

The Occidentalization of the Moroccan Cultural Status Quo between Negation and Negotiation in the Film of 'Asifa Abi'

Kawtar Ettour*

University of Sultan Moulay Slimane, Flsh beni mellal

Corresponding Author: Kawtar Ettour (University of Sultan Moulay Slimane, Flsh beni mellal)

Article History: Received: 12/07/2025; Accepted: 24/10/2025; Published: 01/11/2025

Abstract: It's commonly argued that the Moroccan culture is a huge conceptual and performative gamut that epitomizes a set of specific living conditions along with the way of epiphanizing and regulating their minutiae to the constant needs of the Moroccan being. It's a medium through which the individual assimilates, interprets and practicalizes a routine that adapts to the normative codes of their societal engagement, political mechanization, geographical distribution and economic investment. That's why each culture is distinguished by a sui generis quiddity that inherently depends on how individuals build up consistent convictions and aspirations vis-à-vis the socio-cultural milieu to which they belong. In fact, the interpretation of a particular culture can be mediated and mediatized by different platforms through which we extract different anthropological and epistemological means of difference, diversity and to some extent differentiation or différenciation. For instance, one of the major tenets which are highly evident and critical for such promotion is the films. Each film is considered as an imaginative and to some extent realistic gambit that illustrates the evidence of a specific human cause either in its objective, subjective or neutral means. This perspective is insistently approximated by the Moroccan film of 'Asifa Abi' where we relate to the causes, circumstances and ramifications of a culture shock between the Moroccan traditional heritage and the French modernist lifestyle. The film exposes it as modernist more than modern due to its implicit theoretical approach of different make-beliefs which can be exposed as the grand-narratives of the contemporary world. It brings us to trace a non-mimetic perustration where the film-maker designs a comparative study between two modes of living, and thus relating their mechanical materialism and evolutionary paradigms to the audience's speculation, reflexivity and introspection. Then, this paper is an in-between engagement that deepens the deconstruction of culture as a huge liminal space where structural and ideological barricades are mainly meant to join and overlap rather than blur and fix to perustrate the personal and socio-political criteria through which the human nature substitutes their epiphany and sensibility vis-à-vis the cosmological tendency of their ongoing life.

Keywords: Occidentalization, Culture Shock, Liminality, Disparity, Generation Gap.

Cite this article: Ettour, K. (2025). The Occidentalization of the Moroccan Cultural Status Quo between Negation and Negotiation in the Film of 'Asifa Abi'. *MRS Journal of Arts, Humanities and Literature*, 2 (11)1-5.

Introduction

No one can abnegate that each film is a simulacrum of a set of ideologies either inter-reflexive or contradictory, regarding the vision of the film-maker in terms of sequentiality and thematicity of scenes. In fact, each film is a spatial medium through which the strategies of exclusion and inclusion, as well as particularism and universalism are investigated from a direct, indirect or allegorical approximation. This what marks the decisiveness of the film-maker in terms of tracing the heimlich and sophisticated expectations of the script-writer. For instance, the film of 'Asifa Abi' traces manifold paths through which the audience draws a metaleptic reflexivity with the script-writer and the film-maker in terms of how the exposed themes can extend a realm of distanciation to the introspective, vicarious, cohesive and aporetic in one's soul and sensibility. Reaching the audience's sensibility and epiphany is what peculiarizes the thematic and constructivist entity of each film. It's mechanized by a progressivist degree of capturing the audience's attention to what is unreadable, unknowable and esoteric for them. The film of 'Asia Abi' is a bilateral compendium

of human thinking and lived actions that promote a socio-political production which transcends physicality to morality, and geography to sociology. The film exploits the problem of culturalization by deconstructing the existential and non-evident hyper-reality which bifurcates the world into a West and a rest. It's a constant interrogation of a past and present social space which are affected by political conflicts, geographical distributions, cultural orientations, economic development and so on of such structural criteria that specify their attitudinal, aesthetic and practical characteristics. At this point, we confront the dilemma of the protagonist-family in switching, substituting and adapting to another status quo, regarding its cultural dynamicity and non-connective complexity with the old habitual one. It's an extension of a discursive and multi-dimensional dialect over history, as it scrutinizes two nations with a colonized and a colonizing past, constantly questing for monolithic and elitist conventionality. Then, this paper will thematize different inter-reflexive issues which are complementary in their theoretical approximation of postcolonial, postmodern and cultural criticism.

