

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Ridha Behi (1947-)

LIFE

Ridha Behi was born in 1947, in the city of Kairouan at a time when Tunisia was still a French protectorate. He received a master's degree in sociology from Paris Nanterre in 1973 and a doctorate with a thesis entitled *Cinema and Society in Tunisia in the 1960s*, which he obtained in 1977. *Sun of Hyenas* (1977), which he wrote and directed, is the first feature film by this respected Tunisian filmmaker, who began his film career in 1967 with a short film, *The Woman Statue*. Behi's second feature, *The Flower of Aleppo*, which he wrote and directed, was originally selected to represent Tunisia as Best Foreign Language Film at the 89th Academy Award before being replaced by Leyla Bouzid's *As I open My Eyes* (2015).

ACHIEVEMENTS

Behi's first feature, *Sun of Hyenas*, was awarded the grand prize at the 1979 Damascus International Film Festival. Behi has received numerous recognitions including the Grand Officer of the Tunisian Order of Merit, in 2016, and the Award for Best Director at the Alexandria International Film Festival of the Mediterranean Countries the following year. Behi was awarded "Grand Prix Tribute" of Carthage_Film_Festival in 2017. Behi was also the Winner of the Public prize at the Mons International Film Festival in 2017.

FILMOGRAPHY

Sun of Hyenas (feature) (1977))
Champagne Amer (feature) (1986)
Swallows Do Not Die in Jerusalem (docufiction) (1994)
The Magic Box (feature) (2002)
Always Brando (docufiction) (2011)
The Flower of Aleppo (feature) (2016)

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SOCIETY (patriarchy, class, gender, womanhood, identity-culture, myth)

Patriarchy: In Behi's film patriarchy is reified when family life and social relationships are structured based on the superiority of the father/man and the authority of the rules he sets. Although the mother/woman plays an active role in society, it is primarily the man's presence that is seen as essential in decision-making.

Sun of Hyenas When some strange visitors appear in the village and the perplexed villagers try to understand what they are about, it is at Lamine's place that the men meet, without any female presence, to formulate hypotheses about this intrusion. When the prefect's delegate finally convenes a village meeting to explain to the population the development that the authorities intend to bring to the village and to respond to the villagers' concerns, it is only the men who are present, even though the transformations that the village will undergo with the installation of the hotel complex will affect both men and women. The evidence is that, as Salem's wife complains, the relocation of her husband to the hotel site has destabilized her family unit. The evidence is also that household activities, such as washing clothes at the beach, which is a female activity in the village, is now prohibited in the village by the hotel managers, who want the beaches to be the exclusive preserves of tourists. In the name of male dominance, decisions affecting women's lives were made with little regard to women's insights.

Flower of Aleppo Society, as understood by the Muslim fundamentalists, must be governed by the law of patriarchy, the concept of male dominance that structures all aspects of life. In the fundamentalist camps, women are subjected to the diktat of men. When Salma arrives in Syria, it is Abou Faris, Abou Al Walid's right-hand man, who gives her instructions and assigns her a role in the camp. She learns that women are expected to do whatever the men ask of them, which implies even being sexual slaves. Sexual slavery is a common practice imposed on women by the fundamentalists. The status of all-purpose workers, which is required of women, but not of men, demonstrates, the male/female dichotomy based on equivalents of dominant/dominated, master/slave, and superior/inferior.

Class: Behi represents Tunisia as a society beset by class division that the decision-makers make little if not no effort to reconcile. Behi's critique of inequity in Tunisia is more apparent in his first feature, *Sun of Hyenas*, with its satire of the upper class' extravagances.

