



Deconstructing and Decolonizing the Historical Marginalization of Amazigh Women's Identity in Moroccan Cinema: A Case Study of Razzia (2017) and Myopia (2018)

Meriam NAJI

Ibn Tofail University, Morocco

Email: meriam.naji@uit.ac.ma

Abdelghanie ENNAM

Ibn Tofail University, Morocco

Email: Abdelghanie.ennam@uit.ac.ma

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v8i2.2611>

APA Citation: Naji, M., & Ennam, A. (2026). Deconstructing and Decolonizing the Historical Marginalization of Amazigh Women's Identity in Moroccan Cinema: A Case Study of Razzia (2017) and Myopia (2018). *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*. 8(2).388-413. <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v8i2.2530>

Received:

20/02/2026

Accepted:

02/04/2026

Keywords:

Amazigh women, marginalization, Moroccan cinema, decolonial theory, and gender representation

Abstract

This paper critically examines the historical and sociocultural factors that contribute to the marginalization of rural Amazigh women in Morocco. It traces the evolution of Moroccan cinema from portraying women as objects to depicting them as subjects, using a qualitative methodology grounded in deconstructive and decolonial readings of two visual narratives: Nabil Ayouch's Razzia (2017) and Sanae Akroud's Myopia (2018). Alongside critical discourse analysis, this study draws on Walter Dignolo's theory of decoloniality and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's concept of subalternity to interpret the filmic language and decode the key signifiers deployed in both works. The findings reveal that the marginalization of rural Amazigh women persists through multiple intersecting forces. These include the enduring impacts of colonialism, which have contributed to the erosion and devaluation of the Amazigh language and identity, as well as the persistence of patriarchal orientations that continue to shape social life in remote Atlas communities. The analysis also highlights the cinematic reconstruction of religious discourse. In this context, Islam is at times framed through reductive and stereotypical representations as inherently gender-oppressive. Such portrayals, however, do not reflect the Islamic theology in its pure religious principles and divine precepts. Instead, they are mediated through a narrative and visual framework which may reproduce colonial and orientalist trajectories while engaging with lived socio-cultural realities. It is argued that both filmmakers employ distinct cinematic techniques and visual strategies to navigate these tensions. In doing so, they aim to challenge male-centered perspectives while exploring the ideological and political shortcomings embedded in both local patriarchal systems and broader postcolonial cultural formations that continue to shape North African visual culture.

1. Introduction

Rural Amazigh women occupy a complex position at the margins of both national narratives and global discourses. Historically, Moroccan cinema has reproduced gendered and ethnolinguistic hierarchies, rendering Amazigh women either invisible or confined to reductive roles shaped by patriarchal and orientalist imaginaries. In this context, filmmakers such as Nabil Ayouch and Sanae Akroud do not merely offer simplistic counter-hegemonic representations; rather, their work critically

interrogates and, at times, ambivalently negotiates the orientalist frameworks that have long structured cinematic portrayals of marginalized subjects. This cinematic shift necessitates a closer examination of the ideological frameworks governing both film production and reception. Drawing on Walter Mignolo's concept of decoloniality, this study explores how the legacies of neo-colonial feminist Orientalism continue to shape epistemic hierarchies and contribute to the marginalization of Amazigh language and identity across national and international cinematic circuits (Mignolo, 2011). Within this framework, one of the central findings of this study is that these films mark a significant representational transformation: rural Amazigh women are no longer positioned as passive objects of eroticized spectacle. However, they are instead reconstituted as active subjects engaged in life-changing pursuits of social emancipation and political empowerment. However, this shift remains complex and incomplete. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's notion of the subaltern illuminates the conditions under which rural Amazigh women as "Third World Women" continue to be spoken for or rendered intelligible through dominant discursive structures (Spivak, 1988), while Edward Said's critique of representation underscores the persistence of orientalist frameworks in constructing the "rural Other" (Said, 1978).

By analyzing *Myopia* and *Razzia* within this critical framework, this paper argues that while these films seek to challenge patriarchal structures and amplify the voices of marginalized rural Amazigh women, they remain embedded within representational regimes shaped by colonial legacies and Western or liberal discourses. These tensions reveal the complex negotiation that female characters must undertake in navigating deeply rooted gender norms within marginalized social and cultural settings, such as the remote areas of the Atlas. In this sense, the films' emancipatory potential must be read alongside a deconstructive postcolonial critique of Western feminist frameworks, which often homogenize non-Western women as passive victims, deny indigenous agency, and perpetuate epistemic and cultural domination. While this analysis draws on critical concepts developed within Western academic traditions, it does so strategically, engaging them through what Walter Mignolo theorizes as "border thinking," thereby recognizing their limitations and mobilizing them only insofar as they can be reworked to challenge the very epistemic hierarchies they have historically reinforced. By foregrounding the lived realities, courage, and agency of Amazigh women, the films disrupt both local patriarchal structures and the reductive narratives of neo-colonial feminism. However, they also confront the limits imposed by inherited ideologies, including orientalist and secular-liberal assumptions. Consequently, this study examines not only the possibilities for cinematic liberation but also the constraints of decolonial representation, advocating a pluralistic and dialogic approach that embraces complexity, resists oversimplification, and foregrounds the diverse historical, political, cultural, and ideological forces shaping Moroccan cinematic narratives.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Historical Marginalization of Rural Amazigh Women

Numerous cultural, historical, political, and socio-economic factors contribute to the marginalization of rural Amazigh women. Moroccan Amazigh women face compounded oppression because of their marginalization across geographic, linguistic, and cultural areas. They mostly live in the Atlas Mountains or remote regions. Recent statistics indicate that between 270,000 and 300,000 students leave school annually in Morocco, with approximately 294,000 recorded dropouts in the 2022–2023 academic year. Rural girls remain disproportionately affected due to structural constraints, such as limited transportation, long distances to schools, and safety concerns, which continue to exacerbate educational inequality (UNESCO, 2026; Ministry of Education data, 2023). Social exclusion in Morocco is shaped by the intersection of geography, social class, gender, and neoliberal reforms, which limit rural women's access to housing and education, and their participation in the global market, thereby reducing their chances of escaping poverty (Ben Haman, 2025). All these interconnected factors lead to the view of rural Amazigh women as marginalized, oppressed, and silenced both within society and in media representation. Collective efforts are needed to improve the conditions of Amazigh women in rural areas without discriminating against male Amazigh individuals, since all indigenous people face similar issues. Their underrepresentation in the media obscures the efforts they made during colonial times to protect their Tamazight language, culture, and identity.

The Amazigh language constitutes not merely a means of communication but also a fundamental element of the cultural heritage of all Moroccans. Nevertheless, the recognition and status of the Amazigh language in Morocco have evolved through various phases. King Hassan II proposed implementing the Amazigh language in 1994. Subsequently, his successor, King Mohamed VI, underscored the importance of establishing an organization dedicated to safeguarding Amazigh culture and language in a 2001 speech, leading to the founding of the IRCAM (Institut Royal de la Culture Amazighe), also known as the Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture. The institute is structured into seven departments, each tasked with specific responsibilities, and receives financial support aimed at integrating Amazigh into diverse facets of Moroccan society (Schwed, 2017). Extensive efforts have been undertaken to promote this language; nonetheless, a collective endeavor remains necessary to improve the condition of Amazigh women in rural regions and to ensure the absence of discrimination against male Amazighs, as all indigenous groups face comparable challenges, albeit to varying degrees, contingent on gender.

