

History of Movies from below: Microhistory as a Film Technique

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Submission: 25.02.2024; Acceptance: 04.04.2024; Publication: 24.06.2024

Abstract

This essay focuses on the historical film as a type of historical record that can change the way we think about the past. It looks at how Souheil Ben-Barka's 2002 book *The Lovers of Mogador* avoids colonial portrayals of Moroccan resistance that reinforce stories of inevitable submission and European military superiority. By changing how Hubert Lyautey's pacification campaign (1912–1925) looks, the movie reimagines southeastern Morocco not as a passive border, but as a stronghold of long-term military resistance. This shows how free Moroccan guerrilla fighters are. Using a microhistorical approach, the paper digs deeper into the complicated situation of Moroccan Goumiers, who were native colonial soldiers and are torn between two realities: they are seen as traitors in local memory and are relegated to lower roles in the French military. But the paper makes the case that historical movies can re-stage the past in ways that show its ambiguities and shake up standard historical stories by using these kinds of narrative and visual techniques.

Keywords: Historical film, microhistory, Moroccan goumiers, resistance, *The Lovers of Mogador*.

Introduction

In contrast to what is written, historical film has come a long way from being seen as a tourist attraction with no real purpose to becoming one of the most important film genres of our time. This not only adds to our history collections but also changes how we think about and interact with history. Based on this new knowledge, the director is now seen as someone who does a lot more than just show old events. In a way, the filmmaker is like the historian. Filmmaking is both a way of doing, representing, and commenting on history, and it also projects historical events. Robert A. Rosenstone says that filmmakers may have the same right as scholars to think about the past (155). In other words, the filmmaker can help us see and hear parts of our history that we can not see. In some cases, the rich mix of screenplay, sight, and sound can "irritate gaps in the historical record and polishes dulling ambiguities and complexities" (Carnes 1). Another important thing is that historical films often do more than just show the past; they also give it emotions and feelings that make the audience relate to and identify with it. In this area, the filmmaker, who benefits from the visual power of his medium, stands out more than the academic historian, whose written work and sometimes a few grainy photos do not have the same impact on the audience as the moving image.

There is still a lot of debate about whether a director could call themselves a cinematic historian, though. This debate happens in both the film and history academic worlds. The strict

rules of historical objectivity that historians think about and follow are one of the things that has led to this controversy. The second group thinks that historians must keep a critical distance from their subjects in order to write good, objective history. It is important to make the difference between fact and fiction clear and clear at all times. This is not always the case for filmmakers, who may "project onto the silver screen [their] highly subjective version of real people and events and enliven them with colorful imagery, made-up dialogue, and imaginary people" (Rosenstone 133). In other words, history portrayed in movies is seen as a terrible mistake by historians. This is an example: Ian Jarvie, a historian and film fan, is very critical of filmmakers and says they are dishonest. It is written that "moviemakers have faked and re-staged events for their newsreels and documentaries from the very beginning" (377). So, in Jarvie's opinion, history films can not be seen as a way to see into the past. Despite the fact that films can show historical events or take a certain point of view, he thinks they are limited because the filmmakers can not properly defend, refute, or footnote them, unlike historians who have all the necessary documents and tools at their disposal. When you look at past events through a screen, the lines between fact and fiction become less clear.

In the same way, British historian Edward H. Carr criticizes directors for the same things that historians often criticize filmmakers for. From his point of view, historians also choose and organize facts while obscuring others. In the same way, Hayden White says that professional historians often forget that "written history is itself a representation of the past, a construction with its own rules of operation" (1196). Rosenstone says that history is "a cultural historicist discourse constituted by historians as much as it is reconstructed from the sources available about the past." This makes us think of his idea. Other well-known historians, like Oliver Stone, Tony Barta, Mark Carnes, and Marnie Hughes, all say that the language of movies can be both a way to get information and a way to express yourself, adding a new dimension to what we know about the past.

Ferro comes to the conclusion that both filmmakers and historians do not write history in a pure way. Then Ferro tells his fellow historians to use the many useful features of visual media, which, even if we do not agree on its accuracy, can help shape how we understand history. He even hails the director's power to not only imagine history but also to change it and make it more difficult to understand. He says, "Thanks to living memories and oral histories, the historian-filmmaker can give society back a history that the institution of History has taken away" (20). So, the movie can be seen as a critique of society because it breaks down what many generations of politicians and thinkers have worked so hard to make work so well. The fact that filmic language is completely different from written texts is an important part of Ferro's argument. So, movies should not be used as examples or for fun. Instead, they should be seen as historical records in which the director "challenges generally accepted views of certain people, events, issues, or themes" (Rosenstone 118).

