and its image become one under the mechanical mediation of the lens (15). He goes on to suggest that because of the objective nature of the apparatus, we "are forced to accept as real the existence of the object reproduced" (13). Against this background, the viewers' innate desire for perceptual immediacy and "appetite for illusion" is certainly fulfilled under the realism of the image (11). However, while much of Bazin's theory on cinema's purity could be valid, his generalisability on the impassive quality of the lens should be interpreted with caution. As he asserts that "only the impassive lens, stripping its object of all those ways of seeing it, those piled-up preconceptions, that spiritual dust and grime with which my eyes have covered it, is able to present it in all its virginal purity" (15), he fails to address the philosophical status of subject-object perception which could ultimately interfere with the apparatus's nature of existence, stripping it of all *priori* autonomy, impassivity and "virginal purity". On the one hand, "perception, according to Bergson, is always partial and interested, since it is located in a specific perceiver; it is necessarily embodied, located, and contingent" (Marks 252). On the other hand, in Sartre's *L'Imaginaire* (1940), the terms of relation of "consciousness to its object are translated as 'directed at' (dirigé), 'aimed at' (visé), and 'aimed towards' ('tendue)" (xxix); in other words, since "phenomenological clarification considers objects not as independently given but as intentional constituents of conscious experience" (Mohanty 346), the perceived objects, under our perceptual intentionality, are ultimately stripped of all *priori* autonomy and objectivity once they exist in our fabric of consciousness.

Furthermore, in his analysis of the "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus" (1975), Jean-Louis Baudry finds the status of the cinematographic image in Husserl's definition of intentionality: "the word intentionality signifies nothing other than this peculiarity that consciousness has of being conscious of something, of carrying in its quality of ego its *cogitatum* within itself" (Husserl 33). Therefore, since an "image will always be image of something" (Baudry 43), it would be erroneous to claim that mechanically reproducing an object or event would restore its autonomy and "virginal purity". Contrarily, the existence of the perceived object was and will be always relational and contextual: in relation to the one perceiving it, to the context in which it is perceived, to other objects surrounding it, to the time period in which it exists, to the medium by which it is mediated, and to its mode of projection. In essence, this constitutes the wholeness of the cinematic experience; however, since the latter mediates our perception of the world, it takes over phenomenological insight while giving it a new meaning independent of the phenomenological analysis of subjective consciousness.

Similarly, as an *actualité*, one would normally confer *Le Chevrier Marocain* with qualities of credibility and facticity since Lumiere's cinematographer merely recorded spatio-temporal slices of "objective reality" in Morocco. However, because the footage was shot in a specific historical and political context, perceived with an expeditionary eye, and projected in the "human zoo" of the zoological Jardin d'Acclimatation, it was transformed into a colonial product that legitimized the conditions in which the colonial gaze and the colonial subject emerged. Furthermore, due to the absence of film projections at the times in Morocco, the latter's spectatorship was certainly deprived from the privilege of screen-mirror identification which could introduce it to cinema's imaginary field where a Moroccan "eye-subject" could be formed. Conversely, the absence of this mechanism contributed to the colonial subjects' passivization, othering and objectification.

According to the psychoanalytic film theory, the mechanism of screen-mirror identification, an innate process of the filmic experience, paves the way for the formation of a hegemonic eye, considering that "the cinema manifests in a hallucinatory manner the belief in the omnipotence of thought" (Baudry 47). To be specific, when Baudry highlights the striking similarities between the prototypical set of Plato's cave and the filmic apparatus (e.g., darkened theatre, screen, projection) which invoke the necessary environment that releases the mirror stage, he explores the conditions in which the viewer forms an omnipotent and transcendental "eye-subject" (45). However, it is noteworthy that Baudry does not equate the Lacanian experience to the filmic experience; he asserts that the latter is a "sort of proof or verification" and a "solidification through repetition" of Lacan's "ideal ego" (45). In view of this, it can be said that the cinematic apparatus both fulfils the viewers' "appetite for illusion" and their innate desire for power through their panoptic position as an unseen all-seeing "eye-subject". On the other hand, because the crux of cinema's mechanics of representation is inscribed with a structure of binary opposition between a perceiver (the self as subject) and a perceived (the other as object), the imaginary matrix of the film bestows the colonial gaze with an illusory mastery while fuelling colonial authority through the lens.

Therefore, not only did *Le Chevrier Marocain's* viewers identify with a filmic apparatus, but also with an Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) that frames Moroccan identity with an image of alterity and objectification. As an ISA, the filmic image's formation of identity is double-sided; it forms the centralized identity of an all-knowing, all-powerful and all-seeing transcendental "eye-subject" (the colonizer), and the decentralized identity of a perceived and "aimed at" colonized subject. In other words, because the mechanics of perception and representation during the filmic experience are inherently hegemonizing, they served the colonial discourse in institutionalizing the self/other dichotomy.

2.2.Moroccan identity as an absent self and a present other

Beyond the realm of the image, the paradox of identity resides in the complex nature of vision as a force that transforms the "self" and the "other" once they exit in each other's fabric of consciousness. However, as it mediates this transformation, the visual field of the filmic image fuels the fatal triplet of perception/knowledge/power under the shadow of the gaze. As a result, pictorial arts, including colonial films, were heavily involved in the formation of the colonial subject's identity.