Sun of Hyenas During the inauguration of the hotel complex, a mesh wire fence separates, on the one hand, the officials, the German investors, their guests, and Haj Ibrahim, and, on the other hand, the villagers and the local workers who built the hotel. This wall that separates them is transparent and therefore allows the privileged and the subaltern classes to see each other without being able to touch each other, and above all to see each other in such a way as to think of those on the opposite side as "other." The privileged are in a space that places them far from this wall. And from there, they look at

the poor with disdain while enjoying their hors d'oeuvres, fruit juice, and champagne. And behind the wall of wire mesh, which they touch, against which they crowd, the underprivileged, their mouths watering, envy the privileged, perhaps even curse them for enjoying life without them. In the film, this class disparity is maintained by the unwillingness to train the local workforce or to give a chance to the specialized local workforce. Local politicians, through the voice of the delegate, are proud to explain to the people that engineers and architects will come from Europe and unskilled labor will be recruited locally. This is an ugly practice of foreign direct investments, which always imports specialized workers from the investing nations in the countries in which they invest their money. It is a practice that accentuates class divisions by slowing down the emergence of middle classes in developing countries. It is a flip side of globalization, which continues to enrich the rich and impoverish the poor.

Gender: The representation of women as bewitching enchantresses, the attribution of diabolic virtues to women, which would make men lose all discernment and would lead them to immoral acts, is not an idea unique to the Muslim world. It is found in almost all societies. The only difference is, as Behi shows, that under the power of the fundamentalists, this belief takes on a more assertive dimension.

Flower of Aleppo Nabil arrives at his friend Mourad's house and finds him studying with his girlfriend. He warns Mourad that when a man isolates himself with a woman, the devil is certainly part of it, the devil being the female figure, whose attractiveness is destabilizing to the point where men seek to remedy it by the erection of a wall between man and woman in the form of the veil, the cover. Thus, when Salma asks her son what he would like for his birthday, Mourad insists that she should start covering her head, and, then, eventually wear the *djellaba* before leaving the house. Mourad asks his girlfriend to wear less revealing clothes. Now that he has converted to fundamentalism, Mourad finds his girlfriend's clothing inappropriate. When Salma decides to enter the world of the fundamentalists to extract her son from their influence, she goes as a veiled woman completely covered with a *djellaba* because she knows that without this attire she will not be accepted by the community of the fundamentalists, who perceive a woman's body as an invitation to sin. It is ironic that Salma dies at the hands of her son while wearing the veil he wanted her to wear, the very thing that prevented Mourad from recognizing his mother.

Womanhood: Behi's films, and especially *The Flower of Aleppo*, offer an image of strong and independent women, who do not hesitate to take initiative in a society that has learned to crush them.

Flower of Aleppo Salma is a single mother who was given custody of her son, Mourad, after her divorce from his father. She is an ambulance driver and juggles her profession with her maternal responsibilities. When her son is indoctrinated by the fundamentalists, she takes all sorts of risks, going to the heart of the conflict in Syria to try to get him out of the terrorists' grip. Unfortunately, she dies trying to save her son, which is strong proof of her heroism. Next to Salma, there is also Reem, her sister, another independent woman, who lives life close to the bone, and who, in the face of the fundamentalists, who

seek to control the lives of women, transforms the first level of her home into a dance hall that receives women from all walks of life. And then there is Dalel, Mourad's ex-girlfriend, sports enthusiast, conscientious student and Mourad's math tutor, who warns Mourad that the company he keeps can get him in trouble, and who, when she sees the path her boyfriend is stubbornly taking, prefers to stay away from him. All three are alternatives to the indoctrinated and submissive femininity that serves as a sexual prop for terrorist fighters.

Identity/culture: Cultural identity is not an immutable stone. It is a interpretative dish, which, depending on the ingredients that go into it and the bowl in which it is mixed, takes on a given flavor. This maxim comes true for the worst in Behi's film when greedy the West meets the needy East.

Sun of Hyenas When the grandchildren of this small Tunisian fishing village talk about their cultural identity a hundred years from now, they will likely say that they come from a past of artisans rather than fishermen. Very few among them will recall a time when the beaches of their village had more boats than tourists. They will hardly remember a time when the men spent their days fishing and mending their nets rather than clowning around to entertain tourists; and when the women sold the fresh and smoked fish brought in by their husbands rather than weaving rugs, crafting art, collecting and selling seashells, or dancing for the tourists. In this small fishing village, the inputs of cultural identity are now as much the habits of the local population as those of the newcomers, which must be accommodated, and to which one must also be accommodated.

