

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Férid Boughedir (1944-)

LIFE

Férid Boughedir was born in 1944, in Hammam Lif, Tunisia. He started his career in cinema as a film critic through articles he wrote for *Jeune Afrique*, a French-language pan-African weekly news magazine. His articles, books, and his two well-received documentaries on African and Arab cinemas, “*Caméra d’Afrique*” and “*Caméra Arabe*,” which were presented in official selection at the Cannes International Film Festival, respectively, in 1983 and 1987, sealed his reputation as a respected scholar of African cinema. Boughedir’s first feature, *Halfaouine: Child of the Terraces*, which won the Golden Tanit, the grand prize of the Carthage Film Festival, is considered by film critics as the best Tunisian film to come out.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Boughedir served as member of the official juries of the Cannes Film Festival, in the long film category and the short film category, respectively in 1991 and 2009. In 2001, he served as president of the jury of FESPACO.

FILMOGRAPHY

Caméra d’Afrique (documentary) (83)
Caméra arabe (documentary) (1987)
Halfaouine: Child of the Terraces (1990)
A Summer in La Goulette (1996)
Villa Jasmin (2008)
Zizou and the Arab Spring (2016)



THEMES

SOCIETY (Gender, Patriarchy, Religion, Class)

Gender

CHILD OF THE TERRACES One of the most obvious observations about *Halfaouine* is the filmmaker's structuration of the movie in three spaces or moments, a women's space, a men's space, and a space in-between that we can call neutral. The partitioning of the spaces does not follow a temporal or linear reasoning. These spaces or moments are interwoven, leaving it up to the viewers to disentangle them.

Women's Space The space that is most attributed to women in the Tunisian society, due to the household activities that take place there, and which are generally activities that occupy women, is the inner courtyard. It is also a closed space, where women can go about their business without their veils, away from the prying eyes of men. In fact, a bird's eye view introduces us to Jamilla's courtyard, where a woman is busy drying clothes on a clothesline. This is also where the women prepare the meal for the circumcision feast of Noura's younger brother. This is the women's domain. When the women enter this area, it is full of singing, clapping, ululating, and obscene conversations. In this space, Azzouz is only seen when he is passing between two rooms of the house. And when he understands that the women have besieged the courtyard and may be engaged in lewd conversations he prefers not to hear, he announces himself from the street by hailing his wife before he reaches the courtyard threshold. At that moment, the conversations fall silent, the cigarettes are extinguished, the dancers' dresses are adjusted, and the courtyard becomes a tidy space of sober conversation, until the passage of Azzouz. At that moment, Azzouz becomes the master of the place, the master of the courtyard, for a lapse of time; unless the circumstances of his appearance are of a coincidence which cannot prevent the women from laughing at his expense; unless while the women, in a pictorial speech mocking the small carrots and small cucumbers of their men who can barely fill their baskets, see Azzouz arriving, a basket full of vegetables in his hand. In which case, the master of the courtyard becomes inevitably the target of the joke; and the decorum is broken; and the man is made fun of by the women. Insofar as the women spend more time than the men in the inner courtyard, insofar as the men are there only sporadically, passing through, or during ceremonies, such as the circumcision of Noura's young brother, it is fair to say that the inner courtyard is the women's space. Outside the domestic space, what *Halfaouine* gives us to see as the most feminine space in the public domain is the women's hammam. There, women gather in their greatest comfort to take hot baths, wash their hair with black soap, and rub each other's backs with flannel gloves.

Men's Space Men rule the streets, the political demonstrations, the souk, the barbershops, and the mosque. One cannot say that they occupy these spaces exclusively, but they dominate them. The mosque, for instance, of which we get a bird's eye view at the beginning of the movie, is a compartmentalized space. Although it is more frequented by men than by women, who usually pray at home, it is not always an exclusively male space in Tunisia. Beside the mosque, there are spaces like the souk or the marketplace whose main traders (the fishmonger, the butcher, the fabric salesman like Azzouz) are men. The barbershop is an exclusively male space, where political discussions are held, and lewd jokes are told. Another exclusively male space that is mentioned several times in the film but never seen is the men's hammam. We learn from its attendant that the hammam is closed for cleaning.

Neutral Space Just as there are no exclusive female and male spaces, except the women's and men's hammams, there is no such thing as a neutral space per se. The neutral space is the space occupied by those in the Tunisian society that do not fall in the socially defined categories of fully functioning men or women. Thus, when Noura and his two older friends occupy a space, that space becomes a neutral one. It is a temporary borrowed space from which they are usually dismissed by those who think they own it. Noura sits with the women listening to their obscenities but is soon heckled by Zakia, who threatens him with castration; and Noura immediately gets up and leaves when he hears his father coming, who reproaches him for sitting among the women. Noura frequents the women's hammam, but he is expelled as soon as his innocent look turns into the look of an interested voyeur. Moncef, Mounir, and Noura explore the streets of Halfaouine without being bothered, until they start hitting on the local girls. At that moment, the freedom of movement they have in the streets is threatened by the Sheikh, who hails them and pursues them, forcing them to seek refuge on the roofs. Similarly, they are allowed to be at the circumcision party of Noura's

younger brother as long as they understand that their presence does not give them the right to behave like adults. And there, too, they are slapped and expelled by Azzouz when he catches them flirting with the young waitresses. The most neutral space in Halfaouine is Salih's flea market. There, the young men find themselves in a laissez-faire environment, where all conversations are permitted as long as the teenagers do not touch alcohol, whose soothing effects Salih praises, but whose potentially destructive effects he warns them against. When he finds himself expelled from the domain of women but not yet admitted to that of men, it is on the beach and on the rooftops of the city that Noura will meditate on his next plans of action. It is from there that he decides to become a man in his own terms, a scavenger of experiences, of things learned from the unconventional Salih, but also from his strict and womanizing father, from the puritanical Sheikh, and from his loving mother and aunts.

A Summer in La Goulette For the adolescent girls the quest for femininity has come. It would be a trivial matter if they were boys. However, they are girls, and in their sexual conducts rests the honor of their families. The achievement of femininity requires their intimate encounter with a man, which will cause the loss of their virginity. Thus, Meriem, Gigi, and Tina make an oath that this summer in La Goulette will be the last summer for them as virgins. They will lose their innocence, they have decided. And so that it is done, the girls place their decision under the protection of the Madonna of the fishermen and select the Parade of the Madonna, on August 15, as the day to realize their project. If the loss of innocence for boys is perceived by their families as an act without disturbing consequences, when it comes to girls, this loss of innocence is an act that cannot be taken lightly. Becoming a woman outside of marriage upsets a whole social nomenclature. It is an anti-genealogical act. It is a mutiny against familial and communal order.