On the one hand, as the French colonial system bestowed Morocco with the art of cinematic spectatorship in the 1940s, it laid the groundwork for the mechanism of screen-mirror identification in which a native "cine-eye" could finally identify with the apparatus and form its own transcendental "eye-subject". This process is realized by what Christian Metz recognizes as the spectator's primary identification with the mechanical operation of the cinema (the apparatus) and the spectator's secondary identification with the filmic text. In particular, whereas in the former "the spectator identifies with himself, with himself as a pure act of perception (as wakefulness, alertness): as condition of possibility of the perceived and hence as a kind of transcendental subject, anterior to every there is" (Metz 51); in the latter the spectator identify with the "characters, with their own different levels (out-of frame, character, etc)" (Metz 58). Nevertheless, with respect to minority spectatorship, this paradigm of identification, including the one mentioned earlier, should be applied with caution. Firstly, central to the system of identification is a mechanism that "demands sameness, necessitates similarity, disallows difference" (Friedberg 36); and secondly, the "mirror effect" is changeable, it is an "after-effect of a particular mode of discourse which has been historically dominant" (Doane 30). Therefore, the minority's mode of identification will indubitably be mediated by the "the social and political dimensions of subjectivity", as well as the sociality

and historical specificity of the cinema (Reich & Richmond 9-7). Under these circumstances, the minority's engagement with both levels of identification becomes problematic.

On the other hand, one could argue that while it brought Morocco and the cinema in proximity, the inauguration of Le Centre Cinématographique Marocain (CCM) by the colonial system in 1944, which was tasked with censorship over production and distribution, fortified cultural and economic dependency considering that films were not allowed to be shot by native directors at the times. The latter stirred a pattern of "misrecognition as recognition" for the native cine-eye, who identified with a filmic ego shaped by "ready-made ideological perceptions and values from the outside", and who "appropriate them and identify with them as constituting part and parcel of their own identity" (Majumdar 87). In other words, since we "grasp ourselves from outside, as though we were another person or a thing" (Sartre 78), and since the self is already subsumed beneath the gaze of the other beyond the filmic image, existing without *priori* determination becomes questionable. Therefore, the crisis of identity is substantiated by the perceptual parameters of the image which become embroiled in the policing of the boundaries of this "given" identity, provided that the gaze between the colonizer and the colonized is a one-way non-reciprocal process.

Nevertheless, the mechanical and aesthetic metamorphosis of the film medium is certainly dynamic and transitional; while the image was instrumental as a subjection riffle in the colonial times, it transformed into a liberation riffle in the postcolonial times, becoming a machine of decolonization, deterritorialization, de-objectification and detachment. Indubitably, the quest to dismantle the self/other dichotomy, to form a native cine-eye-subject, to reverse the colonial gaze, and to become a perceiver instead of a perceived via a Western mode of expression is certainly arduous.

3. Postcolonial authority through the lens: *Wechma*'s third eye

Subsequent to Morocco's independence in 1956 was the postcolonial need for self-representation. While restoring control over the CCM contributed to "the nation-building process" (Bahmad), the technical and financial limitations of the nascent nation imposed a challenge on the local eye in experimenting with the medium. Yet, the latter did not stop Mohamed Ousfour from making Morocco's first feature film *al-Ibn al-aʾaq* (*The Damned Son*) in 1958. However, inspired by fantasy narratives and global action, this 16mm silent movie became a product of Ousfour's cinephilic appetite in times of urgent re-subjectification. Resultantly, the film became implicated in a world where "the unreal rules" and in "a world of abstraction and phantoms, where it becomes 'timeless' and history-less" (Solanas & Getino 123).

In their manifesto "Towards a Third Cinema" (1969) Fernando Solanas & Octavo Getino re-examine the status of the filmic image as a universal abstraction while emphasising the national aspects of culture and cinema, "not because they are located within certain geographical limits", but because they "respond to the particular needs of development and liberation of each people" (119). For this reason, to become a weapon of decolonization, the cinema must embark on a quest of "destruction and construction: destruction of an image that the neocolonialism has created of itself and of us, and construction of a throbbing, living reality which recaptures truth in any of its expressions" (123). Accordingly, when they returned from overseas film schools (mainly in France) during the 1960s, many Moroccan filmmakers shared a passion to inject national cinema with qualities of authenticity, nationalism and experimentation. Nonetheless, it was Hamid Bennani's *Wechma* that was celebrated hitherto as Morocco's most authentic film, marking a departure in national cinema with its experimental style that breaks free from classic narrative structures, and releases revolutionary images coded with Freudian symbolism and surrealistic sequences. However, before proceeding to examine

the filmic language of *Wechma*, it is necessary to outline the existential applications of the film that accentuate its authenticity and psychological realism.

In essence, beyond the Bazinian theorization of cinema's "virginal purity", the postcolonial paradigm reframes the conditions in which a new concept of cinematic authenticity might occur. For instance, one could assume that the unconventional revolutionary plane of *Wechma* is what inscribes it with an aura of authenticity. That is to say, while he uses the camera as "the inexhaustible expropriator of image-weapons; the projection, a gun that can shoot 24 frames per second" (Solanas & Getino 127); Bennani exploits the existential applications of the image to re-frame the protagonist, not only politically, but also psychoanalytically and philosophically to foreground the lost identity of Morocco between the "I" and the "Other".

Firstly, according to Solanas & Getino, "any form of expression or communication that tries to show national reality is subversion"; following this reasoning, they come to the conclusion that "truth, then, amounts to subversion" (117). Secondly, subversion equally takes place when the perceived uses "the possibility of reciprocity" of the look, which transforms him/her, after looking back at the original voyeur, into a subject (Majumdar 86). Finally, in his examination of "Sartre's images of the Other and the search for authenticity" (1991), Stuart Zane Charmé reflects on Sartre's description of the inauthentic self as the self that "finds security in the fixed rules and values of the world of civility and that refuses to call into question the comforting structures and institutions of society"; henceforth, authenticity becomes a subversive power that destabilizes the tempting desire to follow the rigid rules and values (253). On these grounds, as it reverses the look, mediates national reality with a native lens, and breaks free from the inauthentic self that is subsumed under the shadow of the "comforting structures and institutions of society", Bennani's lens becomes subversive and authentic *par excellence*.

