

## On How Certain Films and Songs Contain Otherness

**Chadi Chahdi**

Communication & Cultural Studies  
Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra, Morocco  
Corresponding Author: [chaahdi@gmail.com](mailto:chaahdi@gmail.com)

**Jamal Akabli**

King Fahd School of Translation in Tangier  
Abdelmalek Essaadi University, Tetouan, Morocco

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### Abstract

This article comes as a sort of voyage in the sense that it tries to go beyond the simple definitions that pin video clips down to being a mere form of entertainment and a mode of commercialization and instead shows them to be part and parcel of a well-established concourse of texts which repeat themselves with a difference. The study is thus an exploratory odyssey in the quest for the insinuations, intimations and nuances which impregnate a host of video clips made in and presumably about Morocco by a myriad of American and European artists whose works, considered in entirety, give way to what Barthes labels as the mythical, a phraseology studded with the stereotypical, which is no less insidious than the myth with its grand narratives as encapsulated in film or prose. Based on a qualitative approach, *Babel*, *Marrakech Express*, and *Sex and the City* are the three film samples we will set out to explore in juxtaposition with several singles: *Do it Again* by The Chemical Brothers, *The World I Know* by Collective Soul, *Yalla* by Inna, *Marrakesh Express* by Nash, Crosby, and Stills, *Misere Mani* by Era, and *Nothing to Fear* by Chris Rea.

*Keywords:* Films, songs, otherness, Video clips, Orientalism, *Babel*, *Marrakech Express*, *Sex and the City*, Music

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## Introduction

Far from being merely affiliative, part of the homogeneous and homogenizing tradition, music may be affiliative insofar as it reproduces and hence perpetuates hegemonic relations. Such hegemonic discourse is accentuated, fostered, and propagated through artists, writers, travelers, and politicians, resulting in the misrepresentation of many a nation. Then we must here be prepared to accept that the representation fixed to this music, or that video clip, is “implicated, intertwined, embedded, interwoven with a great many things besides the “truth”, which is itself a representation” (Said, *Orientalism*, 1978, p. 272). Then, Music and cinema function as means through which Orientalism is perpetuated. In this context, we are inviting our readers to “listen, really listen to music”, and watch (out) for that matter, to “recognize moments that give us a little start, a shiver down the spine, a “frisson” of surprise. It could be a chord change or a harmony or a turn in the melody” (Mannes, 2011, p. 57). However, suppose one is content with listening out and chewing the cud as it were. In that case, one is bound to perpetuate the anachronistic view that holds the auditor to be a sheer passive consumer at the receiving end of meaning created a priori by the singer as both performer and interpreter.

As we shall see, one could plausibly contend that both films and video clips feed on each other, spring from the same DNA, and mould the Other in the formulaic terms Hollywood dictates. Ideologies governing filmic productions come to govern the production of musical clips as well. “By looking at the different experiences contrapuntally, as making up a set of what” Said calls in his way “intertwined and overlapping histories” (Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 1994, p. 18), one is sure to disinter the buried, expose truisms, and subvert overt and covert stereotypes. What lends music its power to solidify and bolster, distil and instil, the same old redolent and, at times, redundant, clichés pervading Hollywood-made films, is that it occupies the very subliminal space which passes by uncritiqued, the space wherein the adrenalin rush is so high as to discard the critical mind for other senses to take over. Our defense mechanisms are loosened, and thus the subterfuge works its way up and down uncontested.

