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Colonial legacy and Resistance in Mahmoud Zemmouri's L'Honneur de la Tribu (1993), and Deepa Mehta's Midnight's Children (2012)

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Dedication

I dedicate this work
to the ones who gave me their time,
their love, and their quiet strength.

To my mother and father,
your faith in me was my shelter.
Every step I took began with you.

To Nouh, my little brother,
your smile was the peace I needed
on the hardest days

To Asma, Sisi, Sakina, Titi, Yasmine, and Lina
thank you for being there,
for staying up with me through the long nights,
for turning tired moments into laughter.

And to Hocine, my binomial,
we stood through it all side by side.
This was not easy,
but we never gave up.

You were all part of this.
And for that,
I will always be grateful.

"You were the light when I couldn’t see,
the voice that carried me."
from “You Raise Me Up”

Malha

Dedication

“Make us proud”
these were your words,
And here I am.
this work is dedicated
To my father and Mother who always
Regard me as their hope.
To my two brothers,
Ahcene and Aghiles
and all the family
To my binomial, Malha
it was difficult, but
we made it through.
Thank you all.

Hocine

Abstract

This research examines the impact of colonialism and the disillusionment that followed independence in India and Algeria through the study of two cinematic adaptations: Midnight's Children directed by Deepa Mehta and L'Honneur de la Tribu directed by Mahmoud Zemmouri. The study is structured as a comparative analysis across three chapters. The first chapter provides a historical and political overview of both countries, tracing their trajectories from colonial rule to independence and its aftermath. The second chapter is divided into two parts: Part 1 focuses on the colonial encounter marked by identity shifts and cultural othering, and Part 2 addresses post-independence disillusionment, which reveals the gap between liberation and lived reality. The third chapter examines how the films portray resistance, from personal and collective defiance to symbolic and aesthetic strategies, showing how cinema challenges dominant narratives and reclaims agency. By combining historical context, postcolonial theory, and film analysis, this research demonstrates how cinema reflects, critiques, and resists the enduring legacies of empire.

Keywords: Colonial encounter, Cultural resistance, Disillusionment, Postcolonial cinema.

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Introduction

Introduction

Colonialism is not merely a political or economic project; it is a force that reshaped the consciousness of entire nations. Its legacy endures not only in institutions and borders but also in the ruptures it created within personal and collective identities. This research investigates that enduring impact in two distinct yet comparable contexts: India and Algeria. Despite geographical differences, both nations share the experience of violent colonization followed by turbulent independence. India was governed by the British Empire until 1947, while Algeria remained under French occupation until 1962. In both cases, independence did not erase historical trauma but revealed new fractures within society.

This legacy is explored through its cinematic representation. The research does not attempt to retell historical events but instead examines how they are remembered, reimagined, and contested on screen. By analyzing Midnight's Children (2012) and L'Honneur de la Tribu (1993), the study positions film as a cultural archive, a creative repository that preserves, questions, and sometimes rewrites collective memory in the aftermath of colonialism. Cinema in this sense is both a witness, bearing testimony to historical trauma, and a participant, actively shaping how history is interpreted and how identities are reconstructed.

These films are chosen not only for their similarities, but for their capacity to articulate the contradictions of postcolonial life. Midnight's Children, adapted from Salman Rushdie's novel, collapses personal and national histories into a single, surreal narrative that spans the birth of modern India. L'Honneur de la Tribu, based on Rachid Mimouni's novel, offers a critical portrayal of Algeria's post-independence disillusionment, revealing how revolutionary ideals were quickly corrupted. Each film becomes a site of resistance: against official history, against political forgetting, and against the silencing of marginalized voices.

Two central concepts structure this research: the colonial encounter and post-independence disillusionment. The colonial encounter refers to the initial imposition of foreign rule, marked by violence, cultural domination, and the internalization of otherness.

Disillusionment, by contrast, refers to the aftermath of liberation, the gap between the hopes of independence and the realities of neocolonialism, authoritarianism, and fragmented identity. These themes are not treated in abstraction but grounded in cinematic representation, where image, voice, and narrative structure become entry points into the films' critiques of power and memory.

The research is anchored in postcolonial theory, particularly the works of Edward Said and Frantz Fanon, whose insights into orientalism, othering, and the psychological effects of colonization inform the interpretive framework. At the same time, this study emphasizes the aesthetic dimension of resistance. It considers how cinema not only reflects history but also actively reshapes it, by reinterpreting the past through narrative, imagery, and symbolism. In this way, film challenges dominant ideologies and opens space for alternative visions of liberation.

Ultimately, this dissertation positions cinema as both testimony and intervention in the postcolonial condition. By reading Midnight's Children and L'Honneur de la Tribu as cinematic texts, it argues that art can articulate what history suppresses, loss, contradiction, and the ongoing struggle to define what freedom truly means in formerly colonized societies.

Review of Literature

The reception of Midnight's Children and L'Honneur de la Tribu, two adaptations of notable postcolonial novels, reflects the challenges of translating complex literary works into cinematic form. Both films, ambitious in scope and deeply tied to national histories, have elicited wide-ranging critical responses. In analyzing these debates, this study draws on postcolonial cinema theory and comparative film analysis, with particular attention to how cinematic form can resist colonial discourse, reclaim cultural memory, and convey the fragmented identities shaped by colonialism. A key contribution to this field is Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media (1994). Shohat and Stam critique dominant Western cinematic models, linear storytelling, causal logic, and

heroic protagonists as inadequate to capture the ruptured realities of formerly colonized societies. They call instead for an "oppositional cinema" that employs non-linear narratives, symbolic imagery, and hybrid forms to reflect cultural trauma and resistance. As they argue, even European art struggles within linear models, and such frameworks collapse entirely when applied to non-European contexts (Shohat & Stam, 1994, p. 28).

In the case of Midnight's Children, directed by Deepa Mehta and based on Salman Rushdie's Booker-winning novel, critics often emphasize the film's heavy fidelity to its literary source. Philip French, in The Guardian, situates the adaptation as a film "handcuffed to history," quoting the narrator's line: "I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country" (French, 2012). For French, this metaphor captures the film's ambition to weave personal and national narratives, but it also signals the constraints of adaptation. By trying to remain faithful to the novel's historical sweep, the film risks becoming weighed down by it, losing some of cinema's freedom for invention.

Catherine Shoard sharpens this critique by arguing that the film's fidelity is ultimately "self-defeating." She notes: "This is self-defeating faithfulness, which genuflects so far as to insist the audience can't be released for some 148 minutes, and employs actors perfectly cast to the point of blandness" (Shoard, 2012). Her phrase "genuflects so far" conveys a reverence that becomes excessive, an almost ritualistic bowing to the text that undermines cinematic vitality. The result, she suggests, is a flatness of performance and rhythm, where accuracy is achieved at the expense of energy.

Karl Smith, writing for The Quietus, also finds the film overburdened. He observes: "Midnight's Children, in one of the few senses in which it stays true to the novel, and senses being the operative word, is ultimately a festival... But, like any carnival on this scale, it is all a little much. The premise is overwhelmed by the reality. There are too many things half-

explained, too many ideas with too little information" (Smith, 2012). The imagery of a "festival" points to the film's attempt to capture Rushdie's magic realism, with its multiple timelines and large cast of characters. Yet the density of themes and images disperses focus, leaving crucial ideas introduced but insufficiently developed.

By contrast, L'Honneur de la Tribu, directed by Mahmoud Zemmouri and adapted from Rachid Mimouni's novel, has been received through a different critical lens, one which is centered less on fidelity and more on tone, genre, and political context. Some commentators have praised Zemmouri's daring use of tragicomic elements, while others have denounced this choice as trivializing. Slim Otmani offers a nuanced defense of Zemmouri's approach, arguing that his use of satire was both conscious and courageous:

"His choice of a tragicomic tone, oscillating between laughter and gravity, proves profoundly inspired. As one of his detractors put it: 'one does not answer barbarism with confetti and stink bombs.' Yet in the face of the growing shadow of obscurantism, what else remained for Zemmouri but humor and satire to try to awaken consciences? [...] To make such a film between 1992 and 1993 amounts to an artistic feat and an act of resistance against a future he already sensed would be dark and difficult" (Otmani, n.d., our translation).

Otmani acknowledges criticism of the comic register but reframes it as an artistic strategy suited to Algeria's turbulent context in the early 1990s, when political instability and violence were escalating. Humor, he suggests, became a way to resist despair and keep political critique alive.

Others, however, were far less forgiving. André Videau argue that Zemmouri :

> "Made the mistake of stepping outside his usual genre to take on courageously, to be fair, a fine novel by Rachid Mimouni, L'Honneur de la Tribu. He turned it into a grotesque farce, where unfortunate actors stumble awkwardly through

the material. […] You don't answer barbarity with confetti and stink bombs" (Videau, 1994, our translation).

For Videau, Zemmouri's humor undermines the weight of Mimouni's political narrative. His terms "grotesque farce" and "confetti and stink bombs" suggest not only aesthetic failure but also moral misjudgment: the risk of trivializing serious historical trauma through comic exaggeration.

Taken together, the reception of these two films reveals a common dilemma in adapting postcolonial literature: how to balance loyalty to the text with the liberties of cinema. Midnight's Children is faulted for excessive fidelity, producing a dense yet inert narrative, while L'Honneur de la Tribu is faulted for stylistic boldness that some interpret as irreverence. In both cases, critics evaluate not only cinematic craft but also the films' responsibility toward history and memory. The adaptations are measured against political as well as artistic expectations, their success or failure judged on how they navigate the intersection of form, identity, and postcolonial responsibility.

Issue and Hypothesis

This research explores how Midnight's Children by Deepa Mehta and L'Honneur de la Tribu by Mahmoud Zemmouri portray colonialism and its aftermath in India and Algeria. While historical and literary studies have long addressed colonial experiences in both countries, cinematic representations, particularly within a comparative framework, remain underexplored. Most existing scholarship treats Indian and Algerian cinema separately, overlooking how a transnational perspective can highlight shared histories of domination, resistance, and postcolonial disillusionment.

The central issue addressed in this research is how these two films depict the colonial encounter and the psychological consequences of independence. More specifically, it investigates the ways cinema conveys emotional and symbolic dimensions of colonization that are often absent from conventional historical accounts. Unlike written texts, film engages

audiences through visual, auditory, and emotional channels, making it a powerful medium for preserving collective memory and questioning dominant historical narratives. Building on this premise, the study examines how Midnight's Children and L'Honneur de la Tribu function not simply as representations of national history, but as active critiques of it. Through the use of metaphor, irony, sound design, and complex character arcs, both films highlight the ideological tensions and emotional ruptures of the postcolonial condition. The hypothesis is twofold: first, that cinema can serve as a site of resistance and recovery by offering counter-narratives to official histories; and second, that a comparative analysis of Indian and Algerian cinema can reveal common postcolonial dilemmas, despite differences in cultural and political context. Ultimately, both films challenge the myth of liberation and foreground the unfinished struggles for identity, belonging, and meaning in the aftermath of empire.