However, using non-native parameters of perception and narration might problematize authenticity for the third eye. Gilles Deleuze's introduction of "modern political cinema" in his book *The Time-Image* (1989) exemplifies the minority filmmaker's dilemma of authenticity in two situations. In the first situation, the filmmaker might confront an "illiterate public", captivated by "American, Egyptian or Indian serials, and karate films"; according to him, the latter forms a material that the filmmaker has "to work on to extract from it the elements of a people who are still missing". While in the second situation the minority filmmaker finds himself/herself "in the impasse described by Kafka: the impossibility of not 'writing', the impossibility of writing in the dominant language, the impossibility of writing differently" (217). Against this background, experimentation becomes the third eye's recourse to translate the postcolonial reality, particularly that the existence of a revolutionary cinema

> is inconceivable without the constant and methodical exercise of practice, search, and experimentation. It even means committing the new film-maker to take chances on the unknown, to leap into space at times, exposing himself to failure as does the guerrilla who travels along paths that he himself opens up with machete blows. The possibility of discovering and inventing film forms and structures that serve a more profound vision of our reality resides in the ability to place oneself on the outside limits of the familiar, to make one's way amid constant dangers". (Solanas & Getino 125)

Similarly, the film's skilful experimentation with the narrative structure, character arc and the filmic language places the filmmaker "on the outside limits of the familiar". If Bennani's existentialist experimentation with the crisis of identity served his profound vision to translate the national reality of Morocco, it is because of the arduous yet absurdist quest of Messaoud in locating the "I" throughout the film.

3.1.The "I" between absence and presence

Produced by Sigma 3, this film traces the story of a rebellious young man, Messaoud (Taoufik Dada), whose transformation between childhood and adulthood reveals the crisis of living under the shadow of the past and within the constraints of the present.

Indubitably, *Wechma*'s unconventional configuration of the character arc re-stabilize the mechanism of identification which was ruptured and destabilized within the colonial site of encounter between the screen and the minority spectator. Apparently, since the postcolonial lens of *Wechma* is mediated by the perceptual intentionality of a filmmaker who intends to transform the apparatus from a machine of othering to an instrument of selfhood, the previously mentioned pattern of "misrecognition as recognition" for the native eye will eventually be reversed (Reich & Richmond 11). As a result, the self/other dichotomy will be dismantled, the hegemonizing visual field will be reprocessed, and an authentic third eye (i.e. third cinema) will inevitably be formed. Nonetheless, the subject-formation of a third eye does not solve the crisis of identity in the postcolonial paradigm. Since Messaoud's self constantly oscillates between various planes (social, colonial, postcolonial, existential, religious…etc), and since the film is summoned to react to two realities (as Messaoud tries to erase the marks of the colonial past, the sclerotic society in which he exists offers him an unerasable trace that drives him towards the abyss), *Wechma*'s quest for locating the "I" becomes arduous.

On the one hand, being modelled with a regressive pattern, Messaoud's character arc create an image that represents "collective utterance as the prefiguration of the people who are missing" (Deleuze 224). In accordance with Deleuze, "the first big difference between classical cinema and modern cinema" is the presence of people in the former and the absence of people in latter. In other words, while in the former people "are there, even though they are oppressed, tricked, subject, even though blind or unconscious", the absence of people in the latter is what prefigures modern political cinema, in which "the people no longer exist, or not yet… *the people are missing*" (216). This is evidenced in the synthesis of the first three shots of the film (close-up on the Moroccan flag, close-up on the school's speaker, and a pan shot on the school's children standing in a stiff position, with eyes fixed on the flag) that foregrounds the collective agent of the film (see figure 2). However, because Messaoud's character carry an image of

everyman and *everywoman* in Morocco, his death in the ending sequence accentuates the absence of the "I" and the impossibility of existing under the shadow of the past and the present.

Fig. 2 The opening sequence of *Wechma*

On the other hand, Bennani's psychic experimentation with Kamla's (Khadija Moujahid) character arc brings to the surface Messaoud's existential crisis since his birth. In the pre-cinematic realm of identification, and in line with Freud's notion of primary identification, a mechanism that occurs "during the oral stage of psychosexual development when the infant experiences the mother as part of himself or herself" (APA Dictionary), it can be suggested that the absence of a biological mother in Messaoud's infancy prefigures his delinquency, displacement, loss and non-belonging. According to the object relations theory, an infant's need for attachment to the mother signals the bedrock of self-development, and the "unique psychic organization that creates a person's sense of identity" (Goldenberg & Goldenberg 160). Within this context, since the mother represents the primary object or the first love object of the child, one could imagine the compensatory image that Kamla provides for Messaoud's wish fulfilment for identification This is evident in Messaoud's fixed gaze on Kamla in the kitchen sequence as she prepares tea; this sequence mirrors his unfulfilled appetite for "the pleasure principle" via his gaze and intimate proximity to her. In this way, Kamla (whose name means perfection and accomplishment in Arabic) becomes an image of sexual compensation which is necessary for an infant's formation of the id; yet, as this formation was disturbed by the absence of a biological mother, it could be the ground of Messaoud's regression and delinquency.

Accordingly, his collection of objects as a child equally manifests the pattern of regression under repression; for instance, when he arranges his elements on a piece of stone, he creates for himself a private and psychic ritual of questioning the self between absence and presence, existence and non-existence. Perhaps we can assume that his attempt to swallow the egg, a symbol of life and fertility, could imply his drive for "Eros", while removing the egg from his mouth and vomiting, could imply "Thanatos" or life's rejection of Messaoud. Furthermore, central to a character's dual nature is the film's employment of mirrors as an aesthetic and psychoanalytic device that signify the protagonist's conflicting existence between absence and presence. For example, after the sequence in which Kamla asks the child Messaoud to wash his body parts and change his clothes, Messaoud goes to the mirror to watch himself brushing his hair. As he finishes his contemplation with spit, the subsequent shot reveals Messaoud's face reflection in the water, where he spits again. As a symbol of cleansing, water becomes contaminated with the child's spit, signifying the latter's rejection of identification, belonging and existence. Subsequent sequences in which the adult Messaoud (Mohammed Kaghat) uses the mirror underline the same conflict; for example, while sitting and relaxing amongst the ruins with his friends, the adult Messaoud takes a small mirror and starts fixing his hair; the latter is interrupted by one of the delinquent friends who spits next to him and tells him "here is a nice mirror for you", as if inviting Messaoud to reflect on himself with disgust instead of admiration. Finally, one could say that the close-up on the insect takes form of a mirror reflection of the child Messaoud. After being punished for stealing the pomegranate, Messaoud is ordered again to memorize the Quran. Traumatized, Messaoud starts contemplating on the presence of a cockroach on the wall. In essence, in this sequence Bennani invites to contemplate on the metamorphosis of Messaoud as it takes place throughout the film.