## Literature Review:

To understand Orientalism in relation to cinematic representations and misrepresentations, it is only pertinent to recuperate and retrieve images/imagery of Arabs and Muslims as they were circulated in the 19th and 20th century, precisely during colonisation, which was cloaked as a civilising mission. Artists such as Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps, Eugène Delacroix, and Jean-Leon Gerome have left a considerable legacy in which North Africans and Middle Easterners were subjects/objects for and “projects of their imagination, a fantasy space or screen onto which strong desires - erotic, sadistic, or both - could be projected with impunity” (Nochlin, 1989, p. 49). The list of those who dedicated their paintings to the Orient cannot be undervalued, nor can it be exhausted. French Orientalist paintings were also a form of accomplishment among artists of the 19th and 20th centuries, a practice that was also supported by the French state apparatus. Therefore, this artistic practice had been in operation since then as a significant circuit of propaganda and bulwark for the French colonisation of the Maghreb and other colonies around the world. During this era, the Oriental was painted over and over on canvas as the peculiar other who did not in the least look like the painters themselves and thereafter was represented as an object in one of the French *salon des arts* to be debated and reflected upon.

Tracing and reviewing how through a system of intertextuality, Orientalist cinematic representations extend from and feed on the fantasy space projected in the 19th and 20th century's paintings, be they oil on canvas or mere sketches, or simply literary texts of the same period or before. It is significant to highlight that after the age of romantic and realistic painting, and especially after the development of the camera obscura to its earlier successful fixed images, the fascination with and intimidation of the Orient was a recursive theme during these developments. Photography, for instance, carried on the assumption of (s)exposing the harem to its spectators through what Malek Alloula (1986) calls "the figural representation of the forbidden" (p.14). Alloula's analysis of a collection of colonial postcards of Algerian women and couples denudes the photographer's voyeuristic complexities ("scopic desires") which he could partially yet discontentedly trespass only via the (mis)construction of a replacement of the veiled woman. With the availability of photography, the Orient is brought alive once again on fixed images and postcards, presented to and sold on a large scale to the western consumer. The availability of these photographs and postcards has changed the scale of accessibility to the fantasy land of the Orient to include more viewers besides the elites of Western societies, pushing for more production to meet the rising demand of the market.

However, with the arrival of the moving images, the scale and influence have changed drastically, reaching a broader viewership than any time in the past. Orientalist visual representations of the MENA expanded and developed to be impressively lively in motion pictures, first brought to life in the Lumiere Brothers initial screenings of the Maghrib and the Middle East. Cinema after that played a significant role on the Western colonial map. Orlando (2011) remarks how

many [cameramen] traversed the well-established colonial empire and filmed the environments of exotic others across Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, sending the film stock back home to eager audiences. These early films fuelled colonial desire and were a pivotal mechanism in sustaining the empire. In 1896, when the first Lumiere productions were screened in Lyon, "les chasseurs d'image" (Image Hunters) were enlisted into Auguste and Louis Lumiere's legions to document the wonders of the Maghrebian empire on camera. (p. 8)

Orlando takes the debate way back to some of the first directors, the Lumières, who were celebrated everywhere for being among the first ones who brought cinema to life, and with it, they brought their Oriental version on the pictures. The brothers, Orlando tells us, were first to send their cameras to the French colonies around the world to capture the exotic and the fantastic in their shots.

Now that the eye of the camera turns into the eye through which seeing is enabled, yielding a oneness induces a singularity and homogenisation of point-of-view, a simulacrum effect, to put it a la Barthes. However, the ears, another organ, are so deafened by the organised and, at times, frenetic rhythms the only sound they make out is that which the instruments dispense to the detriment of meaning. Even when the mouth mumbles, murmurs, whistles, and hams along with the singers, it seems as though the auditors were swaying under the spell of sounds, screams, chants and so forth. Tunes carrying words and tropes alone scarcely suffice to do the songs full justice

and are thus hammered in with accompanying images of *déjà-vu*, reflective of the meaning of the words being sung and reminiscent of moments captured by filmmakers. The images being reproduced reinforce the utterances being made by furnishing the singers with ocular evidence drawn from cinematic portrayals, which catapult the viewer back in time into fantasised wonderlands privy to the filmmaker and the singer, a space they alone can access and make accessible. Only through identifying with the singers will the audience time travel, freeze time, and in short vicariously live the experiences of ex-colonialists. Strangely enough, “we suddenly find ourselves transported backward in time to the late nineteenth century” (Said, 1978, p. 10) in a time warp.