Villa Jasmin Despite the difficulties of marrying across social classes, in the case of Serge and Odette, however, love, patience, and persistence eventually win out. Serge and Odette are deeply in love, and Serge gives Odette the tactics for making his mother change her mind: Odette gets closer to the matriarch, listens attentively to the stories she likes to tell, cooks her some appetizing meals, and ends up winning her heart and obtaining her blessing for the wedding. The strategy that Serge gives to Odette to conquer her mother is in fact how to be a woman according to the matriarch. And it is this role of woman as the nurturer of the family, the mistress of the house, and the discreet support of the man that Odette played throughout the career of her husband and the ups and downs that the family went through.

Zizou Aïcha's fate is illustrative of that of many Tunisian women, who are beaten when they refuse to fall in line with men's dictates. This can be seen when the henchmen recruited by Sadok, including Zizou who does not know what he is getting into, help the police break up a meeting of the League of Human Rights. Sadok's men ask the women of the organization to go back to the kitchen and take care of their husbands' meals. And when they protest, telling the men that their allusions to what should be women's role are insulting, the men slap them for their audacity to talk back. This provokes the indignation of Zizou, who attacks his own partners, whom he calls cowards for having raised their hands against women. For his about-face and his defense of women, Zizou receives blows from the police as well as from his companions. Men like Zizou, who come in defense of abused women in Tunisia, are the unfortunately the exception and not the norm. Tunisia still has a long way to go to reduce the influence of an all-powerful patriarchy that has its foot pressed down on the brake of equal rights between man and woman.

Patriarchy

A Summer in La Goulette Patriarchy Whether one is a Muslim, a Jew, or a Christian, the law that governs the family is that of the father. First, in the large Muslim community, the fundamental father is the Hadj, the Muslim authority, who plays the role of a spiritual adviser. The Hadj chooses husbands for Muslim girls without considering their opinion. Then, in the smallest family context, it is the law of the father that dominates. The father is the symbol of family honor, and this honor is achieved through the good conduct of the women in the family, and more specifically through their good sexual behavior. Women should be faithful, and girls must remain virgins. Thus Jojo, when he believes that Gigi has lost her virginity, asks his daughter how she could sully her father's honor. And Giuseppe orders a virginity examination for Tina, while Youssef beats up Meriem. And all these men accuse their wives of having been negligent with their daughters, thereby allowing them to humiliate them.

Zizou The nephew of the first lady had Aïcha removed from her mother's care to force her into a marriage to which she would not consent. And to compel her to give in to his advances, the nephew, whom she calls 'the ogre', holds her prisoner in his luxurious villa and buys her expensive gifts that she will accept. So, he entrusts her to the custody of a female servant to tame her with confinement and slaps. Zohra, who beats Aïcha whenever the girl refuses to give in to her captor's demands, is, as we have seen in several instances of North African cinema, nothing more than the guardian of the laws of patriarchy, which she curates and perpetuates. She is unfortunately complicit in a system that subjugates women, a hindrance to sisterhood, which must remain united in its goal to tear down the abusive power of patriarchy. The filmmaker does, however, offer us a glimmer of hope. He makes the character of Zohra, a physically tired woman, who moves with difficulty, and who is also psychologically diminished, because she suffers from the signs of dementia. This can be seen, for example, when she brings Zizou some tea but drinks it all up before handing him an empty cup. This is perhaps the filmmaker's hinting that women's collusion with patriarchy to undermine sisterhood is in its moments of passing.

Religion

A Summer in La Goulette Tina, Gigi, and Meriem have decided to become women on their own terms, that is, to lose their virginity. They have chosen a date. This decision goes against the principles of their respective families. Tina is Catholic, Gigi is Jewish, and Meriem is Muslim. Their families are conservative. In these conservative families, people marry within their faith, and premarital sex is just not permitted; so that for these three girls of various confessions, to lose their virginity before marriage would be a sacrilegious act. However, that doesn't matter to them. They are determined to go through with their decision, or at least they think so. The choice of partners that the girls make turns their quest into a double insurrection. Tina, the Catholic, chooses a Jewish partner; Meriem, the Muslim, chooses Christian partner and Gigi, the Jewish girl, chooses a Muslim partner. These choices test the friendship of their parents and expose their repressed preconceptions that each ethnic and religious group must remain with its own for the world to go round. The subversion does not stop with the girls.

Villa Jasmin For Ben Romdane, for instance, Tunisia was first and foremost a Muslim country, even, as Serge Sr. insisted that Tunisia must remain secular. The nationalists in Algeria, like Romdane, were mostly indigenous Muslims, who sought an independent Tunisia ruled by Islamic law. They understood Socialism as incompatible with the Prophet's teachings. On the other hand, Socialists, like Serge, were mainly Tunisian Jews who were aspiring for a secular state where they could be free to practice their religious faith. With the prospect of independence and the uncertainty of what was in store for the various cultural groups in the country, each group held tightly onto its identity, consolidating it further with internal marriages. Serge's marriage with Odette, a Jewish girl, fell within that logic of safeguarding cultural identity.

ZIZOU \ To ensure that Aïcha cannot escape from the prison where they are holding her, her kidnapers demand that all her clothes be removed. Aïcha's kidnapers surf on a religious conception that makes nudity, and more particularly female nudity, one of the cardinal sins of Islam. The body offered to the gaze is an image that provokes negative reactions from the one who sees it, and that can have violent effects against the one who exposes it. All the logic of the veil, of the enclosure of the body, stems from this uneasiness and shame that the naked body generates in the Muslim religion. Nakedness is a sin. Aïcha's kidnapers therefore know how to rely on this aspect of religion to keep Aïcha in prison. She will never be able to present herself naked in public to ask for help. This would make her more of a victimizer in society than a victim and could expose her to more repressive actions from an offended mob than help from them. Religion thus becomes an accomplice to Aïcha's kidnapers, who make it the second, and perhaps the most formidable, lock in her detention.