The contribution of Messaoud's delinquent circle in his self-making process is equally important. On the one hand, during his childhood, his encounter with the delinquent children traumatized him as he witnessed the cruel ritual of burning the small bird. On the other hand, while his box includes an egg, toys, and a banana as a child; the adult Messaoud's suitcase includes merely two elements, a naked picture of a woman who is uncannily similar to Kamla, and a gun. In Freud's discussion of the drive, "the object is defined as that which allows a drive to achieve its aim" ("No Subject"). Comparably, it can be suggested that the picture mediates Messaoud's drive to achieve his unfulfilled aim as an infant. Therefore, while Kamla's presence could symbolize the Freudian "Oedipus complex" or the Lacanian "Real", Si Lmki's presence could symbolize the Lacanian "Symbolic order" or the "Name-of-the-Father" which restricts Messaoud's "Real" and desires. On this account, to foreground Messaoud's dilemma of existing, Bennani experimented with the character arc of Messaoud, Si Lmki, Kamla, the delinquent circle, as well as the child's box and the adult's suitcase, and the mirrors to translate the protagonist's unsuccessful self-making process.

In short, the image of a "missing people" oscillates and spirals throughout the film via the unsettled postcolonial bodies who are in a consistent exile in their own land. The latter is actualized by Bennani's employment of the exterior space as an open space that entraps Messaoud and his delinquent circle while waiting for "Godot". As a result, as he acknowledges a people who are missing, an absent identity, Bennani presents the new basis on which modern political cinema is founded, "in the world and for minorities" (Deleuze 217). On this account, the crisis of identity is substantiated by an absent image of Morocco in the postcolonial paradigm. However, it is on the basis of this absence that an image of becoming could be formed:

> Art, and especially cinematographic art, must take part in this task: not that of addressing a people, which is presupposed already there, but of contributing to the invention of a people. The moment the master, or the colonizer, proclaims 'There have never been people here', the missing people are a becoming, they invent themselves, in shanty towns

> and camps, or in ghettos, in new conditions of struggle to which a necessarily political art must contribute. (Deleuze 217)

Similarly, if Bennani acknowledges the "missing" image, it is because he lays the groundwork for a new image of presence. The film's last fixed shot, a hand's trace on a rock (see figure 3), invites us to dwell on the "sheets of past" of a collective memory overshadowed by an image of absence, and the "peaks of present" in which an image of becoming (in hybridization) is foregrounded (Deleuze 98). In consonance with Laura U. Marks, "hybrids reveal the process of exclusion by which nations and identities are formed" (251); she goes on to suggest that the hybrid filmic form "in which autobiography mediates a mixture of documentary, fiction, and experimental genres, characterizes the film production of people in transition and cultures in the process of creating Identities" (245). In other words, the "spatiotemporal disjunctions" that the third eye might produce between the verbal and the visual contribute to the authenticity of these films that use non-native parameters of perception and narration and a "hegemonic language "to speak from positions of third world (247).

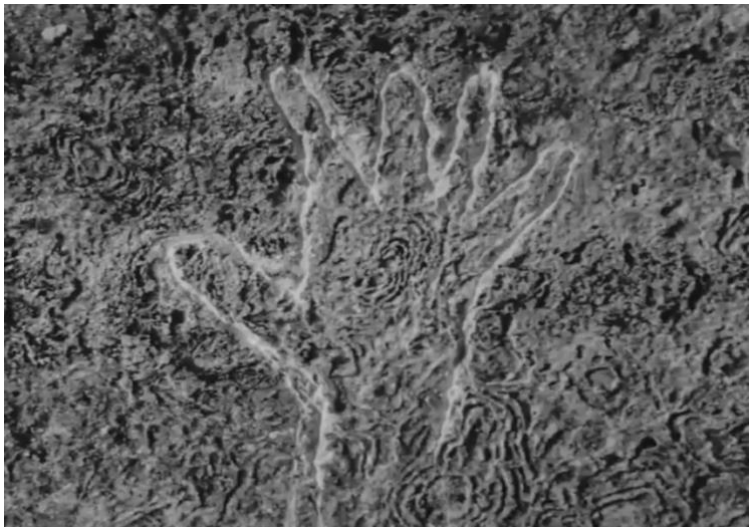

Fig. 3 The ending sequence of *Wechma*

3.2.Spatializing absence and presence

It is evident that Bennani was aware of the filmic image's synthetic capacity, which made him achieve "an intelligent use of the possibilities of the image, adequate dosage of

concepts, language and structure that flow naturally from each theme". While he characterized the crisis of identity via the perpetual displacement of the postcolonial subjectivities on screen, he spatialized their entrapment between two states, the "I" and the "I" as "Other", or between existence as unidentifiable "I", and existence as "Other". Therefore, it would be erroneous to overlook the significance of *Wechma*'s space as a mental space that unearths the unconscious layer of Moroccan identity through the postcolonial paradigm.