Revising historical stories is all about including everyone in the visual memories we make. In other words, it means looking into the past of places and people that are quiet, ignored, or on the edges, especially those whose stories are rarely told because they only serve to highlight the stories of those who are already well-known. In cinema, a new way of looking at

history began to take shape because of this: filming history from below, which is based on a micro-historical approach.

Filming History From Below: Microhistory as Cinematic Practice

One of the first people to study microhistory, Giovanni Levi, says, "The unifying principle of all microhistorical research is the belief that microscopic observation will reveal factors previously unobserved" (Brewer, 97). To tell the difference between this way of looking into history and the French ideas of *petite histoire* and *fait divers*, the latter tend to focus on specific events as case studies. But microhistory, as understood by Primo Levi, Giovanni Levi, and Simona Cerutti, cannot be reduced to "biography or localized history," nor can it be described as a case study (Pucci 462). Actually, microhistory is not just interested in that; it is also trying to find answers to big questions about history. To the same point, Istvan M. Szijarto says, "For microhistorians, people who lived in the past are not seen as passive objects controlled by big historical forces; they are seen as active, conscious actors" (463).

Italian neorealism is a good example of how these new paths have changed historical fiction and documentary filmmaking right away. Efrén Cuevas uses the microhistorical method to study films in his book *Filming History from Below* (2022), which shows how films can be used as a microhistorical record of a certain time, place, or social group. Cuevas's approach is based on the idea that written and visual history go hand in hand. Rosenstone, in particular, suggests this connection:

For film makers to be seen as historians. Hey.Hey.is to agree with a different kind of history. Hey.Hey.Hey.If you want to know a lot of facts, think deeply about ideas, or gain theoretical insight, movies will always be simpler than written history. But its moving pictures and soundscapes will make it more complex emotionally and experientially in ways that can not be found on paper (159).

Using Rosenstone's idea of the cinematic historian within a microhistorical framework to read and think about Ben-Barka's historical films means two things: first, that these films are useful entry points into social history that can help us understand it better through their own unique filmic language; and second, that they are important visual media that can bring attention to stories that have been ignored or forgotten.

It now turns its attention to the everyday lives of ordinary people, or what Alf Ludke calls "the largely anonymous in history" (4). In the world of movies, Cuevas pushes the limits of saving "the casualties of history." He says that microhistory should bring back people who have been forgotten and create counter-hegemonic stories that go against official histories (44–45). Another important book by Ranajit Guha, *The Small Voices of History* (2009), makes a similar case for listening to the voices of subaltern people who are often ignored. Guha, who works in a different area of study than Cuevas, is also dedicated to bringing back the many voices of the oppressed and their hidden histories. He says,

For a long time, historians have followed a method that does not pay much attention to the small dramas and fine details of everyday life, especially at the lowest levels. This hole can be filled by a critical historiography that gets closer to the ground to find the signs of a subaltern life as it moves through time (35).

There is a discursive dualism in Guha's call: histories that are dominant and histories that are suppressed. The suppressed histories are suffocated by the dominant histories.

This may be why a lot of postcolonial directors, whether in Africa or somewhere else, have made movies about the history and culture of their own communities: to give a voice to people who have been left out or silenced by Western and Hollywood movies. One interesting example is Souheil Ben-Barka. His movies show this kind of narrative agency. Not only does Ben-Barka show Moroccan and African subjects as more than just symbols and decorations, but she also digs up memories and histories that have been buried in a way that upsets the self/other binary. His approach to history is different from that of most postcolonial filmmakers, who I think belong to the group that Aijaz Ahmed described above. Instead of just writing about what happened after colonization, Ben-Barka goes further back in time to re-create important historical stories that show how creative and independent Moroccans were. Because he makes historical films, he creates a space where Morocco can escape the Eurocentric panopticon and where the Moroccan people he films are no longer put below Westerners.