Methodological Outline

This research follows the IMRAD method. The work begins with an introduction in which the research problem is identified and the main themes are defined: the colonial encounter, post-independence disillusionment, and resistance. This is followed by a brief overview of the relevant literature on the two novels and their film adaptations. The next section is devoted to methods and materials. In the methods section, we adopt a comparative postcolonial approach supported by theoretical frameworks developed by Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and Hamid Naficy. The materials section includes synopses of the novels, background on the authors, and brief descriptions of the films.

In the results section, the focus is on key findings drawn from the comparative analysis. This includes an examination of how colonial power, cultural alienation, and personal trauma are represented through character experiences and cinematic techniques. The discussion is divided into three main parts. The first explores the colonial encounter in L'Honneur de la Tribu and Midnight's Children. The second part analyzes the disillusionment of the post-independence period as portrayed in the two films. The third focuses on various

forms of resistance, both personal and collective, expressed through silence, storytelling, symbolic imagery, and visual framing.

The research concludes with a summary of the major findings and a reflection on the broader implications for postcolonial identity, memory, and cultural recovery, along with suggestions for future comparative studies of cinema and literature in formerly colonized regions.

Methods and Materials

Methods

To achieve the purpose of this dissertation, a comparative postcolonial approach is adopted, grounded in cinematic analysis. This method allows exploration of how colonialism, disillusionment, and resistance are portrayed in the films Midnight's Children (2012), directed by Deepa Mehta, and L'Honneur de la Tribu (1993), directed by Mahmoud Zemmouri. Rather than focusing on the novels, the analysis emphasizes the films as cultural texts that reflect and critique the legacies of empire.

This approach is informed by two key theoretical frameworks:

a.1 – Frantz Fanon's Postcolonial Theory

In The Wretched of the Earth (1961) and Black Skin, White Masks (1952), Frantz Fanon examines the psychological and cultural consequences of colonization. His insights into colonial violence, alienation, and the reclaiming of identity provide a lens for interpreting scenes in which characters confront oppression and seek resistance. In L'Honneur de la Tribu, Omar's journey to the mountains and his symbolic return to the land can be read through Fanon's vision of decolonization as both a political and psychological process. In Midnight's Children, Saleem's fractured identity and his attempt to rewrite history through storytelling reflect Fanon's concern with the struggle to reclaim selfhood after colonial trauma.

a.2 – Edward Said's Orientalism

Edward Said's Orientalism (1978) offers an essential framework for analyzing how colonial discourse constructs the "Other" and sustains power through representation. Said's concepts are useful for understanding how the films depict language, social structures, and hierarchies of identity. In L'Honneur de la Tribu, the mocked Algerian worker's mispronunciation of French illustrates how colonial language enforces exclusion and humiliation. In Midnight's Children, lingering colonial values within independent India demonstrate that political liberation does not immediately dismantle cultural domination. Said's framework thus illuminates how cinema critiques the persistence of colonial mentalities in the postcolonial period.

By integrating Fanon and Said, the study engages directly with foundational postcolonial theory while applying it concretely to the cinematic medium. Film techniques such as voice-over, framing, silence, and symbolic imagery serve as entry points for analyzing how colonial encounters and disillusionments are represented on screen.

Materials

b.1 – Biography of Deepa Mehta

Deepa Mehta, born in 1950 in Amritsar, India, is an internationally recognized filmmaker whose work often engages with themes of identity, gender, and cultural conflict. After moving to Canada, she directed numerous films that challenged traditional representations of South Asian society. Her Elements Trilogy; Fire (1996), Earth (1998), and Water (2005) have earned global acclaim for its bold treatment of taboo subjects. In 2012, Mehta directed Midnight's Children, adapted from Salman Rushdie's novel, with a screenplay written by Rushdie himself. Known for her humanist vision and use of strong visual imagery, Mehta employs cinema as a medium for both cultural critique and resistance.

b.2 – Biography of Mahmoud Zemmouri

Mahmoud Zemmouri (1946–2017) was an Algerian filmmaker and actor whose career was marked by satire, social critique, and a sharp awareness of Algeria's political realities. After beginning his career in France, he turned increasingly to stories that reflected the struggles of Algerians during and after independence. His films often combined humor with political commentary, highlighting corruption, hypocrisy, and cultural alienation. In 1993, he directed L'Honneur de la Tribu, based on Rachid Mimouni's novel, capturing the disillusionment of Algerian society in the post-independence era. Zemmouri's filmmaking is remembered for its daring tone, oscillating between laughter and gravity, as a means of resistance against silence and despair.

b.3 – Synopsis of Midnight's Children (2012)

The film Midnight's Children follows Saleem Sinai, a boy born at the exact moment of India's independence in 1947, whose life is mysteriously tied to the fate of the nation. Gifted with telepathic powers, he discovers a secret assembly of children born at midnight, each endowed with extraordinary abilities that symbolize the hopes of a new nation. Narrated by Saleem's own voice-over, the film blends personal memory with political history, depicting events such as Partition, the Indo-Pakistani wars, and the Emergency under Indira Gandhi. Through fragmented narrative, magical realism, and symbolic imagery, the film portrays the disintegration of Saleem's identity alongside the disillusionment of post-independence India. His act of storytelling itself becomes a form of resistance, reclaiming memory against political erasure.

b.4 – Synopsis of L'Honneur de la Tribu (1993)

Set in an Algerian village, L'Honneur de la Tribu portrays the contradictions of post-independence Algeria. The story centers on Omar, a young intellectual who returns to his

village in search of meaning but encounters corruption, betrayal, and the unfulfilled promises of the revolution. The villagers struggle under the weight of failed leadership and social disillusionment, while subtle forms of resistance emerge through silence, communal resilience, and symbolic attachment to the land. Zemmouri's use of tragicomic elements underscores the gap between revolutionary ideals and lived realities. The film's visual and aesthetic strategies, its pauses, framing of communal spaces, and satirical tone, transform the village into a metaphor for Algeria's collective memory and its unfinished postcolonial struggle.

Results

This section presents the key findings and results of our in-depth comparative analysis of Midnight's Children (2012) and L'Honneur de la Tribu (1993), which explore the postcolonial experiences of India and Algeria. Settled in the theoretical perspectives of Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and Homi Bhabha, the study reveals how both films address the psychological and political consequences of colonization, the disillusionment that follows independence, and the various forms of resistance that emerge within postcolonial societies.

From our exploration of the two films, we observed that despite their different historical and cultural backgrounds, both India and Algeria experience similar postcolonial struggles. The colonial encounter is portrayed not only as a moment of conquest but also as a system that reshapes identity, language, and self-worth. In L'Honneur de la Tribu, the colonial power is seen through the humiliation of Algerian workers who are ridiculed when mispronouncing French, symbolizing the forced assimilation and inferiority imposed by the colonizer. Similarly, in Midnight's Children, Saleem Sinai's fragmented narrative reflects the broken legacy of Partition and colonial violence. His disoriented identity stands as a metaphor for India itself torn between past and future, belonging and alienation.

The second major finding relates to disillusionment in the aftermath of independence. While both nations celebrate freedom, the characters reveal the bitter truth that postcolonial societies often reproduce the same violence they fought against. In *Midnight's Children*, the excitement of national liberation quickly fades into political betrayal during the Emergency, where the government suppresses dissent and individual freedoms. Saleem's hopes for unity among the *Midnight's Children* collapse, echoing the failure of postcolonial ideals. Likewise, in *L'Honneur de la Tribu*, the character of Omar returns to the village not as a liberator, but as a threat, embodying the internal corruption and violence of the new regime. His mission to

destroy the community's traditional values reveals that independence did not bring justice but created new forms of oppression.

The third and final finding concerns resistance. In both films, resistance is not always shown through armed struggle or grand rebellion, but often through silence, memory, and storytelling. In *L'Honneur de la Tribu*, the villagers' quiet refusal to follow Omar's authority, their emotional bond with the land, and their steady gaze of defiance reflect a silent but powerful form of resistance. In *Midnight's Children*, resistance takes multiple forms: Saleem's decision to keep telling the story, Parvati's refusal to disappear during the Emergency, and Tia's symbolic presence all challenge erasure and domination. These characters show that resistance can be cultural, symbolic, and deeply personal, rooted in the refusal to forget, to conform, or to vanish.

Through these narratives, both films show that the postcolonial journey is marked by pain, contradiction, and survival. They highlight how the colonial experience continues to affect memory, identity, and nationhood long after independence. The findings suggest that resistance in postcolonial cinema is not always loud or revolutionary; instead, it is often carried through visual symbolism, emotional endurance, and the courage to remain present in a world shaped by erasure and fragmentation. Ultimately, both films advocate for the power of storytelling, cultural memory, and personal resilience in confronting the legacies of colonialism.

Chapter one:

The historical background of Algeria and India before and after independence

Introduction

The mid-twentieth century, often referred to as the age of decolonization, marked a significant turning point in global history, characterized by the emergence of numerous nations from colonial domination. Algeria and India, among these countries, fought prolonged and arduous battles for freedom, Algeria under French rule for 132 years and India under British control for nearly 200 years. Their histories were marked by persistent resistance, immense sacrifice, and a profound desire for self-determination. This chapter explores the historical backgrounds of Algeria and India before and after independence, examining how colonial rule shaped their trajectories and the challenges they faced in the post-independence era. This inquiry demonstrates how the past continues to influence their present.