Myth: Behi, like Algerian filmmaker Nouri Bouzid in *Bezness* (1992) debunks the myth that tourism brings people together. He represents tourism as museumifying and alienating local people. Tourism asks locals to freeze themselves in an exotic posture to entertain the spectators, reinforcing the stereotype of their strangeness.

Sun of Hyenas In this film, a mosque is built in the vicinity of the hotel, not so much to allow Muslims to practice their faith in peace, but rather to allow tourists to take pictures and film them. Similarly, a man sitting outside his door, palms facing the sky, praying, is mistaken by tourists as a beggar, with whom they film themselves putting a coin in his hand. And even Lamine, who was so lucid and so critical of the harmful effects of tourism, has fallen into the game, dressing in a goofy way to attract tourists to his wool and carpet store. Tourism, here, is less a vehicle for understanding the other than a tool for reinventing the other and commodifying that other. Tourism reinvents the culture of the other in its own way, in the way that gives it intoxicating feelings. This is not to say that some people are not enriched by it. The Tunisian politicians as well as Haj Ibrahim and Omda have been enriched by it. But they got rich by distorting their compatriots and their culture.

Public Health: Much has changed in the field of public health since Behi's first film. Tunisia has made much progress in providing public health services to its citizens though much remains to be done still. This change has certainly come because conscientious men and women have raised the issue of healthcare scarcity in Tunisia

decades after the country's independence. Behi is without doubt one of these conscientious men.

Sun of Hyenas Behi raises the issue of the lack of public health facilities in the country, particularly in rural areas, more than two decades after independence. As we see during the tragic childbirth of Tahar's wife Zorha, who dies in labor and loses her baby, the only person assigned to the task of performing child delivery is an old traditional midwife, herself already very worn out, who lives at a distance from the village, and who arrives painfully, on the back of a donkey, while Zohra is between life and death. The death of Zohra and her child is therefore a symbol of the neglect of public health in rural areas by the state, a neglect of the duties of the state that leads to high levels of perinatal and maternal mortality. This is not, however, the only public health issue raised in the film. We also see the issue of access to potable water from the very beginning of the film. The only source of water in the village is a well that is exposed to the weather and external contaminants. This means that the villagers are at risk of all sorts of diseases associated with contaminated water in Sahelian areas, including cholera, hepatitis, dysentery, and diarrhea, which cause thousands of deaths each year.

POLITICS (power/leadership)

Power/leadership: Behi raises the issue of leadership in his film. He shows how a greedy leadership is against the people's interests. Both in time of peace and of war, a greedy and selfish leadership destroys the social fabric.

Sun of Hyenas Sun of Hyenas points to the issue of the greed of the local leadership in collusion with both foreign and local investors, who only think of their profits and not of social welfare, and the consequences this has for the local people. In this, both Haj Ibrahim and Omda, the village leaders and businessmen, and the German investors are complicit and equally guilty of the mistreatment of the village people and the destruction of their infrastructural and cultural organization. It is true that the idea for the construction of the hotel complex came from the West. However, very quickly, this idea met with the greed of local men, such as Hadj Ibrahim and Omda, who served as relays for the Westerners, facilitating the conditions of recruitment and exploitation of the populations. The hotel did not improve the living conditions of the villagers. On the contrary, it has impoverished them by destroying their way of subsistence, which is fishing, by perverting their family structures and their morals, by enabling the exodus and prostitution of men and the introduction of alcohol. The most important thing for the local and foreign investors in this film is profit, not human development.

Flower of Aleppo Leadership The forces at play in Syria, the jihadist forces as well as those of the regime, are engaged in a struggle to eliminate the other and to structure the lives of the populations. Whoever wins this leadership struggle will be able not only to administer the country's resources but also to regulate the desires and movements of the people. One thing is certain, however. Whichever leadership emerges from this bloody struggle, its power will be the framework for the repression of women. Salma has been on both sides of the wall that separates the fundamentalists from the moderates, and her

marginalization as a woman has been a just matter of degree. On each side of the Syrian battleground, she has been marked with the seal of inferiority by virtue of her gender.

RELATIONSHIP (marriage, family)

Marriage: Marriage is meant to be a fulfilling partnership between two individuals. When this conventional union fails the woman, however, Behi seems to suggest that she should not hesitate to live alone, for life as a single woman can afford her happiness and fulfillment.