The integration of the Amazigh language into Morocco's educational system started in 2003 and has been progressively implemented in both public and private primary schools. Various initiatives, including training programs for educators, have been established to promote the widespread use of Amazigh within educational contexts. Nevertheless, a discernible disparity persists between policy documentation and practical application at the grassroots level (Ichou & Fathi, 2020). However, Tamazight was officially recognized as a language of official status in Morocco in 2011; not all the requisite measures have been fully executed. Consequently, Amazigh speakers face limited access to international markets and remain marginalized from full participation in society. Within households and on the streets, Moroccan Arabic and Tamazigh are the predominant languages of communication. Meanwhile, French and English are vital for the study of sciences and medicine, as well as for international engagement (p. 33). Despite efforts by Amazigh advocates and media outreach, societal perceptions regarding the teaching of the Amazigh language have remained unchanged: it is primarily regarded as a mode of communication. Without the dedicated efforts of women, the language faces the peril of complete extinction.

Moroccan women play a pivotal role in conserving their linguistic heritage through oral traditions. There exists a significant interconnection between language, gender, and culture. Since the colonial era, Amazigh women have predominantly faced disadvantages within a patriarchal society characterized by injustices and inequalities. Society assigns women the responsibility of safeguarding oral literature, expecting them to fulfill this duty while concurrently raising their children. In doing so, they transmit the language despite an educational system that emphasizes Arabization, thereby contributing to the preservation of resilient women who can manage family responsibilities and express themselves freely (Fadil, 2018). Fundamentally, promoting the Amazigh language is a collective obligation for all Moroccans and serves to unify the nation, both politically and culturally. The active engagement of rural Amazigh women in public spaces is a crucial means of reducing gender disparities and linguistic differences (Sadiqi, 2007). Moroccan Amazigh women have participated in such activities during and after the colonial period; however, their substantial contributions are often overlooked due to the prevailing patriarchal system.

Gender discrimination persists in most rural regions. Numerous stereotypes and cultural violence are directed toward rural Amazigh women, who are frequently expected to remain at home and perform household chores, marry at an early age, and abandon their education prematurely to learn endurance through hardship. Men are typically expected to be the financial providers and work outdoors on farms, whereas women are confined to domestic roles. This disparity partially explains why some Amazigh men speak Arabic, while women remain monolingual in their native language; they have limited interaction with individuals from other cities and do not receive adequate educational opportunities. Although numerous Amazigh activist movements exist, the progress of the Amazigh language and culture remains

slow, which continues to result in discrimination from their Arab-speaking counterparts. The Moroccan government has sought to help rural Amazigh women reduce high rates of illiteracy, but these efforts have not been entirely successful. Educational programs such as ‘Mahou Al Omiya,’ initiated in 2000, faced significant criticism for emphasizing literacy in Arabic and French while neglecting Amazighophone women. Furthermore, there is an intersection between illiteracy and health, characterized by several factors, including the challenges women face in comprehending medical information and other difficulties encountered during medical consultations (Laghssais, 2021).

The rise of Amazigh Non-Governmental Organizations has been vital in advocating for Amazigh women's rights and increasing their involvement in various sectors. Nine Amazigh NGOs, each with inspiring names, work actively to establish a place for Amazigh women in society, where social status is often influenced by gender and language. Traditionally, the Amazigh language has been associated with private spaces, and the Amazighization of public areas promotes the feminization of Amazigh activism (Sadiqi, 2016). Today, numerous stories, folktales, and videos on social media serve as a testimonial archive of the efforts of Amazigh women not only to preserve their identity but also to elevate traditional Amazigh crafts, which have gained recognition beyond local regions and onto the global stage. Their products are artistic expressions imbued with symbols representing their hopes for a brighter future. Many Moroccan Amazigh women writers, such as Yamina Oualhadj, write poetry as a form of resistance. This movement of transforming oral heritage into written form, aligned with Walter D. Mignolo's (2011) concept of decoloniality, helps disconnect from dominant knowledge systems and build alternative narratives rooted in indigenous experiences. Through this process, Amazigh women writers go beyond cultural documentation; they actively contribute to decolonizing knowledge and reshaping Moroccan history from a subaltern perspective (Mignolo, 2011,p.109).

The marginalization of rural Amazigh women has transitioned from literary and tangible representations to their depiction in Moroccan cinema. Following independence, Moroccan cinema has established itself across psychological, social, cultural, religious, and political domains (Elimadi, 2021). Cinema serves as an essential medium for examining existential issues; it encourages debate and dialogue on subjects that are often suppressed. Postcolonial Moroccan films are characterized by messages that permit multiple interpretations, which differ according to viewers' backgrounds. Although filmmaking is an art form through which directors explore diverse ideas, it requires rigorous academic analysis.

Film directors frequently provoke discussion and debate concerning topics that challenge societal taboos and norms. One pertinent issue relates to the depiction of Arab women, especially Amazigh or rural women; their historically limited representation has resulted in their sexualization, silencing, and subjugation, primarily influenced by ethnicity and language. Over time, their portrayal on screen has

transitioned from sexual objects to maternal figures, predominantly depicted in domestic roles. Women in Morocco face numerous challenges, including limited social and economic independence and limited political and media visibility. Consequently, this situation often leads women to compare themselves to men within the same context. Many stereotypical portrayals of Moroccan women are perpetuated in television and other media outlets, often neglecting the progress women have made in Morocco today (El Harraki, 2019).

Numerous previous studies have analyzed the films *Razzia* and *Myopia* through various methods and theoretical approaches. Farida Bourbi's article on *Razzia* analyzes how the film centers the female body as a central point of tension in postcolonial Moroccan society, where issues of identity, sexuality, and social norms intersect. By adopting an interdisciplinary approach, Bourbi argues that the film shows the complex negotiation between tradition and modernity, highlighting how cultural, religious, and social restrictions shape women's experiences and self-image. Her analysis stresses that sexuality remains a highly controlled and taboo subject, often leading to repression, internal conflict, and frustration among female characters (Bourbi, 2018, p. 36). Additionally, Yahya Laayouni's paper on *Myopia* examines how the depiction of women in Moroccan cinema has changed, emphasizing the "rural other" to highlight differences between rural and urban living conditions (Laayouni, 2020, p. 33). This study fills a gap in the field of literature and media studies by exploring the semiotic language of cinema and the techniques used to express what is often silenced or left unspoken on screen, helping to decolonize the representation of rural Amazigh women and uncover hidden meanings.

2.2 Amazigh Female Identity and Gender Deconstruction in Myopia

Sanae Akroud is a Moroccan filmmaker, screenwriter, director, and actress renowned for her focus on women's issues. Born on November 18, 1980, in Taroudant, she has recent works including *Kissar Nadar (Myopia)*, (2018) and *Al Wassaya (The Commandments)*, (2025).

Myopia depicts Fatime, a rural Amazigh woman from Tiki, a modest Amazigh village. Six months into her pregnancy, she leaves her village for Tahnawt, an urban area, to procure new spectacles for the Sheik, the only literate individual who can read the letters villagers receive from their loved ones. The opening scenes highlight the hardships faced by individuals, particularly women. Fatime, portrayed by Akroud herself, exemplifies the daily struggles encountered by women in mountainous regions, emphasizing their engagement with religion and tradition. The film utilizes close-up shots of Fatime's face during an interview with law enforcement officers, maintaining a consistent pace that fosters a documentary style and "cinéma vérité-style realism." Although gender inequalities among rural women are widely acknowledged, Fatime challenges traditional roles by demonstrating agency and voicing her perspectives within her community. Her public participation provides her with a platform to be heard. Her journey signifies more than mere physical movement; it symbolizes a transformation concerning gender, space,

When Signs are Divergent: Analysing Farmer-Herder Conflicts in Southwest Nigeria Through Biosemiotic Theory

and culture. Mountains and silence dominate the wide shots in this film; the film director minimizes dialogue and invites the audience to be actively engaged, observing and discovering the inner struggles of the indigenous people behind the mountains.