Discussion

This study examines two films *L'Honneur de la Tribu* (1993), directed by Mahmoud Zemmouri and adapted from Rachid Mimouni's novel, and *Midnight's Children* (2012), directed by Deepa Mehta and based on Salman Rushdie's novel. Both films were selected for their vivid portrayal of the historical and emotional consequences of colonial rule and independence in Algeria and India. Through personal and collective narratives, they illuminate the interaction between memory, identity, and disillusionment in postcolonial contexts. While their cultural and cinematic styles differ, both address the trauma of colonization, the complexity of national identity, and the process of reconstruction after foreign domination, making them ideal for comparative cinematic analysis. as Frantz fanon observes:

> "Exploitation, tortures, raids, racism, collective liquidations... [all] make of the native an object in the hands of the occupying nation. This object man, without means of existing, without a raison d'étre, is broken in the very depth of his substance. The desire to live, to continue, becomes more and more indecisive, more and more phantom-like. It is at this stage that the well-known guilt complex appears." (Fanon, 2004, p. 40)

This statement underscores how colonialism extends beyond physical domination to the erasure and manipulation of indigenous history and identity. This was evident in Algeria's brutal war for independence, which resulted in nearly a million deaths and left deep scars on the nation's governance. Similarly, India, Jawaharlal Nehru reflected on the impact of British rule in his Tryst with Destiny speech, stating, "At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom" (Mehta, 2012). This moment not only marks the birth of India as a sovereign state but also depicts the turmoil of Partition, economic restructuring, and nation-building. These examples illustrate that the legacies of colonial rule were not erased with independence; rather, they became embedded in political institutions and societal structures. Colonial rule deeply impacted the political, economic, and social frameworks of both Algeria and India, leaving enduring legacies that shaped their post-independence trajectories. Algeria's struggle, marked by the War of liberation (1954–1962), led to a centralized, socialist state dominated by the National Liberation Front with the military playing a central role. In contrast, India's path to independence, driven largely by nonviolent resistance and political negotiations, allowed for the retention of British administrative structures, aiding in the establishment of a parliamentary democracy and a mixed economy.

Following independence, both nations grappled with deep-rooted challenges inherited from their colonial histories. In Algeria, the violent liberation struggle and the dominance of military leadership laid the foundation for an authoritarian regime, ongoing economic

hardships, and recurrent internal conflicts. India contrarily, despite the devastating trauma of Partition, succeeded in upholding democratic institutions and fostering economic growth.

The contrast between Algeria's political instability and India's stable democracy, demonstrates that independence is not a final destination, but the beginning of a long and complex journey of national reconstruction. The divergent postcolonial trajectories reveal the lasting influence of colonial rule, showing that independence is not just a political milestone, but a constant process of redefining identity and governance. These two realizations offer a powerful insight into how individuals and societies continue to grapple with the enduring legacies of colonialism in the present.

A French Algeria: The Making of a Settler Colony

Algeria, a North African country, endured one of the most prolonged and violent colonial occupations of the modern era. Colonized by France in 1830, it was not treated merely as a territory to exploit but as an extension of metropolitan France itself. This settler colonial structure refers to a system in which colonizers permanently settle in the occupied land, displacing or marginalizing the native population while establishing their own political, economic, and cultural dominance. In Algeria, this took form through the mass arrival of European settlers particularly French citizens known as Pieds-Noirs who seized fertile lands and transformed the country's demographic and cultural landscape.

Unlike colonies administered from a distance, Algeria was incorporated directly into France's political and legal system, erasing indigenous sovereignty in favor of European domination. This transformation was formalized in 1848, when the French Second Republic declared Algeria an integral part of France through a government decree extending the Code Civil (Napoleonic Civil Code) and other French administrative laws to the colony. Algeria

was divided into three departments; Algiers, Oran, and Constantine which were governed under the same legal framework as mainland France (Evans, 2012; Shepard, 2006).

The colonial administration systematically dispossessed indigenous Algerians of land, rights, and cultural identity. Through both legal and military measures, native communities' lost autonomy, while their Arabic language, Islamic faith, and tribal traditions were suppressed under the guise of "Civilizing" reform. This process of integration and displacement marked a brutal redefinition of Algerian identity on colonial terms, laying the foundations for the deep inequalities and resistance that would later define Algeria's struggle for independence.

The French colonial project in Algeria extended beyond military domination to encompass legal codes, educational systems, and cultural norms that sought not only to control but to replace the native population's worldview. This imposition created a rigid racial and social hierarchy in which Algerians were economically exploited and politically excluded, producing widespread alienation and fostering early forms of resistance. The colonial state entrenched a social order built on inequality and forced assimilation, laying the foundations for future rebellion. French became the language of administration and power, while Muslim Algerians were denied equal access to education and citizenship unless they renounced their personal status under Islamic law (Shepard, 2006).

A major turning point in this colonial encounter came on May 8, 1945, when peaceful pro-independence demonstrations in Sétif, Guelma, and Kherrata were met with extreme brutality by French forces and settler militias. While Europe celebrated the Allied victory in World War II, Algeria witnessed one of its darkest chapters. What began as a call for equality and recognition turned into a massacre, with estimates of Algerian deaths ranging from 15,000 to 45,000 (Evans, 2012). Entire villages were destroyed, civilians were executed without trial, and mass graves concealed the scale of violence. The Sétif and Guelma

massacres exposed the contradictions of France's democratic ideals and marked a psychological rupture, radicalizing nationalist movements and planting the seeds of armed resistance that would later erupt in 1954.

This tension between conformity and rebellion is powerfully reflected in *L'Honneur de la Tribu* (Zemmouri, 1993), where characters adopt French customs and Western clothing as a means of survival rather than true assimilation. These gestures of imitation reveal an internal struggle: the colonized subject's attempt to navigate two worlds, one imposed and one inherited. Beneath the surface of submission lies a subtle resistance, expressed through the quiet preservation of local values and collective memory. This ambivalence mirrors Algeria's historical dilemma between resistance and erasure.

The village setting in the film, once a symbol of unity and tradition, becomes a fragmented space marked by dislocation and loss. This visual transformation echoes Frantz Fanon's argument that "decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder" (The Wretched of the Earth, 2004, p 65). Fanon's insight captures the chaos and upheaval that accompany the struggle to reclaim both land and identity, a process vividly reflected in Zemmouri's cinematic portrayal of postcolonial disillusionment.

This disorder is not only structural but also existential. In *L'Honneur de la Tribu*, the post-independence generation inherits not only a damaged land but also a fragmented sense of self. The promises of liberation give way to feelings of betrayal and stagnation, making the film an essential cultural lens through which the consequences of colonialism and the unfinished journey of decolonization can be understood.

The path to independence was both violent and transformative. In 1954, the formation of the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) signaled the beginning of an armed struggle that would become one of the bloodiest decolonization wars of the twentieth century. Employing

guerrilla tactics, urban warfare, and mass mobilization, the FLN challenged and exposed the limits of French military control. Urban warfare, particularly during the Battle of Algiers (1956–1957), illustrates how resistance extended into the very heart of colonial power. In the Casbah of Algiers, FLN fighters transformed narrow streets and hidden passageways into spaces of revolt, using the urban landscape as both weapon and shield. The French army responded with brutal counterinsurgency: curfews, torture, and the systematic targeting of civilians. These confrontations revealed the moral and political crisis of the colonial regime and foreshadowed the inevitable collapse of French authority (Evans, 2012; Pontecorvo, 1966).

Despite this repression, the resistance endured, sustained by a shared memory of dispossession and a collective longing for sovereignty. As Fanon wrote, "The war of liberation of the Algerian people has spread the gangrene and carried the rot of the system to such a point that it has become obvious to observers that a global crisis must result… When we address ourselves to colonial peoples, and more especially to the African peoples, it is because we have to hurry to build Africa, so that it will express itself and come into being, so that it may be authentically enriched by the world's contributions" (The Wretched of the Earth, 1961, pp. 114–115).

By the time independence was achieved in 1962, over one million Algerians had lost their lives. The physical devastation was accompanied by profound psychological trauma and fragmented communities. The departure of nearly the entire European settler population left a social and economic void, while the triumphant FLN established itself as the sole ruling party, consolidating power within the newly independent state.

Following independence, the FLN established itself as the sole ruling party, benefiting from numerous advantages such as property ownership, high-ranking positions, and stable employment. Algeria adopted a militarized political structure that initially promised national

unity but soon revealed deep internal divisions. The nationalization of industries and the push for centralized development faced major challenges, resulting in economic stagnation and growing public dissatisfaction and tensions that would later erupt into civil conflict. This transformation from colonized territory to independent nation did not mark the end of struggle; rather, it shifted oppression from the external to the internal sphere.

As Frantz Fanon (1963) argues in *The Wretched of the Earth*, the newly independent state often gives rise to a "national bourgeoisie", a ruling elite that replaces the colonizer without dismantling the colonial system. This class "steps into the shoes of the former European settlement" (Fanon, 1963: 152), maintaining privilege while the masses remain marginalized. In Algeria, this reality embodied Fanon's warning: decolonization without social transformation risks reproducing the very inequalities it sought to end.

Following Algeria's colonial experience, India's historical trajectory under British rule and its path to independence offer a contrasting yet equally revealing perspective.

India under the British Raj

India, one of the world's oldest civilizations, has endured centuries of foreign encounters, cultural transformation, and ultimately colonial domination. Before colonization, India was a mosaic of powerful regional kingdoms; the Mughal Empire, the Rajputs, and the Marathas, each with its own thriving cultural and economic base. Trade in textiles, spices, and precious metals made India a global commercial hub, with flourishing cities like Delhi, Varanasi, and Surat. Religious diversity, though not without conflict, was part of everyday life, and learning thrived in vernacular languages across the subcontinent.

The turning point came in 1757 with the Battle of Plassey, where the British East India Company defeated the Nawab of Bengal with the help of local betrayal. This victory allowed the Company to gain indirect control over Bengal, paving the way for further expansion. The Battle of Buxar (1764) consolidated British dominance, granting it the right to collect revenue

in Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2012). These victories marked the shift from commercial trading to territorial colonization, transforming a mercantile enterprise into a political empire.

In 1857, the Indian Rebellion, often called the First War of Independence, erupted across North India. Though brutally suppressed, the revolt marked a watershed in colonial history. Afterward, the British Crown dissolved the East India Company and imposed direct imperial rule through the Government of India Act (1858), inaugurating the British Raj (Spear, 1990).

Under colonial authority, India's economy was systematically restructured for British profit. Traditional industries such as textiles collapsed as Indian markets were flooded with British goods. The once-thriving handloom sector declined, causing mass unemployment and poverty. Revenue systems like the Permanent Settlement forced peasants into debt, while famines; particularly the Bengal Famine of 1943, which killed over three million people revealed the devastating human cost of colonial policies (Mukerjee, 2010).

Culturally, the British imposed English as the language of administration and education, marginalizing India's diverse linguistic traditions. Indigenous knowledge, literature, and clothing were often dismissed as inferior. The British justified their rule through the ideology of the "civilizing mission," portraying India as backward and dependent on Western guidance (Said, 1978). Yet colonialism had an unintended effect: it created a Western-educated Indian elite that eventually turned against colonial domination.

This paradox is powerfully captured in Midnight's Children (Mehta, 2012), through the character of Saleem Sinai. Raised in Anglicized surroundings, Saleem embodies the conflict between inherited colonial values and the quest for postcolonial self-definition. His hybrid identity mirrors India's own struggle, torn between modernity and memory, domination and freedom.

Anticolonial resistance intensified in the 20th century, led by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, who mobilized millions through non-violence, civil disobedience, and the ideal of Swaraj (self-rule). Movements like the Non-Cooperation (1920), Salt March (1930), and Quit India (1942) movements transformed nationalism into a mass, inclusive struggle (Chandra, 1989).