The Contextual Background of the Film

This film explicitizes the fluctuating story of a pseudo-Moroccan family where the father holds pure Moroccan origins and the mother relates to an utter French background. Taking these two different socio-cultural origins, we progressively confront two modes of thinking that create a kind of dispersal at the level of education, behavioral orientation and societal adaptability for children. In fact, the story highly focuses on children's reactions at home, at school, and even in their societal exchange to evidence how the diversity of cultures can turn out into a vicious circle of discursive ordering and production for those who submit to such ideological and performative shift. Moreover, this brings the audience to interrogate whether the family members are really capable of bypassing their intuitive subjectivity vis-à-vis the Moroccan culture and accepting its cultural status quo with a liminal attitude or not.

The Clash of Cultures between Negation and Negotiation: Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences as Anthropological Subjects and Epistemological Objects

It's commonly argued that the revisionist discourse of the critical theory rests on cultural difference more than diversity. It's cultural difference that brings culture to enunciate itself as an object of empirical knowledge more than an epistemological one, regarding its potency for being knowledgeable and authoritative in constructing a systemic identification for whatever nation or region. This point is highly illustrated in this film where the film-maker focuses on the Moroccan and French culture as processes of signification rather than comparative categories of ethics and aesthetics to mechanize them as fields of production in terms of force, referentiality and applicability: "Too frequently we think of identities as cultural matters, when in fact some of the most dynamic (transnational) identities are created in the realm of politics, in the way people of African descent sought alliances and political identifications across oceans and national boundaries" (Laura Chrisman, 4). This film thematizes the importance of deconstructing the challenges and jeopardies of multiculturalism, cultural exchange and the humanitarian culture by addressing the relativism of two competitive and non-complementary cultural contents which are recognized as simultaneously pre-given and continual in progress. This point is illustrated by the presence of two females (the grand-mother and Evelyn) who adumbrate two dichotomous and critical perspectives in terms of systemizing their acculturation and identitarian localization. The grand-mother sticks to the old and firm rulings of wearing hijab, dressing in a conservative mode, eating traditional home-made recipes and so on of such behavioral codes that keep her in constant reflexivity with a fixed, subtle and restricted cultural status quo. On the other hand, we recognize Evelyn who embodies a modern clothing style that seems practical with her effervescent lifestyle in terms of going out with her friends or children, doing regular farm-work, addressing to public services, and so on of such productive actions. In fact, this controversy is meant to create a liminal space of negotiation between cultural difference and cultural diversity. This idea of liminality is explicitly traced from the film's title that allegorically appeals to negotiation and intermediary exchange from the essence of forgiveness. The film treats the singularity of the Moroccan and French culture by disregarding the subtlety of their totalitarian and utopian attitudes, and thus negotiating an anodyne liberal intertextuality that forges an in-between collective identity without mythic and mimetic memories: "The word

'culture' was at first synonymous with 'civilisation', and continued for some time to be so; but it came eventually to signify a set of values that threw civilisation into question. Robert J.C. Young remarks on 'the startling fact that the notion of culture developed so that it was both synonymous with the mainstream of Western civilisation and antithetical to it. It was both civilisation and the critique of civilisation' (Terry Eagleton, 11). Moreover, the film sheds light on some cultural signs which implicitly perustrate and subvert the anthropological means of the erstwhile historicized imperialist accounts. This point is illustrated by how the present farm-worker takes into consideration the orders and commands of Evelyn more than the grand-mother, deeming this latter as an old woman who acts and reacts randomly and discursively without dialogical fixity and behavioral regularity. This contradictory interpretation is neocolonial in its material vibration, as it appeals to how the European colonizer has been always prioritized in their verbal and non-verbal attitudes vis-à-vis the presence of the colonized either male or female. All of the previously mentioned ideas lead us to interrogate the lost territories and signficatory boundaries of each culture to deflect from misreading their signs and misappropriating their values. The concept of liberation that is constantly declared by the daughter 'Nadia' is a provocation of what Fanon argues as the time of uncertainty and representational undecidability. This is utterly witnessed by how she keeps accusing her parents of turning back to Morocco and depriving her of the ideality of liberty, looking for going out at late times, disrespecting the sublimity of her dwelling by trying to turn it into a pseudo-disco and so on of such critical, discursive and unbalanced acts. Then, the film-maker brings us to stop at the issue of cultural difference as an occult instability that requires a dialectical re-organization of each cultural identity as an intelligent principle of artistic nationalism. Each culture holds a mode of authoritative representation that problematizes the bifurcation of past and present levels of contextualization into what is ubiquitously advocated as the hiatus between tradition and modernity. Delving deeper into this issue, we will figure out how imperialism remains a historical agenda and political code that machinates the eternity of human's epiphany, sensibility and intra-reflexivity with their material and immaterial surroundings. This progressively entangles humanity within the viciousness of subliminal neocolonialism and attitudinal conformity. There is a real problem in terms of signification, especially when addressing the past as a mode of repetition, relocation and translation in the guise of tradition. This immediately leads to a kind of unfaithfulness towards historical and cultural memories, and thus deregulating the present authority in a model of archaic artifice. This issue seems crystal clear in undermining the homogenizing effects and implications of the Moroccan culture to disorient its codes and symbols from their anodyne nature. This point is instanced by how the protagonist, Ibrahim, keeps claiming to his mother, El Hajja, that time has changed in a modernist tone that appeals to more acceptance of differences and diversities. All of these statements appeal to what Fanon addresses as the occult instability in which people dwell for articulating their cultural identity. This instability is highly illustrated by children's behavior who keep accusing their surroundings of an extremist thinking that refuses their cognitive and emotive assimilation of life's minutiae. Moreover, Fanon considers that the epistemological means of culture suggest its political dynamicity as an eternal struggle that provokes the consistency of whatever definite national principles. Taking this issue from its deepest zone, we will realize that the problem resides in addressing the historically imperialistic cultures as politically