In a rejoinder to this dichotomy, Barthes contends that the active task of composing meaning is thus delegated to the singer. In contrast, the audience stands as amateur listening to music “without being able to play” (Barthes, 1977, p. 163), hence the urgency of this paradigmatic shift in focus from the exhaustive study of film to filling up this deficit in taking issue with video clips as texts/textures/textile in their own right, texts that beg to be dissected and disambiguated in the very context into which they came to be. Thus, we are to depart from the well-beaten path of reception and consumption to the less travelled and traversed the path of apprehension and comprehension. This is done with the aim in mind of spasmodically shaking and seismically convulsing the reader and auditor so that a better appreciation of, if not a dissociation from, works of art, which supposedly soothe, lull and enchant, disenfranchise and disenchant, could take lieu. In this respect, it is only pertinent to dust off the presumably inoffensive accoutrement music enrobes to unravel the common threads the spinning of which creates a discourse that often goes unquestioned and unchallenged.

### **Analysis: How Songs Contain Otherness**

To start with, what comes across as just another video clip featuring Moroccan villagers or city-dwellers is in fact an exercise of power. “Do it Again” is the title The Chemical Brothers chose for their song. The ‘it’ in the title points outside the lyrics. What appears to be being done for a second time is the act of representing the very village Babel, an American movie, has already misrepresented. As a matter of fact, both the film and the video clip use the same Moroccan village, Taguenzalt, for their backdrop. Hence, while watching the video clip, flashbacks of the movie come rushing back like a deluge. What stands out in both film and video clip is that markers such as dilapidated mud-built houses, claustrophobic shops, primitive tools, squalid and unpaved streets, herds of goats, barren rocky mountains, lanterns, and the white Mercedes taxis are being revisited, reiterated, and reconfirmed by the makers of the video clip, the sovereign subjects who allot meaning to a naturally and inherently brawling and quarrelsome people.

Above all else, the two brothers, who in Babel almost shoot an American tourist dead, are here recast wearing the same tattered clothes in the manner of cave people, which blend perfectly well with the background. These natural-born snipers have here become thieves. The rifle is synecdochically replaced with a cassette which, upon being played, sets in motion a whole train of events which can only take lieu in this locus then and know. Caught under its enchanting effect, the duo dance like robots. Everyone colludes to make their bank job an easy job, starting with the transporter in his typical pick-up and ending with the bankers, who despite themselves, connive with the children against the very institution for which they work. In a way, they bite the hand that

feeds them, but their only redemption lies in the fact that the music is way too powerful to entrance them.

The title may then be interpreted in this light as suggestive of the lengths and breadths these guilt-ridden, far from innocent kids can go to unwary of consequences. Michael Haussman, the video clip director, may be said to have done it again a la Babylonian in what one may describe as an intertextual instantiation and substantiation of an oft-repeated discourse that holds the natives to be backward, prone to committing murder, pillaging and marauding in an endless tirade of accusatory and frontal onslaughts. Haussman must have watched Babel time and again, for the resemblances are so numerous and striking one ought to call a spade a spade. Said posits that the Orient being invented “had been since antiquity ‘a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences’” (Orientalism, 1978, p. 9). In other words, by depicting the kids as such, the director obfuscates his own act of stealth, plagiarism, and mythical reification, of the hangover the haunting memory of Babel spurs.

The only change that the video-clip director effected is that of effortlessly and maliciously substituting the rifle with a cassette, but the cassette, as it turns out, is a far more lethal than the weapon Alejandro Inarritu gives the juvenile shepherds in Babel. Very much in the vein of the movie, the kids sing out that all they wanted was to have a little fun. Fun in this part of the world is tantamount to either shooting or stealing. The wrongdoer admits that his brain is like bubble gum blowing up his cranium. This admission, coming from a child, testifies to the stupidity/naivety of these children who are shepherding goats on these barren Rocky Mountains instead of attending school. The same conclusion is true for Babel. Goats and humans, humans and goats are seen in proximity even inside the house, so one cannot tell which is who and who is what. His all insane may be read as applying to all the people on the video whose dance moves show them to be high, something the evocation of drugs insinuates.