World War II weakened Britain's imperial control, and in 1947 India achieved independence. However, the Partition of India and Pakistan resulted in horrific violence and displacement, with over fifteen million people uprooted and nearly one million killed. Midnight's Children vividly portrays this trauma through overlapping sounds of chaos and fragmented imagery, visually expressing the psychic rupture of Partition rather than recounting it as mere history.

"Punjab, Bengal. Hindus are killing Muslims. Muslims are killing Hindus." (Mehta, 2012).

The use of cross-cutting and sound layering evokes the fragmentation of the nation itself. Independence, though achieved, thus carried the emotional weight of division.

Post-independence, India's leaders sought to rebuild a democratic and secular nation. Jawaharlal Nehru's Five-Year Plans emphasized modernization and industrialization, while the Green Revolution of the 1960s boosted food production but deepened social inequalities (Gupta, 2010). Urban growth accelerated, yet poverty and caste oppression persisted.

Indira Gandhi's declaration of the Emergency (1975–77) marked a turning point: civil liberties were suspended, the press censored, and dissent crushed. In Midnight's Children, this political repression is symbolized by the sterilization campaign, a visual metaphor for the silencing of the nation's conscience. Saleem and the "Midnight's Children," who symbolize the promise of postcolonial India, are eventually captured and sterilized, reflecting the betrayal of democratic ideals by the very state that once fought for freedom.

This does not contradict the view of India as a stable democracy mentioned in Chapter 1; rather, it exposes the fragility and contradictions within that stability, a democracy capable of endurance, yet vulnerable to authoritarian impulses.

Through its layered narrative, Midnight's Children transforms political disillusionment into cinematic language, fragmentation, overlapping narration, and temporal shifts, that mirror India's continuing struggle to reconcile freedom with justice.

Conclusion

Having examined the historical development of Algeria and India from colonization to independence, it becomes clear that the path to freedom in both nations was marked by contradictions, resistance, and lasting colonial influence. Both nations emerged from decades of foreign domination profoundly transformed politically, socially, and culturally. Despite their different colonial systems, with French settler rule in Algeria and British indirect control in India, both societies were left with deep scars of inequality, disillusionment, and identity crisis. The struggle for freedom did not simply end with the departure of colonial powers; it gave rise to new challenges of nation building, governance, and social cohesion.

This historical overview has traced the evolution of Algeria and India from colonized territories to independent states, highlighting the complex legacies of colonization that continued to shape their post-independence realities. It provides the necessary foundation for the following chapter, which moves from the historical to the cinematic dimension by examining how L'Honneur de la Tribu and Midnight's Children reinterpret the colonial encounter and the enduring struggle for identity through film.

Chapter two:

Colonial encounter and disillusionment through a cinematic analysis of L'Honneur de la Tribu (1993) and Midnight's Children (2012)

Introduction

This chapter presents a comparative analysis of two postcolonial films*; L'Honneur de la Tribu* (1993) by Mahmoud Zemmouri and *Midnight's Children* (2012) by Deepa Mehta, set in Algeria and India. Though these nations experienced different forms of colonization, both underwent long struggles for liberation that left deep political and cultural scars. Algeria endured direct French settler rule, while India faced British imperial control exercised through indirect administration and economic dominance. The historical backgrounds of these countries shape the narratives and identities portrayed in both films, revealing how colonial encounters redefined language, culture, and social hierarchies.

This chapter focuses on two central themes: the colonial encounter, which examines how colonial power structures shaped local identities, languages, and relationships; and disillusionment, which reflects the unfulfilled promises of independence. Despite achieving freedom, both Algeria and India continued to experience inequality, fragmentation, and the persistence of colonial legacies in new forms. Through close analysis of narrative structure, characterization, and visual symbolism, this chapter explores how Zemmouri and Mehta depict the emotional and social consequences of colonization and its aftermath.

In L'Honneur de la Tribu, Zemmouri portrays a rural Algerian village still overshadowed by French influence, where language and authority signify a lingering cultural dependency. Meanwhile, in Midnight's Children, Mehta focuses on India's fractured identity through the character of Saleem Sinai, a child born at the moment of independence, symbolizing a nation meant to be new and united, yet rapidly torn by political betrayal and division. Both films expose how colonial histories remain present in post-independence societies, shaping personal and collective identities. Cinema thus becomes a medium through which these nations revisit their pasts and question the realities of their supposed freedom.

Discussion

Both *L'Honneur de la Tribu* and *Midnight's Children* begin with sequences that immediately immerse the audience in the lingering effects of colonialism, even before any overt political narrative appears. In Zemmouri's adaptation, the narrator states that the Algerian village of Zitouna is "loin du monde et de la civilisation" (far from the world and civilization). This narration, accompanied by still images of dusty, empty streets and abandoned houses, portrays the village as isolated and forgotten, emphasizing its marginalization within both the colonial and postcolonial context. The village's physical environment, with its barren landscape and silence, visually reflects the social and cultural exclusion imposed by colonial rule. When French soldiers arrive, their presence does not simply signal military occupation; it represents the imposition of authority and "civilizing" norms upon a community that has long been excluded from the colonial center.

Similarly, *Midnight's Children* opens with Dr. Adam Aziz returning to Kashmir after completing his medical studies in Germany, symbolizing the encounter between Western influence and indigenous tradition. Aziz's European education and attire contrast sharply with the traditional Kashmiri setting, highlighting the tensions between modernity and local cultural norms. Mehta's use of framing, voiceover narration, and selective flashbacks emphasizes how colonial and Western influences shape Aziz's identity, making him both an insider and outsider within his own society.

In both films, the environment and setting do more than provide context: they actively reflect and interact with character experience. Zitouna's isolation mirrors the villagers' social marginalization, while the traditional Kashmiri landscape underscores Aziz's internal conflict between inherited cultural values and Western education. By aligning character and setting, Zemmouri and Mehta show that colonial power is not only a political force but also a psychological and cultural one, shaping how individuals perceive themselves and their

communities. These opening sequences prepare the audience for the more direct encounters with colonial authority that follow, illustrating how the effects of empire permeate everyday life long before explicit conflicts emerge.

The colonial encounter in L'Honneur de la Tribu and Midnight Children

The colonial encounter is not merely a territorial conquest but a profound disruption of identity and social order. Frantz Fanon (1963) emphasizes that colonialism exerts power not only through military and economic control but also by reshaping how the colonized perceive themselves and their place in the world, creating internalized hierarchies and feelings of inferiority. Similarly, Edward Said (1978) argues that colonial discourse constructs the colonized as the "Other," legitimizing domination while producing cultural and psychological dependency.

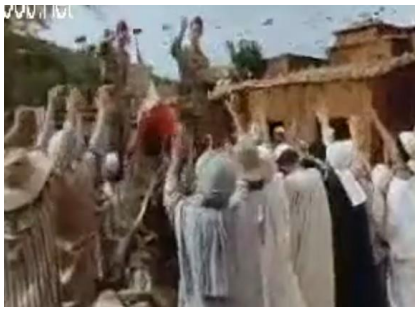
In both *L'Honneur de la Tribu* and *Midnight's Children*, these theoretical concepts are embodied in the daily lives of characters. Colonial power is not distant or abstract; it manifests in language, education, social norms, and personal interactions. The films portray the lived experience of domination, showing how individuals navigate worlds shaped by exclusion, assimilation, and silent forms of violence. Zitouna's villagers in Algeria and Saleem Sinai in India experience othering, both internally and socially, illustrating the enduring psychological and cultural impact of colonial rule.

By grounding the analysis in postcolonial theory, this chapter examines how Zemmouri and Mehta depict moments in which colonial logic becomes visible in everyday life. The following sections present a comparative analysis of selected scenes, highlighting how characters respond to domination, negotiate identity, and resist the subtle pressures of the colonial encounter.

The arrival of the colonizer

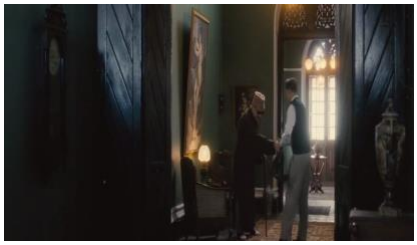
Shot one: from 19:23 to 19:37
The Arrival

In both films, the colonial encounter is introduced not through explicit violence, but through deeply symbolic scenes that reflect how power arrives uninvited and restructures space, perception, and identity**.** This makes the scenes ideal for comparison not because they show the same events, but because they reflect the same deeper structure of how colonialism is introduced as the unspoken authority. In *L'Honneur de la Tribu*, the noise of trucks suddenly pierces the quiet of the village Zitouna, sending people running to see what is happening. This is how the colonial encounter announces itself not with words or direct confrontation, but with an intrusive, mechanical sound that interrupt**s** the natural peace of the village**.** This shot marks the French arrival as a turning point where the entrance of foreign power is immediate, loud, and disruptive, setting the tone for what surveys, this arrival serves as a visual declaration of dominance. This roar present**s** the beginning of colonial intrusion not through warfare but through presence alone. The villagers do not voice or resist; they simply watch, frozen in place. Their quietness is not acceptance but a cinematic portrayal of shock that something fundamental is shifting where the colonized subject is confronted with a force that assumes control without explanation. Zemmouri frames this encounter through long, static shots which mirrors the hopelessness of the villagers. The camera does not move quickly or try to dramatize the event. Instead, it lingers, allowing the audience to feel the weight of this quiet intrusion. After the French settled in, a soldier arrives to present their arrival as something positive, claiming they will make the village a good place. "As they give money to the villagers, this moment reflects the



Shot Two: 31: 43
Buying Silence

colonial mission to "civilize" the colonized, turning occupation into a supposed act of generosity. Thus, this promise lies the fundamental lie of colonization that foreign control is for the benefit of the native people. By declaring the village in need of improvement, the soldier implies it was empty before justifying domination in the name of progress. This is not an act of help, but of power masked in polite language, showing how colonialism often hides violence behind the illusion of civilization. As Marlow reflects in Heart of Darkness, Europeans viewed the "blank spaces" on maps as places to be claimed, ignoring the lives already present. What once seemed like a noble exploration was, in truth, the conquest of land and people not as "pretty thing," but one covered up with ideals and lies. Similarly, the soldier's statement erases the village's value, replacing it with a colonial fantasy of order and improvement.