By doing this, Ben-Barka is breaking down traditional frames and creating new histories. This makes it possible to rethink imperial and colonial histories and geographies. Sandra Ponzanesi and Marguerite Waller called this "unframing histories" in their 2012 book *Postcolonial Cinema Studies*. They see it as a political act to see what has been hidden, ignored, or thrown away. They go on to say that unframing histories "is not only about undoing fixed geographies and established historical accounts, but also about rediscovering the regional, the minor histories, and local spaces, made possible by anachronisms and deterritorializations" (62). Also Pieter Sorlin agrees with this point of view. He says that history in movies "is a mere framework, serving as a basis or a counterpoint for a political thesis" (12). At this point, it is important to note that one of the most important things that postcolonial film does is break up top-down histories of and about third-world people and places.

More importantly, as Ponzanesi and Waller said above, postcolonial cinema should not just do things that are offensive; it should also try to find "hidden histories," to use Stuart Hall's term. Since this description has two parts, postcolonial cinema has two roles: it is both subversive and productive. In order for postcolonial filmmakers to make progress, they need to focus a lot on remembering in their films. Paulo de Medeiros says that remembering is putting different memories back together against the lack of historical memory (139). Sometimes, those memories can bring up upsetting colonial times, like the Battle of Algiers in 1966, *Amok* in 1983, and *Rabbit-Proof Fence* in 2002, to name a few. Sometimes, and this does not happen very often in postcolonial film, they can be happy by reminding people in the country and around the world of the good times in the past, like in the historical films we are looking at.

This second way of looking at visual remembering is not the same as what Paul Gilroy calls "postcolonial melancholia" (68), which is influenced by empire nostalgia. Tom Rice writes about this event in his 2019 book *Films for the Colonies: Cinema and the Preservation of the British Empire*. He says the following:

It is a longing to go back to the "glories" of the past. Of course, this requires a willful lack of memory and knowledge of history, valuing a certain memory of empire—tea drinking, building

colonialism. In this part, the second story is the most important one. Again, we will look at history from below to try to hear voices that have been silenced or ignored by histories that are seen as more important. The Lovers of Mogador shifts its focus from big stories to small ones, just like Sand and Fire and Drums of Fire. "Not to offer specific case studies as 'examples' of general theories, but to discover, through a 'microscopic' analysis, historical realities that have gone unnoticed in macrohistorical analysis in order to better explain a particular era" (24). This is why the scale of history is being changed.

The movie takes place in a time when France ruled over Morocco. There are, however, many experts who do not want to use the word "protectorate" because they say that French policies at the time were not at all in line with what the protectorate asked of them. Abdelhamid Zoubir and Jacqueline Kaye wrote in 1990's *The Ambiguous Compromise*, "The protectorate was a myth, for all power lay with the French" (11). As an example, the French government used the well-known colonial strategy of "divide and conquer." The Berber Dahir (decree) of 1914 is a good example of this. After that, Arabs were put up against Berbers. To be clear, these policies were based on what Rudyard Kipling calls "the white man's burden." This means that white people felt it was their moral duty to handle the problems of non-white people they saw as less developed. In this way, Zoubir and Kaye say, "Whatever the myths about the French mission to civilize, the policy of French colonialism was to make a people who could not read or write." People had to lose their religion, language, and historical customs in order to be free enough to become civilized. In the introduction to his important work *Orientalism* (1979), Edward Said says that every empire has an official discourse that talks about how unique it is and how its job is to educate, civilize, and organize the world. This is called *la mission civilisatrice*. It is said that force should only be used as a last option to "make the world safe for democracy" and bring native people and their lands under the control of civilization (Said XVI).

But these claims of kindness are called into question from the very beginning of Ben Barka's movie. At the beginning of the movie, a Moroccan guide leads a group of French soldiers as they look for rebels in the southern part of Morocco. Because they were trapped in a small, empty fortress and could not get out, the French captain shot the Moroccan guide and called him a traitor. This started a shooting exchange that killed and hurt many people on both sides. There would have been less death if the captain had agreed to talk with the

Arab fighters who were only trying to make a deal with the French army to free their fellow prisoners from French rule. Because the French captain sees the Indians as criminals, he will not talk to them. This means that the only language they know is violence. Also, if they negotiated with the locals, they would be on the same level as the French. In this case, Ben-Barka seems to go against what was said earlier by making violence the main language France uses with its colonies. In addition, he challenges what historians and critics call "the Lyaute method," especially the idea that it puts peace, safety, and negotiation ahead of military conflict. Barnett Singer writes in "Lyaute: An Interpretation of the Man and French Imperialism" that "one came neither as conqueror nor colonizer [...]. Lyautey always valued negotiation above battle (in *Le Role Colonial* he notes his admiration of a soldier who kept talking rather than

return fire)" (136). This is one of the main ideas behind "the Lyaute method." In some situations, this may have been true, but it does not cover the whole history of France's colonization of Morocco.