Going high and to high places is the very condition Collective Soul, an American band, gives way. It is no surprise that the album was entitled Music in High Places. During their four-day trip to Morocco, the band walked in the footsteps of other musicians and film directors who might be said to have mapped the itinerary, the trajectory, for these rockers to retrace. Their journey into exoticism begins with “The World I Know”, a song set in Jamaa Lfna square. The duo sings while Moroccans can be seen in the background. Young people stand still and transfixed like the many tableaux on the red wall behind the singers. They seem oblivious of the passing of time, which is of little, if any, consequence in this part of the world.

As the singers pitch up their tune, one can spot some locals taking glances over the shoulders of the singers; some are riding their motorcycles while others are carrying trays on their heads. An old couple clad in jellabas make their confounding appearance in that one cannot tell the man from the woman in a reminder of one of Matisse’s most famous paintings, *The Riffian*. It appears this couple has sprung up to life from one of the tableaux upon hearing the music. Then, the camera zooms away from the duo and on an elderly man pulling his donkey and cart, and seconds later another riding his cart, then come the women all jellaba-clad. While no woman stops to listen to the musician, two little schoolgirls do. As the music reaches its crescendo and “love is gathering”, the crowd begins to gather in a circle. One boy begins to nod and shake his head in

response to the beat. This pastiche the director brings together interweaves and intermeshes with images already brought home by Hollywood-film scouts. The square itself features abundantly in Gillies MacKinnon's Marrakech Express and in Michael Patrick King's *Sex and the City*, two movies worth investigating.

Drawing on what has been said and to buttress the argument, we deem it only necessary to evoke two more filmic productions pertinent to our current enterprise, namely *Sex and the City* and *Marrakech Express*, an adaptation of a book entitled *Hideous Kinky*. What makes *Sex and the City* a pertinent example to dwell on is that some of its scenes shot in the ochre city seem to overlap with some music videos made there. As is demonstrated, the film deictically points to other songs and films and is in and of itself an inspiration to other singers to follow suit. For Baudrillard (2001), this act of reproduction

is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself; that is, an operation to deter every real process by its operational double, a metastable, programmatic, perfect descriptive machine which provides all the signs of the real and short-circuits all its vicissitudes. Never again will the real have to be produced. (p. 170)

Even when the reality on the ground changes slightly or categorically, the chances are that it will not come to be represented because the reference points for film and music makers are anchored in the unreal, the perceived. In challenging this one-to-one relationship between the sign and the signified, Umberto Eco, a renowned semiotician, reasons that "all systems designed to mediate experience for us (...) depend on the interrelation of their elements, not on the relation of the medium to its referent" (Dudley, 1984, pp. 20-21). Be it as it may, a film or a video clip is, in Barthesian terms, a tissue of quotations, a cobweb that borrows from extant experiences and informs those to come in a language of its own, as Andre Bazin would have it.

This crisscrossing and inter-visibility, as we prefer to dub it, finds expression in the opening scene with which the film is replete. The music being played unequivocally calls to mind that of *Continental Drift*, a song made by the Rolling Stones under the unacknowledged auspices of Bachir Attar, the master of Jajouka. The viewer is compelled to journey back in time from the very outset. The notion of time, timelessness, is a constant in Western narratives on the Orient, excluding any possibility of change. One of their salient features is that time has stood still in this remote but still accessible land of myths, this defamiliarised terra incognita, which has become all too familiar now thanks to scouts who report home. Because their largely ethnographic reports voraciously feed on the same phantasms, they surreptitiously echo one another, which lends them a measure of veracity, the corollary of which can be pernicious and obnoxious.

As the scenes in *Sex and the City* unroll in Marrakech, the filming of which took two months to complete, one can draw parallels between the adventures of the four New Yorkers and the American band, Collective Soul, who, in "The World I Know", sing about solitude in New York City. Both performers, actresses and singers, are here on the lookout for an exotic experience, which only a journey into this "world" apart, one they "know", can afford. This journey out of the mundane into the anachronistic can salvage the singers and the characters simultaneously.