Shot three: 2:00 min
Dr Aziz Meeting Ghaney Sheikh

A similar confrontation unfolds in *Midnight's Children*, though through a different aesthetic. One of the earliest and most symbolic representations of the colonial encounter take place in a traditional Indian home where Dr. Adam Aziz is called to examine Naseem Ghani sheikh's daughter. Dr. Aziz, freshly returned from his medical studies in Germany, steps into this traditional space as a figure of modernity, his Western suit, medical bag, and confident posture marking him as part of the colonial-educated elite. He represented the generation shaped by western science and rationalism, yet as soon as he enters, he is confronted with boundaries. He is not allowed to see Naseem directly. Instead, he must diagnose her through a small hole in a perforated sheet held up by her father. The camera focuses tightly on Aziz's face as he peers through the hole, confused and frustrated, while the rest of Naseem's body is fragmented, only revealed in isolated parts. This moment is deeply symbolic. The perforated sheet in the scene from 2:05 to 3:18 is deeply symbolic. On screen, it acts as both a cultural

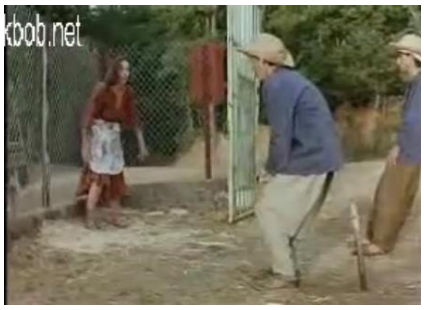
and cinematic barrier, representing divisions between tradition and modernity, East and West. This visual device illustrates the limitations of colonial knowledge: Aziz can only see fragments of the patient, never the whole, mirroring how colonialism fragments understanding and prevents a complete engagement with local culture.

From a theoretical perspective, this scene reflects Fanon's idea of psychological colonization (Fanon, 1963), where the colonized subject internalizes the constraints imposed by foreign authority, creating a sense of divided identity. Similarly, Said's concept of the "Other" (Said, 1978) is evident in how Aziz, shaped by Western education, is caught between two systems: the expectations of colonial modernity and the realities of indigenous society. What appears to be a routine medical examination thus becomes a symbolic colonial encounter, where control over the body parallels the control over identity, illustrating how colonial power is exercised subtly, yet pervasively, through everyday interactions.

However, the difference lies in tone. Zemmouri uses realism to show how colonialism arrives as a slow violence, while Mehta uses symbolic fragmentation to show how it reshapes the subject's identity. In Algeria, the colonizer imposes physical domination; in India, the colonizer's influence splits the mind, leaving the modern subject alienated from both West and tradition. In this way, both directors build on visual borders not merely to mark colonial separation, but to embody the colonial encounter itself: a moment where domination confronts the occupied subject. These images stage the encounter as fractured; voices are either muted or distorted, and a sense of belonging becomes blurred. Zemmouri's realism exposes the external mechanics of control, while Mehta's surrealism captures the internal fragmentation caused by colonial intrusion. This next scene shows how colonial authority operates not only through space, but through language, ridicule, and forced performance.

Colonial hierarchies in performance

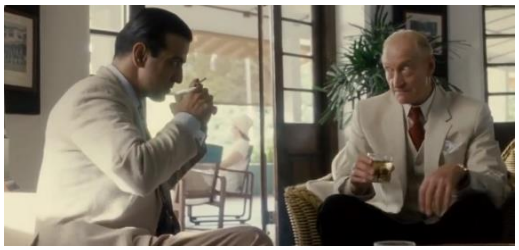
Another striking scene of colonial encounter is presented through this shot from L'Honneur de la Tribu, which captures the mechanics of colonial authority. A young disfigured French girl repeatedly commands a group of Algerian workers, shouting "Travail, travail!" (اخدم اخدم). Her body is weak, young, and her voice lacks force yet she stands as the one giving orders. She exerts absolute authority over the adult men, this contradiction is deliberate. It is not about dialogue, negotiation, it is a scene of imposed hierarchy, where presence alone becomes power. What makes this encounter significant is its visual construction: the girl appears in the foreground, sharply focused and commanding space, while the Algerian men are placed behind her, often blurred, still, and grouped like part of the landscape. Through this picture, the camera doesn't just capture a moment, it frames an entire system: as defined by Edward Said, it is a "system of representation" in which "the Orient was almost a European invention," constructed through images and narratives that served colonial power. This system centers the colonizer's authority and marginalizes the native, turning people into background visual and ideological act of othering: "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences." (Said, 1979, p. 1)



Shot five: 34:40
The Distorted Girl

The girl's distortion becomes symbolic, highlighting how easily power can be exercised within a colonial system. Even someone with no experience or legitimacy can dominate simply by being French. Zemmouri visualizes what Fanon described as a "world cut in two" (Fanon, 1967, p.29), not only geographically but also morally and socially, where one side holds all authority and the other, though physically present, is reduced and marginalized.

In Fanon's terms, the indigenous characters experience emasculation, a stripping of agency, autonomy, and social power, as they are forced to navigate a world where authority is inherited from colonial identity rather than merit or capability. This shot, emphasizing the raw visibility of injustice, resonates with similar scenes in *Midnight's Children*, where colonial and postcolonial power structures shape the possibilities and limitations of individual identity. This shot, built on the raw visibility of injustice, finds an echo in Midnight's Children, where colonial authority is no longer shouted but calmly performed no longer physical but psychological. A parallel moment unfolds in *Midnight's Children*, a battle of presence and submission takes place between Major William, a British officer in a flawless white suit, with Ahmed Sinai,



Shot six: from 27:33 to 28:27
The meeting between Ahmed and Methwold

a wealthy Indian businessman. In this scene, the colonial dynamic is not imposed by force, but reenacted through speech and gesture. Major William communicates calmly, seated confidently, with the house behind him like a visual reminder of British permanence. With his spotless suit that is not a fashion choice but a visual symbol of imperial authority, cleanness and moral superiority, opposite him, Ahmed Sinai tries to purchase the villa but he negotiates hesitantly. His body language is respectful; his tone is admiring. In this moment, Ahmed attempts to align himself with the colonial figure, mimicking his demeanor and language in a subtle act of what Homi Bhabha terms "colonial mimicry ", an ambivalent form of imitation that is "almost the same, but not quite." (1994, p.4) Ahmed's imitation, intended to gain approval or entry into the colonial order, absurdly highlights his difference and reinforces the colonial hierarchy. His mimicry becomes a form of self-erasure, where assimilation is performed but never fully accepted. Through this image the posture of William, the softened eyes of Ahmed we see not just two men, but two positions in a lingering colonial structure. In

a drawing room with colonial decor. Major William stands by the window, his stance straight and controlled.

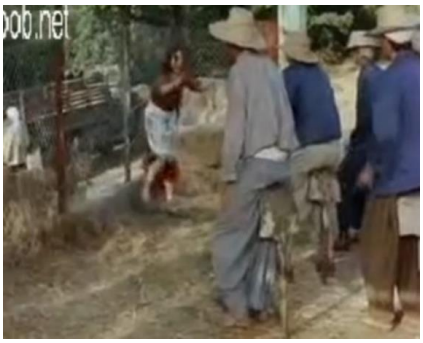
Ahmed Sinai approaches, clutching a briefcase, nervously.
Ahmed Sinai: "Mr. Methwold, I must tell…the price you're asking for Buckingham Villa is absolutely…"
Major William (slowly turning, eyes narrowed, turning his finger inside his wine cup): "Ridiculous! That's a ridiculously low price. We are giving the whole blasted country 1.5, (sucking his finger), hundreds of years of decent, honorable governments, and all of a sudden, it's all up and off."
(Both drinking wine.)
Mr. Methwold: "You must admit! We weren't all bad."
Ahmed Sinai: "Not at all!"
Mr. Methwold: "We built schools, railway stations, trains, so forth…"
Amina: "Darling, is it wise to do business with a madman?"
Ahmed Sinai: "He's English. They ruled the country, he couldn't be totally insane."

This exchange reveals a delicate but powerful colonial encounter. The British characters defend and glorify their rule, appealing to the rhetoric of civilization and order. Ahmed's quick agreement and respect reflect the internalized colonial mindset, where natives are still shaped by the imperial memory and view the colonizer as an authority. Though set in different contexts, both scenes illustrate a similar colonial logic: irrational power structures in which identity, rather than intrinsic value, defines control. In Algeria, a foreign child physically leads grown men, while in India, a native adult seeks approval from a departing colonizer. These encounters distort traditional hierarchies, showing that colonialism not only dominates but also reshapes reality.

The contrast between the two scenes highlights different expressions of power. In Algeria, power is visual and physical: the girl commands through her voice, the workers' silence, and the framing of the bodies, how the camera positions them to emphasize authority and submission. In India, power is mental and symbolic: it resides in historical knowledge, memory, and Ahmed's internalized reflex to comply. In both cases, there is no equality, only performance. The Algerian workers stand tall but remain voiceless; Ahmed speaks, but only

to reflect the colonizer's pride. The girl asserts authority by her presence and nationality, while William dominates through storytelling and historical narrative. Obedience in Algeria is instinctive; in India, compliance is emotional and internalized.

Gestures of Colonial Power



Shot seven: 27:49
A humiliating order

At the center of the frame the French girl rises her hand commanding with strict, repetitive motions, directing labor as if conducting a machine. These movements make her a visual extension of colonial control. She stands confidently in the foreground, framed with clarity and isolation, while the Algerian workers remain in the background, barely distinct from the earth they work on. Her voice is the sound of colonial suppression. It reveals a deeper erasure: the colonized are neither allowed to respond nor refuse. A similar gesture of power appears in *Midnight's Children* during a seemingly minor yet loaded moment when Major William, holds a cup of wine and, sinks his finger into it. Without needing proof, he turns toward Ahmed and asks with casual disgust whether it was him or "one of your Indians." His body language is not frantic or aggressive, but the act itself is cold, invasive, and symbolic. His gesture, is only allowed because of his whiteness and authority, if it was Ahmed Sinai who made the same gesture it would be perceived as uncivilized "Like the French girl's hands, it visually asserts dominance without the need for dialogue. Her gesture embodies authority, imposes judgment, and renders the colonized voiceless, as if their perspective no longer matters."

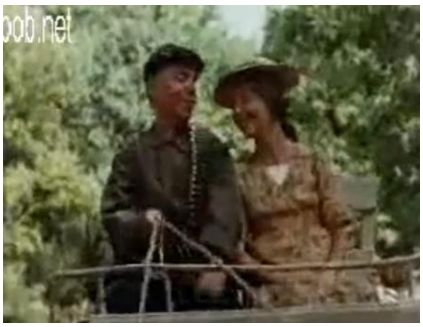

Shot eight: 27: 39 min
A Disgusting Gesture

It assumes authority, assigns blame, and erases the need for the colonized to converse. Both gestures; her commanding hands and his probing finger reduce the colonized to

voiceless bodies under command. In both scenes, the camera isolates the colonizer, amplifying their control while the colonized blend into the background or are framed through stillness. These are not just bodily movements; they are cinematic metaphors of colonial violence: clean, measured, and entirely one-sided. The colonizer acts; the colonized endures. In this way, Zemmouri and Mehta depict colonialism not only through what is said or done, but through gesture itself through who is allowed to act and who is imprisoned.

