

## **The Cell Movie as Cinema 2 Paradigm**

Youssef Loumim

### **Abstract**

Cinema is an overarching art that can be categorized into different types of locomotion. Cinema 1, for instance, refers to entertainment and consumption cinematography, while Cinema 2 represents intellectual filmmaking. This distinction occurred owing to many historical metamorphoses and impulses. This article focuses particularly on Cinema 2 as an elitist film industry that has increasingly spread worldwide, including Morocco. Furthermore, this paper provides a clear-cut analysis of the Moroccan film *The Cell* (2022) by the filmmaker Rabii El Jawhari. It offers a breakdown of shared traditions between Cinema 2 and El Jawhari's aesthetics as one of Morocco's proponents of intellectual cinema.

**Keywords:** Cinema 1, Cinema 2, Cinematography, Movement-image, Crystal-image, Moroccan Cinema

## 1. Introduction

*The Cell* (2022) is a short film directed by the Moroccan filmmaker Rabii El Jawhari. It concentrates on human psychology and the impact of alienation on human consciousness and subconsciousness. The film portrays a woman stuck in a narrow chamber that resembles a camera. This dark room symbolizes the human mind and psyche where endless thoughts occur and grapple.

This film is avant-garde since it adopts unconventional filmmaking methods. The French philosopher Gilles Deleuze has superbly set off two realms of cinema, Cinema 1 and Cinema 2, paving the way for a constructive debate on cinema as images of joviality and cinema as images for learning and critical thinking.

Cinema 1 emerged as an industry that aimed at amusement and was inclined toward the power of moving images to keep film viewers engaged with the superficiality of the movie. Cinema 1 further adheres to the culture of consumerism, which is why Hollywood is a leading film industry that promotes movement and entertainment (Thompson & Bordwell, 2010).

Cinema 2, on the other hand, is an intellectual film industry that thrived after World War II. War had severe consequences on European nations, including poverty, hunger, illnesses, and other devastating phenomena. Therefore, cineastes in Europe believed that entertaining and literary-style movies provided consumers a romanticized universe apart from their true needs. In other words, Cinema 1 can be considered an escapist form of art (Andrew, 2010).

This paper caters to an analysis of *The Cell* movie to reveal the features shared between this film and Cinema 2 and to discuss it as one of the intellectual films in Morocco.

## 2. Literature Review

Cinema 1 inclines towards numerous edits and the amplification of shortcuts to maintain the movement-image. This is why Gilles Deleuze states that Cinema 1 leans on movement images rather than moving ideas. This type of image has three dimensions: perception image, affection image, and action-reaction image. Perception images show viewers what characters see or observe within the frame; affection images convey characters' feelings within the story, and action-reaction images refer to the culmination between perception and affection moments. Hence, the employment of these images in film guarantees amplified movement and deprives viewers of time slots to react cognitively (Deleuze, 1986).

Cinema 1 is deemed a posh film industry paradigm, as it capitalizes on high-budget films. Cinema 1 filmmakers mostly shoot on set, recruit celebrities, use special effects, and work with extended crews. This type of cinema can further propagandize the states where it exists and receive enticing governmental support as a corollary (King, 2002).

Conversely, Cinema 2 is an elitist film industry. It is considered intellectual as it deals with political and militant topics that bring to the fore political and social criticism for the general public. The overt goal of Cinema 2 filmmakers is to provide a realistic representation of life and voice the drawbacks of society, such as destitution, crime, family split, human mental health, and anarchy, to name but a few (Stam, 2000).

Cinema 2 displays little interest in the formalistic beauty of films, such as studios, film stars, and elaborate equipment. Instead, Cinema 2 filmmakers focus their movies on realistic stories

ascending from their life experiences and understanding of divergent life circumstances. This is why, Cinema 2 advocates are known as *auteur* filmmakers (Corrigan, 2011).

Gilles Deleuze calls Cinema 2 the cinema of time-image. This cinema rejects causality and linearity within the plot, as the former reinforces a coherent continuity of events, emphasizing movement and forcing one-way stories. While time is subordinate to movement in Cinema 1, time becomes entirely independent in Cinema 2 through image fragmentation and the use of meditative scenes (Deleuze, 1989).

