

## On the Racialization of the Moroccan 'Other' in Orientalist Romance

**Abdelghani MOUSSAOUI**

*A PhD researcher at the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences Chouaib Doukkali, El Jadida/ Morocco*

[abdelghanimoussaoui1@gmail.com](mailto:abdelghanimoussaoui1@gmail.com)

**Abdellah BENLAMINE**

*A professor of English literature, Department of English Studies, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Chouaib Doukkali University, El Jadida, Morocco.*

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v6i2.1662>

**APA Citation:** MOUSSAOUI, A & BENLAMINE, A. (2024). On the Racialization of the Moroccan 'Other' in Orientalist Romance. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*. 6(2).103-116. <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v6i2>.

### **Received:**

07/03/2024

### **Accepted:**

01/05/2024

### **Keywords:**

Romance, Orientalism, Racial Identities, Otherness, Postcolonial Criticism.

### **Abstract**

*This paper offers an understanding of the discourse of difference in relation to the themes of race and identity in Rebecca Stratton's bestselling romance *The Silken Cage*. It unravels how Morocco, as a subject and a culture, is racialized in British orientalist romance so as to underpin the discourse of the centre/periphery duality in cross-cultural encounters. *The Silken Cage* is worthy of study due to its interest in how the Moroccan 'Other' is turned into a commodity in popular romance. After a postcolonial analysis of the suggested romance, it was found that racial conceptions of the Moroccan Other's identity are at large contingent on racial hierarchies. The novel seems, at first glance, to negotiate the construction of racial identities and thereby dismantle the system of binarism between the 'Self' and the 'Other.' However, the author's emphasis on the ambivalence of the oriental subjects articulates a continued need for racial sameness and the denial of difference. Needless to say, given that racial hybridity is a prerequisite for the courtship to be successful reveals that Stratton resists cross-cultural differences. It can be thus argued that Stratton's romance is an interracial ground where racial differences are not welcomed to legitimize Western hegemony and domination over the Orient.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Generally, colonial discourse has been a space wherein the correlation between human 'difference' and the thematic issues of identity, gender, race and space is contested. This discourse is claimed to be framed within a fixed image which is disseminated among some Westerners in order to perpetuate the notion of centre/periphery duality. With the emergence of postcolonial criticism, a notable set of postcolonial figures (e.g. Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, and Frantz Fanon) descending, mainly, from the ex-colonies have tried to

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question this 'Eurocentric' mode of thinking. It is within this cultural and historical context that this paper undertakes to investigate how racial identities are represented in Rebecca Stratton's orientalist romance *The Silken Cage*. It seeks to unravel how such representation is based on racial differentiations to sustain the discourse of centre/periphery duality in cross-cultural encounters.

Early studies of colonial discourse did not give much attention to Western female writers' works due to their triviality and unauthenticity, thereby being totally excluded from the so-called 'literary canon' until the 1950s, especially with the emergence of cultural studies in Britain. However, to fully understand the subtleties and complexities of the imperial project, it is of extreme cruciality to lay bare how Western women writers have participated in this project. The most recent studies available on, or related to, racial representations of Morocco include: Mourad, 2016; Aammari, 2017; Khouf and Hayet, 2018; Benhima & Mohammed, 2019; Wade-Lang, 2019; El Filali, 2020; Saissi, 2021; Oumoussa, 2021; and Saissi, 2022. Given the review of literature, it is very primordial to note that much research has been carried out on racial representations of Morocco in imperial travel literature, but there is, in the meantime, no critical scholarly interest in how it is racially represented in orientalist romance. This paper is then an attempt to fill this research gap. It argues that although romance fiction is believed to be a subgenre within the 'literary canon' and an aspect of 'lowbrow' literature, it is replete with racist images and attitudes towards the oriental 'Other'. The way the different 'Other' is racially constructed in such a type of literature is no more than a tool exploited by imperialist writers to preserve Western domination and subjugation. In this sense, this paper intends to 'write back' against the hegemonic discourse of British popular romance about Morocco.