Class

Villa Jasmin Identity The 1940s Tunisian society was a place of happy yet precarious coexistence between the various ethnic groups that claimed Tunisia as their country. Peyrouton and Guilbaud were telling examples of what Europeans in Tunisia thought of Jews and Arabs. They were also telling examples of the fear that the vulnerable position of German-occupied France and the possibility of France losing its grip on Tunisia stirred in the French settlers. That anxiety existed also among Jews and Arabs, aware that the balance of power could shift any moment and reconfigure the notion of national identity. In fact, the

struggle for independence had an open agenda of cultural identity, and that cultural identity's foundation was religion.

Villa Jasmin Within religious identities, a class struggle is played out. It is not enough to love a person of the same identity. It is also necessary that this person be of an acceptable social class. Thus, Serge's mother opposes his marriage to Odette, whom she considers to be of an inferior Jewish class. The matriarch thinks that the Jewishness of Odette's family is imported, and therefore, second-hand, whereas hers is Mediterranean, pure, and aristocratic. Serge's mother thinks that her son is crazy to let himself be carried away by the blindness of love rather than by a sense of duty, that of perpetuating a worthy ancestral heritage. She tells him that she would not survive such a marriage, such a shame. As the matriarch shows, these positions on social class are often very entrenched and inflexible.

POLITICS (Leadership)

Leadership

Villa Jasmin *Villa Jasmin* is not only about a struggle between the international powers, France, Germany, and Italy, who are looking for economically and militarily strategic enclaves in North Africa. It is also a struggle for internal leadership between the socialists, of which Serge is a member, the Muslim nationalists, of which Ben Romdane, Serge's best friend, is a member, and the French capitalist colonists, of which Peyrouton, Esteva, and Guilbaud are members, and for whom Tunisia is a territory of France and had to remain attached to France like a cash cow to its owner.

Intrigue

Villa Jasmin In the consolidation of their positions, some actors use negotiation. Romdane the Nationalist and Serge the Socialist's strategy to win the other to their cause is peaceful yet impassioned discussion. We see this discussion between the two friends concerning the independence of Tunisia and the means to achieve it taking place in an electric atmosphere at Romdane's home. Romdane proposes that Tunisia wait patiently until Germany drives already-weakened France out of Tunisia. Serge thinks that Germany, because of its savagery, has disqualified itself as a credible partner, and that Tunisia needs an independence that does not cut it ideologically and philosophically from France and its values of the Age of Enlightenment. Beside these intellectual debates, Nazi Germany and the Vichy government chose only brute force, intimidation, expropriation, torture, deportation, and assassinations, as the lived experience of the Boccara family illustrates.

CRIME (Injustice, Revenge, Repression, Corruption)

Villa Jasmin *Injustice* The protectorate, or simply the colonization of Tunisia, is a great injustice to the native Tunisian populations, an injustice that imports into the colony the racism and anti-Semitism cultivated in France. The residents general and their collaborators who succeed one another in Tunisia hardly treat the Tunisians as full human beings. Serge denounces this injustice both in person and through his writings. The newspapers in which he writes columns, *Le Petit Matin* and *Tunis Socialiste*, are channels of denunciation of the French injustice towards the Tunisian people. In a conversation with Resident General Philippe Peyrouton, Serge tells him of his abhorrence for his open Nazism and collusion with the French capitalists who exploit and impoverish the local population. Similarly, Serge confronts the Nazism of Guilbaud, the information officer of Resident General Esteva, Peyrouton's successor.

Zizou *Revenge* The Tunisian people, who for twenty-four years lived under the undivided rule of Ben Ali and his family, one day stood up with their arms in the air to shout out their exasperation. From the souks of Moncef Bey to the posh neighborhoods of Sidi-Bou-Saïd, spontaneous demonstrations grew and spread through the streets of Tunis. Ben Ali, cornered, appeared on television to make a final appeal for calm, making promises that were not only unrealistic (bread for all the people and work for all the youth), but that also came too late, accusing his collaborators of having hidden the realities of the country from him. The televised pleas and regrets of the dictator, who once despised the people, remain without effect. In a purgative gesture, to rid themselves of their overflow of frustration, the people loot, burn, and break everything, including damaging the public services they will need, even if it means starting over from scratch, forcing the ruling family to run for their lives by sea, air, or land.

Villa Jasmin *Revenge-punishment* All these men, who are Serge's targets, promise him revenge, and they hold on to their promises: his newspapers are suspended by the Residence; his house is requisitioned by Guilbaut on behalf of the German Ambassador; his family is thrown into the street; and he is later tracked down, tortured, and deported to the concentration camp of Sachsenhausen. However, Serge's oppressors, France's Vichy Nazi government, the German invaders, and their collaborators in Tunisia, Resident Esteva, Guilbaut and his anti-Semitic militia are defeated by Allied forces, and Serge returns to a liberated Tunisia, to his family, and to his house.

Zizou *Corruption* In March 2021, a Tunisian court sentenced deposed-Tunisian dictator Ben Ali's brother-in-law, businessman Belhassen Trabelsi, to ten years in prison for corruption. Trabelsi's crime is, according to Tunisians, the tip of the iceberg of Ben Ali's nine brothers-in-law's activities of racketeering, kidnapping, fraud, embezzlement, and money laundering. In this film, "the family" is the criminal organization run by the first lady's brothers. It is a mafia possessing a monopoly on all the supply chains in the country and thus decision-making on prices. There is a scene in the film featuring Zizou, Hamma, and Adel coming to buy computers in the family's warehouse. We see a shopkeeper slipping a thick envelope of money to the representative, which he discreetly puts in his drawer, under Zizou's astonished look. Here, the allusion is clear: The family extorts money from the shopkeepers. And it is certainly this illegal pressure on the retailers that put Mr. Ghorbal out of business.

Zizou *Repression* The family uses intimidation and prison as means of repression. The mafia's crimes are not just commercial. They are also crimes against humanity. Aïcha's case is illustrative. She was unlawfully removed from her mother's care and is being illegally incarcerated to force her to love the first lady's nephew. Intimidation and illegal detention are the family's tools of repression. Thus, we learn, for example, that the family burns down the souks or sell them to private promoters, certainly to other members of the organization, when the shopkeepers resist them. We also learn from the regulars of the Moncef Bey souk bar that it is forbidden to change TV channels when the president appears on the screen, or that it is risky to laugh at his big nose. For those who do it, their sentence is prison. Adel is jailed for daring to break the family's monopoly on supply chains by sourcing from Libya, and Syndicato, the souk communist, whom no one had heard from for days, was actually languishing in prison for daring to call for a demonstration against the family's abuse. Prison or the threat of it, thus, becomes a means of silencing all dissent and punishing and eliminating all opposition to the family's political, commercial and private activities.