Similarly, Si Lmki's (Abdelkader Moutaa') small reading room, including its physical objects, spatialize and embody the postcolonials' hybridization of the self between the aforementioned two states of existence. This is actualized in the mise-en-scene of the room that coalesce simultaneously two different realms, a native realm and a Western realm. For instance, as he first explores the eclectic layout of this room, Messaoud fixates his gaze on the presence of the Christmas ornaments, and on the unfamiliar faces of foreign models whose pictures are hanged on the wall (and around the ornaments). Bewildered by the unfamiliarity of these people and objects, Messaoud's absorption in the Western realm is hindered by the presence of the father ("Symbolic order") who orders him to sit on the floor and memorize Quranic verses. Obeying the father, Messaoud focuses on his task until it is impeded by the striking bells of the clock which invite his attention again to dwell on the ornaments (see figure 4). Apparently, the mechanics of representation in this sequence, the memorization of Quran, the sound of the bells, the close-up on the Christmas ornaments create a space in which the "I" come into conflict with its own existence. Therefore, in accordance with Deleuze,

> The cinema author finds himself before a people which, from the point of view of culture, is doubly colonized: colonized by stories that have come from elsewhere, but also by their own myths become impersonal entities at the service of the colonizer. (222)

In other words, while the act of memorizing Quran could represent Moroccan children's collective memory, the interruption by the striking bells embody the infiltration of the global into the self-making of the local. Furthermore, against the figurative imagery of Christianity

exists the aniconism of Islam which is actualized in the room's floor. Made up from Moroccan mosaics, whose patterns originate from Islamic geometry embodying God's infinity, the floor represents the room as a micro limbo where the postcolonial souls are oscillating between two realms, two identities, and two drives, "Thanatos" and "Eros" (see figure 5).

Fig. 4 Close-up on the Christmas ornaments, *Wechma*

Fig. 5 The floor's mosaics with Islamic geometric art, *Wechma*

Furthermore, similar to the crisis of identity, the room exists in two states; existence as a Garden of Eden, and existence as Hell. If the former is envisaged via Messaoud's attempt to steal the pomegranate, the forbidden fruit that symbolize life, fertility, and regeneration; the latter is portrayed in using the room as a space of punishment, submission, and oppression. Thus, as

the film progresses from stealing the pomegranate “Eros” to stealing the father’s gun “Thanatos”, it injects the narrative with a pathological quality as Messaoud regresses towards an inescapable death.

Parallelly, Bennani’s experimentation with the filmic time and space realizes further the crisis of existence between the two states. Commonly, the employment of the ticking clock as an aesthetic and narrative device, either within a specific sequence or throughout the film, binds the protagonist to a specific conflict or task to be solved within a specific deadline. In *Wechma*’s case, the presence of the ticking clock inside the room underlines Messaoud’s psychic conflict with himself, the Symbolic order (the father) , and religion. On the other hand, the absence of the ticking clock in the exterior space frames the void and the timelessness in which the postcolonial subjectivities exist. Therefore, if the room represents a micro limbo which ensnares Messaoud’s soul between the two realms, two identities and two drives; the exterior space could be regarded as a macro limbo which ensnares the postcolonial bodies and souls between existence and non-existence.

On the other hand, the mise-en-scene of the adult Messaoud’s room gives an insight onto his self-making process. As opposed to Si Lmki’s reading room, Messaoud’s room represents the status quo of his unconscious via its emptiness, the broken mirror, the naked picture of a model, the empty suitcase and the gun. Evidently, where the broken mirror underlines loss, the naked woman reflects Messaoud’s desire for life while the gun actualize his desire for death. As a result, Messaoud’s adult self is determined with loss and destruction.

In short, in her analysis of Deleuze’s politics of hybrid cinema and archaeology of the image, Laura U. Marks argues that “in experimental postcolonial cinema different orders of image, or image and soundtracks that do not correspond to each other, express the disjunction between the official and private memory” (245). Put simply, with their archaeological quality, the experimental films of postcolonial cinema “confound official history, private recollection

and simple fiction, and point to the lacunae that remain, refusing to be filled by the truth of any of these" (245).

3.3. *Wechma* between the real and the reel

It has been demonstrated that Bennani's skilful experimentation with the filmic apparatus allowed him to turn the gaze of the third camera back onto itself, "bringing the perspective of a third eye to bear on the invention of the primitive other" (Rony). Borrowing neorealistic and surrealistic elements from Italian cinema, *Wechma* and realism come in proximity via the lens of a third eye where the filmmaker, the characters and the viewers become one. In his analysis of "Neorealism and Pure Cinema: Bicycle Thieves", André Bazin underscores the very principle of *Ladri di Biciclette*:

> If this supreme naturalness, the sense of events observed haphazardly as the hours roll by, is the result of an ever-present although invisible system of aesthetics, it is definitely the prior conception of the scenario which allows this to happen. Disappearance of the actor, disappearance of mise en scene? Unquestionably, but because the very principle of Ladri di Biciclette is the disappearance of a story. (58)

Arguably, absence and disappearance in narratives like *Wechma* and *Ladri di Biciclette* play a primordial role in injecting these films with a quality of truthfulness. As an important principle of neo-realism, truth becomes an engine that drives the story forward, a device that strengthens the identificatory thread between the screen and the minority spectator and a mechanism that allows for the "I" to grasp itself from within instead from outside. As mentioned in chapter one, when Morocco existed in a mode of urgent re-subjectification, *Wechma* offered a site of contemplation, not only on the dilemma of existing in the postcolonial reality, but also on the ontological ambiguity of becoming in hybridity. As a result, *Wechma*'s viewers confronted a truthfully depicted collective self which existed (first and foremost) in a mode of absence, distortion and displacement.