This paper adopts a postcolonial approach to analyze the selected novel. The choice of such an approach resides in two main grounds: it is much concerned with the issues of 'colonialist' literature (including romance fiction), and it deals with the concerns of the subaltern colonized 'Other'. This paper falls into two main parts. The first part theorizes and problematizes the construction of racial identities in colonial discourse. This part serves as a preliminary inquiry to understand the convergences and divergences between difference and race. The second part investigates conceptions of racial differences in Rebecca Stratton's *The Silken Cage* from a postcolonial perspective, in an attempt to display the extent to which these conceptions can be symbolically represented and fictionalized in texts so as to narrate the

dominance of the Western ‘Self’ while constructing a demonized ‘Other’. Understanding this sort of narration-construction project is the core issue of this study.

## **2. Challenging Racial Identities in Colonial Discourse**

In the Western academy, there has been a tendency of narrating the relationship between the East and the West, based on a binary framework of difference. It is undeniable that Edward Said is the most postcolonial figure to disclose this relationship in his landmark book: *Orientalism* (1978). In Said’s viewpoint, Orientalism is all about binary oppositions between the East and the West. In this binarism, the West is represented as the ‘Self’ and the East as the ‘Other’. Said stresses that this system of binarism should be questioned due to its misrepresentation of the Eastern ‘Other’. Orientalism tends to feature an unequal relationship between the East and the West. The East, from a Saidian perspective, is a fantasy created by and for the West, and ‘race/ethnicity’ is a significant marker by which difference between the East and the West is figured in this fantasy framework.

The debate of race and identity has resulted in a serious study of the manifestations of social segregation and imperial greedy purposes embedded in the discourse of difference. Undoubtedly, human beings share a deep-seated psychological urge to identify diversity and similarity in terms of comparison as an effort to establish their essential identity. This urge implies a fundamental conflict, in that we require diversity in order to distinguish ourselves from others, while at the same time, we find reassurance and comfort in the experience of similarity and belonging to the human race. This point is further concretized while examining types of human discourses and their discriminatory lines of attack and effects. In the course of examining the colonial discourse, therefore, some scholars, among whom Bhabha (1994) avers that “[the] discriminatory effects [of the colonial discourse] are visible in those split subjects of the racist stereotype – the simian Negro, the effeminate Asiatic male – which ambivalently fix identity as the fantasy of difference.” (p.108) Homi Bhabha’s avowal that the racial identity of the colonized subjects ambivalently fixes their sense of being and thereby transforms it into an illusion-defining feature of difference is indicative of the discriminatory foundations of the colonial discourse. This ambivalence can be best understood in terms of discussing the relevance of both sameness and difference to the question of identity.

Within the framework of colonial discourse, the colonized people are mostly stigmatized and identified by their ‘black’ skin colour. The skin colour is the basis on which the colonized subjects’ behaviour and thinking is adaptive to the rules of, to use Conrad’s notorious catchphrase, “the heart of darkness” where they live. By means of an analogy, the

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image of Africa as the heart of darkness that has affected the skin colour and thinking of its people coincides with the illusive description of the chameleon, which adapts itself to its surroundings, while adopting disguise techniques of changing colours to protect itself from the dangers of the same surrounding. This analogy also testifies to the ambivalence of the colonial discourse; an ambivalence that creates a sort of tension and disquiet about the manipulators of this colonial discourse. It has been noticed that the same weak points, blackness for example, that stigmatize the colonized subjects are themselves transformed into strong points of resistance against their colonizers when they turn to be a source of anxiety rather than entertainment. According to Bhabha, the colonial discourse acts in such an ambivalent way that it entertains its Western audience with fantastical images of the unusual racial identity defining the colonized subjects, yet it pictures frightening images of black creatures whose 'barbaric' way of life strikingly jeopardizes the Westerners' presence in the colonies unless such barbaric black creatures are tamed. It is, therefore, this ambivalence of the colonial discourse that Bhabha further explicates throughout his academic works, while remaining faithful to discovering the weak points of such discourse, especially in terms of the association of racial identity to difference.