Fig. 1 A Medium long shot of *Myopia* (2018): Fatime going back home with firewood

Fatime centered the screen within the frame, her figure isolated against a stark and unoccupied background that visually underscores her cultural, social, and emotional marginalization. The mise-en-scène reinforces the film's central thematic concerns: the barren landscape, sparse vegetation, and snow-covered terrain function not merely as setting but as expressive elements that mirror the harsh living conditions and affective realities of the mountain village. The use of a handheld camera closely tracks Fatime's movement, generating a sense of immediacy and corporeal strain while foregrounding the physical and structural challenges faced by women in such remote regions. Burdened with a heavy bundle of firewood, Fatime's labor is accentuated through amplified diegetic sound; her breathing and footsteps resonate in the absence of dialogue, intensifying the embodied experience of endurance.

Fatime's role extends beyond physical labor to encompass both maternal responsibility and domestic management, as she cares for her daughter, Aicha, while sustaining the household through repetitive, gendered tasks. Through the visual emphasis on her daily routines and her implicit aspirations for improved living conditions, the film subtly destabilizes conventional gender norms and highlights female resilience. The husband's absence from the diegesis further reinforces Fatime's solitary condition, positioning her as both caregiver and provider within a socio-cultural framework that normalizes such gendered burdens. Compositionally, the frame draws attention to the weight of the firewood through focal emphasis and the strategic application of the rule of thirds. The extensive use of negative space, which renders Fatime's figure small against the imposing mountainous backdrop, evokes isolation and vulnerability; however, this effect is not neutral but produced through the camera's framing and authorial perspective. The question, then, is not simply what is depicted on screen, but who is constructing this visual hierarchy and for whom, as the cinematic gaze itself

participates in shaping Fatime's marginality, potentially reproducing the very dynamics of distance and othering it seeks to critique.

If patriarchy is understood as male dominance over women, Fatime's journey demonstrates an alternative form of power. She journeys alone and confronts challenges without seeking permission. Fatime states, "We do everything, nothing can frighten us. What can be frightening is getting lost in the snow. Nobody knows if you are alive or dead." Her words carry potency and symbolism. The pronoun "we" signifies female strength and collective experience within the village, where not only Fatime but also others endure similar hardships. "We do everything" indicates that Fatime and other women assume significant responsibilities that may surpass societal expectations based on age or gender. Nevertheless, they persevere despite adverse environmental conditions. From a feminist and critical discourse perspective, this statement can be interpreted as a form of resistance to patriarchal narratives, echoing Bourdieu's critique of gendered power and symbolic domination (Bourdieu, 2001, p. 99). It functions as both a symbol of resilience and an assertion of authority, illustrating how cinematic language can depict women as active agents rather than passive victims.

Fatime challenges societal notions that women should be dependent or obedient. In reference to Judith Butler's concept of gender, she proposes that attacking gender is also an attack on democracy. Gender discrimination is not only a social injustice, but also a political issue. This perspective affirms that individuals' freedom to express their bodies without discrimination or confinement by traditional customs is a basic right. Recognizing history is essential to prevent the recurrence of past male-dominated injustices. Fatime's insightful words and actions exemplify the idea that gender is performative rather than intrinsic: it is an act, not a fixed trait (Butler, 1990, p. 102). Fatime challenges societal conceptions of what is considered natural, cultural, and normal.

Fatime is propelled into her political and social journey after the *Sheik's* eyeglasses break, leaving the village of Takka and heading towards the city, traveling from Tahnawet to Casablanca. She views her journey as a mission and is determined to obtain eyeglasses for the *Imam*, even under hazardous conditions. In the film's opening sequence, it is anticipated that men primarily assume leadership roles, engage in physical labor alongside women, or shape their children's opportunities for a good future, including their access to education and healthcare. However, it later becomes clear that men are also involved in negotiations over who will travel to the city to procure eyeglasses for the *Imam*, who leads the prayers. This signifies a notable shift in traditional power dynamics. The *Imam* is the religious leader; however, he is blind. This constitutes a poignant semiotic irony that demonstrates how the patriarchal

structure is “myopic”; it is focused on internal village rules but remains blind to external laws and reforms. The *myopia* of rural patriarchal societies stems from their theocratic orthodoxy and restricted socio-cultural rules. These hegemonic masculinist regimes promote gender-exclusive policies that see the primary authority for lawmaking as belonging mainly to the ruling male elites.



Fig. 2 *Myopia* (2018): A group of people negotiating who will buy new glasses for the *Imam*

A medium shot, framed from a low-angle perspective, captures the villagers gathered in a tight, circular formation around a small table, set against a darkened background. The use of chiaroscuro lighting, combined with a circular mise-en-scène, confines the spectator’s gaze to the illuminated candle, which functions as a metaphor for the community’s constrained epistemological horizon. The *Imam* urgently summons the entire community to organize a fundraising effort after his glasses are broken. The villagers gather to discuss securing funds for new spectacles, particularly in a context marked by widespread illiteracy and reliance on the *Imam* as a mediator of written knowledge. Throughout this scene, it becomes evident that men tend to dismiss women’s contributions while prioritizing male access to education over that of women.

This scenario raises important concerns regarding the oppression of women and girls in the educational domain, a problem often justified by the absence of schools. Notably, there is no depiction of a school or any children discussing education, reflecting what is commonly referred to as “forgotten Morocco.” In this context, Silvia Gagliardi conducted interviews with residents from various Amazigh regions, including Agadir, the Rif, and areas near Marrakech. She argues that many Amazigh women face multiple forms of discrimination as minorities and non-elites (Gagliardi, n.d.). She maintains that the Amazigh community remains underrepresented in government and civil society. A key argument she presents is that, despite being often regarded as oral narrators and custodians of Amazigh culture, their voices are absent from both academic and non-academic discourse in Morocco. Her research indicates that identifying as a rural Amazigh woman often results in their silencing and marginalization, thus perpetuating their exclusion.

However, this cinematic absence invites a deeper interrogation of the gaze that constructs it: what does it mean for the camera to frame a reality in which education is absent? Is the film merely reflecting a hidden and marginalized reality that demands visibility, or is it also participating in the selective production of that reality for particular audiences? In other words, who is behind the camera, and for whom is this image being produced? These questions shift the analysis from representation alone to the politics of production and authorship. The absence of schools may function as a critical exposure of structural neglect; however, it simultaneously risks aestheticizing deprivation if not anchored in the voices of those represented. This tension becomes even more significant when considering the material conditions of filmmaking itself. As Sanae Akroud has noted in interviews, her attempts to secure financial support from the Center Cinématographique Marocain (CCM) were unsuccessful, revealing the institutional barriers that shape which stories can be told and how. This raises further critical questions: To what extent are marginalized realities contingent upon institutional approval to become visible? What kinds of narratives are funded, and which are silenced? Moreover, how does the lack of support for filmmakers like Akroud reproduce the very exclusions that the films seek to critique? Thus, the scene does not simply document absence; it exposes a layered structure of invisibility, one that operates not only within the film's diegesis but also within the political economy of cinema itself.