totalitarian and aesthetically positivist in declaring their intuitive appetency for criticizing and reprimanding the previously colonized cultures. This idea remains esoteric and quite challenging for recognizing the formerly colonized cultures as potent systems for individual and non-individualist identification in the global contemporary world. That's why we notice that the film-maker asks the audience for welcoming each culture without putting it within the viciousness of calculation, instrumentality and systematicity. This is extended by the historical divisionist factor that anthropologically proves that no culture is unitary in itself as there is always a subliminal and urgent need for complementarity with other cultural models. This perspective is explicitized by how Evelyn suggests the possibility of mediatory exchange with the grand-mother for regulating and specifying the educational mantras that children should abide to. Then, cultures are not necessarily dualistic when engaging with the Other's epistemological means of difference. Bernard Williams appeals to a relativism of distance that exigently provokes the existence of a humanistic nostrum where the culture of mankind reigns and bypasses all individualist attitudinal tones. Moreover, there is an ethical relativism that externalizes each culture's capacity by putting one oneself into the Other's position for realizing how they epiphanize their performativity as decisions, actions and reactions. Metaphorically, each culture writes its own model and enunciates its own meaning where the place of utterance is crossed by the exigencies of varying attitudes, cultural symbols and structural representations. This latter issue can also be interpreted from the spatial change which affects the societal one in terms of commitment to what is accepted and what is not. This film draws a spatial change from Paris to the Moroccan countryside in a rural village that preserves the traditional apodictic beliefs of the autochthonous ancestry. Too many anthropologists argue that cultural difference is engendered by how symbolization is structured, as it affects the production of linguistic meaning which can never be utterly transparent or mimetic.

The Clash of Cultures from a Postcolonial Theoretical Approximation: Imperialism as the Harbinger of Cultural Manichaeism:

It's commonly proved that the colonialist artistry in its verbal and non-verbal models suggests a representation of a world at the boundaries of civilization, the one that emerges within the ideology of European signification and codification. This domesticated world is pejoratively delineated as the critical zone of the universe in its unattainable, chaotic and uncontrollable drives in conceptualization and praxis: "this contradictory role of imperialism which simultaneously unifies the world, in the form of global channels of circulation, and distributes it into structures of global coercion and domination" (Aijaz Ahmad, 45). This portrayal turns out to be identitarian more than descriptive for extending a Manichaeistic appropriation of the world and substituting the differences in race, language, social customs and cultural values into consumptive and productive criteria. These criteria blindly legitimize the conquest and domination of the pretendingly frail regions in terms of societal stability, economic growth, industrial expansion and so on of such developing factors that affect the historico-political entity of a specific country. This problem faces the colonized Other with an incomprehensible and multifaceted alterity as it theoretically extends the interrogation of the anthropological and epistemological means of identity and difference. It's illustrated by how the Self expects the Other to be the same, ignoring their cultural values and significant divergences.