Flower of Aleppo Salma has filed for divorce and is living her life as a paramedic and raising her son. She seems to be financially secure as she does not want to put her ex-husband Hichem under the strain of paying her a heavy alimony. However, her independence does not sit well with Hichem, who wants to make her feel guilty for her choice. Hichem, Mourad's father, blames Salma for their son's problem. He imputes Mourad's trouble to the fact that Salma will not accept the conventional idea of marriage, that of a mother staying at home to take care of the house and the children while the husband is working to provide for the family. He tells her that she is too committed to her work as a paramedic while Mourad needs a stable family with a father and a mother who live together and respect each other. For Hichem, whom Salma left because of his unfaithfulness, respecting each other is a euphemism for Salma closing her eyes to his infidelities.

Family: Although Behi lauds the possibility of women's success outside marriage, he, nevertheless, seems to suggest that a functional family unit is important for the stability of children. And he, incidentally, seems to present that stability within the marriage institution.

Flower of Aleppo If Mourad was so easily lured by the terrorists, it is because he was never able to find his anchor in the family unit. After Salma divorced from Hichem, his father, a carefree, semi-alcoholic artist, disengaged himself from Mourad, accusing his mother of having ripped his son's affection away from him. As Hichem complains to Salma, she is too busy with her job as an ambulance driver, and she has taken more time to look after her patients than her son, who is too often left to his own devices. The assumption is thus that it is this dysfunction of the family unit opened the breach which Emir Nizar filled, promising Mourad that in his gang, the young man would find a family that would be attentive to his needs.

PSYCHOLOGY (loss, isolation, otherness, psychosis, fear)

Loss: The theme of loss holds significant importance in Behi's films. In *Sun of Hyenas*, it is featured as the loss of an entire infrastructural and cultural life for a village. In *Flower of Aleppo*, it is the loss of happiness for a mother, which comes with her son's sudden unexpected enrollment with Islamic fundamentalists and his departure to Syria.

Sun of Hyenas When the fishermen of the village sit on the shore, staring at the watery horizon, tallying up what tourism has brought them, they can only quantify it in terms of losses—the loss of an environment that has been stolen from them, of a culture that has been ripped away from them, and of a dignity that has been trampled on. From the very first hours of the arrival of the German investors, Omda, who was present at the meeting with the government authorities, already confided to Haj Ibrahim that the Germans had bought the whole village. And if this is only a metaphor, the villagers will see over time that nothing belongs to them anymore, and that everything is lost. First, it is the tourists who take over their living space and force them to be simple spectators of the trampling of their customs: the time of the independent fisherman who goes up the sea according to his mood is over. Henceforth it is to the Fishery Office, which Haj Ibrahim directs, that one must be accountable. The freedom to use the beach as one wishes is over. The laundresses are no longer welcome there by decree of the hotel. Gone is the sacredness of the woman, protected from the prying eyes of the foreigner. They are now carpet weavers exposed to the curiosity and cameras of tourists. And with that, the villagers' honor as men, based on the sacredness of their women, is lost. When Mariam is slapped by the hotel guard, who wants to prevent her from washing her clothes on the beach, she runs to the men shouting, "We were chased away, we were beaten, in this defenseless village, without men." And the worst loss for these male villagers is the loss of their manhood. And to prove to themselves that they still have an ounce of dignity, they stop working for Haj Ibrahim. But this is only for a short time. The need to survive forces them back to work for their tormentor.

Flower of Aleppo The departure of her son to Syria to fight alongside the terrorists is a tremendous loss for Salma, who abandons all her activities in Tunisia and goes to look for him. Hichem, the father, does not feel this loss like the mother because he had already gotten used to the loss of his son, who, since his separation from Salma, no longer has any consideration for him. When, during a conversation that Salma had begged Hichem to have with his son, Mourad calls his father an alcoholic from whom he can learn nothing, Hichem signs the separation from his son by a symbolic gesture. He is willing to separate himself completely from Mourad, to lose him completely, by hitting him in public with his umbrella. When Salma panics and comes to tell him that Mourad has disappeared, he does not feel the same way as Salma does. Hichem takes the news in stride, asking her to wait two or three days before starting the search. The disappearance of Mourad, which is experienced by Salma as a loss, is for Hichem only an everyday occurrence to which he has long become accustomed. In fact, Hichem seems more afraid to lose Salma than his son whose loss he has already accepted.