In the second scene, we go to Mogador's port to see a new shipment of guns, ammunition, and hundreds of Senegalese soldiers who will help the African infantry. While looking at the new soldiers that Belkacem has sent, his trusted servant Salem exclaims, "Look at all that stuff!" That is scary! There are a lot of soldiers and guns. They have lost it! Are they going to kill all of us?", to which his master answered, "Clearly!" To take what we Moroccans still own and put an end to our rebellion." The French colonel right after this scene confirms Belkacem's fear by saying, "The more we shoot, the more they sprout." This is meant to be funny (The Lovers of Mogador, 00:05:00).

The first few scenes set a pretty scary tone for the French army's position in Morocco. The army's job is not to keep the peace and promote democracy, but to torture and kill anyone who does not want to live under French rule. Some French historians and geographers say that the French presence in Morocco was good, but this film questions those claims. Victor Piquet (V) wrote in the introduction to his 1917 book *Le Maroc: Géographie, Histoire, Mise-en-valuer*, "La France an acquis le droit d'établir son hégémonie politique au Maroc, qu'elle a su faire accepter avec une remarquable habileté; ses soldats poussent chaque jour plus loin les limites de la zone où règnent la paix et l'ordre." This means that France has gained the right to establish its political hegemony over Morocco, and it has been able to make it acceptable. Every day, French soldiers push the limits of the area where peace and order reign further. The scene above and the ones that followed it not only changed the way the French talked about Morocco, but they also brought attention to the resistance that was going strong in the southeast. Some French nationalists would say that taking over Morocco was easy, but it wasn't. It was tough, and the resistance was happening all over the country, so the war was never over.

Additionally, Ben-Barka brings to light a long-forgotten and very troubling part of French colonial history: the use of Senegalese soldiers, who were wrongly called *tirailleurs sénégalais*, in the growth of the French empire. This book serves to remind Moroccans of the horrible crimes that were done in the name of "la mission civilisatrice." It was common for the French colonial foreign legion to hire local soldiers. This happened in almost all of France's former colonies, including Morocco, as we will see with Belkacem. Along with the unloading of military supplies, a huge group of Senegalese soldiers hired by the French to strengthen the colonial army after the native resistance in the south made it weaker can be seen in the picture above.

There was a time in the early 1900s when the French military used West African colonial infantrymen in Morocco. This was the first time that these colonial troops were sent somewhere other than sub-Saharan Africa. Sarah Jean Zimmerman writes in her dissertation, *Living Beyond Boundaries: West African Servicemen in French Colonial Conflicts, 1908–1962*, that "French military strategists saw the Moroccan campaigns as a place to try new things. The Moroccan campaigns were a place of trial and error for testing the physical limits of *tirailleurs sénégalais*" (23). The movie brings up this issue to show how the French used Morocco as a lab

and people from sub-Saharan Africa as test subjects. Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Mangin called this colonial strategy "the dawn of a new era in colonial military strategy," even though it was cruel to people. Here, Ben-Barka not only shows how the French colonialist machine worked and how it used incredibly cruel and unusual war tactics, but he also shows how the natives were oppressed in two ways. During the French colonial campaign in North Africa, these soldiers were used as labor reserves and sometimes as test subjects. For a long time, no one paid attention to their voices. It is only been recently that historians have become interested in the histories of goums and tirailleurs sénégalais (force noire). Also, it is important to note that these soldiers' lives are very dangerous among their own people. The colonizer sees them as a flexible and effective way to force imperial rules on the natives, while the colonized see them as being traitors.

The movie then takes this theme even further by following the main character as he trades across the Moroccan desert and into Timbuktu. Belkacem, who is known as a great trader, gets his crew together and heads to Timbuktu. He leaves his new French bride with his family at home. As Belkacem makes his way back, his caravan is attacked by thieves, and all of his crew members are killed. Belkacem shows up in a French garrison after surviving the attack. There is no explanation in the movie for how Belkacem makes it through the raid or what led him to where he is now. A whole series of important information is taken out. Martin Scorsese once said, "Cinema is a matter of what is in the frame and what is out" (Mott 40). This story ellipsis makes us think of that quote. This means that what filmmakers leave out of a story is just as important as what they add. The movie tells the story of Ben-Barak's parents, so leaving this out should be seen as a deliberate choice.