As both films rose from the ashes of an oppressive past, *Wechma* and *Ladri di Biciclette* share the same fate of having an aesthetic and moral energy that makes their time a Bergsonian intuition. In his examination of *Ladri*'s truthfulness, Bazin acknowledges that

> if the event is sufficient unto itself without the direction having to shed any further light on it by means of camera angles, purposely chosen camera positions. It is because it has reached that stage of perfect luminosity which makes it possible for an art to unmask a nature which in the end resembles it. That is why the impression made on us by Ladri di Biciclette is unfailingly that of truth. (57-58)

Correspondingly, *Wechma*'s "supreme naturalness" stems from its aesthetics of refusal to employ classic narrative structures and acknowledgement to experiment with a medium that suffers from the after-math of the colonial past. In other words, as Morocco's limited budget imposed challenges on the third eye, it simultaneously brought to the fore the conditions in which an image appears in its "supreme naturalness", which nurtures the truthful quality of the film and bridges the gap between the screen and the spectator (58).

Evidently, if technical limitations could result in a filmmaker's limited experimentation with the camera movement, it could simultaneously contribute to the aesthetics of the image and the narrative arc's development. In other words, *Wechma*'s abundant usage of fixed shots contextualize the film in the postcolonial paradigm with themes of entrapment, immobility and passivity. For example, the static nature of the fixed frame fuels Messaoud's immobility, the Symbolic Order's rigidity, and the mother's passivity in particular; and Moroccan identity's entrapment in general. In accordance with these conditions, Bennani's employment of non-professional actors empowers the naturalistic and the revolutionary plane of the film as it unifies the native cine-subject with himself/herself via the realism of the postcolonial subjectivities on screen. The aesthetic effects of employing non-professional actors are further explored in Bazin's ontological analysis of *Ladri*, where he argues that "with the disappearance of the concept of the actor into a transparency seemingly as natural as life itself, comes the disappearance of the set" (57). As a result, one could assume that *Wechma*'s disappearance of

an actor/set thematizes further the "missing people" image, while it unifies the postcolonial cine-eye with its quest for re-subjectification.

On the other hand, *Wechma*'s location-shooting inscribes it with an "organic description", while it extracts from real locations "pure descriptions which develop a creative and destructive function" (Deleuze 126). "Pure descriptions" are certainly foregrounded in Bennani's exterior sequences of the village's ruins, from where the adult Messaoud occasionally emerges (see figure 6), and via the film's utilization of the village's drought soil. In other words, while the ruins represent an image of remaining, incompleteness and destruction, the drought soil represent an image of infertility, the inability to flourish and regenerate.

Fig. 6 Framing Messaoud within the ruins, *Wechma*

However, Bennani's experimentation went beyond the plane of realism to explore the surrealistic realm of the image. As exemplified via the filmmaker's application of the Fellinian La Saraghina in the feminine subjectivities of *Wechma,* particularly in the sequence in which Moroccan women dance to local tunes, under the sexual gaze of Messaoud, his circle and the locals. Moreover, the Fellinian trope extends throughout the sequence, from the dancers to the mystic prostitute that the delinquent circle sexually assault in the woods. Similar to *8 ½* in which the dance "served as a delicate euphemism for love-making" (Marcus, 226), the dance in *Wechma* served as a "delicate euphemism" for fulfilling Messaoud's repressed "pleasure

principle" and the delinquent circle's sexual appetite, which will be realized in the following sequence. Moreover, while she shares several physical attributes that reminds us of the Fellinian La Saraghina (dark long hair, dark eye liner, wide hips and uncanny smile), the prostitute in the woods embodies the adults' repressed desire for "Thanatos", as she stirs their appetite while wearing an owl's mask (Owls are a powerful symbol of death).

It can be said that Bennani's experimentational quest with the filmic medium foregrounded the primacy of scarcity as a major contributor to the naturalistic and aesthetic articulation of a filmic discourse "from below". In their research on "Future Experiments from the Past: Third Cinema and Artistic Research from Below" (2019), Miguel Errazu and Alejandro Pedregal underscore the importance of scarcity for a Third Cinema practitioner:

> Scarcity was thus understood as an advantage for developing a new way of understanding film practice, as Third Cinema placed the democratisation of the means of production and the engagement with the people in the centre of its practice. Low budget and lightweight equipment, such as Super 8 and 16mm cameras and film stocks, were used despite their technical virtuosity. This approach transformed the low-res, uncertain, blurred, and often failed "poor image"—to use Steyerl's term—into the cipher and condition of possibility of a large transnational network of radical filmmaking. (45)

In addition to the aesthetics of scarcity, the film's complex experimentation with temporality saved it from falling into the materialist trap that binds the cinematic image to temporal abstractions. Because the collective memory of a third eye is affected by the historical and political intervention of a hegemonizing system whose "teleological conception of time" is capitalistic and "homogeneous" (44), re-subjectification should incorporate temporality while it reprocesses the self. For instance, Si Lmki's room coalesce the existence of two different calendars; on the wall hanged Gregorian calendars and a Western clock, while the holy book, and the natural passage of time throughout the sequences embody the lunar calendar. In other words, despite the abstracting nature of montage, the relatively longer duration of the film's static shots releases the Bergsonian intuition via the heavy passage of time in Messaoud's childhood and adulthood. Therefore, it can be said that Bennani answered the demands of a

revolutionary practice which "demanded the politics of time in Third Cinema" (45). The thematic employment of rituals, as manifested in the opening sequence when the father takes Messaoud with him to the sacred site to deliver his gratitude and ask for blessings; or anachronism, which is foregrounded in the displacement of the postcolonial subjectivities in a disjunctive present, overshadowed by a hegemonizing past, accentuate the filmmaker's practical experimentation who, while being challenged by the linearity and abstraction of a Western apparatus, delivered successfully and aesthetically non-Western concepts of time.