Alison Banton, a Western sociologist, assumes that the colonized people's racial identity is usually associated with the racial hierarchization of human beings in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As cited by Banton (1977): "In the eighteenth century there had been a strong tendency to rank all the things in the world—mineral objects, vegetables, and animals from the lowest to the highest— as constituting a 'great chain of being'." (p.29) Drawing on the logic of the great chain of being, Banton seems to attribute the emergence of the racist conception of blackness to the early European tendency to rank people according to types and races. At the bottom of the great chain of being, the black races are matched with animal species based on their physical properties (e.g., skin colour, facial features) which purportedly derive from genetic inheritance. In fact, the need to categorize events, objects and other humans, in order to identify and control them, is part of the psychological makeup of all human beings and plays a fundamental role in the definition of the 'Self' versus the 'Other' in interracial encounters.

In *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action 1780–1850*, Philip Curtin provides a description not so different from that of Banton's of the dynamics of early racist theoretical ideas towards black Africans. He speaks of "racial classification" as "a simple system based on skin colour, with a white, red, yellow, and black race, each of them placed on one of the four major continents." (Curtin, 1965, p.38) After compartmentalizing people into categories

such as races or ‘types’, there arises a problem of arrangement. In this respect, the key problem with this mode of categorization is that the processes of selection regarding what ought to count as ‘racial’ and therefore ‘natural’ differences are themselves inextricably linked to the existence of cultural norms concerning what defines a ‘difference’ as peculiarly ‘racial’. The criteria of differentiation between what are designated as ‘races’ may be established as a result of other factors that have a predominantly social dimension and are related to, for instance, socially determined questions of power and representation. This particular point has been made by writers such as Edward Said. In his book, *Orientalism*, Said (1978) argues that the concept of the ‘oriental’ –taken in the sense of both a subject and a culture – as outlined in the European discipline of ‘orientalism’ is, in fact, a projection of European concepts and values on to the ‘oriental’ subject. Thus, supposedly ‘objective’ racial descriptions of the oriental can be read as expressions of the European imperialist desire to conceptualise and thereby control the identity of the colonised subject. Equally, when the oriental is discussed in unconstructive terms (for example, by attributing the characteristic of barbarity, irrationality and immaturity), this too can be interpreted, following Bhabha’s line of reasoning, as a projection of Western fears rather than an accurate description of the oriental subject’s ‘racial’ and ‘cultural’ attributes. It follows then that it was basically Western biologists, sociologists and anthropologists who initiated the theoretical framework and paved the way for prototype scientific attempts to investigate, especially with regard to conceptions of blackness, race, identity and/or gender.

It has been argued that the scientific revolution in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries provided a muse for the philosophies of Enlightenment. Much focus was placed on the scientific study of human beings in relation to their natural surrounding through observation and comparisons between groups of men and animals. However, objective these procedures might appear at the surface level, they were combined with ready-made judgements as ‘rational objective criteria’. More clearly, the need to establish terms of classification means that human beings automatically tend to assign hierarchical scales to the categories they define regardless of the obvious dangers implied when such a mechanism is applied to the categorization of different races. One possible way of establishing categories for human racial differences, as aforementioned, is through the scientific method. However, the danger remains that the assigning hierarchical and value scales could be used to rationalize many other subconscious drives which are in actual fact aimed at the exploitation and domination of others.

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All in all, the need to establish a conception of human difference based on racial and gender considerations remain a deep-seated human urge and a vital source for identification. In the subsequent section, the focus will be shifted to analysing how racial identities, as a human marker of cultural difference, are constructed in Rebecca Stratton's narrative *The Silken Cage*, adopting a postcolonial approach.

### 3. Racializing the Moroccan 'Other' in Rebecca Stratton's *The Silken Cage*

It is noteworthy that the process of mapping differences in the colonial discourse is a discursive strategy that fuels the circulation of ready-made judgments about the colonial 'Other'. This process entails inviting the question of 'race' into the show. Race, in this regard, should be understood as the dividing force that enables the enactment of stereotypical and discriminatory assumptions regarding cultures and peoples. These discriminatory stereotypes, located in an imaginary Western niche, are based on features or signifiers designed to make the 'Other' visible and natural. Within the framework of cultural and postcolonial studies, ethnic affiliations determine, in a sense, the identity of an individual. This view has become commonsensical and intuitive knowledge in the West. This perception gives a sense of plausibility or vraisemblance to the mode of racial representation. The function of the colonial stereotype is, as Bhabha (1994) asserts, "to 'normalize' the multiple beliefs and split subjects that constitute colonial discourse as a consequence of its process of disavowal." (p.74) However, this process of "normalization" is always threatened by the differences of the Other's skin colour and culture: "it is that possibility of difference and circulation which would liberate the signifier of skin/culture from the fixations of racial typology." (Bhabha, p.75) It is in this context that this paper tries to analyse how Morocco, as subject and a culture, is racialized in Rebecca Stratton's orientalist romance *The Silken Cage*.