Colonial voices through language

Following with Another encounter which emerges through a brief linguistic exchange that emphasizes both exclusion and ridicule. In *L'Honneur de la Tribu*, an Algerian man says "bonne chance" ("good luck") as a French couple passes by in a horse-drawn carriage. The French woman laughs and says, "You'll never know whether he just said bonne chance or bonne chasse," a joke her husband promptly enjoys answering (it is the same thing, this moment summarizes a deep power imbalance embedded in colonial structures. The mispronunciation or the presumed mispronunciation becomes the focal point, not the man's attempt to communicate, but the colonizers' mockery of it. This instance of linguistic mockery subtly reinforces the process of othering where the Algerian is not overtly rejected but silently excluded, His effort to imitate the colonial language does not bring him closer to power. As Edward Said argues in Orientalism, "The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, 'different'" (Said, 1978: 40). This framing constructs the colonized as fundamentally unfit for serious dialogue. The French woman's laughter echoes this discourse, turning the Algerian man's speech into a source of amusement. It is not simply a personal exchange, but a cinematic embodiment of colonial ideology where the colonized is denied,



Shot nine: from 15:26 min to 15:34 min
Mocking the Natives

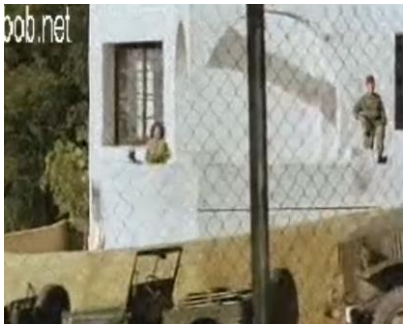
even in the act of orating. As Frantz Fanon notes in Black Skin, White Masks, “To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture” (Fanon, 2008, p. 64). Highlighting that language is not just a tool of communication but a gateway to identity and cultural belonging, it is represented in the previous scene when the Algerian attempts to pronounce French, an attempt to claim presence, instead he receives erasure, a portrayal of failed assimilation.

A similar linguistic encounter takes place in *Midnight’s Children*, when Ahmed Sinai insists on doing business with William Methwold despite his wife Mumtaz’s concern: “Is it wise to do business with a madman?” Ahmed calmly replies that he couldn’t be totally insane after all, “he is English; they ruled the country.” This moment, quiet and conversational, reveals the deep psychological residue of colonial ideology. Unlike the Algerian man who is mocked from the outside, Ahmed mimics from within. He tries to fit in in Methwold s world, absorbing the logic of empire as a mark of reason and legitimacy. His justification that ruling a country must equate to rationality shows the extent to which colonial power has scripted the very terms of thought. Both scenes though different in tone and setting are encounters with colonial discourse. In Algeria, the colonized speaks but is mocked; in India, the oppressed talks but forced to submit. In both, the colonial language does not offer empowerment but becomes a mirror of alienation. The Algerian man's French is twisted into a joke; Ahmed’s rationalization becomes a silent admission of inferiority. These captions demonstrate that even when the colonized utters the oppressor’s language, they remain unheard and misunderstood, the act of speaking so often is seen as a sign of presence here becomes the very marker of exclusion. Thus, these encounters do not portray communication but rather the failure of recognition. They illustrate how colonialism ruins not only space and labor but also language and meaning. The Algerian is infantilized; the Indian internalizes. Through different

Shot ten: 28:19 min
Worshipping the British

narrative textures mockery and mimicry both films reveal that the colonial encounter persists not just in guns or governance, but in accents and norms.

The architecture of empire



Shot eleven: 34: 28 min
The white house

A white house in the Algerian village is quickly seized and converted into a French military base. The choice of this house with its beauty and visibility is symbolic, not just about functionality but about control, by taking the most noticeable and elegant building in the village they employ a visual statement: the best of what is local now will serve the occupier Its selection is far from arbitrary, Frantz Fanon famously describes as "naked violence "a form of domination that asserts itself without justification, negotiation, or dialogue. In his words, "Colonialism is not a machine capable of thinking... It is naked violence…" (2004, p. 88). The scene visually captures this logic: the elegant home, once a private space tied to identity and memory, is transformed into a symbol of foreign control, not through explicit confrontation but through silent and total appropriation.

Shot twelve: 2:03 min
The Indian Havili

The violence here is not just physical it is psychological, erasing belonging and replacing it with occupation. A similar space appears early in *Midnight's Children*, this Indian Havili (mansion), enclosed by delicately carved screens and steeped in filtered golden light, stands as a reminder of a world untouched by colonial intrusion. Though it belongs to a Muslim family, its architectural references to Hindu domesticity reflect the layered histories that existed before the empire carved artificial divisions. Unlike the Algerian home, this space is not forcibly taken but it too becomes charged with transformation. The confined interiors and firm patriarchal norms predict how colonial and postcolonial forces will reshape private life.

Shot thirteen: 27: 29 min
Major's house

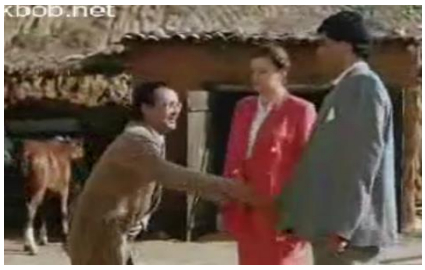
The house remains untouched by European hands, yet colonialism still appears just outside the frame. This shift becomes more pronounced when the narrative enters a British colonial villa. Here, the architecture is clearly imperial. Major William occupies it with casual authority, Ahmed doesn't seek to reclaim space but to mirror the colonizer, the two scenes present complementary modes of colonial power. In Algeria, control is enacted through still takeover while In India, power is presented within symbols, gestures, and architecture, subtly shaping post-independence interactions. Both houses state and both shape the people within them. One land is seized by force; the other remains physically untouched but is reshaped ideologically. Together, they show that colonialism does not only conquer territory, it imprints itself on meaning, identity, and desire. The colonial encounter unfolds through language, spatial control, and symbolic gestures. Yet, it is after independence that a deeper crisis takes shape. The dream of liberation unravels into fragmentation, betrayal, and lost direction. Both films illustrate how the postcolonial state often inherits and re-enacts structures of violence. The narrative focus shifts from the struggle against colonial domination to a more unsettling depiction of internal collapse

and disillusionment.

Disillusionment in both adaptations

Post-independence trauma

Omar's return to the village in L'Honneur de la Tribu is stripped of any heroic grandeur. It is quiet, tense, and uncomfortable. Dust clings to his boots, a detail that visually signals both physical distance and emotional disconnection. The village appears dry and still, painted in washed-out colors and emptied life its silence expresses loudly than any words. Years earlier, Omar had left this very place as a fighter in the liberation struggle, believing in a better future. Now, Omar arrives not as a liberator, but as a functionary of the state. He wears a suit similar to the formal clothing once worn by French colonial officials, this shift of costume is a clear visual marker of inherited power. Instead of rebuilding the village, his mission is to demolish it in the name of modernization. His arrival is reproducing the film's earlier scenes of colonial intrusion, providing signals that what was once imposed from outside is now enforced from within. The revolution has devoured itself. Mahmoud Zemmouri visually reinforces this betrayal through wide shots that frame Omar as small and isolated, emphasizing his alienation from the people he once represented. Omar climbs a hill overlooking the village only to fall. The scene is quiet and undramatic, thus heavy with meaning. The ground that once gave him existence now pushes him away. His fall becomes a cinematic punishment; a quiet rejection by his homeland. In that moment, Omar becomes a stranger not only to the village, but to himself. In *Midnight's Children*, a similar disillusionment takes root through the character of Saleem. After a bombing that destroyed his



Shot fourteen: 53: 24 min
The Homecoming

Shot fifteen: 54: 18 min
The Fall

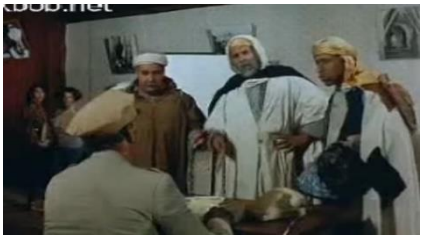
family's home during the India Pakistan war 1965, Saleem suffers a violent head injury that leaves him with total amnesia. This war nearly two decades after independence, represent not only a geographical conflict but a symbolic failure of post-colonial promises The Partition of 1947 had been designed to resolve communal tensions, yet by 1965, the dream of peace and pluralism had collapsed into repeated cycles of militarized aggression. This moment is not framed as personal tragedy alone, it becomes a profound symbol of national breakdown. Saleem, who once believed himself to be a reflection of India, now stands emptied of memory, belief, and identity. He is a blank slate, as symbolized in John Locke's concept of Tabula Rosa, introduced in An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690), argues that the human mind begins as a blank slate, shaped entirely by experience. According to Locke, individuals are not born with innate ideas; rather, their identity and knowledge are formed through sensory impressions and memory.

Shot sixteen: 1h: 33 min
A Blank Identity

In *Midnight's Children*, Saleem's amnesia after the bomb can be seen as a literal return to this blank state. The explosion strips him of memory, effectively erasing the experiences and ideals that once defined him. This loss positions Saleem as a Tabula Rosa, not by birth, but by trauma. He no longer recalls who he is, what he believes in, or how he fits into the narrative of the nation. Just as Locke's theory suggests that identity is constructed through accumulated experiences, Saleem's blankness highlights the fragility of both personal and national memory. His condition becomes a metaphor for a postcolonial India struggling to redefine itself after violence and disillusionment have erased the ideals of its independence. The promises of independence unity, dignity, self-definition is rendered meaningless in the face of erasure. His fractured identity is a mirror of the postcolonial state, which, instead of achieving clarity, turns to confusion, forgetting, and internal decay. The child of

independence becomes a symbol of its emptiness. Both Omar and Saleem, once hopeful figures tied to the idea of national rebirth, are transformed into images of postcolonial failure. In Algeria, the revolutionary becomes the enforcer; in India, the storyteller loses his voice. Through, isolation, and loss of self, the directors of both films expose how the glow of liberation fades into shadows of betrayal. There is no celebration in these scenes only a quiet a realization that independence without justice or memory is another kind of violence.