Whilst the singer is looking for inspiration not found back home, the girls, struck with middle-age crises induced by their menopause, are here in search of ‘sexpiration’ to revive and revitalise their languid sex lives. While it is only here in the land of exotica that their desires can be reignited, only a Westerner can fully quench and quell such burning thirst. Enthralled, the singer versifies that he laughs at himself while his tears roll down. He is torn between extreme fits of laughter and sobbing, a ripple of which resonates in the cathartic scene of the movie when one of the characters almost walks ‘to the edge’, to use the singer’s words, by pulling her bag away from a thug who was trying to snatch it away from her during the call for prayers. The sacred and the profane are here superimposed to drive home the idea that Moroccans live by double standards.

Moroccan hypocrisy and double dealings are here flagrantly shown and further reaffirmed when nobody intervenes to help save the American girl, but the moment her bag falls open and condoms fall out, the crowd gathers like vultures preying on a fallen victim. It is only incest and promiscuity that lure the mob out in this exoticized part of the world, the director seems to be insinuating. One would have thought she would be shamed and stigmatized, but she lashes out at the piercing gaze and tongues of the throng in an act of defiance and self-assertion unknown to women from this land beneath or “below”, to borrow a word from “The World I Know”. At this hysterical point, the viewer cannot help laughing, and yet, not knowing what could happen next, we refrain and retract not so much into weeping but into fear for their fate. This is a liberated woman who has come to satiate her sexual drives, and her body, in contrast with the veiled, cloaked and shrouded bodies of Arab women, purveys what words cannot convey. Another exemplification of this hypocrisy is caught when the quartet wear burqas to escape the mob. The taxi-drivers they try to stop all ignore them save the one they show a bit of flesh to. Apparently, these people want their women wholly clothed, cloaked and covered, yet it is the barely clad women they crave. Even the Sheikh who offered to host them turns his back on them upon the realization that there is nothing in there for him. His hospitality thus metamorphoses into hostility in what one may consider an act of utter inconsideration for the fate of these weaklings caught in a patriarchal world.

These very themes being woven into an oriental tapestry of which desire and fire are the leitmotif are picked up by Inna, a Romanian singer, in Yalla, a song made in the same square in 2015. The title may be read in this regard as an invitation for sex, one corroborated by the fact that as the singer weaves her way through the labyrinthine souks of spices and bazaars of antiques, a young male is chasing her along the alleys. This is no thief this time as is usually the case, but rather a sexually driven macho eyeing the very adventures the quartet in *Sex and the City* come looking for. Strangely enough, the video clip showcases four women dancing hotly like fire on a terrace, the only place the harem could venture on. They seem to be dancing around a cone-shaped pillar or beam, which recalls the phallic symbol. Like the singers, namely Collective Soul, who go high in search of ecstasy, this woman promises to take the man after her so high, perhaps onto the terrace or to kingdoms of pleasure she and the belly dancers can procure and proffer. Her recourse to Arabic is indicative, among other things, of the fact that she is addressing an Arab in the only language he understands. Not only is her linguistic choice suited to the occasion, but it also adds more sex appeal to her, paradoxically entitling her to the much desired and denigrated, notice the oxymoron, status of the harem.

The video clip and the film refer to the Arabian tales of *A Thousand and one Night*, where Shehryar, a virgin-thirsty king, succumbs to the intellectual power Shahrazad wields. She alone can rein his urges in, but in this case the dancers seek to titillate and arouse their Shehryar. As the characters in the movie and the dancers on the clip move to the outskirts of Marrakech into the open space of the desert, they meet with obedient and submissive camels, spend the night in tents under the starry night awaiting, as Samantha rightly sums it up, *Lawrance of Arabia*. This references us immediately to yet another American movie made in the desert of Morocco, one where an English Oxford graduate joins the rebels against his kin and kindred. His allegiance to the Arabs makes him an idol in their eyes and a hero for these women. Produced in 1998 and set against the same backdrop but slightly as early as 1972, *Marrakech Express* regurgitates these new-old discursive paradigms with some variations. *Marrakech Express* is but a euphemism for *Hideous Kinky*, the title of the novel the film adapts. To adopt the title as such would have been politically incorrect, to say the least, hence the soft-spoken and no less insidious *Marrakech Express*.