Stratton's racialization of the Moroccan 'Other' in *The Silken Cage* uncovers the limits of Western mode of representation. Arabs, for instance, occupy a narrow space in the Western imagination. They are mostly associated with certain descriptions like backward, dark, barbaric, savages and exotic, as the following excerpt from the novel indicates:

"Again, he half turned his head, and she sensed the narrowing of his eyes rather than saw it. 'You believe him be in danger?' he demanded. 'From me?' Her silence was confirmation enough, and his voice roughened with anger. 'So \_\_ you still think me a barbarian, eh?' 'Those men who came running out the other night were armed with rifles,' Troy reminded him. 'But they did not



fire! Your brother will not be shot for what he has done, *mademoiselle*; whatever your opinion, we are not savages!” (Stratton, 1981, p.96)

This act of lumping all Moroccans together under the same heading (barbarians and savages) runs counter to any attempt to acknowledge cultural differences and a denial of the Other’s capability to do any better and be helpful to escape the effects of their Western construction. The wordings being blithely expressed may contribute to keep up these prejudices incarnated in the racial discourse. Interestingly, labelling Moroccans, or Arabs in general, as such has “become repeatedly recharged and displaced under the pressure both historical change and of a continuing history of racial identification and ‘othering.’” (Harrison, 2003, p.72) Each nation has its own “racial tag” in the Western mindset as a badge for distinction. In *Just Like Tomorrow*, Guène (2006) states: “it’s so funny to call the Arabs ‘Fatima’, all the blacks ‘Mamadou’ and all the Chinese ‘Ping-Pong’.” (p.6) To draw a kind of analogy, Troy Darrel says to Kadir Ben Rachid: “You’re a savage!” she accused wildly when he remained grimly silent. ‘Only a *savage* would do what you’re doing! Put me down, I’m perfectly capable of walking \_\_ put me down!’ (Emphasis is mine). (Stratton, 1981, p.83) This attribute of savagery contributes to the description of the ‘Other’ as being exotic and, thus, categorized within a *unique* narrative construction. This mode of describing the oriental ‘Other’ has become, using Bhabha’s dictum, “the language metaphor [that] raises the question of cultural difference.” (Bhabha, 1994, p.177) This can, yet, be an agent of repositioning the subject and make it unique and powerful through its difference. This racial difference is typified in the adjectives attributed to the natives as a sign of their race and as an obstacle to Western recognition of the oriental ‘Other’.

The ‘colonial’ language is an indicator of racial difference exploited by Rebecca Stratton to shift the subject position from being a ‘subjective subject’ to a ‘critical subject’. This shift does, essentially, require an awareness of such difference as being a ‘knowledge value’ that enables the ‘Other’ to value the local culture through recognizing the ambivalence of the so-called ‘colonial authority’. However, in postcolonial/colonial encounters, the natives mostly forgo their language through adopting the colonizers’. This reflection brings to the fore the effects of French imperialism on North Africans’ identity, as it is clearly manifested in Kadir Ben Rachid’s conversations with Troy Darrel, especially when he code switches from English to French: “‘Persuasion is my aim, ma chère, to persuade you that I am not the barbarian you have thought me, nor the cold-blooded creature you \_\_’ ‘Never!’ Troy insisted swiftly. ‘I never thought you cold-blooded, Kadir!’” (Stratton, 1981, p.189) The utilization of

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French by Kadir Ben Rachid is not innocent. It advocates the racial incommensurability that locates the colonizer at the 'centre', while it marginalizes the 'undescribed subject'. This image is embodied through these 'ideological devices' to relocate and reinscribe the racial codes and make the distinction between the colonizer and its subject visible and natural.