The *imam's* blindness and silence, coupled with the limited visibility of male characters whose faces are often partially obscured or framed against dark backgrounds, serve as a deliberate cinematic strategy to critique epistemic and patriarchal power within the social structures of remote Atlas communities. Their marginalization within the *mise-en-scène*, through static framing, shallow depth of field, and subdued lighting, does not signify mere absence; rather, it constitutes a semiotic device that engages the viewer through what Roland Barthes describes as the "hermeneutic code," generating curiosity about the *imam's* role and authority. From a postcolonial and decolonial perspective, the *imam's* impaired vision functions allegorically, symbolizing the failures of entrenched patriarchal systems to provide insight or agency to marginalized rural Amazigh women.

The *Sheik's* broken eyeglasses, presented as inert frames rather than instruments of true understanding, underscore this symbolic incapacity. In contrast, characters like Fatime assert presence through both visual and auditory agency: her movements, positioning within the frame, and vocalized expressions resist marginalization, demonstrating how absence and presence can be strategically encoded to critique dominant social hierarchies. Through these cinematic techniques, lighting, framing, and spatial composition, the film highlights the asymmetries of power and knowledge embedded in the traditional social order, without attributing such inequities to religious doctrine itself. Ultimately, Akroud's strategic

positioning of the male religious figure on the narrative and visual periphery undermines the presumed authority of patriarchal and institutional power, redirecting attention toward subaltern perspectives. The film suggests that authentic knowledge, agency, and moral insight emerge not from dominant hierarchies but from those who have historically been silenced or rendered invisible within the social order.

In postcolonial studies, the concept of the subaltern, as theorized by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, extends beyond economic class to encompass all groups structurally positioned in subordinate locations within relations of power. In "Can the Subaltern Speak?," Spivak interrogates the conditions under which marginalized subjects may be heard, arguing that subaltern voices are not absent due to a lack of knowledge but are systematically silenced or rendered unintelligible within dominant epistemic frameworks. These groups, often marginalized along lines of gender, race, colonial history, and social hierarchy, are relegated to the peripheries of representation. Spivak further critiques the role of local elites, institutional authorities, and Western intellectuals, demonstrating how attempts to "speak for" the subaltern frequently result in epistemic violence that reproduces rather than challenges structures of domination. Thus, the question is not simply whether the subaltern can speak, but whether their speech can be recognized outside the discursive systems that continue to marginalize them (p.67). In both films under study, the rural Amazigh women represented do not appear as entirely voiceless subjects; rather, their capacity to speak is mediated by cinematic and ideological frameworks that shape how their voices are articulated and received. Consequently, what emerges is not an absence of speech but a failure of recognition, wherein their lived experiences are filtered through dominant discourses that limit the intelligibility of their agency.

This film depicts rural Amazigh women through extended scenes that explore their societal roles. Their challenges go unnoticed until a female character questions gender norms. Akroud takes on background roles traditionally assigned to men, while Fatime, a brave villager representing independence, stays prominently in the foreground. The camera focuses on her voice, despite her speaking an unintelligible language that is often misunderstood by police and journalists. The portrayal of an Amazigh woman speaking Arabic with a distinct accent during an interview with law enforcement highlights deep divisions within the country, worsened by discrimination and stereotypes targeting a specific community. According to Pierre Bourdieu's theory, as explained in *Language and Symbolic Power*, language reflects a form of symbolic power. Some speech patterns are seen as legitimate, while others are marginalized (Bourdieu, 1991, p.98). When Fatime uses rural dialects, emotionally charged expressions, or experiential vocabulary, authorities and institutional officials may not recognize her speech as genuine. The language she speaks belongs to a marginalized group; only those on the fringes understand it. Neither advocates nor

a perceptive minister understands her simple goal of repairing glasses. The police accuse her of irreligiosity, hypocrisy, and ties to revolutionary groups.

Myopia functions as a visual testimony that foregrounds the resistance of marginalized communities, addressing viewers, cultural stakeholders, and state institutions by exposing the villagers' struggle to assert their fundamental right to dignity and existence. In contrast to earlier postcolonial cinematic representations that often reduce women to figures, such as prostitutes, divorcees, or passive subjects shaped by illiteracy and poverty, Sanae Akroud's work actively disrupts the male gaze and entrenched patriarchal imaginaries. Her film not only emphasizes female agency, empowerment, and resistance to reductive Western constructions of "Third World women," but also brings to the surface the resilience and courage of rural Amazigh women that had long remained obscured or silenced in earlier cinematic narratives. Through this reconfiguration, Akroud challenges binary oppositions and advances a more nuanced and hopeful vision for the representation of rural Amazigh women in Moroccan cinema, one that is far from the Western liberal agenda.

2.3 Deconstructing Colonial and Patriarchal Exclusion in Myopia

Fatime encounters numerous obstacles in acquiring new spectacles. Her endeavors to travel independently and to provide eyeglasses to the village's religious guide exemplify resistance to societal patriarchy. It is a metaphor for the hard work those women do in a traditional society. These village women are the leaders, even though they have not been recognized nationally or internationally. Amazigh women are capable of verbalizing their suffering, taking action, and making decisions about their fundamental rights. The eyeglasses symbolize access to knowledge and social visibility; they embody both the potential for clarity and the structural barriers that hinder marginalized individuals from fully "seeing" or being seen within prevailing systems of power. Social injustice and gender inequality are two critical issues that require thorough recognition and examination by those in authority, such as policymakers and government officials.

In contrast to rural areas, Casablanca distinguishes itself by its prominent, accessible hospitals and commercial centers, exemplifying the urban privilege associated with infrastructure and development. The selection of Casablanca by filmmakers Nabil Ayouch and Sanae Akroud is intentional. Utilizing Lefebvre's concept of the "production of space," these films depict Casablanca as a contested urban terrain where power dynamics, marginalization, and resistance intersect; its frequent portrayal as a site of protest underscores the ongoing struggle of marginalized groups to attain visibility and assert their rights within the city. For example, the protests observed by Fatime upon her arrival in Casablanca subtly reveal disparities between urban and rural regions in education and human rights awareness. Furthermore, there is a notable decline in the use of the Amazigh language, as residents are depicted as relatively

When Signs are Divergent: Analysing Farmer-Herder Conflicts in Southwest Nigeria Through Biosemiotic Theory

disconnected from the broader socio-political landscape beyond their villages. Nonetheless, they demonstrate respect for religious diversity and articulate their spiritual connection to the divine through natural elements and traditional practices.



Fig. 3 *Myopia* (2018): Fatime is asking where she can find the shop to buy glasses

The physician informs Fatime that she cannot be provided with spectacles without an authorized prescription. Subsequently, she embarks on another journey from Tahnawet to Casablanca, undertaking a weighty responsibility under uncertain circumstances. Her primary objective is to return to her native village bearing spectacles for the imam, whom she refers to as “Sheikh.” This journey culminates at a police station after her apprehension during a demonstration. She presumed it would be a swift trip to rectify the spectacles.

Casablanca emerges as a politically charged urban space in the film, often linked with youth-led demonstrations demanding social justice, economic opportunities, and political reform. In this context, Fatime’s encounter with protestors reveals her sense of dissonance: she clearly distances herself from their movement, saying she cannot understand their demands. When asked about her identity, her husband’s name, and where she lives, her mention of living near a Jewish cemetery surprises others, further marking her as socially and culturally “other” within the city environment.