Thus far, this chapter has reviewed the key aspects that centralized the crisis of identity in *Wechma*. Thanks to the perceptual and ideological parameters of the filmic apparatus, a "third discourse" is finally produced. Moreover, as the lens has the agency to reverse the gaze, allowing the perceived to perceive from within, it transforms him/her from a "consumer of ideology" to a "creator of ideology" (Solanas & Getino 69). In consequence, a third eye is constituted as it rises from the ashes of "existing as Other". However, because it rose in flickering image of absence and absence, locating the "I" becomes an arduous task for a third cinema practitioner. On this account, one could assume that Bennani was aware of this dilemma; hence, he made *Wechma* with a psychoanalytic and existential lens to locate the "I" between absence and presence, and Moroccan cinema between the real and the reel.

Exploiting the archaeological qualities of the image, *Wechma* dismantled the site of perception that the colonial system created for us, in which the "I" perceives himself or herself as "Other". Therefore, despite being a fiction, *Wechma*'s facticity stems from its realistic documentation of the self within the colonial and postcolonial paradigm. On the other hand, because the formation of identity is dynamic, the "I" of yesterday is certainly not the "I" of today or the "I" of tomorrow. Correspondingly, as much as contextualizing the cinema and the mechanism of identification is important, contextualizing identity is equally significant. The latter lays the

groundwork for investigating the positioning of the "I" in Moroccan contemporary cinema as it hitherto exists in a mode of absence and presence.

4. Moroccan cinema between *Wechma* and *Sayed Almajhoul*

Celebrated for its idiosyncratic satire, absurdist fable and crafted camera work, *Sayed Almajhoul* ("The Unknown Saint") makes its world premiere at the Cannes Critics Week and its Moroccan entry for the Best International Feature Film at the 93rd Academy Awards. This co-production between Morocco, France and Qatar features the story of a thief who, after leaving jail, tries to recuperate a stolen bag of money that he buried in a deserted hill, only to find that it became a sacred site of an unknown saint. Similar to *Wechma*, Aljem's aesthetic experimentation with the medium enabled him to preserve the ambivalence of faith as something that preserves an identity and faith as something that destroys it. Apparently, the dilemma of existence keeps haunting Moroccan contemporary filmmakers who are in a constant re-discovery of the self. Perhaps this stems from the hybridization that happened to cultural identity which confuses a third cinema practitioner once he tries to employ this non-native mode of expression "from below". Yet, one could assume that Aljem managed to deliver aesthetically and surrealistically a narrative that satirically portray "the trappings of religion and the foibles of humanity while simultaneously illustrating the true power of resilience and faith from those unswayed by the more showy aspects of local custom" (Gorber).

Following the traces of *Wechma, Sayed Almajhoul* employs a deserted village in Southern Morocco as its main setting due to its dry space and abundance of stones and soil. The thematic resonance of rocks, soil and deficiency of rain, either via *Wechma* or *Sayed Almajhoul*, aestheticize these elements as they become a crucial allegory for Moroccan identity, originality, and durability. For example, while stones and soil embody a land's indigeneity and a country's history, the absence of rain symbolizes this land's struggle to endure and regenerate. For example, the imagery of rain in the ending sequence of both films is marked

with a buoyant prophecy of a fruitful future; however, it is only through giving the self that Moroccan identity can be re-born. In other words, it is only through Messaoud's death in *Wechma* and Brahim's passing in the *Sayed Almajhoul* that nature could bestow Morocco with fertility, regeneration, and re-subjectification. Therefore, preserving the thematic resonance of "absence for presence", both films underline the metamorphosis of cultural identity via the Moroccan landscape, which became an important aesthetic device for the third eye.

However, while Bennani succeeded in foregrounding the film's nationhood, via his successful contextualization of the filmic image with the colonial and postcolonial paradigm, Aljem succeeded in backgrounding the film's nationhood, via his successful attempt to transcend national boundaries, while fashioning his "narrative and aesthetic strategies" with a "Western friendly" eye ("Oxford Reference"). One the one hand, despite his attempt to centralize the characters' scarcity of dialogue to invoke absurdism and satire, the latter resulted in a pattern of "misrecognition" and a breakdown in the secondary identification for the native cine-eye. In his interview "The Cinematic Apparatus as Social Institution", Metz outlines the "danger with experimental films", in which a rupture in secondary identification could either disbalance the functioning of the primary identification or could

> raise or augment the primary identification. Secondary identification is then disappointed by the absence of characters to identify with – disappointed by the sudden breakdown of a whole part of the imaginary fulfillment. So – you have a phenomenon of disappointment, and all these forces within the spectator or filmmaker which no longer meet their secondary identification goal can reinforce primary identification. Hence, the possibility of a sort of idealistic aesthetic in certain avantgarde experiments. It's not a criticism against people who try this way of filmmaking, but I think that they have to be very aware and conscious of this problem. How is it socially possible – in our circumstances, now – to break down the secondary identification without falling in love with the apparatus itself, without reinforcing the stages of the apparatus as a fetish? It is a question of the equilibrium of forces. (191)

Accordingly, unlike *Wechma* where the disappearance of actors (including the scarce dialogue) contributes to the film's realism, revolutionary practice and unification of the spectator, the filmmaker and the characters; the scarcity of dialogue and the voicelessness of *Sayed*

Almajhoul's characters breaks the identificatory thread between the native spectator and the screen, due to the unrealistic depiction of southern Moroccans with a lens of self-othering, self-orientalism and *mauvais fois*. In their article "Globalization, creative alliance and self-Orientalism: Negotiating Japanese identity within Asics global advertising production" (2019), Koji Kobayashi, Steven J Jackson and Michael P Sam define self-orientalism as "the wilful (re-)action of non-Western individuals and institutions to 'play the Other' – that is, to use Western portrayals of the non-West – in order to strategically gain recognition and position themselves within the Western-dominated global economy, system and order" (161). Correspondingly, while it signals the bedrock of speaking "from below" for Bennani, experimentation, if not employed carefully, could invite again the hegemonizing discourse and the orientalist image, which will thrust the contemporary native filmmaker back into the pattern of "misrecognition as recognition", of perceiving from outside, and of existing as an "Other". For example, instead of using the camera as a magnifying lens for the human condition, Aljem falls into the orientalist trap in which the camera is an alienating lens that employs visual aesthetics of passivation, othering and exoticization. As mentioned in chapter one, the cinematic apparatus is inscribed with ideological mechanisms that fuels the voyeur's hegemonizing field of perception, which objectifies the perceived. However, as Bennani succeeded in turning the gaze back onto the Moroccan self with an authentic lens, Aljem turned the gaze back onto the Moroccan self with an orientalist lens that further objectified the community in particular, and orientalised the Moroccan landscape in general. Furthermore, instead of matching with the thematic resonance of absurdity and satirical existence, Aljem's utilization of symmetrical editing, depth of field and static shots staged his characters with an exotic image, as if exhibited at the "human zoo" of the zoological Jardin Acclimatation. This is evidenced in the various sequences in which the background actors are passivized