RELATIONSHIP (Friendship, Marriage, Love, desire, Loyalty)

Friendship

A Summer in La Goulette One would have thought that the ordeals suffered by the families of La Goulette had sealed their friendship forever, strengthened inter-community ties, and eliminated mistrust of the other forever. The sincerity of their friendship will soon be tested by a dreaded event, another war in the Middle East. Indeed, the rumors of war between Israelis and Palestinians that had been circulating for some time on the airwaves and on the lips, and that no one took seriously, finally materializes in what would become known as the Six Day War. On the eve of this conflict, Tunisian Jews and Christians, fearing for their safety, abandoned their homes in Tunisia to seek refuge either in Israel or in Europe. The friendship of the people of La Goulette was ultimately only superficial. In their deepest recesses, Jews, Christians, and Muslims continue to rub shoulders with distrust. Here, Boughedir raises the question of the sincerity of our relationships with one another. To what extent are our interfaith, interracial, interpersonal acts merely gestures that we make mechanically, for the sake of convenience, and which inwardly hide our aversion to others, our fear of their culture and religion?

Marriage

A Summer in La Goulette Lucette, Jojo's daughter will soon get married. Her fiancé is Jewish like her. She brings him to eat at her parents' house, and he makes Jojo proud. He only eats kosher, unlike his future father-in-law who, although a Jewish, loves the non-kosher dishes that Wassila, the wife of his Muslim friend Youssef, brings him from time to time. Jojo is proud that his future son-in-law remain faithful to the

Torah's prescriptions, and he congratulates his daughter for choosing a good Jew. Already, thanks to his eldest daughter, he is assured that the family's identity, which is based on Jewish faith, will be preserved. And Jojo pays for Lucette's wedding, which he organizes lavishly, with Claudia Cardinale as the guest of honor. Everything would be perfect if the day of the reception, Gigi, Lucette's younger sister, had not gotten it into her head to lose her virginity to a young Muslim. Jojo becomes apoplectic. Could she not follow her sister's example and take a good Jew? On their side, Giuseppe the Christian and Youssef the Muslim are inconsolable, too: their daughters Tina and Meriem have, respectively, chosen to get involved with a Muslim and a Christian. Giuseppe and Youssef, too, expected their offspring to continue the perpetuation of the family's identity through a marriage in the strict religious faith of their ancestors. In their anger, the criticisms they hurl at followers of other religions are stereotypical. For them, marriage must take place within the same religious faith because this faith is the foundation of identity, and marriage is the river through which that identity flows through generations.

Villa Jasmin Serge and Odette's Marriage is tested several times, and each time, it passes the test of strength. First, Serge is drafted and deployed to France to fight The Germans, leaving Odette home alone in Tunisia to care for their house and their daughter Claudine. Then, Serge's journalistic activism, his writings against the colonial regime and its enforcers (Peyrouton, Esteve, and Guilbaud) more than once causes him to lose his job. Finally, Serge's direct involvement in the resistance against the Nazi occupiers causes him to lose his family home, puts his family on the street, has him arrested and deported, and exposes his wife and daughter to intimidation, humiliation, and financial, physical, and moral insecurity. None of these difficulties can shake Serge and Odette's marriage. On the contrary, they strengthen it even more

Love

Villa Jasmin Through all the hardships caused by Serge's deployment, his repeated joblessness, the family's homelessness, and Serge's deportation to the German concentration camp of Sachsenhausen, love and loyalty remain the glue that keeps the family together and hopeful. After the liberation of Tunisia by the allied troops, while Serge was at Sachsenhausen, and everyone in Tunisia thought that he was dead, Odette kept her hope set on Serge, though with little faith that she would see him again. Odette's cousins felt sorry for her and urged her to go out, start meeting people, and rebuild her life. They invited her to parties, which she refused. However, she accepted to go to the movies with them. It was on that occasion that Claudine saw her father on the screen. Odette's patient love and loyalty has maintained the Boccaras' unity.

Desire

A Summer in La Goulette The Hadj is the demonstration that because desire was born before the law, no law can stifle it. Desire cannot be legislated. The Hadj is the Muslim authority in La Goulette. He is the guardian of the faith and the Muslim law in the community. He is the one who regulates desires, douses them where he thinks they should be doused and lights them up where he believes they should be lit. It is under his authority as matchmaker that the young Muslim women of La Goulette are married. But when the Hadj sees Meriem naked in the shower, his desires play tricks on him. He, the great regulator of desires, who opens and closes the valves of lust, can no longer control his lust. He contorts himself. He humiliates himself. He lowers himself. He threatens. He manipulates. He gets manipulated. He bends the law. He begs even. All to satisfy his desire. And after all these embarrassments, his desires prevail without him being able to satisfy them. He dies of unfulfilled desires.

Loyalty

Villa Jasmin Beside challenging the familial loyalty within the Boccara's family, the situation in Tunisia also tested loyalty across religious, ethnic, and political divides. Ben Romdane Sr., who Serge Jr. was told was as close to his father as a brother, was a Muslim and a nationalist. Politically, he did not see eye to eye with Serge Sr., and religiously, they were of different faiths. When Serge and Odette became homeless and were being haunted by the Germans and Guilbaud's militia, it was Romdane who,

disregarding the great risks to which he exposed himself and his family, hid the family of the socialist Jew in his home. Here, friendship and loyalty took precedence over ideological and religious differences.

