

De-Orientalizing Gender Relations in David Butler's *Road to Morocco* (1942)

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Abstract

The interest of American cinema in Morocco was established during the nineteenth and twentieth century, when North Africa became a central concern of the West in general. At this time many westerners travelled to the region as part of colonialist agendas. Like the Middle East and Asia, North Africa became a fertile ground for western fantasies. The shift from textual to visual narratives did little to change the imperialistic fake view towards the Orient. One of the most influential visual arts which took the East in general and Morocco in particular, as a subject of interest was cinema, particularly Hollywood cinema. This study seeks accordingly to disclose a number of stereotypical images that are fashioned in David Butler's (1942) *Road to Morocco* as one of the most influential visual landmarks of early film. The interest of the present article is to deconstruct gender complexities as expressed in Butler's movie as one of Hollywood's most classical productions. The objective is to show how gender relations are problematized in the film between the Orient and the Occident. Intercultural bias, involving the Western male vis-à-vis the Oriental female, is put to strong questions to reconsider the Western ideology on how gender regulations are screened. By closely reading various scenes from Butler's movie, this article intends to show how the Western power of stereotyping is shifted from a state of vantage position and refocused in terms of Western authority. The camera in the movie is, in ample situations, inverted and subverted by placing the White Orientalist supremacy in a state of anxiety and ambivalence.

Keywords: Moroccan woman, gender relations, sensuality, Road to Morocco, early film