In what looks like an abandoned and broken-down Casbah in the desert, the next scene starts with a legion of French troops busy building barracks and putting away weapons and ammunition. The French flag, which draws the attention of the camera, makes us think of the French colonial campaigns in the south. Heavy guns are framed to show the military power and oppression that were used to control the rebellious tribes. The second reading goes against what is now known as Lyautisme, which is the pacification doctrine that French Resident General Hubert Lyautey put in place. This doctrine says that France should not have direct rule over Morocco and should not have to use military force. Lyautey's controversial colonial method of "never destroying local traditions" (Singer 134) is also upset by turning the Casbah into a military outpost. This remodeling of the building foreshadows Belkacem's forced citizenship and joining the French army. To explain why Belkacem became French, the French captain says, pointing to the news that Belkacem was found in Timbuktu, "Timbuktu is French property, so he is now also French." I will let you rub a stamp on the papers we need to move forward. He is now called Francois Sudan (The Lovers of Mogador, 01:27:00). This sentence shows that the French government treats native people against their will, treating them like things that can be named and used. Because of this, we can think of one way that European empires used to colonize other countries and people: they would name things to give them order and meaning. Naming is powerful because it can uproot and erase identities that are already there to make room for new ones that are more personal. The act of naming or changing the

name of a place or person was a way to control or take control of it during the colonial era (Millison 2). Even by the rules, the act in the movie is fine. The name that was given to Belkacem is both a sign of his ties to the French patrie and his claim to it. Belkacem is now part of the French colonial army. The officer in the picture below is surprised by Belkacem's response. He does not seem happy about being naturalized. When the second man tries to tell the officer who he really is and what happened, the officer does not believe him and tells the other sergeants to take him to the hospital and shave off his beard. But when Belkacem says over and over that he is not French and can not accept the new identity that is being forced on him, the officer jails him.

This is not the first time Belkacem has had to deal with a problem like this. Col. Albert Fojart, a French officer, scolds Belkacem at the beginning of the movie for turning down French citizenship. The colonel makes it sound like being French is an honor and that turning it down would be a very bad thing to do. But when Belkacem asks the French colonel if he will give up his citizenship for another, the colonel gets angry and says the question does not matter. This recurring theme points to more than just a small argument over nationality; it touches on bigger postcolonial issues like identity politics and the question of where one belongs. Belkacem's refusal to become a French citizen must be understood in light of how he felt about colonialism.

At the start, Belkacem says bad things about the French being in Morocco. He tells colonel Fojart, "You take over the land and make your law, which we must follow" (The Lovers of Mogador, 00:06:48). Later, Belkacem has to deal with the consequences of what he said when he is forced to join the French colonial army. Still, Belkacem has tried to get away from the soldier because he misses his wife and daughter, whom he has not seen since the day she was born. He has been caught and is now back in prison with Paolino, the French soldier who helped him get away. There is an idea in the scene that the colonial discourse is full of "heterogeneities, inconsistencies, and slippages." In fact, Ben-Barka does not base the movie on a close Saidian model of criticism that is based on opposites. Instead, he tries to show that not all French soldiers are colonizers at heart. In one scene, the movie ends with Belkacem and Paolino lying in their cells and counting how many shots each of them will get.

If Belkacem is guilty of leaving the army, Paolino is guilty of helping his Moroccan friend get away from the company and join his wife and daughter. The movie uses this friendship between people from different cultures to try to destroy colonialism from the inside by telling us to listen to the history's small voices that were drowned out by French colonialist rule. In this picture, there is a French soldier who is putting his own life in danger to save his friend from being captured by the Moroccans. But these times of talking to people from other cultures do make us think of the different things that French foreign legionnaires went through. Still, they do not excuse the French army from the crimes it committed against Moroccans while they were fighting for freedom.

Because the legion captain is short on men, he will not punish Belkacem for leaving the army. Instead, he makes him wear the French uniform and march with them to put down a rebellion. At first, Belkacem shouts, "They are my brothers!" and refuses to shoot back at the Moroccan militants." This quickly changes, though, when a bullet goes through Paolino's body.