In this film, we notice that the daughter expects everyone to hold the same mentality as hers, disregarding their aspersions and animadversions in futile and prejudicial terms. At school, she alienates herself from exchanging with her classmates, as they intensively refuse her clothing style, rigid attachment to the French language and so on of such individualist choices. Regarding the Other's difference as an irremediable challenge is what propels her to aggressively defend and secure her cultural perspective. That's why the film-maker suggests the possibility of a genuine and thorough comprehension of Otherness if the Self can somehow negotiate or bracket their proper ideologies, assumptions and values. If we compare the reactions of Evelyn and Nadia, we will notice that that the first one looks more for cultural negotiation in terms of progressively adapting to the rural traditional codes of the Moroccan country, and thus struggling to produce an effective exchange with the different farm-owners and workers. However, Nadia sticks firmly to the French cultural codes in epiphany and performativity, tracing a full conviction of its deliberate and linear evolution in all vital and significant paradigms of daily life. This is addressed by how she subjectively treats the farm-workers, regarding them an epitome of lackadaisicalness and philistinism. All of these identitarian and behavioral intricacies address the ideology of Nadine Gordimer and Isak Denisen in their writings where they utterly claim that one can not negate their culture as it is the backbone that forms their being. They are inter-reflexive points that determine the identity of each being as a mind and spirit. This orients towards how the colonizers engage in a vicarious moral superiority that bases societal formation and configuration of how the colonized should always be regarded as an embodiment of worthless and non-energetic alterity. That's why the contemporary theory seeks endlessly to transgress the traditional dialectic of Self and Other that limits the formation of the Self's cultural identity more than the Other. This is fully transmitted by how Nadia bombastically and blindly believes in her moral and intellectual superiority vis-à-vis the present persons at school and the farmland. It simplistically de-neutralizes her exchange into an explicit finitude of ethnocentric assumptions, codified cognitive structures and reserved mentality. That's why the film-maker insists on extending a set of specific encounters with the racial Other in terms of the grand-mother's exchange with Evelyn that radically shifts from negation to negotiation. This point is demonstrated by how the grandmother doesn't accept the betrayal of her son to Evelyn, refusing any alternative of divorce and accusing him of such misdeed. At this point, the film-maker intentionally proves how the former colonized can be more assertive, maverick and determined in bypassing the hierarchical and patriarchal stereotypes by which the imperialist regime has defended itself throughout history. It's an explicit denial of the commonly accepted abuse of history and the normalized social interactions in it. It's an artistic oeuvre that appears realistically antagonistic to the prevailing tendencies of the ongoing generated realism. This realism exemplifies disparity in its Manichaeistic exigencies which refuse any syncretic cultural possibility that can raise an ideological consciousness that will unify time and the world into an uninterrupted movement and unconcluded process towards a real future: "but since the colonialist wants to maintain his privileges by preserving the status quo, his representation of the world contains neither a sense of historical becoming, nor a concrete vision of a future different from the present, nor a teleology other than the infinitely postponed process of 'civilizing'. In short, it does not contain any syncretic cultural possibility, which alone would open up the historic once more..." (Ashcroft,

Griffiths, Tiffin, 22). At another dimension, the film-maker switches from what is imaginary to what is symbolic in approaching a syncretic possibility between the Self and the Other, precisely in the name of the grand-mother and Evelyn who progressively essentialize a great awareness of their potential identities in negotiating their socio-politico-cultural differences. The main aim is to free both characters from basing their self-understanding on the classification systems of their cultures. This point appeals to Forster's *A Passage to India* where he allows his apodictic values to appraise the Other's alterity in the process of his social formation. In fact, the same idea is illustrated in Kipling's *Kim*. These two literary works mediate a liminal exchange with the otherness of the Other, disregarding all barriers of racial, ethnic and hierarchical differences. We can also relate to the film of 'Asdiqae min Canada' where we explicitly realize this negotiation between Louise and Sanae's family. All these previously mentioned artistic oeuvres try to decode their constructive mechanisms from the machinery of the Manichean allegory. It's a matter of forging an exchange between history (imperial ideology) and art (cinema and literature) from a non-unidirectional facet to determine how can revolution against cognitive constancy and attitudinal submission be simplistically motivated by a me-urge which suggests and motivates the reader's or audience's critical spirit: "seek to take their place, forcibly or otherwise, as historical agents in an increasingly globalized world" (Elleke Boehmer, 3). They justify the postcolonial vision and position by deconstructing the putative military superiority of the imperialist enterprise, and thus its systemic grandeurs. Furthermore, the film is textually and performatively a theoretical justification of the postcolonial cause in its actual and active practice against the nagging manipulation of the Other's difference. The moral superiority by which the imperialist regime is encapsulated, is fully driven by an affective pleasure which fortifies the material profit that the colonial project aspires for extending vis-à-vis a set of stereotypes, calculations, prejudices and effacements: "by allowing the European to denigrate the native in a variety of ways, by permitting an obsessive, fetishistic representation of the native's moral inferiority, the allegory also enables the European to increase, by contrast, the store of his own moral superiority; it allows him to accumulate surplus morality, which is further invested in the denigration of the native, in a self-sustaining cycle" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 23). Then, the disparity between the characters' ideological interpretation of both Moroccan and French culture is key to demonstrating how the inferiority of the native is a metaphysical fact which promotes a superficial and superlative pleasure for the colonizer. The native is fully epitomized by the presence of the grand-mother who symbolizes sagacity, compassion and peacefulness in the Moroccan conservative and modernist culture. Her presence switches from a neo-colonial to a postcolonial mediation of cultural syncretism as an innovative decision more than a systemic tradition. This corollary is the ideational backbone of Third World artists.