A vivid cinematic moment occurs when Fatime’s water breaks inside the police station. Instead of following a straightforward sequence, the film employs an elliptical montage, quickly cutting to a hospital scene where she is already in labor. This temporal shift condenses her physical experience, avoiding the sensationalism of her vulnerability or reducing it to voyeuristic entertainment. Instead, the narrative emphasizes the social and political significance of her situation. As Fatime becomes the focal point for journalists, police, and human rights organizations, her voice is both solicited and concealed. She speaks candidly, yet her words resist facile interpretation within institutional frameworks. Through this tension, the film critically examines the subaltern, aligning with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s theoretical perspectives. Fatime is positioned at the intersection of various forms of marginalization, ethnicity, gender, class, and geography, yet she is not entirely silenced. Her

journey from a remote village to Casablanca symbolizes both physical migration and a metaphorical quest for acknowledgment. Despite systemic constraints, she maintains a sense of agency, clinging to hope for an improved life for herself and her family, thereby adding nuance to simplified victim stereotypes.



Fig 4 *Myopia* (2018): A close-shot of Fatime being interviewed and recorded by journalists.

This scene, in which two journalists interview Fatime following her interrogation by activists, serves as a critical site for examining the politics of voice and representation. While the female journalist attempts to mobilize Fatime into articulating a rights-based discourse aligned with the broader protest movement, this intervention reveals a disjunction between external activist agendas and Fatime’s own lived priorities. Rather than amplifying her agency, the journalistic encounter appears to instrumentalize her narrative, reducing it to a spectacle that serves media interests. This dynamic is further intensified during her questioning at the police station, where institutional authority subjects her to a series of intrusive and identity-policing inquiries regarding her place of residence, religious affiliation, marital status, and the legitimacy of her child. Her response, locating herself “near a Jewish cemetery,” unsettles fixed identity categories and exposes the inadequacy of bureaucratic frameworks in capturing marginalized subjectivities. Despite these attempts to delegitimize her, Fatime’s assertive recounting of her daily life functions as an act of resistance, reclaiming narrative authority in the face of both media appropriation and institutional surveillance.

Fatime’s testimony presents a layered critique of structural marginalization, as her expressed desire to leave the village is based on the lack of educational infrastructure and basic medical knowledge, conditions that make life and death uncertain within the community. Her discourse is notable for a strong sense of agency. Instead of portraying herself as a passive subject, she actively narrates the village's collective realities, including the uncertainty surrounding illness and the emotional distance caused by migration. The *imam*’s broken eyeglasses, which visibly unsettle her, serve as a powerful visual metaphor for lost access to knowledge and deferred hope, representing not only individual loss but also the community’s reliance on fragile mediating structures. Additionally, Fatime’s responses consistently highlight a

collective spirit that goes beyond individual concerns. Her mention of villagers waiting for letters from migrant relatives places her within a broader socio-economic network shaped by absence and displacement. In her conversation with the journalist, her redefinition of affection, expressed through everyday gestures such as singing or caring for a child, subtly challenges dominant, often urban-focused ideas of intimacy. Her calm but assertive answers to probing and sometimes intrusive questions further highlight her resilience and discursive presence. When she states, "We do everything," she challenges deep-rooted assumptions about women's passivity, asserting their central role in the village's social and economic life. Fatime's speech operates not merely as dialogue but as a performative act through which she reclaims narrative authority; yet, the eyeglasses, as a recurring semiotic device, complicate this articulation by foregrounding the gap between signifier and signified. While her words attempt to assert a coherent self-representation, the eyeglasses' visual presence signifies that meaning cannot be fully secured through language alone. However, it requires a mode of seeing grounded in ethical and contextual awareness. In this sense, the film exposes the instability of external interpretations, revealing how dominant discourses often misread or fail to apprehend subaltern subjectivity.

Furthermore, Fatime is subjected to accusations that call her Muslim identity into question, based on her role as a guard at a Jewish cemetery, a position inherited through familial lineage, which unsettles rigid religious and social categorizations. When queried by a journalist, "Are you a Muslim? What do you do at the cemetery?" she affirms, "I am a Muslim; I clean it and prepare it for visitors." The same journalist subsequently inquires, "The house is not yours, is it?" to which she responds, "No, houses do not belong to anyone; we are merely transient." Fatime is a devout person who recognizes that only one God can grant and withdraw. The journalist seeks to undermine her identity and faith by persistently asking, "Do Christians visit your mountain? Do they discuss religion with you?" Nevertheless, Fatime is fully cognizant of her responsibilities and duties; she demonstrates her devotion to God in her own manner.

The dialogues in the final scenes of the film convey two messages: firstly, that although the mountain communities are illiterate, they feel a profound connection to God and express gratitude for their daily activities, such as cooking, childbirth, and gathering firewood. Secondly, it is highlighted that the only literate individual, the *sheik* or imam, suffers from "myopia" and is unable to read, which implies that Islamic discourse or ideologies require regulation. This notion could also explain the imam's need for new spectacles to perceive and address the evolving needs of the village inhabitants. For the indigenous populations, Islam is intertwined with their sense of experiencing God's presence. When Fatime mentions that God forgot to visit them, a moment of silence, vulnerability, and anger ensues. Her candid expression is met with a stern response stemming from collective rage and frustration. In her subsequent encounter with police officers, they advise her to return to her village and provide money for her necessities. However, Fatime asserts that she cannot return without spectacles, citing the absence of

doctors and schools in her community. The authorities attempt to devise a solution but instead fabricate an excuse: she lacks official identification documents, as her village is not recognized by those capable of offering assistance. It is incumbent upon the government to identify and support individuals residing in the marginalized regions of the Moroccan mountains.

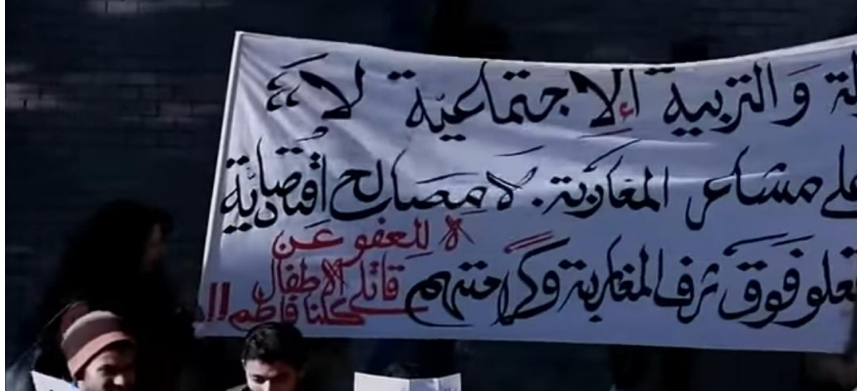


Fig 5 Myopia (2018): A Demonstration of Fatime’s rights.

Fatime leaves the hospital; many young people hold slogans and Amazigh flags, expressing their solidarity and resistance to oppression. These protesters know that Fatime lost her baby due to police violence, and they come as young Amazigh activists, demonstrating their courage and resistance not only to Fatime’s trauma but also to society as a whole. It is written on one of the slogans that “No economic interests are above the honor and dignity of Moroccans.” This reveals that the entire community faces various types of social exploitation and has decided to stand up for their rights and reinforce a sense of unity. However, in this scene, Akroud highlights Fatime’s strength and articulates her agency, which is evident in her actions, honesty, and desire to achieve better living conditions for the future.