PSYCHOLOGY (Loss, Regret, Alienation, Fear, Fascination, Sadness, Isolation)

Loss

Child of Teraces Expelled from the hammam, Noura goes home alone and disappears from everyone's site. His concerned mother asks for Leila to look for him. Leila finds Noura asleep in a bedroom, curled up in the position of the fetus. The scene of Noura's fetus position is significant: It connotes a desire for the return into a place of security he was expelled from, the mother's womb, to speak metaphorically, or in more realistic terms, the mother's protection, embrace, and love. There is a moment of total congruity between the world of the mother and that of the child, which is the moment before and just after birth, when the mother understands all the child's needs and attends to them. As the child grows up, the communication between mother and child becomes less perfect, but it is still maintained and nurtured thanks to the close relations that the child has with the mother. For Noura, it entails going to the hammam with his mother, receiving her constant hugs and kisses, being comforted by her when he is punished by his father, being allowed to sit with her in the women's gatherings and to listen to their conversations. The moment Noura is expelled from the Hammam, that strong, almost complicit, bond is irreversibly shattered. Though not yet an adult, Noura is expurgated as a grown male among the women, a voyeur, with a "glint in his eyes," as says the hammam owner, to Noura's mother. Noura's search for comfort starts right after he is banned from the Hammam. His two older friends hail him in the street, but he wants nothing to do with them anymore and avoids them. He sees them as dangerous to his wellbeing, for if they brutalize him, as they usually do, this time, he will have no motherly Jamilla, or Latifa, or Salouah to run to for comfort.

Villa Jasmin Serge senior is a man who is seeking to fill a lack. He is looking for a nation. Tunisian by origin but French for three generations, he is nevertheless subjected to the anti-Semitic discrimination that rages in France, more particularly from 1940 with the anti-Jewish edicts of the fascist government of Vichy. In his native Tunisia, too, his French nationality and his adherence to socialism create suspicion among Muslim nationalists, who question his loyalty to the ideal of independence. Between these two intolerant nations that marginalize him, Serge wants to make a place for himself, which he sees as the anchoring point of contradictory ideological, ethnic, and religious tendencies and against any communitarianism. This task, as shown by his frank and impassioned discussions with his Muslim and nationalist friend, Romdane, is not an easy one. History will show that it will be thwarted on the eve the six-day Arab-Israeli war, with thousands of North African Jews fleeing their home countries for Europe and Israel, a prospect that, unlike Odette's brother who chose to go there, Serge has never wanted to entertain.

Zizou The family of the Tunisian dictator Ben Ali took away Aïcha's basic rights by arbitrarily imprisoning her. This same family ruined Mr. Ghorbal and ran him and his daughter out of town, thus, stopping Zizou's dream of having a stable job and family life by marrying Mr. Ghorbal's daughter. Zizou and Aïcha have therefore losses to impute to the Ben Ali regime—she, the loss of her freedom and he, that of his job, marriage, and possible family.. However, our two protagonists are only a sample of the Tunisian population oppressed by the Ben Ali regime. In fact, the whole souk, and beyond the souk, most of the Tunisian population, is a victim of the dictatorship of the ruling family. Therefore, the liberation of Aïcha is parallel or even merged with the liberation of Tunisia from the clutches of its oppressors, in this case Ben Ali and his extended family.

Regret

Child of Teraces It is not easy for parents to push their children into the uncertainties of adulthood. The process is even more difficult for mothers, who have a special bond with their children for having carried them in their wombs and nurtured them during their first years of vulnerability. We sense Jamilla's and also Latifa's pains as they see Noura being dragged out by the hammam attendant, who, incidentally, has been trying to convince them that Noura was no longer a child and did not belong in the women's hammam. We also see Jamilla's sadness when she returns from the hammam. The first thing she does as she crosses the threshold of the compound is to call for her son, but she hears no reply from him. She then looks for

him in his familiar hideout and his room without success. She asks Leila to find him for her, for she is worried. Noura has not changed clothes for his brother's ceremony and is nowhere to be found. Jamilla misses her son; she misses his childhood; she misses his innocence.

Alienation

Child of Teraces Neither Jamilla nor her sister Latifa were fooled. They knew that Noura was growing up, that he was no longer a child, and that the world of women was attracting more and more curiosity in him. But where was the line between childhood and adulthood? Could Noura be an adult when he still knew nothing about women, their bodies, or their feelings? Must they not also, as his mothers, contribute to his education towards adulthood, give him a certain knowledge of the realm of women through the hammam and the women's discussion circles? So, Jamilla, her sister Latifa, and her sister-in-law Salouah deliberately delayed Noura's crossing into the realm of the men by holding onto him as a child, by allowing him unlimited access to the women's world despite clear indications that he was growing and developing a "glint in his eyes." Their effort to defer Noura's growth was defeated at the hammam. From that moment forward, Jamilla, Latifa, and Salouah lost Noura as a child, they alienated him from their world, and pushed him into the realm of Azzouz, his father, without properly preparing his weaning. Noura used to respond to Latifa's songs and come to her bedroom to rummage through her clothes and pictures. That night, when Latifa sang, she saw a silhouette tiptoed past her bedroom door and walk up the stairs to the room where Leila slept. She stepped outside and recognized Noura. He avoided her and was going to Leila. He was not coming for maternal love. He was seeking romantic love. Latifa returned to her bedroom with a sad smile on her face. She knew that she had lost Noura as a child.

Fear

Child of Teraces Fear (Castration) Noura has been listening to the brouhaha in the courtyard. He can tell by the noises what is happening exactly. He could imagine his little brother immobilized on the operating table, crying. He could imagine the circumciser approach the child with his scissors, and when Noura heard his little brother scream his heart out, he understood that the child's prepuce had just been cut. Reliving his own circumcision, Noura grimaced, and covered his genitals, as if to protect himself against a second circumcision, or a castration as Zakia has threatened. Indeed, earlier in the day, Zakia, one of his mother's friends, friends, had given him an ominous warning. As Noura was sitting with his aunt Latifa in the women's group listening to their lewd conversations, Zakia grabbed him, forced him to sit in her lap, and joked that today was the day when he would be circumcised a second time, and this time, his whole penis would be removed, meaning, he will be castrated. Zakia's threat and Noura's fear of castration evokes the Freudian tale of the Oedipus complex, whereby the boy in competition with his father to gain his mother's affection is threatened of castration and must step back from his mother and patiently learn manhood from his father, and wait for his own day to come.