The choice of the setting of *Marrakech Express* is not arbitrary, for if one turns the clock back, one is sure to run into *Marrakesh Express*, a song produced three or four years earlier and sung by the trio Crosby, Nash and Stills. The song was written by Nash while on a trip from Casablanca to Marrakech. Numerically speaking, this woman is here with her two daughters, making them a trio, just like the band. While some might argue that this is a mere coincidence, one has yet to listen to their song and watch the movie to uncover the rest of the iceberg. She is a divorced woman from London who, like the four New Yorkers in *Sex and the City*, is here to heal from the ravages home has wrought on her. Not only are the song and the film similar in multifarious and nefarious respects and aspects, but they also set a model for yet other video clips to be made, and perhaps they borrow from other clips and films in an endless dialectic which produces knowledge and power, to put things a la Foucauldian. In Said's appraisal, "the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony" (*Orientalism*, 1978, p. 5). The Londoner is here on a voyage "through the clear skies of Morocco", as the trio sing. While en voyage, the blue-eyed foreigner, Nash, Still and Cosby sing about, is acting out their words by "blowing smoke rings from the corners of my mouth." Images of goats, "ducks...chickens" and much more punctuate both film and song in more ways than one can possibly count, which lends the scene its animalistic tone, say, tune.

If one watches and listens to *Misère Mani* by Era, one can infer that it is no coincidence that the singer is toiling strenuously under stringent conditions which somehow remind one of the misery redolent in *Marrakech Express*. The singer's and the character's fate are made all the worse by the absence/absenting of the husband in a male-dominated society, making them easy prey to many a predator. This is while the girl in the video clip meets with death upon falling off a precipice due to her blindness. She walks to 'the edge' of the world, it seems. What strikes one as odd is that in both film and clip, our ears and eyes are being played upon in such a way as would make the heart throb. One sees in both images of fantasia displays, hears volleys of gunpowder poured into the air, and sees and hears hoofs beating so fast they create their breath-taking music, creating the magical effect so idiosyncratic of this part of the world. Era, too, will look at the sky, but hers is a misty and blurred sky. As blurred as the sky may seem, there is still magic in the air. Another



theme that resonates in both film and song is, as Era phrases it, both the singer and the character do not know what tomorrow holds in store for them.

Nevertheless, these themes and others resonate in another song entitled *Nothing to Fear* by Chris Rea. As the blazing sun beats down on the un/paved road, which stretches endlessly, the Mercedes drives continuously on the asphalt, which merges with the dunes amidst the vast and empty expanse dotted by fully covered men and women one cannot tell apart. A caravan of people and camels, camels and people, marches on heedless of the torrid heat. Images of little girls carrying heavy objects, of fire being lit up, of boys shepherding goats, of cobras dancing to their charmers, *Charming Cobras* in Cosby's lyrics, of watercarriers, compounded by the fact that both must rear their daughters who are blind to the threats closing in on them. The girl in the clip goes missing, and bicycle riders, fire-puffers and a dozen more are far from being randomly picked being canvassed to dazzle the eye and puzzle the mind. There is a sense in which, as Mary Louis Pratt phrases it, "redundancy, discontinuity, and unreality", considered as the parameters underlying imperialism, "constitute the every day with neutrality, spontaneity, numbing repetition" (Pratt, 1992, p. 2). These images, the unraveling of which resembles the uncoiling of the reel, contrive and, in a sense, connive to constitute a composite, a vividly interwoven quilt spun with the utmost care to communicate and articulate the parochial everlasting impression- now almost an axiom- that this is the Orient tout court.