In the film’s closing sequence, Fatime returns to her ancestral village, where her journey began. She places the shattered ‘broken’ eyeglasses within the *Imam*’s mosque, captured in a wide shot illuminated by natural light and accompanied by profound silence, under the same cold weather conditions as her initial departure. The broken eyeglasses remain as an empty frame. Considering eyeglasses as a symbol of ‘vision’, the semiotics of ‘unfix’ does not signify a failure of her journey; rather, it represents an act of resistance and “epistemic disobedience. While Fatime does not verbalize her stance, her actions and the montage techniques convey her thoughts; she will not permit the (*imam*) the whole patriarchal or colonial systems to dictate her choices or control her actions. Fatime is now fully convinced that she can lead a different life by refraining from using the same lens; repairing the glasses would imply maintaining the status quo and participating in a corrupt system. Although she could repair the broken eyeglasses with any available pair and return with new spectacles, she abstains from doing so. This scene underscores an urgent appeal for radical change to challenge male patriarchal dominance and to address the needs of women in remote Amazigh communities.

2.4 Voicing Amazigh women in *Razzia*

Nabil Ayouch, a French-Moroccan filmmaker and producer, was born on April 1, 1969, in Paris to a Moroccan father, Noureddine Ayouch, and a French mother of Tunisian-Jewish descent. He is a member of the Academy Awards and the César Awards, and serves on the founding board of the Arab Film Academy. In 1997, he directed his first feature film, *Mektoub* (1997), followed by *Ali Zaoua: Prince of the Streets* (2000), *Une Minute de Soleil en Moins* (*One Less Minute of Sun*, 2003), *Whatever Lola Wants* (2008), *My Land* (a documentary, 2011), *Horses of God* (2012), *Razzia* (2017), *Casablanca Beats* (2021), and *Everybody Loves Touda* (2024). Ayouch is a prominent figure in Moroccan cinema owing to the substantial number of films he has produced and his autobiographical style. Kevin Dwyer notes that, in one of his interviews with Nabil Ayouch, the filmmaker mentioned that he incorporates events from his personal life into his films, which was “threatening to overwhelm my film” (Dwyer, 2025,p.169). He recognizes his cinematic choices and bold narratives, particularly concerning socially sensitive topics that are frequently silenced on screen.

Nabil Ayouch’s film *Razzia* (2017) is set in Ouarzazate, the Atlas Mountains, and Casablanca. It intricately weaves together five distinct stories, each exploring a different theme related to one of the characters. The first narrative features an Amazigh woman named Yetto (Saadia Ladib), who falls in love with Abdellah (Amine Ennaji), a teacher from Casablanca who relocates to a small village for employment. He is compelled to leave the village after educational authorities prohibit him from teaching Tamazight and mandate instruction in Arabic, a language unfamiliar to the village children. The second story follows a teenage girl named Ines (Dounia Binebine), who begins questioning her sexual identity. In the opening scenes, she appears to identify as a lesbian, feeling excluded from her female peers, whose discussions focus on love and relationships. Salima (Maryam Touzani), another character, is a married woman caught between tradition and modernity. Unable to coexist with her tyrannical and traditional husband, she seeks a space to pursue a modern lifestyle free from judgment and away from her husband’s influence. The third character is Hakim (Abdelilah Rachid), a musician who also works as a carpenter. He hails from a traditional family that does not support his ambitions, nor do his friends.

Ayouch aims to convey a variety of messages that can be interpreted differently based on the audience’s age, background, and culture. Consequently, the film highlights current social issues such as class disparities, the social status of Moroccan urban and rural women, language issues, youth culture, and Amazigh women's resistance. He also criticizes the dominance of the French and Arabic languages while marginalizing Tamazight. The opening scene of *Razzia* features wide shots of a rural village, where Abdellah, a teacher from Taroudant, teaches children in a nearby small community. He appears very optimistic and excited to see his students happy and engaged in learning a language vital to their cultural

identity. It was a smart choice by the filmmaker, Nabil Ayouch, to start the film by emphasizing the place where the Amazigh people have often been excluded from many social events. All the wide shots of the mountains are used as negative space, accompanied by a non-diegetic Amazigh song called “Ait Maten,” which roughly means “the Brothers,” sung by Hadda Ouakki. The song explores themes of love, social struggles, Amazigh identity, and the daily lives of these indigenous people.



Fig. 6 *Razzia* (2017): Yettou invites Abdellah to her house.

This shot occurs in the film's opening sequence, with Abdellah in the foreground on the left. He is partly cut off by the frame, with his face lowered and out of focus, even though he is closer to the camera. The visual composition, however, highlights Yettou, who stands sharply in focus in the mid-ground holding a tray. She is farther from the camera, but her presence is prominent, and her gaze toward it draws viewers' attention. The frame's natural light and traditional clothing offer a glimpse into their love story behind the mountains. Yettou, an Amazigh widow and mother of Ilyas, one of Abdellah's students, invites him to visit her home. Abdellah initially hesitates, fearing societal judgment from villagers if they are seen together. Yettou offers an alternative perspective, asserting, "It is my life, and it is not their concern; when Ilyas's father passed away, no one offered help." Her comments portray her as a resilient woman who challenges societal norms and asserts her independence, saying, "Nobody is going to tell me how to live my life." She also invites him to dine with her, mentions her son's dedication to his studies, and prepares questions for discussion. Abdellah agrees and accompanies her. After she offers bread, he smiles, kisses her hand, and says, "Yettou is a woman with the courage of ten men," an idiom expressing admiration for hardworking women. Like Fatime in *Myopia*, both female characters are initially depicted in private settings, engaged in household chores and assuming maternal roles in the absence of a husband or father, highlighting social

disparities and society's neglect of marginalized communities' needs. Their struggles go unnoticed until the camera captures their silence.

Yettou shares her perspective and challenges traditional and controversial expectations and restrictions placed on Amazigh women. She opposes cultural bans and embodies a modern Amazigh woman whose lifestyle differs from the traditional image shaped by colonial and orientalist discourses about North African women. Typically, colonial discourse depicts them as silent and primarily focused on preserving their traditions, rather than being open to other languages and cultures. As Chandra Talpade Mohanty discusses in “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” colonial and Western feminist narratives often portray the “Third World woman” as a uniform, passive figure, disregarding the diversity and agency of women in non-Western societies (p. 89). This colonial perspective contributed to the formation of stereotypical images of women in North Africa, including Amazigh women, who are frequently portrayed as traditional and voiceless instead of active participants in their social and cultural lives. Nonetheless, Yettou speaks Arabic, navigates between the village and the city, participates in a national protest, and encourages viewers to reconsider the roles of Amazigh women in contemporary Moroccan society, where women from various backgrounds coexist, pursue their passions, and surmount historical limitations on their aspirations.



Fig. 7 Razzia (2017): Abdellah was shocked by the visit of a Ministry of Education representative.

Mahmoud, a representative from the Ministry of Education in Rabat, unexpectedly visits Abdellah to inform him about upcoming educational reforms and to ask if he is aware of the curriculum changes. Abdellah replies, “I am aware that there are some changes, but since we live in an isolated area, it is hard to stay updated on everything.” Throughout this scene, the Amazigh community faces transportation and other daily struggles and receives minimal government support. Regarding education, they face an imposed authoritative role that marginalizes not only their native language but also their identity. The dialogue between Mahmoud and Abdellah unfolds as follows.

Mahmoud: Do you still teach the Amazigh language, despite the ministry instructions?

Abdellah: It is the only language that those people know and communicate in.

Mahmoud: It is not a language; it is just a dialect, and our language is Arabic; it is the language of the Quran, the language that gathers us and unifies us as Muslims.

Abdellah: I understand, but I cannot teach my lessons in Arabic; they will not understand anything.