Internal oppression

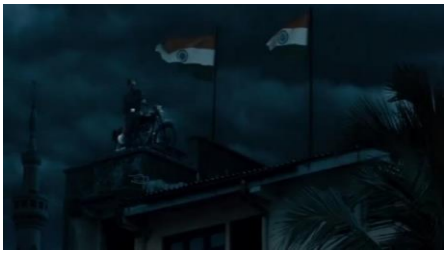


Shot seventeen: 1h: 01 min
The Villagers

This sense of betrayal intensifies as a group of villagers, the majority are elders and former resistance members, approach Omar to beg him not to destroy Zitouna. Their request is not rebellious; it is rooted in a desire to protect memory and history. The village is not just a geographical space but a sign of collective resistance and cultural continuity. The villagers utter with fear, their voices captured in long, unbroken takes that allow their emotions to unfold naturally. The way they dressed and talked enhances the realism of this scene. Their gestures, evokes the rawness of the lived experience.

This cinematic choice strips the moment, making the injustice feel even more painful. Omer orders the arrest theme; this decision marks a turning point. The tools of colonial control are now used by Algerians against Algerians. This reversal fulfills Frantz Fanon's warning, where he argues that postcolonial elites often replicate colonial structures of power. As Fanon (2004, p.119) notes: "The national bourgeoisie who, unable to predict the possible consequences of such fear .in fact they will be erased", Fanon's insight explains Omar's transformation from a symbol of liberation to an enforcer of control, revealing how colonial violence is not just repeated, but internalized by the very figures once imagined as liberators. A similar transformation occurs in *Midnight's Children*, particularly during the depiction of

Indira Gandhi's Emergency. Declared in 1975, the Emergency was a historical period marked by the suspension of civil liberties, mass arrests, and political repression. In the film, Indira Gandhi is depicted as symbol of bureaucratic authoritarian stripped of empathy and driven by ideological control figure who directs the systematic neutralization of the Midnight's Children. These children, once symbols of India's unity are robbed of their magical powers, the regime removes their identity and their symbolic place in India's future. It represents how post-independence India suppresses diversity. The most evocative moment comes when Indira turns the sky black, a surreal but strong visual metaphor. This darkened sky symbolizes the death of imagination, freedom, and future. What once was vast and open now becomes suffocating. This visual darkness also echoes Harold Bloom's concept of "deamonization", a moment when the successor (in this case, the postcolonial state) absorbs and intensifies the qualities of its powerful predecessor. By turning the sky black, Indira does not merely mimic colonial violence; she surpasses it, transforming inherited mechanisms of control into something even more choking and internalized. The image becomes more than repression, it represents a corrupted legacy taken to its extreme, where liberation turned into domination.



Shot seventeen: from 1h:32, 56 min to 2h 00 min
The Dark Sky

Mehta uses this moment to express the internal collapse of India's ideals, showing how the state itself can become the colonizer of its people. Indira's role in the film is both historical and allegorical, she stands for the betrayal of democratic promises by authoritarian reality.

These two scenes; Omar's repression of the villagers and Indira Gandhi's sterilization of the Midnight's Children are brought together in this analysis, because they both portray the tragic continuity of power structures after liberation. What was once called colonial control is

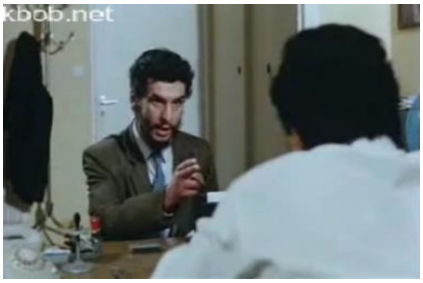
now reproduced by local authority. In both countries, the postcolonial state assumes the tools of its former oppressors, using them not for justice, but for domination.

The comparison reveals several shared elements which consist of the betrayal of revolutionary ideals, the silencing of collective memory, and the transformation of liberators into agents of control. Both movies use quiet, symbolic visuals (unmoving villagers, emotionless children) to convey the deep emotional and moral cost of such betrayals. What should have been moments of joy becomes scenes of renewed trauma. The audience is left not with a celebration of independence, but with a haunting question: of what was liberation for, if it ends in the same voicelessness, it once tried to break?

Disillusionment

The collapse of post-colonial generations

A powerful convergence between *L'Honneur de la Tribu* and *Midnight's Children* emerges in scenes where the postcolonial dream collapses before the eyes of the younger generation. These moments do not merely reveal disappointment; they transform personal pain into profound political allegory. In *L'Honneur de la Tribu*, disillusionment reaches its emotional height in a scene where Omar, now a government official, is confronted by his own son a young lawyer unaware of their familial connection who pleads for the release of the villagers. The meeting takes palace in in a formal office marked by its sterile decor and symbolic detachment. Omar is framed behind a desk in a low-angle shot, heightening his dominance and institutional power, while his son stands in softer, natural light suggesting clarity, moral conviction, and youth. The camera does not rush; it lingers on the silence that follows the son's words, allowing the viewer to absorb the weight of a request that will be ignored. This speechlessness functions as more than emotional awkwardness it



Shot nineteen: 1h:10 min
Omar and his son

becomes a rupture, a moment when personal identity, political conscience, and generational hope are severed. This is not simply a father denying a son; it is the revolution denying its future. The visual language reflects this fracture distance, stillness, and subdued color palettes mirror the exhaustion and moral emptiness of the post-independence regime. A parallel arc unfolds in *Midnight's Children*, particularly in the scenes surrounding the Emergency declared by Indira Gandhi. Saleem, like Omar's son, embodies the idealistic generation born at the moment of independence, burdened with the dream of a plural, just, and united India.

Shot twenty: 57: 35 min
The Conference

At first, this hope finds visual expression in the formation of the Midnight's Children conference. Each child, born in the first hour of freedom, represents a region, a language, a faith together, they symbolize Nehru's vision of a diverse but cohesive nation. These scenes are vibrant: the editing becomes quick and energetic, the music rich with anticipation, and the colors bright, reflecting excitement and national potential. However, this illusion of unity quickly fractures. The children, rather than forming a group of liberators, they begin to argue and clash. Their meetings descend into chaos as disagreements arise over identity, purpose, and loyalty. They do not communicate with one voice but fight over their differences, exposing the fragility of the Indian ideal. What was meant to be a symbol of unity becomes a battlefield of mistrust and fragmentation mirroring how the country itself struggled to hold together its many parts. The connection between the children, like the connection between India's communities, breaks apart. This downfall is not accidental but politically enforced. Under Indira Gandhi's Emergency, the Midnight's Children are deliberately repressed and scattered. The film portrays this erasure through disorienting camera angles and

Shot twenty-one: 1h: 15 min
The collapse of the children

a growing sense of darkness and stillness. Saleem and the others are captured, sterilized, and removed from society. Indira Gandhi's regime seeks to omit them from existence, as if by eliminating their voices, the fractured dream of India can be rewritten or forgotten. This transition from color to muted tones, from movement to paralysis highlights the dramatic shift from a hopeful beginning to authoritarian erasure.

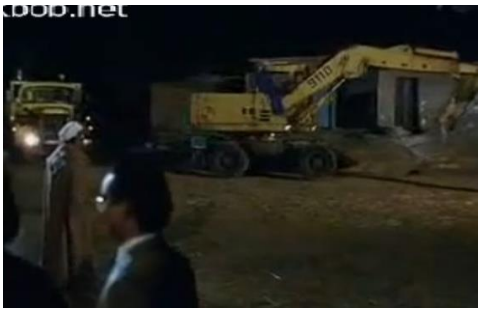
Re-writing Origins

Shot twenty: from 28:03 to 38:39
Switching the babies

Both cinematic works expose the failure of postcolonial nations to protect the truth of their own origins. In *Midnight's Children*, the act of switching Saleem Sinai at birth on the stroke of Indian independence is more than a narrative twist; it is a metaphor for a nation founded on a distortion. Saleem, born to a poor street musician, is secretly swapped with the son of a wealthy English-educated couple. Mary Pereira, the nurse who performs the act, does so out of idealism, convinced she is contributing to a better India. Yet the scene is shaded with moral confusion: the lighting is dim, the camera slow and deliberate, and the emotional tone uncertain. Saleem's future is shaped not by truth, but by someone else's vision of justice. From this first moment, his identity is a fabrication. Raised with wealth and education that are not "his", Saleem becomes a symbolic figure of a nation struggling to know who it really is. The postcolonial state, rather than fulfilling the promise of equality, begins with substitution and suppression. Identity is not inherited through blood or experience but assigned by others with power. This lie at birth casts a shadow over Saleem's entire life, just as it does over India's journey suggesting that the nation's foundational standards are compromised from the start as in L'Honneur de la Tribu, though on a collective level. Zitouna, the village where the Algerians were alienated becomes the target of state-led

erasure. Once a site of memory, the village is now treated as an obstacle to progress. Officials, including Omar, a former revolutionary himself argue that the village must be renamed, restructured, and ultimately erased. This betrayal is not framed as violent, but as clinical and quiet.

The cinematography mirrors this tone: the village appears dusty and drained of color; wide, static shots emphasize emptiness and isolation; dialogue is minimal. The very space that once delivered Algeria's freedom is now considered irrelevant by its own government. This is not just historical forgetting; it is active division. The identity of Zitouna, like Saleem's, is not protected or honored but rewritten by those who now hold power. Just as Saleem grows up with a false sense of self, the village is rebranded, its name and meaning stolen. What unites both scenes are the revelation that postcolonial regimes inherit not only sovereignty, but also the urge to control narrative, identity, and memory. The violence is no longer colonial but internalized, enacted by those who were once victims of it. Furthermore, both films present these moments not with melodrama, but with restraint. Saleem's birth scene is quiet, almost intimate, despite the historical weight it carries. Likewise, the land's destruction is not presented as loud or dramatic, but gradual and administrative. This choice reflects a key idea in postcolonial disillusionment; that betrayal often does not come through war or explosion, but through stillness, paperwork, and the slow removal of what once mattered. The camera becomes a witness to loss not just of land or power, but of meaning. In both India and Algeria, independence is not a clear break from oppression but a transfer of control. Instead of liberating the people, the new regimes manipulate origins to serve their own image of nationhood. The result is a form of national



Shot twenty-one: 1h 03 min
The Destruction of Zitouna

amnesia, where the revolutionary past is no longer a source of strength but an inconvenience to be buried.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined how *L'Honneur de la Tribu* and *Midnight's Children* portray two key dimensions of the postcolonial experience; the colonial encounter and the deep disillusionment that follows independence. Through distinct yet resonant cinematic languages, both films reveal how colonialism leaves behind not only political scars but also emotional, cultural, and psychological fractures. In *L'Honneur de la Tribu*, the colonial encounter is inscribed in the power relations between language, class, and identity, where Algerians are alienated within their own land. Similarly, *Midnight's Children* uses Saleem's hybrid identity and fragmented narrative to illustrate how the colonial gaze continues to shape post-independence India. Yet it is in the portrayal of disillusionment that both films powerfully converge. The dreams of freedom, once vibrant and unifying, unravel before a younger generation caught between inherited ideals and harsh realities. Omar's transformation from resistance hero to state enforcer, and Saleem's psychological breakdown during the Emergency, both symbolize the betrayal of the postcolonial promise. The collapse of unity, whether in a tribal village or a midnight-born conference, reflects a wider collapse of belief. What we find through this comparative analysis is a shared postcolonial condition that is marked by fractured identities, moral contradictions, and the lingering shadows of empire. Thus, within this condition lies the stirring of another force: resistance. As the following chapter will explore, the same characters who bear the weight of disillusionment also become the carriers of resilience. Whether through silence, memory, or storytelling, the postcolonial subject does not surrender. Instead, they begin to reshape meaning and reclaim space, one gesture at a time.