In a revival of the Manichean allegory, the American tourist, with his suit and sunglasses, encompasses everything that his entourage cannot be, living up to Said's view of Orientalism as "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (...) "the Occident" (1978, p. 10), one which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the upper hand" (Orientalism, 1978, p. 7). The traveller's imperial hubris is crystallised in his act of surveillance. Donning sunglasses enables the singer to survey without being surveyed. His authoritative presence in the video is the central figure that transpires through his surveying gaze, his seeing without being seen. He bestows visibility on the hitherto invisible nomads and disavows it as he explores other places. For Said (1994),

The thing to be noticed about this kind of contemporary discourse, which assumes the primacy and even the complete centrality of the West, is how totalizing its form is, how all- enveloping its attitudes and gestures, how much it shuts out even as it includes, compresses, and consolidates. (p. 22)

## Conclusion

Taken in their ensemble, these three films – *Babel*, *Sex and the City* and *Marrakech Express* – though seemingly produced in different eras, in juxtaposition with *The World I Know*, *Yalla* and *Marrakesh Express*, *Misere Mani* and *Nothing to Fear*, converge in that they all overlap not simply territorially by making of Marrakech and its surroundings their shooting location, their confluence, but also discursively in that the filmmakers, as well as the song creators, replicate, duplicate and project their reductionistic and fetishistic desires, pathetic fallacies, onto an imagined landscape, a cultural landscape collusively orientalist in resonance with the whims of European and American (s)explorers. One could argue along Said's line of thinking and contend that, all in all, the portrayal

of things Moroccan is premised and predicated solely and wholly upon a unifying thread and “upon a sovereign Western consciousness” entrenched in what Foucault would call the positional superiority of the all-sovereign Western subject as pitted against an abject object of desire and repulsion made available by the *metteur en scene* “out of whose unchallenged centrality an Oriental world emerged” spurred on by “desires, regressions, investments, and projections” (Orientalism, 1978, p. 16) inherited long ago.

Unchanging as these desires are, they generate a constancy transfixing the East in the loophole, Bhabha explains, of “fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference,” paradoxically connoting, “rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition” (Bhabha, 1997, p. 293). In a word, surreptitious contact zones criss-crossing both genres are postcolonised, primitivised, naturalised, sexualised and relegated to “a topos, a set of references, a congeries of characteristics” rooted “in a quotation or a fragment of a text or a citation from someone’s work on the Orient, or some bit of previous imagining, or an amalgam of all these” (Said, 1978, p. 16). Said’s take on the issue of representation dovetails to a large extent with Jean Baudrillard’s, but not quite so. Baudrillard (2001) maintains that

Abstraction today is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory - precession of simulacra - it is the map that engenders the territory. (p. 166)

In today’s simplified and excessive world there is barely any sense of original reality. Simulacra for Baudrillard are amplified images that bear “no original in reality”, nevertheless these constructed images of the real are excessively formed with far more gratifying effects than reality itself (Atkinson, 2015). The risk of simulacra yet is when these manufactured and masked realities are created to amplify pleasure to the extent “we no longer want the real experience, but the experience of being told about the experience of something – in such a way that is hyperreal, more real than real” (Atkinson, 2015, p. 199). “To dissimulate is to feign not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have what one hasn’t. One implies a presence, the other an absence” (Baudrillard, 2001, p. 170). The films and music videos being scrutinized do both in that they obfuscate that which is with that which is not and replace the non-existent with that which exists largely in imagined accounts entrenched in phantasmagoria.

#### **About the authors:**

**Chadi Chahdi** is a doctor of Cultural Studies with extensive training in Media and Communication and with a keen interest in research in the arts and humanities.

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2631-9584>

**Jamal Akabli** is an Associate Professor at King Fahd School of Translation in Tangier, Abdelmalek Essaadi University, Tetouan. His main areas of interest range from Performance Studies to Post-colonial and Translation Studies.

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8296-7546>

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