Historically, during the period of French and Spanish colonial governance from 1912 to 1956, a primary tactic employed was the systematic exclusion of the Amazigh people. Colonial authorities predominantly relied on a 'divide and rule' strategy to maintain control and sustain the French social and cultural order. For instance, the Treaty of Fez (1912) officially instituted French colonial dominance in Morocco, initiating a regime characterized by domination and exploitation, and declaring the colonized as 'protected'. In *A History of Modern Morocco*, Susan Gilson Miller characterizes French colonialism as a gradual and intricate process of hegemony that extended beyond military occupation to encompass political, cultural, and epistemic authority. She clarifies that the establishment of the Protectorate in 1912 was not an abrupt rupture but the culmination of escalating European intervention that undermined Moroccan sovereignty. Although the colonial administration preserved the Sultan's nominal authority, ultimate power resided with French officials, exemplifying indirect governance. Miller further highlights how colonial institutions were employed as instruments of political control, shaping knowledge about Moroccan society to sustain dominance. Her work demonstrates that colonial strategies such as social segmentation and the creation of loyal indigenous elites contributed to societal fragmentation (Miller, 2013, p.104). This strategy weakened the cohesion of Moroccan resistance by imposing Arabic and French as dominant languages while marginalizing the Amazigh language within the colonial educational framework.

Jessica Schwed observes that during the 1970s, Amazigh communities mobilized forms of resistance in response to the perceived threat posed by Arabization policies in public educational institutions (Schwed, 2024, p. 33). This development reflects the institutional privileging of Arabic within the Moroccan educational system. While Amazigh and Arab populations historically coexisted in Morocco, colonial powers reconfigured these identities through 'divide-and-rule' strategies that exacerbated sociolinguistic hierarchies. As Mohand Tilmatine argues in *French and Spanish Colonial Policy in North Africa: Revisiting the Kabyle and Berber Myth*, colonial administrations contributed to the elevation of Arabic as a language of prestige while marginalizing Tamazight as peripheral and subordinate (Tilmatine, 2016, p. 112). In the postcolonial period, these hierarchies were further reinforced by state-led Arabization policies, which, although sometimes framed within broader Arab-

Islamic identity discourses, were primarily driven by political and institutional agendas rather than by religious doctrine.

The process of Arabization in Morocco significantly affects the country's native languages, a topic debated by Ayoub Loutfi, who argues that Morocco's multilingualism showcases its richness and complexity. Three main languages coexist alongside other foreign languages: Moroccan Arabic (MA), Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), and the Amazigh language. These languages play a vital role in shaping Moroccan identity, but they often operate within a hierarchy because each holds different significance. For example, Moroccan Arabic, also known as Darija, is the most widely used language in Morocco. It is used in daily communication, whereas Muslims use classical Arabic for prayers and education, and also use French, making it a prestigious choice. Based on his research and access to many public and private schools, he finds that Arabization has been essential since Morocco's independence. It aims to create a unified national identity (Loutfi, 2020, p. 139). The Arabization policy affected the status of the Amazigh language, which might have faded out without the king's 2011 speech, in which he recognized it as one of Morocco's official languages. Another key point is that Amazigh activists have played a significant role during the Democratic Spring, voicing their ideas and expressing dissatisfaction over their exclusion from the political sphere.

In 2011, Tamazight was designated the second official language in Morocco, and since then, the number of students from different regions studying and conducting research in the Amazigh language has increased. This development enriches the language and encourages Western anthropologists to explore this field to understand these marginalized groups in Morocco better. Before it became an official language, the state attempted to Arabize the Amazigh population, influencing or reshaping their identity through language. In these scenes, Ayouch seeks to convey that Morocco should be a land of coexistence and tolerance, where people from different cultures can achieve personal freedom and live in peace, rather than focusing solely on the social injustice some ethnic groups face in their journeys toward freedom. However, that is how the marginalization of Amazigh culture begins. Language is one of the significant factors of culture; if we define culture as a broad concept that refers to each group's style of life, dialect, language, and style of clothing, then Amazigh people are excluded in two significant ways: first, due to their geographical location, living in the periphery, and second, because societal limitations restrict them. It is a dehumanizing act to deprive Amazigh people of their mother tongue and impose a language they do not understand. This prevents them from expressing their ideas, voicing their dissatisfaction, or participating fully in society.

When the state enforces Arabic as the only legitimate language of instruction, Abdellah's motivation wanes. He is caught between two choices: obeying a system that silences his students linguistically and culturally, or resisting and risking exclusion. His refusal results in both symbolic and physical displacement. Disappointed by the forced rupture imposed by the state authority, Abdellah leaves the village for Casablanca, never returns, and fails to fulfill his promise to Yettou, who had planned to return for her and her son, Ilyas. Their relationship surpasses a typical love story, conveying a political and cultural message about the emotional, physical, and cultural divide between two worlds. Yettou, the Amazigh woman, has a voice and agency that challenge cultural expectations, unlike Abdellah, who is shaped by institutional power. His broken promise symbolizes the unfulfilled commitments of governments and politicians to improve life in peripheral areas. Their relationship surpasses a typical love story, conveying a political and cultural message about the emotional, physical, and cultural divide between two worlds. Yettou, the Amazigh woman, has a voice and agency that challenge cultural expectations, unlike Abdellah, who is shaped by institutional power. His broken promise symbolizes the unfulfilled commitments of governments and politicians to improve life in peripheral areas. Their story highlights the power dynamics shaping identity in postcolonial Morocco. Their relationship exposes how intimacy itself becomes politicized, revealing the uneven power dynamics that shape identity, belonging, and visibility within Morocco's postcolonial condition.



Fig. 8 Razzia (2017): Yettou's tattoo is a symbol of power and resistance.

This close-up accentuates Yettou's Amazigh tattoo through a tightly framed shot and warm, subdued lighting. Yettou, an Amazigh woman, relocates to Casablanca, where she owns a residence utilized as a gathering place for women to dance as a form of emancipation from domestic constraints. She demonstrates her agency and defiance of tradition through her speech and actions. She mentions her lover, Abdellah, who promised to return to the village and bring her and Ilyas along. She states, "I loved him so much, and I was waiting for him every day." Yettou dares to express her feelings, which may be considered taboo within her culture. She remarks, "My pain was made of tears and silence, but only dead people who are silent." This statement reveals her internal struggle, suffering, and

courage in speaking out, emphasizing that she was born into a culture that silences her. She compares her silence to that of the deceased, symbolizing the death of her dreams and emotional well-being. Subsequently, she tattoos an olive tree on her forehead, symbolizing strength; a star on her cheek, representing enlightenment; and the “eye of God.” The scene is imbued with symbolism; her facial tattoos and her act of breaking the silence serve as acts of empowerment. Yettou’s solitary singing atop the mountain operates as a counter-hegemonic acoustic signifier, transforming a marginalized geographic space into a resonant site of enunciation where Amazigh identity resists erasure and reclaims symbolic visibility.

Furthermore, extensive research has been done on the marginalization of Amazigh women by depicting them as oppressed, silent, or illiterate, which reinforces stereotypes about them. However, there is limited research focused on amplifying the voices of Moroccan Amazigh women, who are often portrayed as voiceless in both literature and some Western films. In their article titled “Beyond Vulnerability and Adversities: Amazigh Women’s Agency and Empowerment in Morocco,” Bochra Laghssais and Irene Comins-Mingol argue that a detailed look at the history of the Amazigh community can reveal an alternative perspective on the stories of Amazigh women through their knowledge and daily practices (Laghssais & Comins-Mingol, 2021).