Isolation: Isolation is explored in Behi's films as a strategy of control. In *Sun of Hyenas*, it is the condition imposed onto a conscientious, inflexible hero standing alone against the ravages of unbridled capitalism. In *The Flower of Aleppo*, it is one of the fundamentalists' methods for breaking the will to power of a targeted recruit.

Sun of Hyenas Tahar's determination to resist the destruction of the peaceful life of the village has cost him both physical and moral isolation. Tahar and Lamine were among the first villagers to understand the implications of the hotel project for the village, and he

denounced it. He protested against the exodus of the fishermen who abandoned the sea to grab picks and shovels at the hotel construction site, thus emptying the village of its men and its main activity of fishing. He protested against the store of Haj Ibrahim, who perverted the morals of the villagers by selling them alcohol. For his denunciations, Tahar was arrested and isolated in a prison, far from his wife and son. Upon his release, when he returned to the village, Tahar realized that he was more isolated than ever. Those for whom he had fought, and even Lamine, his greatest ally in that fight, had all capitulated. They had become props for the resort. He was now alone in clinging to a way of life that was inexorably heading towards its evanescence.

Flower of Aleppo The strategy of the fundamentalists in recruiting and then indoctrinating their targets is to cut them off from the world they know, to isolate them in order to better control them. For Mourad, it is a matter of alienating him from everything that gives him joy, and which could serve as an escape or a refuge from the brainwashing of the fundamentalists. Thus Nabil convinces Mourad that his relationship with his girlfriend is diabolical, and the Emir convinces him that his music is profane and goes against the teachings of the Prophet. So Mourad destroys his guitar, stops listening to any form of music, and breaks off his relationship with his girlfriend after accusing her of dressing indecently. Then, to prevent the teachings of his school from contradicting those of the Emir, and to prevent his school friends from turning him away from the teachings of the fundamentalists, the Emir convinces him to abandon his studies. Finally, it is from his parents that the fundamentalists isolate Mourad, who avoids his father and mother and finds refuge at the home of the Emir. Thus, the isolation works to make Mourad malleable by the fundamentalists, who send him on a mission to Syria.

Otherness: Behi, especially in *Sun of Hyenas*, shows how the logic of tourism is to play on the idea of the strangeness of the others and their unfamiliar environment. When this strangeness is not explicit enough, it is spiced up or new ones are created.

Sun of Hyenas In this small Tunisian coastal village, life has been reorganized in such a way as to make the inhabitants and their environment into artifacts of the European tourist's other, objects of Europe's desire for exoticism but also of its comfort. To satisfy the appetite for exoticism of the European tourist, the utilitarian space of the villagers is transformed into a playful space. The sea becomes a tourist trail to explore; the fisherman's boat becomes a vessel not for fishing but for touring; prayer loses its spiritual aspect and becomes a spectacle to be repeated several times a day for the tourist's voyeuristic camera; the girls are removed from their family spaces and converted into carpet weavers; Lamine is dressed in a burlesque outfit to satisfy the curiosity of tourists in front of his new handcraft store; Ali is made a camel driver by Haj Ibrahim. And for the comfort of European tourism, the beach is forbidden to the women of the village, a fisherman becomes a gay prostitute, and Haj Ibrahim passes from his usual tea to champagne, and from his Muslim tunic to a polished three-piece.

Psychosis: Unbridled capitalism unleashed on a close-knit, traditional, rural community can be the cause of psychological drama. Behi shows this in *Sun of Hyenas* with the

character Ali, who, unable to cope with the rapid changes brought to his community by foreign investors in collusion with local politicians, is driven deeply into psychosis.