Then Belkacem grabs his gun and starts shooting wildly at Moroccan rebels. Quick cuts to a close-up of Belkacem's reaction to his friend's death, which he does not mean to show. The frame is full of the smoke from the bullets and Belkacem's crazy need for payback. We can tell from the look on his face that he has no idea what he is doing. By zooming in on his lead character, Ben-Barka is able to show the audience this moving and violent reaction. In this scene, the close-up is important because it makes the audience feel close to the main character, who seems to be acting out of spite. It also shows the sad results of making native people fight in the colonial army by making them kill their own family members. The fact that they are fighting for no reason and just because they feel like it makes their situation worse. This makes me wonder if Ben-Barka is trying to say sorry to the people who joined the French colonial army. The question is more interesting when we think about the story of the movie, which is based on the director's parents' life.

Even more important, the movie strongly opposes war, no matter who started it, because it is heavily influenced by Ben-Barka's humanist ideas. One great example of this is the wide shot below, which shows the dead bodies after the attack on the Moroccan terrorists. The number of deaths is very high. In fact, Ben-Barka shows his humanist view on war right from the start through the figure of French judge Louis Lenhart. Colonel Forjat tells Lenhart about his plans to crush the Moroccan militants in the south. Lenhart says, "I am convinced that it would have been better to negotiate with the rebels rather than blow them to pieces." (The Lovers of Mogador, 00:05:11) The film shows what happened when the French colonial army did not listen to Lenhart's advice, which was similar to Ben-Barka's view.

But a close look at the picture above shows more than just the effects of violence. To begin with, most of the bodies that are lying around are those of French troops. This can be read in two ways. First, by focusing on the soldiers who died in the French army, the movie keeps up the same sorry tone that even France had lost a lot in the battle to bring peace. Now the talk is mostly about the French army's loss, and making the victim card is very important. This movie act leads to a spreading of responsibility. Putting French bodies in a frame makes Moroccan rebels responsible, which could mean that they are not always the real victims of French violence. By blurring the line between invasion and resistance, this kind of representation changes how people see the visual story.

Second, the scene above can be seen as a way of giving Moroccan militants more power. In other words, it wants to change the idea that natives are weak and easy to conquer. But while France and Spain faced strong resistance in the north, led by political and military leader Abdelkerim Khattabi, who fought against Spanish colonization in the north, not much attention has been paid to the resistance in the southeast of Morocco. The movie shows how militants in the southeast of Morocco gave up their lives to free their country, changing the course of national independence history. While the French army has rockets and heavy weapons, the militants are surrounded and only have rifles. They refuse to give up and continue to fight.

In this case, this suggests a return of the subject, which is Michel Foucault's idea of "the process by which objectified others may be turned into subjects of their history and experience" (Bhabha 178). Also, the dissertation does not pick one reading over another for the scene above;

it accepts both, given the filmmaker's background and vision for the movie. The second person can not completely condemn the colonial campaign just because the story reminds him of his parents, and he also can not ignore the role of the Moroccan militants because the story is so important to the Moroccan people's memory. After this, the movie becomes a confusing visual landscape that makes you feel different things. It is not the first time Ben-Barka jumps between two stories that are at odds with each other; he does it in almost all of his movies, which is why he is known as an artist. David Bordwell says this about the artist trademark:

A trademark that can be used to make money is an author's signature that stays the same across a body of work. A part of the signature comes from devices that are used in more than one movie. Different filmmakers could be told apart by themes (Buñuel's cripples, Fellini's parades, Bergman's theater shows) and camera techniques (Truffaut's pan-and-zoom, Ophuls's winding tracks, Chabrol's high angles, Antonioni's long shots). The trademark signature can also depend on how well the story is told. [...] The authorial trademark says that viewers must see each film as part of a larger body of work.(211).

As you can see in the scene above, Ben-Barka sometimes uses double critique to make his point, and other times he uses universal humanism. His feelings against war color the whole story. Speaking from a humanist point of view helps the film get seen by more people, keeps international funds coming in, and gives Ben-Barka a way to avoid a simplistic view of his family's history. However, it also creates a lot of mixed feelings and unanswered questions. Because of this, the movie will always teach the current age different kinds of historical facts.