Fascination

Child of Teraces Father as a rival is most discernible in a scene where, in preparation for the circumcision feast, Noura is helping his mother grind some meat and make sausages. At one point he asks her out of the blue if his father is going to sleep with her tonight. Astounded by the question, Jamilla replies, "where else do you expect him to sleep?" And she casts him a long, reproachful look. Noura's fascination for his mother and his subliminal hatred for Azzouz, the strict father who beats him and slaps him on the head for the slightest misconduct almost cost him castration as Zakia has predicted earlier. Fortunately for Noura, he is only banished from Jamilla's overbearing affection to be pushed into his father's kingdom to learn from him how to become a man. And although Noura learned little from his inattentive father, of whom Jamilla says that he is hopeless, Azzouz's pornographic magazines that Noura slipped surreptitiously under his shirt, the passes he witness Azzouz make to his female customers and to his sister-in-law Latifa contributed to what incited his curiosity about the female body.

Isolation

Child of Teraces Noura's expulsion from the world of his mother is both traumatic and aspirational. In the sense that it comes with no warning, no preparation, it is traumatic. Usually, a child's weaning from his mother's breastmilk comes gradually. In contrast, Noura's weaning from his mother's world is sudden and

disgraceful, as he is beaten by his mother and the hammam attendant, jeered by the women, and dragged to the changing room to get his clothes and leave unaccompanied. As painful as it is, Noura's exclusion from the women's hammam precipitates him into a promise, the promise of his father's world, of the men's world. He will no longer be attending the women's hammam, but he will be going to the men's bathhouse and learn to be a fully grown man. And so, in a failed attempt to take one last peek in the women's hammam, which is thwarted by the menacing face of the hammam attendant, Noura walks nonchalantly to the men's hammam, only to be told that it is closed for cleaning.

Sadness

Child of Teraces /*melancholy* This is the beginning of an unfulfilled promise that sends Noura into deep melancholy, as he relives scenes of happy moments with his mother in the women's bathhouse. The last time Noura's mother was trying to get him admitted to the women's bathhouse, she had explained to the attendant that Azzouz was hopeless, that Noura would come back from the men's hammam dirtier than he went in with his father. It did not matter at the time, because Noura was still considered a child and in the care of his mother, who washed him thoroughly. Now that Noura is excluded from his mother's world and is supposed

to be taken care of by his father, the closing of the men's hammam and Azzouz's absence indicate that Noura will not be receiving his education about manhood from his father, that he might even remain dirty forever, that is, an incomplete man. This has a larger significance. It points to the false promise of wholeness, of completeness, as individuals are ejected from the comfort zone of motherly love into that of fatherly rigid, masculinist societies.

FLAWS (Anger, Greed)

Anger

A Summer in La Goulette Youssef, Meriem's father, gets angry and flouts the Hadj's authority in La Goulette. In principle, in Youssef's conservative society, a girl who has lost her virginity before marriage is a lost girl who can only be saved by a generous man who, ignoring her impurity, will offer to marry her. Such a proposal is a blessing for the parents, who see in this suitor a savior. The Hadj is therefore convinced that his proposal to marry Meriem will be received with great gratitude by Youssef. Besides, his position as Youssef's landlord and creditor makes him a feared person to whom few things are refused. However, the Hadj finds an angry Youssef, who denounces him in public and sends him packing. The father's love for his daughter is stronger than his fear of the Hadj and his honor in the community. The Hadj, this "snooping, dirty old man," as Youssef calls him to his face, will not marry his daughter.

Greed

A Summer in La Goulette The Hadj is the personification of greed. He is already the owner of many buildings in La Goulette, whose tenants he harasses and blackmail. That is not enough for him. He exploits the vulnerability of indebted people to buy their properties at low prices, which he resells at a higher price to make big profits. Promoters have contacted him to buy his buildings at very high costs in order to destroy them for the land. Putting forward the profits he would make from such a deal rather than the welfare of his loyal tenants, the Hadj arrives with a bailiff to put his tenants on the street. Moreover, with the imminence of the war in the Middle East, he already sees good business to be done. He anticipates that many Jews would not want to take the risk of living amongst Arabs and would hastily sell their properties to move to a safe place in Europe or Israel. He asks his secretary, Taita, to keep her eyes and ears open and to make him a list of those who would be ready to flee, so that

QUEST

Child of Terraces *Wandering* There is in Noura's relationships (Wandering, Explore, Introspection) with his father, and to a certain extent with most of the men in Halfaouine who can pass for father figures, an emptiness that needs to be filled with information. Those relationships are structured around interdictions and strikes rather than instruction. When Noura asks his father whether his aunt Latifa, who is divorced, is a virgin, his father smacks him on his head and tells him to leave these kinds of questions to adults. Azzouz misses a good opportunity to teach his son about the birds and the bees. When Azzouz returns from the market with a basketful of vegetables and finds his son listening to women's lewd conversations and laughter about the size of cucumbers, he calls Noura aside for a rehearsal of the precepts of manhood he has taught him. So, Azzouz asks Noura if he remembers his lessons. The child remembers the first one: A man never cries. He gets a smack on the head for forgetting the second one, before his father repeats it for him: A man does not hang around women. Thus, is summarized Azzouz's lesson on manhood, a lesson that is more a catalogue of prohibitions than a teaching. Likewise, when Noura approaches the butcher about to slaughter his sheep, he is told to go away, for this is an adult's business. Other than a number of dogmatic "no", Noura gets little teaching on what it takes to be a man from his conventional (biological and social) fathers. It is instead thanks to his non-conventional father, the drunk poet Salih, that Noura gets to explore the paths to manhood. The bazaar of the shoemaker is a treasure trove of bibelots collected from far-off places that titillate the boy's curiosity, and which he lets him investigate freely.

Child of Terraces *Exploring Manhood* Abruptly removed from the women's hammam and from his mother's security and affection and prematurely thrown into the world of an elusive father, Noura is no longer a child and not yet a man. He will need to explore on his own and learn to build his adulthood. He gets closer to Salih the drunk poet and asks him what it takes to become a man. In a gesture that indicates that his lips are zipped, Salih hints that becoming a man does not have a predetermined recipe, thus, encouraging Noura to write his own manhood, which Noura does by observation. Noura invests the rooftops of Halfaouine and, flying from one level to another, he collects individual experiences. From Salih, he learns that a man can also be sensitive, contrary to what his father told him, that he can be vulnerable and humble. It is this vulnerability and sensitivity of Salih that makes him conquer the heart of Latifa, a woman who fled from a rich husband and who resisted the solicitations of the men of Halfaouine, including Azzouz. Noura also learns from Salih that a man must be ready to go to jail for his beliefs when Salih is arrested for writing his political opinion on a wall.