Using different races in Stratton's *The Silken Cage* is destined to reinforce the general image of the Arab communities. While scrutinizing the way the characters are constructed, one may notice that the relation between power and subject is not what is meant in the colonial discourse. For example, Troy Darrel, as a Western woman, is pictured as being modern, clad in a Western style, and hence "civilized". As stated by Stratton (1981):

"'Mademoiselle Troy Darrell,' said Kadir, making a more orthodox introduction. 'Troy, this is my sister Ayesha.' Determined to be civilized, Troy smiled and murmured a conventional greeting, but there was something about the girl that made her very uneasy. She was prejudiced, she had to admit, but she could not even begin to feel the pity for the girl that Peter evidently had; in fact, she was prepared to believe that Ayesha had been a more than willing partner in the elopement and that her father and her brother had exaggerated her innocent unworldliness." (p.180)

Obviously, this discourse of mimicry on the part of the Western woman, Troy Darrel, is transformed into a strategy of resistance to preserve the cultural/racial "origin" of the 'Other'. More clearly, this apparatus tries to seek the dominance/superiority of the 'Self' through asserting the racial difference of its 'Other'. However, this difference functions as a powerful source of the 'Other'. In the same way, the discourse of mimicry is transformed into a strategy of resistance, which discloses "the ambivalence of colonial discourse [and] also disrupts its authority." (Bhabha, 1994, p.88) This shifted vision in this discourse questions the superiority claimed by the colonizer and contributes to the circulation of power between the 'Self' and its 'Other'. What is more, while Stratton uses some Eastern characters to lump the Arabs (Moroccans) together under the same rubric, she also brings some Western characters to buttress their cultural/racial dominance. The establishment of Western community in the Other's land is highly recommended for the establishment of their cultural affiliation and influence on the 'Other'.

The skin-color (Whiteness/blackness) is another feature implemented by the author to celebrate racial difference between the 'Self' and the 'Other' in *The Silken Cage*. The



institutionalization of the Western ‘whiteness’ has become threatened with the presence, or rather with their presence in the land of the ‘Other.’ This ‘interracial encounter’ carries multiple metamorphoses at the level of how Western perceive the Other’s culture. They mostly tend not to show this changeable view which qualifies the exotic culture. However, there are some moments of enunciation that urge them, unconsciously, not to conceal such a qualification. In the following passage, Stratton (1981) introduces Troy Darrel who is fascinated by Kadir Ben Rachid’s dark and handsome profile:

“For the moment she did not even realize that Meduhma had been left behind and that they were surrounded on all sides by the searing hostility of the desert; as isolated as two people could be. She watching Kadir’s face, fascinated as always by the dark and harshly handsome profile that could arouse such unfamiliar emotions in her, and she dared not even contemplate that he *minged* if Adrian was her lover.” (p.172)

What is disturbing, however, in Stratton’s representation of Kadir Ben Rachid is her lumping of ‘harshness’ and ‘being handsome’ together. This reflects the possible change of Western construction of the ‘Other’. However, this contingency is impeded by the pre-given images about the ‘Other’ that is tended to be fixed in the Western memory and by the obsession of the ‘Self’ to hold the position of authority at the expense of this ‘Other’. Accordingly, racial construction in the Western discourse is not based on the ‘participant observation’ that might affirm the ‘correctness’ of its discriminatory discourse and stereotypical attitudes. The importance of interracial encounters is, thus, conspicuous from two phases which are embodied in Self-discovery and discovering the Other. These two phases contribute to reframing certain attitudes and visions. This possible change might lead to the creation of the space of conciliation and enunciation that might discontinue the construction of the geopolitical, political, racial and cultural division between the West and the East.

Based on what has been mentioned, it can be argued that race and imperialism are two interrelated aspects. The West usually justifies the conquest of other races under the umbrella term of civilization. The West has to know more about the targeted race(s) so as to facilitate the invasion process. Knowledge, in this sense, is a starting point that precedes imperialism. In *Orientalism*, Said (1978) argues that “knowledge of subject races or Orientals is what makes their management easy and profitable; knowledge gives power, more power requires more knowledge, and so on in an increasingly profitable dialectic of information and control.” (p.36) For Said, the control of other races requires knowledge as a source of power. The ‘white’ West