Sun of Hyenas Ali, though simple-minded, was well integrated into his community. He had his references, a job which validated him, and he participated in the men's meetings as much as any other man. Before the arrival of tourism in the village, Ali was a jovial man, always displaying a big smile. He could be seen joking with the men of the village at Lamine's café or happily tending to the bellows at Lamine's forge. The construction of the hotel complex, the reorganization of village life, and the new values brought by tourism cause Ali to lose his smile and his references. Now a camel driver, busy walking tourists to the beach, Ali does not find his new position rewarding. To Haj Ibrahim, who asks him what he is doing while holding the reins of a camel ridden by a tourist, Ali answers that he is busy dragging two animals behind him (the camel and the tourist). As tourism increases, Ali returns to the backroom of Lamine's forge. When Tahar is finally released from the prison where Haj Ibrahim and his cronies had held him, he returns to visit Lamine's old store, where he finds a bare-chested Ali in the back room, who greets him with a demented and thunderous laugh. The changes in the village have finally driven Ali into madness.

Fear: In *The Flower of Aleppo*, Behi seems to be arguing that in the dirty war raging in Syrian, both the fighters of the Assad regime and the Jihadists are terrorists. The war between the fundamentalist terrorists and the Syrian regime is a confrontation in which fear is used as a psychological weapon by both factions.

Flower of Aleppo The fighters of terrorist leader Abou Al Walid are convinced that they are fighting for a just cause, one that aims to bring down the regime of Al-Assad, which they consider infidel, illegitimate, and brutal. From their point of view, their war is that of good against evil, the sacred against the profane, the just against the unjust, for which the end justifies the means. However, this is not what Salma thinks, as she tells Al Walid that his war is as deadly, as saddening, and therefore as unjust as that of the regime against which it is directed because it alienates the civilian population as much as the war of Al-Assad's regime alienates them. This is because these two opposing forces have chosen fear as an instrument of persuasion or deterrence. The fundamentalists, as seen in the summary execution by of captured soldiers, create carnage to create fear in the enemy. And like them, the soldiers of the regime, murder, rape anyone suspected of alliance with the enemy.

FLAW (ambition)

Ambition: In *Sun of Hyenas*, Behi shows the deleterious effects on the social fabric of unrestrained personal ambitions. The people through whom this criticism takes place are two local leaders, hitherto heroized adulated by their community, who turned out to be self-indulgent.

Sun of Hyenas Omda and Haj Ibrahim are ambitious men for whom the end justifies the means. To get rich, these two men have destroyed the social fabric of the village. To

prevent other fishermen from competing with him, Omda, who owns a fleet of motorboats, has kept them fishing with archaic means, using any available means to ensure that his fellow fishermen can never afford to buy motorboats. For example, Omda refuses to buy the land of old Mahmoud under the pretext that it is not arable, but in reality it is to prevent old Mahmoud from having the resources to acquire a motor. As for Haj Ibrahim, who sees Tahar as an obstacle to his ambitions, he has him arrested and imprisoned. Haj Ibrahim wants Tahar's incarceration to be a dissuasive factor for all those who would stand up to him. Against his own religious principles, he sells alcohol to the workers, and he himself ends up drinking champagne with the German investors. He desecrates the customs by making prayer an attraction for the tourists' cameras, and he brings in girls from the villages to work as carpet weavers for the tourists' gaze and cameras. Everything for him is allowed as long as he makes money out of it.

QUEST (introspection, search)

Introspection: Behi explores the theme of introspection in his second feature, when young Mourad, overtaken by boredom and being out of place in Tunisia, reflects on a way to give a purpose to his life.

Flower of Aleppo Mourad is a young man who has done his introspection, who is searching for his fulfillment, and who thought he would find it in Muslim fundamentalism. After his first encounters with the Emir and his followers, Mourad tells his stunned mother that she deserves a better son than him, that his life has been a disappointment to God. Although his mother reassures him that God has nothing against him, Mourad repeats this same lament to his aunt, who also gives him the same answer. Mourad has allowed himself to be convinced by the fundamentalists that the education he has received in France, the language (French) that come with that education, and the people he has associated himself with have distanced him from God and not allowed him to reach his spiritual fulfillment. And it is this fulfillment that Mourad seeks by detaching himself from all what he considers as distraction—his guitar, music, and school, as well as from all those whom he sees as figures opposed to God, his father, the alcoholic artist, his mother, the liberal and independent woman not conforming to the conservative ideals, his girlfriend and his school friends, carefree youth sold on Western ideologies. To redeem himself from all the years spent in ignorance of Allah and to concretize his faith, Mourad decides to go and die for Allah, in Syria, in a so-called holy war.