Time images are different, implying two major types of images: crystal and op-son images. The crystal image involves the fusion of time, where past, present, and future become nested; hence, it is a non-momentary image that compels viewers to involve themselves emotionally and cognitively in divergent ways depending on their initial receptions. This resembles looking at a piece of crystal fallen from a chandelier to see objects in incommensurate shapes (Deleuze, 1989). The op-son image further links the optical sign and the sound sign. The op-son image was first exploited by the Russian filmmaker Eisenstein in his theory of montage, particularly the tonal type (Eisenstein, 1949).

### **3. Findings and Discussion**

This section addresses the common threads between *The Cell* and Cinema 2. It highlights the influence of Cinema 2 advocates on Moroccan cinematic traditions, embodied in the person of Rabii El Jawhari as an intellectual filmmaker.

#### **3.1 Narrative Approach and Techniques**

In terms of techniques and narrative approach, *The Cell* aligns with Cinema 2 traditions. Technically, El Jawhari uses a minimalist setting: a short time (the film length) and a limited space, a small dark room. Limiting the space is suggestive, as it curbs the concentration of movement in the movie and confines it to timeless thoughts (Kracauer, 1947). He additionally uses symbolism instead of customary images to activate the viewers' schemata and provoke their thinking in tandem with the protagonist's internal conflict (Eisner, 1969). Regarding the narrative approach, the filmmaker fosters an introspective narration that aligns closely with modern literature and its inclination toward monologues (internal dialogues) (Bordwell, 1985). Therefore, *The Cell* rejects the conventional methods of classical cinema, which employ an action-oriented or external narration (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008).

#### **3.2 Intellectual Commitment**

Another commonality between *The Cell* and Cinema 2 is the intellectual commitment of the filmmaker. Cinema 2, as outlined in the literature review, is an anti-consumption or spectacles industry (Deleuze, 1989). Hence, it rejects entertainment or consumerism in favor of edifying cinematography. Likewise, El Jawhari uses experimental techniques to focus on existential and psychological themes that may affect any individual. The film's themes deliberate on universal phenomena that stem from our nature, rendering the film an objective work par excellence (Rothman, 2014).

#### **3.3 Time Fragmentation**

As previously discussed, Cinema 2 rejects plot linearity; thus, time in Cinema 2 is usually fragmentary (Deleuze, 1989). Similarly, time in *The Cell* is incoherent and incomplete. El

Jawhari, in this regard, uses a non-linear structure since the film scenes fluctuate between flashbacks, dreams, rapid cuts, and dissonant images without an exact timeline (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008). Here, it is noticeable that the filmmaker emphasizes temporal disjunction to deconstruct time subjectivity and let the viewer see life from different perspectives without time or space restrictions (Deleuze, 1989).

### **3.4 Psychological and Existential Themes**

*The Cell* mirrors the complex human consciousness from intellectual and psychological lenses. It sheds light on human inner conflicts through the use of symbolic and imagery scenes that invite viewers to puzzle over various aspects of the human psyche; therefore, the film is engaging and seeks active reactions (Rothman, 2014). El Jawhari, in this respect, tends to expose the monstrous drawbacks of psychological conflicts, as he depicts negative mental health as a prison that entangles human beings with endless passive ideas. According to the filmmaker, mental instability is the real prison that impedes individuals' life progress or may drive them to what Sigmund Freud calls the eternal state of suffering (Freud, 1920).

After a close observation, it seems apparent that El Jawhari parallels the filmmakers Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau and David Lynch for ample reasons. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922) employs unconventional lighting techniques, as in expressionist cinema, to uncover the dark side of the human psyche (Eisner, 1969). In the same vein, El Jawhari manipulated contrasted lights as an aesthetic to agitate tension and create a haunting environment by making the room dark or vice versa (Kracauer, 1947). The use of silence in many scenes in *The Cell* is another method whereby El Jawhari aligns with Murnau's work. The power of silence in expressionist movies develops certain atmospheres and creates psychological meanings beyond the meaning made in conventional dialogues (Prawer, 1980). Both filmmakers use juxtapositional images to communicate ideas figuratively, as in juxtaposing light with darkness or voice with silence (El Jawhari, 2022).