unrealistically (see figure 7), or via the pretentious and inauthentic performance of the patients at the hospital (see figure 8).

Fig. 7 The villagers rush to help the dog, *Sayed Almajhoul*

Fig. 8 Patients' reaction to seeing the doctor, *Sayed Almajhoul*

As a result, following the Sartrean reasoning, as Aljem found security in the fixed rules of orientalism, he depicted the weight of tradition with a Sartrean "bad faith", considering that "if no false representation could occur, Bad Faith could not occur" (Sartre xiii).

Despite Ajlem's "bad faith", *Sayed Almajhoul* managed to attract the global market and the platform of international film festivals. However, the sociocultural nature of these Western-based festivals impose an existential, aesthetic and cultural challenge to the third cinema practitioner who will either follow the "comforting structures" or revolt against them. Therefore, born out of a transnational co-production, the film deviated from the transnational path that is supposed to supplement the national, to a path in which the translational replaces the national. In other words, instead of experimenting with the local/national via the articulation

of a “third language” outside the hegemonic system, a language identifiable with the “third-eye” and readable for the global eye; the filmmaker experimented with the local via the application of an experimental language, constructed with Eurocentric attitudes to globalize the local inside the hegemonic system in which the depicted is orientalised by a native director. Therefore, an incautious articulation of a third discourse within the transnational paradigm problematizes the self-making process for the native director in the contemporary context.

5. Conclusion

To summarize, it has been conclusively shown that the cinema is a contextual apparatus *par excellence*. In consequence, the articulation of a third discourse, via a native lens, with an incautious experimentation, might lead to inconvenient consequences that infiltrate to the self-making of a third nation. Against this background, one could reasonably fear that the native director might become an orientalist against his own identity. Therefore, careful experimentation with the aesthetics of the image, the perceptual parameters of the apparatus and the political specificity of the cinema is fundamental. Within the Moroccan context, caution ought to be increased considering that Moroccan identity still exists with traces of the colonial past that forces it to perceive itself from outside. These traces are certainly locatable within Aljem’s transnational production *Sayed Almajhoul* and other contemporary films that fall into the orientalist trap of self-othering. Alternatively, the third eye ought to know, first and foremost, himself/herself from within and beyond the cinematic realm, then approach the apparatus with a perceptual intentionality that aims to transform the camera from a machine of othering to a machine of “selfing”. According to Deleuze, the speech-act of a third discourse ought to “create itself as a foreign language in a dominant language, precisely in order to express an impossibility of living under domination”; he goes on to suggest that “it is the real character who leaves his private condition, at the same time as the author his abstract condition,

to form, between the two, between several" the utterances of Morocco (223). Inevitably, the latter will inscribe the native eye with "good faith" instead of "baid faith", which will culminate in authentic images that foreground the humanity of the characters on screen (even if they exist in an absurdist mode), and centralize psychological realism that is responsible for mediating the characters, the landscape and the narrative with genuineness. Correspondingly, one could argue that cinematic objectivity cannot be bound to the mechanical reproduction or mediation of an object, event or character; neither can it be bound to the direct documentation of an object, event or character. Conversely, the "objective character" of the image is equally contextual and relational; in *Wechma*, it is the "virginal purity" of Messaoud's existence between absence and presence, and the realistic mediation of the crisis of identity between the self and the other. Parallelly, revolution cannot be bound to guerrilla filmmaking, nor can it be bound to using the camera as riffle. Contrarily, revolution is aestheticized in the realm of the image; in *Ladri di Biciclette* and *Wechma*, it is the scarcity of speech, the poetry of absence and presence, and the disappearance of the actors.

On these grounds, it can be said that the interlacement of the cinema and identity is a fundamental paradigm in the postcolonial theory. Using the diagnostical lens of the apparatus lays the groundwork for "cinema-as-research", which will provide new routes of anthropological and ethnographic explorations of the self and the self as "Other". Therefore dismantling the self/other dichotomy is certainly possible via the perceptual parameters of the filmic apparatus and the ideological mechanism of the cinema. As a result, situating Moroccan cinema between the I and the Other, under an academic analysis, helps us unlock the chains that restrict freedom of speech for Moroccans locally and globally. In other words, the ideological and psychoanalytic findings of these research could unveil the self-regulating patterns that Moroccans created for themselves as a result of the colonial past. While these patterns are foregrounded in the self-orientalization of a number of Moroccan filmmakers, they

are equally foreshadowed in the culture of spectatorship in contemporary Morocco. For instance, the colonial past's configuration of the Moroccan self with an image of "Othering", the domination of Hollywood narratives and Egyptian melodramas in most local theatres, the training of Moroccan filmmakers in overseas Western film schools, and the hitherto indirect regulation and censorship of the CCM by a conservative system, are all layers that contribute to the "bad faith" of a variety of filmmakers, and to the conditioning of Moroccan spectatorship to "a world peopled with fantasies and phantoms in which what is hideous is clothed in beauty, while beauty is disguised as hideous" (Solanas & Getino 6).

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