Cultural Syncretism from a Postmodern Perspective: Towards the Politics of the Possible

It's commonly argued that postmodern thinking is an explicit refusal of turning the Other into the Same. This provides a theoretical space where the Self and the Other can never be fully original or uncontentious. Even if the 'post' in both postcolonialism and postmodernism is a space-clearing gesture, but the postmodern thought emphasizes the postcolonial condition hasn't yet reached its completeness. This point can be illustrated by how all aspects of

contemporary African culture including films, music, literature and painting are still influenced by the transition of African societies through the imperialist systematicity. This means that they cannot fully declare that they have transcended or gone beyond coloniality. This means that the popular culture which is promoted in the contemporary world, especially in the previously colonized countries is still attached by the borrowings of an international cultural platform that is essentially neocolonial. Then, the postmodern thought is interested in perustrating this internationalization of the cultural market and the commodification of the art-works to a specific regulation which is neocolonial in its ambit and praxis. The aim is to promote an exclusivity of vision through which the antecedent practices are put into question more than rejected. This point is mediated by the presence of the son 'Redouane' who welcomes the possibility of an international exchange of commodities without objectifying the verbal dynamic processes of neocolonialism. That's why postmodernism always puts into question 'the post' of postcolonialism, regarding whether it appeals to a space-clearing gesture or not. Postmodernism considers that humanism is provisional, contingent and anti-essentialist in its demanding prospects. Moreover, Postmodernism exposes a theoretical dynamicity where there is a powerful engagement with deflecting from cruelty and pain without neglecting the contingency of such demand. This point seems the mediating force behind the postmodern thinking in its deconstruction of the neo-conservative in which all artistic endeavors are still engaged. The main lesson that the film approaches from a postmodern dimension is that the broad shape of cultures' circulation is surely impacted by how we are contaminated by each other. This means that the postmodern thinking insists on realizing that there is no pure autochthonous culture that awaits salvage by our commonly creative artists either in literature or filmic representation. At the same, the taxonomy between the Self and the Other is considered a modernist shibboleth from we can extract an urgent call for negotiation instead of negation or bifurcation. What unifies postmodern and postcolonial approximations in this film is that they concomitantly look for transgressing the marginalization which is provoked by the ex-centricity of the European nations in face of the Arab ones. The choice of a family that migrates from France to Morocco and not the opposite is not exploited randomly, but it aims to decentralize the commonly accepted hegemonic forces which put too much focus on the colonizing nations as the main supportive source of financial growth and social stability. In this case, the family looks for its humanistic and ethical backbone by attaching to the minutiae of the Moroccan social life. It's a matter of privileging the margin without fully centralizing it. It's an open door towards the magic realism of abnegated and neglected regions for explicitizing how this film is considered as a postmodern art that contests the radical claims of universality in terms of centralizing and de-centralizing spaces.

Conclusion

To sum up, this film extends the normative codes of a cinematic representation into what is theoretically readable as a text with a deconstructionist tone and a subversive agenda. The aim is to look for a terrain of negotiation from which emanates the dialogical exchange of two cultures that unify under the scope of educating children and preserving their social stability by disregarding all political pre-references. Moreover, this artistic piece transgresses what Simon During claims about postcolonialism as the exposure of previously colonized nations'

need to achieve an authentic identity that is uncontaminated by the ruins and exigencies of the universalist Eurocentric concepts. This film mediates the force of the ex-colonized in creating stability as the family allegorically and metonymically exemplifies the large society in the name of the grand-mother and the Moroccan nation. This exploits how the film-maker looks for aestheticizing politics rather than politicizing aesthetics to show up that ex-contamination is a stratagem through which former differences have been brought into contact.

References

1. Ahmad, Aijaz. *In Theory*. Verso, 1992.
2. Ashcroft, Bill, et al. *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*. Routledge, 1995.
3. Boehmer, Elleke. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*. Oxford University Press, 2005.
4. Chrisman, Laura. *Postcolonial Contraventions: Cultural Readings of Race, Imperialism and Transnationalism*. Manchester University Press, 2003.
5. Eagleton, Terry. *The Idea of Culture*. Blackwell Publishers, 2000.