Chapter three

Forms of Resistance in postcolonial India and Algeria through a cinematic perspective

Introduction

The chapter analyzes how resistance is articulated in Midnight's Children (Dir. Deepa Mehta, 2012) and *L'Honneur de la Tribu* (Dir. Mahmoud Zemmouri, 1993), emphasizing that resistance goes beyond explicit rebellion or confrontation. Storytelling, memory, and visual composition become central tools of defiance, shaped by the colonial contexts and cultural repertoires of India and Algeria. In *Midnight's Children*, Saleem Sinai's non-linear, magical narrative structure defies both colonial and postcolonial authorities who seek to impose a rational, unified historical account. He claims narrative sovereignty through a voice that is messy, mythical, and emotionally resonant. L'Honneur de la Tribu enacts resistance through opacity, communal endurance, and everyday rhythms, avoiding conventional cinematic explanations in favor of shared presence and slow observation. Edward Said underscores the centrality of storytelling to cultural resistance, noting that "the power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism" (Said, 1993, p. xiii). This theoretical insight clarifies how both films enact resistance not only through their content but also their chosen form.

The comparative analysis highlights resistance as both spoken and unspoken, embedded in personal and collective acts, and expressed in narrative and visual forms. Saleem's refusal to conform linguistically and Zemmouri's visual rejection of the colonial gaze both suggest that resistance is not restricted to spectacle; it thrives quietly, intimately, and structurally. Instead of framing resistance purely as struggle or revolt, both works foreground subtler, culturally rooted strategies that expose how artistic production becomes a space of cultural autonomy (Shohat & Stam, 1994). Examination of both Saleem's mythic unravelling and the villagers' resilient stillness reveals two formally distinct but ideologically united approaches to resisting external control (Mehta, 2012; Zemmouri, 1993).

Personal Expression as Resistance

The opening line "I was born in the city of Bombay once upon a time", immediately signals Saleem's fusion of autobiography and fable, disrupting Western conventions of linear historical beginnings. His storytelling, which blurs fact and fantasy, actively resists efforts to force India's past into a coherent, rational narrative (Rushdie, 1981; Mehta, 2012). Through narrative fragmentation and a magical realist style, Saleem asserts his right to shape his own history and that of postcolonial India. Calling upon Derridean thought, Kabir (2008) argues that translation within Indian culture privileges transformation and emotional truth over fixed accuracy, a logic reflected in Saleem's narration and reinforced by Indian traditions of mythic retellings and oral folktales. Rushdie's own essays on identity and language illuminate Saleem as a "translated man": influenced by multiple histories, tongues, and perspectives, and embodying resistant hybridity (Rushdie, various years). Saleem's speech marked by disrupted grammar and appropriated English is not read as deficiency, but as a calculated strategy of abrogation and appropriation, deliberately rejecting colonial linguistic norms (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2000). Hamid Naficy's concept of accented cinema describes how fractured, displaced, and hybrid voices become vehicles of resistance; Saleem's narration, shifting erratically across timelines and syntax, demonstrates that difference itself is oppositional (Naficy, 2001).

Zemmouri's film similarly resists colonial cinematic standards, privileging slow pacing, silence, and daily rhythms over linear Western plot structures. Rather than explicating Algerian village life for outsiders, the camera chooses endurance and collective memory as aesthetic and political strategies. Shohat and Stam (1994) note that Third Cinema foregrounds nonlinear narratives and collective experience, qualities Zemmouri leverages to disrupt the colonial gaze and create a decolonial aesthetic. By centering non-explanation and

quiet witnessing, Zemmouri's film asserts the right to opacity and local rhythm, refusing colonial interpretation and instead valuing communal endurance (Zemmouri, 1993).

Responses to Pressure

Saleem's resistance during the Emergency in India takes the form of deliberate silence rather than loud defiance. Tortured and pressured by the government to betray the identities of the Midnight Children, Saleem chooses not to speak, thus protecting his peers and refusing to participate in the regime's violence (Mehta, 2012). Edward Said's observation that "survival...is about the connection between things, and that after all, is what culture means" (Said, 1993, p. 363) contextualizes Saleem's ethical and deeply personal refusal, which preserves the unseen bond of collective memory and possibility. Rushdie departs from Western heroic tropes, emphasizing that defiance need not be loud or violent; Saleem's quiet, ethical stance resists surveillance and the pressure to betray, reframing heroism within everyday dignity and connection (Rushdie, 1981; Mehta, 2012).

In *L'Honneur de la Tribu*, resistance to colonial violence is articulated through Omar's controversial, morally ambiguous decisions, shaped by the crushing pressures of occupation and communal rejection. Rather than presenting him as a conventional hero, Zemmouri focuses on complexity where Omar is rejected, seen as a threat, and his choices reflect not triumph, but lived tragedy and social tension (Zemmouri, 1993). Frantz Fanon argued that resistance is not solely about victories or iconic rebellion, but also includes the refusal to accept domination in any form, even when this leads to ambiguity or rejection (Fanon, 2004, p. 99). Zemmouri refuses to glorify resistance, preferring a model marked by sacrifice, uncertainty, and the deep complexities of postcolonial life.

Both Saleem's silent resistance and Omar's ambiguous confrontation represent deliberate refusals to accept assigned roles. Saleem protects the diversity and potential of

postcolonial identity by refusing to betray others, while Omar challenges the moral codes imposed by colonial power, ensuring neither is reduced by the controlling system. Both narratives honor memory, loyalty, and deeply personal dignity over spectacle or martyrdom (Fanon, 1963; Shohat & Stam, 1994).

Remaining as an Act of Resistance

Parvati-the-witch's refusal to disappear, despite the historical associations of invisibility with marginalized women under colonial and patriarchal oppression, emerges as a form of resistance. Her actions, grounded in everyday choices, maternal care, and self-determination, redefine opposition as presence, not absence (Rushdie, 1981; Mehta, 2012). Campt (2017, p. 32) frames such acts as "a refusal to stay in one's proper place," underscoring endurance and survival as quiet but powerful resistance. She resists dominant colonial discourses and nationalist myths that idealize women as sacrificial or passive symbols. Through personal assertion and protection of her child, she subverts both colonial and patriarchal expectations, embodying resistance that does not rely on aggression or visibility. Rushdie constructs her character to challenge the binary between victim and rebel, celebrating resistance that persists in daily life, relationship choices, and the act of staying rooted against oppressive structures (Rushdie, 1981).

Similarly, Zemmouri's villagers refuse to confront the French occupiers directly. Their collective endurance, choice of non-cooperation, and quiet presence reject colonial domination on their own terms. As Fanon contends, "He is dominated not domesticated. He is made to feel inferior, but by no means convinced of his inferiority" (Fanon, 2004, p. 37). The villagers' refusal to engage becomes an active defense of identity, challenging colonial power through acts of non-submission and presence without spectacle (Fanon, 1963; Zemmouri, 1993). Both Parvati's presence and the villagers' quiet refusal articulate non-

violent forms of resistance. These forms are neither passive nor invisible; instead, they signify deliberate, politically and emotionally charged denials of imposed authority.

Conclusion

Midnight's Children and *L'Honneur de la Tribu* collectively reveal resistance as a strategy deeply woven into narrative, memory, and daily survival. Rather than celebrating dramatic revolutions, the films underscore the significance of storytelling, symbolic gestures, emotional strength, and the refusal to be erased. Resistance, as represented in these works, draws upon ancestral connection, collective memory, and narrative sovereignty, emphasizing the persistent effort to maintain dignity amidst structures of domination (Mehta, 2012; Zemmouri, 1993; Rushdie, 1981; Said, 1993; Campt, 2017; Ashcroft et al., 2000; Shohat & Stam, 1994; Naficy, 2001; Fanon, 1963, 2004; Kabir, 2008). Such resistance is not bound to masculine, visible, or violent acts. Both narrative traditions celebrate survival as defiance, dignified within everyday life, and expressed through forms uniquely shaped by the colonial experience.

Conclusion

Conclusion

The research has examined the complexities of colonialism, disillusionment, and resistance in India and Algeria through a comparative cinematic analysis of Midnight's Children and L'Honneur de la Tribu. It sought to understand how colonized societies experience and respond to the colonial encounter, and how postcolonial cinema represents these processes, including the lingering effects of empire on identity, memory, and social structures.

The study reveals that both films, despite their different geographies and histories, converge in portraying the nuanced ways colonized individuals and communities navigate colonial legacies. In Midnight's Children, India's postcolonial reality is filtered through Saleem's fragmented, magical narrative. His voice becomes a site of resistance through abrogation, appropriation, and refusal, symbolizing struggles of identity in a nation shaped by both trauma and hope. Storytelling transforms personal memory into a political act.

In L'Honneur de la Tribu, Algerian villagers navigate the silences and confusion left by colonial domination. The film's visual language its silences, landscapes, and framing communicate subtle resistance through presence, connection to land, and communal solidarity. Omar's spiritual journey and the villagers' quiet refusal to conform illustrate that resistance can be symbolic, embodied, and deeply rooted in local context. Across both films, resistance emerges not only through overt action but also through memory, language, and narrative strategies. Whether through Saleem's chaotic voice or the still resistance of Algerian villagers, postcolonial subjects confront the echoes of empire in personal and collective ways. Cinema, in this sense, does not merely reflect resistance it performs it, offering counter-histories that challenge colonial legacies and open space for new voices.

Future studies could expand this analysis by exploring other postcolonial cinemas to investigate how visual and narrative techniques articulate resistance in different cultural

contexts. Comparative research could also examine gendered experiences of colonialism and postcolonial memory, or the role of diaspora in shaping postcolonial identity. Additionally, interdisciplinary approaches combining film studies, history, and postcolonial theory could deepen understanding of how cinema mediates between personal memory and collective historical consciousness.

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