*The Cell* also shares many similarities with Lynch's *Mulholland Drive* (2001). Both movies use surreal elements to evoke realities that cannot be shown in mundane reality, as in the synchronization of reality with the dreams of the protagonists (El Jawhari, 2022). The surrealistic features elucidate how human internal thoughts, mainly subconscious ones, lead individuals to mysterious and, sometimes, nightmarish states (Rodley, 2005).

### **4. Conclusion**

Since its debut, cinema has perennially been a prominent art form. However, the issue with this locomotion picture discovery lies in the fact that audiences often approach it from an entertaining perspective, turning a blind eye to its edifying tenets. Edifying cinema was and continues to exist; notwithstanding, the educational precepts of cinematography are eclipsed or barely acknowledged for several reasons, such as the rampant culture of spectacles and the greed of capitalism.

*The Cell* proves to intersect with Cinema 2 in that it prioritizes intellectual messages over superficial art, recognizing the importance of understanding human psychology and mental health for a better grasp of reality. Moreover, El Jawhari's stylistics and aesthetics reveal the ubiquitous impact of Cinema 2 on different film industries worldwide.

## References

- Andrew, D. (2010). *The major film theories: An introduction*. Oxford University Press. <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-major-film-theories-9780195019919>
- Bordwell, D. (1985). *Narration in the fiction film*. University of Wisconsin Press. <https://uwpress.wisc.edu/books/0117.htm>
- Bordwell, D., & Thompson, K. (2008). *Film art: An introduction*. McGraw-Hill. <https://www.mheducation.com/highered/product/film-art-introduction-bordwell-thompson/M9780073535104.html>
- Corrigan, T. (2011). *The essay film: From Montaigne, after Marker*. Oxford University Press. <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-essay-film-9780199781706>
- Deleuze, G. (1986). *Cinema 1: The movement-image*. University of Minnesota Press. <https://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/cinema-1>
- Deleuze, G. (1989). *Cinema 2: The time-image*. University of Minnesota Press. <https://www.upress.umn.edu/book-division/books/cinema-2>
- Eisenstein, S. (1949). *Film form: Essays in film theory*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. <https://archive.org/details/filmformessays00eise>
- Eisner, L. H. (1969). *The haunted screen: Expressionism in the German cinema and the influence of Max Reinhardt*. University of California Press. <https://www.ucpress.edu/book/9780520301242/the-haunted-screen>
- El Jawhari, R. (Director). (2022). *The Cell* [Film]. Raja Production. (No direct link available)
- Freud, S. (1920). *Beyond the pleasure principle*. International Psychoanalytic Library. <https://www.freud.org.uk/learn/books/beyond-the-pleasure-principle/>
- King, G. (2002). *New Hollywood cinema: An introduction*. Columbia University Press. <https://cup.columbia.edu/book/new-hollywood-cinema/9780231116363>
- Kracauer, S. (1947). *From Caligari to Hitler: A psychological history of the German film*. Princeton University Press. <https://press.princeton.edu/books/paperback/9780691191348/from-caligari-to-hitler>
- Praver, S. S. (1980). *Caligari's children: The film as tale of terror*. Da Capo Press. <https://www.hachettebookgroup.com/titles/s-s-praver/caligaris-children/9780306801485/>
- Rodley, C. (2005). *Lynch on Lynch*. Faber & Faber. <https://www.faber.co.uk/product/9780571220181-lynch-on-lynch/>
- Rodowick, D. N. (1997). *Gilles Deleuze's time machine*. Duke University Press. <https://www.dukeupress.edu/gilles-deleuzes-time-machine>
- Rothman, W. (2014). *The "I" of the camera: Essays in film criticism, history, and aesthetics*. Cambridge University Press. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/i-of-the-camera/DA5103E3C611D3A39E8BD95F942A80E4>

Stam, R. (2000). *Film theory: An introduction*. Wiley-Blackwell. <https://www.wiley.com/en-us/Film+Theory%3A+An+Introduction-p-9780631206545>

Thompson, K., & Bordwell, D. (2010). *Film history: An introduction*. McGraw-Hill. <https://www.mheducation.com/highered/product/film-history-introduction-thompson-bordwell/M9780073386133.html>