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mostly puts itself at the top of other human racial categories because it claims that it knows other races more than these races know about themselves. (Said, p.38) In colonial discourse, including popular romance, the 'white' color is always celebrated at the expense of other races. The racial taxonomy of people situates the 'white' race as a distinctive entity from all other worldwide entities. In *The Silken Cage*, Stratton (1981) writes:

“Ayesha was pretty, but not in the way that Troy would have expected to appeal to Peter. Ever since she could remember Peter had shown a preference for tall and slender blondes, and Ayesha was the complete opposite of everything he claimed he liked best. She was of pure Moroccan blood and her skin was golden as peach, her hair as black as her brother's, and a full and slightly pouting mouth suggested a reason for her plumpness. For Troy could imagine her constantly nibbling at the sticky sweets and pastries that her aunts were so fond of.” (p.179)

The distinction of Peter, Troy Darrel's brother, makes him noticeable to all Arabs as being “very English”. His distinction would put him in the danger as a person targeted by the Arab watchers. The Western subject is imagined as an innocent individual who has to be careful from guilty Arabs who are always ready to act in a savage way towards the Western 'Self'. Accordingly, the white race signifies innocence, purity, civilization, familiarity, and knowledge, and the black race designates guilt, obscurity, backwardness, abnormality, and ignorance. The savagery of the Arabs is more emphasized, in the novel, by Kadir Ben Rachid when he kidnaps the heroine for the sake of her daughter Ayesha, who in turn runs away with Troy's brother Peter. Kadir kept her as a bait to find his daughter Ayesha who had been taken away by Peter after their sinking in love:

“I don't know what you have in mind, Si Kadir, but I will find Peter, Whatever obstacles you put in my way. I think you know where Peter is, what happened to him; maybe you even have him prisoner as you have me, at the moment I can't make head or trail of any of this, but I will! I promise you, I will!” (Stratton, 1981, p. 61)

All the white individual characteristics like “vitality”, “enthusiasm”, “golden hair”, “white skin” and “blue eyes”, to mention just a few, are imagined to be signs of 'superiority' through which the heroine has influence on those who are perceived to be unsatisfied with their features. For example, the laziness attached to the Arabs in the Western imagination is very much manifested in the oriental harem when women gather and chat the whole day without

doing anything. In the following extract, Troy Darrel criticizes the Moroccan women's situation in the palace due to passivity, tediousness, and imprisonment:

“I've everything I could wish for in the way of comfort,' she told him, 'but I'd far rather be doing what I came to Jelhabu Dhai to do, namely look for my brother. I could achieve so much more by doing something constructive instead of sitting about all day, doing nothing.' 'You find the inactivity tedious? The Sheik asked, and she nodded, glancing up at him to judge his reaction. 'You do know that I 'm not allowed out of the palace, don't you? That to all intents your son is keeping me a prisoner?'" (Stratton, 1981, p.104)

Remarkably, the novel, by implication, is flooded with the metaphors of 'darkness' infused with the presuppositions of the positive associations of whiteness, light, purity and the like, and negative attributes of blackness, dirtiness, ignorance, barbarism, and primitiveness. All these metaphors are used to justify the 'superiority' of the Western Christian white and the 'inferiority' of non-Western and non-Christian black. Thus, the purpose of othering the 'other' race is to introduce cultural (Christian) civilization to them. Furthermore, the novel fantasizes the depiction of the oriental as an exotic background where the white woman could act out some Western traits such as courage, tenacity, and self-control. What is more, the imperial (I/eye) of the heroine classifies races according to her stereotypes and misconceptions. *The Silken Cage*, then, comes to prolong and buttress racial stereotypes about the orientals held a long time ago in the memory of the Western audience. One of these stereotypes which is very much related to the native orientals in general, and to Arabs in particular, is lasciviousness. Arabs are always represented as sex-obsessed. This sexual obsession of the Arabs especially towards the blonde European woman is highlighted by Stratton (1981) as follows:

“There was very little room to manoeuver in the front seat of the Land Rover, and as Troy struggle to push her arms into the sleeves, Kadir reached around and gathered the bulk of the garment into his hands, then dropped it over her head. It took several moments of pulling and struggling before her head eventually emerged from the neck opening, when she did it was to find Kadir's face so close to hers that their cheeks touched when he leaned to settle it over her shoulders.... His arms under hers brought him in close contact, and while he finished dressing her he looked directly into her eyes from only a few inches away.” (Stratton, 94)

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The above quote introduces Arabs as hypersexual people who could not control their sexual desire in front of a Western woman. This implied the bestial side of the Arabs who savagely treat a woman as an object of desire. This representation has been manifested not only in popular romance, but many previous literary works, like travel writing, have treated the same issue in almost different ways. Hence, the politics of race transcends the external features of people to what is a cultural behavior.