When we talk about historical information, though, the movie is very helpful in bringing back the voices of Moroccan militants in the southeast who had forgotten about the past. There have not been many Moroccan films that go into as much detail about resistance in the southeast of the country as this one does. The lack of films about Moroccan resistance is mostly because there are not many historical films because of economic and structural issues, as well as the problematic issue of how to show history. The sad thing is that colonial movies like *Itto* (1934), which was directed by Jean Benoit-Lévy and Marie Epstein, fill in this gap. So, how people think about native resistance is framed by Herbert Lyautey's colonial strategy of "pacifique pénétration." The movie also helped to solidify the idea of the Berber myth, which David H. Slavin describes as "a self-serving array of half-truths concocted to explain the origins of the Maghreb's earliest inhabitants and to justify a policy of divide and rule" (125). The film, which Lyautey himself backed and paid for, was used to push the ideas of Lyautinisme. Lyautinisme was an intolerant and colonial movement that "romanticized Morocco's customs, traditions, and religion; idealized the bled, the countryside, over the city" (125). More importantly, the movie not only shows how the Berber people of the Middle Atlas live, but it also shows how pointless it is to fight back. It is about how the famous Mouha Ou Hamou and his daughter *Itto* led the tribes in the Atlas to give up. So, *Itto* (the movie) is a great example of how well Lyautey's efforts to bring peace to the region worked, but it also paints a pretty negative picture of one of the most important and charismatic anti-colonial tribal Berber leaders.

Still, Ben-Barka's "The Lovers of Mogador" sidesteps colonial depictions of Moroccan resistance that reinforce the idea that Morocco will have to give up and that Europe has better weapons. From below, the movie changes the way we see Lyautey's campaign to bring peace to the southeast of the country. People have said that the campaign to bring peace was smooth and very effective in colonial movies, but *The Lovers of Mogador* shows the exact opposite. This movie shows the southeast as a stronghold for military resistance, which sheds light on the freedom of Moroccan guerrilla fighters. Like, Belkacem's brother Lamine is in charge of the armed resistance. From the start, Lamine is shown to be a problem for the French colonial army. Lamine keeps up his violent activities even though he is badly hurt. In contrast to colonial films that focus on the dead end of resistance, Lamine gets hundreds of people to join his cause and tells them to fight the French, even though the French have the upper hand in battle. In this case, Ross E. Dunn, an American historian, says,

While Moroccan fighters used breech-loaders more often than flintlocks, they were still a long way behind the French in terms of technology. It was because the Moroccans did not have many repeating rifles or any of the machine guns and portable cannons that the French would use to win every major battle. (137).

Even though there are not enough soldiers, Lamine and his fellow fighters do not seem to give up. Instead, they keep fighting even though they know they will soon die. The fight scene in the end gives telling images of Moroccan resilience and self-sacrifice. The movie evens out the way that militant Moroccans were shown to people around the world before. It also draws attention to the part these people played in making it take longer for France to control Morocco.

Nonetheless, the film sometimes depicts the resistance from a reductive point of view. That is, the movie seems to change the idea of resistance into a personal grudge match between Salem, his brother Lamine, and Colonel Forjat. Not much has been done to connect the pushback to a bigger national cause. In keeping with Ben-Barka's style as an author, the movie is based on the humane idea that violence only leads to more violence. Because of this, most attacks by Moroccan rebels are a response to how cruel the French colonial army led by Colonel Forjat was. For example, Lamine is first shown in the story when he is taken to the hospital to have surgery after the French colonial army shot him. After what happened, Lamine seems to be thinking a lot about how to fight back and save his fellow militants from Colonel Forjat's cruel and violent treatment. There are no nationalistic undertones in what he says. Hélène catches him bringing guns to his brother's house without permission. He then tells her about the bad things the French Colonel, who is her friend, does to Moroccan militants, saying that they are treated like wild dogs.

The movie also talks about a big part of Morocco's past right before it became a French protectorate: the role of the country's internal crises in its colonization. This is shown through the resistance in the southeast. This is what Dunn says:

The army's ideas about how Muslims would react to its offensive—whether they would resist or give up—were based on the cultural and racial smugness and paternalism that ruled European thought in the years before World War I. During that time, colonialist writing and journalism also tended to agree with these

ideas. Because of this, Europeans usually talked about the conquest of southeastern Morocco as something that happened in their own history, not the personal and collective crises of the people who were conquered.(233).