Child of Terraces *Knowing* Outfitted with the lessons gathered from teachers, such as, Salih and his aunt Latifa, Noura heads to adulthood. He takes his apprenticeship to manhood as far as trying to undress Leila in her sleep. And when he fails, he proposes that they recreate the atmosphere of the women's hammam at home while his mother is absent. Jamilla surprises them and asks the Sheikh to come get Leila. The night before she leaves, Leila invites herself into Noura's bedroom while he is on the rooftop freeing Salih's caged bird, and she sneaks under his covers, naked. In the morning, an elated Noura dances and jumps on the rooftops. The next day, the perceptive Sheikh looks at Noura and exclaims to Azzouz "there is no doubt. That son of yours is grown now." Noura has found his way into manhood by himself, without the father's help. And when Azzouz tries to ascertain his authority on Noura, the son looks down at the father from the rooftop with a taunting smirk.

A Summer in La Goulette *Play A Summer in La Goulette* opens with the children of the three featured families escaping their nap routine and setting up to explore the Hadj's villa. They build around the Hadj all kinds of fantastical stories. The Hadj, also dubbed 'Double-Hadj' for unsuccessfully attempting to reach Mecca twice, the children claim, is single because he is a sorcerer who killed and buried his seven fiancées under the slab of his courtyard. Having satisfied themselves with their fantastical tales and stolen flowers from the Hadj's garden, the children wander in the streets of La Goulette. There, they come across boys older than them, but wanderers like them, who heckle them in a friendly way to mark their territories as bigger boys. The youngest have borrowed from their elders some comic books that they are slow to return, and they would like to make sure that the books do not end up in the local bookstore. But the children, knowing the weakness that their elders have for their sisters, find ways to get out of trouble by reassuring them that their books are in the girls' good care. Then, jumping carelessly in the back of a passing carriage, they head to the sea to harass the peanut vendor, who comes complaining to their parents for unpaid merchandise. The time of childhood is also the time when, having wandered all day on the beach, the

children find at home mom's steaming dishes, which make them lose all sense of propriety, so great is the impatience of their hollow bellies. Thus, Gigi's young brother is scolded by his father for rushing to grab a dish, forgetting that the family is receiving a guest, which requires a little more decorum than usual.

A Summer in La Goulette *Exploration/knowledge* If for the youngest the time of childhood is a moment of pure hedonism, for their elders, the teenagers in the age of puberty, this moment presents a more existential stake, that of becoming-man or becoming-woman. For the older ones, girls as well as boys, it is the time of the quest for adulthood, the age of passage. There is in the big boys a sort of frantic anticipation. It's as if time is running out, and every little minute must be seized as not to miss the train to emancipation. The young men whistle at passing girls, give them awkward compliments and offer them flowers picked without authorization in a neighborhood garden. They offer to escort them out of the cinema or to go with them to the next film. They propose to help with the preparation of an upcoming wedding in the hope of getting closer to Meriem, Gigi, and Tina. For the older boys, the kingdom of childhood is a time of quest for knowledge of the female body. It is a time of awkward flirtations and long waits on the beach, peeping in the girls' showers, hoping to catch some female nudity. And when it happens, one of the boys is so overwhelmed that he faints, bumping his head against the shower wall, revealing their presence,

Villa Jasmin (exploration, introspection) *Villa Jasmin* is a film about a quest, the quest of a young Jew for a family ideal. Having left his native Tunisia at the age of nine when his parents died, Henri Boccara has only hazy memories and idyllic hopes of his homeland and his family. After adopting his father's first name, Serge, Henri Boccara, now Serge Boccara Jr., goes to Tunisia with his fiancée, Jeanne, to explore his family and national past. Through the Jewish section of the Tunis cemetery, the local dishes offered by Tunisian restaurants, the visit of the old family villa and the narrations of those who, like Romdane Jr., know part of his family's history, Serge's quest leaves him nostalgic, with the taste of an unfulfilled hope. No one in the street seems to remember his father's name. The beautiful ancestral villa is now only a decrepit building housing an electrical cable business. The theater where his father fell in love with his mother is now only a pile of scrap metal barricaded behind a rusty sheet metal door. The meal served to him in the restaurant is far from the harissa-spiked cuisine of the maid Rachel. The bougainvillea he hoped to find have long withered. Perhaps it is his fiancée who tells it most sincerely: Serge is chasing ghosts. What he is looking for exists only in the phantasmagorical imagination of a child. The jasmine have never scented Tunisia with the strong perfume he imagines. The bougainvillea have not been always in bloom. Rachel's dishes have never been as spicy as he imagined. And his father was never a hero, but a Jew trying to survive the politics of discrimination and racial intolerance.'

PAST Of all of Boughedir's films, *Villa Jasmin* is the one that makes of exploring the past one of its central preoccupations. Serge Jr. needs a closure on his family's story that will open for him a departure, an opening onto the future. For that, he must revisit his past.

Villa Jasmin Serge Jr.'s memory of Tunisia and his family is limited to nine short years. After that, it is life in boarding school in Paris, and the mockery of his pals of the boarding school that furnish his "I". Thus, Serge chooses to adopt his father's first name. But a first name cannot rewrite a family history. For his wholeness, it is his past that he must understand, or else remain frozen in the doubt of his person and his destination in life. He discovers his family history. It is not the idealized story he has hoped for. Nonetheless, he returns to France satisfied to have understood who he is.

APPEARANCE (dishonesty-betrayal)

Zizou *Dishonesty* Sadok, the representative of Ben Ali in Moncef Bey, was, like the president and all his collaborators, a dishonest character. Sadok abused the naïveté of Zizou and sent him on a punitive expedition against the League of Human Rights, which he represented to Zizou as a dangerous organization. He also used Zizou to find and ransack the headquarters of the Islamic fundamentalists. When Zizou started working for Sadok, the latter had made Zizou believe that what motivated him was the general interest of the Tunisian people. Sadok had even reproached Zizou, who asked that the police help him to free a friend held in detention (Aïcha), that his request was of personal interest. Yet, Sadok, who advised Zizou to put the general interests above all things, had only his personal interests in mind. Thus, as soon

his interests were threatened with the fall of the dictator, Sadok did not hesitate to betray President Ben Ali, whose so-called positive actions towards the Tunisian people he used to praise.