Search: If Mourad is searching for happiness in Syria, Salma's sense of happiness is to bring her son back from Syria. To fulfill it, the mother travels to war-ridden Syria in search of her son.

Flower of Aleppo Salma's journey to Syria via Turkey to bring back her child is a journey in search of her own happiness. Unlike Hichem, Mourad father, who has emotionally removed himself from Mourad, and who does not rely on the young man's wellbeing in order to have a sense of fulfillment, Salma has tied her own happiness to Mourad's and vicariously experiences joy and life satisfaction through him. She is happy only insofar as she sees Mourad happy, and Mourad's happiness is one that she has

already defined as being what she wants it to be. She will not accept his own idea of happiness (fundamentalism) because it does not conform to her ideas. Thus, her pursuit of Mourad across Tunisia, Turkey, and Syria is the pursuit of her own happiness, her desire to bring Mourad back to her ideal of happiness, one that is condensed in him, and which she can only experience through him

APPEARANCE vs. REALITY (dishonesty)

Dishonesty: Is Behi suggesting that if honest people can become dishonest, dishonest people, on the other hand, become more dishonest over time and rarely change for the best. This seems to be what he implies with the characters Omda and Haj Ibrahim, who, crooks in the times of colonization, became even greater crooks after colonization despite their leadership roles in their community.

Sun of Hyenas Lamine likes to tell a story about Haj Ibrahim and Omda, which, if it makes the villagers laugh, annoys the two companions because it reveals an aspect of their personality that they would have liked to keep secret: their dishonesty. Indeed, Lamine tells us that Omda and Haj Ibrahim were two cattle thieves who robbed the farms of French colonists, and who on independence, rather than being treated as the thieves they were, were rewarded as resistance fighters because their crimes had targeted colonists and not natives. Those who made our two thieves heroes failed to see that if the natives were as rich as the settlers, they would also be victims of their crimes, and that the crimes these two thieves committed against the settlers were the very indication that they were of bad character, and therefore unfit for public responsibility. Obviously, in the anti-colonial frenzy, this judgment was lacking in the authorities, who made the two thieves into heroes and notables of their village. And Haj Ibrahim and Omda never ceased to be what they were, common thieves, who from independence to the construction of the resort, found all sorts of tricks to enrich themselves at the expense of their fellow villagers.

CHARACTERS

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Open (Salma) vs Closed (Hichem)

Agreeable vs Disagreeable (Omda, Haj Ibrahim)

Conscientious vs Unconscientious

Rational vs Emotional (Tahar, Mourad)

1. Open

Salma (*The Flower of Aleppo*) Salma is a strong, independent, and resourceful woman. Alone, she raises her son and provides for his needs. Alone, she goes to Syria to try to remove her son from the indoctrination of the jihadists.

2. Closed

Hichem (*The Flower of Aleppo*) Hichem is an eccentric and distant character. He makes no effort to be present in his son's life and would prefer to be bothered as little as possible.

3. Disagreeable

a. **Omda** (*Sun of Hyenas*) Omda is a greedy, naive, and manipulable character. As he complains to Lamine, he has become the plaything of Haj Ibrahim and his acolytes.

b. **Haj Ibrahim** (*Sun of Hyenas*) Haj Ibrahim is an unfair, ambitious, and corrupt character. For him, the end justifies the means; and the end is the accumulation of wealth.

4. Emotional

a. **Tahar** (*Sun of Hyenas*) Tahar is an idealist who found himself alone by wanting to cling to a way of life in rapid transformation. He aspired to continue the tradition of fishermen in the tranquility of his village. Unbridled capitalism decided otherwise.

b. **Mourad** (*The Flower of Aleppo*) Mourad is a depressed, malleable and insecure young man who goes looking for the opportunity to prove to himself and the rest of the world that he is important.