As it turns out, these internal crises are not talked about much in colonial films. This is mostly because of how France uses art to promote its ideas. The historian Glenn Reynolds says that France created a colonial lobby that pushed movies as a way to connect national pride with colonial growth (42). These kinds of movies were also part of Lyautey's colonialist plan, and they were used to "stir up popular support for the Empire" (Slavin 23). It makes sense to ignore anything that might challenge the idea that France invaded Morocco because it had better soldiers than Morocco and not because of problems within Morocco. In the film, Ben-Barka zooms in on Morocco's tribal rivalries that Moroccan rebels had to deal with besides foreign invasion of their land. Like, when Belkacem's caravan set out to go to Timbuktu, it was attacked by a group of Moroccan bandits who promised to be loyal to France in exchange for money. This group of Moroccans betrayed the French, as Belkacem says in the movie. They are not the same as the Moroccans who were made to fight in the colonial army. To understand Ben-Barka's view on the French effort to bring peace to the world, we need to look at Abdelkebir Khatibi's idea of "double critique." His camera does not just criticize France's imperialistic goals in Morocco; it also talks to the people who lived there and helped those goals come true. In this way, Ben-Barka criticizes both the other person and oneself, making both of them responsible for the horrible acts of violence that Moroccan militants had to deal with during the protectorate. He is launching two types of subversion that aim to change how we think about the history of resistance in the southeast and across all of Morocco.

There is "an archaeology of silence and a resistance of recuperation within a closed system," as Khalid Amine puts it (2). The movie not only brings back the voices of Moroccan militants in the southeast of the country, but it also brings to light those who helped the colonial machine move through the country. In this way, both Moroccan history and the idea that France was the best foreign power ever are called into question. We should all look at our history with a critical eye, and the movie makes us want to do that. People can build on their knowledge of Moroccan history while also taking into account the political issues that were important during that time by looking at it from this angle.

Having said that, the southeast of Morocco has become a recurring theme in Ben-Barka's movies. There is no need to go into detail about the filmmaker's ties to the place, but I think the focus on the Tafilalt region can be understood in terms of the power relations of the center and the periphery. In a way, Ben-Barka is trying to change the history of the southeast of Morocco, which made a big contribution to the country's independence and should not be seen as small or unimportant. Instead, the movie shows the area as a refuge for fighting against colonial power. "By the fall of 1904, however," Dunn says, "Lyautey decided that the population of Tafilalt was too large and too hostile to be brought to terms by any means other than a huge, expensive, and logistically dangerous campaign" (231). The film also gives the southeast a transnational character, which is more important than just making it the center of national

resistance again. The second one is shown as a busy market that links sub-Saharan African countries to Fez, Marrakech, and even France. Dunn says,

Southeast Asian merchants had been moving goods north and south for hundreds of years along a network of routes that led to West Africa and Europe. At one point in the 1800s, Tafilalt sent some of its own date crops to Europe through Fez on their way to England. (134).

The movie then shows how the area has historically been a place where many trade routes met. It looks like Tafilalt's spatial identity is playing out on the screen within a clear trans-local framework. By focusing on caravans, Sarhraoui costumes, palm trees, oases, and Kasbahs, the film creates a physical record of the area's historical memory while also drawing attention to its most important economic role. A cultural and urban geographer named Eric Ross says that the southeastern hinterland of Morocco was a major regional highway. He says that "its dromedary caravans were as important to the trade of the Sahara as contemporary Venice and its shipping were to that of the Mediterranean" (259). In fact, the movie shows what Ross meant by his comment. That being said, it is safe to say that Ben-Barka has shed light on how the area helped countries become independent and how it served as a trade hub between North Africa, Europe, and sub-Saharan Africa.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have focused on Souheil Ben-Barka's work as a cinematic historian and his film as a historical record that brings back (trans)national memories by highlighting the important part that southeastern Morocco played in Lyautey's effort to bring peace to the country. The movie consistently highlights subaltern voices, giving cinematic space to people who have been historically left out or silenced in dominant historical narratives. Instead of writing off movies as a bad way to learn about the past, this paper has shown how historical movies can be used as an alternative way to learn that challenges dominant historical accounts. This view encourages viewers to actively participate in building historical understanding by paying attention to the political, social, and moral ambiguities that shaped the time. This reaffirms the power of historical cinema to resist narrative closure and to open the past to new critical interpretation.

Compared to Eurocentric depictions of colonial Morocco, the film offers a fresh look at the past through its portrayal of history as a place where people argue and debate instead of a set colonial story. Through a microhistorical lens, it brings to the fore localized forms of resistance led by Moroccan fighters, giving players who had been left out of imperial accounts for a long time back their agency. At the same time, the movie does postcolonial memory work by showing the complicated lives of Moroccan Goumiers, who worked in the colonial military and were caught between being forced to work together, surviving, and being forced to work together. The movie challenges simplistic views of colonial history by showing both resistance and complicity at the same time. It also opens up the past as a place of negotiation, tension, and moral ambiguity.

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