Zizou Betrayal Sadok betrayed President Ben Ali. As the representative of the presidential party in Moncef Bey, Sadok was obviously the biggest supporter of Ben Ali in the city. He was the one who organized the rallies in honor of the president, who had the posters printed, who paid the per diem of the crowds he gathered, and who harangued them. He was also the one who organized punitive expeditions against those he considered hostile to the regime, such as the Human Rights League or the Islamic fundamentalists. However, when Ben Ali's regime collapsed under the pressure of the crowd, and when the fundamentalists took advantage of the situation, vandalizing and looting the villas of those close to the president, Sadok bought himself a false beard and found himself on the side of the fundamentalists that he had beaten up only a few hours earlier, participating in their demonstrations and threatening those who hesitated to take part. In fact, Sadok's loyalty to Ben Ali was insincere and purely opportunistic. He did not hesitate to betray the president.

CHARACTERS

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Agreeable (Jamilla, **Odette, Zizou**) vs *Disagreeable* (**Hadj, Guilbaud**)

Conscientious (**Noura. Serge Fils, Adel**) vs *Unconscientious* (**Azzouz**)

Rational (**Mothers**) vs *Emotional* (**Fathers, Salih**)

1. *Open*

- a. Meriem (*A Summer in La Goulette*) Meriem is a flirtatious, defiant, and manipulative girl. Like her two friends, Tina and Gigi, Meriem is part of a generation that no longer recognizes itself in the strict social rules set by their communities. For Meriem, who has no consideration for the Hadj whom everyone fears in La Goulette, it is out of the question that the Hadj choose a husband for her, let alone that he be that husband. Although she is not serious about losing her virginity, she intends to make her parents uneasy on the subject. This is her way of telling them that she alone will decide on her sex life, and that she has the ability to do so.
- b. Serge père (Serge Sr.) (*Villa Jasmin*) Serge Sr. is a loyal, optimistic, and direct person. A man in search of a nation is a description that would suit Serge Sr. well. Caught between two nations that reject him, Serge wants to build a welcoming land with universal principles. This task, which he undertakes with passion and impetuosity, puts him at odds with various interests and jeopardizes his freedom and the stability of his family.

2. *Agreeable*

- a. Jamilla (*Child of the Terraces*) Noura's mother is protective, affectionate, and persuasive. She is the kind of mother every child would dream of. Her affection is boundless, her protection reassuring, and her good mood infectious. Nonetheless, she also knows when to set boundaries for Noura.
- b. Odette (*Villa Jasmin*) Strong and supportive, Odette is the central pillar of the Boccara family. More than once, the responsibilities of the family will rest on her fragile shoulders. And more than once, she will show admirable courage.
- c. Zizou (*Zizou and the Arab Spring*) Zizou is a conservative, gullible, adaptable, and determined character. His honesty and willingness to help often put him in the company of unsavory people and place him in unenviable situations. However, he is always carried by a providence that saves him from peril.

3. *Disagreeable*

- a. The Hadj (*A Summer in La Goulette*) The Hadj is a ruthless, hypocritical, and vindictive prowler. The Hadj has tried twice to go to Mecca and has failed twice, thus, the mocking sobriquet of "Double-Hadj" that people use for him in his absence. Nevertheless, he has used his financial stature to impose himself as a community leader and the Muslim authority in La Goulette. His dishonesty permeates his ruthless commercial methods, his vindictiveness, and his immoral pursuit of Meriem.
- b. Guilbaud (*Villa Jasmin*) Guilbaud is a disagreeable vengeful fascist. He the image of the "petit blanc" (poor white man) of the colonies, who finds in the conquered lands of France, outside the metropolis, the opportunity to make for himself a glory which would not have been possible in France. To this purpose, the native becomes his punching bag.

4. *Conscientious*

- a. Noura (*Child of the Terraces*) Noura is an impressionable, manipulative, and jealous boy, whose determination to become a man too quickly got him lost and wandering between the worlds of childhood and adulthood. Noura likes the club of his older friends. He wants to be like them. However, he is in no hurry to grow up, because he loves his mother's hugs and her boundless affection. When, in order to gain the esteem of his friends, they lead him to do things that get him banished from the kingdom of childhood and its delights, Noura has only one option: to become a man as soon as possible, or else remain in the no-man's land of no longer-a-child and not-yet-a-man.
- b. Serge Fils (Serge Jr.) (*Villa Jasmin*) Serge Jr. is a conscientious person. He is idealist, determine, affectionate, but somehow reckless. Engaged in an excavation for the reconstitution of his family's history, Serge fils is animated by the idealism and the passion of the archaeologist who ignores the risks to which he exposes himself and the people around him. Serge carelessly drags his pregnant fiancée through the streets of Tunis until she breaks down. His recklessness hides, however, an enormous tenderness for his fiancée and a great sensitivity for his entourage.
- c. Adel (*Zizou and the Arab Spring*) is a caring, defiant, and determined character. Behind his intimidating gladiator appearance, Adel is a gentle person. It is he who, moved by the plight of Zizou, the stranger in Tunis with nowhere to go, finds him his first job and a place to sleep. Adel takes Zizou under his wing, who becomes his protégé, his companion in the struggle against the mafia, and his business associate despite himself.

5. *Unconscientious*

- a. Azzouz (*Child of the Terraces*) Azzouz is a negligent and disciplinarian father. He lacks the tools to lead his son into manhood. When he does not throw his hands at Noura, he throws them in the air and gives up. His teaching method is to tell his son what not to do, but he is incapable of teaching him what to do.

6. *Rational*

- a. Mothers: Wassila, Fritna, Lucia (*Summer in La Goulette*) The girls' mothers are protective and conciliatory. Unlike their husbands, they are more reasonable than emotional.

7. *Emotional*

- a. Salih (*Child of the Terraces*) Salih is an eccentric mentor. He brings a refreshing antithesis to the representation of Tunisian masculinity. Sensitive, liberal, a heavy drinker of alcohol,

a poet, and politically voluble, he is a cocktail of what it takes to get into trouble in this very conservative society.

- b. Fathers: Youssef, Jojo, Giuseppe (*A Summer in La Goulette*) The girls' fathers are protective and proud parents. Despite their differing religious beliefs, Meriem's, Gigi's, and Tina's parents are mirror images of one another, with the fathers on one side and the mothers on the other. However, the fathers's judgement is more based on emotion than reason.