To sum up, the racialization of the Moroccan 'Other' in *The Silken Cage* has been derived from the previous racist narratives to buttress derecognition and hatred towards others. Notably, the rationale behind constructing racial differences in orientalist romance, *The Silken Cage* as an illustration, is to serve the economic, political, cultural, and ideological interests of the West. What could justify this claim is the fact that the Western racist discourse homogenizes all other races which are outside the realm of the white as 'the colored races'. The influences of these racial representations are manifested in the wide gap between the West and the East.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This paper has tried to cast light on the discourse of difference in relation to the concepts of race and identity, through a postcolonial study of Rebecca Stratton's narrative *The Silken Cage*. In so doing, an attempt has been made to explore racial difference within a spectrum of interrelated colonial dictums of stereotyping. Colonialism, as an ideological system, has delineated the way the oriental 'Other' is culturally structured and conceived of by Westerners. This mode of delineation is manifested in the literary accounts and historical records which testify to the backwardness of the people the Westerners had first come to 'civilize'. Drawing on the same stereotypical structures and paradigms of the first colonialist writers, Stratton has participated in the dissemination of racial stereotypes about Morocco. After the examination of *The Silken Cage*, it was found that racial conceptions of the Moroccan Other's identity are at large based on racial hierarchies. The novel seems to problematize the way the Moroccans' racial identity is constructed, and thereby deconstructing the system of distinctiveness between the 'Self' and the 'Other'. However, Stratton's emphasis on the ambivalence of the Moroccan subjects articulates a continued need for racial sameness and the denial of difference. In the same vein, given that racial hybridity is a prerequisite for the courtship to be successful reveals that Stratton resists cross-cultural difference. Accordingly, Stratton's *The Silken Cage* is an order of discourse where power relations between the Western 'Self' and the oriental 'Other' are maintained.

Postcolonialism, as an area where the discourse of difference is explored and problematized in relation to race and identity, is better taken as a critical scholarship that has based the end of its political agenda on two major goals. The first is the destabilization, dismantling, and subversion of the essentialist discourses. The second is the articulation of cultural difference based on correcting the misinterpretations and misrepresentations of the colonized past that still affects the present. Stated simply, the colonized past can be revived, rehashed and reshaped in a way that opens up the possibility for the articulation of cultural difference that does not conflict with the political agenda of postcolonialism. Undoubtedly, this paper has some limits and limitations. Much focus, for instance, in this paper has been put on the discourse of 'race', but other areas such as 'gender', 'space', 'culture', 'religion', and 'class' can be subject to analysis as far as popular romance is concerned. Besides, it would have been of great importance to make a comparative study between romances and other popular narratives, such as travel, detective, and captivity literary works. Having said that, it is noteworthy that the ultimate purpose of this paper has been to draw attention to 'race' as an order of discourse materialized in popular romance. This paper is then expected to bring into light the importance of studying imperial popular romance in terms of its colonial and cultural discourses. It is also expected to show that colonial discourse has no limits or barriers, but goes across time and space, across 'high culture' and 'popular culture'.

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### **AUTHORS' BIOS**

**Abdelghani MOUSSAOUI** is an EFL teacher and a PhD researcher at the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences Chouaib Doukkali, El Jadida/ Morocco. His research interests bear on Intercultural Postcolonial Studies. He has delivered several papers in national and international forums. He has published some articles in indexed journals. His famous motto is: "All worthy work is open to interpretations the author didn't intend."

**Abdellah BENLAMINE (PES)** is a professor of English literature at Chouaib Doukkali University, Faculty of Humanities, Department of English Studies, El Jadida, Morocco. He has been teaching English literature since 1986, with a special focus on the 19th English novel and the American Southern novel. He is a PhD holder since 2004.