Yettou is seen walking among other young people at the Casablanca march, appearing convinced that Abdellah will not return to her life. While she remains hopeful about her dreams, she begins to accept the reality around her. No longer living in the Amazigh Mountains, she seems older than she did in the film's opening scenes, almost sixty. She might feel disappointed by the chaos in Casablanca, a large, modern city where people from various Moroccan cultures and regions come to seek freedom. The film’s last scenes echo Abdellah’s initial questions: “What is the benefit of language when it silences voices?” and “What is the benefit of faith when it deprives them of a dream?” These questions are relevant throughout the film, as each character faces unique challenges crossing traditional and cultural boundaries. Both *Myopia* and *Razzia* explore similar themes through different camera angles and scenarios, showing how language and religion become political tools used by those in power. It is not about the Islamic religion or religious identity, nor language itself being problematic, but about how these tools are used to exercise authority and maintain dominance over “others.”

Furthermore, these questions guide the film’s investigation into the cultural, linguistic, and religious restrictions faced by Amazigh women like Yettou. Abdellah claims that language is not neutral; it acts as a tool of power, favoring Arabic and French while marginalizing Amazigh, which silences women whose voices are rooted in their native language. Likewise, faith and tradition, instead of offering hope, serve as regulatory mechanisms that curb Yettou’s independence and ambitions, highlighting

the patriarchal norms present in her society. Abdellah's critiques align with postcolonial and feminist theories, demonstrating how institutionalized language and religion can restrict identity, agency, and self-expression. Yettou's acts of resistance, asserting her wishes and taking charge of her domestic and emotional life, embody everyday agency that directly challenges the systemic silencing criticized by Abdellah. Ultimately, the film depicts the tension between imposed structures and personal empowerment, illustrating that even within social and cultural constraints, Amazigh women can reclaim their voices and aspirations.

2.5 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has moved beyond a purely textual analysis of *Razzia* and *Myopia* to interrogate the epistemological, ideological, and visual frameworks within which these films are produced, circulated, and interpreted. The findings suggest that the marginalization of rural Amazigh women cannot be reduced solely to a legacy of colonialism; rather, it is shaped by the intersecting forces of colonial discourse and certain neo-colonial feminist interpretive frameworks that risk reproducing simplified readings of gender, culture, and liberation. While both films foreground Amazigh women's resilience, labor, and forms of agency, they remain entangled in representational regimes often mediated by external gazes and normative assumptions about gender, modernity, and emancipation.

In this sense, Western feminist paradigms grounded in universalist assumptions must be critically approached for their epistemic blind spots, narrative simplifications, and their potential to reproduce hegemonic hierarchies. By homogenizing Arab-Muslim women as oppressed subjects in need of rescue, such frameworks can enact forms of epistemic violence that obscure local forms of agency and self-representation, reducing complex lived realities to reductive tropes of victimhood. At the same time, this study adopts a more cautious stance regarding broader claims about "Western secular modernity" and "consumerist logic." Rather than treating these as fully substantiated analytical structures within the films themselves, they are better understood here as *partial interpretive horizons* that inform dominant global regimes of representation. Within this context, neo-colonial feminist Orientalism does not operate as a neutral discourse of emancipation but as a set of circulating interpretive assumptions that may, at times, align with broader modernist narratives of progress and visibility. However, these dynamics should be understood as suggestive rather than exhaustive explanatory frameworks, and they require further grounded textual and contextual analysis beyond the scope of this study.

Against this backdrop, the analysis reaffirms that rural Amazigh women's lives cannot be adequately understood through externally imposed metrics of liberation. Their cultural practices, social roles, and

When Signs are Divergent: Analysing Farmer-Herder Conflicts in Southwest Nigeria Through Biosemiotic Theory

daily experiences are not inherently oppressive but are often meaningful, coherent, and embedded within their own socio-cultural and religious contexts. Islam, in this regard, should not be reductively framed as a source of subjugation but recognized as a complex lived framework that may coexist with diverse expressions of female agency. Therefore, deconstructing the marginalization of Amazigh women requires a sustained critique not only of colonial legacies but also of contemporary discursive formations that continue to shape the representation and interpretation of their voices. It calls for a shift toward epistemic plurality, one that acknowledges localized knowledges, respects cultural specificity, and resists the imposition of totalizing external narratives. Only through such a reorientation can cinematic representation move beyond the paradox of visibility that simultaneously reveals and obscures, and begin to reflect the lived realities of Moroccan rural Amazigh women on their own terms.

Referencess

Ben Haman, O. (2025). Women and intersectional barriers in social exclusion. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 112, 103142.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power* (J. B. Thompson, Ed.; G. Raymond & M. Adamson, Trans.). Harvard University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (2001). *Masculine domination* (R. Nice, Trans.). Stanford University Press. (Original work published 1998)

Bourbi, F. (2018). Nouvelles subjectivités : Le corps féminin en quête d'émancipation dans le film *Razzia* de Nabil Ayouch. *Revue du Laboratoire Langage et Société*, Université Hassan Ier de Settat.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.

Dwyer, K. (2025). *The perils and promise of Moroccan cinema*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Elharraki, B. (2019). The image of Arab/Amazigh and Moroccan women in the media. *International Journal of Culture and History*, 6(1).

Elimadi, I. (2021). The representation of women in Moroccan cinema. *Journal of Geopolitics and Geostrategic Intelligence*, 3(3), 125–140.

Fadil, S. (2018). Women's preservation of oral culture in Imilchil: The Festival of Marriage as a case study. *Feminist Research*, 2(1), 19–28.

Gagliardi, S. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). *When the "minority" speaks: Voices of Amazigh women in Morocco*.

Ichou, A., & Fathi, S. (2020). Amazigh language in education policy and planning in Morocco: Effects of the gap between macro and micro levels of planning. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 11(1), 50–56.

- Laayouni, Y. (2023). The internal other in *Myopia*: Challenging social exclusion and dominance. In *La femme dans le cinéma amazigh* (Actes du colloque de l'Université d'été de Sidi Ifni).
- Laghssais, B. (2003). *Amazigh feminism narratives: Aspirations, agency, and empowerment of Amazigh women in the southeast of Morocco* (Doctoral thesis).
- Laghssais, B., & Comins-Mingol, I. (2021). Beyond vulnerability and adversities: Amazigh women's agency and empowerment in Morocco. *Journal of North African Studies*, 28(2), 347–367. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13629387.2021.1990048>
- Loutfi, A. (2020). The status of mother tongues and language policy in Morocco. *International Journal of Applied Language Studies and Culture*, 3(2), 139.
- Mignolo, W. D. (2011). *The darker side of Western modernity: Global futures, decolonial options*. Duke University Press.
- Miller, S. G. (2013). *A history of modern Morocco*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sadiqi, F. (2007). The role of Moroccan women in preserving the Amazigh language and culture. *Museum International*, 59(4), 26–33.
- Sadiqi, F. (2016). Emerging Amazigh feminist nongovernmental organizations. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 12(1), 122–125.
- Said, E. W. (1978). *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books.
- Salim, Z. (2011). *Between feminism and Islam: Human rights and Sharia law in Morocco*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Schwed, J. (2017). *The power dynamics of language: An analysis of the positionality of Amazigh language in Morocco* (Independent Study Project No. 2632). SIT Digital Collections. https://digitalcollections.sit.edu/isp_collection/2632
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (pp. 271–313). University of Illinois Press.
- Tilmatine, M. (2016). French and Spanish colonial policy in North Africa: Revisiting the Kabyle and Berber myth. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 2016(239), 112. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl-2016-0006>

AUTHORS' BIOS

Meriamé NAJI, a PhD candidate in Film Studies at Ibn Tofail University (ITU), Morocco.
Abdelghanie ENNAM is a full Professor of International Media, Communication, and Translation. Department of English Studies, Ibn Tofail University (ITU), Morocco.